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Studio Hato and A Practice For Everyday Life (APFEL): How Two Independent Creative Houses Are Mapping Out a Distinctive Blueprint for East London Design

This comparative essay will examine two East London based design houses, Studio Hato and APFEL (A Practice For Everyday Life), with specific focus on projects of similar structure and outcome. The projects to be compared will include a brand identity and a published book, focussing on the creativity of the design from initial idea to end product. *The Hepworth Wakefield* and *Mobile M+: Inflation!* will be compared in relation to brand design, alongside *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentlemen* and *Art of Change: New Directions From China* which will be compared for the publication.

An Introduction to Studio Hato and A Practice For Everyday Life

Established in 2009 and located in a small office in Hoxton, HATO (comprised of Hato Press, a printing and publishing house using Risograph printing; Studio Hato, a design studio and Hato Labo, an interactive design studio offering website design, workshops and exhibitions) is an "autonomous experimental space to encourage collaborators to develop ideas and facilitate both the production and distribution of new content".¹

Although the company is relatively new and comparatively small, a team of five makes up Studio Hato, the inclusion of young designers and Risograph printing has allowed Hato to integrate itself within the design world to an impressive extent; some of the reasons for which will be expanded upon later. The team consists of the founders, Ken Kirton and Jackson Lam, and designers Mélanie Dautreppe-Liermann and Jason Chow who work on projects singularly or collectively with the ethos of sharing ideas and resources being fundamental to the running of the business. Recent clients include Arts Council England, Calvert 22 Gallery, The Hayward Gallery, Tate Modern, South London Gallery and The Whitechapel Gallery, two of which will be detailed later.

In order to compensate for the lack of design work at the time of launching Studio Hato, the inclusion of a printing service within the building meant that a publication design, for example, could be worked upon and printed simultaneously. As well as this being more economical and quicker for the client, it also meant that Hato established an autonomy over the production of their ideas and exposed their clientele to more interesting ventures.

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¹Lisa Hassel in Conversation with Hato - http://inkygoodness.com/blog/interviews/interview-hato-press/ [accessed: 19/4/15]

The use of Risograph printing, a simple technology that is "highly reliable compared to a standard photocopier and can achieve both very high speed... and very low costs"², has become paramount to the identity of Hato. The use of Risograph offers clients an unusual³ result as the inks have a powdery quality⁴ and are available in a range of colours, some of which are made in-house by a process of printing colour over colour and resulting in a tailored, fully bespoke experience.

In comparison, A Practice For Everyday Life was set up a few years earlier in 2003. Its co-founders, Kirtsy Carter and Emma Thomas, are graduates from the Royal College of Art and formed a collaborative work ethic whilst studying. APFEL employ approximately the same number of staff as Hato and have an equally small office space in the roof of a former Victorian workshop in East London. They also have an internship scheme which allows recent graduates a paid three-month work experience placement.

Unlike Hato, APFEL do not have an in-house publishing department; rather, projects are worked upon and designed in collaboration with publishers, galleries and brands who then take the design to print elsewhere. This could be seen as beneficial, in terms of reducing the workload and possible costs for the studio, as the team focus solely on the design aspect of a project and can thoroughly research in a "considered and thoughtful approach" without the time constraints of printing being an added pressure to the deadline. For APFEL, and in no doubt for Hato also, a "balance between creativity and managing things in a professional and organised way" is paramount to their success as a design agency. Thus, being only a small team, perhaps for APFEL the exclusion of an inhouse printing facility is favourable in terms on of being able to concentrate solely on design.

Recent clients for APFEL include some of the same companies Hato has worked with, for instance, the Tate and The Whitechapel Gallery, as well as larger clients such as The British Council, V&A and Art Basel.

For both companies the collaborative nature of each team member, the research-heavy way of building proposals and the emphasis on involving the client as much as possible, is of principal importance for any design company who want to fulfil a brief to its full potential. The major benefit of having a small team - rather than larger London based agencies such as Cartlidge Levene and Havas who have large teams working on different aspects of the design process in bigger work spaces - allows Hato and APFEL to provide a more bespoke service for the client who is included in all aspects of the decision-making process and progression. The process thus goes beyond the initial brief that was submitted to the client due to the organic nature of collaboration.

