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During lunch we discussed titles. I suggested forms of wordplay such as ‘Youthoria’ and the like, and while not bad ideas they didn’t seem to fit with our choices. Giselle suggested using a title based on Ross Sinclair’s T-shirts, eventually leading us to the final choice of ‘Crazy? Damn right I’m crazy’. (MOR)

HERE’S THE BRIEF: WE NEED PRINTED MATERIAL TO PROMOTE AN ART EXHIBITION AND TO INVITE PEOPLE TO THE PREVIEW. THERE ARE A FEW FACTORS TO BEAR IN MIND THOUGH. MOST OF THE AUDIENCE WE WOULD LIKE TO ATTRACT AREN’T ON OUR MAILING LIST. AND THEY’RE NOT USUALLY INVITED TO PREVIEWS. TO BE HONEST, WE’RE NOT SURE IF THEY EVEN COME TO ART GALLERIES MUCH ...WHICH IS REALLY THE REASON WHY WE’D LIKE TO INVITE THEM.

As design briefs go, this has been one of my favourites. I’m not being sarcastic – I love engaging with something that will put our creativity to the test.

To be fair, I am rather doing the Ferens Art Gallery and the exhibition’s curators a disservice here – they knew exactly what they were doing in curating a show by young adults with young adults as the primary audience. And even better, they had the Art Ambassadors – recruited from the very audience they wished to engage.

It’s one of my deepest-held design philosophies that the best way to engage people with any project is to involve them in the creative process, so it was with eager anticipation that I welcomed a representative posse of ambassadors and curators to our studio to throw around ideas, both mentally and physically.

What came out of that initial meeting was the desire for ‘something’ appropriate to the environment in which it would ultimately be used - notably pubs, coffee bars and at freshers’ fairs. It had to have that ‘pick-up appeal’, quickly followed by ‘pocket appeal’ so that flyers and invites would end up in bedrooms, stuck on fridges and pinned to walls.

Our design approach was to use a visual language that didn’t look like it came from an art gallery - this wasn’t going to be aimed at those who were already art-savvy. Nor did we want to risk creating promotional material that would be ignored because it was deemed to be for a different social or class grouping. Being cool in the way that many art galleries seem to aspire to, or even a bit clever (or worse, arty-clever) was never on the agenda. We intended to challenge perceptions, arouse interest, even fool people into reading our stuff and to that end, the title of the exhibition very much set the tone. It would be just a little bit crazy.

How did you come up with the title?

We asked the Art Ambassadors to come up with some ideas for a title and, with some ideas on the table, we talked through their suggestions. However, one of the slogans from Ross Sinclair’s t-shirts seemed to shout out at us – Crazy Damn right I’m crazy. It seemed to speak for every generation – whether you were a young person in the 1950s, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s or are one right now. We checked with Ross Sinclair for his permission to use an idea from one of his art works, and also with the Arts Council Collection and the Ferens for their approval. It got the thumbs-up.

How did you create your publicity material for the exhibition?

We approached Adrian Riley of Electric Angel Design to create the ‘brand’ for the exhibition and design publicity material that would attract a younger audience, particularly those young people who may not have visited the Ferens Arts Gallery before. We discussed ideas with the Art Ambassadors, asking them to bring along examples of advertising material, magazine layouts and brand logos that they particularly liked, to one of our meetings. We then shared our thoughts with Adrian. We wanted the branding and design to be consistent with the design of the labels and panels in the exhibition, so that those who had discovered the exhibition through the publicity material we had circulated, could clearly identify with it.

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After exploring several ideas, we settled on the premise that everyone likes to play. And so the little booklet of sometimes slightly surreal activities in shockingly bright orange was born. A kids' doodle book, but for bigger kids. We envisaged these being completed and compared amongst friends, doodled in and scrawled on in the pub, saved for a friend who'd 'like this sort of thing', or popped into a coat pocket and rediscovered the next morning on the bus – a stimulating start to the day. And, hey! You can trade in one of the pages for a drink at the opening night.

The inspiration for the activities came from some of the artworks in the exhibition, and so coloured panels on wheels, empty boxes, tattoos and t-shirts with slogans all featured. And it was left to the owner of the booklet to choose if they coloured the panel, put something in the box and mused over what their tattoo or t-shirt was going to look like. Make your own mind up, it said.

The posters were orange too. As were banner stands. And t-shirt prints. And panels, graphics and banners inside the gallery. I've seen photos of the Ambassadors' freshers' fair stalls - they're almost vibrating with colour. It might be coincidence but we have not used an inch of orange on a design since and now rarely eat citrus fruit at work. How many of the young people, students, young adults and more regular gallery-goers made a link between the booklet and the art in the exhibition, I don't know. I do know that stood in the gallery on the opening night I was just pleased that they came and in good numbers, most clutching something small and bright orange.

Large sheets of blank little t-shirt outlines in the gallery were quickly filled with comments about the exhibition but I'd have loved to see how some of the booklets were used and whether filling in a fictional family tree helped someone relate to a piece in the show. Instead they had a life of their own outside the gallery, perhaps once customised even became little works of art themselves, carrying thoughts and ideas out into the world. And although the security staff might not wholly agree, I tend to think that galleries are at their best when people can take something home with them. (AR)

[The finished flyers] were exactly what we wanted – something eye-catching that was a little bit different. We advertised all over Hull, each taking separate areas. I took posters to university and put them up everywhere I could, and left our leaflets on tables, as well as giving them out to people in my lectures and asking my teachers to pass some on. (MA)



How did you promote the exhibition to the audience you wanted to attract?

As part of our marketing strategy, we worked with the Art Ambassadors to distribute the publicity material at the places where our intended audience might hang out. Obvious locations included the University of Hull and Hull College (we attended both Freshers' Fairs and distributed over 2000 booklets and a large number of posters). We also left our booklets at bars and cafes, as well as more conventional locations like the library.

To target young people who may not have visited the gallery before, we called the preview of the exhibition a 'launch party' and, on the advice of the Art Ambassadors, organised DJs for a Friday evening, with the later opening time of 7pm – 9pm. The Art Ambassadors felt that the timing was crucial to the event's success. People would come to the event as a warm-up for an evening out. When we talked to students at the Freshers' Fairs – we went up to them, we didn't wait for them to come to us – we gave them a booklet and a poster and we sold it to them as "a good way to start your evening". The booklet would entitle them to a free beer, plus DJs and some cool contemporary art.