SO,\textsuperscript{a} THIS IS REALLY\textsuperscript{b} WHAT IT’S ALL ABOUT,\textsuperscript{c} AS FAR AS I CAN TELL,\textsuperscript{d} AT THE MOMENT:\textsuperscript{e} EXPLORING\textsuperscript{1} THE COMPLEXITY\textsuperscript{2} OF SOCIAL EXPERIENCE,\textsuperscript{3} AS A COMMUNICATION DESIGN\textsuperscript{4} PRACTITIONER,\textsuperscript{5} THROUGH COLLABORATIVE\textsuperscript{6} PROJECTS.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{a} Meaning at the end of this study. It’s like the end of a pause. The other side of an ellipsis. I’ve explained this stuff to so many people over the last few years. And so many people have explained it to me. Their explanations have often been more succinct than mine, but that’s not really the point. Because no matter how succinct, nothing has quite fit. This is, perhaps, because what I’m trying to do here (to paraphrase BS Johnson) is chart a map of some areas of the inside of my skull. And whilst I have some pretensions about writing, I am not a writer. It’s not my strength.

\textsuperscript{b} What do I mean by really? Do I mean ‘this is really what it’s all about’ the way Rick from The Young Ones would say it? All full of belief (but still, somehow, not convinced)? Or more the way Alain de Botton would say it? As a summative adverb (but aware of the dangers of summation)? Well, really, the second. I think.

\textsuperscript{c} All, in this sense, is a difficult word. For me this is both over and under stated. By all I mean, of course, all that is contained within the small confines of this study. But at the same time, this study has become so intertwined with the way I think about things that it does attempt to encompass all that I do. It’s not a manifesto. But it is.

\textsuperscript{d} Fallibility is a given. As are shortcomings, oversights and inconsistencies. These are things that I’ve learnt from people. And about people. But also things that I’ve learnt to embrace more thoroughly through this study. I know my views will change. I hope they will.

\textsuperscript{e} 7.53pm, Friday the 25th of August, 2006 (this is when I have begun making the print-ready PDFs).
1—Exploring

Various methodologies have been present throughout the course of the last four years. Some have been more deliberate than others. As my diagrams point out, I’ve done a fair amount of wandering (albeit wandering from an intended path)\(^5\). But this seems to be a natural path for me to take. And I’ve discovered that it’s only through doing, that I seem able to thoroughly reflect\(^3\) on things done.\(^4\) I learn a lot through reading, looking and listening, but it’s hard to say whether this learning takes place at the time or later, when this absorbed material becomes active in a conversation\(^6\) or collaboration.\(^7\) I would say, on reflection, that the latter is the case. It’s at this stage the ideas are tested and played with,\(^8\) that what I’ve absorbed can run through the framework that surrounds such a project and see if there is a place for it (or for my idea of it). I wonder what happens to the stuff that doesn’t come out the other end… am I retaining it? Or is it disappearing?

1.1—Wandering

A work in progress, under constant revision.

1.2—Planning

Originally I set out to make myself be political. That was my plan. Of course, there was more to it than that at the time, but really, that was the crux of it. There were lots of reasons for this, and some of them had to do with my views on the relationship between graphic design and politics (but more on that later). My initial planning, after a research methods class, too much reading and an initial proposal that I didn’t understand all that well, was to do an humanities degree and come back to this masters. After I realised this was unfeasible, through much discussion with my supervisor, I began, with the parts that felt right about my proposal, to plan and make projects that explored these ideas.

My attempts to follow an action research methodology took on their own idiosyn- cracies as I realised more about myself as a reflective practitioner (see 1.3), and also as I came to terms with a damm- ing realisation about the way that I take in information (see 1.5). I also became aware that if I was between projects, my reading/viewing/talking/walking, would accumulate, but not necessarily become useful to my study. It was only through making that these absorbed ideas would become useful to my study and to my reflection and planning. So it was with the projects documented here that I pro- voked this reference material through the framework of my study.

It was through these realisations that I came across a hybrid version of the planning/action/reflection cycle of an action research methodology. My consumption of reference material, either textual, film- ic, conversational, designed or artistic (or a combination of any of these), became a parallel to the planning and initiation of projects—although not always a synchron- ous parallel. These parallel streams (that overlapped often) account for planning, action and reflection, but in a non-linear, fluid structure. This fluid approach to ac- tion research has been, to me, necessary in the formulation of this research and its ongoing progress. This is evident in the revisions to and evolution of the project’s aims and practices.\(^9\) Also woven through- out this process, as important methodo- logical catalysts, are the collaborative situations that I sought out. These are the stitches that bind this seemingly haphaz- ard assemblage together (this is discussed further below).

