

**MA Graphic Design
(Contemporary Dialogues)**

Confirmative Praxis - Written Report

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Introduction

The focus of my work has been to celebrate the Welsh language and promoting an increased use in daily life. My work is predicated on the concept that it is a positive and advantageous to encourage opportunities for the Welsh language to be spoken and practiced. I also wanted my work to allow people to celebrate their “Cymreictod” which is a Welsh word where the closest translation to English is “Welsh-ness” and no other word comes close enough.

A large amount of my practice has involved designs created using letterpress, which is something I wanted to focus on within this project. Letterpress is a historical printing method that once the height of technology, pushed to one side for more effective methods, as technology improved. Letterpress has seen a recent resurgence not as a tool for mass production but instead as a unique artform. It creates pieces that are not just visually appealing but also tactile three-dimensional objects that can be appreciated by touch as well as sight. Making it an experience for all the senses (Rivers 2010).

This report will reflect on the history of letterpress and its role in advancing the Welsh language, through standardising and increased accessibility of written resources available to many. In contemporary society letterpress has a different function, caused by the evolving way written information is conveyed both through print and digital media. Letterpress is now used to convey a message in a beautiful way, transforming a piece of paper into something to cherish. I will seek to show how this historical method of producing information can still be used in a contemporary context, to advance the Welsh language, as it did in the past.

This work I created was intended to evoke certain feelings and then lead to actions from those viewing it, which is why semiotics needed to be considered and understood to make the best design choices. Semiotics create a silent dialogue between designer and viewer that communicates complex messages in a simple, yet extremely clear, way (Dyess 2023).

Letterpress

Printing with reusable, moveable type is what Johannes Gutenberg set out to create in the mid-fifteenth century that then replaced handwritten calligraphy. The process was then made mechanical, and presses were designed and created. This process was left unchanged for over 300 years, and new presses kept the same principles and were only developed in later years to create larger, commercial print runs and smaller presses for hobbyists or smaller companies (Rivers 2010).

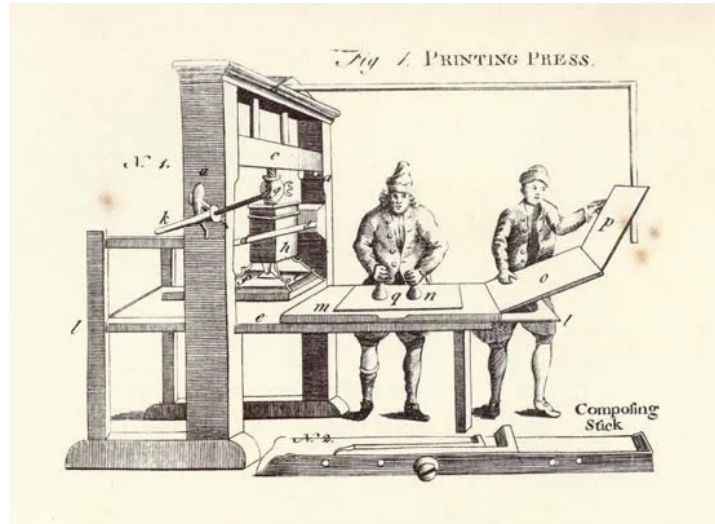


Fig. 1 – Gutenberg Press

When it was the only option for creating and dispersing information, letterpress was merely a practical tool, which was significantly easier than writing out the information by hand. These days creating information and setting typography couldn't be easier, due to technological advances. Jury (2011) would argue *"The almost universal automation of commercial printing, is designed to minimise the need for human intervention and, in this way, to reduce the possibility of errors and serious flaws in quality"*. The process of letterpress, even when made mechanical, requires a large amount of human intervention, which naturally led to more imperfections than using a programmed machine.

Many designers reject this quest for perfection and lack of apparent mistakes in their work, with some even purposefully adding 'errors' into their work to counteract the perfect, slick feel that is created when technology 'corrects' everything. Gerber (2004) would even go as far to say, *"in striving for perfection, we make mistakes. In aiming for flawless work, things go wrong or take a different turn"*. Designers are trying to introduce the experimentation that

comes with analogue methods, including letterpress into their digital work. Designers are continuing to imitate letterpress to produce an outcome that looks closer to handmade than digital (Odling-Smee 2002).

These imperfections and the human touch are what makes pieces, created through letterpress, beautiful and character filled. Through technological methods, the same piece of work can be copied and duplicated multiple times, but when creating through letterpress each piece will be unique and an original piece of artwork. The amount of ink on the plate, the pressure the artist puts on the press and any movement of the type will ensure that however hard they try to avoid it, there will be differences in the results. The relationship between control and freedom is what should be celebrated (Jury 2011). This unique history and the distinct characteristic imperfection of the process is what gives letterpress it's place in the modern world of graphic design (Rivers 2010).

