

ctrl alt delete

- Memory And Experience in The Design Process

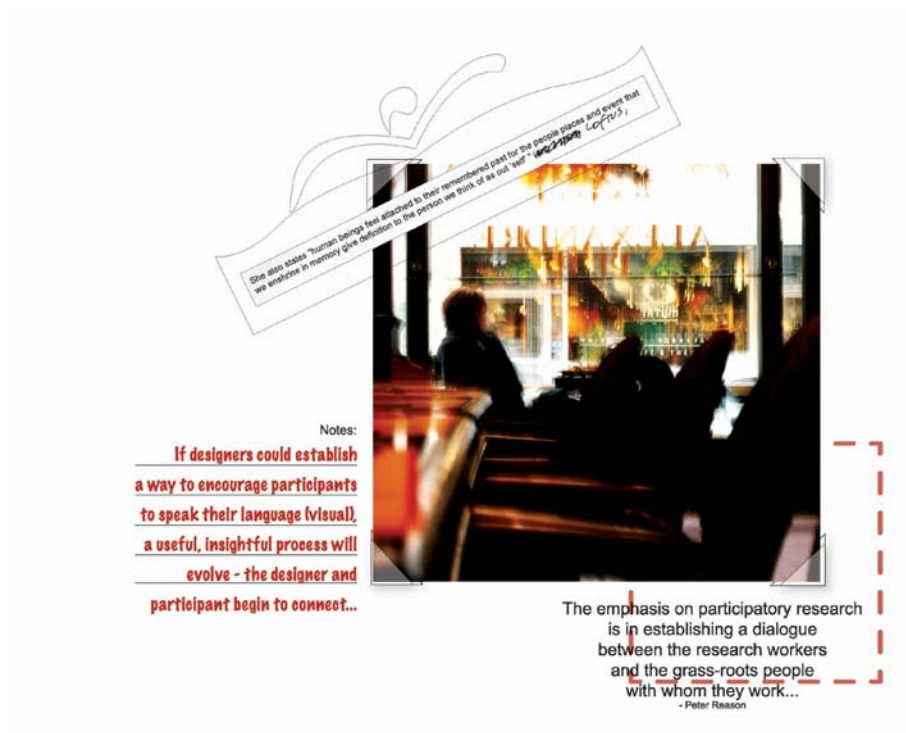
Brooke Trevitt

Abstract

'ctrl alt delete' addresses the design process and presents a new approach to qualitative research methodologies which incorporates memory. It suggests a shutting down of computer systems 'not responding' during the design process and a movement towards human interaction, connection and empathy. It aims to enable designers to become more personally and emotionally informed in subjects out of their personal experience.

Through research and experiment the benefits of utilising memory in qualitative research methodologies such as questionnaires, interviews and focus groups are evident. Subsequently I have created a model for the design process which specifically aims to connect the designer and participant through memory and experience, uniting the designer's creative ability with the participant's passion for the subject.

The model is applied to an 11 step iterative process and tested using four separate design briefs. The first brief is used to test the validity of the model, each step being completed and carefully considered over a period of two months. Three live briefs are then used to test the model under more realistic time frames (1-3 weeks). Alterations are made to the model accommodating each separate brief showing its flexibility and ability to be implemented in the professional design industry.



Introduction

Nearly three years ago I was sitting in a crowded stadium watching my favourite band perform, the atmosphere was electric and I felt a strong sense of excitement and connection in the crowd. During the encore a close friend tapped me on the shoulder and said 'ctrl alt delete'. I was intrigued by his comment and asked him what he meant, he replied "no matter what happens 'ctrl alt delete' to *this* moment". That was one of the last times I saw him.

Since then 'ctrl alt delete' has consumed me. I am constantly considering human existence in relation to memory. How much of our life is consumed by returning to captured moments? How do we express feeling and emotion when sharing memories? Why do we obsess about maintaining our memories? Why do we connect with people through memory we normally would not associate with? I began to consider memory in relation to design. How as designers do we reflect on the subjects we are visually representing? Do we see associated memories and experiences as the essence of the subject? Do we try to empathise with the people who have a personal understanding of the subject in question?

