



**you could work twenty-four hours a day, every day, and that still wouldn't be enough**

**[www.twentyfourseven.org.uk](http://www.twentyfourseven.org.uk)**





Designed & Written by Adam Graveley

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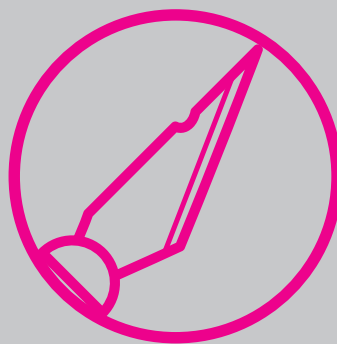
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**print**me



**bind**me



**read**me



**keep**me

that's all i ask

# INTRO

In my first design job, three months after graduating, I thought that I would be shown and told what to do - 'looked after', you might say. I didn't realise I had just entered a business and that this business couldn't slow down to hold my hand whilst I got to grips with it. I was expected to pick things up quickly; to learn the house style for corporate jobs; help the other creatives with scanning and image searching (I had never heard of internet image search libraries); mock up presentation boards and brochure work and be a general dogs-body around the studio - change a light bulb, clear up the bookshelves, tidy the store cupboards, run errands etc. I was told that I could work twenty-four hours a day, every day and that still wouldn't be enough, which made me think, 'what's the point?' I was completely unprepared and shocked. I was never told about this. Not one of my lecturers at university mentioned the pecking order within a design studio or the fact that I would be expected to be more of an assistant to the other creatives rather than be one myself. If I'm honest (and it is always the best policy, supposedly) I thought I was better than that and my talents were being wasted. I was impatient, probably a bit arrogant but definitely naive. I started to think that if I had had some sort of guide or reference at university that highlighted the issues of a design studio for a graduate designer, I would have been better prepared to work in the environment.

Thus the intention of Twenty-Four Seven. I want to bring to the front of your (the design graduate - or soon to be) mind the issues that you may face when you get your first design job. The pace of the studio; the attitude to have; the time spent on briefs; mocking up; your work ethics; the business you are in and the expected hours of work. Awareness of these issues before you start work, will make you a better graduate designer when you work. I have gathered the thoughts of well respected graphic designers from around the world to give you a taste of what is expected of graduates and I hope that you read these words not as a lecture, but as a piece of hindsight that will hopefully help you out when you start work.

Adam Graveley  
The keen bloke at the front.



**24  
17.**

**24  
17.**





24  
J7.



- ...The time it takes you to actually write and design your CV
- ...The paper you will print it on. What does it say about you?
- ...Do you print it at home or at a printers?
- ...Some companies only accept Word files when emailing your CV
- ...Samples of work that are relevant for the position & company
- ...Keep the look and feel consistent
- ...Use the same stock of paper for all your self-promotion
- ...Are you going to post it? First class? Recorded? Special?
- ...Envelopes?
- ...Researching a company
- ...Electricity for Mac and printer
- ...Ink for printer
- ...Paper for printer – matt/gloss/uncoated
- ...Your patience – for the replies
- ...Cold calling
- ...Quality of Portfolios – quality of paper/print
- ...Mailers – any additional advertising/self-promotion
- ...Clothes for interviews
- ...Travel expenses to get to and from interviews



**24**  
**17.**







**24**  
**J7.**



This is about you  
as an employed  
junior designer.

This is what you've  
been waiting for.

This is what you've  
been sweating and  
bleeding for.

This is your foot in the  
door, your starting block.

This is your chance to  
work on some 'real' jobs.

This is your chance to

shine and impress.

This is your chance  
to tidy up, to pick up  
after the creatives  
and make the tea.

This is your chance to  
sort out the bookshelves  
and change a light bulb.

This is your chance  
to show initiative and  
print me greyscale.

This is your chance.  
Don't waste it.



**24**  
**7.**





**24  
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**24  
77**



# alexandar getman

President and founding partner of  
Design Machine, NY. Check out  
[www.designmachine.com](http://www.designmachine.com)

- >
- > 1. What advice would you give a graduate about preparing them for work at a design agency?

**First of all, they should pick their favorite agency to work for. Obsessively study all about the agency and its principals before approaching them. If the agency isn't hiring offer to help out with no pay. Take an evening job if necessary.**

- >
- > 2. Do you think that graduates are ready for the pace of a studio when they start? and do you think that graduates today expect too much? i.e working on top accounts and think they know everything.

**Some do, others don't. Confidence is a good quality, but I don't tolerate arrogance and stubbornness. The successful attitude is: I'm here to help with whatever has to be done. There's no boring or unimportant assignment. Any experience is a learning.**

- >
- > 3. When i interviewed Jonathan Ellery, co-founder of Browns Design, London, he mentioned that there were not enough jobs/places for the amount of design graduates graduating to go in to. Do you agree and what do you look for in a graduate to give them the edge over all the competition?
- >

**There's tons of jobs out there. Energy and thoughtfulness pays off. The edge is in a healthy cheerful attitude and wiliness to help and learn.**



**24  
17.**





# tom roope

**Tomato interactive.**  
**Check out [www.tomato.co.uk](http://www.tomato.co.uk)**

- >
- > 1. What advice would you give a graduate about  
>>>preparing them for work at a design agency?

**Try and stay optimistic and positive.**  
**Be yourself**  
**Listen**  
**Work hard**  
**Have fun**

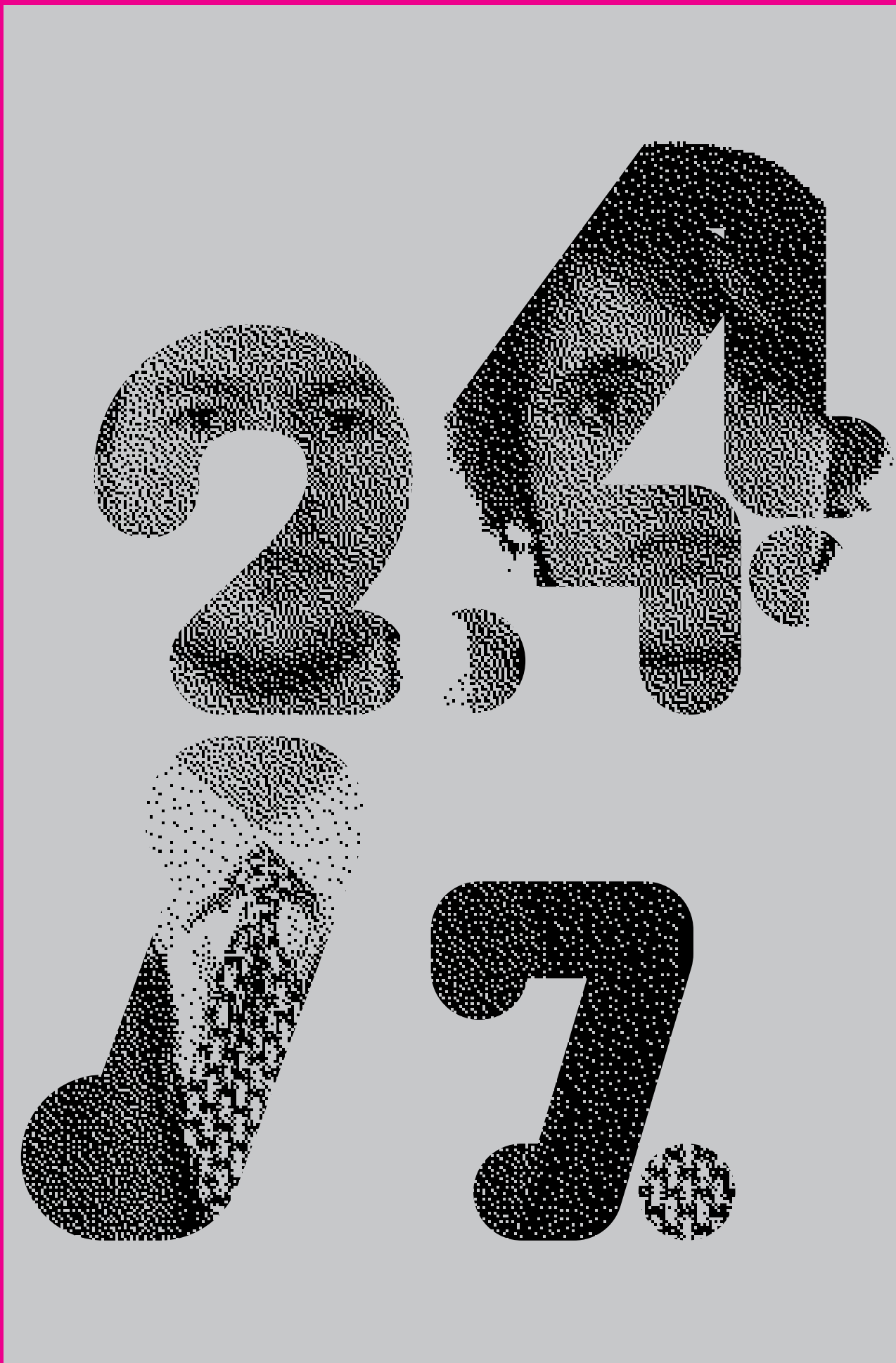
- > 2. Do you think that graduates are ready for the pace  
>>>of a studio when they start? and do you think that  
>graduates today expect too much? i.e working on top  
accounts and think they know everything.
- >

**I think students are not really used to the variety of demands made on jobing designers, and I feel they do find it a little daunting to come to terms with the complex rythnm of working professionally but all this gets learnt on the job. In regards to expectations, I think over expectation is something that professionals and graduates share. It still surprises me how long something takes to come about, but I have also realised that these goals can almost always be achieved the long run.**

**In terms of knowledge, I think we all have to come to terms with that we will be students all our lives, there will always be a vast amount of knowledge that we neither have to time or the capacity to cram in to our heads.**

- > 3. When i interviewed Jonathan Ellery, co-founder of  
> Browns Design, London, he mentioned that there  
were  
> not enough jobs/places for the amount of design  
> graduates graduating to go in to. Do you agree and  
> what do you look for in a graduate to give them the  
> edge over all the competition?

**If creative person is passionate and can communicate that passion they will always have an edge. It is about developing oneself as a unique entity, so it is down to finding your own voice. It is this voice that is the difference between a position where people will seek you out and commission you, rather than simply assist the implementation of other peoples concepts.**



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Karlssonwilker inc. NY  
Check out [www.karlssonwilker.com](http://www.karlssonwilker.com)

>>  
>> 1. What advice would you give a graduate about  
>> preparing them for work at a design agency?

