**How to showcase the Pentagram conviction?**

Passion, intelligence, personal commitment



I**nroduction**

Pentagram is equally owned and run by 23 partners who are all designers. It has been emphasised that this aspect alone makes the dynamic of this business quite unusual (Element Talks 2006). All designers working either independently or collaboratively with one another. The company showcases a diverse range of designers who don’t see themselves as specialists. (Element Talks 2006) Three of these designers are; Natasha Jen, Paula Scher and Giorgia Lupi. This is a chance to look at the contributions that these Pentagram partners have made to their industry, especially within Pentagram and how they have showcased Pentagrams conviction ‘*Great design cannot happen without passion, intelligence and — above all — personal commitment.’ – Pentagram, (1972 – 2021)* I am interested to know how they process the information around them. In short, this is an insight into their story.



**Natasha Jen**

Natasha Jen is a graphic designer and a partner of Pentagram. She has been an important contributor to the world of design, using her ability to transition between media genres with ease. Jen works intrinsically across *“brand identities, environmental design, multi-scale exhibitions, signage systems, print, motion and interactive graphics, created in collaborations with universities and professional organizations, museums and galleries, and retail and fashion brands.”* (Pentagram, 2021)

This broad approach to design application allows her to actively engage within the wider design community. During her talk for ‘99U’ called ‘Design thinking is Bullsh\*t’, Jen challenged the notion of design thinking and tries to proactively engage the design community to ‘critique’ this term and the steps involved in the process. (99U, 2018) As a result from challenging this process, Jen is seeking to inform designers in the right way, including herself and partners at Pentagram. Actively communicating her concerns to the design community through talks like this is evidence of her passion and personal commitment within her industry.

Following a lot of uproar and criticism from her initial talk on ‘Design Thinking is Bullsh\*t’, Jen improves the talk for the second time around to better communicate her issues with the process, expressing that such a process is too simplified, not a universal solution to all design problems. She implies that using one medium as the only outlet to challenge ideas means that you cannot arrive at a more rounded outline from which to design. “Design needs to actually use a lot of research”. (design Indaba, 2018, 8.32) Jens diverse application means she can use various strands of information from various sources or experiences and use this to fuel her commitment to design perspectives.

Making sure frameworks are in place so that young designers can develop their work and themselves in the right way is fundamental. However, Jen’s desire to educate doesn’t stop at public talks. Eager to help shape the next generation of young designers, she has served on the Board of directors at New York Chapter of the American Institute of Graphic Arts from 2014 to 2017 as well as being a guest critic for the likes of Harvard Graduate School of Design and Yale University School of Art. (Emile Uys, 2017) Jen’s ability to pass on her passion and intelligence in such a diverse way is inspiring. As a student; having access to insights from someone such as Jen, with an arsenal of perspectives and experiences within the world of design, incentivises me to learn in the right way.



The offices at Pentagram showcase work on the walls, publications that have been produced and an active, somewhat messy environment. This all adds to the so-called visual research and allows standards to be kept at a high level. Office space at Pentagram is also open plan; meaning that a chat with another like-minded designer is an inherent occurrence, resulting in more critical minds that can contribute to a discussion about design.

Integrated within her individual process of designing, she



**Paula Scher**

Seeing herself as a graphic designer. Working predominantly with type, Scher works with her team and guides them in creating designs for theatre, museum etc. Being the first female to be offered the principal position at Pentagram in the 1990’s, was incredible humbling for her (. )

Work that Scher produces at Pentagram has “developed identity and branding systems, promotional materials, environmental graphics, packaging and publication designs for a broad range of clients.” According to the pentagram website. (Pentagram)

Lucy Bourton indicates that the move to New York has exposed Scher to both inspirational and endless briefs to take on. (Lucy Bourton, 2017) Access to diverse primary research allows Scher to communicate effectively. Paula’s work has reached hundreds of thousands of people through designs such as the Windows 8 operating system. During her early years as an Art Director for CBS records Scher made an impact on pop culture following her designs for record sleeves. Designs where most enjoyment came, were the ones for not so well-known Music Artists, allowing her to create work independently and freely, often creating the best outcomes. (*Abstract: The Art of Design, 2017*) She was able to create over 150 album covers each year as well as designing adverts and posters for the company. (Ellen Lupton - *1998*)

One of these designs were





Working within a company made mostly of incredibly talented male designers, Paula admits that she saw it as an intimidating venture. (. )

A lot of the tim, clients come across designs that they like, contact Pentagram and are then connected with Paula, and in her eyes, a lot of the time are shocked at the creator of these designs. (. )

"Designing the logo isn't the hard job, it's persuading a million people to use it"

Paula Scher – Quote from Abstract, The Art of Design.

