



MAKE YOUR OWN LUCK

The image features the phrase "MAKE YOUR OWN LUCK" written in a vibrant, hand-drawn, bubbly font. Each letter is a different color: 'M' is red, 'A' is pink, 'K' is light purple, 'E' is purple, 'Y' is purple, 'O' is dark blue, 'U' is blue, 'R' is blue, 'O' is teal, 'W' is green, 'N' is light green, 'L' is yellow, 'U' is orange, 'C' is orange, and 'K' is red. The text is surrounded by numerous colorful decorative elements: a blue swirl at the top left, a red swirl at the top right, a green swirl on the right, a yellow 'x' on the left, a yellow triangle on the right, a purple swirl on the left, a red 'x' on the right, a teal swirl on the right, a pink zigzag on the right, a pink circle on the left, a purple zigzag on the right, purple lines at the bottom left, a blue swirl on the left, a blue swirl on the right, and a yellow arrow pointing left at the bottom right.



# MAKE YOUR OWN LUCK

## A DIY ATTITUDE TO GRAPHIC DESIGN & ILLUSTRATION

Kate Moross

Foreword by Neville Brody

PRESTEL

Munich ⚡ London ⚡ New York

FOREWORD BY NEVILLE BRODY

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# FOREWORD

Kate Moross is nuts. Brilliant, creative, fun and unique. And obsessed. You have to be. To not only survive but prosper in this industry requires all the driven craziness you can muster.

From a beginning in flyers, fanzines and fanciful failures, Kate has forged her own path. Growing up as part of the lively independent music scene in London, she has grabbed the chance to develop and flourish within a supportive community packed with opportunities and challenges. Her ceaseless energy and hunger for new ideas and new inventions has led her to be constantly experimenting, always pushing boundaries. Energetically embracing the possibility of failure is a far greater venture than playing safe.

We share a lot, Kate and I. North Londoners, we both went to art school in South London, and survived, and then pursued careers driven by our interests in radical and often politicized underground music. On leaving the London College of Printing, I had the luxury of being connected to the burgeoning UK music scene. Like Kate, I produced fanzines and music posters at college, and the nascent independent record industry consequently allowed me to both earn a meagre living and drive my ideas at the same time. I lived in a squat, and again like her was obsessed, working virtually 24-hour days, seven days a week. I felt that if you weren't obsessed by developing what you were doing, you should be pursuing something else.

I first met Kate in 2005 at the London College of Communication as part of a onedotzero workshop called TypoMove. We have had intermittent connections since then, largely through Kate kindly dropping off the odd piece of misdelivered post to my studio in Angel – Kate's mum is our neighbour here! In 2013 we met up at Typo Berlin and found out just how much we have in common. Kate had presented a lecture, and I was amazed at the quality of and creative thinking behind the work and at just how sure and confident Kate was.

The other thing that surprised me was the breadth of work. Kate is unafraid to jump between media and platforms, living out the premise that we are all becoming multi-disciplinarians; that the modern designer is hybrid and operating across any platform, be it illustration, typography, print, video, installation, programming, web, app, sound, fashion, writing

or food! Kate's roster of clients is testimony to her unlimited scope, quality of thinking and professionalism – be it Diesel, Adidas, Eastpak or Retro Super Future; *Vice*, *Vogue* or the *New York Times*; Jessie Ware, Pictureplane, Simian Mobile Disco or Apes and Androids.

In this book, Kate has pulled together invaluable advice from that experience to help young creatives who want to start out on this journey, peppered with plentiful examples of her work. It isn't easy, this business of ours, and a creative designer is by nature driven and rarely satisfied, but it is one of the most rewarding professions you can possibly think of jumping into. Good luck.

**Neville Brody**  
**London, 2014**



Hölló

When I first started out as a graphic designer and illustrator, I worked mainly for the growing circle of friends and contacts I made as I explored London as a young and enthusiastic music fan. I followed a simple DIY ethos inspired by the riot grrrl and punk music culture that I had been absorbing since my teenage years through pirated music, gigs, zines and, more importantly, the Internet. Whether it was creating my first zine using a photocopier or selling promo posters I'd made at a gig, this do it / make it / design it yourself attitude was something I picked up from the different things I was into. But as much as I wished I had been at those early Bikini Kill concerts, the reality was that I grew up in England listening to (and coming up with dance routines for) the Spice Girls' 'Say You'll Be There'.

