

Západočeská univerzita v Plzni
Fakulta designu a umění Ladislava Sutnara

Diplomová práce

AUTORSKÁ KNIHA
Unconventional Holidays

University of West Bohemia in Pilsen
Ladislav Sutnar Faculty of Design and Art

Master thesis

AUTHOR'S BOOK
Unconventional Holidays

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Katedra designu
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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracovala samostatně
a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

*I do declare that I have written my diploma thesis by myself
and that I listed all inspiration sources and reading materials.*

Plzeň 2021
Nicoleta Puiu

.....
podpis autorky

As a great philosopher said “I wanna thank me for doing all this work”, but without my great teachers this work would not look the same.¹

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Last but not least, thanks to my colleagues and friends for helping me to pass smoothly and deal with Czech language through 3 years of studying.

¹ Video - Snoop Dogg thanks himself after receiving Hollywood star
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfF3bThOWoQ>

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Annotation

This initial experiment is a selection of posters around the idea of unconventional holidays. This book was created with the aim of bringing together the unconventional with the traditional. We live in a commercially driven era, where digital is chosen over print, where fast making products are chosen over meticulously crafted pieces and where whatever sells comes first. In this book, I want to bring attention to the traditional way of doing things, while also giving it a modern touch.

Holidays are the best representation of a traditional way of making things, people have been celebrating Christmas for ages and it always brings them together. However, lately, even the biggest holidays have become commercially driven. This book focuses on holidays that are not yet commercialized, but can still be celebrated as a way of bringing us together.

In terms of design, every poster has its own voice and character. The illustrations are both digitally and hand drawn. They feel more lively, rough, and have more character through their imperfection. Combining modernist posters with traditional hand made craft in a classical form of a book is what I hope will bring attention to the beauty of celebrating random holidays.

My work in the context of specialization

Originally primarily interested in fine arts during my art school in Moldova, I studied interior design at university but found myself continuously drawn to the more graphic elements of my projects. At the time I didn't realise it, but focusing on elements such as composition, layout, type and collage were actually graphic design components. It was my attention to the graphics in space that landed me a way in with various projects that enabled me to explore more experimental, graphical pieces versus traditional implementation.

One of my incipient projects during my transition from interior to graphic design was designing a series of wine limited edition labels for a local brand from Moldova, nothing came into my mind than using my drawing skills, or collages.² These works helped me understand how important is the difference between printed and digital work. How a poorly executed print effect can change the entire feeling about the artwork you have done before.³

If I used to make things unconsciously before, now it's different. During the 3 years of studying for a Master's degree, I did realize that personal strengths, a solid knowledge of visual language, typography, illustration, color combination, and most important - experimental skills are required. All of these then need to be put into practice and filtered through a strong design sense and more importantly - imagination.

I am a big fan of design that communicates. Design that stands out. Design should be considered creative just because it is based on ideas rather than design trends and cool techniques. Nothing is determined beforehand, and what they teach us at university was to conceptualize and find various ways of messaging that fits each specific project. As with anything, the more I do, the better result I get.

An example of getting a result out of failure was my semestrial project for Depo, in which, after starting in a totally different direction, at the very end I created an identity totally based on a custom font made out of tape that's been used in Depo interiors.⁴ And it was working way better than the one I was working at a lot before. Sometimes it's better to

² Pic. 1: Label design – Fautor limited edition

³ Pic. 2: Label design – Agrici

⁴ Pic. 3: Depo – final version

give up on some ideas, when you don't see a perspective in it, and start everything from the beginning.⁵

Studying for one semester in Poland has changed my vision about this field. It made me understand how important it is to see my work on paper.⁶ I was starting to experiment with classic techniques of linocut, lithography, and screen printing, even trying to combine some of them.⁷ I was starting to pay more attention to poster design, which is something between art and design.⁸

In addition to my studies, I consider participation in workshops and exhibitions as a great contribution to my specialization. Only a big visual background could help me in mixing mediums. Only through experimentation can I understand where my place in this vast creative world is. The way of finding my style is trying and inventing my own approaches.

