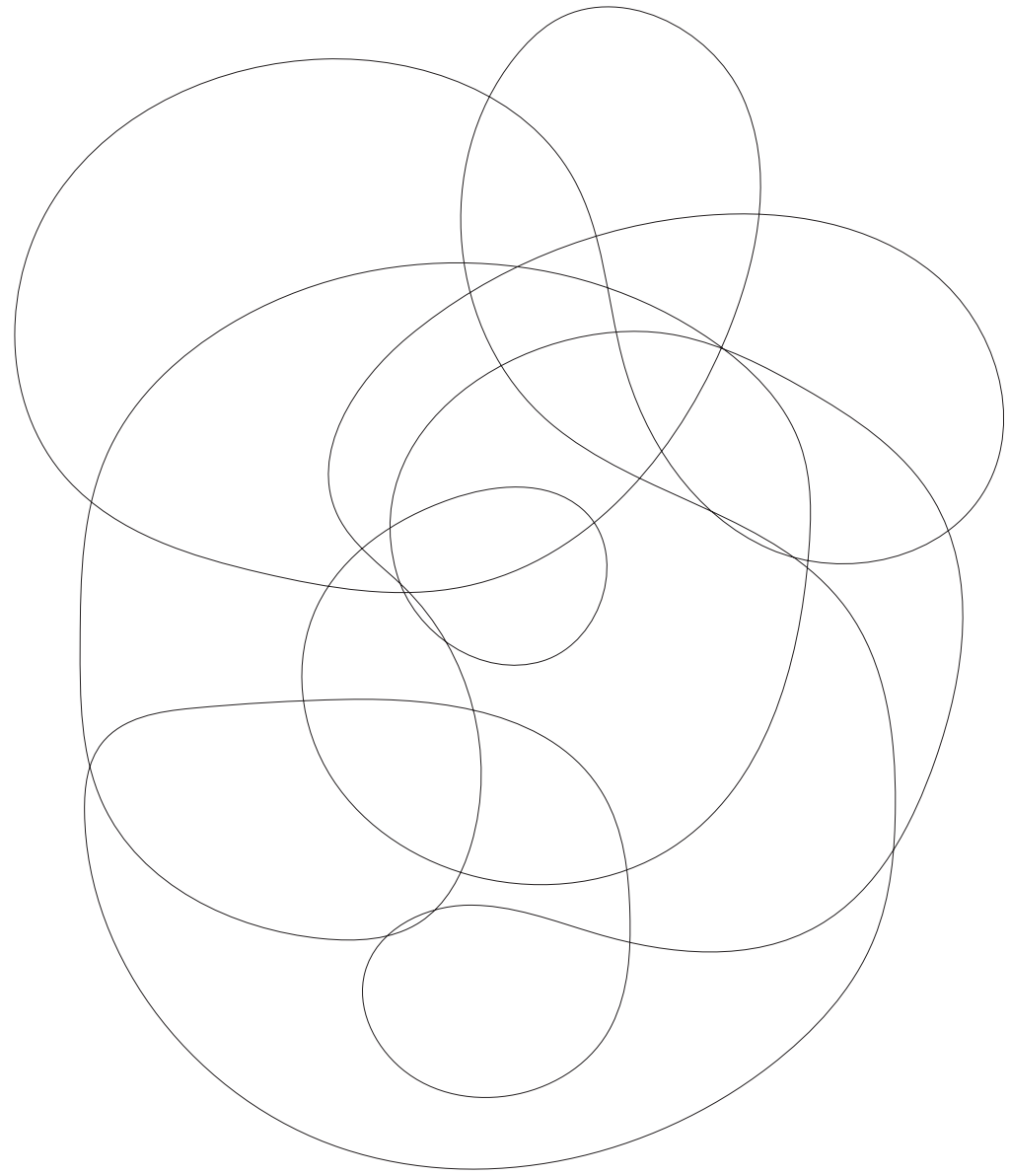


# Narrative of re-discovery

James Shaw



The emergence and point of discovery. Since beginning my freelance practice, Volley Design in 2017 there has been multiple twists and turns along the way but one thing that hasn't changed is the work which I've been producing under Volley Design. This started to change when starting my MA in Graphic Design. Shortly after starting the MA I uncovered a 'point of discovery'

