



HOUSEPLANTS & DESIGN

OBSERVING THE HOUSEPLANTS TREND
THROUGH GRAPHIC DESIGN

CAITLIN LEIGH CARTER

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01
INTRODUCTION

YOTAM OTOLENG

THE

WHO AM I AS A DESIGNER AND AN ARTIST?

I am someone who has always been a creative and artistic person, and have studied art my whole life. It has influenced a large part of who I am, with most of my hobbies outside of university and work revolving around creative fields, such as painting, drawing and reading.

I have most definitely learnt a lot about the different areas of graphics during my degree at the University for the Creative Arts, but I have also certainly found my preferred area of the discipline which is Editorial Design. I love the tactility of art - the feel of paper and that of a pencil sketching - so it is no wonder that I am drawn to print. The idea of creating something that is not necessarily a part of our increasingly technological world is something which I think is really refreshing and makes the creation more enjoyable.

As well as a preferred field of graphic

design, I also have found my personal style both in graphics and in my artwork. I find that I am drawn to creating pieces that are more minimal and clean looking that have an air of luxury. Especially with editorial design, I don't think that there should be too much on a page and that negative space is king. This is something that has also transferred into my artwork, with my paintings not filling the page and not being overly decorative. This is something that I would like to develop further, but is a style in which suits both me as an artist and a person and is one which I feel I understand how to execute successfully.

In addition, I really enjoy incorporating elements of illustration and painting into my graphic design work, combining all of my passions into one piece.

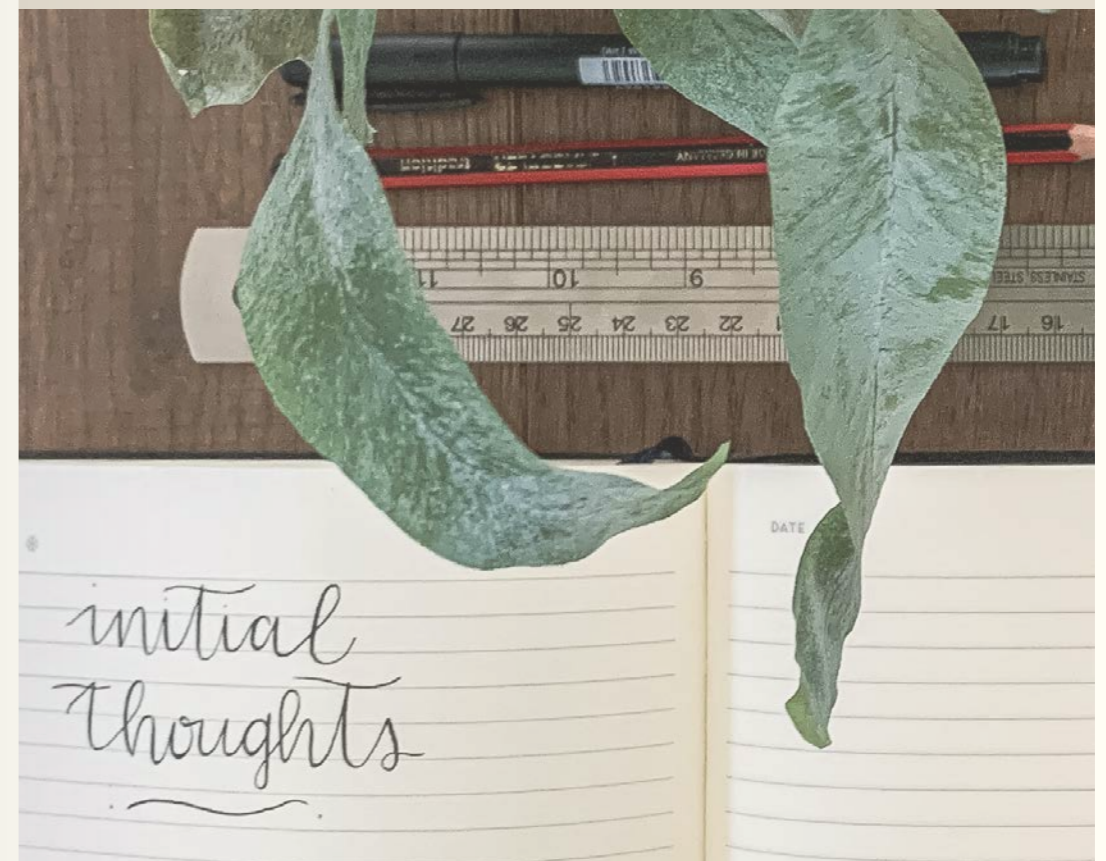


INITIAL THOUGHTS

After thinking about what projects I have enjoyed the most as well as what I am interested in within graphic design, it became obvious to me that my final major project should focus on editorial design. As well as enjoying designing books and magazines, I also find the industries of these tangible items really interesting. In fact, I have focused my dissertation topic on Breathe magazine, analysing the rise in popularity of independent magazines.

Initially, my first idea was to create a book on how to look after different species of houseplants which would include illustrations (done by me) of each species. This is something that is a personal dream of mine to create, but was perhaps a bit unfeasible for this timespan. It did however lead me to looking into the gardening magazines that are out there, and this is where I noticed the lack of publications focused solely on houseplants.

I also had ideas focusing on mindfulness, as this is something that I also explored in my dissertation and is something I am thoroughly interested by. These were projects such as a book detailing different houseplants and how they can benefit the owners mental health, as well as an illustrative guide to yoga and meditation.





(BLOOM, 2021)

"I STRIVE FOR TWO THINGS IN DESIGN: SIMPLICITY AND CLARITY. GREAT DESIGN IS BORN OF THOSE TWO THINGS." - LINDON LEADER

STATEMENT OF INTENT



My main intent with this project is to produce an answer to the lack of magazines on the market that focus solely on houseplants. Through research I have noticed that most - if not all - of the magazines on the UK market that are focused on gardening are on outdoor gardening rather than indoors. Given the resurgence of popularity in houseplants, this is something I found highly surprising. This in conjunction with the rise in independent magazines meant that there is a large gap in the market for something that could be hugely popular. Therefore, I am intending to provide an answer to this by creating an upmarket independent magazine focused on houseplants and their care.

As a budding houseplant gardener myself, I also know the frustration with the lack of information on the plant care cards that come with the houseplants you purchase. They are generalised and not necessarily specific to the species or variety of plant. Because of this, I also want to provide better information on how to best care for people's houseplants both in general and specific to variety. This is something that I intend to include in the magazine and as additional collectible plant care cards.



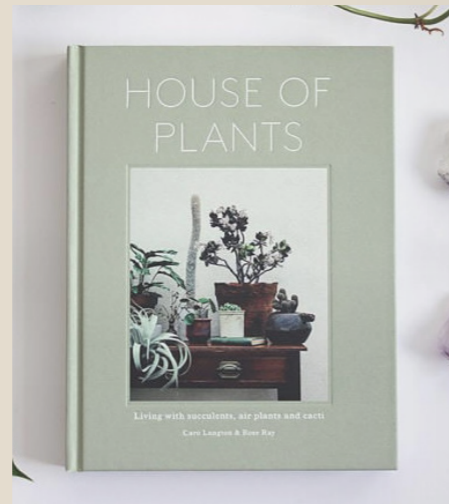
(PINTEREST, S.D)



(PINTEREST, S.D)



(PINTEREST, S.D)



(PINTEREST, S.D)



(PINTEREST, S.D)



(PINTEREST, S.D)



(PINTEREST, S.D)





O2

FIELDS OF STUDY

MY INTERESTS

Outside of my graphic design degree, I have a great deal of interests that I partake in such as:

- Illustration & Painting. I love being creative and channelling my fine art roots taking pencil to paper or taking to my iPad.
- Cooking. I love collecting recipe books and trying out new vegan dishes as well as baking.
- Walking. My partner and I love to travel the country to different scenic walking locations and immersing ourselves in nature.
- Houseplant care. I own around 50 houseplants and they are my passion.
- Interior Design. I love playing around with styling my home as well as helping others do the same in my job.
- Yoga & Meditation.
- Music. I am always listening to music and love attending concerts.
- Running my small business. I run my own business on Etsy selling my artwork.
- True Crime. I am usually listening to a podcast or watching a documentary on it as I find it fascinating. This also includes folklore and mythology.
- Reading. I have always been an avid reader as I love immersing myself in different worlds and lives.