Abstract

'ctrl alt delete' addresses the design process and presents a new approach to qualitative research methodologies which incorporates memory. It suggests a shutting down of computer systems 'not responding' during the design process and a movement towards human interaction, connection and empathy. It aims to enable designers to become more personally and emotionally informed in subjects out of their personal experience.

Through research and experiment the benefits of utilising memory in qualitative research methodologies such as questionnaires, interviews and focus groups are evident.

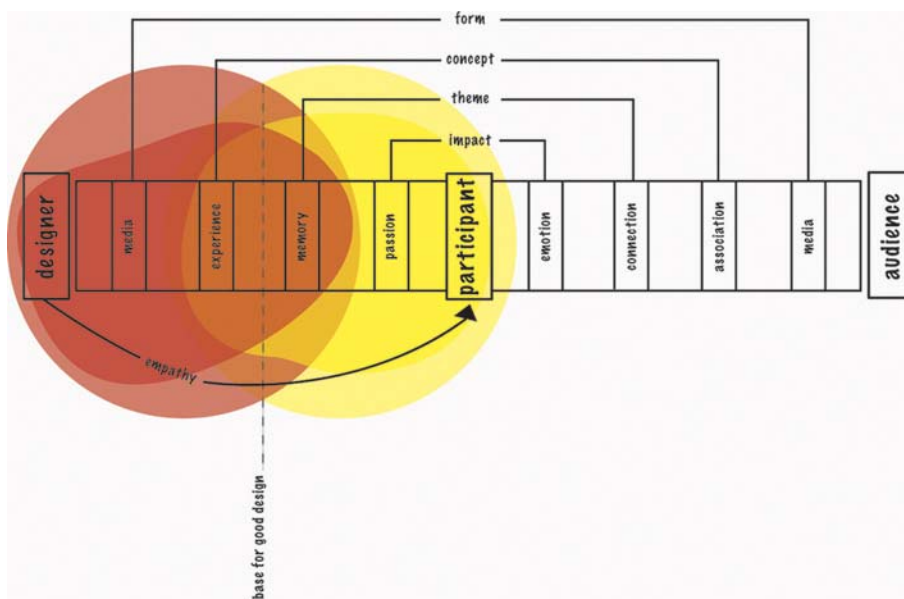
Subsequently I have created a model for the design process which specifically aims to connect the designer and participant through memory and experience, uniting the designer's creative ability with the participant's passion for the subject.

The model is applied to an 11 step iterative process and tested using four separate design briefs. The first brief is used to test the validity of the model, each step being completed and carefully considered over a period of two months. Three live briefs are then used to test the model under more realistic time frames (1-3 weeks). Alterations are made to the model

accommodating each separate brief showing its flexibility and ability to be implemented in the professional design industry.

Impact of Memory

Through research and experiment the benefits of utilising memory in the design process are evident (particularly in qualitative research methods such as questionnaires, interviews and focus groups). Subsequently I have created a model (shown below) to be used in the design process which displays the implications of memory and experience.



The model specifically aims to connect the designer and participant through memory and experience, uniting the designer's creative ability with the participant's passion for the subject. This connection aims to bridge the gap between designer and audience and bring meaning to the designer's work. It creates a dialogue with the audience through their association or connection with the designed outcome.

Within this model there are two main components - the designer and participant. Depending on the design brief the participant is varied, they may be members of the audience or engaging in similar activities to the audience. Their memories and experiences with the subject are ingrained with passion, and passion is a base for engaging evocative design.



From the implementation of memory in qualitative research methodologies, the participant will become more involved, expressive and visual. Since memories are so important to the participant they enjoy elaborating on the subject to paint a clearer picture to the designer.



Testing & Evaluation

To practically apply and test the proposed model, an 11 step iterative process is formulated. The steps move from questionnaires, interviews and focus groups which are all moulded around memory, to 'direct experiences' where the designer observes the subject in its natural setting.

1. Designer's position - with the subject and design brief objectives

The designer considers their own associated memories with the subject and acknowledges any perceived knowledge they may possess to alert themselves to style traps or superficial concepts.

2. Questionnaire - initial thoughts and scope

The questionnaire focuses on the participant's memories relating to the subject.

