

OF VIRGINS AND WHORES.

Graphic Design is only a job Kid, just another job. Being a designer (lower case **d** intended) is different.

Ben Terrett's blog is so good for three very good reasons.
One: it cannot be quitted until you get right to the end.
Two: that inner relief of thank God it isn't just me.
Three: the feedback post he received.

Now then, let's deal with those in reverse order.

Three. It's interesting that some of the people who posted back, who are in tune with Ben, say they are not designers. They do not tell us what they *actually* do to keep the wild things from the gate though. So we have to be aware that one day we could meet an anthropologist or, worse, a welder, who notices badly spaced type. Personally I hope it will not be me who does meet the welder, if the conversation turned from kerning to soldering I'd be sunk deep.

Two. I believe people say "Thank God I'm not alone" when they go into places like the Priory for rehabilitation. Designers, of course, are not alone but we do share a beautiful addiction: curiosity. Which is nothing to be in denial of. Being curious however does provoke odd behaviour— like looking for too long at Polish food packaging in Tesco. It is also very difficult to explain to our partners why we keep on filling the places we live in with all kinds of useless crap.

One. Paying attention to detail (Three, above) and constantly absorbing the minutiae of Life (Two) is what designers do. What the good designers, like Ben, do next is to shuffle all this stuff together in an engaging way. They communicate. That is the job of Graphic Design. To help others to absorb information and learn something that they did not know before. And if the designer can do that clearly and concisely and— even better, entertain as well, they become good citizens.

But then— and this is me creeping up on your original question, whores play an important role in society also. So I'm told.

So.

The question you asked.

Is the artist a virgin and the designer a whore?

Artists spend too much time alone. (Far too much time so many may well be virgins.) And it is true that designers and art directors have borrowed many images from the art world then invoiced their client for the privilege.

Conversely, since the 'sixties, more than a few painters and video art makers have not exactly gone broke by lifting from the mass of media. Andy Warhol was rich for a lot longer than fifteen minutes. And don't tell me that there is any living artist who would send back the cheque for the Turner Prize: whilst all that you can expect from your Silver Pencil is a nasty hangover.

No. Graphic Design is just a job. Underneath the skin artists and designers carry the same defective gene. From the age that we have to start thinking about where our careers lie— usually around second year at school, we develop an acute allergy to wielding big spanners: or any activity that involves wearing a uniform for most of the day.

Let me tell you a story.

Last year the restoration of my little house was almost complete. One of the last tradesmen I employed was a joiner, to fit some skirting boards. He did a fine job. I asked Paul, the joiner, what other kinds of work he did. Not much call, he said, except for skirtings, doors, and building Ikea flatpacks for them as give up on them.

For over a year I'd been looking for a simple wood surround for the open fire in the living room. The only choices I turned up were mock Victorian, real Victorian, or somebody's vision of the future with a gas fire in the middle. I asked Paul if he'd have a go. Two weeks later he delivered a surround in three perfectly proportioned pieces which slotted easily together with hand-crafted joints. He had used old timber from a derelict barn and brought the surface out singing with beeswax.

Happy?

Me?

As Larry.

It's brilliant, you should do a lot more of this: I told Paul.

It's more a case of finding the client as'll let you: said Paul.

Graphic Design. It's only a job.