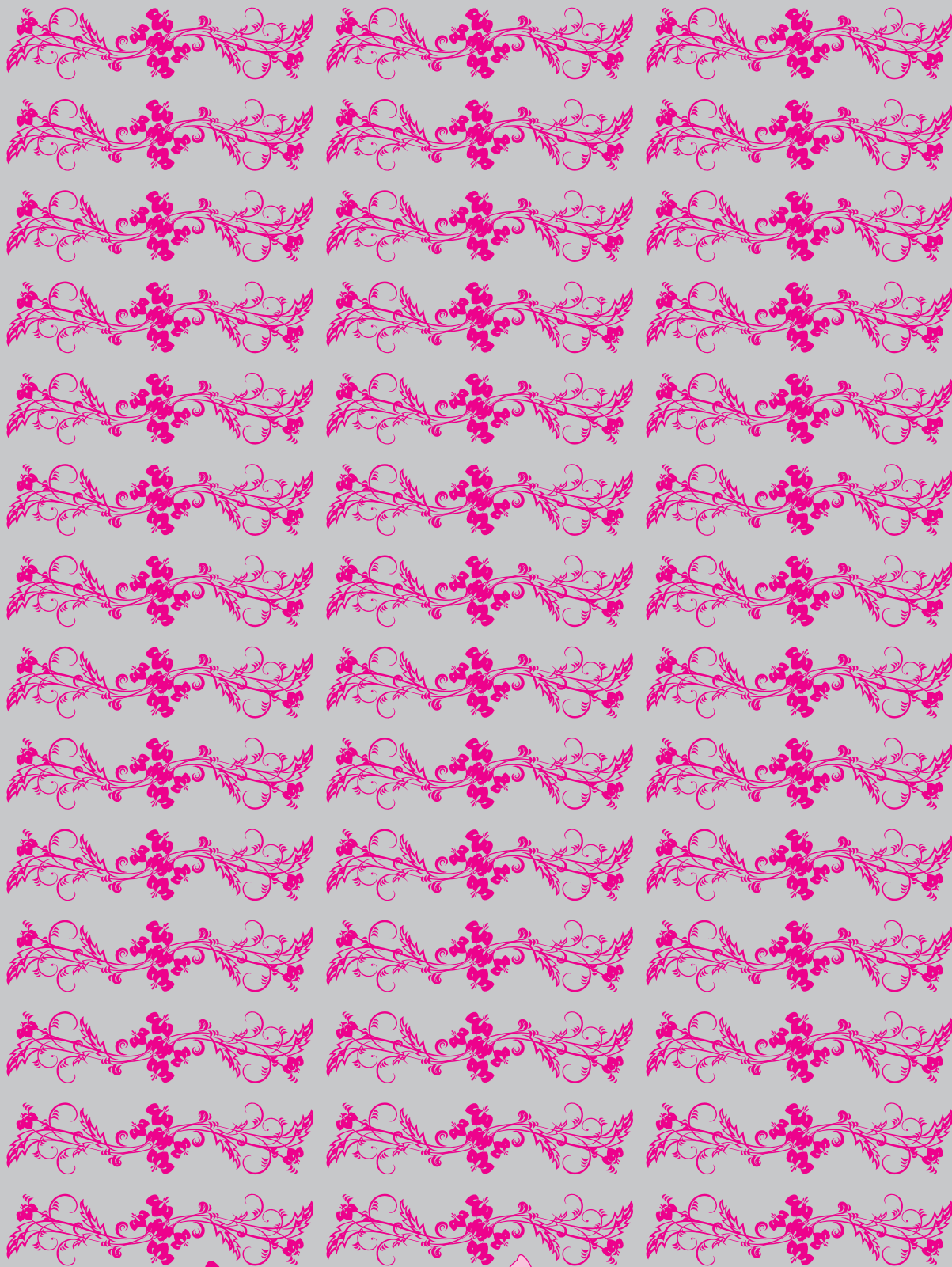
**first and foremost, it shouldn't be just any design company, it should be one that you really want to work for, you should be into what they are doing. skills always help, but if you're bored at your job or just couldn't care less about what you do, then you will suck at your job and no one is happy. i guess the keywords are: interest and dedication. pretty simple.**

>> 2. Do you think that graduates are ready for the pace  
of a studio when they start? and do you think that  
graduates today expect too much? i.e working on top  
accounts and think they know everything.  
>>

**i don't know about the pace in other studios. but you should be able to perform the very basics (opening and closing files, exporting, cropping, scanning etc.) if you have the technical things down, you can spend more time on the actual design. i hope that all of these things sounds ridiculously easy for you, and that's what they should be. so far we only had one guy in here who was pestering all of us with his premature bigheaded attitude. he would only do his way or he would be upset. i wonder where he is now. about wanting to work on top accounts i don't really know, but i can see that, through all the design magazines you might get the impression that you need to work for big names in order to move forward. sad.**

>> 3. When i interviewed Jonathan Ellery, co-founder of  
Browns Design, London, he mentioned that there  
were  
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what do you look for in a graduate to give them the  
edge over all the competition?  
>

**i guess he's right. i never saw have any numbers. what i/we look for in a graduate i already answered in the first question; dedication and interest. if someone comes in for an interview and the first thing they say is "i have no idea what you guys do; can you show me something?" i'm not sure if he's the right one for us.**



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/7



## the pace of the studio.

A design studio is a business, it is there to make money and it has to work hard and fast in order to make that money.

When you start working, the pace and the workload can't slow down for you and the people can't slow down to accommodate you. You have to fit in with the studio, not the other way around.



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J7.



**your  
attitude.**

You DO NOT know  
it all. The second  
you understand  
that, you'll have  
the right attitude.

You're always  
learning and  
designers will be  
helping you to learn  
more, so don't piss  
them off with a  
'fuck-off' attitude.

Oh, and don't ever  
say, 'we didn't do  
it like that at uni'  
because you may  
get a slap.



24  
J7.





## mocking up projects.

Learn to love the scalpel and ruler, because you'll be using them a lot. You could spend a lot of your time mocking up the work designed by the rest of the team. This is a big job because it's your responsibility to get the work looking shit-hot for the client to see. Whether it's flush mounting a presentation or making a 68 page manual, it has to look sexy. Remember, it's all in the sell; if the client likes the look of it then half the battle is won.



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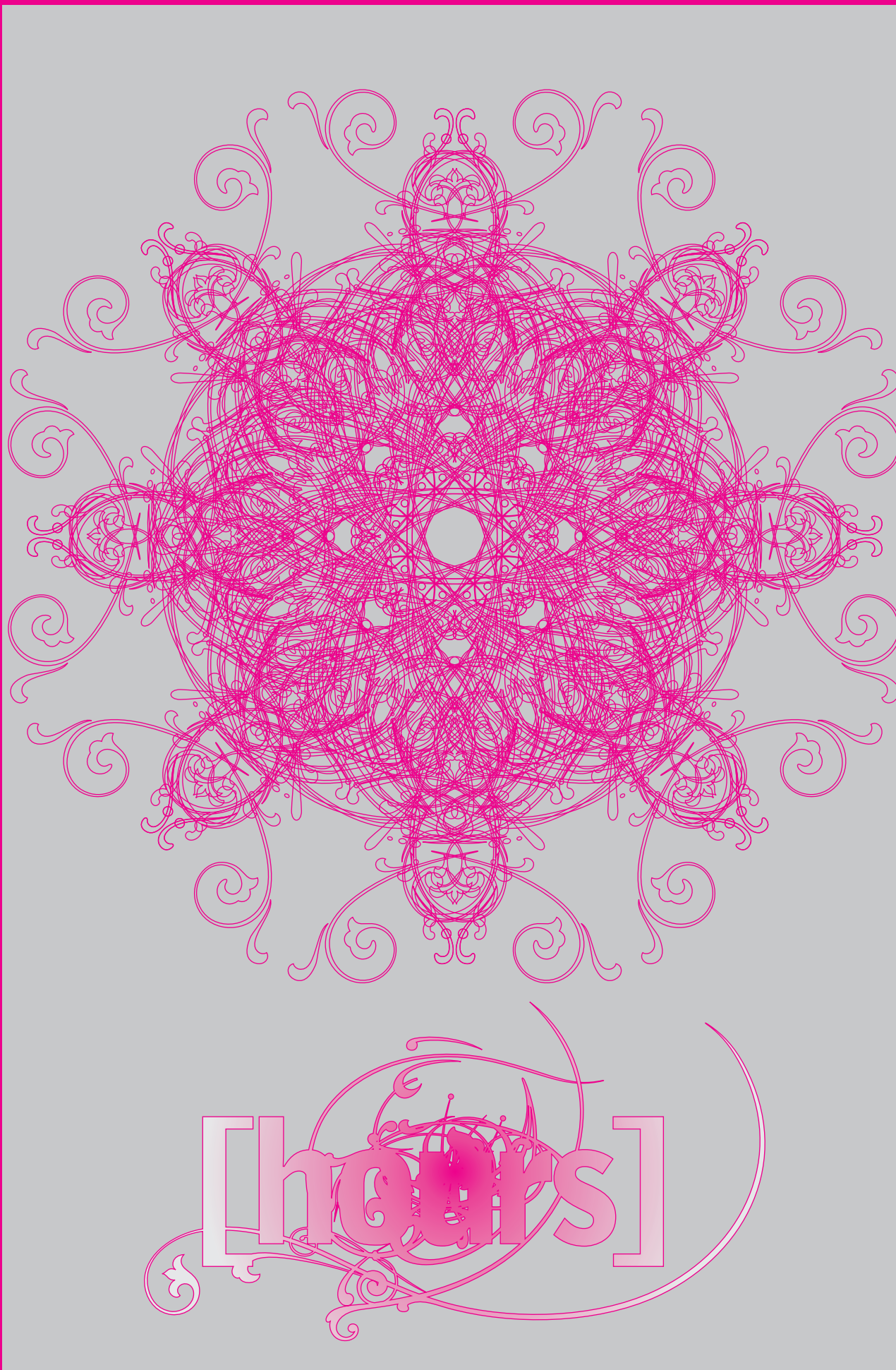


## **your time spent on briefs.**

You will not have six weeks to complete a brief. You will need to produce relevant concepts quickly and must be able to articulate them in progress meetings.

You could only have a few hours to produce something. You have to be able to handle yourself when time is running out. You will panic, you will cock up and you will learn from your mistakes.

Be aware of time management.

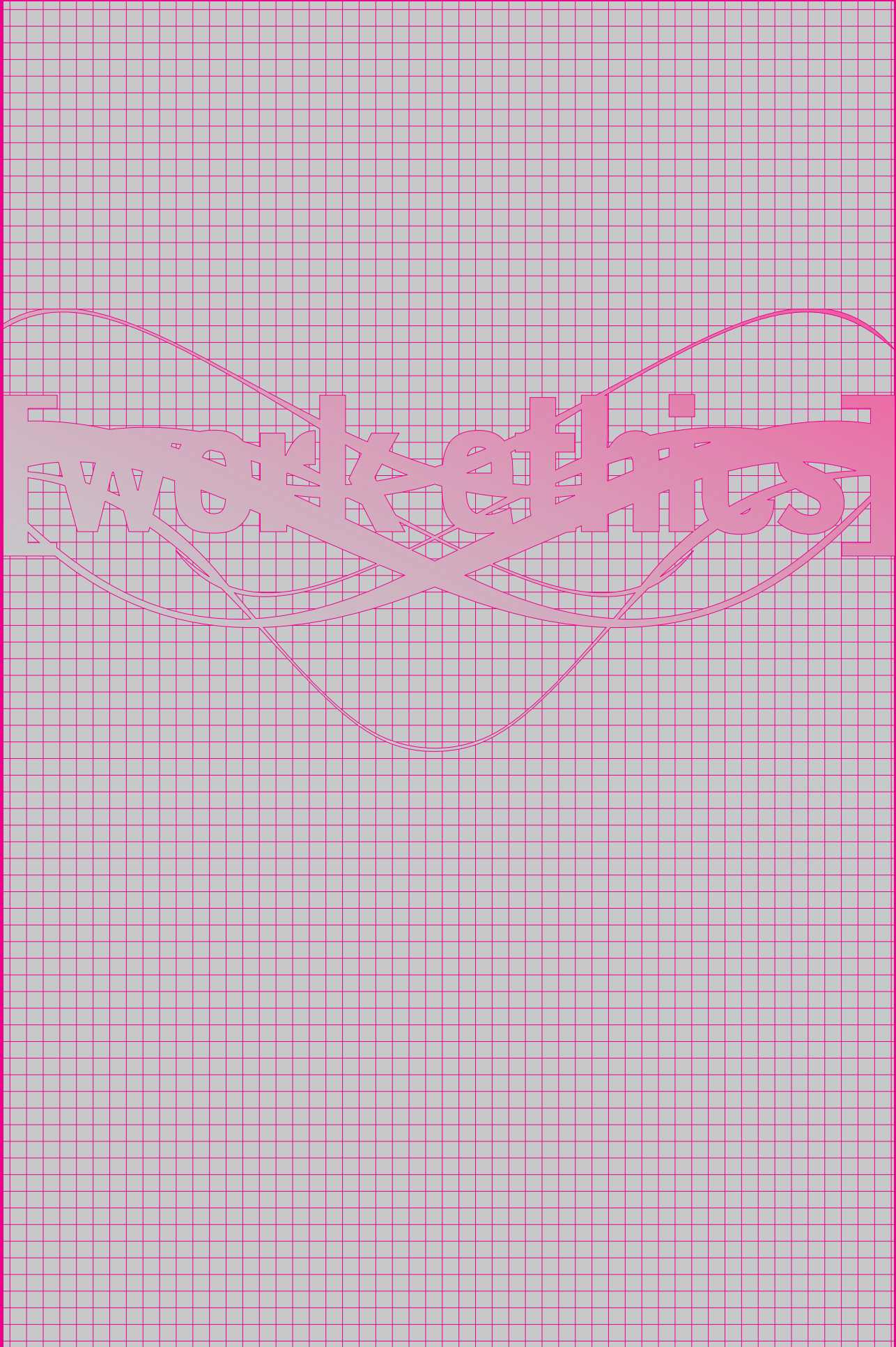


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## **your hours of work.**

This is not a nine to five, repeat, this is not a nine to five. You will be expected to stay till the job's done. Save some of your best jokes for when you're still working at midnight. Ask if there's anything else you can do before you leave, every day, it'll be appreciated. Show energy and enthusiasm all the time, you'll never be bored.



