

globally and put together trend reports as part of my job, and these illustrative concepts evolved from my research.

Figure 8.17 Maxx is the youth range at Target Australia. Letitia was asked to create some banners and boards for instore point of sale that pushed the boundaries and grabbed the audience's attention. The boards were to hang behind mannequins instore.



In the Know...

Fiona Sinclair: My Typotany

Who Are You?

I am an illustrator, graphic designer and teacher. I teach typography and graphic design at TAFE and am a member of Illustrators Australia. I have held some exhibitions of my work and am aware of the crossover between fine art and design and feel that both serve to enhance the other. I work in a range of mediums, but my greatest love at the moment is working with type.

Can you tell us about Typotany?

Typotany came from my interest in Typography and Botany. I decided to create an alphabet that was based on Australian native plants while I was on holidays at Ned's Corner, west of Mildura. I was staying on a property that was surrounded by native flora and there was a library of Australian native plant books in the house. I began with the 'C'



Figure 8.18 Fiona Sinclair

Corymbia ficifolia (as this is my favourite tree and I have three of these in my garden back home in Thornbury), and then the rest just evolved.

Where did the idea for Typotany come from? How did you get the inspiration for each letter?

The name 'Typotany' came from a brainstorming session where I wrote all of the words associated with typography and plants onto a sheet of paper. I had to say them aloud to see how they sounded as a title for the alphabet. I had recently seen an exhibition of typefaces called 'Australian Characters' and thought that the play on words was really strong, so I tried to create a title that combined words in an interesting way.

Each letter was inspired by either the flower, leaf or seed of the plant and I tried to use natives that I was familiar with and could see in the flesh, rather than working from a photograph. I used some existing typefaces and pulled them apart using Adobe Illustrator, and then put them back together with images of the plants. Sometimes I placed an existing font under my image of the plant and re-shaped the imagery into the form of a font. I used Adobe Illustrator's Scissor and Knife tool to remove sections of existing fonts. I re-shaped the font by 'Creating Outlines' and moving the nodes in the direction that I wanted. I drew my imagery using the Pen tool and I tried to keep to a limited colour palette.

Who or what has influenced your work?

My greatest influence is from Jessica Hische, a New York-based Melbourne typographer who had an exhibition at Lamington Drive called 'The Daily Drop Cap'. Her fonts were clean, creative and beautifully printed. I sent all of my typography students to see her exhibition. That's the good thing about teaching Design – I always have lots of people to share my excitement with when I get inspired.

When you produced your initial ideas for Typotany how did you work? For example did you use fine liner and a visual diary? Did you use photography at all?

I would take my visual diary with me to sketch the native plants on location, and then



Figure 8.19 Giclée print poster x A2

return to my workspace and produce the imagery using Illustrator.

I began by drawing the plant and sketching it, and combining it with a font, but after the first few letters, I worked entirely on the computer with specimens, books and photographs all around me. I found that there was a certain freedom on the computer to make quick colour and shape changes that I didn't want to draw in a book. The Pen tool and Delete on Illustrator replaced the 2B pencil and eraser.

You have created your letters using Adobe Illustrator. Can you give us a few tips and tricks? Or can you tell us one of your favourite or most useful Illustrator techniques?

To 'create outlines' on a font and then re-shape that letter you really have so much freedom to create something original. I like using clipping masks and zooming in very close to work with the detail.

When working with digital methods is there any advice or tips you can suggest for our young designers? For example, methods for saving work, what file types are most useful and working with colour on screen and off screen?

I like to limit my colour palette with each image or letter so that the form and shape becomes important. I save all of my files as both Illustrator Ai files (to work on further or change if necessary) and EPS files (so that I can place them in InDesign and they are not too big). I use InDesign to create multiple page layouts for the gift cards and to place the images for the alphabet tea-towels that have type placed below each image to identify the plant. All of my files are exported to PDFs to get printed. This means that I have EPS and Ai files of every individual image, and InDesign and PDFs of what needs to be printed, such as the wrapping paper, gift cards and tea-towels.