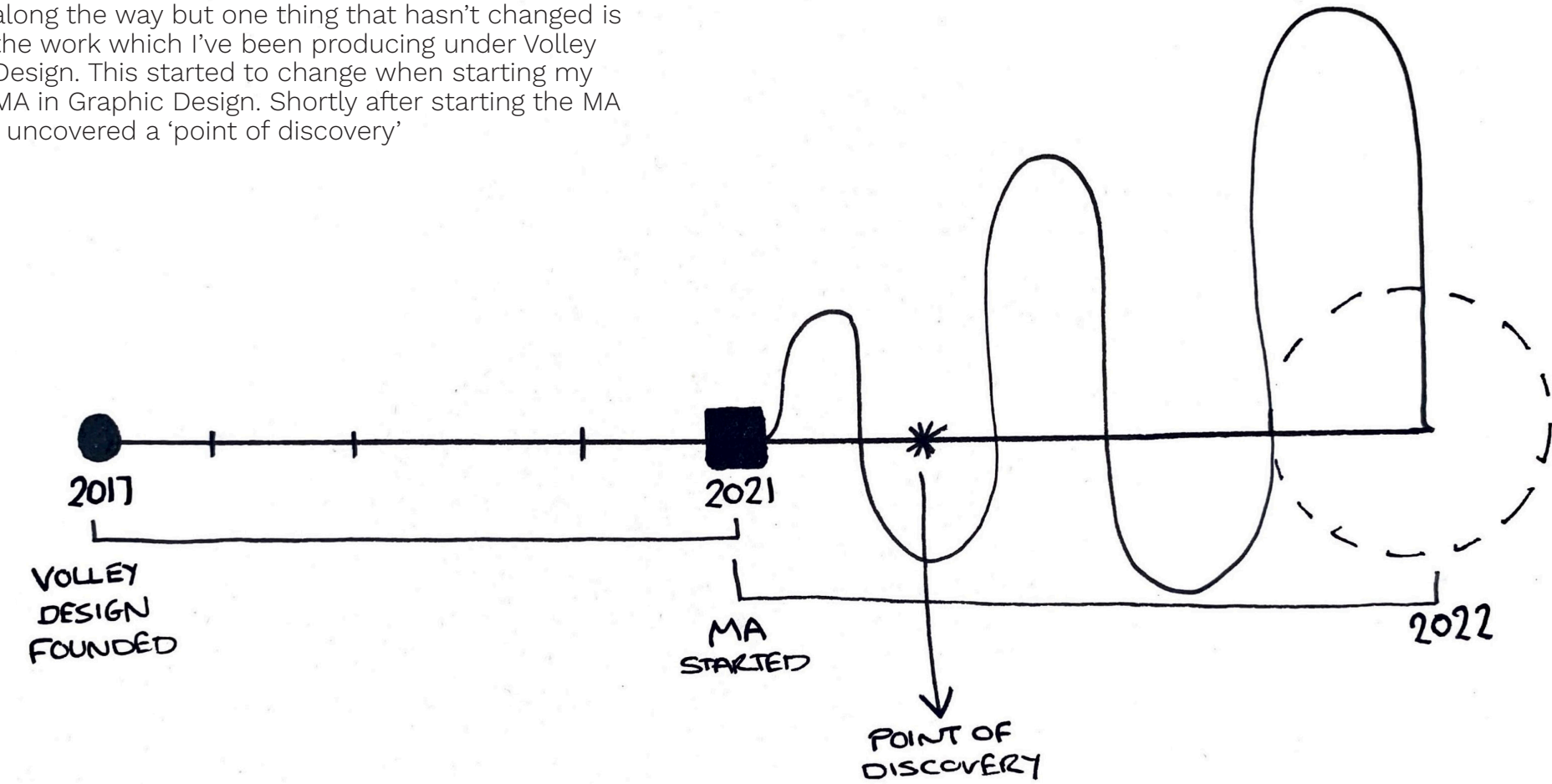


Diagram Analysis of journey to date

I have always spoke of a change within my practice and this divide between two areas of my practice. This more ‘art’ side and the ‘design’ side. I would also separate the two and I think since reflecting back there was a worry that the more experimental side wasn’t ‘graphic design’ but since exploring and pushing the boundaries I’ve started to see how my two areas can come together to be explorative and solve problems.