24  
17.



## your work ethics.

You're working for someone and they're paying your wage, remember that. Don't take the piss and do your own thing when you have nothing to do, ask and you'll be given something. You're working as part of a company so there's an overall company style and feel to all the work. You'll be expected to pick this up and in the beginning adhere to it; there will be plenty of time to create your style later on. Ask questions if you're not sure about something.



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/7





## **the business you are in.**

Design is a business like any other, which means you have policies and procedures to follow and adhere to. Every company will have it's own anal methodology and way of doing things. Learn it quickly. Writing design visual forms, producing work folders, archiving jobs, working on servers etc. They will be learnt on the job but it helps to be aware and understand that design is a business that is very competitive and, like any business, needs to make money, not just pretty things.



Jonathan Ellery is the co-founder  
of Browns Design in London.  
The Ellery interview...





**AG**

If you could start by telling me a little about what Browns does, how you got started? And how grads fit into Browns?

**JE**

Browns is now 11 people, started 6 yrs ago in 1998. When we started there were 3 partners, now there's just me that runs it. We are multi-disciplined, which means we don't just do the one thing, so we're not pigeon-holed. Books or identity work or brand work, so we do a bit of everything. Um, and how grads mix with us? Pretty good, we always have a grad here. I find they are either fantastic and they slot right in or they're a pain in the fucking arse.

As a culture we're pro education; I give a lot of talks at colleges, we've done the D&AD student awards for the last 3 years. I mean, we feel that it is important, but it doesn't always work out. We sense as a studio that there's this sense of entitlement with students at the moment, there's this arrogance that they think it's all going to slot into place; which doesn't go down well with us here at all. We just like the people who are sort of clever, have good ideas, settle in, get their heads down without telling us how it should be done. It sounds ridiculous but you'd be flabbergasted. You get that a lot. We've got designers out there who have just graduated and they're even flabbergasted. There's a gentle air of entitlement with a lot of students and they're all in for a shock.

What sort of work do you get grads to do?

We involve them fully, they work on real projects with us, they never get isolated and work on their own. They might be working with me on something or a group of designers on something, from initial ideas, concepts, brainstorming and scribbles through to deliverables. They help with turning it into an aesthetic; making it actually work, actually looking at typography, looking at colour, working with photographers. So it's a real role, its not tokenism.

What advice would you give a graduate looking for work nowadays?

I think you need to work your nuts off. There are so many students, you need to be good, insanely driven and you need to be insecure about it - thinking that it's not going to happen - and that's where your drive's going to come from. Then you need a





...there ain't e  
placements fo  
and thousands  
of students ar  
what they all



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nd thousands  
have no idea  
d up doing...



bit of luck. I used to say that if you want it hard enough you'll probably get there, but you need a bit more luck now as well. I was just reading your last paragraph, 'don't kid yourself it's a ruthless business.' I don't think it's ruthless in a nasty sense, it's just statistically and logically...(pause) they're ain't enough placements for the thousands and thousands and thousands of students and I have no idea what they all end up doing and I'm not sure how long it can continue like that. There is such a disproportionate number of design graduates.

Do you think a lot of them are setting up their own little thing?

No, it's impossible to.

Really?

Yeah. I mean it doesn't exist, I know how hard it is to set up a design business. If students think they're gonna set up their own little thing, I'm sorry but it isn't going to happen. That's a reality.

It does happen, but very rarely. For instance The Royal College has had a history of little design groups starting up from there, there's been quite a few of them, say four or five in the last fifteen years. The world doesn't need another design group.

Yeah, fair enough. Can you see a big comparison between when you started out and now?

I think it was hard then and I think it's even harder now.

Colleges have told me that when they started out you weren't given such a pressure to know everything and to hit the ground running, would you say that's fair?

Are you talking about joining a company or starting up your own business?

Joining a company.

Most students have a Mac now, or a laptop or access to that. My brother's kids are pretty good on the Mac, you know, it's happening more naturally. But the rare thing to find is a truly talented person with really interesting ideas, that's still the commodity. It's not about Macs and stuff, I mean certainly not here. We can soon whip you into shape with that.



There are  
no easy  
first steps,  
and there's  
no way of  
avoiding  
that.

...you need  
to be good,  
insanely  
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be insecure  
about it...





But finding an intriguing, intelligent person with a different way of looking at things, or an interesting way about them is still the commodity with studios like this. The thing with this place is that it's quite a small place and it's quite friendly but it's very, very quick and it's very, very professional and there's a pace to it. There's a lot of telepathy going around, there's a lot of short cuts in terms of communication with one another and it's very hard for a student because the studio can't slow down. Sometimes I wish I could sit down with students and teach them a bit more, but that doesn't happen here. It can't happen here because we have all the pressures of cash flow and staying alive and doing good work and whatever, so it's a big ask for a student to come in. If a student goes to a bigger studio such as Wolff Olins or Landor there's probably more places to hide, you're not exposed so quickly. It is a bit less brutal and you can just quietly settle in.

Do they have mentors?

I'm not an educational establishment and nor are they, they're a business and have the pressures of business upon them, but it's probably a calmer place to settle in for a month. This is a tough place to join for the wrong student, for the right student it's a pleasure.

They just fit in...

Yeah, it's the right place because there's real work to work on and it's a real environment. You're not going to be given the photocopying to do, whereas with a bigger outfit you may just be given the library to file or you might get to clean the photographic cupboards out for 2 months.

Can you tell me of any costly mistakes a graduate has caused Browns?

We get on well with them all, it's not so much about that. The arrogance is the mistake which is a new thing and I'm disappointed with it and I don't know where that comes from. We had a girl graduate here recently who was ok, wasn't too bad but then when she left she emailed me some advice on how to run my studio. I was absolutely astonished...

Was she a young graduate?

Yeah, young graduate who'd just left college and



invariably  
everyone  
in the  
room is  
a better  
designer  
than you

that's not uncommon.

Really?

Yeah, I don't know where that level of arrogance comes from but I find it all baffling.

What did you say to her? Did you reply?

Yeah, I just emailed back and said I find your email rude and I wish you every success with your career. I mean, I felt like 'ah, bless her cotton socks', I felt for her really, because she's in for a shock. There are no easy first steps, we see a lot of graduates and I think they think it's all going to happen for them. They get a placement at Browns and think they're almost in, but unfortunately it doesn't work like that, it's hard work. It's fantastic and exciting but it's hard work, and there's no way of avoiding that.

How do you find they cope with the pace of the design studio?

I think the majority of them find the first week a big shock. Browns has a reputation because it does good work and it does good work because the studio is sharp and quick and professional and to ask anyone to slot into that is a tough call, isn't it?

Sure.

If I was going to go and have a placement at North or GTF, I would probably struggle to adapt into different personalities, adapt into telephone calls, adapt into new equipment on the desk, adapt into a difficult boss, you know. For the first week I always tell them it's going to take you a week to settle in, to get your bearings, to get your confidence up.

I think once people get the feel of the place and understand that, if they work hard, they're supported and will start getting respect for what they're doing, then they end up having a very good time, hopefully. A placement is vital because they just learn so much and it's stimulating and exciting because invariably everyone in the room is a better designer than you.

I can remember back to when I did it, thinking 'Oh my God, they're all really good'. So it's stimulating and exciting and no doubt most graduates that come here sleep well at night because they get home knackered, but that's good.

I know there's no real average day, but how long is a

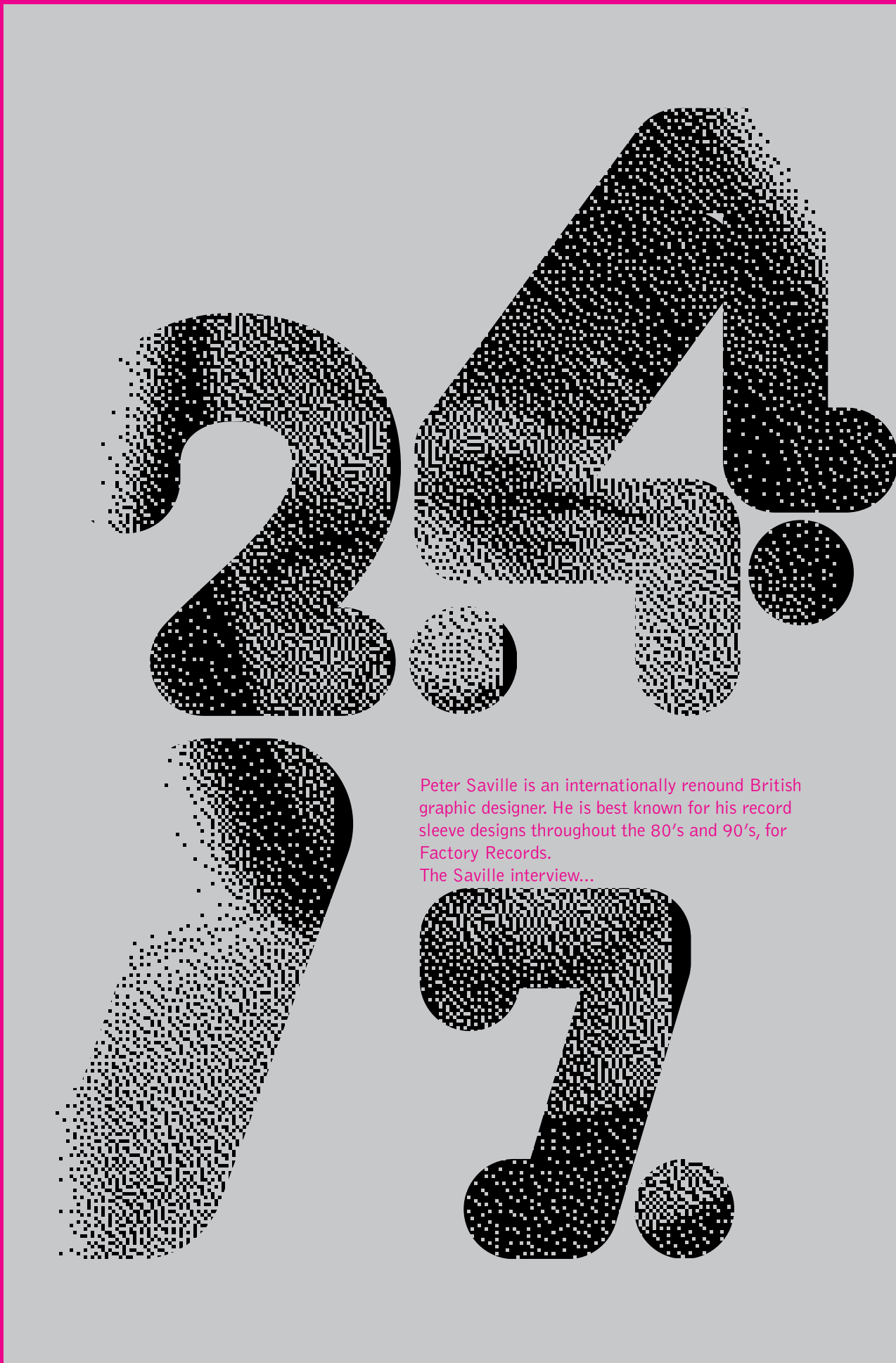


working day at Browns?

The official time is 9.30 to 5.30/6, the graduate can come and go within that. If you give a designer or a student ownership of a project, well, it's up to them how they want to run it. There's no late night work ethic here, inevitably there are going to be a few late nights if the project demands it, but it's a self-imposed time schedule. If you're a designer and you're getting stuck into a lovely project you might look at your watch and it's seven thirty because you're enjoying yourself and you're getting somewhere with it. So it's kind of up to the individual really.



