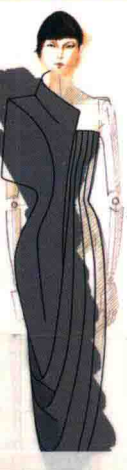
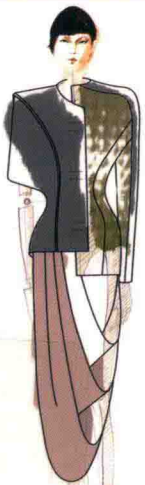
FASHION DESIGN

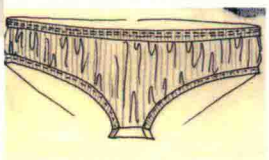
PROCESS INNOVATION & PRACTICE

Second Edition

KATHRYN MCKELVEY & JANINE MUNSLOW







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FASHION DESIGN:
process, innovation & practice
2nd edition

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Janine Munslow
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Preface

As a book on fashion design, this has been very stimulating to create. It is interesting and difficult to try and place the right information on the page in a form that communicates clearly. There is so much that becomes second nature during a career in design and teaching. Putting yourself back in the novice designer's shoes requires some effort!

Fashion is fleeting. Decision making on the kind of examples included will always have pitfalls, potentially dating the book. But the examples are here to make points and the points will always be pertinent regardless of any changes in technology and upheavals in the industry.

Successful design is about **thinking** and communicating the thoughts, on paper, or wherever, and realizing them through prototyping, solving any problems along the way. There will never be a substitute for **good ideas** and these must be the focus of problem solving.

All of the ingredients for successful design are contained herein, it is up to the individual to put their personal design stamp on the world, whether it be by becoming a known designer, by working for a retail chain, by supplying others with products, or by moving into new media and flying the 'fashion' flag; all areas are equally valid and require the same commitment and enthusiasm.

When starting out as a designer or student, try to dispel preconceived ideas about design, try not to start a project with the end product as the focus. Taking the journey prescribed in this book may well turn up surprises and delights that may never have been considered, leaving room for the new and innovative. If each element of the process is explored thoroughly the actual development should be very exciting and each solution always unique. The skill comes in allowing preparatory work to influence design; how much or how little is a matter of judgement.

The book is called **Fashion Design: Process, Innovation and Practice** and at the risk of being repetitive it works like this: the **process** has been demonstrated clearly enough and in enough ways for it to become well established. The **innovation** comes from thinking in different ways, having different approaches, by searching for something new and not settling for the 'tried and tested'. The innovation exercises may be used as often as desired. The **practice** is obviously the Fashion Careers and the Case Studies; there is a lot of information here and the links between the careers and the common elements of design help to gain understanding and put the design well into context.

It is hoped that this book gives some indication of what is expected from the design process. Above all, it has been very broad in applying the process to investigate graphics and styling too.

As a student, one of the hardest aspects of study to come to terms with is the sheer volume of information to learn. Don't lose sight of what the short-term goals are. With every design project completed comes more experience. Career choices need to be made along the way as the paths that are possible are many. For instance, you could become a textile designer, or a fashion stylist, or a womenswear designer, or a fashion/graphic designer; whatever the choice it really is up to the individual and their skill and judgement. Each aspect of designing fashion garments could be studied in it's own right.

More than anything though, in design, there are no right or wrong solutions to a design problem (in the commercial world, success depends very much on the sales of any given product), it will always have a personal stamp upon it, as long as the solution fulfills the brief in a creative and relevant manner...

Enjoy the process, give time for innovation and you will love the practice!

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Introduction

The very word fashion signifies change. This pace of change shows no sign of halting and designers are under constant pressure to maintain their creative momentum. New developments in mass production and information technology have helped to increase this speed of change by decreasing the lead time between design and finished stock entering the retail environment, quickly turning catwalk fashion into high street equivalents. Brands spread their influences, constantly diversifying into new product areas. In such an arena there is a need for well trained designers and other personnel to take up a variety of related career paths such as buyers and stylists.

Universities and colleges run degree courses and other specialist courses to provide a solid grounding in fashion education. This book is intended for anyone aspiring to a career in fashion and design.

There are so many approaches to designing clothes and so many factors to take into consideration that many beginners are daunted by the prospect; this book sets out basic principles and exercises in order to make fashion design a logical process, providing limits from which to expand skills steadily. This design process can be learned.