The art side was always an ‘Instagram thing’ it never worked its way into my client work even though I would at times spend more time crafting and coming up with new ideas, using an array of materials. The drive and excitement at times was more towards this way of working rather than designing for clients. However I still would not think about moving this across to my practice, why? I don’t think I have the answer other than I needed to keep afloat with my freelance.

The current freelance practice and before I started to realise that a new way of working was developing I would predominantly be working across brand materials for digital and print plus supporting huge tech companies with bid documents, only on PowerPoint however, so the excitement stopped there.

If I look back over the past 5 years on the projects I have worked on it’s only a handful I can pick out that I really enjoyed and was able to get stuck into creatively. I know it’s not always possible to have a creative freedom on projects but clients should be looking to hire you for what you produce. This for me is what is happening. Clients see my more commercial work and aren’t exposed to the more creative / experimental side. Could this small change help me or hinder?

## Analysis of practice

Before planning for the development of my new practice I wanted to first engage with an analysis of my current business, Volley Design. This allowed me to understand what’s not working within my current practice but also look at the strengths to see what can be taken forward.

## Issues with the current practice

Either clients I’m working with are not who I want to be working with or the projects briefed are to corporate and bland? No flex their to get my more experimental approach involved

Time – Currently I don’t have time to focus on my practice due to other commitments within lecturing (which I don’t want to give up as it’s fantastic in informing my practice)

Fee – I believe I am charging too little currently to make this a sustainable business. What can I look at here to support this better.

Name and overview – It’s currently too straight design focussed – work advertised (via website) is not really the work I want to be creating anymore. I want to allow my creative freedom to take part in these projects. I have been really inspired by the work of Kessels Kramer. The agency write in their ‘about’ that “solutions that blur the boundaries between culture, commerce, content and collaboration”

The agency works across multiple mediums with a multitude of different individuals. Their work pushed the boundaries of what we know as graphic design, exploring different materials and outputs to create unique, engaging communicating content for their clients. – A direction I’m heavily inspired by at the moment.