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Peter Saville is an internationally renowned British graphic designer. He is best known for his record sleeve designs throughout the 80's and 90's, for Factory Records.  
The Saville interview...





In East London...

... Sitting in Peter Saville's studio apartment, where he literally does work, rest and play, there's an eclectic mix of books and artefacts that surrounds him. He has a very open studio, it is his home. He's very accommodating and whether he's on the phone or discussing an exhibition, when you walk in he'll casually ask you to sit down and relax. You'll be submerged in his world and he is fascinating to watch and listen to. He is very thorough and thinks about everything he's saying and he's very conscious of what he is saying, why he is saying it and to whom...

...A conversation with Peter Saville.

It was my final term at college. I heard that Tony was doing The Factory and I said 'Can I do something?' so he said, 'Yeah do a poster'. So I was 23 and I was still at college and in those days we had a grant. I was at college in Manchester, which was my home area but I didn't exactly live at home. Thankfully, my parents had a holiday house on the coast in North Wales. My dad had sort of packed his bags and was going to Wales, so my parents had gone to live in North Wales and my two brothers and I lived in and around Hale, which was where we had grown up. There was a flat and a sort of small holding and things like that, which were either rented or owned and I just managed to sort of busk it. I had my last term at college and I was living in my eldest brother's flat. He'd gone to a new property he hadn't sold yet and my dad said let Peter stay, so I lived in my brother's flat and Tony paid me I think £25.

For the poster?

For the poster, FacOne to do FacOne.

How long were you working on that for? Honestly.

A day or so, then I did it all in a night, the way things always get done. You do it when it has to be done, you faff around and worry about it for days or weeks and then finally have to get it done and it gets done in a night. You stay up until dawn and it's done.

Sure.

Which is pretty much how everything happens. So I earned little bits of money occasionally, I did a bit of work, a bit of delivering, things for my father. But £20 was quite a lot then, you could get through the week on £20. So I had little bits of supplementary income and I was at college and then graduated in the summer. Malcolm Garrett, who was my best friend at college, went immediately to a job at Radar Records where he'd done a placement the previous summer and they had told him to come back as soon as he was finished. So Malcolm started a job in London the same week we finished while I sort of dilly-dallied around really. I knew I had to come to London to get a job, I just knew I would.

Why was that? What was it about London?

Why? Because there was nothing to design in Manchester. Maybe a calendar for the local printer, a head sheet for a model agency; a lot of cut and paste, although it wasn't called cut and paste then, it was called paste up. It was just a lot of very banal commercial art, same as it's always been. Graphic design as a professional activity was not really discussed, it was not part of popular life. Twenty-five years ago people



didn't know what a graphic designer was. A London cab driver would say, 'Oh, what do you do then mate?' and you'd say, 'Graphic Design' and he'd say, 'What's that?' But they've got a graphic designer on Eastenders now so most people in Britain have heard of a graphic designer. They're not really clear what you do, but they've heard of it.

Sure.

At least they've heard of it. 25 years ago they hadn't heard of it.

Sure.

Commercial artists, well that's like lettering, isn't it? It's like the man who paints your name on your office door, that's a commercial artist. To add a bit of context to that, I only knew of two graphic design firms when I left college. I think we had a visit from a working professional once in the four years at college, and it was a good course.

Who were the two companies?

The two companies were Pentagram and Wolff Olins. They were the only two I'd ever heard mentioned and I think it was an advertising guy who came in one day and talked to us about advertising and that was it, in four years. So the level of interaction between the educational system and the working professional system was minimal, but so was the professional universe of graphic design. We're very limited, if you look in applied art books and annuals and things like that of the Sixties and Seventies you will see the same half dozen names again and again and again. And that's it.

Sure.

I think the Design Research Unit is pretty much accredited as being the first graphics firm and they worked in the late Fifties and early Sixties; so what we understand as graphic design was, until the Sixties, a kind of department in advertising. That's where it all happened. So at that time if you needed a new letterhead or a logo you got your printer to do it or if you were a big company you might ask your advertising people. That was it. My father was not very impressed with the idea that I wanted to be a commercial artist. He thought it was a ridiculous idea and he was right. He was absolutely right. It took me until my late twenties to realise that it's a dumb vocational thing which pretty much is still the same as it ever was, commercial art.

Right.

Its commercial art. Ninety percent of the communications material that clients require is trade. It is a trade. Doing a brochure for British Telecom is a trade.

Sure.

And its even worse now because designers have to sit there and key in the fucking text themselves. At least we were saved from that aspect of workmanship until the macintosh appeared. I mean, you didn't set type. Designers did not set type, and in a proper studio designers did not stick it down either, artworkers did. Typesetters set type, and they actually set much better than kids do these days. Typesetters set type, and artworkers stuck it down. Somewhere like Pentagram or Wolff Olins in the Seventies, designers were at least thinking. That was their job, their job was to think. Not to produce. In that sense,





**Ninety percent of the communications  
material that clients require is trade.  
Doing a brochure for British Telecom is a trade.**



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/7.**



the kind of digitisation of the graphic world has to some extent been a backward step.

Because everyone has to do everything now...

Yeah, everyone is doing everything.

And do you lose a certain essence of quality?

Well in all sorts of ways, yes. In that we don't know how to do it. Most people who have hung out at art college for three years haven't got a clue how to set type.

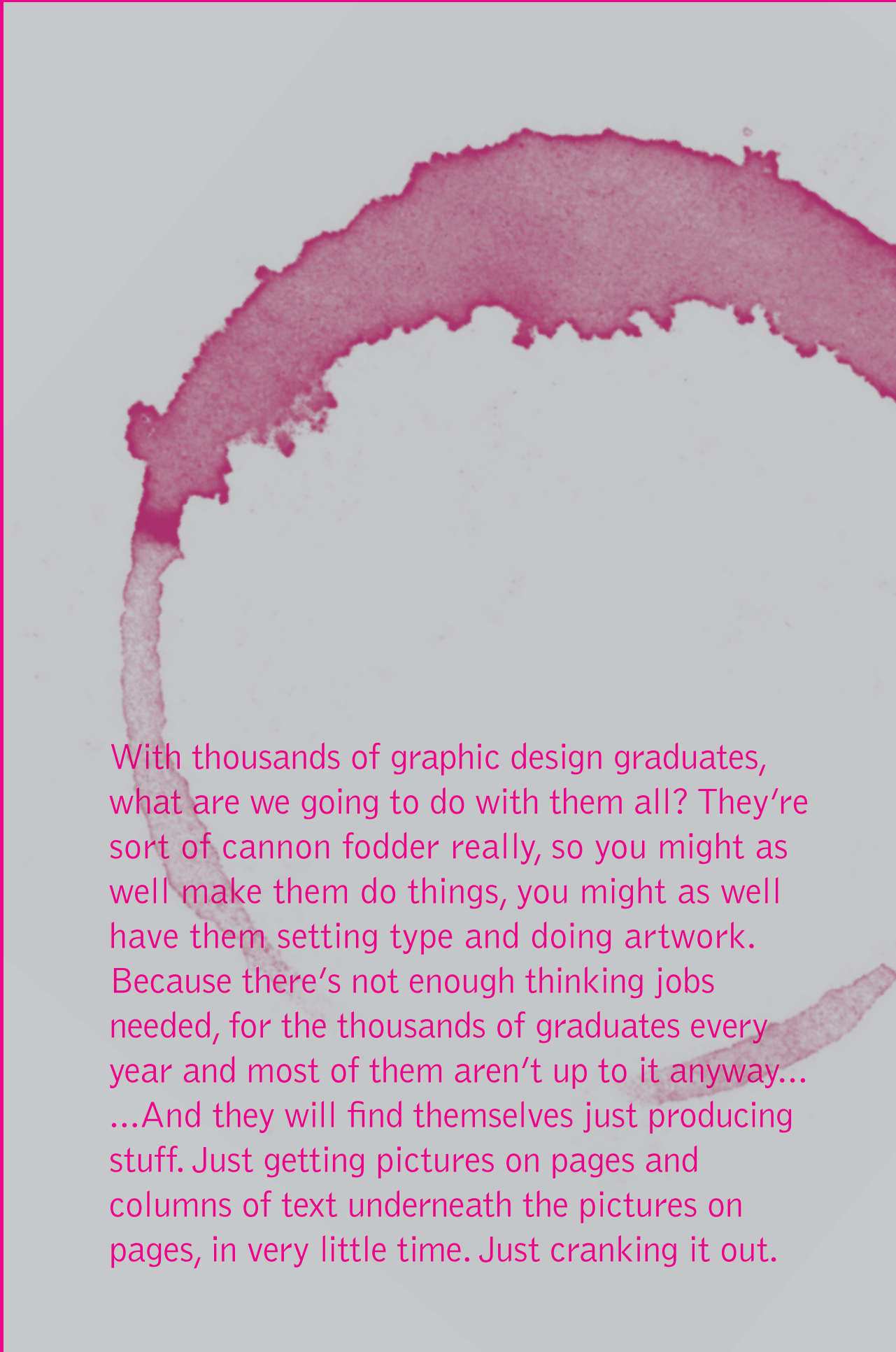
Or the importance of it.

Yeah, I mean, how would they know how to set type? It's a real precision craft, setting type, and it's a thing you do for years and years. You learn how to do it. The guys that worked at typesetting houses in London in the Seventies were brilliant, they corrected everything for you. They knew how to set Neu Helvetica, they knew how to set Times, they knew how to set Garamond. They knew how to set those fonts and the peculiarities and intricacies of different fonts as well as inter character spacing, inter word spacing, leading, line breaks and widows and all of those issues. They knew how to do it and they knew what adjustments they had to make to a piece of text. Whereas somebody graduating from art college now hasn't even been shown how to look at it and they shouldn't be doing it, it's not what they went to college for and not what they think they got a degree in. So they shouldn't be setting type, they should really be thinking about the ...hang on a second Adam... (Peter gets distracted by a text message and chats to Sam, his PA, organising some plans for the week.)

Peter cont.

But what you have, I've lost the plot of that Adam, but we'll start another point. With thousands of graphic design graduates, what are we going to do with them all? They're sort of cannon fodder really, so you might as well make them do things, you might as well have them setting type and doing artwork. Because there's not enough thinking jobs needed, for the thousands of graduates every year and most of them aren't up to it anyway. They've got a degree in a trade. That's actually what they've got, a degree in a trade. Like having a degree in brick laying. That's a really negative point of view. And the educational situation at the moment is interesting. I've been an external assessor for six years with various colleges, and it's interesting to see what's being produced. Some of the good, bright students are, I think, a lot more academic and have a much higher intellectual and philosophical understanding of issues pertaining to communications, than ever before. The ones who get Firsts these days are more impressive than the ones who got Firsts 20 years ago; they're much, much more academic and philosophical. But the average ones, I'm afraid, are going to feel a bit misled, because just getting a job is going to be miraculous for them and they'll be really happy to get a job. And they will find themselves just producing stuff. Just getting pictures on pages and columns of text underneath the pictures on pages, in very little time. Just cranking it out. And that's actually the old fashioned type setting and commercial art. They've got a degree, they've done a thesis and actually they're looking at the next 20 years just doing stuff.

So do you think that the average student, who has been taught through projects and different lectures based mainly on commercial work, comes out after graduation, looks for a job in design, really hard to get one, finally gets one and then like you say, just sits there ...



With thousands of graphic design graduates, what are we going to do with them all? They're sort of cannon fodder really, so you might as well make them do things, you might as well have them setting type and doing artwork. Because there's not enough thinking jobs needed, for the thousands of graduates every year and most of them aren't up to it anyway...  
...And they will find themselves just producing stuff. Just getting pictures on pages and columns of text underneath the pictures on pages, in very little time. Just cranking it out.





And within about 5 years gets totally and utterly disillusioned.

Yeah completely.

Yeah. And bitter.