1.3—Reflection

Over the course of this study I have come to realise many things about the way that I work. But one of the most crucial realisations for my research has been about the way that I work as a reflect- ive practitioner. As the projects of this study progressed, whether time passed between finishing and starting, or if the projects overlapped, I found that a fin- ished project would be somewhat closed to me until I started on another. This lack of reflection irked me, as I believed in the action research methodology and I thought it important to be able to reflect on a project in order to start a new one.\(^5\) I found that I was starting a new project feeling guilty that I hadn’t thought about the previous one enough and apprehen- sive that I wouldn’t get enough out of the new one. It was only after surveying sev- eral projects together that I could observe the progression of thought evident and reflect on the process rather than each project as a fixed and closed whole. This new (to me) idea of ‘reflection in action’ opened up years of studio experience in which I had felt similarly challenged. I had developed, over these years, a way of working whilst keeping other projects just out of sight—at my peripheral vision, so to speak. And whilst this seemed to work, I was always uncertain of its legitimacy.

The point at which this idea became solid was in the overlap of these projects to- wards the end of this study. I had very recently finished working on Dear John and was developing two new projects, one that I saw as my major project (a still untitled comunication work), and one that I had initiated with a small group of friends (Is Not Magazine). The conflicts between my approaches to these two new projects and the different processes that were involved in their conception, drew into- sharp focus the values and disadvantages of the Dear John project. This realisation led me to take on Is Not Magazine as my major project and legitimised, for me, the relationship between reflection and action in my practice.

Another reflective methodology of great importance that developed (or that be- came clearer) during this thesis was collaboration—either the particular collabo- rative situations I was involved in. The ongoing, incessant process of discussing, making, critiquing, disagreeing, agreeing, making, etcetera, enforced the close ac- tivity of the project at hand, but also calls into the equation the history and experi- ences of the participants.
What a difficult thing to write a paragraph about. Complexity, to me, is...
2:1—The 11th of September, 2001

I have the strongest memory of my own horror in the days following the 11th of September 2001. Not horror for the deaths of people in the World Trade Centre in New York. Nor for the passengers on the airplanes that crashed into the buildings. Nor for the people who were driven to commit such acts. My horror came from a mounting realisation of the complexity of the situation. One thought would lead to another, which would lead to another. I was constantly beset by the palpable w— the conceptual tapestry — that made up the past, present and future of the situation. I couldn’t go twenty minutes without a new thought that would add an entirely new colour, tension, pattern to my picture of things. Overall, I could see no beginning and no end to the event —just a knot of terrible threads that had somehow lead to this point (and lead away from it).

Needless to say, the money wasn’t on Ritchie succeeding, but you had to admire the young fellow’s gumption, so we stopped and watched. And we were ever richly rewarded.” From Knight of Infinity, Champion of Enlighten-

ment by Lynn M. Haber.

‘Over the last several years Matthew Ritchie’s art work has explored and documented the manifold creation myths of the universe: religious, scientific and mythological. Though it employs traditional practices of painting, sculpture, and drawing, Ritchie’s work extends to nontraditional installations that incorporate enormous light boxes, vinyl and pen wall drawings, books, and website projects. Short stories, written to accompany each body of work, reference pulp fiction, voodoo, folklore, and mythology, and cover topics ranging from love, horror, sex, and loss to gambling, quantum physics, religion, and moral consequences (among other things). Ritchie details these varied elements until they are compressed into their simplest form: information. For him, information is raw material to be dizzyingly mapped and diagrammed across and through his systems of colour, line, paint, metal, glass, and light. Just as Joseph Beuys mapped the “amorphous stuff of life” to delineate a desired clarity, Ritchie’s iconographic gestures pres-cribe an analytical study of how information arranged itself in a closed system. Here, the system just happens to be a model of the formation of the universe.

‘Scientists posit that we can account for only five percent of the universe, if we open our eyes wide; Ritchie’s work allows us perhaps five percent more of the big picture, to see more of what surrounds us. Ritchie gives us some powerful tools for understanding the universe, one of the most difficult concepts we might ever wrap our brains around. Yet this documents created by his vast project are as much about incompleteness as they are about completeness. We propose that you use this colour-coded map of creation as a key to de-ciphering the universe—a version of a version with vivid characters to cheer for and hiss at. This is just one way to tell it, and as Ritchie says, everything is true—except for the parts he leaves up.” From Five Percent More by Jenelle Porter.

2:2—Matthew Ritchie

Two excerpts from Proposition Player†

"At the same time, Matthew Ritchie showed up on the field with an array of discarded college text books, forty-nine fictional characters taken from history, science, mythology, and assorted religions, an outmoded palette of colours, and anordinate amount of energy. It was an un-auspicious beginning, to say the least. Yet he stood his ground and set out to create a map of everything—a map of everything from the big bang to the present. The crowd was be-mused and skeptical. Who was this artist, de-claring under the harsh glare of the contempo-
rary art world’s stadium lights that he, that he, was going to create a body of work that en-capsulated a history of the universe? And with such hopelessly outdated equipment, no less.

