

Project Statement

The forty prints on exhibit are a selection from more than one-hundred ampersands created as part of a personal hand-lettering experiment. Beginning September 12th, 2013 I challenged myself to draw, digitize, and publish one ampersand each day via a website titled, "am.persand.me".

As a designer, I work best within certain given limitations. Because of this, I set very specific parameters, the most important was that the focus be on form. I limited myself to only black and white, and insisted that all be displayed in a similar size and format.

On December 20th, 2013 I hit one-hundred ampersands in one-hundred days. Since then, I am still drawing ampersands, but no longer on a daily basis. I have shifted my focus to the transformational process of moving the finished digital form back to a physical form using various printing techniques.

Process Statement

The graphic designer in me craves structure and process. Because of this, this project began with a strict set of rules and objectives, focusing the project on experimentation of form and refinement of skills. I've always admired typographers, illustrators, and more recently hand-letterers. To better understand the nuances of these disciplines, I chose to focus my study on just one letterform to see how many different variations I could come up with. I chose the ampersand over other characters because of its vast variety of form, but also its ability to stand on its own.

I vowed to publish one new work a day, online via a blog I created specifically for this project, "am.persand.me" to keep me honest throughout the experiment. I published the rules and objectives alongside the work, further committing to my process. This can still be found on the blog, but among the most important were limiting myself to a single color (black), and format (600 x 600 pixel jpg), and allowing myself the freedom to experiment with all variations of the basic idea of the ampersand. This consistency of the presentation format eliminated any distraction from the focus on the form.

I spent the majority of this portion of my project drawing. I drew dozens of ampersands each day. Occasionally I'd use french curves, but more often than not I just let myself draw without the worry of precision or judgment. I used sketchbooks, but I also drew on anything available. There were ampersands on napkins, bills, bank statements, and post-it notes. There were pen drawings, pencil drawings, sharpie, whatever tool was available, I drew with it.

Each day, I'd evaluate the drawings, and choose just one. The chosen drawing would go through a revision process. I might draw it again three or four, or even ten more times to work out the details. Once I was satisfied with the mark, I'd take a photo, and bring it into software to prepare it to be posted digitally. It's in the computer that the finest details would emerge. I would sometimes spend hours pulling curves to build the form. Once finished, the finished mark was exported and uploaded. The next day, I'd do it all over again, one-hundred times over.

Some time after my one-hundredth mark, I was approached with an opportunity to participate in a gallery show abroad. My body of work was digital, which forced me to consider ways to move the work back onto the paper page. I choose to avoid digital printing, taking the opportunity to focus this stage of the project again on form and skill development.

I had recently gotten access to a laser-cutter and had been looking for the perfect opportunity to experiment with this tool and now I had it. I went to work transforming my designs into wooden plates to be printed on an etching press in the printmaking studio. I had no previous printmaking experience, but I was determined to learn to print. With the help of some generous colleagues and students, I learned the process of woodblock printing. I was drawn to the wood texture that was filling my form. The transitional process from paper, to digital, to paper again was really exciting, and I was compelled to keep printing. Eventually a series of sixteen woodblock printed posters prevailed.

Many of the more painterly marks did not lend themselves well to the woodcut process I had developed. Obstacle as opportunity led me to explore another process. I begin to experiment with silk-screening techniques, another area in which I had little relevant experience. The end result is a series of twenty-five silk-screened posters, some even making use of half-tone patterning.

A year and a half ago, I made a decision to start this project. I certainly did not expect that the decision to start this project would have the impact it did on me. Today I have a large digital body of work, a collection of forty-three unique prints hanging on gallery walls, and a solid working knowledge of a handful of printmaking techniques. This project was centered on process and experimentation and this exhibition, too, is centered in process and experimentation. Not every mark in this show is perfect, in fact most aren't even close, but in the end, that isn't the intention. The whole, in this case, is larger than the sum of its parts.

Background

Jillian Noble came to UWSP in 2007. Jillian graduated from Iowa State University, where she received her MFA in Graphic Design. Her graduate work focused on immersive design environments and social constructions of scale. Jillian has done a great deal of work for the Chippewa Valley Historical Museum, helping to create multiple exhibitions and a multimedia object theater.

Jillian is involved in teaching at all levels of the graphic design curriculum and specializes in web design, print production, and has also offered classes in environmental design topics such as wayfinding design.

In addition to her teaching, Jillian is the Co-Founder of [Elbongurk](#), a small graphic and web design firm located in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.