In terms of the longevity and satisfaction of projects, Studio Hato have an advantage in being able to see a project from idea, to aesthetic, to physical object; being able to choose minor details for projects, such as printing, binding techniques and finishing processes for books, or paper stock for exhibition materials, means that control of the final outcome is entirely in the hands of the studio. While this may be riskier, especially with tight deadlines and costs, the team members could be said to have a higher degree of

² Frank J. Romano (2000), "Stencil Duplicating", *Digital printing*, pp. 165-169

³Tom Hughes in Conversation with Hato - http://www.iconprinting.com/blog/experts-in-printing-hato-press/[accessed: 19/4/15]

⁴ibid

⁵Emma Thomas and Kirsty Carter in conversation with formfiftyfive - http://formfiftyfive.com/2014/01/interview-a-practice-for-everyday-life/ [accessed 20/4/15]

⁶ ibid.

satisfaction and personal investment in projects and can learn from mistakes in the act of making⁷ which could benefit the design of future projects.

Brand Identity: The Hepworth Wakefield by APFEL and Mobile M+ Inflation! by Studio Hato

The recently built Hepworth Wakefield is the largest purpose built gallery to be erected in the UK since 1968. The building, designed by architect David Chipperfield who has worked on other projects such as the reconstruction of the Neues Museum in Berlin and The Turner Contemporary in Margate, is a structure composed of "ten trapezoidal blocks; its upper-level galleries are lit by natural light from large windows in the pitched roofs."

The thirty-five million pound complex includes ten galleries which cover five thousand square metres⁹ and contains works and prototypes by Barbara Hepworth as well as other pieces by Henry Moore and JMW Turner. Although the location may be considered to be problematic - the gallery was built on a "dreary stretch of motorway near a shopping mall... over the River Calder, neither in the town of Wakefield not outside it"¹⁰ - the low-built concrete structure positively imposes on the otherwise barren landscape. At entrance level, the dark walls, floors and gallery furniture reinforce "the neo-brutalist aesthetic"¹¹, something which APFEL have reflected in their work.

For the Hepworth Wakefield, APFEL designed a brand identity including signage and way-finding, a website which functions as a promotional tool for exhibitions and events, as well as discursive platform where visitors to the website can access links to a blog and news forum.

Working in collaboration with Ripple Effect for the website - a digital agency based in Liverpool - APFEL created a fluid online format¹² which mirrors their work on the interior spaces in the gallery. Utilising a palette of light blue and grey font with monochrome imagery on a white background, the website in understated and subtle, simultaneously referencing the clean lines of the architecture and providing a fresh take on the works within the gallery.

Alongside the website, which also includes the bespoke font made by APFEL for the signage of the gallery, smaller items such as business cards, paper bags for the shop and printed material including flyers and information leaflets were created. Finding inspiration from David Chipperfield's architecture and Barbara Hepworth herself, the printed materials use textural effects and patterns informed by Hepworth's form and shapes within her sculptural works. The typeface, also inclusive of research into Chipperfield, is distinctive in its subtle, non-evasive aesthetic. The bespoke typeface, which is similar to Helvetica in its simplicity, is more angular with the capital letters appearing wider; the angles are "derived"

⁷ Conversation I had with Hato in April 2015.

⁸Barbara Hepworth Wakefield, Barbara Hepworth.org, [accessed on 12/5/12]

⁹http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-13447180 [accessed on 12/5/15]

¹⁰ Richard Dorment, *Hepworth Wakefield: a brutal setting for Barbara,* The Telegraph,http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-reviews/8531405/Hepworth-Wakefield-a-brutal-setting-for-Barbara.html [accessed 12/5/12]

¹¹http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-reviews/8531405/Hepworth-Wakefield-a-brutal-setting-for-Barbara.html [accessed on 12/5/15]

¹²http://apracticeforeverydaylife.com/the-hepworth-wakefield/ [accessed on 10/5/15]

from [research into] the roofs of the Hepworth Wakefield and surrounding buildings."¹³ The *Hepworth* font is easy to read at a distance with clear reference to the building it was designed for, emphasising the minimal aesthetic.