2:3—Lila, A Users Manual

For me, reading Lila, A Users Manual was a revelation. The slowness of its unfolding, and the intricacy of its narrative were unlike any-thing I had read. This was complexity embed-
ded in structure, form and content. But more, this was the poetic realisation of a work that grappled the necessary complexity of its con-ception but didn’t yield to the potential to become clinically or lifelessly experimental. I could tell, throughout my reading, that there was a logic, a pattern to the movements of the observer/narrator. I had been told a little about the Oulipo group before I began read-
ing. But it was not until much later that struc-
ture was explained to me:

“The name Gaspard Winckler reappears in Perce’s Life, A Users Manual, written over nine years and published in 1978, three years after the artist’s death. This is a remarkable book, since the first version of the text was explained to me:” From On Biography (Masculin) or Public Image Limited by Stuart Bailey†

2:4—Baroque

Without any real comprehension of it, I like immensely the exploration of the idea of the Baroque by Doleuze! I realise this is quite a dangerous and naïve citing of ideas, but perhaps my idea of the baroque, formed by the mostest exposure to him, is enough for my purposes.

What I like about the idea is this: that the bar-
oque can be thought of as a system. An ex-plosive and ever-expanding system that mas-
ters space and form through effusion. It seems both curious and enthusiastic. It weaves and folds and extends beyond (in fact discards) the frame. It’s the tension created by some- thing that seems chaotic, but through inspection displays characteristics, personal-
ity. Something that is comprehensible, but not predictable. The mutability of form and ideas that this system presents is close to my every-day experience and lends texture and reason to my chaos. As Helene Frichot said to me, it’s a seductive idea. I wonder, is that enough? Has that seduction caused in me enough use-
ful thought that I need not go further into it? I Don’t know. You tell me.

2:5—Systems

Interestingly, all of these examples make more use of ideas of systems and patterns than they do of ideas of chaos. This is reflected in my ideas about communication design. It’s the systemic nature of humanity, or the use of systems to understand humanity, that feeds my ongoing interest in communication design. And particularly the idea of chance, mimesis and other critical and poetic devices emerg-ing from broken or overflowing systems. This seems like a particularly human idea to me.
3—Social Experience

By this I mean our (or my) experience of society. I find it useful¹ to break that down into two parts. Predominantly, for the purposes of this study, a society can be expressed culturally² and politically.³ These parts are not separate, but overlapping. The most important part of this definition/breakdown of society, is that it’s people-centric. I see the cultural and political as being deeply rooted in the interactions of people with other people, people with ideas and people with things.

3:1—Useful
Useful in terms of expediency. And a good limiting factor in a project that tends towards sprawl and tangential exploration. That is why this section is so short—it needs to be.

3:2—Cultural
In looking at the OED definition of culture,⁴ I am drawn to the latin origins of the word, which are about growth and cultivation. This sits well with the first part of my split definition, in that it points to what is made by a society, or the people of that society.

3:3—Political
Again with the OED,⁵ but this time there are several useful definitions. Between politics, body politic, politics and political, you can get an idea of what I’m trying to get at. In particular, definition four of politics (the principles relating to or inherent in a sphere or activity, especially when concerned with power and status) seems important. It’s the use and misuse of this power that is so often the subject of the ‘political’ graphic design that is partly critiqued by the projects of this study. But also, importantly, the Greek origin of politic is derived from the word for citizen.

4—Communication Design

What I’m proposing with this study is part of the evolution of the practice of graphic design to communication design. Graphic design amalgamated as a profession from a range of trades including typesetting & book design, commercial art (advertising & packaging design) and sign-writing. This really occurred in parallel with late 19th century and early 20th century modernism.⁶ The ideological conditioning of graphic design has then been largely modernist. This has meant, for graphic design, privileging the ideal of the rational, objective, professional designer.⁷ Throughout this process of professionalisation, all the mystery and craft of these trades was reduced to supposedly objective problem solving. It could have been a science for all the bloody modernists cared.⁸

This modernist approach in graphic design has been broken down over the last 30 years or so, by many practitioners and critics, pursuing many different theoretical and formal objectives.⁹ The change of title from graphic design to communication design is significant in that it recognises the act of communication as being more pivotal to the profession than the form that communication takes. In fact, it implies that the form is subservient/reactive to the communication. This stands at the heart of what I am trying to get at (both as a researcher and a practitioner): communication design is embedded in communication—that most fundamental of human acts.