It should also be emphasized that there is more than one path to take when developing designs and it is the individual's input and the forming of their personal philosophy that helps to decide on the path taken. This philosophy develops with experience as does the ability to tell good design from bad, how materials are best used and handled and what is a long-term trend or a fad. Lack of experience need not be a barrier; being observant and aware of what is happening in the world can feed into design. Being enthusiastic, keen to learn and having an enquiring mind is a necessity.

This book presents an overview of what is involved in studying and becoming a designer in the contemporary fashion industry. It is intended to show the breadth of the industry rather than in-depth views of any particular area. For reasons of size it does not set out to be, nor could it be, fully comprehensive in its contents. Its aim is to pull together in one book the basic knowledge and skills necessary to begin designing. The various stages of the design process are investigated, from research inspiration, direction and design development, to how to plan collections and ranges and promotion.

This book uses a variety of problem-solving approaches to encourage the development of innovation, experimentation and versatility. What is often referred to as 'flair' is analysed through a logical approach so that anyone can improve their skills with the exercises included. The innovation section exercises can be used over and over again.

The design process indicated here of research, development and prototyping is as valid for the promotional and graphical side of design. The ideal would be that this process becomes second nature to the designer.

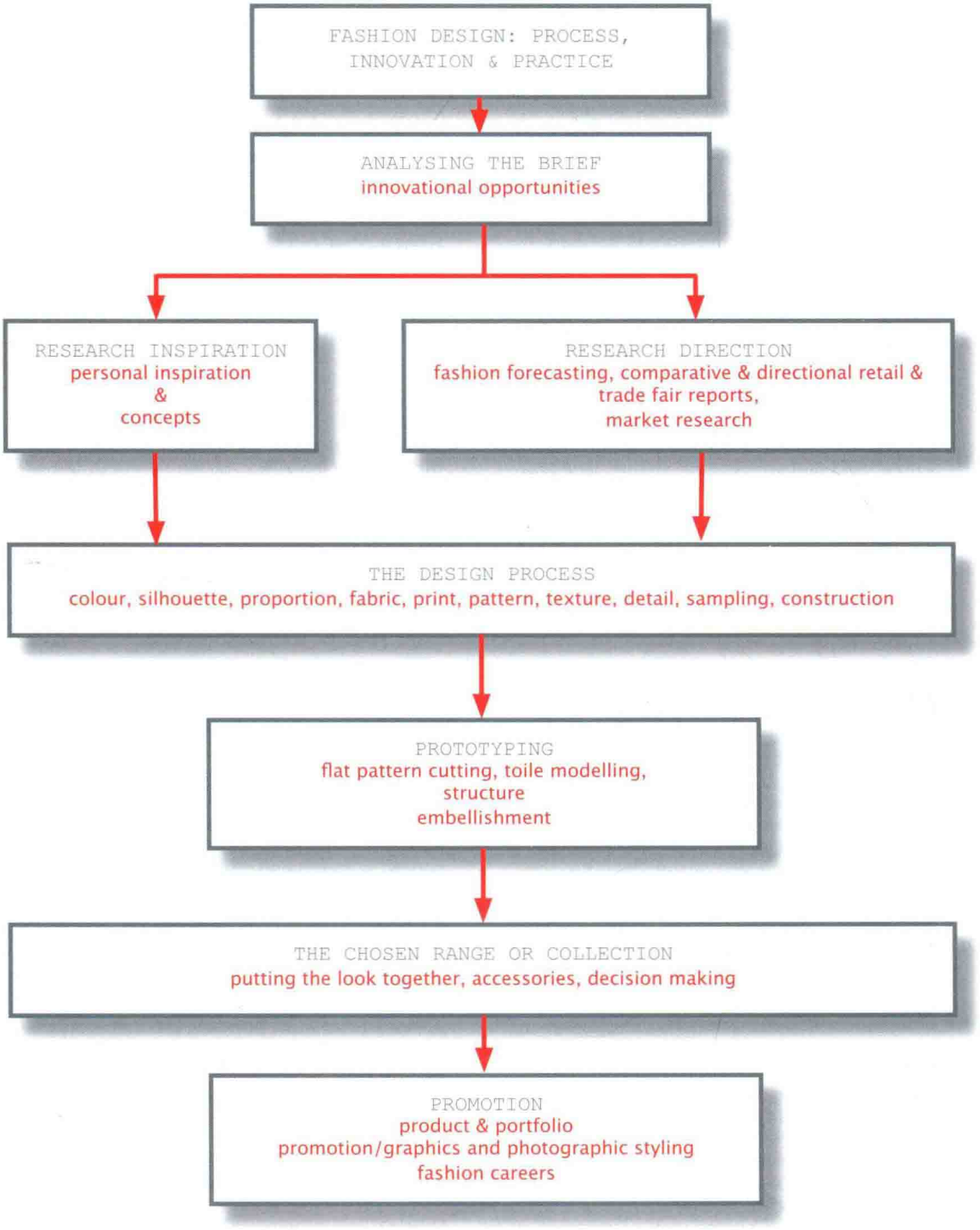
The analytical problem-solving approach is illustrated in the case studies located towards the back of the book.