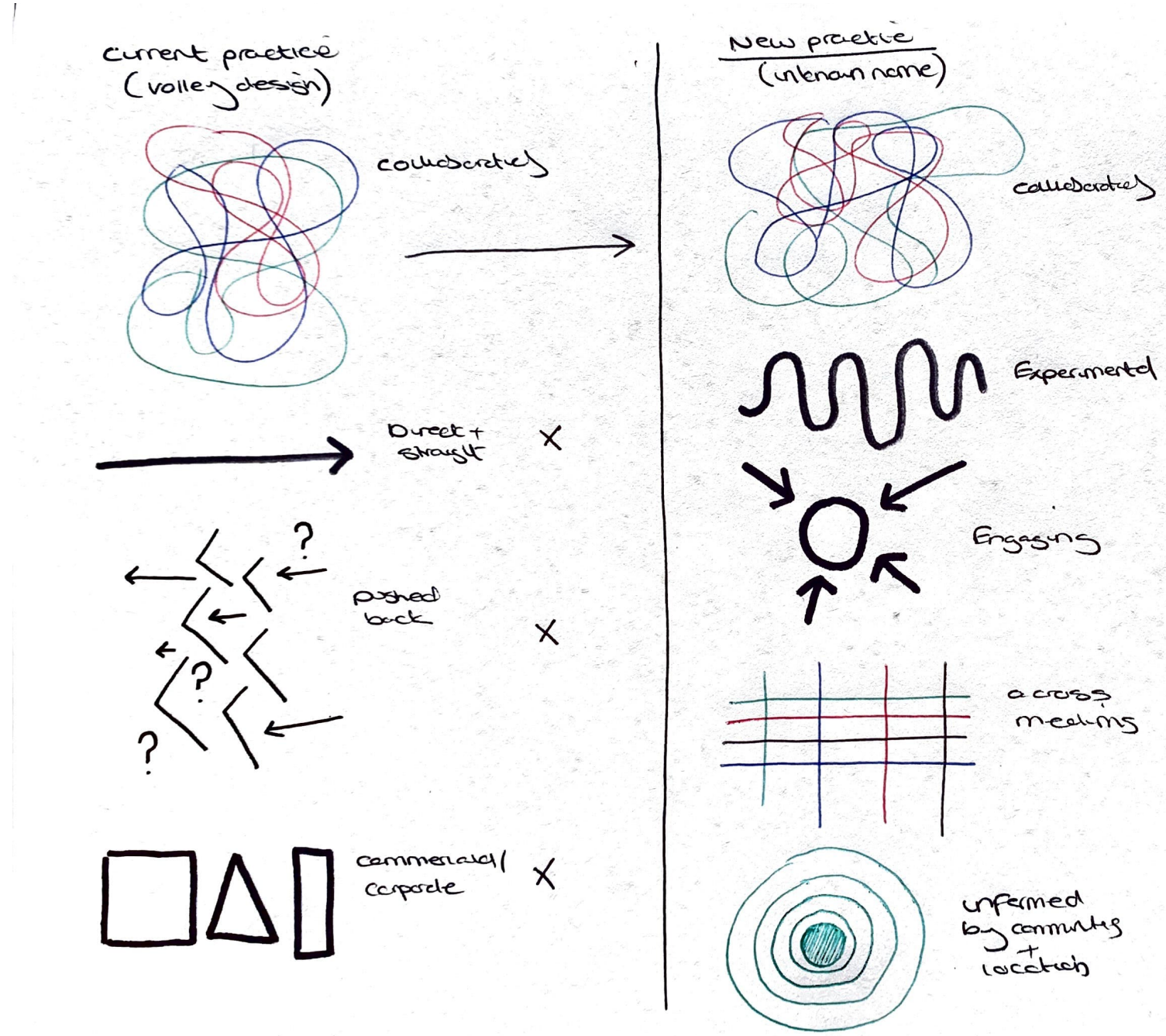


Strengths within the current practice

Communication and connection within my network. One thing I have been successful at is building up a network of connections across different disciplines (I think I've done this sub consciously) knowing that these are areas I want to work / tap into. For example Education, Technology, local Community projects and music.

5 years experience working in a freelance capacity with clients large and small. I've been working in a freelance capacity in some state for the past 5 years. I've learnt how to work with clients, working on projects large and small, communicating with clients. This will only benefit the development of a new practice – this time I feel more prepared and resourced with people I can speak to for support in different areas.

Existing clients - I have a number of existing clients, these may not be within the area I want to work within however this gives me an element of income to support the development if I choose to remove full time work.



Visual reflection on current practice and future practice



Copyright - Design proposal, Shape Newham

Currently I'm working within the education sector as an associate lecturer within the design field while also continuing my freelance design practice, however this has reduced further as I see the transition to a new practice happen.

Through conversations, influence and research I have been starting to think about how the new practice will take shape. One of the first things I want to do is move away from the name, Volley Design. The reasoning for this is I think it refers to how I was thinking at the start of my design career. It's not a forget about the journey I've been on but a reflection and emerge of the new practice. With this comes a re brand / brand development of the new practice.

Conversations and influence from external

In July 2022 I had a great conversation with my study skills tutor about what's next and the influences which are sparking this development. Within this discussion we spoke of a more recent influence I had come across in terms of ways of working. I came across a project called Shape Newham.

Shape Newham is a project funded by Newham Council and 'was launched by Newham Council in 2019 to co-design and install 18 imaginative and original public space improvement projects. The projects are varied and include artist installations, upgraded street furniture, pocket parks, public realm enhancements and youth-led murals'

This project brought to life even more this idea of developing a practice which encompasses a community and a mix of practitioners working across graphic design, architecture, urban design and art. What stood out most for me within this project was the community engagement and involvement. Everything was for the community and they had a voice in how this was developed. I want this to play a key part in the projects I'll be working on.

