



PORTFOLIO

Tricia Austin & Richard Doust

New Media Design

Mapping the spectrum of career opportunities created by digital technologies in the graphic design industry, this book describes the attitudes, skills and knowledge needed to enter the profession, and captures the flavour and excitement of working in this field. It explains how graphic designers use computers as a medium to combine word, image, motion, sound and user interaction for the Internet, film and television, games, CDs and exhibitions.



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Laurence King Publishing





LAURENCE KING

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Introduction

What is graphic design?	9
What is old media?	10
What is new media?	11
What is new-media graphic design?	21
The aim of this book	21
Summary	22

1

Starting Points

Historical overview	25
Graphic design and the impact of new media	33
Changing and emerging areas of practice	37
Summary	60

2

Designing for New Media

New-media design vocabularies and techniques	63
The design process	80
The creative process	85
Summary	89

3

The Internet Environment

- From cyberspace to the real world 93
- Routes into the labyrinth 100
- Social space 102
- Discovery and learning 107
- e-learning 108
- Intranets and extranets 110
- Email 111
- Digital broadcasting 112
- Marketing and commerce online 113
- Summary 116

4

Imaginary Worlds

- Computer graphics: imaging real and unreal worlds 119
- Simulation 123
- The virtual graphic-design studio: the digital island 125
- Multimedia 128
- The digital effects industry 132
- The computer games industry 137
- Electronic and virtual worlds 145
- Summary 146

5

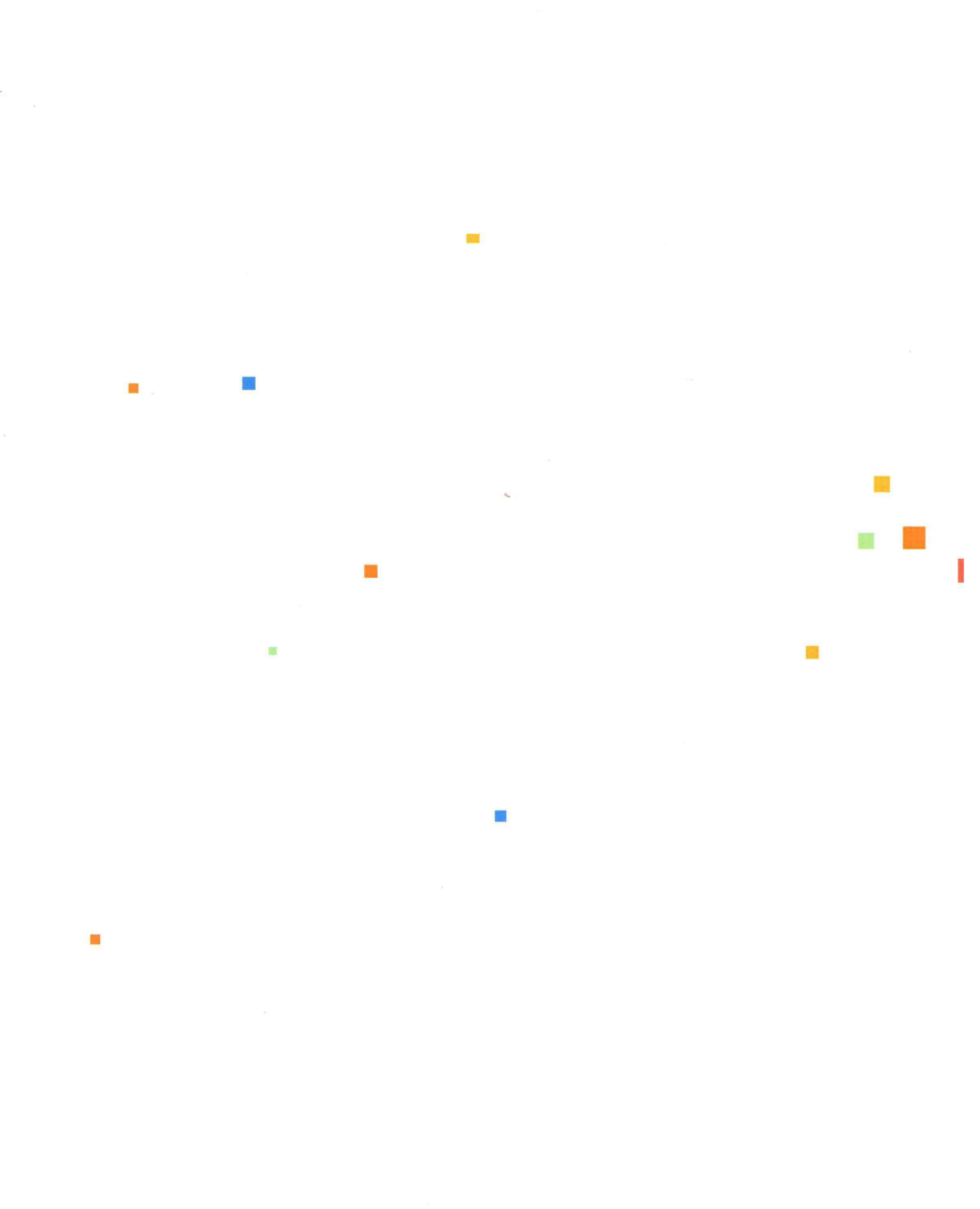
Next Steps

- Why choose new-media design? 149
- The qualities you need to succeed 149
- Working environments 151
- Young, independent new-media design companies 153
- Freelancing in new-media design 156
- Workflow 159
- Collaboration 160
- Getting your first job 162
- Telling the world about yourself and your work 164
- What you need to know 169
- Summary 178

...