Consideration is also given to the portfolio and a chapter deals with the types of career available within the fashion industry in an attempt to provide some sort of direction to graduating students, or students who are taking up work placements within the industry.

Because we are dealing with the basic design process there is not space here to discuss pattern cutting in depth. However, pattern cutting is an implicit part of the process and, as with many other areas discussed, it could be that 'creative cutting' and construction is the direction that one may take as opposed to designing garments that are, for example, 'print based'. Often the amount of construction included in garments becomes a 'fashion' issue as does the input of all the other areas mentioned. Further reading into pattern cutting is recommended.

There are many books on the theory of design. Questions concerning what makes a good design or what is good taste are part of an ongoing debate in the design world

Overleaf is a simplistic flow chart indicating the way the design process works.


FASHION DESIGN: PROCESS, INNOVATION & PRACTICE
ANALYSING THE BRIEF
innovational opportunities
RESEARCH INSPIRATION
personal inspiration
&
concepts
RESEARCH DIRECTION
fashion forecasting, comparative & directional retail & trade fair reports,
market research
THE DESIGN PROCESS
colour, silhouette, proportion, fabric, print, pattern, texture, detail, sampling, construction
PROTOTYPING
flat pattern cutting, toile modelling,
structure
embellishment
THE CHOSEN RANGE OR COLLECTION
putting the look together, accessories, decision making
PROMOTION
product & portfolio
promotion/graphics and photographic styling
fashion careers

Analysing the Brief

Before work is begun, it is very important to understand exactly what is required for a client or project. Reading a brief and carefully dissecting it can make the difference between a success or a failure. Asking the right questions is essential!

ACTION LIST

- What are you being asked to do?
- How are you expected to do it, in terms of format, presentation and layout?
- How much work is expected?
- Have you been given a deadline?
- Can you impose a timetable of tasks?
- How will you break down the tasks?
- Is there a budget? What is the budget?
- Is a shop report necessary to gain a better understanding of the market
- Is the shop report going to be directional or comparative?
- Do you need to look at other material such as: historical, cultural, political, social, artistic inspiration?
- Are there any special considerations, for example, when designing children's nightwear?
- Which season are you designing for? What will you use for fashion direction?
- Are there any magazines that you need to refer to?
- What type of fabric and finish are required?
- Do you have to source the fabric?
- Do you need to include samples of finishes?
- Have you got a firm idea about the colour story, fabric story, silhouette, details, pattern and texture?
- What style of execution is required?
- Are you free to interpret the market in the way you see fit?
- Can you use inventive presentation and media techniques?

which FABRIC?

BRIEF:

WHAT? which market? defined by

Design a range of **gilets and jackets** for any market utilising your Trend Sketchbook.
You are required to produce *at least* 30 designs in full colour (to be able to pick 30 designs you should produce twice the amount - 60

design ALL IMPORTANT

The designs should be illustrated as working drawings. No figures! Consideration should be given to the design (including construction as well as surface interest!) of a three dimensional garment (show back and front views - obligatory, and side views if necessary).

clear information - back and front!

Develop your design ideas with due consideration of media use for strong fabric representation and present the ideas for your portfolio - they may be any shape and size as long as they fit into your portfolio.

Suggested areas of consideration:

WOMENSWEAR?

need a shop report, what's happening now!

THINK THEMES

SILHOUETTE
FABRICATION
COLOUR
PATTERN/TEXTURE
GRAPHICS
PRESENTATION
FASHION DIRECTION

WHICH SEASON?

Work Requirements:
At least 30 designs rendered as coloured working drawings presented for portfolio.

NO MODELS

WORKING DRAWINGS ONLY!

no deadlines! find out???