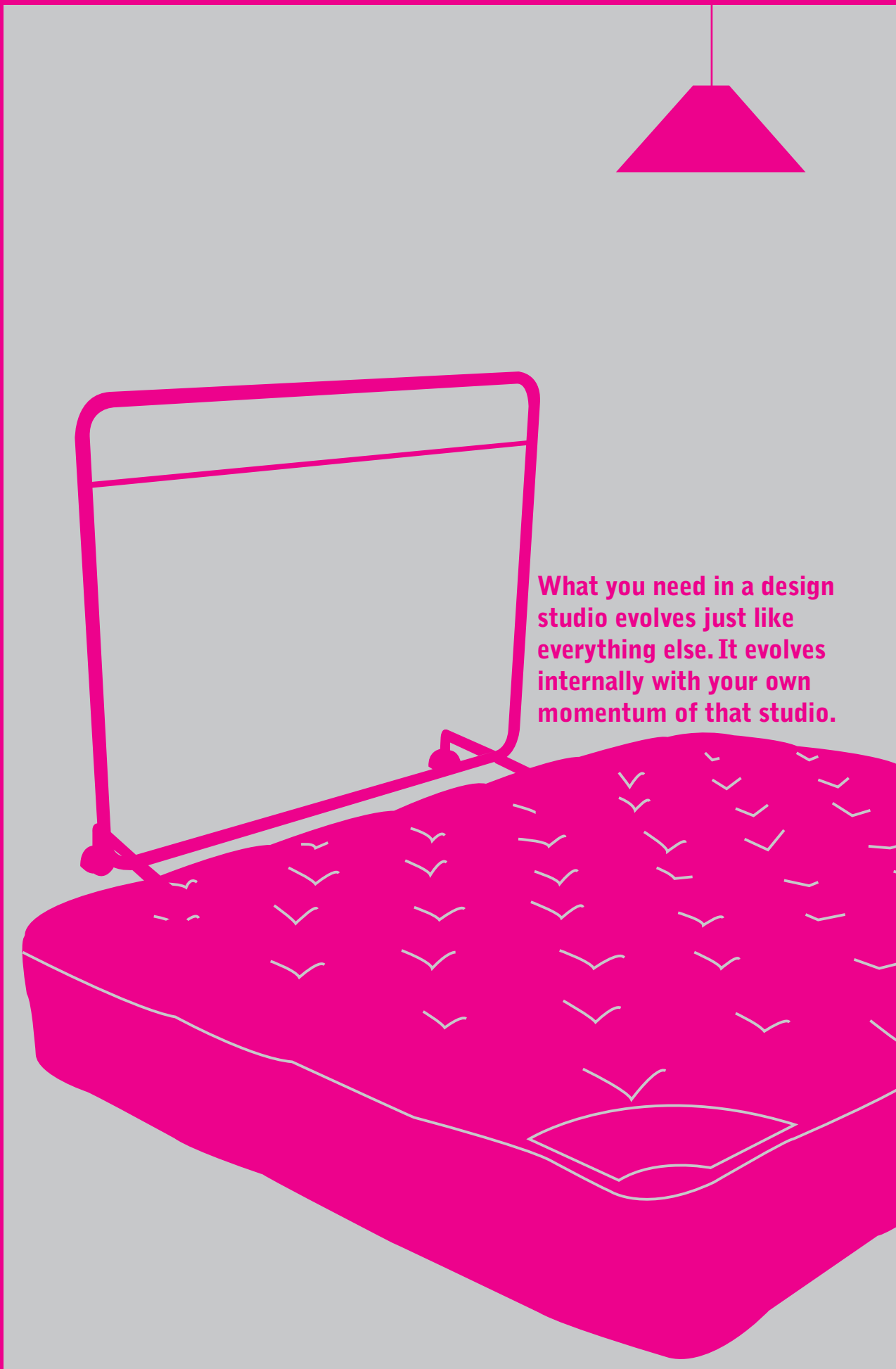
And that's how it is always?

Well that's how it is, it's probably to some extent how it's been for a long time so there's nothing new about it, but there are new issues there which I think have bearing on it. There appears to be, hundreds of thousands more every year, more and more people going in to graphics courses. This college has 100 doing graphics final year, another's got 100 doing graphics final year. How many thousands of graphics graduates are there every year? That's a big question. And it's not as if they die after a year. They're not like salmon, or something like that. You're layering these on top of one another.

It's funny you say that because I was looking through the job paper this morning and I was thinking that I'm a year out and I'm now competing with the fresh ones just come out. And it's interesting how it is just a continual churning out of graduates.

Yeah, completely and you're layering another graduation year on top of the previous one, on top of the previous one, on top of the previous one, on top of the previous one. I really can't see what you're going to do with all of those graphics graduates. The other side of the Macintosh is that it has created the wonderful world of desktop publishing, so there are thousands of companies and services and businesses out there knocking out their own graphics look, which shouldn't be allowed. There should be a law against it because it's irresponsible visual material in the world, but, there isn't a law against it. Each time I've gone and done an external assessment, I've looked at what the students are doing and you can't help but run a comparative check between what these graduates are coming out knowing, and what you need in a studio or business at this moment in time. What you need in a design studio evolves just like everything else. It evolves internally with your own momentum of that studio. I was doing record covers, then stuff for galleries and then stuff for Factory, so my studio had it's own momentum. Naturally, I needed different talent at different times. So that's one thing. But then along side that there's this kind of design buying culture which is evolving in the universe of clients, which sets the pace in client world and that's changed a lot in the last 20 years. These days, for example, if you are doing even the communications material for an arts institution like the Barbican, it is very marketing orientated. It's attempting to identify the target audience for a particular concert series, asking what is the demographic for this? What are the visual codes that determine the demographic? So you can find yourself doing an avant-garde concert series poster for the Barbican, and it can feel like doing a new kind of hair shampoo. It can feel as analytical as that. They're not very good at it, it's all a bit quaint, a bit cute but it's more targeted and it's more specific, because all of those institutions have to be competitive now, and they have to be financially viable and financially answerable. You could be working on an identity for a hospital, but a hospital's a business these days. A school is a business. Everything is a business. So all this public service sector, which used to be more egalitarian, is now much more commercially orientated. If the V&A puts on a show, it has quotas to hit and money to take. So they go about advertising a show at the V&A in a much more targeted, focused, aggressive way than they would have done 10 or 15 years ago. It was all a bit willy-nilly in those days. You know, do something nice, make sure you can see the name of the show, the date and that there's a concession





**What you need in a design studio evolves just like everything else. It evolves internally with your own momentum of that studio.**

**24  
7.**





for OAP's and students, that's it. That was it in those days; well that's not it now.

How do you think that effects the whole process?

Well, it does affect the process. The first point is what you need in your studio, the talents you need in the studio, are different. What you might want out of a graduate or someone who's one or two years out of college is quite different. It's much more demanding than what you might have needed 10 years ago, and there is an onus upon the educational system to respond to this quickly. Now the educational design world has evolved quite dramatically over the last 10 years, but the situation on the ground is developing just as fast and at the moment the thing that I find frustrating is that the relationship is reactive rather than proactive. What's tending to happen is that the colleges are reacting to things, so a change happens in the working environment and two or three years later the training goes to it.

But by that time it has changed again.

Exactly, it has changed again. I've been talking to Chelsea College of Art, where I've been doing external assessment most recently, and there are a couple of things I've been saying for the last year or so with them... The single most important ability in a design studio, or in a designer's palette of competence, in my opinion, is project analysis and articulation. What that means is that it doesn't really matter what you do, as long as you can present it properly. And that's actually been the most effective tool.

So being able to sell yourself, as it were.

There's not a blanket situation because there are smarter design buyers appearing, and with the smart design buyers you can pretty much fast track through the psycho-babble. With a smart design buyer, you and they get on to a common wavelength quicker. If you're not able to get on a common wavelength then there's a problem. So there are design buyers out there now smarter than a lot of designers. They are much, much more conversant with what's going on and the relevance of what's going on to the particular situation that we're discussing here at Selfridges today. A company like Selfridges is a good example of it. There is some very astute design buying going on in Selfridges. A designer, design consultancy, whatever, needs to really be up to speed with the world and how it contains Selfridges before stepping in through the door. Because if you're not up to speed then you'll find your client is ahead of you. So it'll be a short meeting. The smart design buyers can read the results quickly, you can get to a starting point quickly and then they can look at where it's going and know whether it's on target or not. So they're a special case, clients like that, they're in the minority but of course they're growing, so that's the thing to keep an eye on, is the smart design buyer. But at the moment they're still a minority. The majority are committee and board based solutions, and very often a smart design buyer has got a committee or a board to be answerable to so then even the smart situation then dove tails into this one that's coming, can't read the results. They don't know whether what they are being shown is right or not. What they are able to respond to is perceptive and astute analysis of their industry, their market sector, themselves, their specific task at hand. They are all reasonably bright people in decision making positions and they can be talked to, and that's how you have to deal with them. So the presentation goes along the line of: this is who you are; this is the business you're in; this is the problem as we see it; this is how your competition is dealing with the problem; this is the niche gap which has been left; this is what is synonymous with you and your brand. That's it. That's the solution. It doesn't matter whether it's a or b, it's a logical





...everybody can do  
everything, which is another  
part of the digital dimension.  
Everybody is knocking up  
everything and everybody's  
got a Mac with Photoshop  
15, that sits on their kitchen  
table. Everybody's got  
everything and everybody  
knows everything, and  
everything moves really fast.

24  
17.



The single  
most important  
ability in  
a design  
studio, or in  
a designer's  
palette of  
competence,  
in my opinion,  
is project  
analysis and  
articulation...



So the presentation  
goes along the line of:

**this is who you are;**



**this is the business you're in;**



**this is the problem as we see it;**



**this is how your competition  
is dealing with the problem;**



**this is the niche gap  
which has been left;**



**this is what is synonymous  
with you and your brand.**

point at the end of a sort of flow chart. And it's the ability to do that, which is essential, and even that smart design buyer who has been able to say "well you'd think A but actually it's B", then says, "Adam, you're right, its great, I love it. I've got to present it on Tuesday to the board. Can you do the presentation?" Then you know that what they've been able to see, you've got to then create the argument that proves that, because the merchant sitting down doesn't know the difference. So very rarely can you get away with out doing that big analysis. That's the job now. That's the job, because everybody can do everything, which is another part of the digital dimension. Everybody is knocking up everything and everybody's got a Mac with Photoshop 15, that sits on their kitchen table. Everybody's got everything and everybody knows everything, and everything moves really fast. So the hippest, grooviest thing on the inside back cover of Dazed and Confused this week can be an Orange campaign the next week. Everything is like one great big melting pot of stuff now and everybody's confused, desperately confused. So in order to get anything to a resolved position, the analytical, logical and consequential procedure of 'this is why we should do this', is the key ability. That is the key ability and it's an ability which is enormously missing in the current design training. It's just not there. It has to be there. It was more of a marketing thing, maybe more of an advertising account handling kind of thing. It's the kind of marketing, philosophical, positioning thing, the kind of Powerpoint display type mentality, "this is the brand and this is the solution". It's a marketing thing. One of the things I find sad about graphic design in the last 10 years is that it has become the new advertising. Probably by the 70's, definitely by the 80's advertising had completely devalued itself and everybody knew. The audience grew up and got smart and we learnt not to believe advertising. And we don't believe in advertising, no one believes in advertising any more. So advertising performs a different kind of role now, a kind of seductive or irritant sort of avenue of brand awareness and brand recognition. You know, a BMW ad doesn't sell you a new 1 Series, it just sells you BMW.

Sure.

So the marketing world has identified, partly because they're just part of it, the thing which we started talking about which is sociocultural emancipation. People in marketing now know that you know the difference between Armani sunglasses and Diesel sunglasses. That you know the difference between a Nike watch and a Swatch watch and that you know you like Adidas, and so on and so forth. They can probably predict what kind of furniture you have at home and all sorts of things and what you respond to, so that's the evolving characteristics of the kind of market demographic. They know a lot more now, and they're interested and they're responsive to visual codes and those, actually, are the visual codes of design more than traditionally of advertising.

Sure.

