



Courtesy of the Royal Mint.

Matthew Dent

Matthew Dent, a 26-year-old graphic designer, has achieved so early in his career what other designers only hope to do in their lifetime: to make a lasting impact on not only the design world, but to people's lives in general. Matthew's design will soon be in the hands of millions of people, used every day, and has the potential to stay in circulation for a very long time. This achievement comes from submitting the winning design in an open competition to design the new reverses on the coins of the United Kingdom. Out of over 4,000 entries, The Royal Mint Advisory Committee selected Matthew's concept and design because of his respect for the British traditions of heraldry combined with a contemporary, fresh approach to the project.

Beginnings

Matthew Dent, grew up in Bangor in North Wales where he studied art at Coleg Menai, before moving to England to study graphic design at the University of Brighton from 2000-2003.

'The two faculties were hugely influential on my creating thinking,' he recalls of his student years, 'and both instilled in me the importance of an idea at the very forefront of any design work produced.'

The coin design competition

A friend of Matthew's alerted him to an unusual competition with a remarkable prize: that The Royal Mint was inviting the general public to submit ideas for the first redesign in almost 40 years of the reverse side for six of the United Kingdom's eight circulating coins. The winning design would feature on the circulating coinage, used by millions of people everyday and an extraordinary brief for any designer: 'I couldn't pass up the chance to have a go; it was a fantastic once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,' says Matthew.



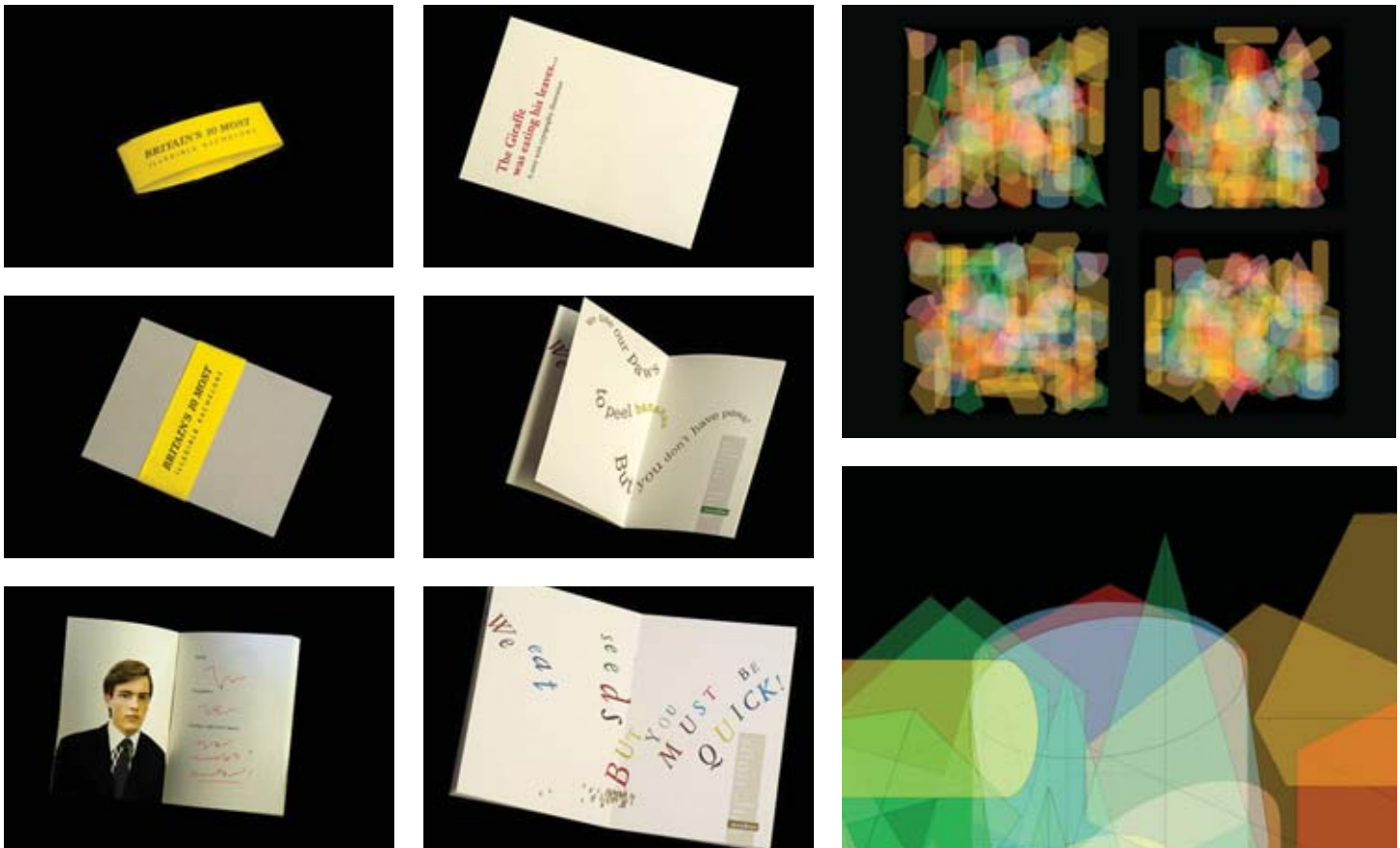
Courtesy of the Royal Mint.