NEED TO PLAN TIME

ANALYSING THE BRIEF

By Dr. Kevin Hilton

The analysis of a brief should start with deconstruction and end with reconstruction. Breaking down a brief allows you to try and determine what the client believes they want and, more importantly, to identify what the client actually needs. Briefs can often be ambiguous when the client attempts to describe what the issues are.

If you look at riddles and lateral thinking questions closely, you will notice that there are often three types of content within a question/brief structure:

- **Key elements:** which frame important points positively or negatively.
- **Situational elements:** which are of secondary importance but help to set the context for the key elements.
- **Distracting elements:** which serve only to distract from the key elements.

Distracting elements must be identified quickly and discarded in order to clarify the structure of the brief and to identify the key elements. Once these are determined, the brief needs to be reconstructed with a clear context, described by situational elements, setting the scene for designers and the client to then understand the key elements. Sometimes it may help to use association and metaphor if situational elements rely too heavily upon specialist experience for the key elements to be fully understood.

Once you have written a clear context for the brief and taken a design or innovation approach to the process, you will need to conclude the brief by qualifying your intent with an 'Actions List', for the benefit of the designer as well as the client.

It should be noted that there are two different approaches to this process of brief analysis. Design takes a problem identification approach which is a reactive approach, looking to identify and solve key problems to create a better product or service.

Innovation, however, takes a proactive approach by opportunity identification, to change the way user needs are served by products or services, avoiding problems through the innovation.

In order to deconstruct and reconstruct a brief, with either a design or innovation approach, it may become apparent, especially within an innovation context, that more market knowledge is required in order to proceed with any certainty.

From your first pass at reconstructing the brief it should become apparent what research direction is required. Try drawing up a mind map to clearly log your approach and research findings. Start the map with key opportunities and/or problems and then begin to expand upon these with related issues. As your research continues in parallel and your comprehension of the market area opportunities improves, you will need to transfer the new information to the map to keep it up to date. There are many different approaches to mind mapping, the divergent approach being most common, but try a networking approach by creating links between those issues that are related to more than one element. By this networking method you may become aware that some of the apparently minor issues are quite key to a lot of elements within the whole context. The mind map acts as a reflection point, but you will need other tools as part of your process; for instance, try creating a generic checklist of issues that will need attention.

Also, always keep a notebook close at hand for data, questions and ideas. Short-term memory is often unreliable.

Your research approach should be fully logged with images, swatches, reference material and other relevant data, neatly filed for quick reference and clearly written so that anyone reading the project can easily determine your present position and how you got there.

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Innovation

This chapter offers a series of exercises that are intended to promote innovative thinking to generate new products or processes which successfully change the way we do things.

The exercises tend to be useful at the onset of a project after the brief has been analysed. Sometimes they require the input of a group of people, this may help when developing a whole new range of products.

EXERCISES TO PROMOTE INNOVATION
By Dr. Kevin Hilton

BRAINSTORMING
Brainstorming or concept generation can be a valuable 'first action' exercise. It can involve between two to eight people, plus one person whose role is facilitator. It is the facilitator's role to get the session rolling by showing a funny video clip and/or asking a lateral thinking question, or something similar, for the first 5 or 10 minutes. Then, with the intention of getting as many ideas as possible from the group, the facilitator delivers the main question. As people begin to generate ideas, the facilitator makes sure that the 'no criticism' rule is obeyed and that the group does not wander too far off subject. (It is permitted to wander a little, as this can allow the group to return to the problem from a different angle). Refreshments, e.g. drinks and confectionery, should be available throughout, not just for breaks but as an energy source. The session length may vary, dependent upon subject matter, but a session should not be shorter than 1 hour because it takes 20-30 minutes for people to settle down to the flow.
Whilst it is good to generate workable solutions during such a session, if people only say things they believe are workable then their mental blocking of certain ideas may preclude others from being sparked off on a workable solution path. In addition to the production of a mass of potential solutions, brainstorming also serves to charge up the subconscious to continue thinking about the subject as a background process.

REVIEW & REFLECTION
Throughout a project, you should have designated points for reflection upon work to date, whether this is a review of ideas generated by a brainstorm or a review on completion of a project stage. Such reviews require the use of constructive criticism and are intended as a check of the project, for opportunities to further improve on achievements or even improve the approach taken so far. This approach is called total quality management and can be a valuable management tool.

To carry out a review of a brainstorm or project stage you will need a copy of the brief, your theme or action list and a list of criteria which states exactly what the project needs to address in order to fulfil the brief. With these, you will gain a measure of the worth of the ideas generated or how well the project is keeping on track.