While it might seem embarrassing to admit that I used to spend my time dancing around to the Spice Girls in homemade polystyrene platform trainers, the merchandized product of Girl Power was hugely influential on me, and music undoubtedly became one of the most important things in my life. Surrounded by a family of music lovers, I soon discovered my older brother's diverse CD collection and through it the music of Jamiroquai, Cake, The Bangles, Carly Simon, Stevie Wonder, Simon and Garfunkel, Toni Braxton and Motown, which all featured in the soundtrack of my childhood.

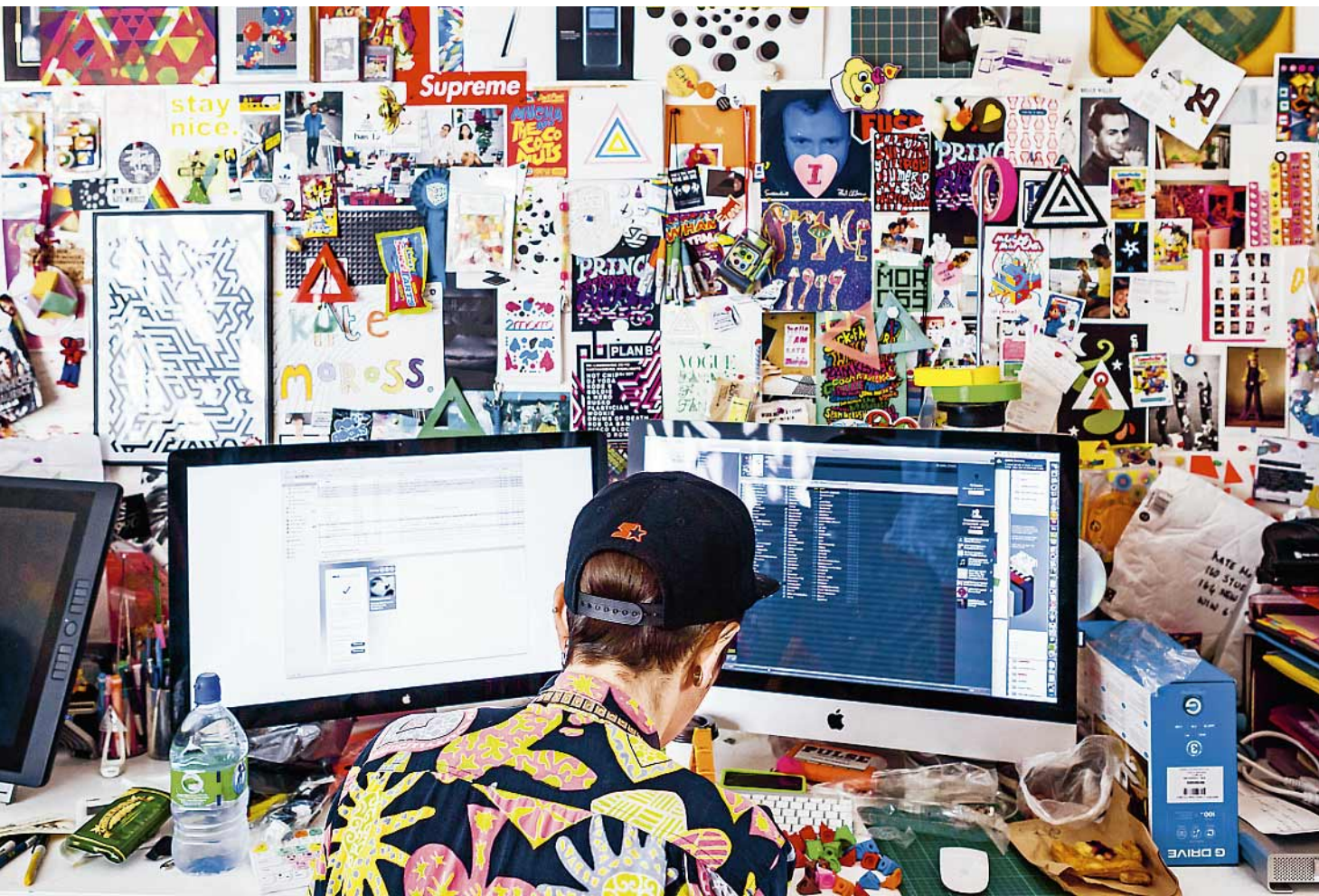
Another important part of my upbringing was the time I spent each year at a Jewish summer camp in the English countryside. From the tender age of seven, for two weeks of the summer holidays, I was thrust into a crowd of screaming children, art classes and innumerable activities ranging from outdoor games to bubble writing on posters, guitar playing and trying not to wake the grown-ups. More than anything else, the experience was a social one. Initially I was new to the environment and the crowd, but each year I'd learn more, and eventually I was one of the big girls teaching and leading activity groups. Summer camp instilled in me a fierce independence and an easy confidence around people, whether they were familiar or strangers.