Simple as this sounds, people stand at the heart of this study, in all their frailty, stupidity and greatness. This manifests itself in this study through opening the communication process up to others. Be they collaborators, participants or audiences.¹⁰ In particular, three of the projects that make up this study¹¹ attempt to set up a framework that prompts thought, interaction and discussion. This is explored through the collaborative process¹² as much as it is evident in the projects produced.
5—Practitioner

Me1, of course. This study has, almost above anything else, been about drawing together the different strands of a (seemingly) disparate practice. A practice that initially involved a studio2, exhibitions/initiated projects3 and teaching.4 There was a certain clunkiness to the way these related to one another. There were connections—but they more resembled a three-legged monster5 than a Morgan three-wheeler.6

My practice now involves magazine art direction,7 magazine design and publishing,8 freelance design projects,9 design research10 and education.11 When I list it like that it seems even more unwieldy than when I started, but these activities form a more cohesive and directional whole for me than I previously considered possible in my practice. They are now, on the surface, the activities of my practice. What lies beneath the surface is covered elsewhere in this document.12

We started the studio at the end of 1998 and worked together, as five until mid 2004, and three until mid 2005. To begin with, Studio Anybody was a collection of practitioners who were uninterested in the options before them. We started, quite simply, with an interest in working together, collaboratively2 and a further interest in contemporary art practice.

So far, the story lacks a little originality. The things that made Studio Anybody work were: the generous and intelligent, well-rounded approach we developed to critiquing our work, the ongoing, methodical and critical self-appraisal of how we worked; the changes we made to our work and our methods of working in light of critique and appraisal, how hard we worked; and how much we enjoyed working together.

A key means of learning to work together was that we began, early on, to initiate public projects. These began, I suppose, as public art projects, and became public design projects (the last of which was probably No One is an Island). One of the most important revisions we made during the course of these years, was to redress the imbalance in our affections given to studio projects over studio work. Slowly we were able to approach our commissioned projects with the same explorations, critical and playful essay as we did our initiated projects.

We viewed these initiated projects as research activity, as we did, later on, the ongoing development of the studio’s working practices. This research-led approach was obviously strongly influenced by, and strongly influenced, the research of Lisa Grocott.5

5.3—Exhibitions/Initiated projects
The Studio Anybody initiated projects focussed conceptually on romantic love (with the exception of No One is an Island). This seemed, to us, to be an area of ideas that was seldom considered by artists and poorly considered by advertising and design. The latter simply utilised the tropes of romantic love in order to sell greeting cards, ice-cream or diamonds. And the former seemed to shun notions of romantic love as trite and overly laden with traps of sentimentality and earnestness.

The studio was divided roughly in half (an uneven, fluctuating half, with 5 members) between romantics and cynics on love. This tension fed our projects and necessitated our dealing with their pluralist outcomes. It was from this basis, within our initiated projects, that we were able to address an idea of collaborative practice that sat outside both conventional studio practice and the collective model of practice. By this, I mean to say that we were able to use collaboration as a generative methodology that allowed for uncertainty, multiple perspectives and exploration, and resisted homogeneity and reductions.

5.4—Teaching
My teaching prior to this study was informed by my studio practice—an experimental, research-led practice. This, whilst bringing a good starting point, was also that, a starting point. I had yet to develop a pedagogical framework.
My teaching was rewarding, but it was only after it was informed by my research that it became a part of my practice, and flourished. This is discussed below in 5.9—Education.

5.6—Magazine art direction
I currently art direct Monument magazine. This has been a fascinating shift in work culture, with phases and minutes. I work directly with great people, but in a strange, corporate environment surrounded by other strange people. Sales people. I work less collaboratively than in previous situations, but am enjoying the novelty and challenges of being responsible for the direction of this project. Monument is more conservative than previous projects and situations, which is at times frustrating, but also interesting—a learning experience in terms of perceptions, economics and politics. That being said, I have been pleased with the changes I have been able to make with Monument—both for my enjoyment and for the magazine's sake.

5.6—Magazine design and publishing
Is Not Magazine: This project is open ended. At the moment I am a co-designer, co-publisher and to some extent a co-editor (to the extent that I contribute to the editorial direction of the magazine).

But Is Not (the organization, not the magazine) has other ambitions and possibilities—some educational, some philanthropic, some commercial. There are possibilities here that may or may not eventuate, but importantly, it is an organization that embraces, as some of its core ideas, pluralism, social agency and a kind of enthusiastic earnestness. ¹

5.7—Freelance design projects
While Monument and Is Not Magazine (however different) allow for the serial exploration of an entity and set of ideas, freelance design commissions allow me to continue to explore the kind of bespoke projects that Studio Anybody would undertake. This is an important space for exploring tangents and ideas, both conceptual and formal, that don’t exist elsewhere in my practice. It is also a useful means of participating in limited and specific collaborations.

5.8—Design research
Recently I spoke at an AGDA event in which I was supposed to talk about a project. It made the most sense to me to talk about my practice—a project. In this sense I see my practice as a research project. Or I see my practice as the ongoing subject of my research. At the moment, what you are reading is the most up-to-date documentation of this, but through each facet of my practice, a design research motive creeps.