MY CHOSEN FIELDS OF STUDY



In addition to my interest in editorial design, I needed to focus this project on some of my interests outside of graphic design. The two that I decided to choose out of my many interests were houseplants and illustration. There were ones which I thought would produce the most successful outcome in combination with my design style and editorial design. In my opinion, the clean and minimal take I like to have when creating an editorial piece would suit this subject matter.

This trio of editorial design, houseplants, and illustration I think will help me create a piece of editorial design that will solve the problem of houseplant magazines on the market in addition to creating something that is different to other indie magazines.

I thought that these interests would be some of the best ones to choose as they are something which has a very popular market. I did contemplate looking into my interest in true crime but realised that this is something that is still sometimes classed as a taboo interest. The houseplant industry is one which has proven to have surged in recent years, especially in the demographic that is also interested in independent magazines. This led to these being the best decision to embark on for this project.



03

CONTEXT



BUT, WHY IS IT INTERESTING?



Editorial and magazine design I find incredibly interesting because I am obsessed with print. The physicality and tactility of paper is something which I think is incredibly important, especially in our ever growing digital world, and the beauty of it is just something else. I think it is also a very different type of design to other aspects of graphic design like branding and advertising as it is so much more about the importance of layout and treatments and how they communicate. I also think it is a lot of a calmer process of design than these other aspects of graphics.

Houseplants are also something that I find really interesting, as I am a budding indoor gardener myself. The way that they have grown to such popularity recently is an exciting phenomenon and has allowed graphics surrounding the subject to thrive. Both how the care of these plants is communicated and accompanying imagery is very interesting.

THE HISTORY OF EDITORIAL DESIGN

Before exploring the history of editorial design, we must first look at what editorial design is as a type of graphic design and why it is important.

Editorial design is a large part of the graphics industry, and is an important part of communication within design, as it has a large impact on how particularly written information is understood. At the centre of almost all editorial design is “the idea of communicating an idea or story through the organisation and presentations of words [...] and visuals” (Caldwell & Zappaterra, 2014, p8). This more subtle form of communication is one that is often overlooked when people look at graphic design, but it certainly just as important as its advertising, branding, and poster design counterparts (just to name a few). Traditionally, this subset was referred to the design of printed material such as newspapers, magazines, and books. More recently however this has now also referred and applied to other printed material such as brochures and leaflets, and has also grown to include online publications (Smith, 2019). In short, editorial design is the design of a product of written (and/or image) communication whether that be printed or digital, a form of “visual journalism” and “curated

storytelling” through the page (Caldwell & Zappaterra, 2014, p7&8). Rather than creating the elements that communicate a brand or company, editorial designs look at communicating all the elements and accompanying visuals as a whole entity.

As well as making the information look pretty on the page, it is also incremental is this form of design to think about and cater for the user experience. An editorial designer can have a great influence on this, as a reader can be appropriately guided through the publication (and each page) through the use of visual and typographical hierarchy and the placements of these features. They have a role of guiding the eye in an order that is informative as well as making it easy and enjoyable for the user. The information in the material could be absolutely amazing, but without a good layout that guides the reader in an easy and relaxing way the whole thing would be just short of a catastrophe. The design of these editorial pieces still remains crucial to the success of them. However, in recent years the focus on the ease of reading for the user has lessened, and now standing out from the competition is taking precedence. (Williams, 2020)

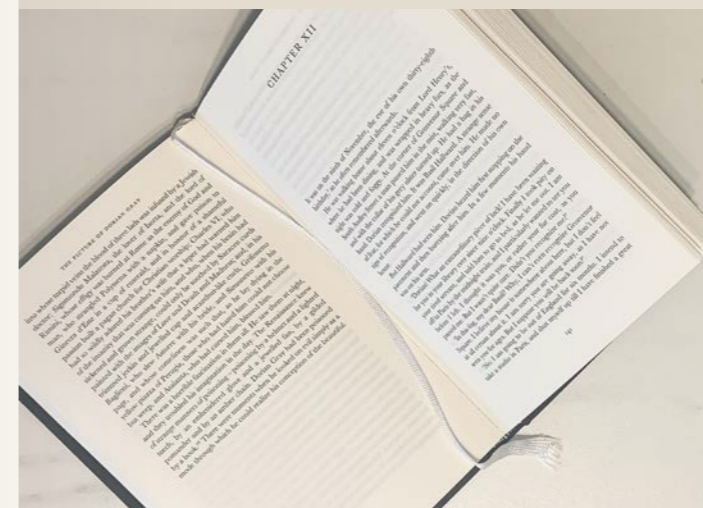
The practice of editorial design is



(SUTORI, S.D)



(BARNES, 2020)



one that goes back quite far in time, arguably (without it being classed as a form of design) back to the beginning of writing itself. We as humans have been creating and designing written texts for thousands of years, since the development of cuneiform script around 3200BC (Smith, 2019). The layout of the script and how it was used by different people is (perhaps unknowingly) a form of written design. Much later down the timeline, during the mid 15th century, the first mechanical printing press (pictured opposite) was invented by blacksmith Johannes Gutenberg (Smith, 2019). This revolutionised Medieval Europe at the time as information was now able to be created on a bigger scale and distributed as well as making production both quicker and cheaper. This was the first form of mass printing of a singular publication, and changed the industry completely on how they should create their material. It has arguably even influenced it all the way to the present day, as this early form of movable type setting has evolved from more elaborate printing presses and letterpresses during the 19th and 20th century, to the creation of computers and digital printers. How

“EDITORIAL DESIGN
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ARE DISTINCTIVE
AND UNIQUE”
- VINCE FROST, ART
DIRECTOR, ZEMBA

(CALDWELL & ZAPPATERRA,
2014, P8)

designers are now able to have such easy access to the software and printing materials needed to design publications has really opened up the industry as well as made the whole process a lot easier for the designers as well as the companies themselves. Although these are seen as landmarks in the history of editorial design, the term or principle of it did not exist until the early 20th century when artist William Addison Dwiggins coined the term ‘graphic designer’ (Smith, 2019). It is thought that the idea of editorial design developed shortly after this and has since grown to become a large part of the graphic design industry.

The way in which editorial design has grown and developed in more recent years to accommodate and meet the demand of the ever growing digital world is a very interesting one, with a lot of publications now being available in print and digitally. Some publications have even decided to only publish digitally. This has meant that there has had to be a new breed of editorial designers who are accustomed to using the digital mechanisms as well as taking something designed for print and altering it so it is appropriate for the screen. Although the principles of editorial design, such as rules for typography, do not change regardless of medium, digital publications have the capability for additional features to be inbuilt into the design such as share tools, related links, and comments (Tong, 2014). These additional features can alter the user experience of an editorial piece greatly as it allows a much easier form of interaction and sharing with peers. It has been interesting to see how this has emerged, and as it is still a relatively new phenomenon it will be just as interesting to see how it progresses.