“The way things that get made are really accidental and circumstantial. And that things have a life of their own.

In a talk called Do What you’ve never done before. Scher talks about the real-life interactions and processes of carrying out projects.



By carrying out talks like these, she is providing information and insights into the real world of a high-level designer. During the talk she talks about restructuring the system and changing the way the reporting happened and that “sometimes it’s not the design, sometimes it’s the people.” This is similar to what Ian Spelters had said in an interview with ‘High Resolution’. Spelter talks about designing the company in order to design effectively and maintain the right incentives. Scher later goes on to talk about a project for Pittsburgh to create a logo to get people to visit the North of Pittsburgh that is accessed under a bridge. She decided to ignore the brief and pitch them an idea where the bridge was used as a space for an art installation to draw people in rather than put people off.

Ultimately, the passion evidenced through the way Scher talks about design is the main contributor in her success as a Designer.

Scher is also drawn to educating and connecting with the wider community. One of the ways she has done this is through publications, most notably ‘Maps’ where she shows emotive examples of maps that are not geographically correct but are correct in their information and are only understandable if the viewer takes the time to read details on each map. Having an emotional connection to these maps could be a response and a connection with her father, who was a photogrammetric engineer, working for the US Geological Survey, inventing a device to obtain ‘distortion-free aerial photography.’ It was from her father that she discovered that maps were distorted.



**Georgia Lupi**

Georgia Lupi is an information designer and a Partner at Pentagram.

Lupi Focuses on data and tries to communicate it in a visual form. Whilst doing this, she tries to connect the viewers with the main source of the information and the stories behind that source. Her work seems to incorporate an element of emotive response as well as simply information. She states that ‘Numbers are never the point; they are always a means to an end.” Georgia Lupi - How we can Find ourselves in Data – TED talk

<https://www.ted.com/talks/giorgia_lupi_how_we_can_find_ourselves_in_data>

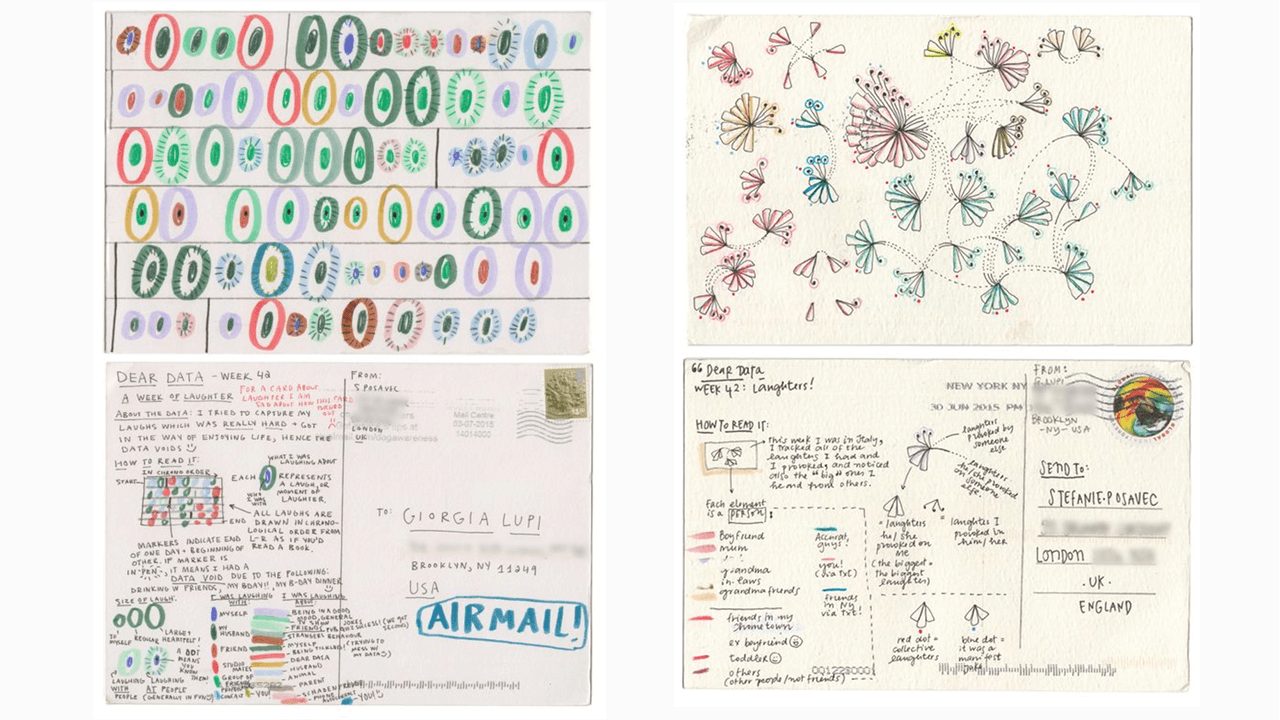
‘Data power the experience but it’s the stories of human beings that are the drive.’