5.9—Education
There are similarities between differences here. Like the differences between graphic design and communication design are similar to the differences between old ideas about teaching and new ideas about learning. The ideas that I have discussed as being central to my practice, and central to my research, are ideas that have centrally informed my pedagogical concerns. Pluralism, discursiveness, social agency and discovery-led methodologies are central ideas to the kind of student-centered learning that is at the core of my approach to education.

6—Collaborative
It took me a long time² to realise just how crucial collaboration is, both to this study and to my ongoing practice (for they are, more and more, the same thing). And it’s a little disturbing to think that it took so long, considering my time with Studio Anybody. Perhaps this just means that I take collaboration so much for granted that it sat under my nose until I could no longer ignore it. I remember the pleasure of working collaboratively at the studio being in stark contrast to the individualist culture at university (which I remember ignoring as often as I could—three times, I think). I remember thinking that I never wanted to work on my own if I could work as I was working at the studio.

But collaboration seems a difficult thing to pin down. Which probably partly explains my interest in it as a working process. Each collaboration is different, they are constantly in flux, and they are difficult. But the possibilities that collaborations afford are, in my experience, more compelling than even the most brilliant and uninhibited singular voice. Collaborative practice is alchemy. And despite unpredictability in the process, alchemy is capable of creating something precious and rare from something ordinary and dull. These four collaborations (Studio Anybody, No One is an Island, Dear John² and Is Not Magazine³) vary in scale, process and intent, and warrant some examination.

6.1—a long time³
Three years—the GRC after Dear John.

6.2—Studio Anybody
The structure and processes of Studio Anybody changed several times over our six years of collaboration. Our initial belief in a complete lack of structure and hierarchy led us on interesting (and at times ill-informed) adventures, but our shared interest in the processes of thinking and making led us to implement structures and roles that meant we worked more cohesively as a group by concentrating (loosely) on the areas that most interested us.

The three ways that the studio worked were:

Groups of two or three—we would work on projects as they came in, with consideration given to how the job came to the studio and whom we thought best suited it. This worked reasonably well for a while, but we fell into a pattern of Jason and Liu working together, Dean and I working together, and Dave working with both groups of two. This became repetitive, and we each wanted to work with the other people. There was also the problem that we were all, individually project managing, account book keeping, client managing, etc. Do I need to discuss the problems with this idea?

All in—all was generally how our initiated projects ran. There was some structure, in terms of having an exhibition date/space, having ideas that we wanted to explore, time aside to work on them, timelines for thinking, making, critiquing, etcetera. But inevitably the breakthroughs only ever happened when one or two people left the room. Not a specific one or two—just that there were fewer people. We were very democratic about the whole thing.

Roles—eventually we discussed, theorised, planned and adopted individual roles that were devised (by us) to suit us and to make a workable studio model, based on our experience. This worked well, allowing us to concentrate on what we liked to do and admire the others flourishing at what they were doing. And it provided a logic through which to work together. My frustration with this model was only that I wanted to do everything (except account book keeping). Taking account book keeping away from someone such as myself was a really good idea.

There’s something else though—throughout each of these phases, we were all surrounded by what the others could do/think/say/make. Me wanting to do everything was alien to wanting to play in their sandbox, with them.
This project felt really important. Because of the seriousness of the cause, and because of the way people reacted to the badges. The joy it spread in the face of bitter ill-feeling.

I remember the initial couple of meetings for Dear John, where the idea was coming into being. They were exciting, and it felt important. This was an important part of the genesis of the studio. At the time we were students together, with a lively and positive culture of debate and critique, but we had never worked together, and we came from very different backgrounds.

Then I remember a meeting that Yoko was late to and as she walked in the rest of us were in the thick of railing off funny ideas that we thought could become the basis for the website. Afterwards Yoko very tactfully brought to our attention that we were often critical of the way in which we were now working—that we hadn’t considered our audience, that we were just designing artefacts based on what we thought was funny, witty, relevant. It wasn’t really an intervention. But it kind of was. After this discussion we developed a range of semi-fictional characters that helped us to flesh out an idea of our audiences. This was, of course, invaluable.

The text that I designed around these thoughts reflects my narrative shortcomings and the almost human whimsy that I couldn’t help but observe in my own life and the lives of others in the crowd, and went the badges for a long time after the rally.

This project felt really important. Because of the seriousness of the cause, and because of the way people reacted to the badges. The joy it spread in the face of bitter ill-feeling.

Then there is the group work that is involved in the day-to-day, month-to-month running of the magazine. This is the difficult, time-consuming work that is never evenly distributed, but is crucially important because it isn’t only keeps the magazine active, it keeps the magazine funded.