THE HISTORY OF MAGAZINE DESIGN

After researching the context and history of editorial design, it seemed only natural to go deeper and more specific in the research by looking at the history and importance of magazine design.

Derived from the word 'makhzan', an Arabic word meaning storehouse, these deeply collaborative publications have been popular amongst society, being more visually interesting and easier to digest than books or newspapers. What is interesting about the collaborative nature of magazines is that this does not solely apply to the designers and editors creating the material, but also the reader who has the freedom and choice to read the information in whichever order they choose to (Allen, 2016, p12-13).

Magazine publications as an industry has a very rich background and history, with periodicals being sold as far back as in Georgian and early Victorian times. During this time however these did not look like the magazines we have today, instead being mainly centred on fictional writings by authors such as Dickens. (Quinn, 2016, p10). These were set more like book publications with very little to no imagery, almost like a book delivered in bite size chunks. This was the standard for these 'magazines' for quite sometime, until they were eventually revolutionised by a mass-market readership occurring due to the rise in the literate population and the decrease in taxation. By the 1890s, multiple weekly periodicals were selling half a million copies a week (Quinn, 2016, p10). Since then, magazines have continuously grown and changed to reflect the society at the time and the demand in the form of illustrative experimentation, new ways of writing, and varying production techniques.

The field of the magazine industry is one that reflected the society of the time, and the differences in these across different decades is something very interesting to observe. Advertisements started to pop up in magazines during the 1950s, where they marketed products and services. There was almost a "ready made audience" for them with

women staying home after the war (Caldwell & Zappaterra, 2014, p50). This is the decade that birthed the idea of modern advertising in magazines, eventually leading to what we are familiar with today. During the 1960s magazines became a sort of window to the world, using their covers to reflect the changes happening in society such as the sexual revolution and the Vietnam War. It came a more visual, digestible version of the news, and especially young designers were using a lot of experimentation within the layout in order to communicate this. The era of the 1970s was similar to that of the 60s, except the radicalisation being depicted through stylistic choices like bold photography and typographic flair (Caldwell & Zappaterra, 2014, p52-54). These publishers used their magazines as an art form and a form of expression on behalf of society rather than just as a form of information. By reflecting what was going on in society through design, they appealed to the readers in their market, selling more magazines and turning profit. In addition to this, they were able to bring about new artistic directions amongst other artists and designers, David King being an infamous example, and create stylistic features that are still used in today's publications.

Today, the magazines we are used to seeing are printed in colour with advertisements filling the pages outside of the cover and articles included. The way in which magazines are sold has even evolved over time, with most magazines now either sold in newsagents or via an online subscription, the latter of which is growing in preference.

Like with editorial design, magazine design has also had to morph with an ever growing digital society in the past decade. Many large magazine companies completely lost their faith in print and turned their publications entirely digital, saving a huge amount in production costs. Despite this however, there has been a plethora of independent magazines hitting the market and have even created their own subset within the industry. Tyler Brule came out with 'Monocle' in 2007,

arguing that "publishers were not investing in their main product and were being distracted by digital media" (Quinn, 2016, p207). This is an outlook that I think is shared by a lot of independent magazine publishers as it is common for them to have a real passion and respect for the tactility of a printed magazine, and rather than get 'distracted' by the digital they put more thought and care into the design of the magazine itself making it more of a luxury item (Jamieson, 2015). These artists and publishers have seen the potential of the magazine and the physicality of the printed pages and how it can be distributed, and used it to their advantage by tapping into that part of the market. (Allen, 2016, p14). The rise in the digital, which is cheaper and immediate, has called for something a lot slower and of higher value; things only print can do (Jamieson, 2015, p8). This is where independent have come to thrive. In addition to using the form of print to grow their publications, they have used the growth in digital media to their advantage. Many independent magazines plaster themselves across the image fed social media platforms, gaining an audience and building their market base by posting gorgeous photography linking to the magazine or an upcoming issue regularly in order to draw attention to themselves. A lot of these independent magazines also use this as a method to fuel their crowd funding to begin their publication.

The history and importance of magazine design is one which will continue to grow and change, as I think it something that will never not be in circulation.



THE GENRE OF INDEPENDENT MAGAZINES

With society growing more and more digital, and social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter taking hold of most people's attention spans, the magazine industry has had to adapt rapidly in order to maintain readers. This has led to a lot of large magazines stopping print production and creating entirely digital publications as such as Look and NME (Deighton, 2018) a reaction to dwindling sales. To most, this would look like the death of the print magazine. However, despite this there has been a blossoming in a subset of the magazine industry: Independent Magazines. These publications are almost exclusively always printed and incredibly different from their "glossies" counterpart. They have grown to a huge popularity, with Stack - an independent magazine subscription service - reporting a 78% increase in revenue, and 76% more subscribers in 2014 (Orr, 2015). Publications like these have taken a hold of the print industry, but what are they and what makes them different?

Independent magazines are, as can be guessed by the name, are independently owned and published rather than being owned by a large company. They are often started by people who are passionate about a topic and want to make a community around it using print. This means that there, more often than not, is a lot of care taken to create each issue. The care behind the content curation and design of these issues in conjunction with smaller teams means that these magazines are also published a lot less frequently, "dictated by the pursuit of original content" (Van Groll, s.d.). This desire of original content and creating a community also alters how most of these 'indie mags' approach advertisements. It is very common for issues to not have adverts at all - which was very rare to see - and for revenue instead to come from the higher cover price. Rather than having to try and leave as much page space as possible for paid ad space, these independents have the freedom to spread out their content to be user friendly as well as beautiful as well as the luxury to be able to go deep into the topics included in each issue.

Magazines like these, such as Gourmand, The Gentlewoman, Kinfolk, Cereal, 91, and Little White Lies (Thorpe, 2018) have taken the world by storm, and are not thought to be going anywhere anytime soon. By being able to place more emphasis on the aesthetic aspects of the magazine as well as create a community around them (which they also fuel through using social media) they have also created a wider community of people with a preference for print and its tactile beauty.



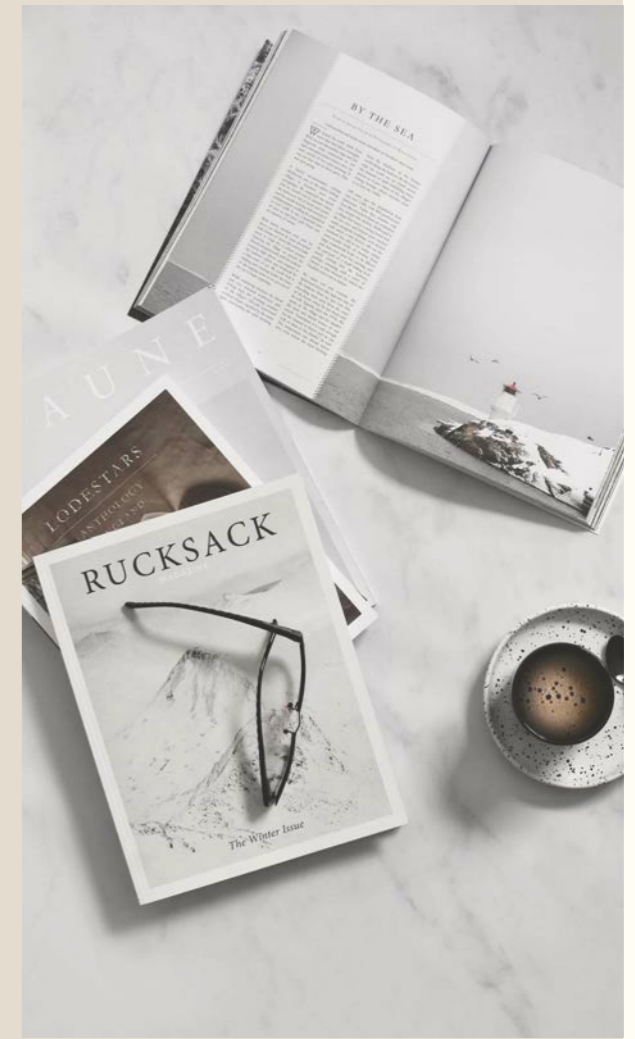
(ROWLAND, 2020)