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0:8:57.700 --> 0:9:12.690- Julia Platt

“It feels like there's quite a blurring of boundaries in terms of graphic design merging into interior design and architecture. Do you know what I mean? It's like that's of embracing working in the environment”.

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0:33:53.210 --> 0:34:10.270 - Julia Platt

“So you've got interests in both your own area, locality and possibilities around where you live. But equally you'd be interested in joining any projects that are establishing nationally.”

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0:10:42.410 --> 0:10:52.380 – James Shaw

“pushing the boundaries of what graphic design can be in terms of the materials that are being used”

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0:0:34.520 --> 0:0:51.740 – James Shaw

“This is kind of the realm that I want to be involved with and it had kind of kickstarted the”

0:3:36.720 --> 0:3:44.170 - Julia Platt

“So that celebration of the history, that was really resonating with you because of your recent project?”

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0:12:33.710 --> 0:12:45.90 – James Shaw

“This is where it's going to go. I just knew that I wanted to redirect my business and somehow incorporate my creative, artistic kind of side that wasn't being seen. And I think naturally it's happened through Projects and working locally”

0:29:16.750 --> 0:29:46.850 - Julia Platt

“Is there a whole sort of world of funding to be explored around these sort of projects? Like how, where, how do you how do you sort of access funding for what you might call community art projects? “

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0:38:47.410 --> 0:39:0.200 - Julia Platt

So you want to break out of the corporate bubble completely? Really. Collaborate with like minded designers, not only graphic designers, but other others, interior designers, architects, all sorts.

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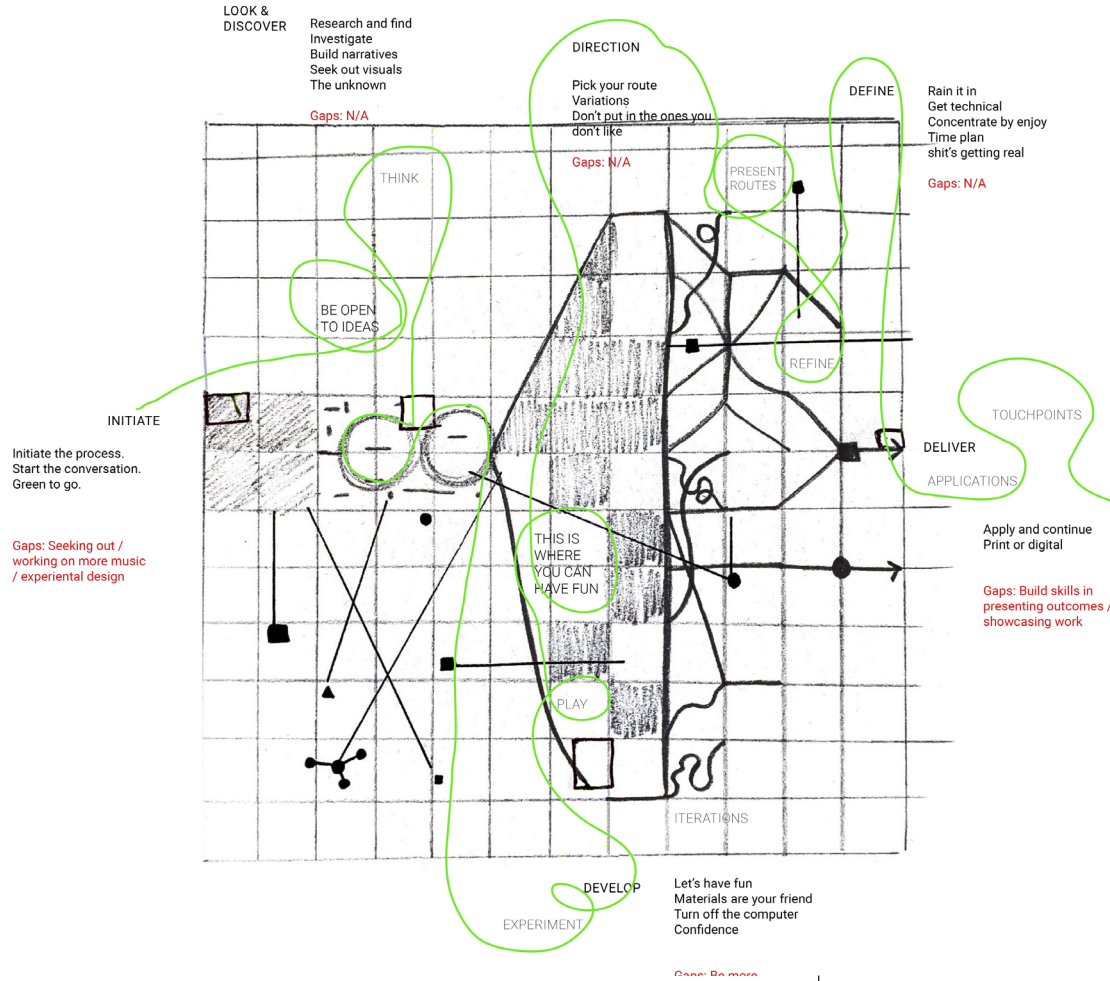