Then there are the group meetings with contributors. Once the dual themes of the forthcoming edition have been settled on we have a meeting with around ten contributors. This meeting is an open conversation about the themes and the content of the issue. The themes themselves can be questioned and any content ideas can be put forward to be discussed. This is to see if the themes have legs, and to generate a range of ideas that have some affinity with them—having come out of the same conversation. This allows those contributors to know how their work sits next to others, and transfers ownership of the issue away from the magazine’s editor-in-chief. At these meetings we will often work individually with contributors to draw out links between articles and ideas. And often there are ideas that come to the magazine from the public, from people who have no connection to the initiators or contributors. New voices that add other perspectives to the project. This is the most satisfying evidence of there being a widening community for Is Not.

So in terms of a collaborative situation, Is Not is partly collaboration, partly group work, and partly the activities of a community.

7—Projects

No One is an Island, Disclaimer Comics, Meanwhile, Moth Exhibition, Alpha/Comic Book, Is Not Magazine

7:1—No One is an Island

This project was the first that I worked on within the parameters of this study. It was a collaborative project that I initiated with some members of Studio Anybody and one other friend. It was designed to coincide with the big Melbourne march in support of refugees in February 2002. It was a set of nine stickers and three blank badges.

The project utilised the existing and accepted form of protest badges but subverted the iconic black and red sloganising language about being proudly Australian and positive and forward-looking, that was hopeful. More importantly though, to use the badges, you had to engage with them. You had to make decisions about what you were going to say and how you were going to say it. There were instructions that came with the badges and stickers. You asked the recipient to remember what was important, by customising the badges with the stickers we provided, or by writing or drawing on them, or both. And to stick the remaining stickers on whatever would hold them. This left the authorship of the project, to a large degree, in the recipient. This open-ended strategy was important to the people at the rally. That crowd was made up of a staggering diversity of people. The badges were used in all of the ways we suggested and more. People were glad of the positive approach, shared and discussed their messages with others in the crowd, and wore the badges for a long time after the rally.

This project felt really important. Because of the seriousness of the cause, and because of the way people reacted to the badges. The joy it spread in the face of bitter ill-feeling.

I put the class to the test that I could write a text to accompany the comic panels that would tie into my research, and that would lend the project a social context. This was accepted and I began working on what I would do. At the time (December and January 2003/4), the Bush government’s invasion of Iraq—with the Howard government’s participation—was imminent and it seemed there in the week that it would take to print the publication, we could have been at war. This seemed to dwarf the significance of anything that I could do with the text I had volunteered. I had also recently seen Kaufman’s script which had struck a chord with my research at the time and I was interested in the ambivalence that Kaufman expresses in the hopelessness that overwhelmed his thinking.

The text that I designed around these thoughts and events is rich with hand-wringing hopelessness and ambivalence at my role in all this. The text is set not as speech or even as thought but, in the comic tradition, as that of an observing narrator. The text is contextualised by newspaper headlines from the days preceding the completion of the project. Whilst I still enjoy the joy of reading the text later, this context is a relief because it seems to dwarf the significance of anything that I could do with the text I had volunteered.
of language and writing in relation to image, but also wanting to test the use of representations of language—still through observational captioning, but also through the implication of blank space. The exploration of comics was also continuing to develop as a mode of working. This triptych that I made for the exhibition reversed the image of refugees in Australia from being victims to being heroes—from outsiders to insiders. The captions refer to the protagonists as ‘our heroes’ and ‘the weary travellers’, it positions them as hopeful and, eventually, disappoited by their discovery of an intolerant and hostile land. I was also exploring deixis as a means of opening up the narrative to the viewer and at the same time closing the narrative off from the heroes of the narrative. The speech bubbles of the protagonists were blank, as were the landscapes they find themselves in.

Whilst I enjoyed making these pieces, conceptually and formally, I was vexed by the way they meant to remain untouchable. The ability of an audience to interact with them, to read them or re-contextualise them, was not. Not that I was interested in going down the sloganeering, adbusting, turn-up-the-volume path. But between the discretion comics and this project, I think I’d reached the other end of the spectrum. Both seemed inessential to my mind. Although having said that, I think the end of the spectrum I’d been lurking in remains a more thoughtful, contemplative place.

7/5—Dear John
Dear John marked the long-delayed return to collaborative projects in this study. Initiated by the group of masters students I was studying with, Dear John sought to engage the electorate for the Australian 2004 federal election. It had two primary objectives. Firstly to contribute to a humiliating defeat of the Howard government; and secondly, it aimed to do this by promoting discourse, by starting conversations. The rationale, of course, was that this project was a Dear John letter to John Howard. The material outcome of the project was a website that collected a range of free to download t-shirts, posters, stickers, screen-savers and Dear John letters. The project developed from our discovery that nearly 40,000 people had become eligible to vote since the previous election. Our idea was to make a project that might reflect the difficult pluralism (or conflict) of issues at stake in this election.