3. Interview One - memory discussion and visual material

The participant is asked to provide five memory items relating to the subject and a written description of each item's significance. These items will be discussed in the interview.

4. Direct experience One - event/situation experience

The designer will experience the subject in action by participating in field research.

5. Interview Two - discuss core thoughts and themes

The designer provides visual responses (photography/graphics/drawings) to aspects of the subject for the participant's response.

6. Direct experience Two - learning

The participant will instruct the designer on the practical, hands-on aspects of the subject.

7. Focus Group One - discover common memory and themes

Conversations between participants will be provoked through relevant memories and visual material. This will encourage a particular language and attitude to evolve influencing the written aspects (captions/words) and overall tone of the design.

8. Direct experience Three - event/situation experience

The designer observes the subject in action focusing on the personal/emotional knowledge gained in the process.

9. Focus Group Two - initial design created for participant response

The designer will create visual material to summarise their understanding of the subject taking into account the core themes. This imagery is presented to the participants for testing and evaluation.

10. Final Outcome - created

The designer creates a final outcome taking into consideration the objectives of the brief and their personal/emotional understanding of the subject.

11. Testing and evaluation - of final outcome

The designer will then test the design with participants and the target audience.

Case Studies

To test these steps and the application of memory in the design process, four design briefs were used as case studies.

	Client	Product	Participant	Audience	Outcome	Time Frame
1.	Soccer	Jr Boys Soccer	Soccer players and parents	Parents	Visual Essence	2 months
2.	KingGee	Safety boots	Tradesmen	Tradesmen	Print ad	3 days
3.	Epson	Projector	Home entertainment lovers	28-40 males "Big Boys, Big Toys"	Billboard	2 weeks
4.	Richards Consulting	Education	Delegates and PR office	Corporate Sector/ personnel	Corporate ID/ promotional booklet	3 weeks

The hypothetical soccer brief was the first case study used to test the validity of the model. Each step was completed and the application of memory and experience was carefully considered over a period of two months. Three live briefs were then used to test the model under more realistic time frames (1-3 weeks) taking into account limitations in accessing relevant participants. Alterations were made to the model accommodating each separate brief showing its flexibility and ability to be implemented in the professional design industry.

The positive influence of memory in the design process was evident in these case studies and can be compiled into five main points.

- Memory allows for the collection of appropriate imagery, *giving designers visual material to work with* which speaks to an audience, does not offend and will not be misinterpreted. Because many people use visual methods to capture their memories (photography,

mementos/artifacts, journals, videos etc.) the designer is able to see deeper into the subject from the participant's perspective.

- Memory creates a *level playing field between designer and participant*. The discussion of memories generates a more fluent dialogue between designer and participant allowing them to connect on a deeper level.
- Memory encourages a *non-sterile - more personal way of researching* promoting emotion, passion and feeling.
- Memory enables the designer to explore the *personal experience as opposed to the perceived experience*.
- Memory encourages *engagement with an audience*. By learning the personal aspects of a subject through the participant's memory, designers can connect, associate or trigger an emotional/engaging response with an audience.

Case Study 1: Soccer



Giving designers visual material to work with:

The participant produced a number of visual items throughout this process and used them to describe his experience of soccer. I asked him specifically to provide five items (refer to

soccer 1–5) describing what soccer meant to him.



Soccer 1



Soccer 2



Soccer 3



Soccer 4



Soccer 5

soccer 1

“This shirt represents dedication and loyalty to me. It takes me back to when I used to play soccer for my school and how important the connections I made were to my team mates and the club.”

soccer 2

“This is a medal I have kept that represents my achievements in soccer. It reminds me of what you can achieve with hard work.”

Soccer 3

“This is a postcard from when I was watching soccer overseas. It reminds me of the great times I’ve shared with friends through soccer - on and off the field.”

Soccer 4

“This soccer bag reminds me of the essence in the sport. It sounds strange but this old bag filled with the essential gear describes the game removed from the sensationalised ‘Beckham’ sport. Soccer isn't about quality brand names and sponsorship to me, it's the people, dedication and connections that have made the sport so sensational.”