Welsh Language

Not only is it a method of creating beautiful pieces, but letterpress is also functional and has had a huge impact on many parts of history, including the advancement of the Welsh language. The earliest printed Welsh book is testament to this. Known as “Yny Lhyvyr Hwnn” (in this book), it helped move towards the standardisation of the language for people to follow by including the alphabet, pronunciation guides and the months of the year and many religious texts. When the book was published in 1546, religion and church attendance was standard so the content in this book would be highly read. After this book was printed and distributed there was a real demand for publications like this (Gruffydd 2025).

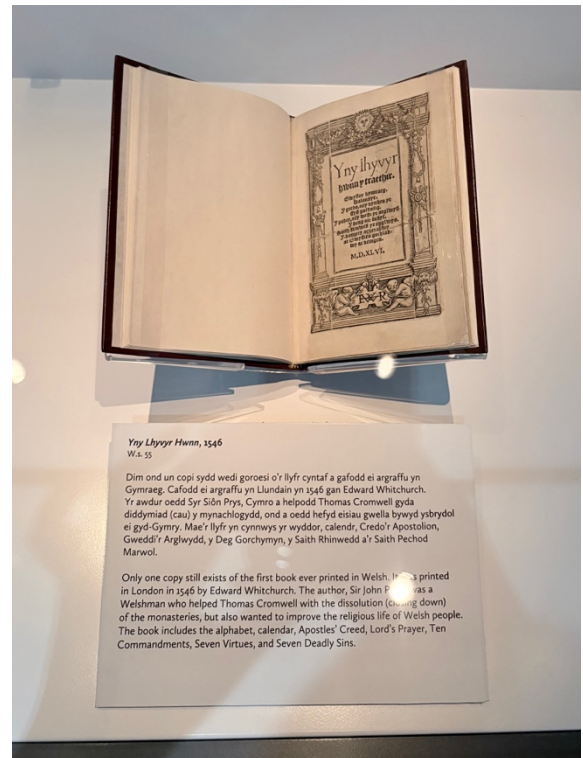


Fig. 2 – “Yny Lhyvyr Hwnn”

However, the printed work with the biggest impact was the Welsh bible, translated by William Morgan in 1588. Around this time, it was seemingly unlikely that a Welsh bible would have been printed for a variety of differing factors which prevented the language from advancing. Welsh had been denied official status and had been banned from use within the



Fig. 3 – “1588 Welsh Bible”

spheres of law and administration. It had also been decreed by the established church that the English bible was to be exclusively read in every church. The language was heading toward extinction, but the publication of this bible heavily contributed towards the saving of the language and became the foundation on which the language was based (National Library 2026).

Since this time the status of the Welsh language has been a topical political issue for many years and one which brings many different opinions. However, with only 20% of Welsh people disapproving of efforts to increase the use of the Welsh language, and 67% agreeing that much more can and should be done it shows that there would be a willingness to adopt behaviours and take part in actions to do just that (Difford 2025).

Statistics show that the use of the Welsh language is declining, with the 2021 census being the first one to show declining numbers of Welsh speakers and the Annual Population Survey (APS) showing a decline from 2023-2025 (see figure 4) also show how measures are needed to keep the language alive (Daglish 2025)

The overwhelming majority (67%) agreeing that more could be done became the motivation behind my work and I began thinking of designs and methods that could do this. I sought an effectual way to use letterpress to replicate the effects it had on the Welsh language in the past, on the Welsh language today.

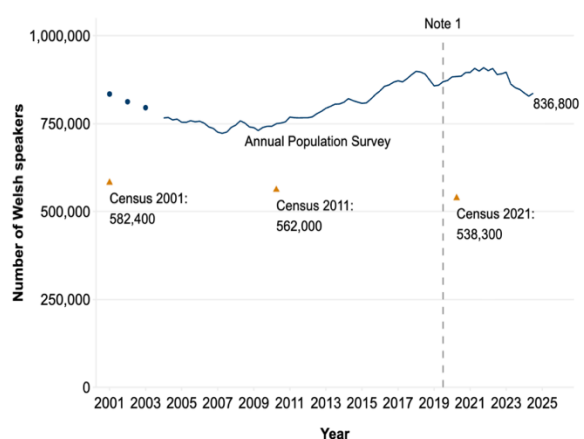


Fig. 4 – Welsh speaker statistics 2021-2025

Semiotics

When creating a design each aspect needs to be considered, not just a series of random decisions to look aesthetically pleasing to a viewer. If I wanted my designs to have meaning I would need to carefully think about every designed element, such as signs, symbols, images and colours.

Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols, something that represents something else. Chandler (2021) would argue “*anything has the potential to be interpretable, but nothing has an intrinsic meaning; for human beings, something becomes a sign when it is interpreted as signifying something*”. This is something visible in designs but is also echoed in the world around us, we have natural signs as the world is a meaningful place.