ENQUIRY EXERCISE & MOTIVATION
For any activity or process to become second nature requires regular practice. However, in order to practise regularly you need to be motivated and this can only come from within. You must determine what sort of mental, physical and spiritual experiences you have an interest in whilst keeping an open mind to try new things.

What follows is a series of exercise types intended to suggest sources of stimulation that can improve your approach to opportunity identification and problem solving.

ALTERNATIVE USES
This exercise can be used as a short warm-up before a brainstorm. Take an item from home or the office and see how many alternative uses you and your colleagues can think of for it within 5 minutes. This exercise can be done either as a group or as a competition between the two halves of the group. This exercise can also be done individually but it is best not to run it as a competition between individuals because it is easier to cope with being part of a losing team than it is being and individual loser.

ASSOCIATIONS & SCENARIOS
Working alone or in a small group, take pairs of ideas and place them in association. Consider whether these associations could describe novel concept services or products. If not, try again with other ideas until workable concepts are generated. Then

develop scenarios (story lines) around the use of each concept. This exercise is similar to brainstorming, but instead of the intent being to generate large numbers of ideas, this exercise is intended to help develop an approach towards the evaluation of ideas, which improves the individual's ability to identify opportunities.

TWENTY QUESTIONS
This exercise is sometimes called 'Animal, Vegetable or Mineral'. With a limit of just twenty questions that can only receive 'Yes' or 'No' answers, the first three questions are best spent determining what mix of materials the puzzle item is made of. This game may have been played as a child with the goal of guessing the item with the fewest questions asked. However, there is an additional part suggested for this version: the person posing the puzzle should think about the questions and the method of questioning that their opponent is using and consider how best to narrow their field of focus quickly and also consider whether there are any additional clues their opponent has unwittingly given away. For example, does the opponent keep looking towards the same part of the room?

LATERAL THINKING PUZZLES
There are a number of puzzle books available as source material for this exercise and whilst they are usually structured so that you can puzzle over them alone it is much more fun to do this exercise in pairs or groups. This exercise has some similarity to 'Twenty Questions', though it is not usual to impose a limit on the number of questions asked during such puzzles. However, you may wish to impose a limit. It is also suggested that you should be thinking about the effectiveness of questioning as the puzzler or solver. Thinking what to ask when you first begin such exercises is often more difficult than you might expect, but as you practise you begin to develop an approach and the exercise becomes more fun.

HOW THINGS WORK
Although you may think of this exercise in terms of product, it also refers to services. This is an exercise in enquiry, which may include how a sewing machine stitches or how a franchise works. Such a line of enquiry improves our understanding of the world around us; when we answer our enquiries and when we are unable to answer a question our mind stores the enquiry, sometimes for years, and improves our attention to these issues. Improvements in alertness may develop a sharpened perception of opportunities.

WHY THINGS DON'T WORK
Similar to the above exercise but approaching from the opposite direction, this requires that you consider why products or services fail. There are often opportunities to be had from failures, even your own. 'Do not fear failure. Respect it.' Many lessons cannot be learned without failure. (You have no idea how well a car can hold the road in wet or icy conditions until you begin to feel it skid.)

NATURAL PHENOMENA
Though you can find books that pose such puzzles as these, you can spot examples of such phenomena yourself and it is very important that you do so. Use this exercise like the previous two to sharpen your perception and to motivate an attitude of enquiry. Some explanations may simply be gained from an expert source, whilst other explanations will be developed as this exercise sparks off a research exercise. See 'Diary or Log-Book' on page 7.

A DAY IN THE LIFE
This is a social exercise where you are encouraged to increase your knowledge of other professions by taking the opportunity, socially, to enquire about a typical day for people you meet. Many people will make a mental note of people's professions by title only, but you can increase the depth of your experience and confidence if you carry out a regular exercise of 'A day in the life of...'.

HAVE A GO
This is also an exercise in experience building, but it differs from the previous in that you are encouraged to try things for yourself, provided they are not physically dangerous. Try cooking a meal for ten, redesigning your garden, or reading a classic novel. You may seek supervision for this exercise. You might think about recording your experiences; some experiences may be suitable for video.

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY
Try doing something you have done many times before in a different way. Question in what way it was better or worse than normal. Create new experiences and compare these to old ones on a regular basis.

MAGIC TRICKS
For this exercise you should start with a magic trick you have seen and try to recreate it from scratch. Ask yourself: was it achieved by device or distraction? Can you do it alone? How would you best go about such trickery? This is a very practical type of exercise but nonetheless requires some thought.