⁵ Pic. 4: Depo – old version

⁶ Pic. 5: Silkscreen illustrations

⁷ Pic. 6: Lithography+screen printing

⁸ Pic. 7: Smile poster

Looking into the topic/ choosing the subject

What does ‘real’ mean? What does beautiful mean?

What is making an object be real? Something you touch or something that arouses your feelings? What will arouse your feelings? The fact that you will see a hand drawing or the fact that you will hold it in your hands? I'm not saying the ultimate truth or defining beauty through my work. I'm not trying to program an idea of what beauty would mean in a particular context. I try to create a concept, I try to represent a point of view, I try to speculate.

The digitalization is becoming more and more part of our life, I think it diminishes our ability to experience things. There are pictures that disappear one after the other without leaving traces in our minds.⁹ This goes insanely fast. And maybe that's why I want to come up with something that will last longer, will be consumed slower, it will be kept, it will have weight.¹⁰ The feeling of holding a book excludes an aura that I believe cannot be digitized. We have to be careful now, that we rule over the digital world, and are not ruled by it.

Because nowadays, people usually can't find time for reading, or maybe they are not interested in it as much as before, so I have chosen to have an illustrative book, since it makes it more accessible for people and also erases the language barrier problem. An image is universal language and because in this world we run out of time, it helps dissolve the existence of the language barrier. Sometimes, a funny drawing is more powerful than an entire story. Books used to be forgotten in time.

I would like to bring back the tradition of books, but also keep the modern touch of illustrations. It's another feeling when you have an object in front of you, you put your hand on it, you feel it. When it is virtual, it's as if it's not real for me, it gets lost somewhere behind the never-ending screen. The holiday topic – being so easy and funny, gives me this freedom to experiment in the field.

⁹ <https://techcrunch.com/2018/02/10/the-birth-of-snapchat/>

¹⁰ Dieter Rams about modern world.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/28/technology-our-lives-control-us-internet-giants-data>

The aim of the work

The main goal of my thesis was to design an object, which will fully represent me, not a client, an agency or a compromise between us. A book where every page has something to say, where the reader does not feel tired or bored. Where he looks forward to seeing what comes next. It's not a typical book, but rather a collection of images placed in front of the viewer to evoke different states, make him/her smile, think, or come up with a different solution.

I want to finish my master degree studies holding in my hands a real object, touching the texture and feeling the weight and smell of the fresh printed paper. I was aiming to influence the viewer through the visual language I have used, combining techniques like collage, drawing, serigraphy, lithography and combining forms and tools into the composition with a little bit of humour, which would result in a personal reflection, evaluation or speculation to the holidays topic.

I was always considering myself somewhere between being a designer and illustrator. An illustration is like a storyteller. To create a vivid, emotionally intense result, it can try to tell a full story through the image. In my work, there are often images that appeal to feelings, and even their very performance can cause various sensations, even tactile ones. I wanted to use in some of my posters a kind of game with cultural codes, images, words. The goal is to make a person feel something.¹¹

The book is an attempt to encapsulate the essence of finding a way to celebrate something every day. I hope that through exploring the holidays with my representation, I spread some curiosity about holidays that nobody may have ever thought of or heard about. Therefore, I focused on the technical experiments, combinations of digital and traditional. A personal goal of it was both learning and experience through process. This work had a significant effect for me.

Printed on paper, the posters are emotionally charged by the way their message is addressed to others through the arrangement in space. The intention of the visual part of the book is to emphasize this wide range of formal approaches, as well as the process of finding one's own manuscript, consistent art language and compatible form.

¹¹ <http://wtpack.ru/reviews/illustrators-vs-designers/>

The process of creation

During my Erasmus semester in Poland, I basically received a list of topics and one of those was about stupid holidays which inspired me a lot and have made me extend it into something huge. Due to the fact that the holidays are unconventional, I wanted to find an unconventional way to represent it. I wanted it to be a representation of my style - bold colors and unique techniques with a humorous perspective, but also with utility.

One of the biggest challenges when creating this project for me was not only generating ideas, but organizing them in a cohesive way. At the first step of the project, I started to generate as many visual ideas as possible. I was focusing only on my imagination while creating the posters. At some point, I even started to lose the coherent expression and some of the illustrations didn't really fit together visually. That's when I realized that I need to take a step back and visualize what I wanted to express.