I work in CMYK and always get proofs of my work so that I know what to expect. When 200 tea-towels arrive on the doorstep – I don't want to be disappointed. Because I use type in my work it is important that it is legible when printed on surfaces such as linen and recycled paper stock.

Do you ever get stuck on an idea? Or don't know how to solve a design problem? If so what ways do you overcome this?

My partner is a photographer and loves to draw and write, and my daughter is creative, so I always have someone to run my ideas by if I am stuck. My best ideas always come when I am on holidays, because we go away to remote locations where there is a lack of clutter and distraction and design decisions seem to be clear and obvious.

How do you evaluate your own work?

The Typotany alphabet was applied to cards, wrapping paper and tea-towels and I sent an email and PDF samples out to a range of local nurseries and gift shops to see what the reaction was. The retail purchaser for

the Royal Botanical Gardens in Melbourne was very positive and now stock the product range. I often ask friends and family for feedback and my Mum is always very honest. She told me that I had over-packaged the tea-towel, so I thought about that. I don't always do what people suggest, but I do listen to what they are saying.

I will always be creating things and some will hit the mark and others won't. I have so many projects that I plan to do that I just hope one lifetime is enough.

Can you discuss the ways you tried to keep your project 'green'?

I was teaching a Sustainability Unit at TAFE and decided to keep my carbon footprint small with my Typotany range. I used 100% recycled paper stock for the wrapping paper and gift cards. This gave me less choice with the 'finish' of the paper, but I like the look of recycled stock. The tea-towel material was a more difficult choice as I had used too many colours to have the work screen printed and had to use offset printing. I chose to have the artwork 4 colour process offset printed onto 100% linen, by a local printer. I researched if there were benefits of using linen over cotton or whether I should focus on searching out a printer who would print on organic cotton.

I did some research, comparing a linen and cotton item, and found that the major eco-benefits of linen are in the agricultural stage.



Figure 8.20 Gift card 165 mm x 240 mm when opened flat. Each letter of the alphabet has been produced in this format.



Figure 8.21 Tea-towels on 100% linen

Cultivation has less impact for linen because fewer pesticides and fertilisers are used. Additionally, linen requires much less water for its cultivation than water-intensive cotton growing. Apparently linen only requires natural precipitation during production, whereas cotton requires intense irrigation – around 7100 L for each kilogram of harvested cotton.

Linen items don't need as frequent washing, and so reduce water consumption at this stage of its life cycle. Personally, I also find that linen lasts longer and I would tend to throw out my cotton tea-towels before my linen ones which means that I would purchase fewer linen items.

All of the production was completed within a 20km range of my home and the furthest distance travelled was to drop off the product range at the Botanical Gardens.

The Botanical Gardens gift shop is trying to focus on stocking sustainable products so this may have assisted me in some way when my range was selected for sale.

Once you designed your alphabet you applied your imagery to a range of presentations and products. Was it difficult to apply it to different products? What challenges if any did you have?

It was not difficult to apply the imagery to a range of products. I would like to apply the design further, in some format, onto coasters, fabric for cushions and bookplates. The only

difficulty was in sourcing printers who would produce smaller quantities to start with. Some printers only offer a print run of 1000 units and at a low cost of \$6 per tea-towel, it still adds up to a high cost when that price is multiplied by 1000. All of the people who have been involved with the printing have been great – supportive, friendly and professional. I think that it is important to work with people, at all stages of production, who support your vision and who treat you with respect.

Where can we see more of your work?

Illustrators Australia website and my Blog at Tumblr:

- http://www.illustratorsaustralia.com/portfolios/fiona_sinclair
- <http://fionasinclair.tumblr.com/>



Figure 8.22 Wrapping paper sheets 430 mm x 600 mm