Jessica Hische

“Honestly, the only thing that could make this book (‘In Progress’) better is if there were 200 more pages!” -[Shauna Lynn Panczyszyn](http://www.alphabettes.org/author/shauna/), Alphabettes.org

“Let me start with the fact that I can’t love this book more than I already do” – Nancy Wu, nancywudesign.com

These are just some of the reviews that I have found about Jessica Hische’s book ‘In Progress’, there are many reviews on the book and I have yet to find one that says something negative about it.

Before starting this project I had never really heard much about Jessica Hische, but after doing some research I found myself watching her lectures online for hours on end. Her work is simply beautiful and she has an excellent way of engaging an audience, which kept me hooked in with every lecture and tutorial that I saw. Hische has turned into a real inspiration for me and I am always on the look out for more of her work.

Once I found out about her book (‘In Progress’) I bought it straight away because I knew that it would be a very helpful guide to me as part of the design aspect of my course. It is safe to say I fell in love with every page and I constantly use the book as a reference before practicing my lettering on paper, ‘In Progress’ will feature heavily in this write up because it is such a great example of how Jessica Hische works and it is a fantastic guide for any start up letterer, designer, calligrapher or artist.

How it all started

Jessica explains in one of her talks on YouTube all about how she was always a naturally creative and artistic person. From a young age she would sit and draw instead of going out, this is what she has always enjoyed doing and it is what she has successfully made a career of. Hische speaks a lot about her childhood in her lectures this is because it was the starting point of her work life.

“*I would draw for 8-10 hours of the day, I was in the corner, you pump me full of art supplies and I was good to go.”*

Naturally, Hische very much enjoyed studying art through out her school life, when she got to college she studied a foundation course in art to try out everything but with the intention of wanting to study fine art at the end of it. During this time Hische found herself procrastinating over her graphic design work rather than fine art and this is where her love for graphic design was born.

Hische ended up taking graphic design and running with it, she interned at an illustration designers in Philadelphia. Hische found a new passion in lettering while working at the internship and although doing the internship got her some money, Hische earned more money doing free lance work, she used the skills that she was learning from the internship and incorporating them into the jobs that she was commissioned to do for others.

The more she worked the more that Hische was puttering lettering into her free lance work and lettering became her first passion project.

Following this Hische redesigned the covers of popular books such as ‘the picture of Dorian Grey’ and ‘Pride and prejudice’. She was also commissioned to design a poster for the indie movie ‘Moonrise Kingdom’

Going back to her lectures, there was one point I found very interesting, she explained that she is a letterer, and not a calligrapher, at first I was confused and didn’t know the difference but she explained how they are different corners of the same box the vital difference is that “calligraphers write and letterers draw” a calligrapher has a “crazy sense of muscle memory” that allows them to recreate a certain font over and over again, whereas letterers such as Hische will draw out a new type for every project that she does, whether its for a book, film, poster etc.

Hische talks about herself as two people who she metaphorically refers to as Bruce Wayne and Batman; she describes how Batman needs Bruce Wayne’s fortune to fund his vigilantism, and Bruce Wayne needs Batman to somewhat relax after dealing with the Wayne Enterprise- in the same way Hische has her job that she uses to fund her “fun side projects” such as her ‘should I work for free’ chart and her ‘letter a day’ project where she designed a different style for every letter in the alphabet.

In Progress

As mentioned before, as soon as I found out Hische had a book I went out and bought it immediately. I feel like this book is an important weapon in any designer’s arsenal. It is very intuitive, explanatory and tells you everything you need to know about type, lettering and how to master it as Hische has.

Jessica’s book literally is a step-by-step guide to be able to work like she does. The book starts off with her explaining the meaning of type and calligraphy and the difference between them, and swiftly moves on to the tools that she uses, she goes into detail about the most basic of utensils used just to show their importance in the job that she does. Hische then quickly moves on to the digital side of her work and how she was able to move from paper to computer to make her work even more impressive and bringing it to the modern age where everything is computerised even art. She also has a checklist of digital items that she uses and again goes into immense detail on the software and hardware that she uses and why she has chosen to use them. I found this very insightful because with every other instructional video or book that I’ve been interested in they have not gone into such detail over what they use and prefer.

Throughout the book there is a reappearing pattern of the poster she made for one of her most famous quotes “The work you do when you procrastinate is probably the work you should be doing for the rest of your life.” You see how this quote starts off as just a sentence then moves into guidelines for the poster and how Jessica builds and builds on it improving whilst going along and ends up with the finished product near the end of the book I really like this sense of production that is given with this poster and I think that it was very good to do this throughout the whole book as it shows her process as she done it.

One of my favourite pages of the book is one that shows sixteen different book covers that Hische has redesigned. These books are classics such as Dracula, The Picture of Dorian Grey, Pride and Prejudice and Frankenstein. These books have been given a modern make over but they would not look out of place in the era that they were written, they are all beautiful examples of typography and they really do the book justice. Hische has a certain way of working round her clients to suit their needs and this one page of her book proves this to the highest extent. Everything has had a lot of thought put into it from the typefaces to the colour schemes and this one page is a perfect example of how good Jessica Hische is at what she does.

Although I have not yet finished the book I always look to it for inspiration when I need it, and I would recommend it to any one who is interested in either Jessica’s work, lettering or typography as a whole.

What Jessica Hische is doing now.

Jessica is now doing her “Bruce Wayne/ Batman” work. She has her commissions that she does by day and by night she works on the things that she wants to do for fun. Jessica has a range of products on her website that she sells and also does a lot of freelance work. This is the type of thing I would love to do and this is why I picked Hische as the subject of my essay she is a huge inspiration for me and I think what she has done for the world of lettering and typography is game changing. Her attitude towards her line of work is exceptional and she never puts herself under too much stress and I believe that that is the way work should be. She has expanded her designs to posters, mugs, memorabilia and even jewellery and this is what makes her so impressive, her work is so diverse that she can incorporate it into anything she wants and it will always work and look good. She has designed movie posters for the likes of ‘Moonrise Kingdom’ and she will continue to excel in the work that she does.

Hische is a personification of her own quote “The work you do when you procrastinate is probably the work you should be doing for the rest of your life.”