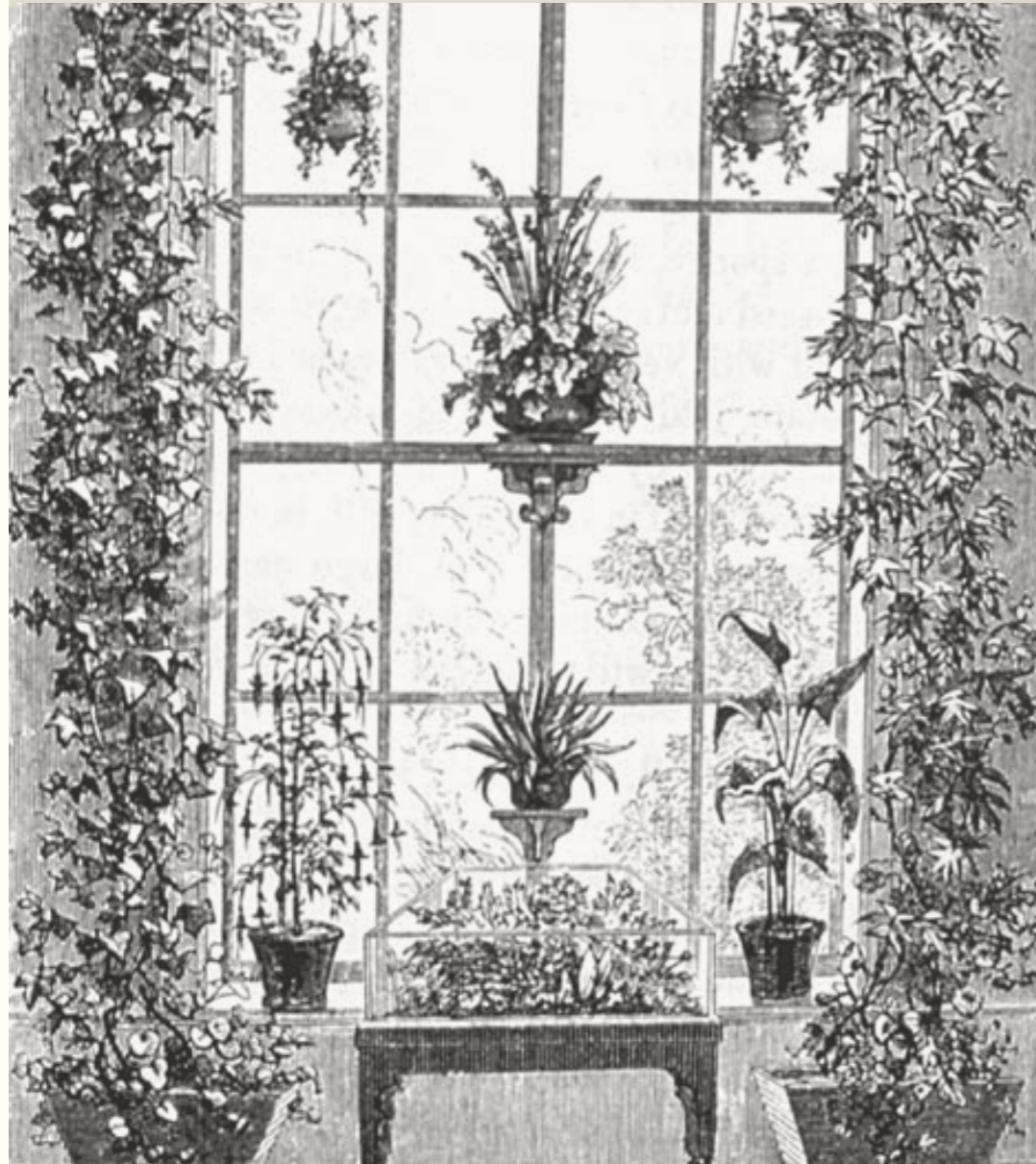
(VOGUE, 2014)



(ROWLAND, 2019)



(ABI, 2019)



(OLD HOUSE JOURNAL, 2011)

“NO LONGER A SYMBOL ONLY FOR WEALTH, THE HOUSEPLANT HAS NOW BECOME A SYMBOL OF BEAUTY, WELLNESS, AND CLEAN LIVING”

(DAN, 2017)

THE HISTORY OF THE HOUSEPLANT INDUSTRY

With the houseplant industry booming in recent years, it would be very easy to assume that this fascination with greenery in our homes is a relatively new thing. However, the idea of taking plants inside is something which people have been doing throughout history with them ebbing in and out of popularity.

The earliest record of humans having houseplants is thought to be the fabled Hanging Gardens of Babylon in around 600 BC (pictured on page 44), although it is still argued as whether this garden existed (Dan, 2017). Other this, other early records show wealthy people from the Mediterranean powers (Egypt, Greece and Rome) keeping houseplants in their vast homes, with these being mainly decorative features more than anything else. After the fall of the Roman Empire however the popularity of houseplants amongst the rich dwindled, and they were rarely seen again until the European Renaissance. (Dan, 2017). We don't know a great deal about the owning of houseplant this early on in history, only what we can depict from paintings completed in that era.

How plants were styled in the home, what plants were used, or whether they were taken in at all has been heavily

influenced by the interior design style at the time. For example, during the Tudor period, house designs changed from dark and draughty to a style we are more familiar with now and plants were brought into the home more regularly. This then changed through time, with Georgian minimalist style evolving into Victorian clutter, to early 20th century classicism (Horwood, 2020, p10). This also worked in the opposite direction, with plants in the home leading to large changes in interior design and architecture, such as spurring on the invention and common use of conservatories and stove houses in the early 1700s (Horwood, 2020, p35). This particular aspect allowed people to take care of their plants more successfully by mimicking close to their native temperate as well as producing more space for plants. These were themselves re-invented over time to create what we have today, as during the time of the 1700s it was thought that - especially in stove-houses - heat was the key to a plant's survival rather than light, so less glass was used in the structure. Plants also influenced interior styles on a smaller scale, with wooden stages being manufactured for displaying exotic plants indoors, and the Victorian's live for ferns taking over and

replacing a large amount of flower motifs on wallpaper and furnishings (Horwood, 2020).

Observing which plants were showcased and most popular during different points in history is an interesting one, from the fern crazy Victorians in the 1860s and 1870s, to the cacti and succulents that took hold as modernism started to creep into the design of people's homes. The popularity of cacti and succulents is on that lasted a long time in comparison to other 'plant highlights' in time, being some of the most popular indoor plants from the early 1900's to end of the Second World War (Horwood, 2020, p127-129). The Rubber plant was also a popular plant towards the end of this period as it was also a no fuss and easy plant to take care of.

Interestingly enough, through all of this time the term houseplant was one not in existence, with the term 'houseplant' beginning to be used in 1960 by infamous nurserymen Tom Rochford. Along with this, in the early years of this decade, plant labels were redesigned by Rochford to be more informative to the public and even being colour coded with the care difficulty of the particular species (Horwood, 2020, p135-137). Before this they were little in

the way of helpful to any plant owner who wasn't already an expert.

