

# GET OFF THE TRACK

A Q&A WITH OLIVIA CHAN



## GET OFF THE TRACK

## INTRODUCTION

3

*Get off the track* is an editorial design based on the quick and insightful exchange I had with graphic designer Olivia Chan. Along with her constructive feedbacks is my self-reflection and things I've learned along the way. This is called 'Get off the track' because many designers including her have suggested that one should not simply cater to just one aesthetic. Getting off the track means leaving your comfort zone to explore and discover several different styles of design.

Olivia Chan is a multi-disciplinary graphic designer from Baillat. Her works include motion graphic designs for Cirque du soleil as well as for MutekMtl. She also runs a YouTube channel on the side, her videos ranging from tips and tricks to some heavily art directed fashion lookbook which I'm a great fan of.



## GET OFF THE TRACK



4

## Q&A I

Based on your experience and this body of work, what stands out?  
What should I continue to do more of?

As you mentioned in your portfolio, you are much influenced by Swiss design and I think it shows! Although I love Swiss design (I mean, who doesn't hehe) the project that stood out to me most is your KERNING project. Maybe because most of your projects are mainly black and white, the bold type is a nice statement, the colour combinations are nicely chosen and the packaging set is clever.

However, I do think because the packaging is so fun, it could've been emphasized even more in the project photoshoot. Maybe complementary colours as background, maybe making even more cans with the labels and aligning them in a clever way that really shows the concept of kerning. I'm assuming that the slinky and the dinosaur toy was the idea of making it playful, but I think because it isn't related to the project or the typography concept, it feels a little random.

5

Which project(s) do you feel is the weakest in my portfolio?

Generally, I think the projects presented are quite nice. We can see a bit of variety in your projects. If I had to really choose one then I might say the Langues Autochtones poster. I can see how you wanted to create a poster that's a little gritty and rough. Maybe if you would've tried creating those rough effects by hand, scanning them then maybe even manipulating them in Photoshop, that feeling would've come off even stronger. Even for the typeface, it would've been even more interesting to push the "roughness" further and make something that's a little more custom, organic and raw.



## GET OFF THE TRACK

Which skills would you encourage me to develop further?

I think you nailed the layout aspect, it shows especially in your portfolio layout and your projects in general. I know at Dawson you guys learn to do motion design so I would've love to see that! When you get into the work field, depending on if you're planning to work in a studio or go freelance, I would definitely suggest either sharpening and developing a specific style you have if that's how you want to offer your services or showing a variety of things you are capable of doing in your portfolio.

In my own experience, I quickly realized that motion design was really in demand especially if you have a design background because the person who's hiring you understand that you are capable of doing both independently and together. Therefore, I tried learning the most by myself through youtube. It doesn't have to be motion design if that's not what you're into, it can also be photography, typography, illustration, 3D, web coding and more. Although in the past we were conditioned to specialize in one thing, nowadays studios are more interested in someone who is more multidisciplinary. It really raises the chance of you getting hired and being more involved in different projects. It doesn't have to necessarily be specific skill sets, it could also be that you're showing different styles of design, eg, very minimalist design vs. super fun vibrant geometric design. I would also encourage you to collaborate with people in your projects. Sometimes you don't need to be the person that does it all. It can be done in a collaboration, it enables you to form new connections with people and let the right person do their specialty and enhance your project. Not to mention, it gives the visibility for both of you! On the opposite end, if you're planning on wanting to really develop a specific style to yourself and having people hire you for that, by all means that a great route to as well. The only downside is that it's trickier and probably demands more time. As someone who will soon be fresh out of school, I would definitely recommend not being afraid of trying new things!

6

7

## Q&A II

What can be improved? Be specific, if possible.

Based on what I've previously said, I would say the Langues Autochtones poster because I think you could've brought the poster to the next level by trying hands on explorations.

I always believed in the saying that goes "There's always room for improvement". If I go back to my Dawson portfolio, I would've probably changed and improved all of my projects. I guess I won't be specific in pinpointing what can be improved in your projects because that can be subjective to each's experience. Only based on what I mentioned above, I would say maybe the photo-shooting of the Kerning project, and if you're doing mockups, my advice would be to shoot some mockups yourself since there are so many designers out there, we would want to avoid using the mockups that's been used over and over again by everyone. Don't be afraid to really create an art direction for your project photo-shoots. They can really bring to life, make or break a project.)



## GET OFF THE TRACK

And lastly, what are your inspirations whenever you have a creative block when editing your videos or designing?

Whenever I get a creative block, I usually turn to my colleagues to ask for a fresh perspective or exchange files to work with something new. Often, when we work too much on something, it's like we don't see our vision as clear anymore which is absolutely normal by the way. There's a time when you're working on something so much for so long, and that you've tried several things already and can't find the solution to it. That's when you should know that there's no point in forcing it further. Sometimes all you need is break. As cliché as it might sound, your mind is a muscle. When you overwork this muscle, it needs rests and breaks in order to perform better. This applies to your creative mind. Make sure when you take that break, that you're NOT thinking about it during your break.

*The point of it, IS to get away from it.*

Look at something new, do something unrelated. Often, we rely on other people's work on the internet for inspiration, which for the most part can help. But sometimes, the best ideas and inspiration comes from the ideas generated within. That can also avoid unconsciously reproducing someone's work with slight modifications and really create something that's not been done (although a lot of things has been done haha). By doing something unrelated, it enables you to enjoy something at ease and makes creative connections in your brain that enables space for new ideas. If you don't have colleagues or friends to ask for feedback, and you've tried doing something else and taking a break, you can always fall back on a brainstorm tree and go back to the core message you're trying to evoke. Make a list of keywords, synonyms, sometimes the ideas are the simplest and are closer than you think.

8

## Q&A III

Nonetheless, when I do need some graphic inspiration I would recommend finding inspiration through Tumblr rather than the conventional Pinterests. Maybe because of all the algorithms, when looking for something I find that Pinterest always loops you into the same circle of references. As oppose to tumblrs, some people really curate the content they share to a specific style. Here are a few links:

<https://gdbot.tumblr.com/>  
<https://designeverywhere.tumblr.com/>  
<https://generalofficestudio.tumblr.com/>  
<https://contemposter.tumblr.com/>

9



## GET OFF THE TRACK

*One last point that's unrelated to the questions above, is that I've noticed several spelling errors throughout your portfolio. Make sure to proof read by someone if needed because if you're trying to impress an important client and they notice these minor errors, it can impact your credibility*

## SELF-REFLECTION

A question for myself. What did I learn throughout this interview with an experienced designer? Did I have any takeaway?

Upon reading her insightful feedbacks on my work, my takeaway from this short interview is that one shouldn't shy away from trying out different things. Not just particularly in graphic design, but life in general as well. Learning new things expands our horizons and even vanquishing fears that we initially had. Learning new things causes ripple effects in a sense where if you learn one thing, it might lead into something completely unexpected. The way I see is that if you completely *get off the track*, you have nothing to lose because every time you try something new, you gain something; whether you turn it into something positive or something negative, it is completely up to you.



# GET OFF THE TRACK

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE  
FOR GRAPHIC DESIGN 2

ANDREI GASILAO