

# A Walk in Memphis – Post 16 Introductory Project for Design

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### Abstract

Team building and team management pose one of the greatest challenges to a head of faculty. There is no doubt that people represent the greatest resource in terms of expertise and investment and demand the greatest leadership. At Beauchamp the head of faculty has risen to the challenge through a collaborative approach to introducing post-16 design courses.

### Introduction

The Beauchamp College, Oadby is a comprehensive upper school and community college, with pupils aged between 14 and 19.

The design department comprises the following specialisms:

- Art
- Design
- Food
- Graphics
- Photography
- Textiles
- Intermediate and Advanced GNVQ Art and Design

Each year a new project is chosen for the Year 12 students to act as an introduction to design. This year we drew inspiration from the magazine *Designing*, which featured an article on 'The Memphis Look'. The Memphis designers rejected traditional design in favour of a look that reflected the reality of modern life, setting out to shock, confuse and entertain. This theme would certainly give the students something to think about!

### Aims

In deciding on a suitable first project for Year 12 students, there were a number of goals that we wanted to achieve:

- The project was to integrate all of the design specialisms within the faculty at Advanced GCE and GNVQ and Intermediate GNVQ in order to give all Year 12 students a holistic view of design.
- Convergent thinking and problem solving should be complemented by divergent thinking and creativity: both are expected of all, irrespective of the particular discipline within design.
- Develop team building: staff and students working together with a common aim and a shared sense of achievement and celebration of success.
- Start the course with a 'wow'. This is no longer a GCSE course but Post 16 study and it is a preparation for Higher Education and design in the real world. The project should introduce students to the fun and excitement of Post 16 design.
- To treat students in an adult way, helping them to take responsibility for their own work and manage their own time.
- Students had to get up to speed using Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for their research; Internet, Intranet and E-mail, as well as producing a CV and a PowerPoint presentation at the end of the project.
- Aiming towards presenting the work in a very public event with the students' work named and on display.

### The programme

The theme of Memphis was discussed amongst the staff and agreed fairly informally. We were inspired by a staff INSET on PGCE exhibitions. The project was also a follow on from a previous successful exhibition on the Bauhaus, which itself was a follow on from previously successful Art and Photography exhibitions. We were looking to give other disciplines a similar opportunity to display their work.

Figure 1: The invite – now a collector's item!

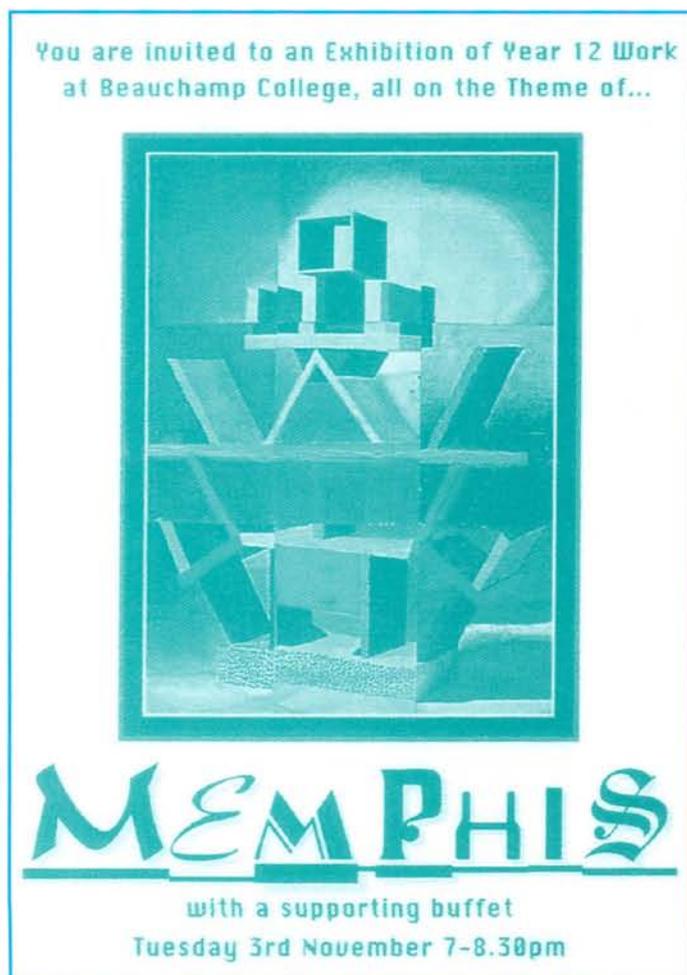


Table 1: Once the theme was decided upon, specialist projects were identified and linked to the appropriate syllabus.