The design journey

Today's designers increasingly find themselves branching out into other design disciplines and Matthew Dent is no exception. Having studied both art and graphic design, he was able to envisage how his design for the coin reverses would translate to different formats. After deciding on a heraldic approach to the brief, Matthew chose the Shield of the Royal Arms as the basis of his design, the Shield being a traditional element of the United Kingdom's coinage. However, the way in which he would be apply it to the coins would be done in a decidedly non-traditional way; for the first time, a single design would be used across a range of United Kingdom's coins. Matthew explains, 'I'd had an idea ticking away about a single design spread over several coins, and whereby arranging them in a certain way might produce a composite image. Since heraldry has been the basis of coinage design in Britain for hundreds of years, I wondered about a heraldic solution. This seemed to work successfully in my mind; coins could be arranged above and below each other, as well as to the left and right of each other, to carry the whole design.'

Matthew began by sketching out his ideas on paper, and cutting out discs of the paper to get an idea of how the designs would translate to the coins' shape. Although the competition only required drawings in the first instance, Matthew's submission caught the attention of the judging panel at The Royal Mint – The Royal Mint Advisory Committee on the Design of Coins, Medals, Seals and Decorations – who then introduced him to John Bergdahl, a sculptor with the expertise to help Matthew translate his designs into 3D. These models were scanned into a computer and it was the following data that was used to create the finished metal coins.

'This was a fascinating journey to be privy to,' Matthew recalls, 'seeing how the designs translated from one medium to the next. The things I learnt along the way will no doubt come in handy in future.'



(left column)

Britain's 10 Most Illegible Bachelors A spin on the all too popular eligible bachelor compilations of trashy girly magazines. Features 10 disadvantaged males.

(centre column)

The Giraffe was eating his leaves... A story book exploring animal characteristics through typography, developed in collaboration with rooftopillustrations (www.rooftopillustrations.net)

(right column)

Design Trends... Are there trends in design between different professions? 20 county planners, 20 builders, 20 graphic designers and 20 illustrators were given 6 different shapes of 6 different colours. Would one average group design differ significantly from the next?

3 fish in a tree

Matthew Dent is part of the creative team at established design practice 3 fish in a tree, which is based in London. This close-knit team of eight enjoys working collaboratively, and draws its creative energy and strength from working together on projects for their clients. Matthew says that having input from each member of the team on a project 'means that the result is all the richer because of this pooling of ideas. I love working in this way.'

Matthew counts highly among his influential artists and designers his tutors that he has studied under as well as close friends whom he has worked alongside, who help him to hone the way he thinks and looks at things. His enthusiastic approach to working collaboratively with his colleagues and peers coupled with an instinctive desire to branch out across design media and disciplines are qualities that are indeed must-haves for the next generation of designers.

Matthew is currently completing a series of digitally-printed bespoke books selling a retail space. Bound in felt, the books feature specifically commissioned photography and elegant typography. Matthew says that it's a project that is 'pushing the boundaries of not only what I'm used to producing but also what this client is used to receiving.'

www.mattdent.com
www.3fishinatree.com