

The Little Poster Festival: Drawing Thinking

Mel Brown & Jason Hiron

ORCID Numbers

Mel Brown: 0000-0002-4440-8492

Jason Hiron: 0000-0001-8676-3815

Output Type: Conference Contribution

Output Date: 2021

Output Details:

Research Poster [author accepted abstract and research poster attached]

Education & Illustration: Models, Methods, Paradigms, the 11th Illustration Research online symposium held on 11th Feb 2021. Kingston University.

Illustration Research symposium archived, transcript and audio available on the [symposium site](#)

The Little Poster Festival: Drawing Thinking

Jason Hirons & Mel Brown | Plymouth College of Art

Approaching the design and delivery of contextual modules in ways that develop the skills of student illustrators: extending their knowledge and understanding through critical writing practices which combine drawing and illustration.



We want the illustration degree at Plymouth College of Art to celebrate the value of illustrators commenting on and engaging in and with the world. This includes encouraging students to see writing not as something additional or removed from their work – e.g. the theory element they *have* to do – but rather as something in which they can explicate their ideas and beliefs, described through image and text.

Any illustration programme would want to explore, develop and celebrate the illustrator's talent in being able to convey complex ideas and narratives with visuals that are thought-provoking and accessible. At the start of their third year we always ask students to give a presentation showing consolidation of their thinking, acting as sign-off for the final writing phase of their dissertations, and we recently decided to shift from verbal to drawn presentation of research so far.

The format for the Little Poster Festival is an Illustration Pedagogy take on what is essentially an academic poster. However, we want our students to think about approaching these posters as if they were a commission from a client - to convey 'big ideas', making them both academic and visually exciting. They have to simultaneously present their posters to the rest of their cohort and ambulate the space, questioning methodologies, discussing research questions, and offering recommendations for new avenues of inquiry.

Illustrators have more and more entered the fray as commentators intent on engaging in the big debates of the day, using words and images to speak the language of a world increasingly made of signs and spectacle. Through *drawing + writing, making + thinking*, we are challenging the existing orthodoxy of the supremacy and essentialism of the word in the understanding of critical debate.

Hirons, J. and Brown, M. (2019), 'Drawing thinking: Illustration as pedagogy', *Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice*, 4:2, pp. 327–40, doi: 10.1386/drtpr_00011_1

Jason Hirons MRes - Senior Lecturer in Contextual Studies

Mel Brown MA - Assistant Head of School, School of Design + Communication

The Illustrations above are from Little Poster Festival submissions for the dissertations listed below:

- *Respect Should Not Have To Be Demanded, But Here We Are*, by Izzy Hazard 2020
- *Bastard of a Man! A practice led exploration into toxic masculinity* by Sean Morgan 2020

At Plymouth College of Art we approach the design and delivery of contextual modules in ways that develop the skills of student illustrators, extending their knowledge and understanding through critical writing practices which combine drawing and illustration.

At the start of their third year we ask students to give a presentation showing consolidation of their research and thinking, acting as sign-off for the final writing phase of their dissertations.

The format for The Little Poster Festival is an Illustration Pedagogy take on what is essentially an academic poster.

Students approach their posters as if they were a commission from a client, conveying 'big ideas' while making them both academic and visually exciting.

They then present their posters to the rest of their cohort, questioning methodologies, discussing research questions, and offering each other recommendations for new avenues of inquiry.



2.



3.

Illustrators have more and more entered the fray as commentators intent on engaging in the big debates of the day

They use words and images to speak the language of a world increasingly made of signs and spectacle

Through drawing + writing, making + thinking, they challenge the existing orthodoxy of the supremacy and essentialism of the word in the understanding of critical debate



1.

4.



"It made me think about my project in a more concise way, to organise it in a way that made sense to someone else"

"Working out how to portray my topic visually was an interesting challenge - it forced me to narrow down the key points and references of my dissertation"

"I received some good suggestions, things I hadn't thought of before...sometimes they were very simple things, but I hadn't thought of them because I was too 'head down' into the things I was already researching"

"I just wanted to say what a positive experience the Little Poster Festival was!...It ran so smoothly and I feel like I really got a lot out of it and we all felt much more confident coming away from this experience"

"It was great to be able to summarise my research to someone who had no previous knowledge of the subject. It really solidified what I knew and boosted my confidence!"

5.



1. Jess Holloway, (2020), The Charm of Ugliness

2. Jua O'Kane, (2020), Everyday Horror: The Pain of Being Seen

3. Charlotte Leadley, (2020), The Power of Editorial Illustration: Discussing Environmental, Social and Political Issues of the 21st Century

4. Sean Morgan, (2020), Bastard of a Man! A Practice Led Exploration into Toxic Masculinity and what I, as an illustrator, Can Do to Help Change it

5. Izzy Hazard, (2020), Respect Should Not Have To Be Demanded, But Here We Are: How We Have Not Just Used Our Voices To Fight For What We Deserve

* Hirons, J. and Brown, M. (2019), 'Drawing Thinking: Illustration as pedagogy', Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice, 4:2, pp. 327-40 [2019, Dec]