This translated into using metaphors and hidden meanings, as well as hyperbolas without showing straight forward the object we expected to see. This was a longer process, but I managed to express my own identity and collect all the posters in one place by giving them utility - the idea of celebration that comes with each of them, but not every time it comes to me instantly as I see the holiday name.

The ability to conceive and execute different types of messages, artworks and stylistic experiments for static or moving images really excites me, mainly because the possibilities are endless. I draw inspiration from a multitude of things: the movies I'm watching, my friends and family, trips, exhibitions I am visiting, and even memes. I think being inspired by things outside graphic design allows me to approach my work with a different perspective.

When I feel I don't have enough inspiration on a specific holiday, I get help by asking myself some stupid questions like: is rock a broad genre or a solid mass of geological materials?¹²

¹² Pic.8: Old rock day poster

Do you remember when we used to leave the caps-lock button on, and we didn't pay attention to it and started to write something while pressing the shift button? As a result, we had all the sentences written in caps lock with the first letter in "small case". How could I show it visually? As a person?¹³

Another component that keeps the posters together is the pieces that formed them, which include a lot of collages that I made from the leftovers from other projects, from flyers and booklets I started to collect a long time ago. I wanted to make something huge, to put in all my effort and strange collections during my travels. This project is a showcase of everything I have done and experimented with during my stay in Czech Republic and Poland. Sometimes the leftovers of the colleges were equally interesting as the main composition

Some of the techniques I use are *hyperbolas* – I used it in the "Broccoli day" poster, which is maybe not visible at the first sign. Maybe the viewer will expect to see broccoli on broccoli day, but I wanted to exaggerate it and transform it into a forest of broccoli. For "Handshake day" – idea was to draw the hands and use the scan motion for giving that shake for the hands. In the metaphorical posters – some of the days are built on unexpected illustrative narrations.¹⁴

Another visual technique is integration of lettering into illustration, which results in a compact visual message combined with visual part.¹⁵ Also, I like to play with words and search some meanings where they aren't or putting the accent on something which maybe doesn't make sense, such as catfish (being a type of fish) I spell it to illustrate it separately - as a cat and fish.

I did a selection of all the posters I had design and I turned them into prints, because I had never done any prints before, so I just thought I will try it. Afterwards, what I decided to do was taking all the posters I have made and turn it into a book.

¹³ Pic.9: Caps-lock day poster

¹⁴ Pic.10: False teeth day

Pic.11: World cocktail day

Pic.12: International coffee day

Pic.13: International sign day

¹⁵ Pic.14: Ugly Christmas sweater day

Pic.15: Work from home day

Pic.16: Spaghetti day

Pic.17: Typewriter day

Technical specification

The book is divided into 12 parts according to the months of the year. Every monthly chapter includes a list of weird holidays for every day and a selection of my personal representation on some of them. The entire approach of the book is a combination between technical text and bold expressive posters. The entire process of the book was a personal research of possibilities and techniques. Starting with traditional approaches such as lithography, serigraphy, linocut and drawing, and ending up with modern software (Photoshop - for putting all elements together, and designing the page layout in Adobe InDesign).

After many attempts on consultations with teachers, we arrived at the 2 formats of the book. The book is digitally printed on 150gr paper for the small formal and 300gr on large one. The chapters for each month of the year have an atypical size.

For every concept, I created a visual language which fills in the gaps in descriptions of holidays, tells stories and speaks to the viewer. As the visual part is the most important component of the book, technique choice intensifies the message I wanted to come up with. For example, using colored pencils in a children's drawing inspired manner, was giving a human touch correlated with the poster's subject.¹⁶

I control the entire process, from the very first phase until the final print. Image is central to my work. Combination of free drawing and magazine cuts, allowing them to intertwine and form well-thought-out and harmonious compositions.

¹⁶ Pic.18: Kids music day poster

The benefit of work for the field

A designer marshals existing tools to communicate messages creatively. A great designer is someone whose imagination goes beyond the existing tools to create opportunities for innovation.