To accentuate the architecture and to be as sympathetic to the clarity of the design, the typeface for the galleries exterior walls, as well as interior signage, APFEL applied the wording as directly as possible. Printing straight onto the surface, avoiding the 'object sign' which can look bulky and imposing, the text was then sandblasted into the concrete walls providing an integrated and functional aesthetic - "by developing this fully integrated scheme, the Hepworth Wakefield was able to evolve as a total environment which is sculptural and minimal, and can present both the Collection display and contemporary artworks in a powerful and elegant way." This technique brings benefits to the gallery upkeep; there are no sharp edges which is positive from a health and safety angle (if the signs were printed on perspex) and no unsightly, peeling text (if the signage was made from vinyl).

For their brand identity project for Mobile M+: Identity!, Hato employed similar rules to a differing environment.

M+, the mother to the sister Mobile M+, is a new museum of visual culture in the West Kowloon Cultural District of Hong Kong. Currently still under construction, it is expected to open in in the summer of 2019. The inaugural director, Lars Nittve, has stated that the mission for the forthcoming museum aims to "focus on 20th and 21st century visual culture, broadly defined, from a Hong Kong perspective and with a global vision. With an open, flexible and forward-looking attitude, M+ aims to inspire, delight, educate and engage the public, to explore diversity and foster creativity." 16

Uli Sigg, a Swiss collector, is to donate a large amount of his collection to the museum when it opens. The works, which will include Ai Weiwei amongst other contemporary Chinese artists, vary in media and format.

Whilst the museum is being built, curators have succeeded in creating engagement and anticipation from the public by holding events and activities under the name of Mobile M+. One of these events, titled Mobile M+: *Inflation!* which opened on 25th April until 9th June in 2012, included brand identity designed by Hato. *Inflation!* occupied a site in the District next to the future M+ museum building and was an exhibition of inflatable sculptures by artists which included Jeremy Deller for the UK, Paul McCarthy for the US and Tam Wai Ping for Hong Kong.

Similar to APFEL's project for the Hepworth Wakefield, *Inflation*! saw Hato venture into designing a bespoke typeface as well as a exhibition catalogue and printed matter. The typeface is stencil-like, which could be said to draw reference from the 'in limbo' feeling of the ongoing erection of the M+ museum - its broken lines and hurried feel are reminiscent of the building process and "evokes the relationship between the artworks and the exhibition site... by drawing on the notion of scale, contrast between the materials and the raw state of the landscape."¹⁷

¹³ ibid.

¹⁴ ibid.

¹⁵ Chow, Vivienne (13 May 2015). "Opening of M+ museum in cultural district delayed until 2019". *South China Morning Post*.

¹⁶"Executive Summary" (PDF). *M+ Architectural Competition Brief*. WDCDA.

¹⁷http://studiohato.com/mobile-m-inflation [accessed 10/5/15]

The site could be called a non-place. De Certeau, the French scholar, talks of the non-place as having a distinct lack of specific names (unlike space and place which could be given the names City or Week) and how when one travels, a schedule is given a starting point and an end but not a 'middle' - only a form of divergence, when one becomes lost for example, from named places which give "meaning that could not have been predicted in advance". ¹⁸ It is in this way that the 'middle area', or non-place, can be said to be a passageway or an aisle - one does not stop but instead travels through to get to somewhere else, a place they were intending to be. The non-place is a place of limbo where there is a loss of focus perhaps, or a certain ignorance towards where one is, as opposed to place where a completion of a journey is made.

For this reason, one could say that the site for creating a brand identity was as problematic for Hato as it was for APFEL with The Hepworth Wakefield. However, the work displayed and the intuitive signage made the project successful with over one hundred and fifty thousand visitors in its short running length. The signage, similar to APFEL in its integration into concrete blocks, emphasises the city view over the river and is subtle but evokes associations between permanence and temporariness as well as "beauty and grotesque in the realm of constructed landscape" This compliments the temporariness of the exhibition but also of the nature of the work. Tobias Berger, the curator of the exhibition, stated that M+ needed "to be sure of total integration; there must be dialogue and a challenge between art and architecture." Hong Kong needs Art Commons, to borrow a term from Economics Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom, those common assets that are shared tangible and intangible resources, enjoyed by the whole community and recognised by society.