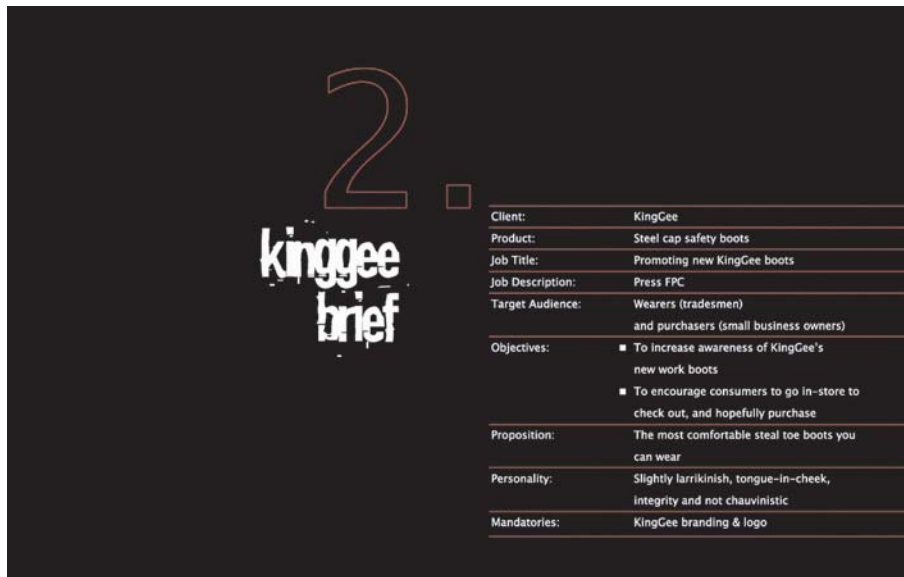
Soccer 5

“These pieces are from a broken exit sign and are a token of the time I tried to kick a goal at indoor soccer and missed - smashing the sign. I’ll never forget the adrenaline that ran through me. The sign will always trigger the feeling of scoring a goal.”

The brief specified to represent soccer as a growing sport. When I empathised with the imagery provided I understood soccer on a more personal, emotional level. I saw the game through loyalty, teamwork, friendship, achievement, connection, dedication and adrenaline, which became the visual tone for the design. From this the concept progressed from ‘growing with soccer’ to learning life lessons from the sport and in essence maturing. The concept statement ‘grow in soccer’ implies growing in the game rather than just growing with the game.



Case Study 2: KingGee



Client:	KingGee
Product:	Steel cap safety boots
Job Title:	Promoting new KingGee boots
Job Description:	Press FPC
Target Audience:	Wearers (tradesmen) and purchasers (small business owners)
Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ To increase awareness of KingGee's new work boots■ To encourage consumers to go in-store to check out, and hopefully purchase
Proposition:	The most comfortable steel toe boots you can wear
Personality:	Slightly larrikinish, tongue-in-cheek, integrity and not chauvinistic
Mandatories:	KingGee branding & logo

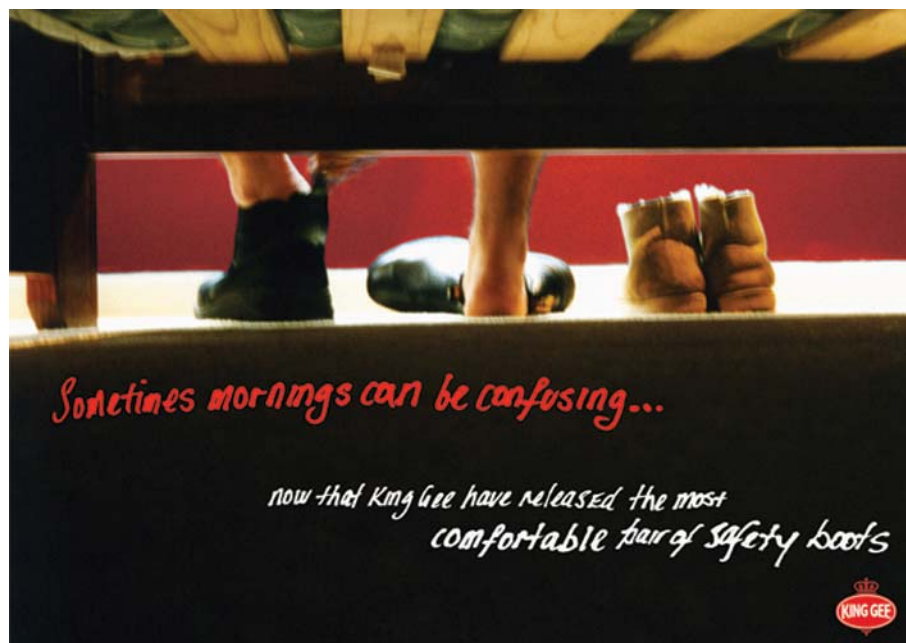
Level playing field between designer and participant:

Admittedly I had reservations about meeting with these participants. I was sure we would not connect or understand each other and even planned the visual direction of the ad before our meeting (see below).

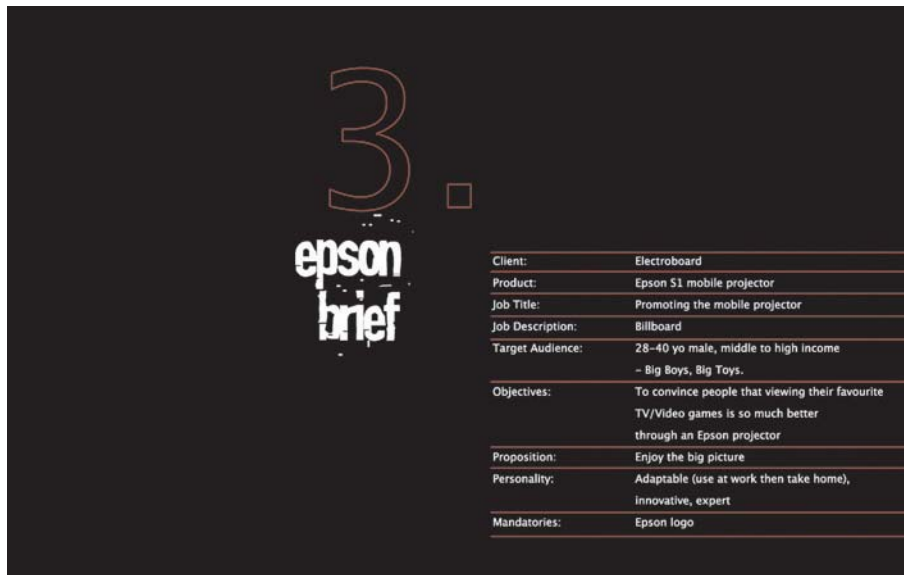


Prior to this meeting I had two strong opinions with regard to the design brief. First, I felt that 'larrikinish' was chauvinistic and silly and second, I did not see the need to express the importance of comfortable safety boots.

After meeting with one participant and discussing his memories in relation to the subject, we discovered shared experiences and found a common ground. I was able to empathise with his foot discomfort from my days working in hospitality wearing uncomfortable shoes. I then realised how important comfortable boots were to the people wearing them. We discussed a common memory of blisters and laughed about how we needed weekends to mend our feet before destroying them again during the working week. The participant spoke of wearing ug-boots over the weekend as a healing process for his bruised and blistered feet. This story was applied to the concept of the final outcome - that safety boots were as comfortable as ug-boots. This obscure comparison between safety boots and ug boots, and the visual tone of the ad, was also informed by the over the top humour and witty nature of the participant.



Case Study: 3 Epson



Non-sterile - more personal way of researching:

The participants were very technical in their questionnaires and during our first interview. They went into great detail about electronics and I could not relate to their technical terms. However, when I specifically asked about their memories in relation to the subject they became more expressive. Some described their memories of role playing with their friends, pretending to be different characters in movies and video games. They began to talk using their hands providing examples and giving demonstrations. I observed how passionate and engrossed they were while explaining and playing video games (see below).



The concept became the viewer being part of the big picture, participating in a film/video

game in the comfort of their home. The ad expresses a sense of engagement and sparks curiosity in the audience - is he in the film or not. The visual tone emphasises the intensity and realism which can be associated with a home entertainment system.



