

# CULTURE & MEDIA

24 January 2012

## Slow Graphics: Screenprinting, Silkscreen & Letterpress Now

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# ARTS & GRAPHICS

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Kate Gibb



Deer Wolf Wolf



James Joyce

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*Today, we rely almost solely on digital communications, so traditional handwritten communication has become a truly authentic way to foster relationships, both business and personal* explains Daniel Nadeau, co-founder of US-based Ink Meets Paper

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## Re-learning Traditional Methods

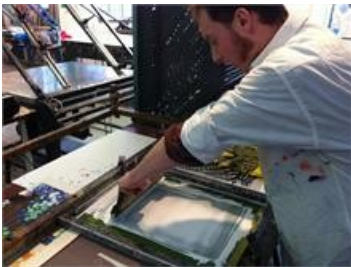
**Print Club London** is a shared workspace, printing press and collective of designers based in East London. “When we started up five years ago there was nothing like us,” says Kate Newbold-Higginson, Print Club London’s director.

Newbold-Higginson notes a surge of interest from creatives who are wanting to learn silkscreen printing: “We aimed to create a place where creatives could share facilities, network and meet others wanting to put on shows. What also emerged was the huge number of people wanting to learn silkscreen printing, so we set up day courses.”

The courses have been so successful that Print Club London has since expanded to a second gallery and a new, shared creative workspace called Miller’s Junction – which opened in January 2012.



Blisters on my Fingers, an annual exhibition at Print Club London



Print Club London technician Marco Lawrence screen printing



The Print Club London studio in Dalston, London



Artist Mr Gresty at Print Club London

## Social Creativity Driving Popularity

By necessity the act of screen printing is a social activity – the process requires a technician and space that usually means a group share of a studio. **The Bloomington Print Collective**, a non-profit community print shop in Bloomington, Indiana, was set up in 2011 and is another new studio collective fostering a creative support network.

Economics are another factor in bringing creatives together in such environments. The cost-effective hot-desking model has spread to manual creative work, and brought with it a renewed focus on craft production techniques.



Bloomington Print Collective t-shirt design



Bloomington Print Collective poster

The education system is also still playing a part in the socialisation of these crafts, with print studios within schools still

a popular destination. **Carey Ellis**, a recently graduated textile designer in London (and winner of 2011 HSBC Student Bursary) says: “A huge number of my contemporaries at university had a passion for screen printing. This traditional skill is hugely valued, which has ensured that screen printing is still fashionable.”

**Trillusion - Final Major Project** from **Carey Ellis** on **Vimeo**.



Carey Ellis. Sway - BA Textile Design degree Show 2011



Carey Ellis. Sway - BA Textile Design degree Show 2011

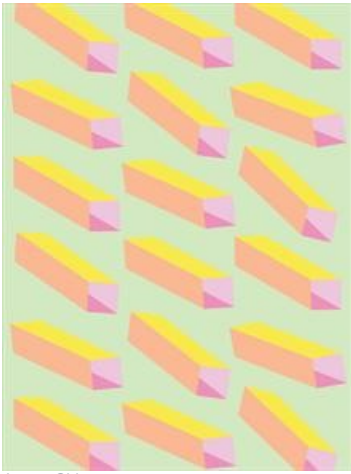
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## Traditional Methods, New Aesthetics

Designers such as **James Shines**, who works with print and digital collage, typographer and graphic artist **Emily Forgot** and silkscreen artist **Paula MacArthur** demonstrate the varied new aesthetics in print born of similar tools and craft.

Other longer-established letterpress studios, such as **Yee-Haw Industries** in Knoxville Tennessee, have produced influential designers including Kyle Blue – he was Yee-Haw’s first intern. Blue is now co-founder of the **Everything-Type-Company**, an innovative design studio based in Brooklyn.

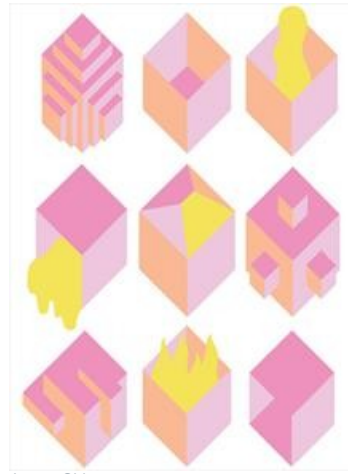




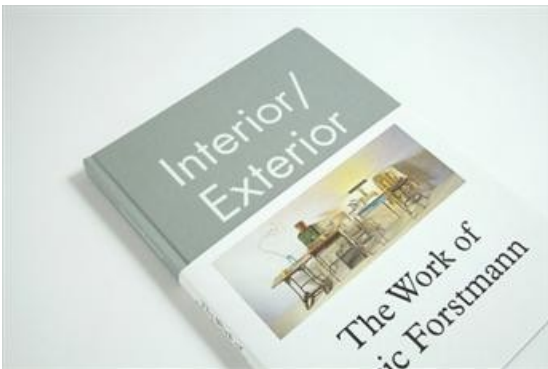
James Shines



Paula MacArthur



James Shines



Interior/Exterior: The Work of Eric Forstmann designed by Everything-Type-Company



In Pursuit of Modern Form designed by Everything-Type-Company

A technician at London Print Club, **Dominic Owen** has recently worked on printed work for new menswear lifestyle brand **Fourth & Main**, for release in March 2012. The wooden information boards, black and white tote bags and box packaging were all screen-printed. Fourth & Main's aesthetic, defined by single block colours, is well suited to the technique. Owen believes that commercial interest in screen printing is growing, particularly among start-ups and independent brands.