Book Design: The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentlemen by APFEL and Art of Change: New Directions From China, Hayward Gallery, by Studio Hato

Published in nine volumes, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentlemen* was written from 1759 to 1767 by Laurence Sterne. In the first published forms, the book, which narrates the comic exploits of Tristram Shandy, utilised revolutionary design and printing techniques which both entertained the reader and gave animation to the words. Creative aspects included detailed drawings, blank pages and diagrams which were subsequently lost in later editions of the book. Sterne faced negative criticism for his adventurous text although John Ferriar, who was a poet and physician, was the first to praise the book stating, "If [the reader's] opinion of Sterne's learning and originality be lessened by the perusal, he must, at least, admire the dexterity and the good taste with which he has incorporated in his work so many passages, written with very different views by their respective authors." APFEL would, like Sterne in the 1700's, have to portray the book for that which it was intended; they would have to be the instigators of entertaining elements and witty humour through their ambitious re-design.

¹⁸ Merleau-Ponty (1976 page 156)

¹⁹ "150,000 visit Mobile M+: Inflation! The 4th M+ nomadic exhibition ends successfully with fan-fare". West Kowloon Cultural District Authority. 9 June 2013.

²⁰http://studiohato.com/mobile-m-inflation [accessed 10/5/15]

²¹http://www.domusweb.it/content/domusweb/en/art/2013/05/6/mobile_m_inflation.html [accessed 9/5/15]

²²ibid.

²³Ferriar (1798), chapter 6, p.181

The idea of breaking the fourth wall (originally applied to the dramatic arts), whereby aspects of self-referentialism and modernism encompass meta-fiction and John Locke's theories of empiricism²⁴, is applied within the writing and form. The book questions the idea of language itself, interrogating the trustworthiness of words, and acknowledging its existence by reminding the viewer that they are engaging in the process of reading.

The publishing company Visual Editions - founded by Anna Gerber and Britt Inverson - approached APFEL to "bring the story back to life, and through researching and growing to love the book, [they] designed a visually rich, playful edition, which has inspired a new and shared Shandymania."²⁵ Nominated for the Brit Insurance Designs of the Year in 2011 by Simon Esterson and Will Hudson, the new edition of Tristram Shandy makes use of playful techniques to evoke the original. The re-imagined edition designed by APFEL employs a colour palette of bold reds and greens to make the new additions stand out; by overlapping text with imagery, the result is striking and forms a contemporary link to a renowned classic. The visual elements of the book are an integral part of the reading experience; "they are not just decorative, they are inseparable from the text itself" which makes the re-design a success.

APFEL experimented with various techniques which included physically tearing out pages, leaving a gap in the codex and a margin sized stump in place of each missing page (Chapter 4, pages 322-333). They also overlaid a blank page with a smooth oval shape of varnish (Chapter 6, page 438) as well as the same varnish applied to areas where there is mention of sweat and rain in the story (Chapter 5, page 408). APFEL were encouraged to add their own additions independently of Tristram Shandy's own originality. These included such elements as folded down corners and overprinting text. While this was a welcome addition, the complexity of being able to print such elements in a large quantity were problematic. There is a fine line between creativity and artist's book, and it was imperative to both APFEL and Visual Editions that the book retains a high quality of printing and production. The complex design meant "the first printing had a few glitches. The ink, especially the fluorescent, didn't sit well on the paper, so [the Chinese printers were asked] to reprint those pages."²⁷ These additions, although welcome in the re-design process, cost APFEL time and money. Had APFEL been able to print in-house, these problems may have been resolved more quickly and been less expensive. However, an in-house production would have meant a bigger responsibility - not only due to the complicated design of the book but also the amount of copies Visual Editions required; in-house was simply not an option for such a commercial publication.