You'll believe what you want to believe, not what you're told. So, communications design, which is the quickest, easiest and cheapest way to create a veneer and an aura around something, is the current interface between commodity and consumer. So, graphic design becomes this sort of covert form of marketing. The new advertising. So therefore it's no surprise that the talents required in the design studio are the talents which would be more traditionally associated with marketing.

Sure.

The positioning skills are something that the educational system hasn't really got up to speed with yet, and they're the most useful ones. They're the things you most need

around a studio, some young people who can tell you why this or that can be a solution to a problem. But it's usually the one thing they don't know. They just do stuff and you have to look over their shoulder and you spot something and think, "Ah, that's actually quite good". But the ability to articulate it, I mean the most useful ability that I would find around the studio these days is somebody who can actually write a response to a client. They came to the meeting, they've listened to it and they're going to come in tomorrow morning and write 500 words. That is the hardest work, coming away from a creative meeting with someone who sort of got it and then having to make a presentation for their superior or their board the following week. That is the hardest fucking work. That is the hardest work and it's the area where the graduates are not being prepared at all. It's the proactive/reactive thing again, it'll happen but it'll happen late in the day again. The ability to speak and write analytically about the work they've done, would be a fantastic asset and that's the bit that's missing at the moment. The other thing I've noticed is the self-motivated module, the final assessment, did you do that?

Yeah, the final project.

Right, the final project. That shouldn't be the final project, I can see that is massively misleading to people, particularly the better ones. The better ones are straying pretty much into art territory with it, and its giving people a really dangerously loose idea about what they'll do when they work. By virtue of it being your last project, it indicates that this is the last bit of training and this is the world you're going into, but it so isn't the world you're going into. Actually the world you're going into is nailed down so that that is the space you've got to operate in (makes small gesture with his fingers) not that (opens his arms out). Obviously there are experiences to have, things to be learnt, directions to be seen from doing that self-initiated project. It is a good indicator of things about the graduate, where they're at, what they're about and it's also a fantastic one for them beginning to discover what they want to do. What I feel at the moment is that self-initiated module should be in the first or second term. In some ways it'll be good to be in the first term because you could prepare for it during the summer or it needs to be in the second one. What I think has to happen is that the tutor or tutors for those final year students need to see the direction that the individual is taking with their self-initiated module and create a realistic brief for them. The kind of brief they would get if they then went into a job in music or fashion or whatever it is, you know. Where are they going with this? And where could it land them? And what could they, as a graduate, be expected to encounter in this place where they've landed? Lets say Bob wants to be a film editor, I'd like to set him the kind of thing he would do if he got a job at The Moving Picture Company or that kind of place and see what he makes of it. So say a sixty second Tango commercial with six ten-second mini slots. Bob, that's your final job. You know, find out if you really like it and show a potential employer what you can do with something real, because those final projects get sometimes very self-indulgent and a lot of people in the studios and who interview you don't have time to work out whether sleep patterns could be of any interest to Reebok, it's too much work.

So do you think that the educational system needs to have some of the more mundane design? I don't want to say corporate stationery, but if Barclays comes to you and asks you to design their invoices or billing reports, they all need to be designed, so injecting that into the educational system shows it's not all commercial advertising fun?

Yeah, there are some people who actually like doing things like that and they're the sort of things that should be set to people who are going into that direction. Someone who loves doing analytical typography needs to be given the sort of thing they would do if

they followed that career path. Yeah, it would be good to do and it would stand them in enormous stead in getting a job if they could demonstrate the ability to do it. And yes, there is a lot of work like that, there are annual reports and corporate guidelines. The educational system needs to continue to develop the kind of philosophical awareness of graduates, it needs to nurture the real world marketing analytical policies and it needs to introduce students to real jobs and a wide range of them. Not just the local fucking fishing tackle shop. Yes, we can have a bit of that but I suppose to a large extent it needs to be more selective, which again is a problem if you've got a hundred students in a year and not enough staff. How on earth can you be selective? How can you look at an individual, figure out where they're going and customise a course for them. It's really tricky.

Especially if they don't know where they're going.

No they don't know, so that early stage customising is to help them find out where they're going. But it is very tricky actually, because if you're not careful you end up just throwing shit at the wall to see what sticks.





**it needs to introduce students to real jobs and a wide range of them. Not just the local fucking fishing tackle shop. Yes, we can have a bit of that... But it is very tricky actually, because if you're not careful you end up just throwing shit at the wall to see what sticks.**

Co-founder of the design studio Intro and  
creative director of This is Real Art.  
Author of 'How to be a graphic designer  
without losing your soul'.  
Check out [www.thisisrealart.com](http://www.thisisrealart.com)

ask  
small  
mess

1. If you could start by telling us a little bit about yourself, your background in design and how you started in the business...

I am self-taught. I didn't go to design school. I was taken on as a trainee graphic designer in a big studio in the mid-1970s. I didn't get much training – I was left to work it all out for myself. But I was surrounded by very skilled and experienced designers. They'd give me the odd five minutes to explain something, but that was it. So I learned by watching.

Within a few weeks I was doing live jobs (small stuff – but real work), and it wasn't too long before I was a functioning part of the studio, and people stopped making concessions to my novice status. For a long time afterwards I congratulated myself on having bypassed design school. I thought I was a better designer for it. But I no longer think this. Years later, when I started going into design schools to lecture, I realised that I had missed something. I'd missed that wonderful opportunity to experiment that a good design school gives you. And now a part of me regrets not having had a formal education.

In the late 1980's, with my business partner, I set up a studio called Intro, doing mainly design for the music industry. There was a point in the late 1990s when we were 40 strong, and working for companies in many sectors, not just music. I left Intro in 2003 to pursue an interest in writing and consultancy.

2. What advice would you give students graduating to prepare them for a job in graphic design?

My answer divides into two parts. The first is to do with presentation (of yourself and your work); the second is about adopting the right frame of mind.

**Presentation:** the way you present yourself is more important than the work you show. Students always ask me how they get a job when every vacancy seems to demand at least two year's experience. Every graduating generation has faced this problem – and each generation imagines they are the first to be confronted by it. So ditch that old chestnut! When studios say they want two years experience they don't really mean this. What they mean is they want someone good.

As a graduate you must take heart from the fact that you have an attribute that a designer with two years experience doesn't have. Namely, you are cheap! No designer with two year's experience wants to do internships – but you don't mind (or at least you shouldn't), and all designers should use internships to make themselves indispensable (you do this by working hard and offering your help wherever it is needed – and yes, that



When studios say they want two years experience, they don't really mean this. They want someone who can help them do good

might mean helping to shift 20 boxes of printed brochures that have just been delivered to the street, four floors below).

Also, you have passion and energy, and you are willing to do many of the mundane things that someone with two year's experience is less willing to do. So don't see yourself as disadvantaged. See yourself as garlanded with many of the qualities employers want.

Still on the subject of presentation, be prepared to sweat blood over the way you present your work, and the way you present yourself. No one expects lavish, high-concept presentations from graduates, or great displays of confidence and bravado – but every employer expects a level of basic competency and clarity of communication. There are a thousand things to think about – everything from checking to see that you have correctly spelt the name of the person you are approaching, to doing essential research on the studio that is interviewing you. And you can't afford to get any of these factors wrong.

Finally, attend as many interviews as you can. If none of them result in a job offer – don't worry. But learn from each interview. Find out what you are doing well and what you are doing badly. Ask your interviewer to tell you. Most will do this happily. If they won't, they are probably not worth working for.

Frame of mind: by frame of mind, I mean having the right attitude and managing your expectations. Don't assume you will walk into the first job you apply for (but don't assume you won't, either). Be positive, but expect setbacks – everyone has had them at the outset of their careers, and how we deal with them determines how we develop as a creative individual. More importantly, don't adopt too lofty an idea about where you should work. By all means be ambitious and aim high, but don't turn your nose up at opportunities that don't conform to your vision of the ideal job. In my view, there is no such thing as a bad job in your first two or three jobs. Nor is there anything wrong with having 3-4 jobs in your first few years of working life. We learn more from the bad jobs than we do from the good ones.

So to sum up – make your presentation as good as you can (be prepared to change it after two or three interviews if it's not getting a good response), and adopt a confident but unprejudiced view about any opportunities that present themselves.







no matter  
whether you  
are a genius,  
or middle-of-  
the-road, as  
soon as you  
start work,  
you have to  
go back to the  
beginning and  
start learning  
all over again

3. How well do you think university prepares graduates for a job in Graphic Design?

**I used to employ one or two graduates each year, and I thought the universities did an abysmal job of preparing graduates for work. Now, I'm not so sure. I don't see how universities can prepare graduates for every eventuality. What I think schools need to do is create an appetite for learning. By this I mean, provide an education in design that teaches you how to learn. I say this because no matter whether you are a genius or middle-of-the-roader, as soon as you start work, you have to go back to the beginning and start learning all over again.**

**When I was an employer, I worked on the notion that it took between 6 and 18 months for a graduate to become a fully-fledged member of my studio. This is a big investment for a small studio: it means that graduates are non-fare paying passengers until they become fully competent. So it is vital that they have had the sort of education that makes them open-minded, adaptable and fast learners.**

**It is unrealistic to expect the universities to be able to train graduates for every career option. But they have a huge responsibility to make students agile-minded and greedy for knowledge and experience.**

4. "The final project. I can see that is massively misleading to people...its giving people a really dangerously lose idea about what they'll do when they work. By virtue of it being your last project, it kind of indicates that this is the last bit of training and this is the world I'm going into, and it so isn't the world you're going into."

The above is an extract from my interview with Peter Saville. What do you think about the notion that the final project is misleading for students and gives them a false sense of the graphic design world they will be entering, especially in relation to the corporate jobs that they will inevitably end up working on?

**Well, I sort of agree with Peter. But there's another way to look at the final project. Working life for even the most experienced designer is a series of never-ending tests. I've been a designer since the mid-1970s and I'm still pitching for work. In other words, I still have to pass tests and 'take exams.' It's a grim way of looking at it, but I suppose your final project goes some way towards equipping you to deal with 'working life' and the fact that you never stop being assessed.**

**Having said that – lots of great designers failed their courses. And personally, I've never set much store by degree marks. I always look for signs of graft and enterprise and flair before I look for what sort of degree someone got.**





But the reality is that for ambitious graduates, starting a studio – or working as a freelancer – is sometimes the only option.

5. Should graduates be raw creative putty, unhindered by the constraints of client work or should they be educated in the restrictions put on jobbing graphic designers such as time and budget?

In general I'm in favour of universities encouraging all designers to look beyond jobbing design. But I have no problem with anyone whose ambitions are simply to earn a living in jobbing design: the universities should help people prepare students for that. But it would be wrong if education didn't encourage looking beyond traditional jobbing graphic design: and it would be wrong to promote the view that work opportunities only exist in jobbing graphic design. This is not the case.

6. If graduates had an insight into the working design profession and the demands that may be asked of them when they get a job in a design studio, would it make them more prepared for working life?

I think the best way to answer your question is to leap off at a tangent. Today, with the popularity of design education (I don't know if its true, but someone recently told me that design degree courses are now the third most popular in the UK) there are more graduates than there are vacancies.

What does this mean? It means that the current generation of graduates are going to have to be more entrepreneurial than previous generations. In order to do the sort of work that you want to do you might have to consider setting up on your own sooner than expected. I think its best to get a few years working in studios (even mediocre ones) before setting up on your own. But the reality is that for ambitious graduates, starting a studio – or working as a freelancer – is sometimes the only option.

So – to answer your question – I'm sure the universities could do more to equip graduates for working life. But the question is – what will working life be like in coming years? Which takes me back to my main thought: all the schools can hope to do is to teach students how to learn. In other words, how to think!



be prepared  
to sweat blood  
over the way you  
present your work,  
and the way you  
present yourself...  
every employer  
expects a level of  
basic competency  
and clarity of  
communication.

# www dot

Just a few personal favourites, I thought you may enjoy checking out...