Jason Teegarden-Downs, owner of Chicago-based **Delicious Design League** offers a different take on screen printing: "Brands are looking for a 'hand made' feel, which can be accomplished without using screen printing. There is a misconception that screen printing something automatically gives it texture and makes it 'cool'. Good screen printing looks exactly like the original file or parent artwork."

As a manual process, there are limitations in terms of order volume with screen printing, but limited runs for bespoke events are proving to be a popular choice.



Fourth & Main S/S 2012 collection with print by Dominic Owen



Fourth & Main S/S 2012 collection with print by Dominic Owen



Delicious Design League



Delicious Design League



Delicious Design League



Delicious Design League



Delicious Design League



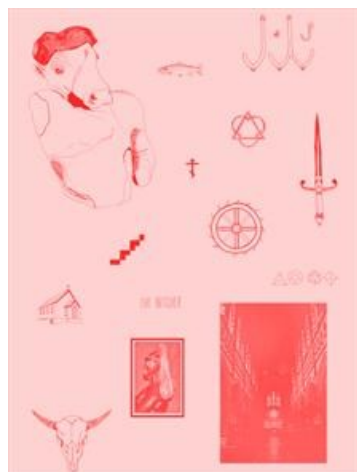
Delicious Des

## Tapping into the Personalities of Print

Thanks to the egalitarian nature of ecommerce, designers are becoming celebrity printmakers in their own right, personalising their own products such as clothing and tote bags. The potential for brands to tap into these creative personalities is significant.

Australian printer and illustrator **Jennifer Mehigan** sees a link between creative and personal brand and online exposure,

saying: "Even the tiniest letterpress or screen-printing studio in the middle of nowhere can now receive an extraordinary amount of attention and we are using that to showcase brands."



Jennifer Mehigan. Screen printed illustration and found images 2011



Jennifer Mehigan. Screen printed illustration and found images 2011



Jennifer Mehigan. Screen printed illustration and found images 2011



Well-known contemporary names in print include UK-based **Anthony Burrill** and **Kate Moross**, who share a shrewd ability to mix commercial work with self-branding by branching into other disciplines – notably film (Burrill) and fashion (Moross). Print Club London's Newbold-Higginson highlights London's Central St Martins graduate **Margot Bowman** as a new name to watch.

Burrill is good example of a 'screen-print celebrity' says screen-printer **Daniel Mather** (who is soon releasing a promotional short film about the process of printing to highlight his own practice). "His bold, shouty typographic style is instantly recognisable. This is a good example of 'work is brand'."





Margot Bowman



Margot Bowman



Margot Bowman



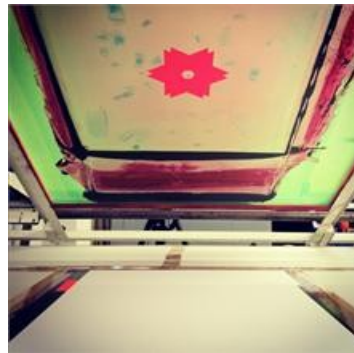
Anthony Burrill



Anthony Burrill



Still from Daniel Mather's screen printing promo film



Still from Daniel Mather's screen printing promo film



Still from Daniel Mather's screen printing promo film

## Digital & Analogue Hybrids

Current developments in print are not anti-digital, but are a result of the changing technological landscape.

US studio Ink Meets Paper launched its new site in mid January 2012 to cater for the increased demand in hybrid digital/analogue print requests, including incorporating QR (quick response) codes onto letterpress business cards. "I think consumers are getting more and more comfortable with digital interactions. There is a huge opportunity for handmade products to include these interactions, but the challenge is to use technology in a way that authentically complements their handcrafted nature," explains its owner Daniel Nadeau.

Handmade products with digital interfaces could allow consumers the ability to integrate a more idiosyncratic and personally stylised aesthetic to their daily digital routines.

Looking to the future, Nadeau understands that although there is no going back in terms of a technological arms race



there is real opportunity to harness the very best in analogue and digital – and combine the two together. "We're going to have to learn how to incorporate microchips into paper. Technology moves fast, but it's constantly giving us more ways to authenticate the products we create. Sometimes it would be nice to *just print cards*, but when you see that dialog click and watch the viewer take that step to learn more about what they bought or received, it's all worth it."



Kate Gibb. Editorial for Le Monde September 2011



Kate Gibb. Editorial for Le Monde September 2011



Kate Gibb. Editorial for Le Monde September 2011



Ink Meets Paper screen printed QR business card



Ink Meets Paper screen printed QR business card

## Stylus Summary

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The resurgence in traditional printing production is not anti-digital. Print makers are looking to cross-pollinate new technology with traditional print qualities.

The growth in print making is due to new avenues being explored in retail, exposure for individual designers, social networking and demand for 'home-spun' aesthetics.

Print makers are self-branding smaller products and selling them through online retail channels. This in turn is attracting larger commercial clients, as well as fostering an online community spirit among designers and aficionados. Larger, more well-known print makers are branching out into other genres including film and fashion.

Businesses looking for fresh graphics perspectives would do well to tap into these new creative communities.

The technical abilities required for printmaking do not necessitate loss in quality of reproduction for clients, nor do the results need to be aesthetically low-fi. This is becoming increasingly apparent as larger clients utilise print for campaigns.