By the age of 17 I'd turned my self-confidence into activity: I was the designer of the school magazine and was decorating the sets for school plays, illustrating the cover of the yearbook and spending every second of my spare time teaching myself new software on the art department's computer. If there was a creative job to be done, I was the first one to volunteer.

I brought this attitude, as well as my love of music, to Camberwell College of Arts in 2006, where I studied graphic design. I became practically nocturnal, relishing the chance to embed myself in the London music scene and taking photographs of bands at gigs with my Canon 350D. I also bought my first Wacom tablet and started drawing and posting my creations online. As well as taking people's pictures at clubs I drew vector portraits, posting them on people's MySpace profiles, and offered my services as a MySpace coder for bands and club nights. I designed a few profile skins and I don't think I took any payment – I was just happy to have something to do. Everyone, it seemed, had a moniker and needed a logo, so with a student copy of Adobe Illustrator I became an unstoppable logo-maker, creating avatars for practically everyone I met.


As well as HTML, which I learned through creating custom MySpace skins, I taught myself Dreamweaver so I could start to work as a web designer. I built early websites for the Young Turks record label, The Maccabees and Lightspeed Champion, to name just a few. This is how I started doing flyers – I was using a basic requirement such as a website or logo to promote myself as a designer. It worked.

Essentially I had started freelancing before I really knew what it meant to be a designer. I was hungry to establish myself as someone who could bring design to different music-related areas, so I took on whatever I could. And because I didn't know much, I learned a lot fast. That's why, primarily, this book exists – to pass on some of those lessons and help people understand that my success hasn't just happened overnight. I didn't emerge into the world with a fully formed style or approach. Rather I've worked hard for years, not just at learning the tools of my trade and experimenting with different visual ideas and materials, but at being an asset to my peers, who together formed a busy community of like-minded, driven young people who wanted to make something of themselves and of their endeavours. Of course, to succeed you need some good fortune as well as good skills, but in my experience, if you work hard and do whatever you can for whoever you can, well, you might just make your own luck.



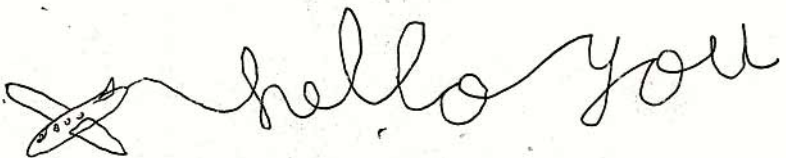
Me at Studio Moross, 2013

HOW  
SURVIVE  
ARTSCHOOL



Speaking from my own personal experience at Camberwell College of Arts, art school is what you make of it. A first-class degree is nothing without real-life experience, so it is your job to create work, initiate projects and find your way through the syllabus. This is not a criticism: I believe that this approach can teach you very valuable skills, and the lecturers are always present to critique your work and guide you. This way of learning can be difficult, though, as you will have to maintain enthusiasm and motivation across short- and long-term projects, some of which you might not enjoy. Learning to find your own way through a project is a challenge, but also a skill that will be very useful when you have graduated.