- Glossary 180
- Further Reading 184
- Websites 185
- Index 187







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Introduction

What is graphic design?	9
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What is new media?	11
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From cyberspace to the real world 93
Routes into the labyrinth 100
Social space 102
Discovery and learning 107
e-learning 108
Intranets and extranets 110
Email 111
Digital broadcasting 112
Marketing and commerce online 113
Summary 116

4

Imaginary Worlds

Computer graphics: imaging real and unreal worlds 119
Simulation 123
The virtual graphic-design studio: the digital island 125
Multimedia 128
The digital effects industry 132
The computer games industry 137
Electronic and virtual worlds 145
Summary 146

5

Next Steps

Why choose new-media design? 149
The qualities you need to succeed 149
Working environments 151
Young, independent new-media design companies 153
Freelancing in new-media design 156
Workflow 159
Collaboration 160
Getting your first job 162
Telling the world about yourself and your work 164
What you need to know 169
Summary 178

• • •

Glossary 180
Further Reading 184
Websites 185
Index 187



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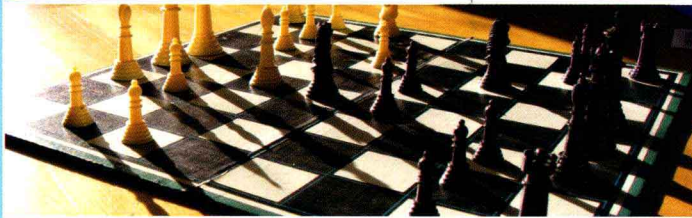
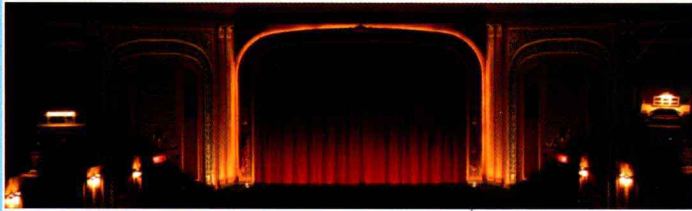
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Introduction

Traditional Media



▲ Top down: Printed magazine display in a typical newsagent's shop. Traditionally printed books on a shelf. Cinema audience. Traditional chessboard game.

► Top down: Vogue magazine website, Condé Nast. Music download website, Livewire. Interactive TV controller, Sky TV. Computer game: Black & White 2. Computer-generated images at a theme park ride. Interactive museum installation by Rom and Son, Horniman Museum, London.

New Media



Introduction

What is graphic design?

Graphic design is the process by which textual and visual information – words and pictures – are arranged, given form and structure, to communicate a mood or a message in an aesthetically pleasing way. Graphic design is everywhere. How would you find your way around the subway system without signs and maps to orientate you? How would you be able to find what you are looking for on a website without a clear navigational system? How would you know which medicine to take without the labels on the bottles? How would you choose which book, CD or magazine to buy if there wasn't an attractive and informative cover that described what was inside? How would you recognize the beginning of your favourite TV programme if it weren't for the title sequence?

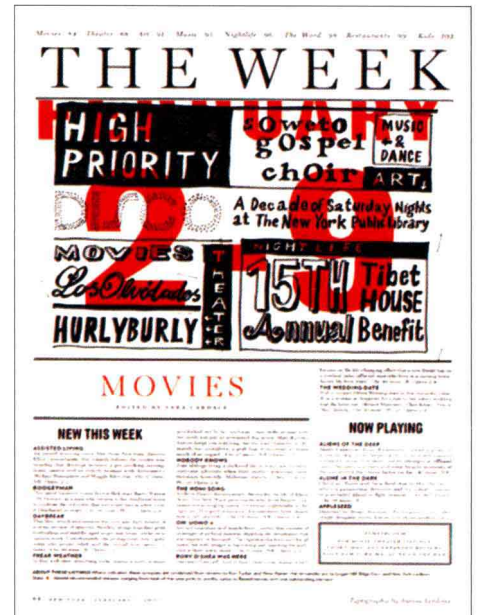
Graphic designers have made the numerous messages you encounter in the street, in the supermarket, in clubs or galleries, at home on television, on your computer, or in magazines, posters and books, more exciting and accessible. They use their skills and imagination in assembling text and images to communicate all the vital information you need in order to find your way around real and virtual space. Their work informs our decisions about what we buy, and even what we think we want. But it also goes deeper than that: graphic design enables us to imagine ourselves in stories, films and games. We even collect graphics: for example, the posters, CDs and old concert tickets that trigger some of our most cherished memories.