During the collaborative development of the project, through the months of conversation and planning, we came to the position that this could be an anti-Howard while still being open to various perspectives. In fact, it was imperative to the project’s authenticity that it had one fixed position and many open-ended responses. This did prove confusing to some; the Howard supporters who contacted us generally assumed that we were pro-Labour.

The works that appeared on Dear John varied in their approach; some were forceful and belligerent, some were quiet and questioning, most were humourous and many were open-ended. This range of work allowed visitors to the site to find a level of political comfort that suited them and, in doing so, that they would be most comfortable with. This became the means by which the project, as a whole, responded to the need to stimulate discussion in the desired audience.

It was through this project that I re-discovered the importance of collaborative practice to my research. Not, though, before I had initiated another project. As I’ve discussed elsewhere in this document, I have discovered that I’m most reflective of past projects through my work on subsequent projects. And so it was only through initiating a major individual work after the pleasure and success of Dear John that I realised the difficulty of discussing pluralism with myself.

7/6—Alpha/Comic Book
Alpha the Albino was intended to be the protagonist of a graphic narrative work I started to develop as a major project. The premise being that, in a magic-realist twist on the comic book medium, colour could carry ideas and influence people, and as an albino comic character (consisting of a lack of ink on the page), that Alpha could absorb and process this pigment. Alpha was developed slightly autobiographically, sharing many of my traits of observation and quiet, long-winded processing of thought. The world that Alpha would inhabit would be constantly in flux; colour, texture, typography and language would swirl and penetrate, would become part of the narrative structure. The experimentation with narrative structure would also be played out over various formats and physical reading structures.

Through various conversations and reflections through, the fabric of this project began to change. Alpha fell away as a main protagonist and the use of distant narratives seemed less important. At this point I was interested in tracking and exploring the ideas of the research through conversation both overheard (incidental) and recorded (planned/designated). These conversations would be built up as a bank of vignettes that would, en masse, make, as images, uncover trends, styles and structures of conversation in relation to the complex topics to be discussed. The form of the work I re--fashioned as an expansive wall-piece that would track and categorise these recorded conversations. The illustrative style would change many times throughout the work to attempt to capture the range of voices that would populate it.

I ceased the development of this project for several reasons. Firstly for the reason that I had previously mentioned regarding the difficulty of discussing pluralism with myself. Secondly I was wary of its potential to spiral into abstraction (as I felt the previous Moth pieces had). And finally because I had (in the meantime) co-initiated Is Not Magazine. This meant two things that practically to do both would prove difficult, and that, as a collaborative project, it had already begun to develop along the lines of my research, but in directions that I couldn’t have foreseen and that were enriching my study in ways that Alpha could not.

7/7—Is Not Magazine
Is Not Magazine emerged as a separate project to my research but the two quickly became intertwined and are now, to me, inseparable. It began, in conversation with four friends (one other designer and three writer/editors), as a literary magazine and over the course of nine or so months, turned into something quite different. Is Not is now an intervention and a proposition. It questions the forms of communication we are subject to in the city and proposes a deeper engagement with the spaces between ideas.

Is Not is published bi-monthly as a 2 x 1.5m bill poster and distributed in the general public had to rely on...
7—Projects

No One is an Island

Dear John

No One is an Island (also see 7:1)

This was mostly a Studio Anybody public design project (see 5:2) but didn’t include all of the studio and did include Mathan

Dear John in the press, and a downloadable t-shirt strategy that I made for the project.

*Disclaimer Comics

This short series of (two) comics was to

7:4—No One is an Island

This was the first that I worked on

7:5—Dear John

within the parameters of this study. It was a

7:3—Meanwhile

It was a set of nine stickers and three

7:2—No One is an Island

This project felt really important. Because of

7:1—No One is an Island

The project was the first that I worked on

7:6—Alpha/Comic Book

Preliminary work on characters and visual styles.

7:7—Alpha/Comic Book

Exploring the complexity of conceptual design

7:8—Alpha/Comic Book

Preliminary work on characters and visual styles.

7:7—Disclaimer Comics

This is probably the most difficult to dis

7:3—Meanwhile

Within the publication, there is the collabora

7:6—Is Not Magazine (See also 7:7)

This is probably the most difficult to dis

7:5—No One is an Island

7:2—Disclaimer Comics

This short series of (two) comics was to reg

7:3—Meanwhile

Meanwhile was a class I co-wrote and t

7:2—Alpha/Comic Book

Page 9c

Page 9a

Page 8

Page 8c

Page 8a

Page 7c

Page 7a

Page 6c

Page 6a

Page 5c

Page 5a

Page 4c

Page 4a

Page 3c

Page 3a

Page 2c

Page 2a

Page 1c

Page 1a
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**pha/Comic Book**

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One example of comics made by students.