[www.adcglobal.org](http://www.adcglobal.org)  
[www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)  
[www.attik.com](http://www.attik.com)  
[www.bibliothequedesign.com](http://www.bibliothequedesign.com)  
[www.britishdesign.co.uk](http://www.britishdesign.co.uk)  
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[www.ycnonline.com](http://www.ycnonline.com)  
[youworkforthem.com](http://youworkforthem.com)



**A century of graphic design**

Jeremy Aynsley

**A smile in the mind**

Beryl McAlhone & David Stuart

**Advertising Today**

Warren Berger

**Eating the big fish**

Adam Morgan

**graphic design speak**

Miller & Brown

**How to be a graphic designer  
without losing your soul**

Adrian Shaughnessy

**mmm...skyscraper i love you**

a tomato project

**tellmewhy**

karlssonwilker

**The art of looking sideways**

Alan Fletcher

**Type 1 - Digital Typeface Design**

Nathan Gale

**Type & Typography**

Phil Baines & Andrew Haslam

**Computer Arts**

**Creative Review**

**Design Week**

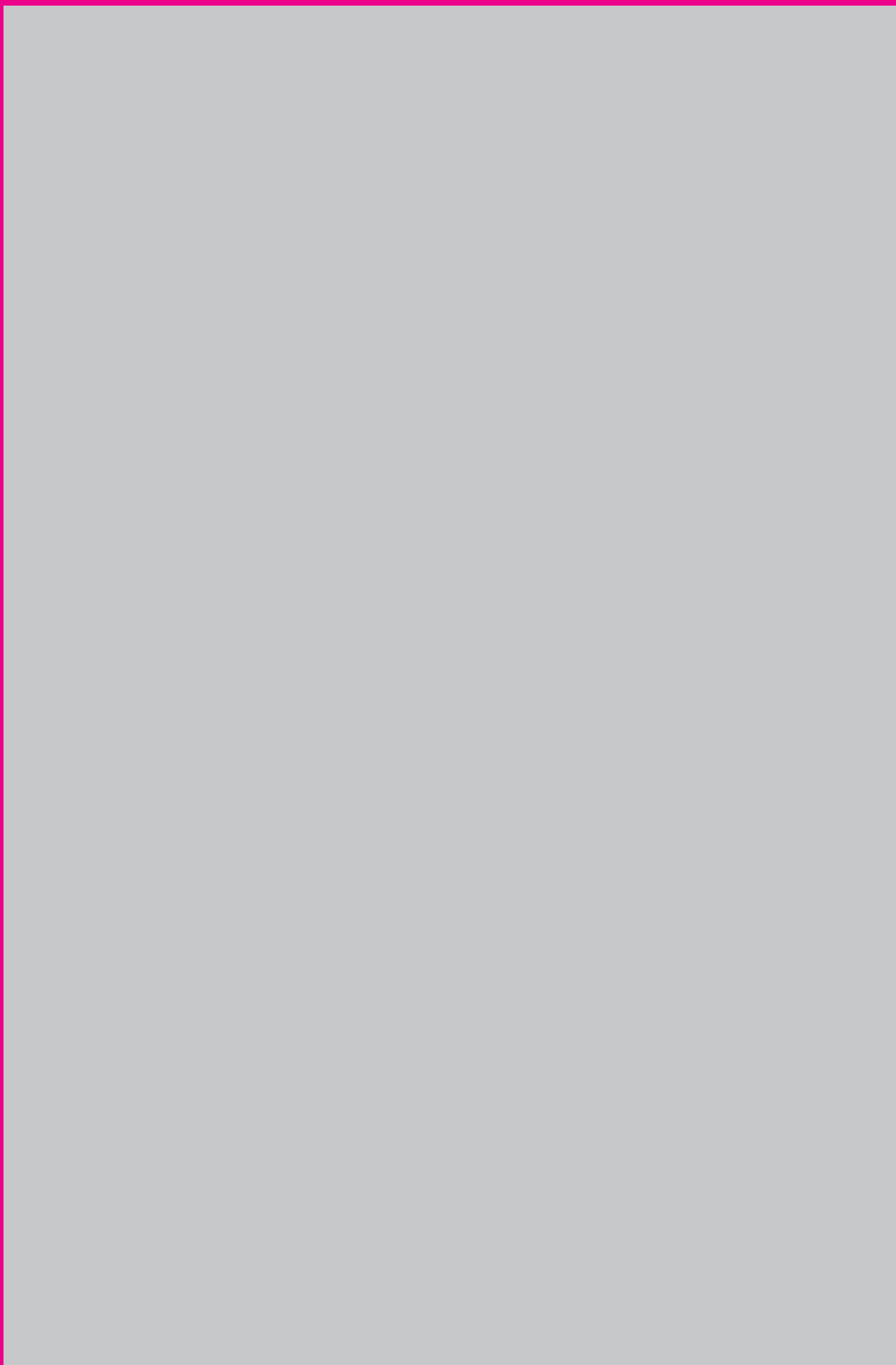
**Marmalade**

some essential must-haves to read and be inspired by...  
**coffee and**



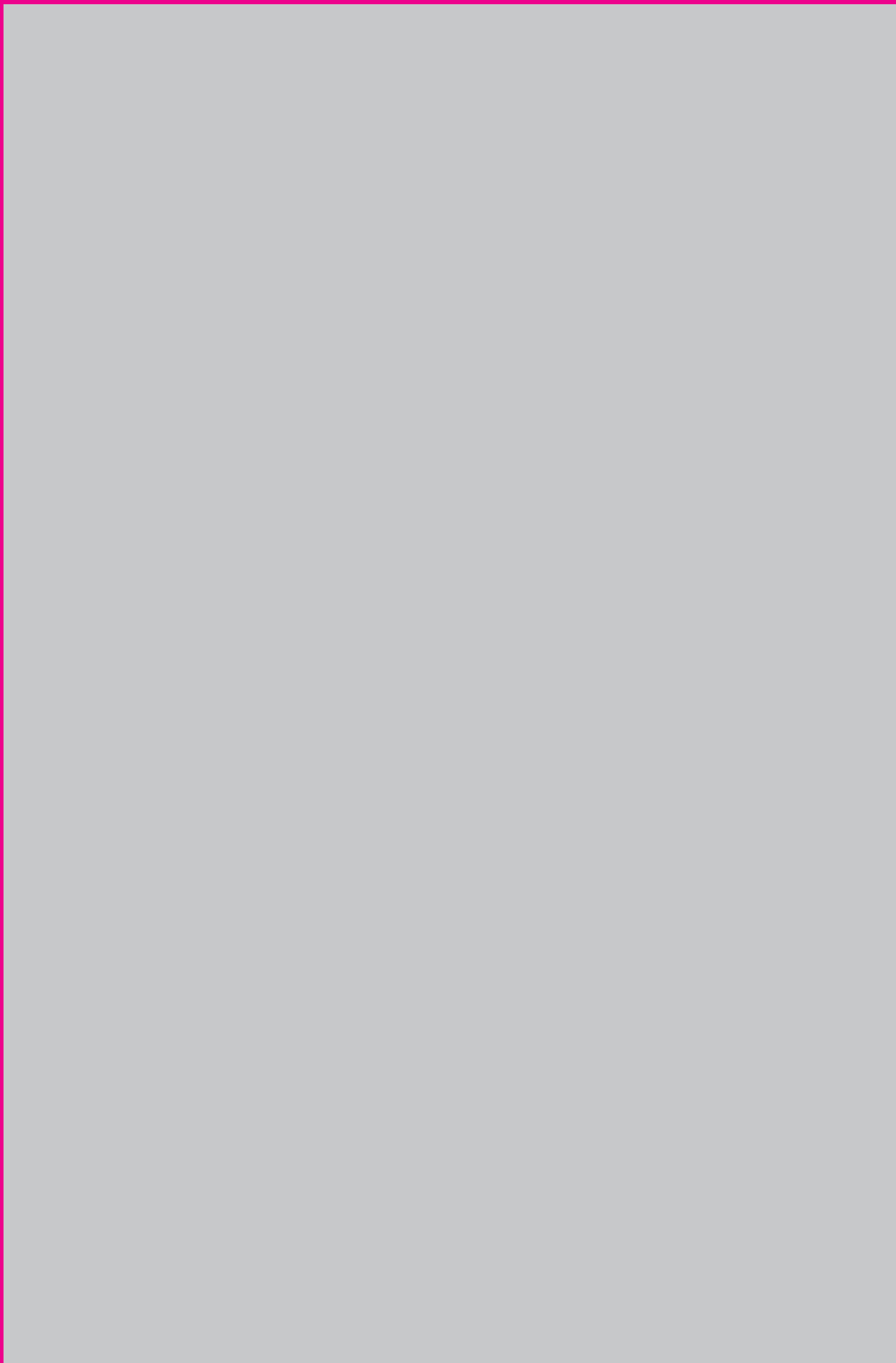
your thoughts  
start here...

24  
7.



