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Adrian Shaughnessy sat down with LA-based tech and design firm Use All Five to chat about his design career and the importance of writing. Adrian Shaughnessy is a graphic designer, publisher at Unit Editions, and a senior tutor at the Royal College of Art in London.

UA5: You had a unique start to your design career, a method of learning that is rare today. Can you tell us about it and how you feel it compares to the experience recent graduates will face?

AS: I didn't go to design school. I trained in a studio in the pre-digital era. And yes, it's hard to imagine it happening today. But if I were starting out now, I wouldn't choose this route. Back then I thought I was being smart. How cool to learn on the job. Who needs design school when you can start working as a designer from the get-go? But I now realize that I missed out on something that only a period of study gives you – the opportunity to experiment and make mistakes.

I had to learn everything at high speed, which meant that I couldn’t take risks, couldn't indulge in experimentation, and couldn’t make mistakes. The result of this was that I became a conventional client-pleasing designer. It was only when I started my first studio (Intro, in 1989) that I developed the confidence to challenge orthodoxies and conventions, and take risks.

In a way, I've lived my life in reverse. Grads come out of school today jacked up on experimentation and a desire to set the world on fire. Over time, many of them (though not all) slip into a sort of default professionalism. I did it the other way round. I started as a conformist, and now I'm much more inclined towards experimentation and creative risk taking. I tell my students not to be me-too designers.

Few of us will be doing the same work in 10 years time, and who knows what the design landscape will look like then. Education's role is to equip designers for a future that is unknown. And of all the skills it needs to teach, critical thinking is the most important. Without this ability, we will only succeed in producing a generation of design automatons.

UA5: What are your thoughts on the current state of design education? How do you think it will change with the new resources of the digital age and how will this affect existing educational institutions?

AS: My own view on design education – and its relevance in the digital realm – is that it is the role of educators to produce grads who are fit for an ever-changing discipline, and even more importantly, for an ever-changing world.

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No client ever accepted a design proposal without asking questions. And the more bold the proposal the more difficult the questions. Therefore, it’s vital that designers know how to talk about (in some cases write about) their work.

UA5: What drew you personally to writing about design? Why is written/verbal communication of aesthetic ideas so important to designers and how can this skill be developed?

AS: Mastery of the written word and mastery of spoken language are vital skills for designers to possess. No client ever accepted a design proposal without asking questions. And the more bold the proposal the more difficult the questions. Therefore, it’s vital that designers know how to talk about (in some cases write about) their work. I noticed that all the designers I admired were always able to talk and write about their work with clarity and objectivity.

This was one of the prompts for my own interest in writing. I knew that as a designer I had to get good at it. But I also had an interest in literature, and I've always been a reader. So when the design discourse of the 80s and 90s kicked off, I knew I wanted to be part of the discussion, and the only way I could join that discussion was as a writer and lecturer. But writing didn't come easily to me, and I’m still on a quest to become good at it. I admire good writing almost above everything else in life, and I think writing is the highest art form as it is the only art form that can effectively critique itself.

Read the whole interview here: http://goo.gl/IxVLBi
This Hackable Wearable Is for Kids Who Don’t Mess Around

TECHNOLOGY WILL SAVE Us, the London tech-for-kids company that in 2013 made the popular DIY Gamer Kit, is launching a wearable device today. It’s called the Mover, and it’s best defined by what it is not: “This is not a GPS, or a tracker. It doesn’t count steps, or collect data and put it in a cloud, and it’s not a smartwatch,” says Bethany Koby, TWSU’s founder and CEO. “It probably will compete more with other open-ended creative products, like Lego.”

Here are a few things that can be said about the Mover, which is now raising funds on Kickstarter: its core unit is a plastic case that houses two circuit boards—one with a processor, the other with an accelerometer, a magnetometer, and eight RGB LED lights. Like TWSU’s gaming devices, the Mover comes disassembled. Once young users have snapped and connected the components into place, the Mover is about the size and shape of a Double Stuf Oreo cookie. It can attach to a silicone slap-band bracelet, or a carabiner, or kind of anywhere, which is largely the point. The Mover, Koby says, “is about you as a young person, with all your boundless activities.”

Koby tells me as this she snaps together a prototype of the Mover and program them to respond to the sensors. Run for five minutes, and all the LED lights will flash blue; jump rope for 65 seconds without tripping, and your Mover will turn pink. The idea, Koby says, is to give kids a simple tool for playing with the basic “if this, then that” functionality of technology, but in the context of their own physical movement. If I move like this, that creates data, and that data will trigger a reaction. “When you give kids a few, but very powerful, parameters—movement, customization, and an open-ended potential for [the Mover] to respond to them—you can get it to do a million things. You don’t need a million sensors, you actually just need a few to be really creative.”

After watching 300 kids in London, France, and Germany play with various prototypes of the Maker, Koby is convinced that this idea—that a few basic tools can unleash a ton of creativity—is a solid one. She’s seen kids program Movers to play versions of hot potato, to work as the center piece of an Iron Man costume, and to help guide an obstacle course. One kid even programmed his Mover to unlock rainbow-colored lights after two minutes of brushing his teeth, to prove his diligence to his mom. Another kid stuck his Mover inside a paper towel cardboard tube, and made a lightsaber.

None of these actions, it’s worth noting, involves a screen. The Mover is a STEM toy, for sure, but it’s also a Trojan Horse for getting kids started on computational thinking. Young users will interface with a screen to program their Movers, but after that, everything happens on the playground and in the playroom. Kids are already learning how to code on computers, Koby reasons. “We don’t want this to be something that needs a screen, it’s something you do in the world,” she says. “Go dance, get on your scooter, do what you do as a young person.”

With the new block-based desktop software that TWSU is en also launching today, kids can customize the lights in their Movers and program them to respond to the sensors. Run for five minutes, and all the LED lights will flash blue; jump rope for 65 seconds without tripping, and your Mover will turn pink. The idea, Koby says, is to give kids a simple tool for playing with the basic “if this, then that” functionality of technology, but in the context of their own physical movement. If I move like this, that creates data, and that data will trigger a reaction. “When you give kids a few, but very powerful, parameters—movement, customization, and an open-ended potential for [the Mover] to respond to them—you can get it to do a million things. You don’t need a million sensors, you actually just need a few to be really creative.”

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The music on Vera Vinter’s latest album, Monsterland, is beautiful and dynamic, but also hides deep dissonances and implied sounds from the abyss. Our world, our fairytale land, our Monster Land is a land where love is betrayed, memories hurt and where the heart stops beating and everything and everyone eventually falls.

The monsters that inhabit this seductively beautiful country has neither horns or hoofs, they are wrapped in the silent icy heat that only lost love and helpless yearning can generate.
Congrats on finishing your presentations APD2, TD2, and IXD2!

... now back to work on UID '16