Innovation requires a deeper understanding of what it is we are innovating against: what is the common position that we need to rethink? My aim is to analyze the tension between tradition and modernity in contemporaneous visual communication.

Innovation – in fact, the odds are stacked against true innovation, in the sense of creating something never, ever seen before. As Paul Rand enjoyed repeating ‘Being good is hard enough, don’t worry about being original’¹⁷

I don't pretend to be original, because it's too hard to come up with something new in this field. But when my concept works, it's a win for me. The aim of my diploma project was both learning and experience through process. I hope someone else will learn something from it too, or it will serve as a guide for their further experiments. Maybe someone will find a new day to celebrate something, or at least will find some fun in it.

¹⁷ David Airey. Logo Design Love: A Guide to Creating Iconic Brand Identities

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Resumé

"Unconventional holidays" je aktuální/stále pokračující projekt, ve kterém plánuji vytvořit plakát pro každý v roce a prezentovat je v knižní podobě. Práce představuje výběr neobvyklých svátků po celém světě, které nejsou komerčně vytěžené, ale přesto mohou být oslavovány jako jedna z cest, jenž přivádí lidi dohromady a pojí je k sobě. Co se týče designu, má každý plakát svůj vlastní hlas a charakter. Zaměřila jsem se na experimenty s technikou, na kombinaci digitálního a tradičního. To způsobuje že plakáty, které kromě humoru a sentimentální hodnoty, slouží také jako zdroj pro čistou vizuální potěchu.

Sources

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<https://polishjazz.pl>

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<https://medium.com/@katyatinnmey/https-medium-com-katyatinmey-typography-in-japanese-posters-eng-ea1aeab53ad6>

Picture supplements

Pic. 1:

Label design - Fautor limited edition



Pic. 2:

Label design – Agrici



Pic. 3:
Depo - final version



Pic. 4: Depo - old version



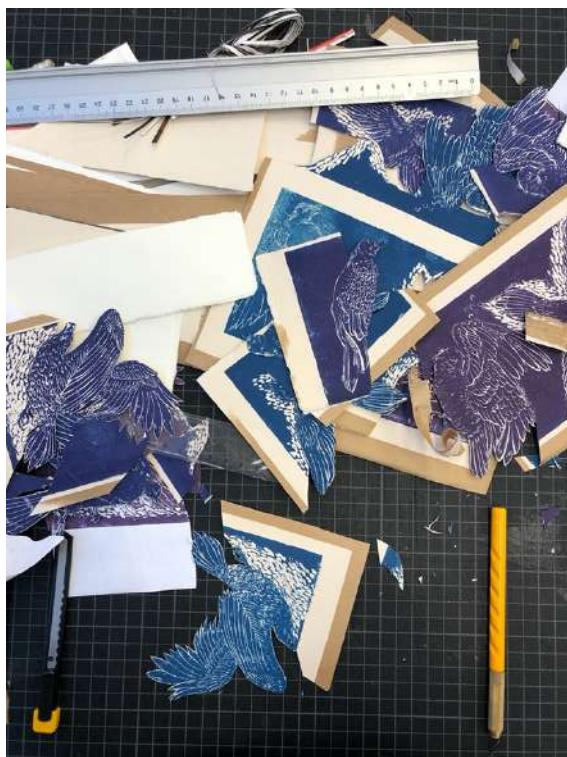
Pic. 5:
Silkscreen illustration



Pic. 6: Lithography + screen printing



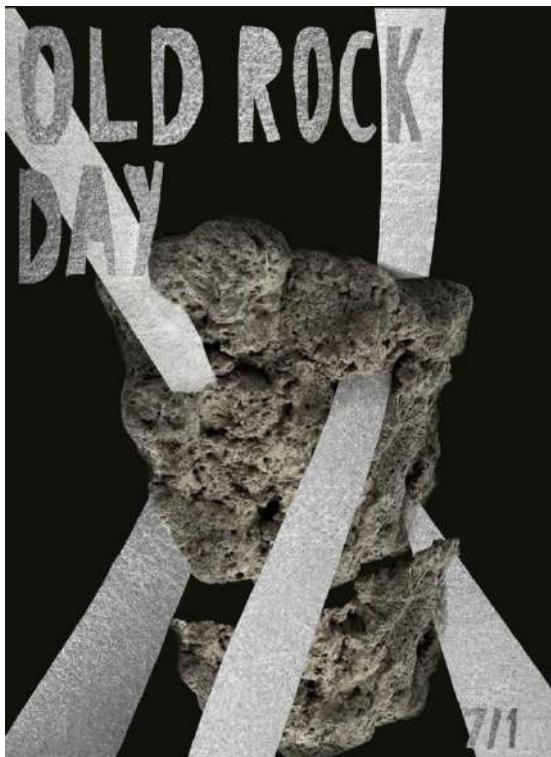
Pic. 5:
Tunnel book/Linocut
Collages



Pic. 7: Smile poster



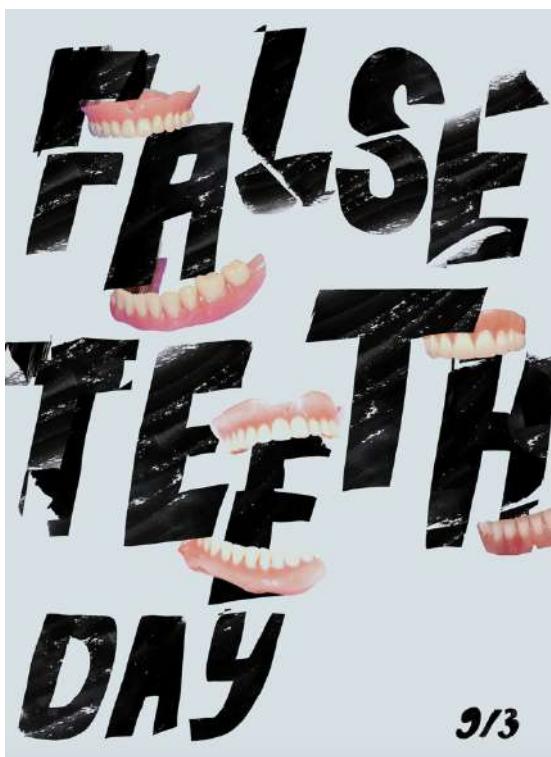
Pic.8: Old rock day poster



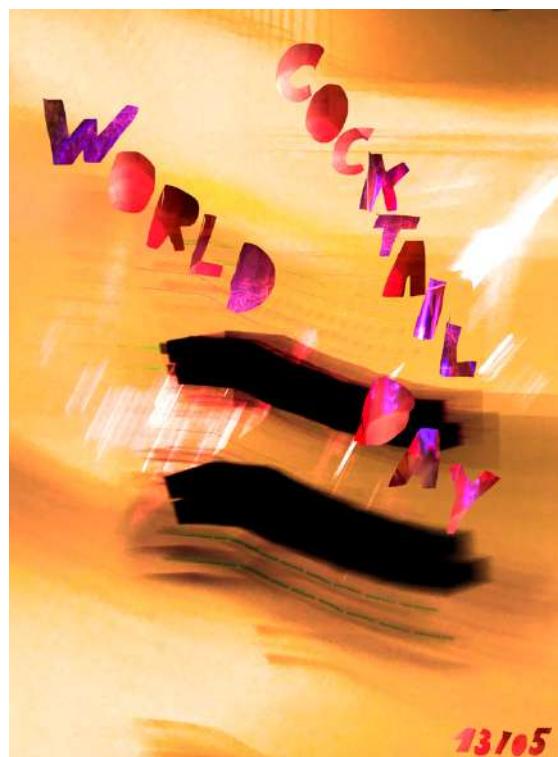