**24**  
**J7.**

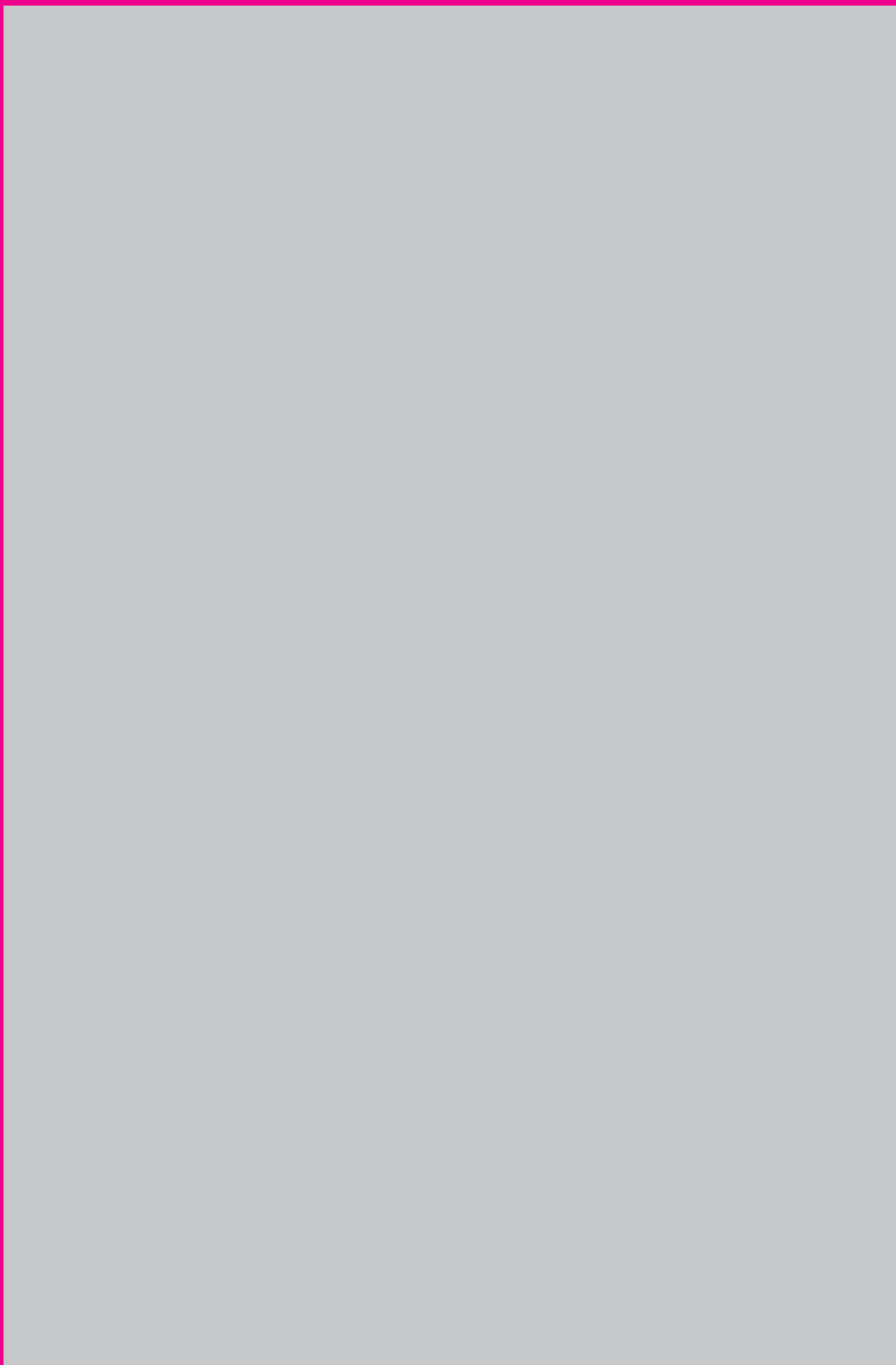




**24**  
**J7.**

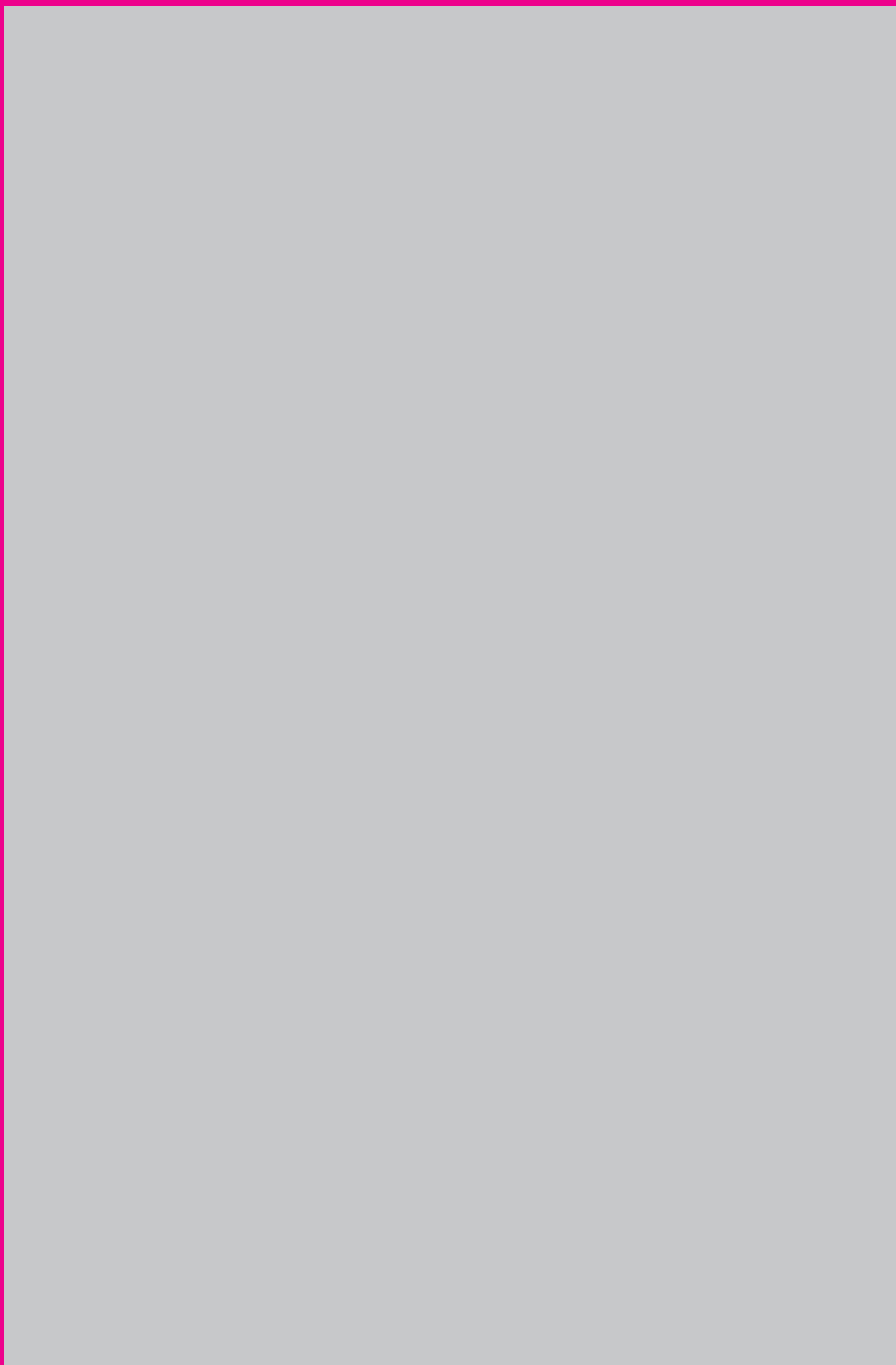






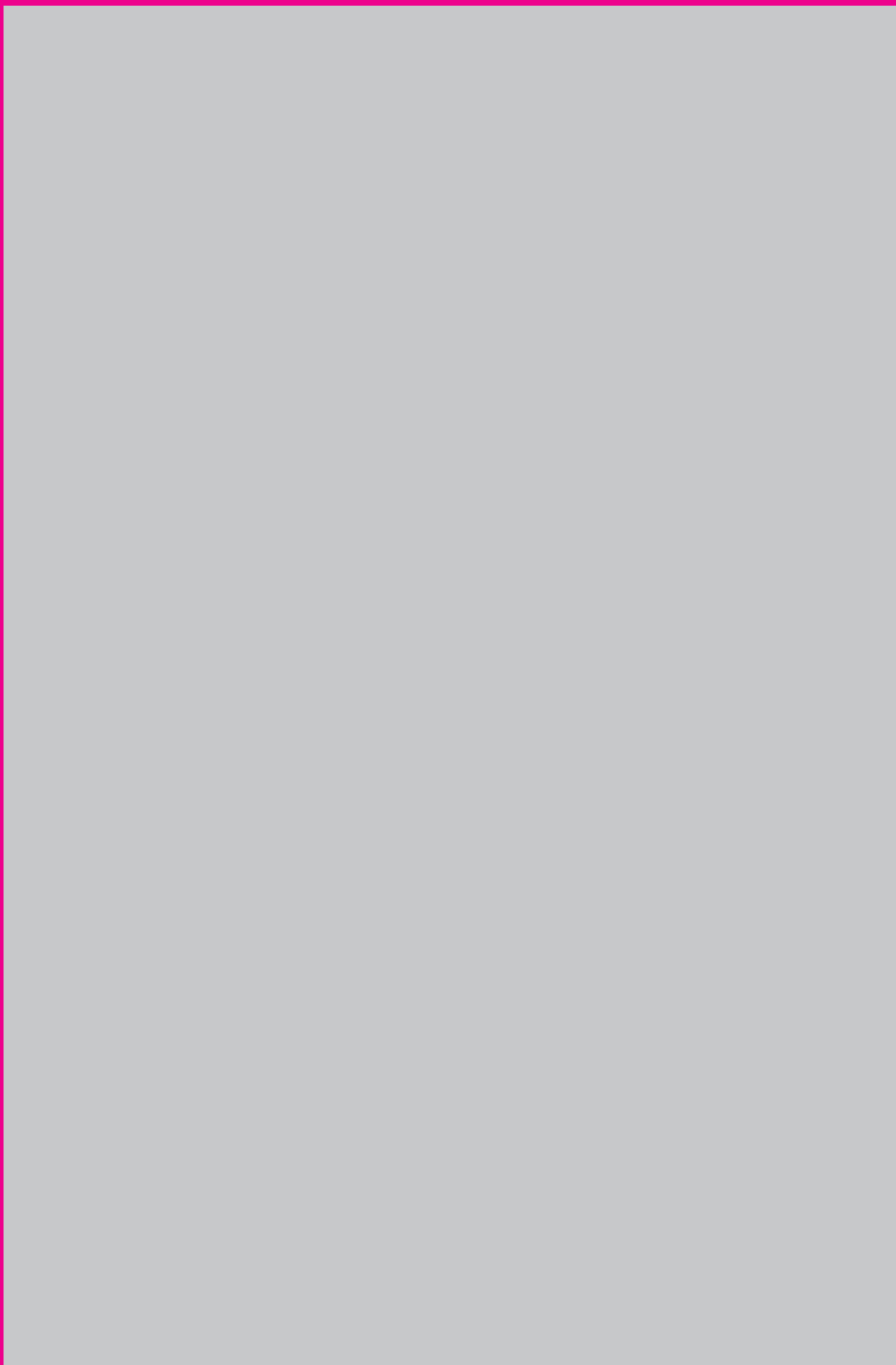
**24**  
**J7.**





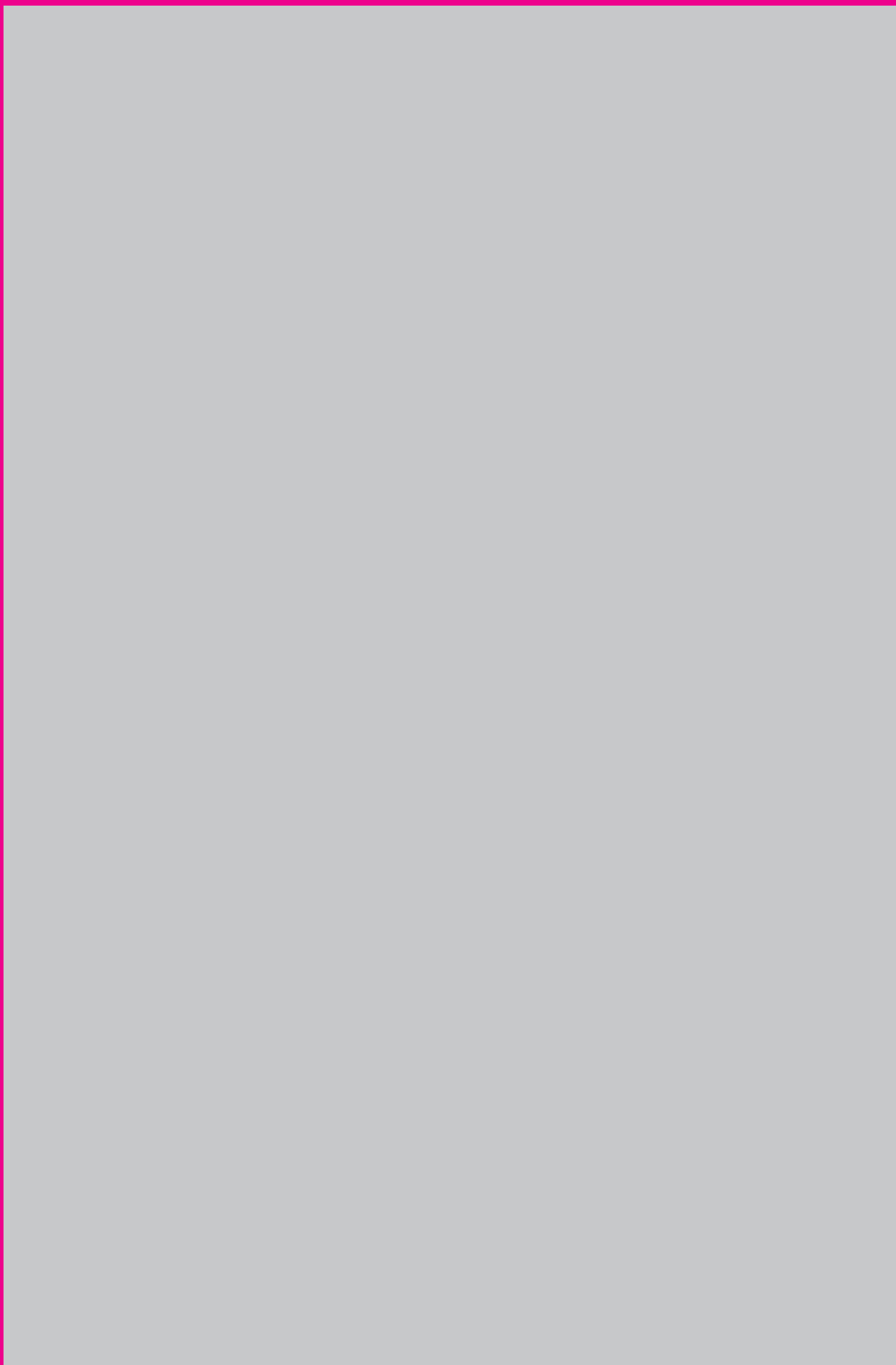
**24**  
**J7.**





**24**  
**J7.**





**24**  
**J7.**





**24**  
**J7.**





**CAUTION**  
**CARELESSNESS CAUSES FIRE**  
This item is made from natural materials and is not treated with fire retardant chemicals.

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