Indigo Expo

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The design brief was to create identity, branding, infographics, and associated promotional design for an Australian digital art convention/expo. As well as creating a logo and visually consistent branding for the event, it was vital that the design package showcased the work of the exhibition practitioners including digital illustrators, concept artists, and animators. The suite of work was required to enhance the overall aesthetic of the event encapsulating the iconography but not drawing attention away from the work.

The initial idea for this design package was drawn from my passion for Digital Art and Graphic Design and the potential for this rapidly evolving media to be used as a tool to share contemporary social and cultural ideas. As Adelaide currently does not have any major expos or events dedicated to the digital arts, I took the opportunity to design a brief that could address this shortfall. This brief allowed me as a designer to explore elements of character design and digital illustration in combination with graphic design to create a holistic package that appealed to the Pop Culture-focused target audience.

Through the research of existing events and conventions such as Supernova, Comic-Con, and its Australian counterpart Oz Comic-Con, I established the requirements and restrictions for the design process. Taking inspiration from the approach to identity and branding, used by Adelaide-based design company "Simple" I closely examined the Rundle Mall rebranding portfolio. Specifically, I investigated the way they redefined the iconic symbol of the "Malls Balls", repetitively applying this symbol in a variety of media to visually promote controlled branding.

The name for the event was developed through a brainstorming process where I explored techniques of word association to connect the event with art and digital media. This resulted in keywords such as graphix and mosaic which provided the potential to develop a visual narrative through symbolism as well as names that referenced colours such as Vermillion, Azure, Lazuli, and indigo which would allow for colour-coding and visual consistency. An extended process of elimination led to a focus on the names Indigo and vermillion and mosaic, and each name became central to the investigation of these as a potential identity for the event.

The experimentation and exploration of each potential name allowed me to develop three branding alternatives that each offered its own aesthetic and conceptual basis. I sought advice and canvased opinions from a range of people who represented the target audience as well as from other design practitioners and this helped me make critical design decisions. Vermillion was ruled out as the association with the colour limited its application. In a graphic design context, warm colours like orange and red are better suited for tech companies and fast food as these bright colours are associated with power and hunger. Furthermore, the length of the word limited the flexibility of its application to a range of contexts. Investigating Mosaic as a potential brand was appealing due to its flexibility to be applied in a variety of colours. In combination with the symbolic reference to digital fragmentation, the visual elements of fragmented shapes not only connected with the name mosaic but also provided an illustrative quality that could be applied to a number of design applications. Indigo was ultimately chosen because of its alliterative qualities as well as its rhythmical assonance.

The word could be formatted for the "ind" and "igo" to share the 'i', and the relationship between the word indigo and expo created many logo design opportunities. Eventually, the logo evolved into a square form with a restricted colour pallet and repetitive text. The use of geometric shapes and simplified typography was drawn from classic Bauhaus design principles. The Bauhaus school preferred sans-serif type fonts and this influence can be seen in the final identity and applications.

My illustrations which were representative of the variety of technical approaches to digital art that would be on display at the expo, were influenced by practicing artists Hans Chen and Gareth Davies. Drawing from Chen's compositional techniques to focus in on a moment caught in time I created *Boy with a Sword*. Initially, the digital illustration included a portal that surrounded the key figure, however, once the illustration was applied to a design context, the portal distracted from the focal point, and the central figure was too far away. Adjusting the illustration and zooming in closer to the subject proved the solution to this design problem. The second illustration was based on stronger conceptual themes and included religious symbolism which is also something that can be found in Chen's works. The central figure in the digital illustration is derived from throne angels surrounded by heavenly clouds. The final digital work *Robot*, draws inspiration from the work of concept artist Gareth Davies whose illustrations of mechanical characters have a humanistic quality. *Robot*'s mechanical features are set in a fiery environment. Through the rendering process, I discovered that the Robot and the background were too similar in colour scheme which caused the subject to get lost. To improve the contrast and make the robot the focal point I added a contrasting blue and highlighted the edges to make the *Robot* protrude.

The illustrations were applied to several design contexts. For the large-scale banners, I added a border to visually tie them together, creating unity between the otherwise contrasting styles. The Indigo Expo logo was featured between the illustrations, with repetition used to create a visual story but not clash with the illustrations. I used techniques of controlled execution to apply aspects of the illustrations and identity to several applications including posters, brochures, and other promotional material for the exhibition.

When experimenting with the logo I created a Lino carving to bring a more organic quality to the identity. This version of the logo shares visual elements with the more refined final logo but can be applied to merchandise such as T-shirts and other promotional applications. I used the Cricut and printed the Lino on shirts and bags to show the design in these applications. Photoshop was a great tool for creating all printed works and especially helpful for editing mockups such as the Advertisements on the screen seen in malls. The visual consistency of all branding ties the iconography of the event and creates the 'vibe' of the Indigo Expo. The development of skills in industry software such as Photoshop, Illustrator, and Procreate were strengthened through the design process and through my participation in a workshop with Adelaide digital artist Simon Scales and this was critical in the refinement of digital art and graphic works.

Throughout this process I have successfully created a brand for the Indigo Expo, that is visually consistent and promotes my digital illustrations across several design applications. I have drawn from the work of a range of art and design practitioners and explored a variety of media in order to create design solutions. Through careful design decision-making, I have been able to refine a body of work that meets the brief and is reflective of an extensive design process.