My advice is to complete your coursework as best you can, and if you can add extra outcomes to a project, do it, even if it is not required. For example, if you are asked to design a poster, do a series; if the brief is to develop a brand identity, sketch out a website and a set of stationery to complement your work. Document your working process and help the tutors understand the choices you make, as this will help them assess your work. Attend lectures and seminars – dodging classes won't get you anywhere. Crits are VERY important: learning how to communicate your work is key. If you aren't naturally talented at giving presentations, these sessions will be good practice for you to develop this crucial skill. It is also a great idea to challenge, question and make suggestions to your peers (constructively, of course). This will demonstrate to your tutor your critical thinking and design understanding – and who knows, you might even end up helping a friend with something they have been struggling with.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "hello you". To the left of the text is a stylized drawing of an airplane, also in black ink, with a circular tail section and a rectangular fuselage.

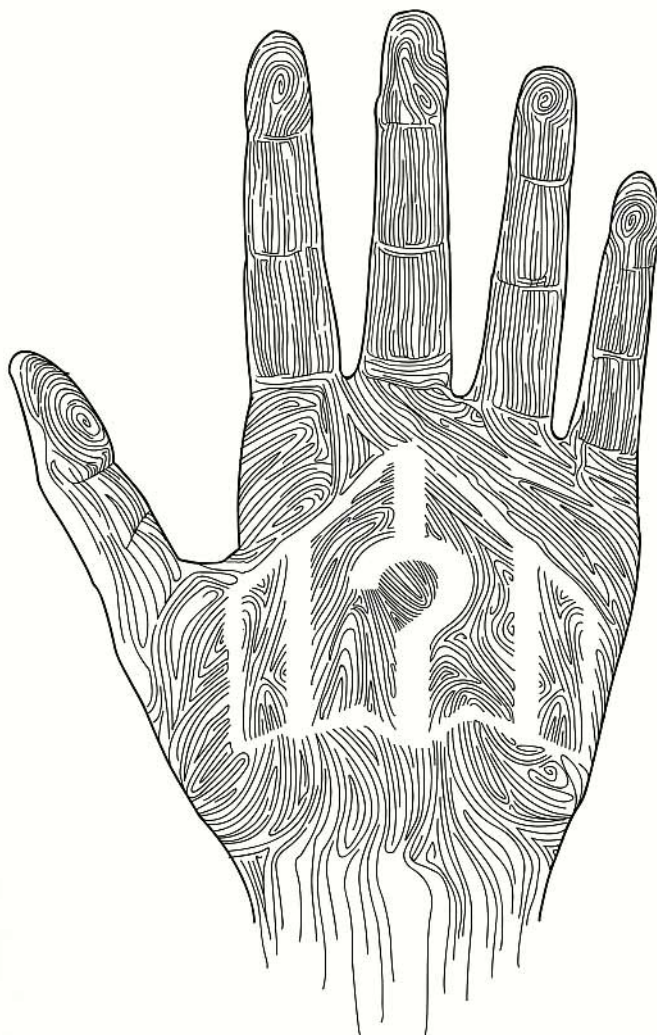
# THE SUBJECTIVE TUTOR

Art teachers have strong opinions. They may HATE your work; they may not get it. Sometimes they will be right, and sometimes they are wrong. Trust your instincts. Yes, you are being graded and you want to do well, but believe in your creative direction. If you disagree strongly with your tutor, swallow a bad grade and see your work through. The grade is evaluated by looking at the supporting work, concept, development of ideas and documentation. As long as you do these, regardless of whether your work is to your teacher's taste, you should be marked fairly and objectively. If you feel that the work has not been marked fairly, you can appeal to your head of year for a second opinion.

## GET AHEAD

University is great fun and hugely educational, but it's not the be all and end all. Having a Bachelor of Arts degree doesn't make you employable; experience is just as important. Personally, when I read a job application I don't look at the CV until after I have looked at (and liked) the portfolio. The three most important things to me are the body of work, communication skills and personality. If I'm impressed by all of these I'll hire you on the spot, regardless of any grades and degrees. Therefore you should use university, its facilities and the awesome new community you have discovered there to generate work. Though warehouse parties, guest list events and student exhibitions are tempting, set some free time aside for working on your own projects. Some university courses only need you to be in the studio one day a week; others can require that you attend for 40 hours a week, with strict registration. But no matter what course you are on, you should be making your own work, whether it be in response to personal briefs you have set yourself, competition briefs, freelance projects or interning. If you're worried about fitting it all in, discuss any concerns with your tutors; maybe they will allow for a live project to be included in your course structure or end of term marks. Expanding your portfolio is essential. If you start freelancing now, the transition to professional life after finishing your degree will be much easier.