Table 2: Schedule for the Memphis project

An introductory presentation was given by two of the staff to all of the Year 12 groups using a PowerPoint presentation and LCD projector. Slides were prepared of Memphis designs and radios and transferred to the college Intranet.

Students were expected to carry out follow up research individually, using the college's available resources, including the Internet, Intranet, E-mail and textbooks. Internet and E-mail were used widely and after a phone call to Milan we received a fax from the Sottsass Design Company wishing us 'Good Luck' with the exhibition. To be contacted by a professional design company created great excitement and inspiration for the students.

Next followed an interpretation of the brief for all specialisms in the Memphis style and with Memphis values (see Table 1). Students produced sketches and ideas capturing the flavour of Memphis. Short term goals and plenty of feedback were included to keep a check on progress and to encourage students to keep going.

**Managing the learning programme**

The project had a very short timescale in order to develop a short sharp approach to Post 16 work and encourage extra commitment - both from students and teachers! See Table 2.

Frequent and regular feedback 'kept things going'. Also, the enthusiasm and involvement of staff (who regarded the work as very important and had high expectations of students to show 'what they are about') encouraged the students.

The staff within the department had very high expectations of the students, expecting them to use their study time, free lessons and twilight time to work on the project and to reach their targets. The students did just that. Students and staff used their spare time freely to progress the project.

**Immersion**

The project proved to be just as demanding on the staff as on the students. Teachers', technicians' and students' time became a focus and a priority for a short period of time.

Although most of the project work had to be carried out within each specialism, there was a lot of organisation involved that included the whole department working together. The general organisation was shared amongst students, teaching and technical staff. The promotion of the event was crucial and the

**SPECIALIST PROJECTS**

Art	Ceramics
Art GNVQ	Papier-mâché
Design	Radios using TEP resources
Food	Italian emphasis
Graphics	Posters and invitations
Photography	Image manipulation
Textiles	Mirrors

**SHORT TERM GOALS**

Week1	Research completed and marked*
Week 2	Designing completed and marked*
Week 3	Model made and marked*
Weeks 4, 5, 6	Final radio built
Week 7	Radio finished and evaluated – exhibition