The houseplant industry has particularly soared in the past year and half, with the world's population being locked indoors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With many people living in urban areas and/or apartments with no access to a garden or outdoor space, the number of people using houseplants to bring nature indoors has sky-rocketed. This has been mainly in the younger generation of adults, with a National Garden Survey finding that "18 to 34 year olds now occupy 29% of all gardening households" (DiLonardo, s.d.). The Royal Horticultural Society also found in 2019 that around three quarters of adults had a houseplant in their home, with that number being even higher between 18 and 24. (Horwood, 2020, p148). It has also been thought of as a reason as to how this generation of people have made it through this uncertain time, with the mental and physical benefits of looking after houseplants being well documented (DiLonardo, s.d.). The current 'houseplant craze' has also been fuelled through social media and online plant shops, with "plantfluencers" like Hilton Carter and online plant stores such as Patch - who

sold more than 120'000 plants in 2018 alone - making indoor gardening all the more accessible (Horwood, 2020, p150-151).

The mental and physical benefits of houseplants has been being researched into since the 1980s, when NASA began testing a theory between houseplants and the chemicals that build up in confined spaces. They found that not only can houseplants being an aesthetic addition to a home but are actually a way of improving the air quality in your home and came up with a list of fifty plants that were the best for this. Top of the list was the Boston Fern, closely followed by the ever popular Rubber plant, with the Arecea Palm and Spider plant following behind (Horwood, 2020, p145). As well as being amazing for your physical health, as proven by NASA, they have been found to be extremely good for the mental health of humans too. They can tie into the practice of Feng Shui, which is a practice mainly used in Eastern countries to improve the flow of positive energy by basking in nature, and allow it to be undertaken more regularly by basking in the nature you've brought into your home. They have also been found to tap into the human innate need to tend to and nurture something, and arguably being more desirable as they are a lot cheaper than pets or children, as these tropical plants can need a great deal of attention and care given to them. In addition, houseplants have also been found to lower blood pressure and calm the nervous system (DiLondardo, s.d.), having a great effect on the mental well-being of plant parents.



(PINTEREST, S.D.)



(DELONG, 2018)



THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

Research and context are incremental to a design project, as they can aid in understanding the brief to deeper level. You can get a better understanding of the brand, the message, and any stylistic choices that are preferred. It can also be incredibly inspiring.

Especially in terms of the histories of editorial and magazine design, the context of these is incredibly influential on us as designers and can help us find our place in the industry. It is also a very important thing to know and understand as a designer, as stylistic trends are something that is very cyclical, so knowing the past of them can influence amazing ideas in the present and for the future.

For this project in particular, researching the contexts of my fields of study has allowed me to better understand them. In addition, I have been able to see possibilities of how they relate to each other and what combination of them is going to produce the best designs solution to the problem I have found and gap in the market I am trying to fill. It has affirmed which of my ideas at brainstorming is the best solution, as well as given me some ideas on how this can be executed that I can later whittle down through researching some case studies.

I have also now fully understood why this needs to be a must for every designer when they embark on a new project and brief.





04

THE BRIEF

THE BRIEF



WHAT ARE YOUR FIELDS OF STUDY?

My chosen fields of study for this project are editorial design and houseplants, although I do hope to also include some illustration.

WHAT IS YOUR FOCUS?

My focus for this project is to address the magazine market after noticing the minimal about focused of houseplants entirely and to educate on how to best care for the plants, creating a high quality houseplant magazine with collectible beautiful plant care cards.

WHAT CONTEXTUAL WORK DO YOU HAVE TO SUPPORT YOUR AREA OF FOCUS?

To support my area of focus, I have looked at the rise in popularity of independent magazines and the reasons behind this as well as the rise in houseplant books being published. I have also looked into the popularity of houseplants among you adults and possible reasons behind this. In addition I have researched into the history of editorial design in order to fully understand my fields of study

WHY IS THIS YOUR FOCUS?

I have chosen this as my focus as working in editorial design is something I would really like to do after graduating, as well as it being a dream of mine to publish my own book on houseplants that I have illustrated and designed. I chose magazines rather than books in a choice of media as I have spotted a gap in the market for a beautifully designed magazine focused solely on houseplants. The houseplant community is one which has been growing and becoming more and more popular, and I think it could do with a magazine within that.

WHAT IS YOUR FINAL OUTCOME?

My final outcome will be to create a magazine on the topic of houseplants. To accompany this issue will be some care cards on the plants featured in the issue. These cards will be like a summary of the information in the issue and have a lot more information than the care cards plant have currently.

WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

As well as this outcome being for whoever is interested in houseplants, my main audience will be young adults (mostly between ages 19 and 32) who have an interest in houseplants. It will also be aimed towards those who prefer the style of editorial minimalism; which is thought to be popular amongst this age group. It is also important that this outcome is not gender specific.

WHO OR WHAT WILL INFLUENCE THE VISUAL DIRECTION OF YOUR FINAL OUTCOME?

Context specific inspiration will come from books such as 'Leaf Supply' and 'Plantopedia' in relation to content and style. Magazines such as Cereal will also influence the visual direction, especially with regards to the minimalistic layout. So visual direction and inspiration may also come from design agencies such as Range Left.

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO PRODUCE YOUR FINAL OUTCOME?

In order to create my final outcome, I will shoot my imagery and decide on the components that will make up the magazine such as choices of type etc. After this and creating a framework, I will start filling the pages with content - plant care, styling tips, interviews, and features - to create the magazine as a whole. In addition, I will illustrate the plants that I will feature in the magazine to create the accompanying care cards.

ARE THERE ANY PARTICULAR ASSETS YOU WOULD LIKE TO WORK WITH?

Aside from the editorial design, for this project I would like to work with photography as well as my own illustrations

HOW WILL YOU EVALUATE YOUR FMP?

As I progress through this project I will be asking for feedback from my peers on my course as well as my professional tutors. The opinions and feedback I get from these people will be help me greatly by helping me evaluate the direction of the outcome and its success. When it is closer to being finished, I will also ask the opinions of people I know who are interested in houseplants in order to get a consumer opinion. Through getting opinions of potential consumers it will allow me to get feedback on how it behaves as a product rather than just a piece of design.

FURTHER QUESTIONS



After finalising my brief for this project, it was important that I went over it and questioned it further. Through doing this, I would hopefully come across aspects for the project not addressed in the brief, and I would therefore be able to look into those further to make sure I was creating the best possible outcome to answer the issue addressed in the brief.

What I found possibly most important to look into further and think about what the relationship between my chosen fields of study. Through the gap in the independent magazine market that I have come across, the combination of editorial design and the houseplant industry make complete sense. However, I must make sure that I understand all the different possible relationships between the two and how these may take form in order to make sure that I embark on the right one and create an outcome that best reflects the relationship between these two fields in the context I have chosen (the independent magazine market). Through exploring a variety of case studies that have addressed one or more of my chosen fields of study, I should be able to understand these better and be able to explore ideas on how they intertwine with each other. I must make sure that I focus on the effectiveness of how these two subjects relate to each other and can communicate together through design rather than my own personal preferences on them. Although they may help me with my decision, they may not be the best for the market.



