

Functional Books

Aims

To think like a product designer rather than a graphic designer (just for a change). To make an object that people use rather than look at. To create value through design, rather than present something that is already valuable. Perhaps even to design something that could be manufactured and sold.

Task

Design and bind a book which is primarily functional rather than being solely a medium for text and images. So, think maps, cooking books, personal organisers, diaries, notebooks... Basically, it should be a book that you *use* for something other than reading.

The function could be derived from what is printed on the book's pages, or from the way those pages are folded, cut, sewn, glued and bound. Pay careful consideration to materials: what sort of paper and board should you choose? Should it be durable or ephemeral? Could you combine the paper with more exotic materials? How do all these parts fit together into a satisfying whole?

Who uses the book? And for what reason? What situation will it be used in? You should ask these questions right at the start of the project and then design the solution.

Practicalities & considerations

Printing is quite difficult when combined with the practicalities of book binding. Book binding works best when you can print onto large sheets of paper on both sides and fold them down. You will need to consider how you get your design onto the page and how

you then bind those pages into a book. We can talk about this as the project progresses.

It's probably best not to buy expensive paper until the final version. Instead, use the cheapest materials you can find like sugar paper or newsprint for the earlier prototypes. As you will be making a lot of prototypes it will likely be expensive otherwise. However, you should still be thinking about which materials to use and should buy small samples to try out.

Hopefully your designs will be inventive when it comes to the book's graphic elements, binding and materials, but please make sure that you don't stray too far from the codex form. Your book should remain 'bookish'.

Process & schedule

Thursday 16th Nov – Briefing

Week 1 – Choose a purpose for your book and then jump headfirst into a process of iterative prototyping. Make a series of dummy-books out of real materials in order to make your ideas tangible and testable (please don't just make sketches).

Thursday 23rd Nov, 2.15pm – Group tutorial where we'll look together at what you have produced so far. Followed by a book-binding workshop where we'll go over the basics for those who haven't yet had the pleasure of one of Douglas' classes. Even if you are not doing the brief, you are welcome to come and learn this very useful skill.

Duration: 3 weeks. Further dates & deadline to be announced.