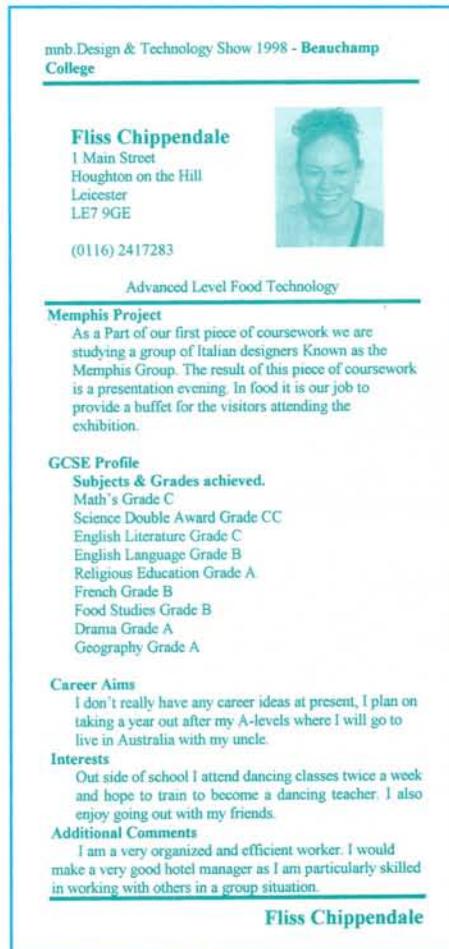
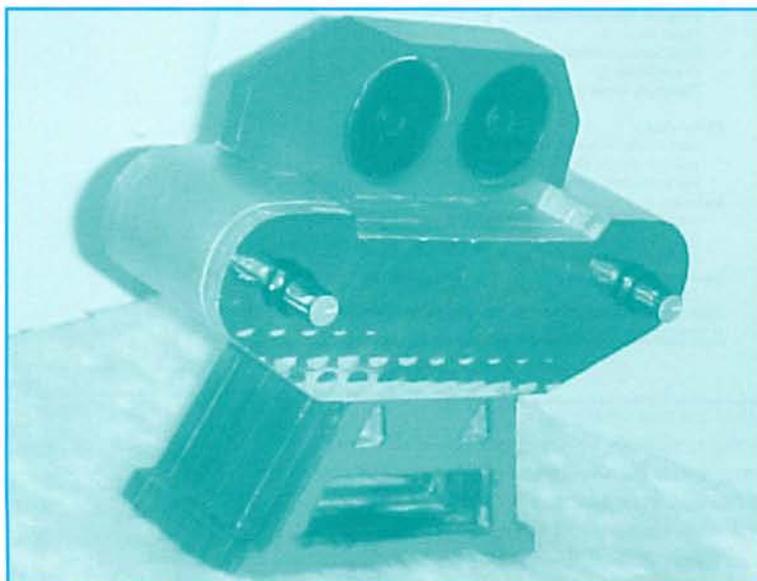
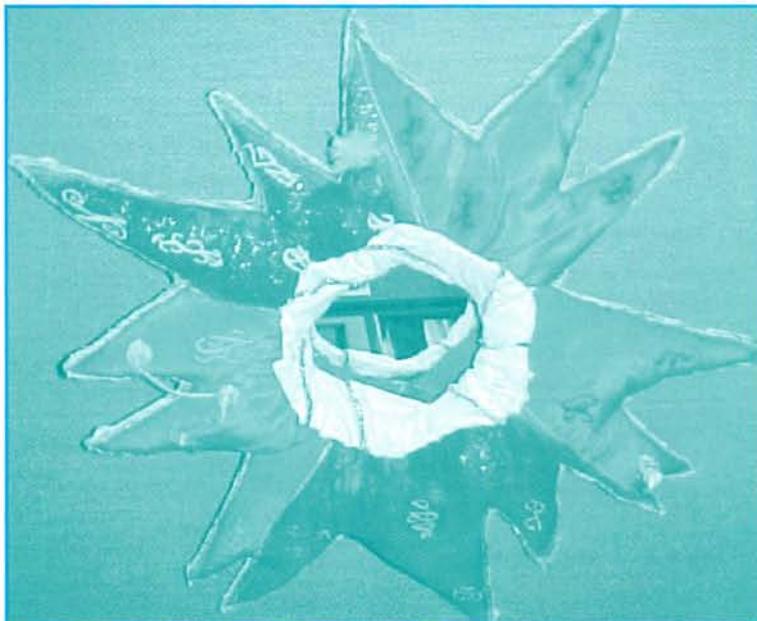


Figure 2: One of a selection of CVs that were displayed at the exhibition.

guest list was carefully targeted, with invites going to schools, universities, PGCE students, parents and friends. The invitations for the exhibition were produced by the department, and were intended to become 'collector's items' (see Figure 1). A CV template was drawn up



and followed by all of the students (see Figure 2), creating a standard feature at the exhibition. Everyone involved in the project had input on the preparation of the gallery, the presentation of the work, organisation and presentation of food and drinks (including displayed menus, which linked in with the Memphis theme), selecting appropriate music to accompany the event, producing Memphis key rings and selling them as momentos, and maintaining a Visitors' Book.

**Was the project a success?**

The project culminated in an exhibition held on the evening of 3 November 1998. The exhibition was well attended, keeping the hosts busy all evening serving food and drinks.

**Syllabus links**

A' Level assessment criteria from all the syllabuses used for the specialist parts of the project. For example, A' Level design and technology is broad enough to encompass the entire project – used as a skill based project to introduce new skills – and reinforce basic ones:

- sketching – use of sketch books
- rendering
- modelling
- use of CAD/CAM – heavily used in production of radios
- A' Level food, links with society, values, styles, multicultural foods.

**Success in our terms**

The project proved to be a huge confidence builder for individual students. They felt a real pride in their achievements. Also, the project created a sense of shared goals both amongst students and between students and staff.

Everyone involved worked hard but had fun, which served to promote design education. We were given the opportunity to celebrate the students' success publicly and parents were involved, early on, in seeing the work of their youngsters at A' Level. And of course, the exhibition helped to promote design at Beauchamp College.

**External evaluation**

Presented as a Rondeval at the Technology Colleges Trust Conference and made into a CD-ROM for use by other colleagues.

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