A project which opened up further my thought of re discovery

Since the commencement of my MA I have been pushing myself more and more and exploring the use of different materials and mediums, both across digital and tactile formats.

One of these earlier projects which ignited a spark was within module 1 of the MA called: Skills & Making: Process Models. We were tasked to respond to this challenge: Create a design which summarises a process model that works for you at the moment, highlighting the skills you have and the gaps you have.

Something on this project allowed me to let go of my usual approach and I ended up going back to the sketchbook, drawing and creating diagrams. But beyond this I started to work with sounds. Recording my daily happenings and working these together to create a process model sound which accompanied the design. Even though this was a lo-fi output it was dynamic, different and pushed what a usual piece of infographic/communication could be. This sparked further developments throughout this module including within Week 9: Message Delivered. Allowing me to explore my immediate location, using materials and references in a more tactile way.



Process Model - Week 8



Locality Response - Week 9

The next step in this journey

It hasn't come out of the blue and it certainly has had allot of thinking behind how it's going to develop and move into a new way of working. I had a conversation with my study skills tutor a few weeks back and she mentioned a design agency called Kressels Kramar. She told me to take a look and explore what they did. They say in their 'about' section "we make content that is human and risk taking" this connected to me instantly. The risks I was taking within my 'art' side and started to do on the MA. I started to explore new ways of working I had never worked before, for example with sound and image. I was pushing what design was in a traditional sense and from what I was producing before coming onto the MA. Kressels Kramar also say " We produce an effective and prolific output of solutions that blur the boundaries between culture, commerce, content and collaboration.

This also stood out to me about how a mix of materials and mediums can be combined to create risk taking, boundary pushing outcomes. Being influenced by their surroundings and location to inform their practice. How could I start to look more locally within my community to inform my practice?



copyright - Sweet dreams made for summer, Kressels Kramer

The plan

The business will be a Interdisciplinary design practice. Initially this will have 1 director – me James Shaw.

Overview of practice:

An interdisciplinary design practice pushing and blurring the boundaries of what graphic design can be today. Drawing upon research and community engagement from geographical locations to inform design processes across tactile, digital and print outputs which have purpose and impact.

Our creative ambition brings our clients into the collaborative process sparking conversations and intrigue from delivery to implementation, helping discover the possibilities of how objects, narratives and ideas can be explored to solve problems and communicate across a spectrum of mediums.

Mission Statement:

We strive to connect, collaborate, uncover narratives and ideas within communities through creative outputs which push and bend the boundaries of design.

Values:

**Be Creative** - Aim to explore the possibilities of materials and mediums to create exciting and surprising outcomes

**Be Collaborative** - Allow collaboration to form and foster within creative projects. Allow practitioners and communities to merge and discover.