ANALOGIES
The more you practise the use of analogy the more it will help with many of the other exercises, whilst improving memory recall and perception of opportunities. Analogies sometimes allow you to make inspired leaps through 'If - Then' reasoning. If you suggest something is comparable to your puzzle problem, then following the analogy further there may be additional similarities, which may suggest possible solutions to the problem at hand. Analogies are also a good means of explaining new concepts to people.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER
The best way to learn about something and to better understand it is to teach it. By verbalizing your thoughts, you will often find you can think more clearly about the subject. This is not just because you may not wish to pass on incorrect information, but because individual thinking and learning styles handle visual, auditory and kinaesthetic information differently and the more types of referencing your brain can make the easier it will be to recall this information on demand. So, for this exercise, when the opportunity arises pass on some of your knowledge. You may get some in return.

DIARY OR LOG-BOOK
Keeping a diary or log-book with you at all times will encourage you to note down ideas, information and questions. You cannot be expected to remember all the thoughts that pass through your short-term memory, but you will find that writing them down helps transfer them to long-term memory as well as providing a back-up in the log. This is more an exercise in recording information than one of thinking.

SUMMARY
You need to be motivated towards practising any of these exercises and some may appeal more than others, so start with those first. You don't have to try them all to feel the benefit. It may help not to think in terms of exercises, which sound very academic. Think of them as a source of fun. So, if they aren't much fun then they probably aren't the right experiences for you, yet.

There are plenty of opportunities open for everyone to improve their knowledge and processes for innovative thinking, within education and professional practice, using the techniques described here. However, to do well, individuals must be intrinsically motivated. Intrinsic motivation comes from within, driven by personal purpose.

DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

In his book 100+ Ideas for Teaching Thinking Skills, Stephen Bowkett lays out the 'Seven Dispositions for Effective Thinking', these may well be aspirational skills but reflect the motivation required to be an open-minded designer.

Effective thinkers:
- Are adventurous, playful and curious;
- Like to wonder, probe and enquire;
- Actively construct explanations (at their current level of understanding);
- Make plans and create strategies and are prepared to change them;
- Are precise, organized and thorough, even while recognizing that the creative aspects of thinking can be 'messy' - non linear, irrational, metaphorical;
- Value ideas, seek and evaluate reasons;
- Are reflective and metacognitive.

From Bowkett, S,. (2007), 100+ Ideas for Teaching Thinking Skills, Continuum International Publishing Group, London.

A SERIES OF VISUAL EXERCISES

With this in mind, further, more visual exercises may open up all kinds of possibilities. Sometimes it is difficult to know where to start if the analysis of the brief doesn't begin to offer inspiration direction, these exercises will offer original material that may help to direct research. The exercises begin by using words as the basis of visualizing concepts.

The first exercise explains the Dadaist technique of creating an original poem and is a method devised by Tristan Tzara!

- Find a newspaper, any newspaper.
- Take some scissors and any article in

the newspaper - Tzara suggests that the article is as long as the poem you require.

- Cut out the article and cut up each word, placing them in a bag.
- Shake the bag gently.
- Take out the words and lay them out in the order they come out of the bag. Copy this literally.
- This becomes the poem, which is original and comes from you and should provide inspiration because of its quirky sense.

