

RMIT University

*Communication Design,
School of Applied Communication
Design and the Social Context Portfolio*

Review of Candidature

Semester 1, 2004

Name of Candidate :	Luke Wood	Date:	20.05.2004
Commencement date:		Student #:	
Completion date:		Full or Part time:	Part-time
Senior Supervisor:	Lisa Grocott	Research Program:	Masters
Second Supervisor:		First review:	Yes
Consultant Advisors:		Review in progress:	Review number

First Review of Candidature

A1. Title of study

The Hybrid Practitioner : appropriation as an evolutionary catalyst in graphic design

A2. What do you want to research and with what end in mind?

This research programme will attempt to advance the act of appropriation as a generative strategy in graphic design. It will investigate how—and at what point—various types of appropriation move beyond the derivative, and open up new questioning and new paths to the practitioner and audience. How appropriation might aid in the hybridisation and diversification of practice is central to this study. The hybrid identities and conflicted relationships that inhabit popular culture drive the development of the hybrid practitioner.

A3. How will you conduct your research?

This is a practice based research programme following an iterative, reflection-in-action model. Initially a literary inquiry into the related notions of appropriation and hybridity will be developed alongside a series of small-scale projects. While acting primarily as exploratory tools with which to investigate the topic, each project should also essentially end with a brief/question for the project to come next. These smaller projects will provide a stage on which to develop a more complex large-scale project.

The work of Marcel Duchamp, Dada, Fluxus, and early American Pop artists provides a cultural and historical precedent for this research. As does Elvis Presley and the evolution of popular music.

Early postmodern graphic designers, Peter Saville, Malcolm Garrett, Jonathan Barnbrook, and Dan Friedman have been influential in the development of this topic. New Zealand artists such as Michael Stevenson, Ronnie Van Hout, Judy Darragh, Tony de Lautour, and Michael Parekowhai have dealt in various areas related to my topic.

For my use of the term 'hybridity', I am referring to Daniel Grassian, Mikhail Bakhtin, Homi Bhabha, and Bruno Lautour. Ingeborg Hoestorey's critical survey of pastiche as a genre minuer in visual arts, literature, and music, informs my notion of appropriation.

A4. Why is this research worth doing?

The related notions of appropriation and hybridity are often discussed within the discourse of graphic design, yet it seems they are little understood or developed. Through this research program I aim to:

1. Position the act of appropriation as a valuable tool within the design process, and challenge the notion of postmodern pastiche as “blank parody” [Jameson].
2. Develop my notion of a ‘hybrid practice’ – one which might ultimately be more sustaining than the traditional, more specific and ideologically based model. The developed notion should encourage and enable the practitioner to enter into periods of active hybridity via conscious eclecticism and conflation of other disparate practices and genres.

Primarily I see the benefit of this research being an outcome that will provide a strategy not only for a more sustaining practice but also a more open and exploratory one – one which I believe will find some resonance in the professional community. While post-modernity might have seen us become more accepting of ‘Others’, we each still tend to approach our own practice in a linear and ideological manner. My intention is not to negate this entirely, but to disrupt it on occasion, turn it in on itself, and make at it laugh.

A5. What will you produce?

The projects within this research programme will be developed as explorations of borders and boundaries – metaphorical ‘sites’ where opposing, or non-parallel, conditions, voices, and methodologies clash. Initially the projects will investigate the employment of different strategies for appropriation:

- appropriating style
- appropriating context
- appropriating identity.

While these distinctions are to some extent artificial, they will be useful in developing an understanding of the functional application of appropriation toward hybridity.

Actual sites for presentation/dissemination of work will necessarily be developed in conjunction with the projects themselves. Obviously the space within which the work is placed will play a large part in the dialogic of the associated appropriation[s].

A6. Attach a concisely selected preliminary list of readings and references.

In regard to appropriation:

Hoestorey, Ingeborg, 2001. *Pastiche: cultural memory in art, film, literature*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press.

Poyner, Rick, 2003. *No More Rules: graphic design and postmodernism*. London, Laurence King Publishing Ltd.

Michl, Jan, 2002. *On Seeing Design as Redesign: an exploration of a neglected problem in design education*. Originally published in ‘Scandinavian Journal of Design History 12’, 2002: 7–23. Republished “with minor changes” on the Design Addict website www.designaddict.com/essais/michl.html.

In regard to hybridity:

Anzaldúa, Gloria, 1987. *Borderlands/La Frontera: the new mestiza*. San Francisco, Aunt Lute Books.

Bakhtin, Mikhail, 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin, University of Texas Press.

Grassian, Daniel, 2003. *Hybrid Fictions: American literature and Generation X*. Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.

Elam, Mark, 1999. *Living dangerously with Bruno Latour in a hybrid world*. From 'Theory, Culture & Society, Vol. 16[4]: 1–24. SAGE, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi.

Bhabha, Homi, 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London, Routledge Press.

In regard to pop culture:

Boyle, David, 2003. *Authenticity: brands, fakes, spin and the lust for real life*. London, Flamingo.

Docker, John, 1994. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture: a cultural history*. Cambridge University Press.