For Hato, similar problems arose with their design for *Art of Change: New Directions From China.*

Curated by Stephanie Rosenthal, Art of Change explores Chinese contemporary installation and performance art dating from the 1980's until present day. Exhibiting artists include Chen Zhen, Gu Dexin and Wang Jianwei who exhibit works from their early careers through to recent pieces and new commissions. As change is deeply rooted²⁸ in the philosophy of Eastern culture, the works in the exhibition deal with notions of change

²⁴A theory which states that knowledge comes only or primarily from sensory experience. Psillos, Stathis; Curd, Martin (2010). *The Routledge companion to philosophy of science* (1. publ. in paperback ed.). London: Routledge. pp. 129–138.

²⁵ http://www.eyemagazine.com/feature/article/a-nose-for-type [accessed 10/5/15]

²⁶http://the-publishing-lab.com/features/view/145/a-practice-for-everyday-life-on-tristram-shandy [accessed 9/5/15]

²⁷http://www.eyemagazine.com/feature/article/a-nose-for-type [accessed 9/5/15]

²⁸http://china.southbankcentre.co.uk/exhibition/index.html [accessed 10/5/15]

through transformative aspects in the work which might alter their appearance over time or be unpredictable in their material.

The issues Hato faced were conjoining these ideas of transience and impermanence through their design for the publication which would accompany the exhibition; working in collaboration with Stinsensqueeze (STSQ are a design studio founded by Stina Gromark and Louise Taunton Morgan who, like APFEL co-founders, both studied at the Royal College of Art) allowed the project to expand not only in its design, but also the production for a large gallery of a high status.

Unlike most projects undertaken by Hato, *Art of Change* was not printed in-house. Instead, Hayward Publishing took hold of the completed designs, partly due to the cost incurred by Hato in having to produce a vast quantity of books, but also in order to adhere to the paper stock and binding technique requirements specified by the Hayward Gallery. Like APFEL, when producing a publication for a commercial market, decisions on quality and consistency are valued more highly than the unreliability and 'hand-printed' quality of a technique like Risograph printing.

Although Hato did not have the opportunity to see this project from initial stages to an end result, the advantage of working with such a large institution have secured accolades within the design world - an accolade that recently saw them exhibit at Somerset House for Pick Me Up, a graphic design arts festival which occurred earlier this year.²⁹ During this event, specially curated workshops, such as Risograph printing, bookbinding and font design were on offer to the public and sold out quickly showing that an interest in publication design, and all of the processes which go alongside it, are gaining in popularity.

The book uses perfect binding³⁰ which is inexpensive and easy to deliver on a large scale. Whilst this may not be the most creative form of binding, by opting for simplicity the designers were able to experiment with other areas without problematising the binding at a later stage. The book is essentially rectangular but folds in on itself to form a square when completely closed; the advantage here is the way in which each page opens out to reveal more information and images coinciding with the text, thus, being able to hold more information in a relatively small sized publication. The fold-out nature of the book is beneficial in terms of saleability and storage - the book works well with relation to the content of the exhibition surrounding ideas of change and also allows for more information to be included without any extra bulkiness.

Conclusion

The four projects discussed in this essay are a small selection of the many projects each company has been involved in. Other important projects include exhibition designs, talks and workshops for the public and video animation projects for websites and bands. This

²⁹ Pick Me Up returned to Somerset House for its sixth year, featuring a fresh line-up of artists and designers who brought the best of new illustration, graphic design and related disciplines to inspire and delight. Vibrant, engaging and packed full of exciting things to see, do and buy, Pick Me Up 2015 once again featured a whole host of different working processes and techniques ranging from traditional screen-printing to animation, risograph printing to paper craft. https://www.somersethouse.org.uk/visual-arts/pick-me-up-2015 [accessed 30/4/15]

³⁰Perfect binding, also known as adhesive binding, applies an adhesive to the spine of gathered pages which, when dry, keeps them securely bound. Commonly, a soft paper or paperboard cover (or paperback) is attached over the binding adhesive. Perfect bound publications have rectangular backbones. http://printwiki.org/Perfect_Binding [accessed on 17/5/15]

integration within the field of art and design, commercially as well as publicly, and the addition of social media playing an increasingly important role in enhancing their reputations, has been imperative to each companies respective success.

