

What I Wish You Knew Before You Met Me

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My brief was to create a zine to inform people about the LGBTQIA+ community in a kind and comprehensive manner, which reflects my personal way of teaching people about the community in real life. I used the texture and style of comic books to attract my appropriate target audience of those ignorant about the community. Those who grew up in the silver age of comic books (1950s-1970s) represent an older community, and other fans of older comic books are statistically more likely to be white straight cis men. Both populations are less likely to know about or empathise with discrimination toward the LGBTQIA+ community and hence would find a resource like this useful.

As I planned my body of work, I found it getting bigger and bigger as I continued researching and ideating the content. My initial idea of producing a brochure was quickly changed to a zine, which is so large it is probably better described as a booklet. I have 45 A5 pages of content, but the final product is even smaller than I planned since in my initial content ideation I included the topics of sexuality, romanticism, and LGBTQIA+ history. I decided to focus just on gender since this is the topic I am most familiar with and feel the most comfortable talking about.

By evaluating the work of other designers, I found that texture is the most important thing to create a comic book style. I tested many methods of creating both background and graphic texture. Through learning to filter images into a comic or pop-art style, I learnt how to add colour halftone and Ben-Day dots to my work. I also was able to use 'actions' in Photoshop to add various filters such as 'misregistration', 'ink effects', and 'texturing' to create 'bad' printing effects that emulate older comics. Though this was useful to see how my final product would look, I ended up printing on beige textured paper to provide the old and textured comic feel. This is because importing and exporting to Photoshop (the only Adobe Program that supports 'actions') would drastically decrease the resolution of my final product, as it would rasterise everything. Since each page would be saved as images, it would also make it hard to print. By hand-drawing and vectorising lines and shapes through Illustrator, I was able to add texture to the boxes and borders used throughout the zine. Though this wasn't a new skill, I learnt the importance of line weight when scaling vectors and learnt some ways to become more efficient in editing vectors in InDesign and Illustrator.

I frequently found it difficult to match the zine to the style of a comic book. As comic books are made up primarily of images, and my zine is very wordy, it made it difficult to make the style clear. This was made especially difficult by the fact that I didn't have time to implement any images I had planned (such as people), since I didn't have time to take original photos. To solve these difficulties, I used colour halftone texturing, implemented a black border that mimicked panels of comic books, and used graphic elements such as explosion bubbles to create the energy and excitement that is associated with comic books. By using colour, shape, and formatting to my advantage, I created energy and excitement with minimal images. One advantage of choosing a comic book style for the zine was the overlap between my aesthetic and the style. I love texture and bright colours, both of which are archetypical to comic books.

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I had some difficulty in choosing a colour scheme. Whilst older comic books had a wider palette than I gave myself (Marvel used a 64-colour palette), I wanted a smaller palette to maintain more consistency. I started with 3 colours, which expanded as I found myself needing more contrast. In the end, I used 10 colours, including the background beige, which ended up as a subtle rainbow palette to represent the rainbow flag of the LGBTQIA+ community. Throughout my work, I used colour to emphasise kind messaging, for example, making the 'use' examples more prominent than the 'avoid' examples. Though I had to drop the history section of the book, I was able to use some quotes from people online to implement more of the wider community (rather than just my voice). This helped to emphasise why it's important to support the LGBTQIA+ community.

I am very pleased with my outcome and impressed with the number of pages it ended up being, even cut down as it was. My research was thorough, though I think I would have benefitted from doing more research into zines to better inform decisions about consistency across pages. I also think looking into more graphic elements from comic books - such as how explosion bubbles are used to create a sense of motion and energy - would have been useful. As it was, I think I effectively used the research I did do to inform my outcome. My ideation was very useful, as throughout my refinement process whenever I got stuck, I returned to my designs to determine why they weren't working.

My biggest flaw in this project was time management. It would have been more useful at the start to properly determine the size of the project I wanted to undertake so that I could plan for the excessive amount of time that refinement would take and the book binding process. In the future, I'd like to add more graphic elements such as images of people, to better show the diversity of the LGBTQIA+ community. I believe I effectively met the brief and created an informative, kind, and comprehensive zine about the LGBTQIA+ community. I am very excited to be able to use this resource in the future.