Pic.9: Caps-lock day poster



Pic.10: False teeth day



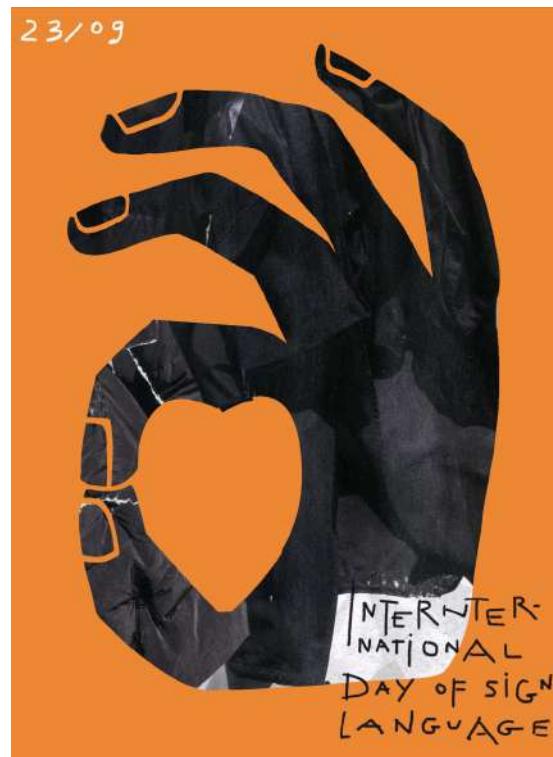
Pic.11: World cocktail day



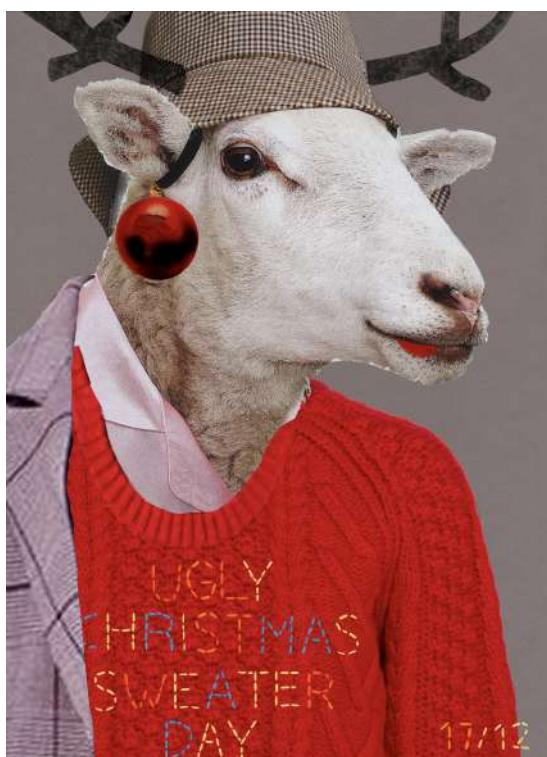
Pic.12: International coffee day



Pic.13: International sign day



Pic.14: Ugly Christmas sweater day



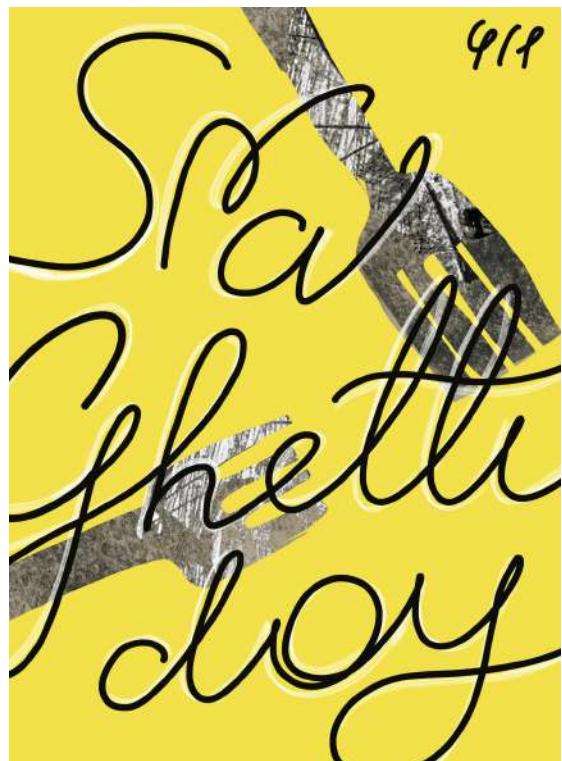
Pic.15: Work from home day



Pic.16: Spaghetti day



Pic.17: Typewriter day



Pic.18: Kids music day poster