For Hato, using Risograph printing has been one of many decisions which have contributed positively to the companies growth; increasing the popularity of Risopgraph printing has meant Hato have gained many clients who want the unique aesthetic for their projects. Investing in specialised printers has allowed Hato to provide this technique at a relatively affordable cost for large clients and also students or recent graduates. Having co-curated an exhibition in April this year and worked with Hato on a publication for *A Statue Is Present*, I found the process to be professional and quick, with communication being the key element in the company's approach; regular meetings with the designers were held to discuss progress and the book was delivered on time and to our specifications. Having all aspects of the publication completed in one studio - being able to be involved in the design process, as well as choosing the right paper and binding for the book - meant that a close working relationship was formed, thus creating a publication which felt complete, not only from a design perspective, but on a personal level as well.

For APFEL the communication is also a key element in their approach to working with clients. Although printing in-house is not (yet) an option, APFEL compensate for this by producing clear designs that are easily printable wherever the client decides to take them. This is a major positive for a client of APFEL, as at Hato "there are various restrictions [to using Risograph], such as not being able to print on glossy or silk papers but these restrictions only make the process more creative". The inability to physically see every project from design stage to end product does not impinge on APFEL's success - and neither does it impinge on the success of Hato by having the ability in most cases (for publications, at least): it is an added bonus for Hato who are highly skilled in this form of printing.

Although Hato are now seeing an increase in their international exposure and are working with larger companies, this has already been happening with APFEL for some time now. What they do share however, alongside such established clients such as the Whitechapel Gallery, The Hayward Gallery and The South London Gallery, is offering a customer orientated bespoke service which has culminated in some of the most innovative, exciting and distinctive designs currently around. In both cases, it is not the size or prestige of each project which is of paramount importance. It is the creative and collaborative nature they have both espoused from their very beginnings, and which has led them to their current and continued success.

4005 words

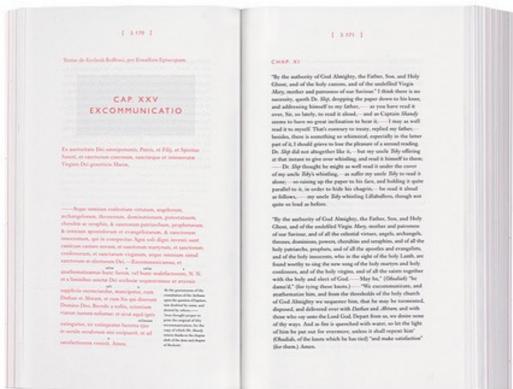
³¹http://inkygoodness.com/blog/interviews/interview-hato-press/ [accessed 12/4/15]

Appendix

APFEL - Images from The Hepworth Wakefield and *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentlemen*









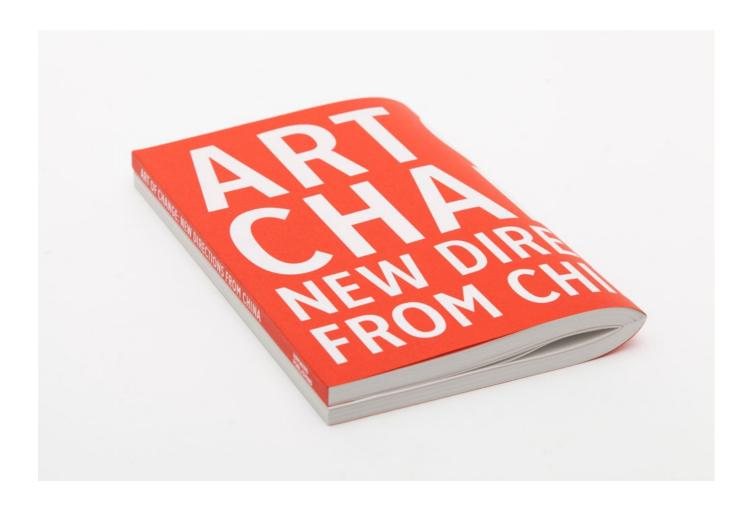
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Hato - Mobile M+: Inflation! and Art of Change: New Directions From China













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