O5

CASE STUDIES

CEREAL MAGAZINE

Cereal is a gorgeously designed and printed magazine based in Bristol, England focusing on travel and style. Founded in 2012 by Rosa Park and Rich Stapleton (Anglepoise, s.d.); who are still incredibly involved with the content creation and designing of the magazine. It has been thought of as more of a beautifully and expertly curated book more than a magazine (Woodward-Court, s.d.), with each issue often surpassing 200 pages and looking very different to the magazines found in local newsagents and supermarkets. Since 2012, it has received a huge global cult following and was selling more than 40'000 copies an issue by 2016 (Lim, 2016) and it has only grown since then.

Being a bi-annual publication, Parks, Stapleton, and their team have plenty of time to collect only the best content to meet their luxury, minimalistic, and calming aesthetic. They originally started out as a quarterly magazine, but found that they were having to be non-stop with content collection and designing, especially for their small team. Instead they evolved quickly to a twice a year publishing routine, which allowed them to put more time and care into each issue as well as experimenting with the design of each one (Rodriguez, 2015). In addition to this, they had time to curate other Cereal products such as their travel guides, where they were able to focus on one city and the associated travel, style and imagery in more detail.



(CEREAL, S.D.)



(CEREAL, S.D.)

“EVERYTHING ABOUT
CEREAL EXUDES A
SENSE OF TIMELESS
QUALITY AND
MAKES YOU PAUSE;
THE STUNNING
PHOTOGRAPHY, THE
POETICALLY CURATED
CONTENT, THE
CONSIDERED LAYOUT.”

(WOODWARD-COURT, S.D.)

Cereal magazine is thought of as an independent magazine, as they are not owned by a corporation (i.e. are independently published) as well as not conforming to the structure and layout of ‘mainstream magazines’. In addition, their bi-annual status, high price tag at £12 an issue, and subscription based readership hold them securely in this market. However, similar to Kinfolk magazine, Cereal have been able to

bridge the gap between mainstream and independent magazines through the use of advertisements. Most of the ‘indies’ (another word for independent magazines) do not include advertisements as a principle and are instead funded through the cover price and other revenues of income. Adverts often get in the way of the design and commercialise the material even further, which is not usually the desire of these publishers. Their desire is to create a community of like-minded people rather than sell products and services to their readers. Cereal manage to include advertisements in their publications without hindering either the design of the magazine or the message to the readers by being very mindful with whose advertisements are included. Through only featuring brands that are in line with their aesthetic and ethos, and putting in extra work to shoot a lot of the ads themselves Parks and Stapleton manage to keep the magazine relatively free of interruptions often caused by these pages. In addition, it shows the passion and dedication to the readers that these publishers have, that they would rather do even more work to photograph and design advertisements to include in their magazine so that “their readers understand we care” (Watson, 2014).

I thought that Cereal was a perfect

case study to use for this project for many reasons, such as the aesthetic and design as well as the ethos of the publishers. It was something stylistically similar to the pages of Cereal that I envisioned when thinking of my brief, and so I thought it best to look into this publication in order to understand how it is successful.

Every page is engaging, even if it is only holding text, and I think this is how both the images and the text is treated. Every image in the issues are full colour, but not vibrant. They are softened, almost as if they have a slight decrease in opacity, which I think sets the tone for the reading experience as well as communicates the message of the magazine just through this one action. It makes every page look that bit softer, and in conjunction with the spectacular use of white space, makes the user experience one which is very calming and easy on the reader’s eyes.

The way in which Parks and Stapleton decided to use negative or white space is one which, in my opinion, adds an additional element to the layout. As well as adding to the calming experience for the reader it exudes an air of luxury. Cheaper, mainstream magazines cram every possible space with content in order to create as much free space as possible for advertisements. The way that independent magazines like Cereal that do include

adverts juxtaposes this. Rather than designing the content of the publication to fit the ads, the content is created first and the third party content (i.e. the adverts) are added in after and are made sure to fit with the content. This creates a more successful flow for each issue and overall a more aesthetic piece of editorial design.

Even though I shall not be including advertisements in the magazine publication I will be creating, as it is not something I would necessarily want to include as well as it not being a published piece of material, it is important to understand how this treatment and messaging can be communicated to the readers in a way that stands with the design aesthetic of the brand. Everything with the design of each text column, image, and page is very deliberate and has a reason to be there, which is something that I will take on and apply when creating my own publication. Elements that have no design or communicative purpose being there, especially in a publication with an aesthetic such as this, do not need to be there.



(FLEURARIA, S.D.)



(PINTEREST, S.D.)



(OPSTAD, 2016)



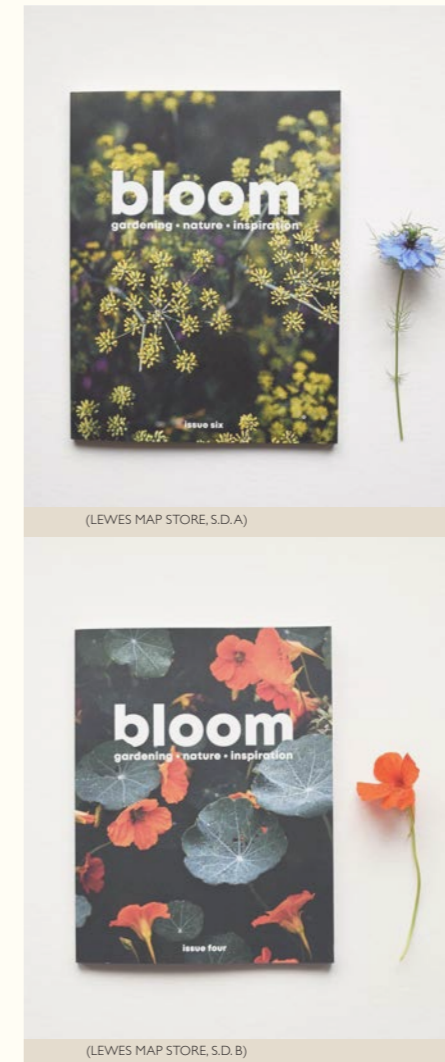
(PINTEREST, S.D.)



(CURIO, S.D.)

“BLOOM IS A WONDERFUL PUBLICATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT GARDENING AND NATURE. TO LIVE SEASONALLY AND TO APPRECIATE THE CHANGES IN OUR LANDSCAPE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.” - L. ARCHHELL (ARCHHELL, 2018)

BLOOM MAGAZINE



The second case study I thought appropriate to explore was Bloom Magazine as it combines my two chosen fields of study. This independent publication focuses on nature and gardening, and everything associated with them. Being “coffee table worthy yet super useful” (Curio, s.d.), Bloom is a magazine which truly serves its purpose to the independent magazine market by being aesthetic as well as informative. It is an indie publisher’s hope to be displayed out on a coffee table and styled rather than be read and put aside. They are a relatively new magazine to the market with the first issue of Bloom being published in the Autumn of 2018 (Bloom, s.d.), but has absolutely has the potential to gain a cult following of readers.

Being published three times a year, Zena Alkayat, the founder and publisher of Bloom, and her team are able to put more thought into the content and topics of each issue. What is interesting about this magazine is how each issue is themed around the season in which it is being published. This means that all of the information is current and the reader can also keep it for references for the coming years. Covering topics from “bonsai trees to vegetable patches” (Unique Magazines

Limited, s.d.), they are able to appeal to a wide variety of gardeners. The content is more orientated around outdoor gardening rather than indoor gardening, possibly because this is more of a niche community. However, it does mean that they have a large amount of content to explore including plant care, nature book recommendations, and tips on seasonal food to grow and eat.

