

CREATIVE FUTURES

Meet the Designers
- Airside, Creative Agency

**DESIGN
MUSEUM**



Creative Futures is supported by:

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Airside is a London-based Creative Agency working across the disciplines of graphic design, illustration, digital, interactive and moving image.

Our uniquely quirky, fun, creative and sometimes maverick approach has gained us recognition and won us many prizes, despite the small size of our team.

We have worked on many different projects and commissions over the last 10 years, for a wide variety of clients, some of which are shown in this presentation.

Here we will show you the 3 different ways that we approach our work at the studio: working for an advertising agency on behalf of a company; working directly with a client and working for ourselves.

You can find out more about many of our other projects on our website www.airside.co.uk

Which design disciplines do you work in and why?

Malika: At Airside we do a bit of everything really but I guess we are more animation, moving image and digital media orientated. We occasionally do branding and typography projects. Anything exciting that we feel like taking on. When I was studying in Paris, I already had a “crush” on Airside’s colourful work and I made it my goal to join the team. I loved the way they could take on any media and add an Airside stamp to it.

Jamie: Design and Illustration. Working within these disciplines is like having a more complete toolbox. If I design something that needs to look a certain way I have the tools to illustrate or create the imagery that will complete the design to match the original idea. Being able to illustrate and design opens up the number of approaches you can bring to a brief and subsequently you never know what your solution is going to be!

Henki: We’re a multi disciplinary design company so work ranges from graphic design/ branding/illustration/animation direction/interactive/etc.

Can you pinpoint what first inspired you to become a designer?

Malika : As far as I can remember I have always been drawing. Drawing at school, at home, on the bus, everywhere. My mother is an artist and I have always been fascinated by what she could do. She gave me a set of pencils when I was about 4 and I haven't stopped since then. The truth is that being a design never occurred to me as a teenager. I wanted become an engineer and be rich like any other kid. So I chose science. When I was about 19, I was studying physics in Paris and I realised that I would be bored to death in this domain, so I decided to go to art school but as I didn't want to be a starving artist I choose applied arts instead of fine art. I loved it straight away. I liked having a brief and solving problems so I chose graphic design and here I am.

Jamie : As far as I remember I always wanted to be a designer. As a toddler I was fascinated by road signage and would constantly pester my dad to pull over and pick up broken motorway signage. I remember the spark of the idea being even brighter on returning from the Design Museum when I was about 6 - 7.

Henki: Coming from an eastern background, as a child I was inspired by all the cool toys/animation/packaging imported from Asia.

Which part of your education has been most crucial to your progress as a designer, and why?

Malika : Getting honest opinions from my tutors (French ones are good at telling the truth without caring about your feelings). When someone criticises your work it can hurt but eventually the praise will come and it will feel a million times better when it's genuine.

Jamie : Learning self motivation was the key for me. It's a competitive field to get involved in and unless you can work under your own steam it's very easy to find yourself sinking.

Henki: Tutors banging on about learning the fundamentals in typographic design. Tutors banging on about "always keep questioning". Last but not least, work experience - being in the real design world.

If you could visit yourself aged 16, what advice would you give yourself about your future as a designer?

Malika : Be curious about everything around you. Design is more about observation of everyday events than historical knowledge. You can learn the latter anytime but having a critical eye on society and understanding people's emotions is priceless.

Jamie : Answer emails quickly and read and re-read the brief again, answer your own questions.

Describe a typical day at work.

Malika : I get up at 9 15, get a coffee. Cycle to work. 10 am coffee. Check my emails, have a chat with the guys here about the weekend. Meeting with the team. 10 minutes chatting about the movies we watched, exhibitions we saw or just fun stuff that happened to us like Jamie almost falling in the canal on his bike. What are the new projects? We show everyone work in progress in the Monday morning meeting. 11 30 proper work starts. Lunch at 1pm. we all have lunch together. 2pm. Back to work until 4. creative meeting on a new project. We bounce ideas around. Some bad , some good and eventually one worth exploring. Excitement! Next we start research, moodboards and eventually we start drawing, Work until 6 30 then home.

Jamie : Cycle in, change, tea, emails, meeting, design/illustrate, think, tea, design/illustrate, think of lunch, lunch, tea, emails, design/illustrate, get stuck, tea, design/illustrate, meeting, design/illustrate, pack, cycle home.

Henki: (9am) Get up at. (9.30am) Look at trees whilst dodging mothers with prams as I walk to work. (9.50am) Eat bowl of 'Honey, oats and more' and check emails. (10am) Start colouring in (10.30am) Make a cup of tea then go back to colouring in unless there's a meeting I need to be in (1pm) Lunch (2pm) Start colouring in unless there's a meeting I need to be in (6.30pm ish) Power down Mac and walk home and continue to think about colouring in...

*inbetween all the colouring in I'm usually distracted by design blogs/gametrailers/creative events/studio chit chat/staring out of the window.

What are the big issues affecting your industry at the moment?

Malika : They are so many graduates and the recession was really hard on the people just graduating. That being said I believe that a talented designer will always find a job in the industry.

Jamie : Advertising studios launching their own spin off studios that can talk the talk, and have strategy - these compete with smaller design studios for the same clients who often lose because they can't keep up with the strategy speak. Everyone needs to understand the lifetime of the products they produce - Airside try not to design anything that will just end up in the bin. As designers we have to respect that we are at the forefront of the green-agenda and be conscious that we 'produce' things. So if we are producers we need to bring things into the world that won't add to the problem of landfills, chemicals or polluting processes. Ever think how much CO2 goes into producing a simple sheet of paper?

Henki: In this country every year thousands of design students graduate. It's so competitive out there you really need to stand out from the crowd to get noticed.

Where do you hope to be in 5 years time?

Malika : 5 years is a long time and I can't really project myself given that I don't even know what projects I'll be working on in 2 months! I hope to be as enthusiastic about design as I am now and to still come up with fresh creative solutions.

Jamie : Who knows? The future is what you make it.

Henki: Not sure....

What are the key attributes needed for a successful design career?

Malika : I believe in opportunity meets talent. So you have to be talented to start with but the main attribute is reliance and persuasion. You need enough ego to keep you going without giving up and not a too big ego to admit when you are not pushing it far enough. It is a balance of being confident about your own work and being humble.

Jamie : Confidence in your own work, drive, luck and passion. It's not a career, it's a life.

Henki: Being really good, loads of passion and pinch of luck.

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