Don't label university projects as such on your website; there is no need to point these out to whoever is viewing your portfolio. Your work should all blend together.



B O Y S



# THE 10,000-HOUR RULE

Design is as practical a subject as any other academic area, and you must put in many hours of practice in order to do it well. The theory of the 10,000-hour rule says that anyone who spends this much time learning something will become an expert in it, or beyond. The more time you spend working in your software, the better you will be at using it. Give me any problem in Illustrator and I can solve it, because I have been using the software since before it was bundled with Creative Suite in 2003. Using it every day for over 10 years has been worthwhile!

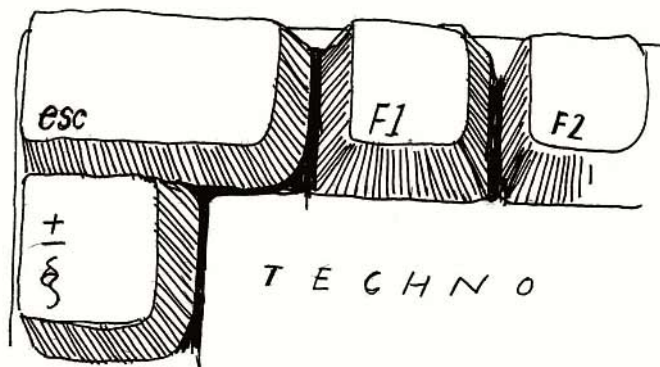
The most important thing you can do during your time at university is learn how to use the tools at your disposal. These are imperative for professional practice. Even if you don't want to create digital work, software is an essential tool. You have to recognize that at some point or another your work will pass through a computer, whether it is photographing large-format paintings, scanning technical drawings, archiving your work for your website or generating digital work. The computer is essential: it's as simple as that. Even if you aim to be a fine artist, you will need to earn money somehow in the interim and computer / software skills will come in handy.

Art school isn't meant to be easy. Some days you will feel like you are in a therapy session, and on other days you will feel totally lost, but whatever happens, work hard and listen harder. Find a tutor who understands you, who you can go to for honest advice. If your teachers don't like your work, don't shy away and give up; prove them wrong. Fulfil all your examination requirements. Even if they don't like your topic, style or theme, if you hand in the work that is required, you can still do well.



# OR DON'T GO TO UNIVERSITY?

University is more expensive than ever, so you might wonder whether the ensuing debt will be worth it. My opinion is that it's not essential. If you have a full- or part-time day job, build your creative work experience around it. Contribute your creative skills to your company and help with the creative aspects of the job. Use your free time to start doing small live projects: help out a family friend with a website, take pictures at a wedding, draw portraits. Whatever you want to start doing, just do it. You have three years to catch up with those university students, so use your time sensibly. Take some evening classes, or teach yourself the software you need using online tutorials. There are plenty of student briefs openly available on which you can test your skills. Use forums to post your outcomes, discuss and receive feedback on your work and approach practising professionals for advice on your portfolio. Document your work and build up your portfolio; get to know the trade you want to get into; save up and buy the equipment you need to start work. You can seek freelance work, too; work experience is the most important element when learning to be a designer. There are plenty of self-taught practitioners out there, and a degree doesn't make a designer. Good luck, and work your arse off.



Draw  
ALL  
THE  
TIME

My mother always told me that if I wanted to be an artist, I had to draw all the time – that practice is what makes you excel. She said I must always carry a sketchbook on me, so I got into the habit of doing this. Although I am an illustrator, I rarely do anything observational or figurative; my work is nearly all type-based.