In addition to their interesting topics, the image content and layout of this magazine is something of note. Pictured overleaf is an example of their beautiful page spreads taken from their second issue. The clear column grid structure, modern type choices, and creative photography combined make for a clean and beautifully designed publication. The relationship between the different typography is a common one with sans serif titles and serif body copy, but by using a thicker weighted title font it creates some difference from other magazines. Bloom's colour treatment throughout each issue is also something that is really interesting as it something not often seen in editorial pieces, as a static colour palette is usually used. Rather than this static palette, Bloom use their images as a guide for the colour tones used on that

spread. Using the image overleaf as an example, the nude/pink tone in the flowers have been used to colour the title text on the opposite page. This is something which is incredibly effective and makes for a dynamic layout. In conjunction with the use of negative space used on the pages the treatment of image and colour help make the experience for the reader one which is easy and calming as well as creating a serene sense of flow to each issue despite the varying use in colour.

Bloom has been a really useful and interesting to look at as a case study for this project due to it being almost the combination of my chosen fields of study; except for the fact that it not specifically on indoor gardening. Nonetheless, it has been really helpful to see how this information and content can be treated especially in such a clean and minimal style.



(LOREM, S.D.)



(CURIO.S.D.)

LEAF SUPPLY



The third and final case study that I am going to look at for this project is Leaf Supply. This is an editorial piece, more specifically a book, focused on houseplants and their care and styling. This was the first book by Leaf Supply, an indoor plant and delivery service in Sydney, Australia, in 2018 (Leaf Supply, s.d.). They have since published *Indoor Jungle* in 2019, and *Plantopedia* in 2020. Since publishing this book has become incredibly popular, being stocked in stores like Anthropologie and Urban Outfitters.

Leaf Supply provides easy to follow care instructions for around 100 different houseplants that are both popular and more rare in addition to styling advice to provide the best outcome for your plant and your space. By also featuring other creatives who are avid indoor gardeners and how they style their plants the book also displays plants in real life settings and what it can be like to live with plants. (Leaf Supply, s.d.)

It is clear to see from flicking through this book that the authors of the book and owners of Leaf Supply Lauren Camilleri and Sophia Kaplan have put a lot of care and attention into the creation of it. The design of every page is thought through to be as informative as possible whilst still

being pleasing to the eye. The different type choices make each page interesting, with the very heavy weighted titles to the interesting, almost decorative, pull quote secondary typeface creating a balanced contrast amongst the written information on the page spreads.

Another design choice of note in this editorial piece is the treatment of some of the text that is particularly used on the front cover, contents page, and section dividers. On these pages in particular is the overlaying of the text and leaf images. This adds a level of depth to the page and adds a lot of interest. It is aspects like these that add to the reader experience as well as make the piece different from others on the market.

I thought it interesting to look at Leaf Supply as a case study for this project as in addition to being a culmination of my two

“PLANTS – LIVING,
BREATHING,
LIFE SUSTAINING
PLANTS – ARE WHERE
IT’S AT!” (LEAF SUPPLY, S.D.)

chosen fields of study - houseplants and editorial design - it is also a different media format. As mentioned in my brief, in this project I am aiming to create a magazine, yet I thought it important to look at a book as part of my case studies in order to look into how the breadth of information is designed and communicated and how it is different from a magazine.

In addition, the treatment to page layout was something that I thought important to look at and take note of as it can be very different treatments between media formats even if they are the same material (print). Books arguably have more content to fit in as they are a one off rather than a running periodical so the written information is more important, whereas magazines have a slight preference on imagery.

Taking the design choices of Leaf Supply in addition to how these are communicated with the same subject matter as my project is one that was very important for me to look into as it can help me understand houseplants on a more graphic level. From looking at this case study, I have realised that the imagery of the plants are more important than the written information, as this is how a reader will be able to identify the plant they have or want and after that will then engage with that content if they choose.



(LEAF SUPPLY, S.D.)



(LEAF SUPPLY, S.D.)



(LEAF SUPPLY, S.D.)



(LEAF SUPPLY, S.D.)

HOW HAVE THESE CASE STUDIES INFLUENCED MY PROJECT




(CAMILLERI & KAPLAN, 2019)

Through looking at my chosen case studies of Cereal Magazine, Bloom Magazine, and Leaf Supply I have been able to look at different design and style application in my chosen fields of study and the combination of them. Through doing this, I have gained a better understanding of how the subject houseplants and gardening has and can be communicated and the graphical elements behind that.

I have also been able to look at the different styles used in these case studies and assess which elements of these will be applicable for my own project. It is important that I take into account the subject matter and possible readership to make sure that these elements have a purpose being included on each page and in the publication as a whole.

OPPOSITE: (PINTEREST, S.D.)





06

LITERATURE
REVIEW

LITERATURE REVIEW

By looking at the case studies of Cereal Magazine, Bloom Magazine, and Leaf Supply I have been able to understand my chosen fields of study better as well as the relationship between them.

From looking into Cereal Magazine, I was able to understand a case study of the passion and effort it takes to publish an independent magazine. I wasn't able to do this with Bloom magazine as it is a newer and less well known publication. This passion and effort comes across in the pages as you can clearly see the care and attention that has gone into the design of each page spread. What is interesting in the way Cereal does this though is they do it whilst making their issues have an air of luxury to them. As this is I want and am aiming for the publication I am creating for this project, it was really helpful to see how this has been successfully done with an existing magazine and will be a great source of inspiration for me when creating my own.

By exploring Bloom Magazine, I was able to seem some of the design elements I found inspirational used in a different style of layout with a different subject. The way that page furniture, and more specifically thin lines, are used in both Cereal and Bloom is very different. Cereal use these lines often as key line features to structure a page or as an aesthetic divider between texts, and are often horizontal. By contrast, Bloom use them less frequently and often vertically to add to the structure of the page. It was interesting to see such a simple and effect design tool like a thin line be used in different ways in different publications and the effectiveness of each. Another thing I took from the design of Bloom magazine was their use of colour. As mentioned in the case study, rather than having a static colour palette the colour used on that particular spread is a tone taken from the image used. This is a really subtle way of using colour and has also got me thinking about whether this would be applicable in the publication I am creating

for this project. It is always beneficial to research into similar pieces of design focused on a similar subject, as it can help you understand how that subject can be successfully communicated to its readers.

Finally, Leaf Supply. Looking into this book as part of my case studies was something that I knew was going to be helpful to me in this project and is one of the first case studies to come to mind. It was very interesting to research into the subject of houseplants being communicated through the material of a book, as this is a more common format of houseplant editorial. Looking into the information, both written and imagery communicated in this larger scale format is one which I thought important to explore, as it would help me understand what perhaps should be communicated in a magazine format. Magazines are usually a lot smaller than books, however independent magazines that are published less frequently have begun to increase their size, with magazines like Cereal and Kinfolk having a similar number of pages to Leaf Supply at just over 200. Due to the time-scale of this project I will not be aiming for a magazine of this scale, but this is something to possibly take into account for future pursuits in creation. Due to this, it was necessary for me to look at a houseplant book as it allowed me to compare it to the likes of Bloom, the closest publication on houseplants to see both the level/amount of content in each medium. By doing this, I can set myself up with an expectation of roughly how many pages of content I should be producing for my first issue. Leaf Supply were able to go into a lot more detail and feature a lot more plants, but Bloom had the capability to include varying content in one publication. The similar use of style in Bloom and Leaf Supply was also an interesting observation, both using a very heavy weight in their chosen title typeface. This creates a style that looks a lot more modern, although Bloom have made it slightly more of a

classic pairing by using a serif font for their body copy. The style that Leaf Supply and Bloom use completely contrast that of Cereal, whose chosen font combinations give the same feel as the layout; clean and minimal. Through using a very thin weight sans serif font for the title, and a classic serif font for any subtitles and body copy they portray a very classic combination.