Case Study: 4 Richards Consulting

4

consulting
brief

Client:	Richards Consulting
Product:	Education – workshops & courses
Job Title:	Promotional/information booklet with detail of the company illustrating services and quality provided
Job Description:	Promotional booklet
Target Audience:	Corporate sector/personnel
Objectives:	To inform current and existing clients on the wide variety of work the company offers. To inform clients of interest on the service the company provides and the quality. Convincing all clients that their service is effective, professional and of a high standard.
Proposition:	That Richards Consulting offers a unique, professional & valuable service
Mandatories:	Richards Consulting logo

Personal experience, as opposed to the perceived experience:

My biggest problem with this brief was my perception that these courses were useless and boring and corporate graphics always look the same with little scope for creativity and emotion. As I listened to the participants’ memories of courses, I gained a deeper understanding of the personal experience. One delegate reflected on a course which

encouraged her to pursue her career and is now in a position where she has realised her dream. I concluded that the courses offered by Richards Consulting provided powerful education and training.

I was then faced with a dilemma - the combination of interesting and corporate, fun and professional, different and trustworthy. Could these words all represent one – ‘dynamic’? On questioning the clients, their most dynamic course type was ‘Corporate Athletes’. Corporate Athletes became the visual theme expressing the ‘dynamic’ aspect to the courses, allowing Richards Consulting to stand out against their competition while still remaining professional.



Conclusion

This model comes with restraints such as time, funds and access to participants. As a result some interviews were conducted over the phone/via email and one participant was sourced online. Sometimes it was impossible to engage with ‘direct experiences’ however, ‘direct experiences’ could be replaced with common memory/empathy. As with KingGee - remembering my sore feet, Epson - pretending to be movies stars when I was young, and Richards Consulting - being inspired by educators. As design briefs will vary, each step and method to this model will not always be appropriate. However the model proved to be adaptable over all four design briefs.

I have established that memory can be used in the design process as a powerful enhancement to participant interaction, visual research and qualitative research methodologies. I have also

found the use of memory in the design process can inform the designed outcome and spark a connection and dialogue with a target audience. I am able to conclude that the implementation of memory in the design process can be a means of assisting the designer to be more personally informed on subjects that are out of their experience.

“The best stories are those that stir people’s minds hearts and souls by doing so they give them new insights to themselves their problems and their human condition.” (Churchman 1971) The best stories will not always originate from the designer’s experience. I like many designers, could not claim to be an expert soccer player, tradesmen, home entertainment user or delegate. Knowing how to visually communicate does not give us the right to own experiences. If designers are to stir people's minds, hearts and souls, they need to connect with the people who are experienced.

This connection can be made or enhanced through memory.



Credits

Thank you to Cheryl Trevitt - for *everything*

Acknowledgements

For Andy.

His memory, which lives in me and leads me in the quest to discover methods of designing with depth, passion and emotion

REFERENCES

- Acconci, Vito. 2002. *Moving Pictures*. New York: Guggenheim.
- Barthes, Roland. 1993. *Camera Lucida*. London: Vintage.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 1993. "Radical Exoticism." *The Transparency of Evil*. London: Verso.
- Branzi, Andrea. 1996. "Design after God (and the jelly-sweet philosophy)." *Domus*, 787.
- Charlton, Susan. 2003. *House of Exquisite memory*. Sydney: State Records
- Charlton, Susan. 2003. "When James met Barry." *Vital Signs*, 4 - 5.
- Carson, David. 1999. *Fotografiks*. London: Laurence King Publishing.
- Csikzentmihalyi, Mihaly. 1993. "Why we need things." *History from things: Essays on Material Culture*, edited by Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Christov-Bakargiev, Carolyn. 2002. "A fallible gaze: The art of Willie Doherty." *Willie Doherty: False Memory*, 11 -17. London: Merrell Publishers.
- Cockington, James. 2003. "In a past life." *Sydney Morning Herald*. Sydney: Fairfax.
- Dalley, Tessa. 1984. *Art As Therapy. An introduction to the use of art as a therapeutic technique*, edited by Tessa Dalley, 15-29. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Darboral, Massimo Guerrera. 2003. *Test area*. Quebec City: Quebec Museum of Contemporary Arts.
- Dick, Philip K, and Goldman, Gary, and O'Bannon, Dan and Povill, Jon and Shusett, Ronald. 1990. *Total Recall*, directed by Paul Verhoeven. LA: TriStar Pictures.
- Doherty, Paul and Murphy, Pat. 1998. "Messing with your mind." San Francisco: Exploratorium.
- Doherty, Willie. 1993. *30th of January 1972*. Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art.
- Doyle, James and Loftus, Elizabeth. 1997. "Retaining Events in Memory." *Eyewitness Testimony: Civil and Criminal*, 48-63. Charlottesville: Lexis Law Publishing.
- Engel, Susan. 1999. *Context is Everything: the nature of memory*. New York: W. H. Freeman Company.