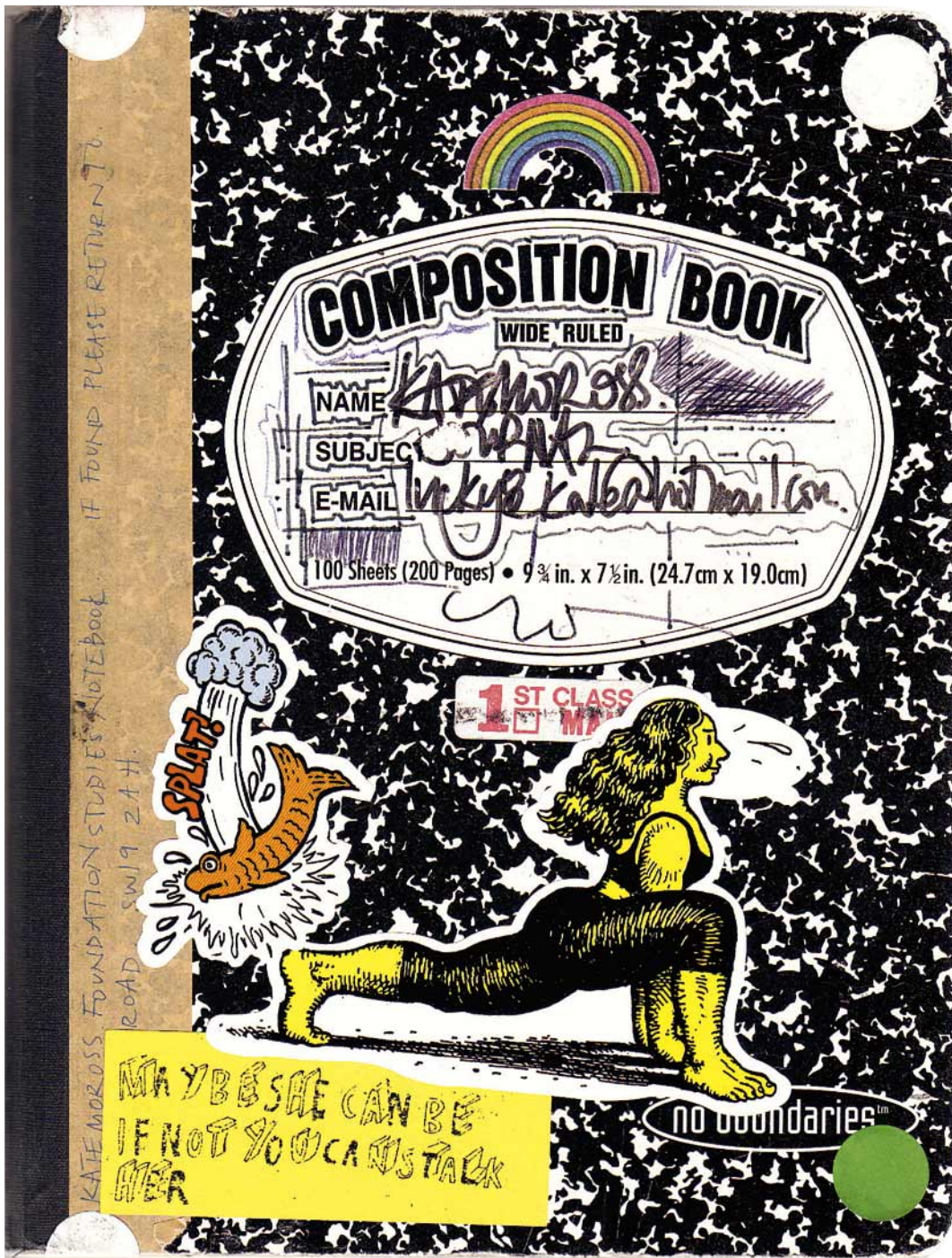
Hand-drawing letterforms is something I have always done. As a young child I used to copy book covers and make my own versions of popular children's books. I used to draw band logos meticulously over and over again in my sketchbooks at school. I was never great at drawing objects or people, but words and letters felt like a natural subject for me.

The art of lettering is ancient and I am really thankful for the resurgence in hand-lettering in recent years. It has been and always will be a core element in design and our visual landscape. No matter how digital our lives become, hand-rendered type reminds us of our humanity.

Looking back on these doodles makes me appreciate the way I used to draw and think. Years of briefs and client work have stifled this freedom in me; rarely now can I just sit down in front of a blank page and create work. These days, I feel as though I need someone looking over my shoulder and directing me. Drawing just for the sake of it is something I aim to get back into – I am just waiting for some free time!



**I implore you, if you enjoy it, never stop drawing, especially for yourself. The skills that drawing hones will stand you in good stead.**



This is my first journal which I used to carry around and draw in as a teenager; I'd stick the work of artists I loved (like Robert Crumb and Dr Seuss) on the front to constantly motivate me