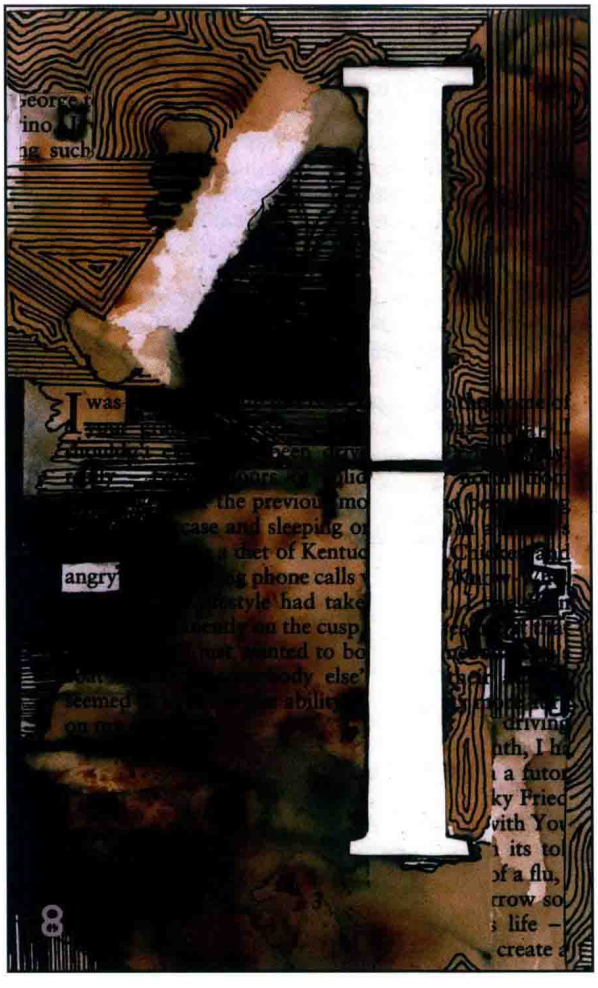
William Burroughs developed a cut-up technique of his own which combined and blended a series of random texts into a separate narrative. The idea was to avoid using conventional language patterns and to make the reader think differently about what they read. Try this approach using acclaimed novels, scientific textbooks or artist's philosophies.

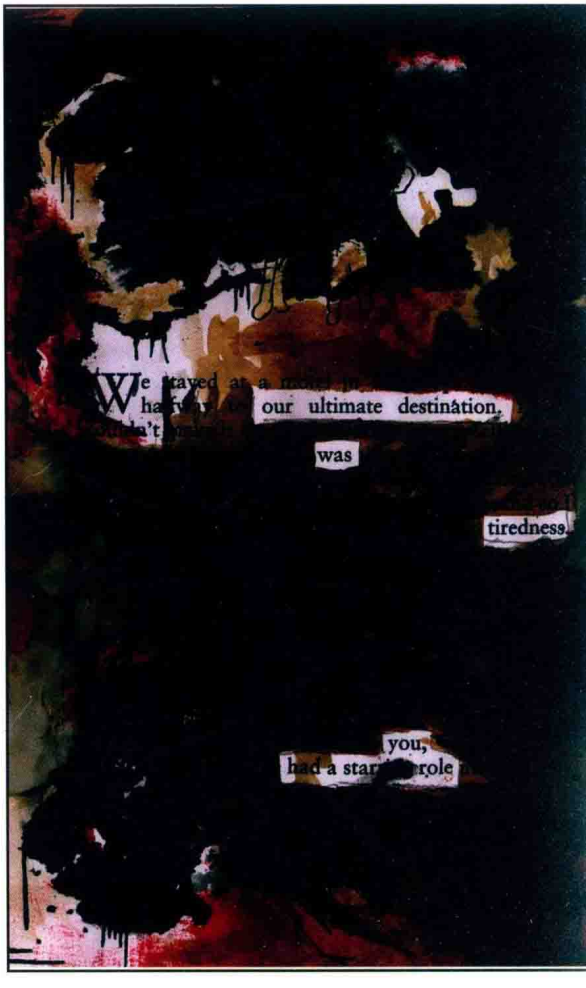
This final exercise is based on an idea by the artist, Tom Phillips, who was originally inspired by William Burroughs and the Dadaists cut-up techniques.

Tom Phillips used 'the Human Document' by W.H. Mallock as the subject of his own version of the cut up technique and called his resulting work 'the Humument'. This is a derivation of the **Hum**an Doc**ument.** He looked at deleting certain words from the publication and then started to visualize the sense of the remaining words, on the page.

For further inspiration and information search on the Internet for Dadaism, Tristan Tzara, William Burroughs, Tom Phillips and The Humument.

Illustrations by Helen Ingrey. The text for inspiration here was Life After God by Douglas Coupland. These visualizations were adapted from the chapter 'Little Creatures'!