However, if you tell someone you are a graphic designer, more often than not they don't know what you mean. Graphic design is a booming profession globally, yet somehow it remains a mystery to many people. The reason why people might find graphic design unfathomable is that it takes so many different forms. The term includes typeface design (the design of letter forms); editorial design (the layout of books and magazines); the design of environmental signage (way-finding systems such as street signs); the design of posters; corporate-identity design (the design of logos, letterheads, websites, brochures that convey the brand values of a company); packaging design; information design (diagrams, charts, maps, manuals); advertisements; title sequences for television; music videos; characters and environments for computer games; interface design for websites and kiosks – stand-alone interactive touch-screen information displays found in museums, visitor centres, concert halls and theatres.

This book is about new media, but what exactly do we mean by old media?



▲ Without directions such as these road signs, we would find it very difficult to get around in unfamiliar and even in familiar locations.



▲ Some designers, such as Jeanne Verdoux who works in New York and France, combine illustration with typography.



What is old media?

While the focus of this book is on new media, it is useful to explore first what is meant by old media and its various characteristics. What we now call old media are those that were developed before computers and the Internet came into widespread use, namely print, film and television, with the allied skills of illustration, photography and graphic design. It is not a term widely used, except in contrast with so-called new media. Although computers are now ubiquitous and almost indispensable in all media, old and new, it is technically possible to create books, newspapers and magazines without them, although the skills and equipment needed are virtually obsolete. New media, as we shall see later, cannot exist without computers.

It is hard to believe when we hold an illustrated second-hand book from the 1960s in our hands that it was produced entirely with analogue technology, using either hot-metal or photographically produced type, cut-and-paste layout with designers employing scalpels and gum or wax, and printed by plates processed in baths of chemical solutions. It is also almost unbelievable now that early television went out live to air. For repeats, they got the actors in again and broadcast it live once more, just like a theatrical performance. When video recorders became available, tape was so expensive that many classic comedy and light entertainment programmes were quickly wiped and the tape reused.

The characteristics of old media

What are the fundamental differences between old and new media? Old media were analogue; new media are digital. Old media were sequential; new media are interactive. Old media were static; new media are dynamic.



What do we mean by analogue? On an old vinyl long-playing record, for example, the music is stored as a continuously variable spectrum of vibrations, as smooth waves cut into the grooves. On a digital CD, however, the music has been sampled into discrete chunks with each given a number. These are stored on the disc as bumps and pits, equivalent to the 1s and 0s of binary arithmetic, just like the bits (binary digits) that make a computer work. It may appear a crude method of representing the richness of sound, but the bumps are so tiny that our ears do not notice the transitions. And because the technology is digital, the numbers can be copied and manipulated endlessly with no loss of quality. Indeed, some early computers were analogue, adding together two voltages for example to create a sum, but digital won the day.

Old media mainly means print: books, newspapers, magazines, packaging, posters, and other publications, such as manuals, company brochures and point-of-sale displays. These are static linear media, meaning they impose a rigid pattern of reading – left to right, from top to bottom, start to finish. Of course, users can dip into a magazine, or consult an entry in a dictionary or encyclopedia, but by and large they perpetuate a narrative structure based on traditional storytelling techniques, i.e. with a beginning, middle and end. Traditional film, television, radio

and animation also work the same way, presenting narratives in a linear fashion. The usefulness of old media is further limited by its physical size, need for storage and lack of portability.

What is new media?

By new media we mean: the Internet, computer games, CD-Roms and DVDs, interactive environments, in fact anything digital and moving; and in the future it will include things like electronic paper that can be updated automatically. It is the term used to describe the huge explosion of new entertainment and information systems developed in the past ten years, all made possible by developments in computing. In the early 1990s, you might have amused yourself by reading magazines, watching movies on video or playing computer games on your TV screen. Now the options have been vastly extended: for example, you can play games 'live' online with real people all over the world; create your own music by downloading samples and loops; use the remote control to change the camera angle of the picture on your interactive TV; take a ride in a virtual environment at a theme park or museum; tour representations of buildings that haven't yet been built; or fly through detailed 3D reconstructions of cities and even through immersive representations of the human body.

Interactivity is possibly the most novel and challenging aspect of new media. Compare fixed and static print, photography, radio, television or film to the dynamic responsive Internet or interactive exhibits, objects and environments.



▲ Interactive graphics in museums and visitor centres enable people to navigate their way around immense volumes of information, such as this interactive display from *Imagining the City*, Urbis, the museum of urban culture, Manchester, UK. The graphic designer no longer simply interprets the brief set by the client. The interactive possibilities within the digital medium itself have become the focus of interest. *Land Design Studio*

▼ *Imagining the City* is a sensory table interface that instantly transforms into an overhead projected city. *Image: Nick Wood*