**Immersive within locality** – Research and uncover narratives within immediate locations

**Push the Boundaries** – Push the boundaries of graphic design to explore new mediums and output touchpoints

**Be sustainable** – Consider the environment in all that we do and how we can support within our practice delivery.

Structure

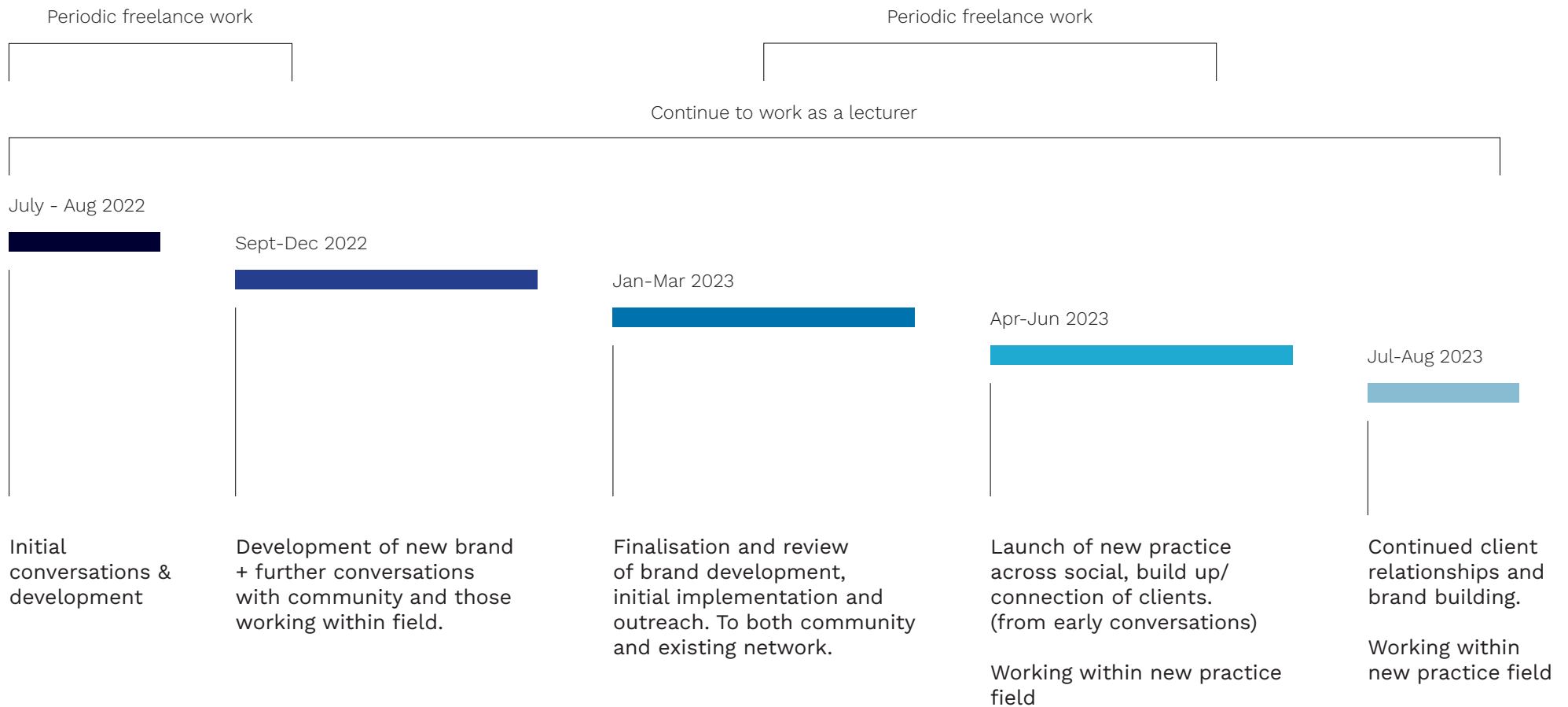
1x Creative Director (me) 36-40K salary required (based on current climate)

Future resources: Freelance Designer (interim on larger projects)

Consistent pool of talent to draw upon:

- Son of Jesse (Web Designer)
- Donna Sarah (Illustrator, Freestyle)
- Red Nine (Design Agency)
- Owen Vincent (portrait photography)

Location – Home Studio, Wiltshire, United Kingdom



## Timeline of events

On a high level planning what is next in the development of my practice. This has to take into consideration current work commitments and the evolution of Volley Design