Through the scale in use of negative space in the page spreads of these three case studies, from Cereal using a great deal with negative space to Leaf Supply having a slightly more 'maximalist' approach with their page layouts, I have been able to see how these different treatments come across and how they affect the reader's experience. Given the clean, calming, and collectible feel I want this publication I am creating for this project I will reference pages of Cereal and Bloom when creating my page layouts as I think somewhere in-between these two will be the most effective.

By looking at these three publications, from how they began and ran to the graphic design elements that make them unique, I have been able to analyse my own style and asses whether it is applicable, or what parts of it were, for my chosen medium and subject for this project. By taking style inspiration from these three case studies, I think I will be able to create a publication that is appropriate for the content yet gives the clean and minimal style that I have as an editorial designer. It has also helped me with understanding different aspects of editorial design that I had only read about, being able to see how it can be applied; and that it wasn't as hard as it sounded.



(ST.HILL, 2019)

BOTANICAL

YOUR GUIDE TO HOUSEPLANT CARE



07

CONCLUSION



THE PROJECT

This project has stayed true to the brief and lead to an outcome of an independent magazine focusing on the topic of houseplants, including chats with people in the field, care information, and features on other independent businesses that sell plants or plant related products. In addition, it also includes painted plant care cards giving a more condensed block of information on the plants featured in the issue. To accompany this is also this book and a development board to feature my thinking and research when creating this outcome. On the next few pages are images of the produced outcome in print.

Inspired by the likes of Cereal, Bloom, and Kinfolk magazine and books such as Leaf Supply, Kinfolk Home, and Wild Interiors this first issue aims to look as luxurious and calming as these inspirations. It is something to enjoy.

The outcome has aimed to inform plant parents both beginner and expert on the care for different plant species, as well as in detail care on aspects such as plant pests and humidity. The stylised issue aims to be as much a collectible as a format of information, hoping to be something that is collected and put out on display after purchase. It hopes to be a welcomed piece of print to the independent magazine market, addressing the large popularity in houseplants in society.





VEGETARIAN | VEGAN

When you're ready to serve, place a... pan using a slotted spoon and set aside... the cooking syrup.

pears are tender. When the berries... pressing the liquid up to a... 500ml (17 fl oz water)

pears are just starting to burst and the... berries are just starting to burst and the... the liquid up to a simmer. Set the... heat. Add 3-4 tablespoons of the... berries down into the pan and cook... thickened slightly. Remove the pan... pears in half. Place 2 pear halves... bursting elderberries next to... and serve straight away.





The Urban Garden is a different kind of garden centre. As well as being classed as an independent garden centre, they can be thought of as a non-profit; a social enterprise. They are managed and run by Grow Yourself, which is an established Community Interest Company, as well as running in collaboration with the Grow for Life for charity. Through these proceedings, this amazing plant shop reinvests all of its profits back into the training and the community, helping to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young adults in the area of Bath.

Located a short walk away from the centre of Bath in the heart of the Royal Victoria Gardens, it is very easy to say that this little hidden gem is a very idyllic setting for itself. It is not a plant shop by any means, sitting at the bottom of a council nursery site, but is very easy to navigate with all of their houseplants being

housed in a gorgeous long greenhouse. You'll be like you're stepping into the plant's home as the increase in temperature as soon as you walk in, even on a chilly day.

This particular shop specialises in tropical plants and garden products for all types of urban spaces, so whether you are interested just in indoor gardening or have an outdoor space to tend to too this place is perfect. Whilst browsing through the array of tropical plants in the greenhouse, you can step outside and pick up something for your visiting birds.

This plant shop is the definition of small and mighty, holding such an array of plants as well as doing so much good for people in their community of Bath. The Urban Garden certainly gets the Botanical stamp of approval and is very much worth a visit if ever in the beautiful city of Bath.

SOCIAL...
DO...
THE BENEFIT OF THE...
AND THE ENVIRONMENT...
(THE GREAT GARDEN 50)



08

PERSONAL
REFLECTION

REFLECTION

This project has quite easily been my favourite one I have done whilst studying my degree as I feel like I properly understood the different components of what makes for a successful piece of editorial design. In addition, I was able to focus it around a subject that I already know a lot about so the content writing wasn't as tricky as I have found in previous projects.

The process of creating my final outcome, Botanical Magazine, was one which I found really interesting to undertake and it definitely took a lot longer than I originally had anticipated. This did eventually lead to a bit of a time management issue on this project, as I arguably put it too much time to the final outcome and less on my research book and invasion board which I feel like I did rush a little bit more than I had wanted to. Despite this though, I think the time that I spent on my magazine has paid off as I think that the thought and care that was put into its creation is clear in the pages.

Something else that I think paid off was the amount of my own content that I took. Rather than trying to find all the imagery to include in my final outcome and using that I decided that I would take all the photographs I could to include. This included a trip to RHS Wisley to their tropical house to take pictures of larger scale plants, as well as taking all of my houseplants over to a Neptune showroom to shoot in a beautiful setting. I think this helps add to the sense of flow in the outcome as they are all edited the same and in similar settings. However, I didn't shoot quite enough content for some of the pages so did have to find some, which did not come out as clear as I was hoping in print despite increasing the resolution. I should have gone and tried to shoot some more content to include to remove this risk, but neither time or the weather was on my side to try and get these additional photographs.

One of my favourite things about my outcome is the care cards that I have created to be included in the issue, giving more concise care information. Rather than using a photograph I had taken of the plant, I decided to add another level of care to the project and paint these plants. This was perhaps a step that didn't need to be taken and a photo could've worked just as well, as each painting would take a couple of hours each (and there are 10) but I think it was a step that paid off as it makes them something a reader would want to collect. They also add to the idea of the beauty of tactility as they are something to keep, collect and use. I also think that how I have included them in the magazine

E EVALUATION

is something that adds to the idea of tactility by keeping them in an envelope. I did struggle with trying to work out how to include them in the magazine, as they couldn't be slipped in like Cereal do with their brochure as they would all fall out. I am sure that there is probably a way that I could have included these that also didn't make the back part of the magazine not flush as it sticks out with all the care cards being on that page. Despite this I am glad that I didn't opt for a plastic wrap so that the magazine could remain sustainable.

I think I could have perhaps been a bit more experiments with my project, as I very much kept it all within my comfort zone in terms with style. It is all very clean, minimal, and classic which is how I like to design, but I know that I could have had a bit more fun with the designing of it at least at the beginning to test out different options at that stage. My assumption looking back is that I was scared about it being good and wanted to make it as beautiful as I could so stuck with what I knew. I was a bit more experimental (granted only by a small amount) in my research book using a soft tone colour block with the imagery and extending this where appropriate. I do think the style I used was fitting for the market and for the subject matter, and it does have that luxurious air to it. I think that the style I chose also matches the typeface I chose to be the star of the magazine; Botanica. This softly decorative sans serif typeface was one I fell in love with instantly and is one that I am happy I chose to use. It also works really well with my chosen title typeface Chatoyer, the swoops of which contrast the sharpness of Botanica.

When receiving my outcome in print I was really happy with how it had turned out despite there being a small amount of damage on the spine. Looking through the pages, I did find that the type could have been a point size smaller, perhaps 9pt or 10pt. All of the images also had a lowered opacity to make them softer, like I have also done in the research book, but I think I could have possibly dropped this down a little further to add more softness to the page.

I am also happy with my use of lines to add structure and interest to the pages, as well as using the drop caps in Botanica. All in all I am really happy with my outcome but if I were to actually publish this (as well as swapping the third party content for my own) I would make these tweaks to make it worthy of going out to the public.

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