7:3—Meanwhile

Whilst I enjoyed making these pieces, conceptually and formally, I was irked by the way disclaimer comics and this project, I think I'd been wary of its potential to spiral into abstract. The ability to develop as a major project. The premise be

7:5—Dear John

...with, Dear John sought to engage the electorate... (incidental) and recorded (planned/design). non-fiction features, to 160-character flash fictions, to comics and

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**Not Magazine**

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LET US PLAY - THE MAGNETIC FIELD (MURDERIOUS LUKE)

LETS PRETEND WE'RE BUNNY RABBITS

LOVE IS FLIPPANT, LOVE IS WISE

THE POINT OF DIVORCE

Economists have
SEENING/ BELIEVING

Good in Theory
Concept bands are happening in the local music scene, reports DAVID HENRY.

<THE VISION OF VELLO>

Snaking Dark

Chili Dog Crackers

Ultrasound

The Religious Bandwagon

SPOKE BLACK: Sheds out what happens when God joins the band.

On the Beach

IT'S THE PERFECT PLACE FOR IT."

 Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945), American author. A Study in Intimacy at the One & Only in Melbourne, Australia.

Architecture in Helsinki

"FIVE YEARS OF UGLY"

more or less

Candlelight

PULLING THE EARTHER OUT OF THE HAT

COMIC MADNESS IN JUNE
I WAS A TEENAGE OPTIMIST

DISCREDITED THEORIES THAT ROBERT COVELS LIVES LIFE BY

Dear Judy Blume,

I hope this finds you well. I was wondering if you could provide some additional insight into the book "Young Avengers". I've been reading it recently and I find it very inspiring. The main character, a young girl who starts a revolution, has a similar spirit to that of the characters in your books. I'm curious to know what inspired you to create such a forceful character. Additionally, I'm interested in knowing the challenges you faced while writing the book. Did you face any resistance or criticism? How did you overcome these obstacles? I would greatly appreciate your thoughts on these topics. Thank you.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

I hope to hear from you soon.

Oh, hello are you the new intern?

WEST MEMPHIS THREE

THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS

Dear Judy Blume,

I am a huge fan of your work and was delighted to read about the West Memphis Three in your book. I understand that the story is a true account of three young boys who were wrongfully convicted of murder. I would like to know more about the investigation leading to their conviction and what you think of the legal system's handling of their case. Also, could you tell me about the impact of this story on your writing? Did it inspire you in any way? I would appreciate any insights you have on these topics.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

I hope to hear from you soon.

TERROR AUSTRALIS

NEW ANTI-TERRORISM LAWS UNDERMINE THE FREEDOMS THEY'RE MEANT TO PROTECT, WRITES EMMA MOSS

On

Dear Judy Blume,

I was wondering if you could provide some insights into your personal experiences with anti-terrorism laws. As someone who has written extensively about freedom of speech and expression, I'm curious about your perspective on the impact of these laws on society. Also, have you had any personal encounters with the legal system that have influenced your writing? I would greatly appreciate any information you have on these topics.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

I hope to hear from you soon.

THE YOUNG & THE RENTLESS

I WANT MORE

Dear Judy Blume,

I've been reading your work and I'm curious to know what inspired you to write about young people and their experiences. I understand that you have a special interest in exploring the complexities of adolescence. Could you tell me about the process of writing these stories? Also, have you ever encountered resistance from your readers or publishers? If so, how did you handle these situations? I would greatly appreciate any insights you have on these topics.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

I hope to hear from you soon.
AMAZED SCIENTISTS DISCOVER
NO TIME-MONEY LINK

BONSAI CHRISTMAS

Shelve your enthusiasm

We all know that the best time to go shopping is Christmas. But don’t let the excitement get the best of you. The time is here to get the best deals and save some money. So, don’t spend too much on gifts and think about what you really want. The true meaning of Christmas is spending time with family and friends, not shopping.

Eternal

the

BOOM in

DOOM

TIME LINE OF DOOM

Ritch Bitchin’

I’M GONNA LIVE FOREVER

HEAD OR HEART?

METAPHYSICAL OR PHYSICAL?

MONEY FOR NOTHING
(and the Pics for Free)

W LUST/
So in summary (as much as is possible)—

This research revealed to me that communication design exists as a component of society, the constructed social world. Communication design is, in fact, only one more thing that people use to try to communicate. This means that it is every bit as convoluted, complicated, fraught, idiosyncratic, dysfunctional and poetic as other forms of human communication. In a way I’m saying that minimalism is inhuman, robotic. In this study, in these projects, I’ve developed methods and conceptual frameworks by which to navigate, work with and enjoy this idea, primarily by using collaboration as a generative strategy that acts as a microcosm of a community, or more loosely, a society. This has resulted in a re-evaluation of and shift in my practice involving a conscious drawing-together of the various threads of my practice, and a shift in emphasis including publishing and publication design as core activities. It sounds pretty simple now. All spelled out like that. But it wasn’t.

Declaration—

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

Stuart Geddes
Tuesday the 29th of August, 2006