- Ewen, Stuart and Brody, Neville. 1989. "Design Insurgency." AIGA conference.
- Franscara, Jorge. 1997. *User-Centred Graphic Design, Mass Communications and Social Change*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Froshaug, Anthony. 2000. *Typography & Texts/Documents of a life*. London: Hyphen Press.
- Jung, Carl Gustav. 1989. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. New York: Vintage books.
- Keedy, Jeffery. 1998. "Experience versus Education." *The Education of a Graphic designer*, edited by Steven Heller, 87-90. New York: Alworth Press.
- Kemp, Fiona. 2003. "Memory Time & memory space. *Vital Signs*. Sydney: State Records
- Lister, Suzanne and Nicholas, Linda G. 1999. "Art therapy and pediatric patients." *Grief and the healing arts: creativity as therapy*, Edited by Sandra L. Bertman. Amityville, New York: Baywood Publishing Company.
- Lupton, Ellen. 2002. *Skin. Surface Substance and design*. London: Laurence King Publishing.
- Makin, Susan R. and Malchiodi, Cathy A. 2000. *Therapeutic Art Directives and Resources: Activities and initiatives for individuals and Groups*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- McQuire, Scott. 1998. *Visions of Modernity. Representation, Memory, Time and space in the Age of the Camera*. London: Sage Publications.
- Mierendorf, Michael. 1996. *Losing it all - The Reality of Alzheimer's Disease*, directed by Michael Mierendorf. New York: Home Box Office.
- Norman, Donald A. 1988. *Emotion and attractive. The Design of Everyday Things*, New York: Basic Books.
- Ramakers, Renny. 2002. "More experience." *Less + More : Droog Design in context*. Rotterdam: OIO Publishers.
- Reason, Peter. 1988. "Storytelling as inquiry." *Human inquiry in action*, 79 – 102. London: Sage Publications.
- Reece, Jane B. and Campbell, Neil A. 2002. "Animal form and function." *Biology*, 1247. San Francisco: Benjamin Cummings.
- Repp, Philip C. 1997. *Reflecting on a stone. Looking Closer 2*, edited by William Drenttel, Michael Bierut, Steven Heller & DK Holland, 81 – 84. New York: Alworth Press.

Rochberg-Halton, Eugene and Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. 1981. The Most Cherished Objects in the Home. *The meaning of things*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sabat, Steven R. 2001. *The experience of Alzheimer's Disease. Life Through a Tangled Veil*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.

Schacter, Daniel L. 1994. "Priming and Multiple memory systems: perceptual Mechanisms of Implicit Memory." *Memory Systems 1994*, edited by Endel Tulving. London: Massachusetts.

Shedroff, Nathan. 2001. *Experience design 1*. Indianapolis: New Riders Publishing.

Westinghouse. 2003. *Alu Design*. Sydney: Fairfax.

Yates, Francis A. 1966. *The Art of Memory*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.

Yorkin, Budd and Perenchio, Jerry. 1982. *Blade Runner*, directed by Ridley Scott. Los Angeles: Warner Studios.

Brooke Trevitt completed her Degree 'Bachelor of Design – Visual Communication' with Honors in November 2003. She is currently working in the inhouse design studio for Southcorp. In 2002 she established her own business and has been producing a variety of graphic and 3D designs for various freelance clients. Brooke's interest in memory and design developed during her student exchange scholarship to Concordia University, Montreal, Canada. She devoted much of 2003 to this model, which became her honors thesis. Brooke plans to test and further develop this model in the design industry and continue her studies in this area for a PhD.