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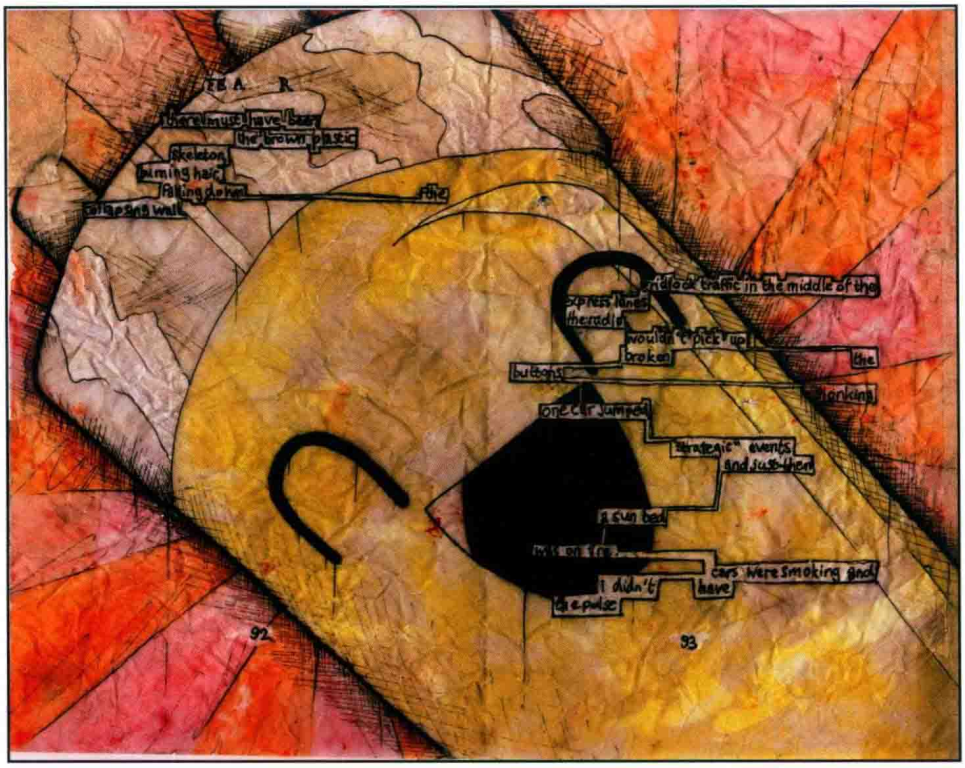
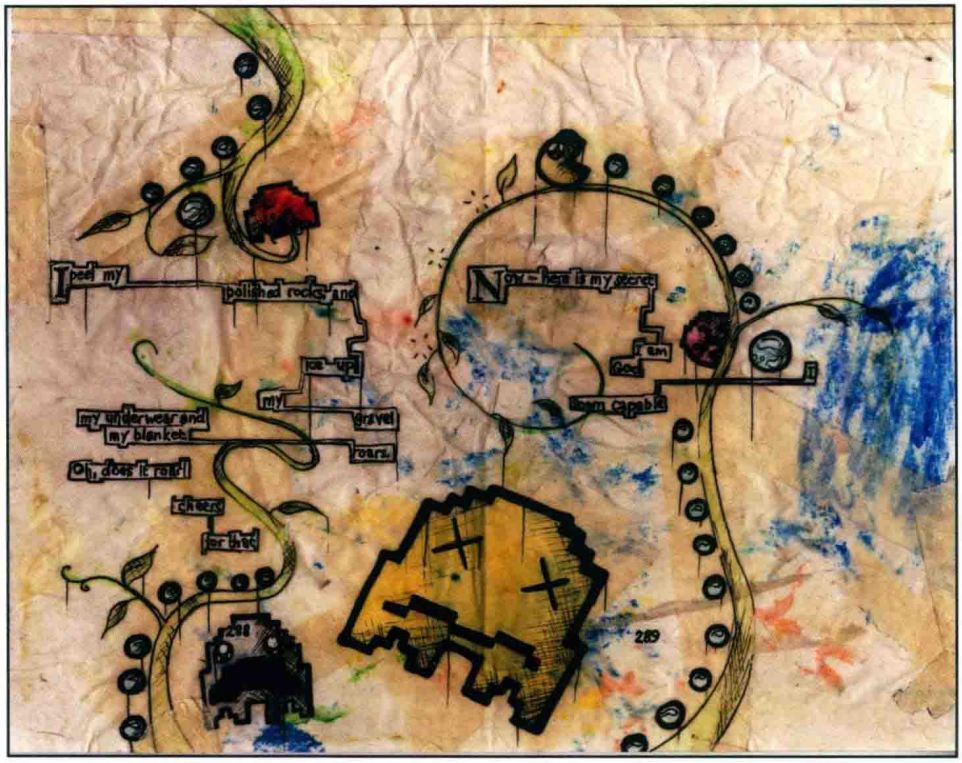
Illustrations by Michael Laine. The text for inspiration here was Life After God by Douglas Coupland.

These visualizations were adapted from the chapter 'The Wrong Sun'.





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