Lupi collaborated on a project where herself and a fellow designer, Stephanie Posavec, communicated using only data, no technology, only through postcards. Creating a key on one side, much like a map, provided the other party with a reference point to visually understand the marks and drawings on the reverse side of the postcard. This data showed the day-to-day happenings of each designer, providing a simplified, accurate and detailed analysis that would be more difficult to communicate simply using words and actually creates a much more emotional response when reading each postcard, providing a *‘lens’* into the life of that designer.

<http://www.stefanieposavec.com> – Stephanie Posavec.

This is a really interesting and creative approach to looking at design, not only focusing on the construction of the design but also training yourself to be analytical and unpick or decode the messages.



This project along with many other work

**Educating**

A conclusion

Pentagram has been an extremely influential collective, especially with the involvement of these three female Partners. They shine light on areas of importance within design and helping companies to establish a visual language, an identity and a place within design. Their contributions didn’t stop here. Making further meaningful contributions to educating designers and general public through written and visual information and making design accessible. It is important to pay tribute to these three designers because they encompass what not just what young female designers hope to achieve but also male designers like myself. They are an integral part of Pentagram and have evidenced positive contributions to the world of design.

The way in which all three designers apply themselves points to the conclusion that great design cannot be created from a narrow focus. In order to produce meaningful design, there must first be a passion. Following this, a willingness to engage with any area that suits the design appropriately and allows it to develop. The work of these designers also depicts a clear statement; that design is visual first and informative later.

**Bibliography**

**Natasha Jen**

(Pentagram, 2021) - <https://www.pentagram.com/about/natasha-jen>

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(Design Indaba, 2018, 8.32) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8gjDsW3lsY>

**Paula Scher**

(Pentagram) - <https://www.pentagram.com/about/paula-scher>

(Lucy Bourton, 2017) - <https://www.itsnicethat.com/features/paula-scher-graphic-design-151117>

-Ellen Lupton

*Please note: Content of biography is presented here as it was published in 1998.*

<http://adcglobal.org/hall-of-fame/paula-scher/>

*Abstract: The Art of Design (2017*) Netflix, 10th February

<https://guides.library.ulster.ac.uk/ld.php?content_id=28291696>

500 word crit with kyle.

Mention the influences on each of the designers work but also show the work itself and how this these influences have impacted the work itself. Use photos as references as well to back up ideas.

In the conclusion, be evaluative and reflective, and show what I have taken away from this and how it will impact my future endeavours.

References, use incite references and use a generator to make the in text cite and reference for bibliography.

Pentagram conviction, *‘Great design cannot happen without passion, intelligence and — above all — personal commitment’*