Signs and symbols are important as sight is often the first sense that we use in life. As a child we see things and recognise sights before speech and words. What we see around us informs what we know and helps us to make sense of the world, but our experience of the world will also shape how we see certain things. Words can never replicate or fully explain the feeling that we get from what we see and that experience will be unique to each person, which is why visual communication is so vital (Berger 2008). Anything has the potential to become a sign or symbol if enough people agree that is what it is.

An argument could be made that we are prone to only see what we want to see because of this fact. Fletcher (2001) states “*we only notice things which are directly relevant to our daily business*” so if designs are being created for a specific reason or for a specific target audience you need to understand the way they think or the experiences they have been through to reach them fully and make an effective design (Fletcher 2001).

One sign that carries meaning with it, is colour. In everything we see there is colour, they have the power to convey meaning or evoke emotions which is why it is such an

important choice in a design. Colour has become a universal visual language that transcends words communicating conceptual ideas without the need for words (St Clair 2018).

There are four primary functions that colour has within a design, the first of which being to attract the attention of a viewer. Designers usually do not have much time to capture the attention of a viewer, and colour is usually the most eye-catching and rapidly recognisable feature of a display. But it is not just the choice of colour, but the combination and contrast between colours can do this as well. After a design has grabbed the attention of a viewer it needs to hold the attention. A colour can be bright enough to attract attention but if it is not appealing or easy to look at a person will not keep looking at the design. When the design has a person's attention then the information needs to be conveyed clearly, meaning it also needs to be functional as well as aesthetically pleasing. If information is not readable then it has not met its intended purposes. Finally, the information provided needs to be memorable, to ensure that a person will consistently return to a brand or product (Berry & Martin 1991).

However, some would argue that for functional design there is no need for art in printing. Dwiggins (2019) would argue that printmakers simply created information to be distributed and there was no place for art within it. I cannot disagree more with this statement. While it might be true that information could just be typed onto a plain piece of paper in a simple black font, this does not fully utilise or make best use of the possibilities of print and might produce very little lasting impact. We absorb visual information, and we take in so much more than just words, and without colour, symbols or signs to explain what we are seeing we would be lost in information; these are the tools that make the information we see meaningful (Mccandless 2012).

Influences

Throughout my practice one of my main influences has been designer Abram Games, particularly his World War 2 posters. His work was of vital importance for the country and had to make a real difference, and some even described his work as “*a powerful weapon*”. His work needed to influence a nation to change their behaviours and habits and communicate many different messages. There was a risk for his posters to become overcomplicated and unclear, but Games avoided this by following his strategy of “*maximum meaning, minimum means*” (Games et al 2003).

One of my favourite pieces of Games’ work are his pieces titled “Grow your own food” as seen in figure 5. The imagery along with the words on the poster makes a far greater impact than just simply telling people they can grow their own food. The combination of symbols within his work sends a very clear message, while the beauty of the design holds the attention of the viewer so it is more likely that the message will stick. Both works also show a clear connection between the person at home and the work of the war, making the choice to follow the instructions a personal one, placing the responsibility at their door. Even though the posters do use limited words the message is independently clear from design alone, in fact both the illustrations and the type work in harmony.

This clarity of message is something I aspire to emulate in my work, even though I will never do it as well. I want my work to stir people to action and cause them to make a change that will affect not only their lives, but the world around them as well.



Fig. 5 – “Grow your own food” – Abram Games

Another major inspiration for my work has been Alan Kitching, one of the world's leading letterpress artists. He focusses on the use of colour and diverts from simply using black, white and red, which was the normal print process when he started out. One quote by Kitching (2020) that stands out to me is

“Once you've found something that you love, then you must pursue it to the very end and keep at it and work at it. You can't just pick it up one day and leave it the next, you've got to constantly pursue it.”

He often works with woodblock that is nearly 100 years old, but his designs are contemporary and appropriate for the modern day as well. His work is not only pleasing to look at but functional and serves a purpose as well (Kitching 2020).

One of my favourite pieces by Kitching is seen in figure 6. The use of colours that normally would clash, such as pink and red, work very well together to create a beautiful piece. I also love that the texture is present in the process as well as the final design, the image of the plates before printing, as seen in figure 7 could be a piece of art on their own.



Fig. 6 – Design is Hope – Alan Kitching



Fig. 7 – Work process – Alan Kitching

Finally, one company that inspired me with their mission and intentions behind their work is Smorgasbord design studio and the creation of their type face Cymru Wales Sans. The goal of this typeface was to capture the essence of Wales and communicate the Welsh spirit through its use. One of the main focuses of this design were the digraphs (unique letter combinations) that are present in the Welsh language, to make them their own letter rather than just two letters pushed together, as seen in figure 8. The hope is that this design would help younger generations take interest in the language and then want to use it themselves, to avoid a further decline of Welsh speakers (Smorgasbord 2020).

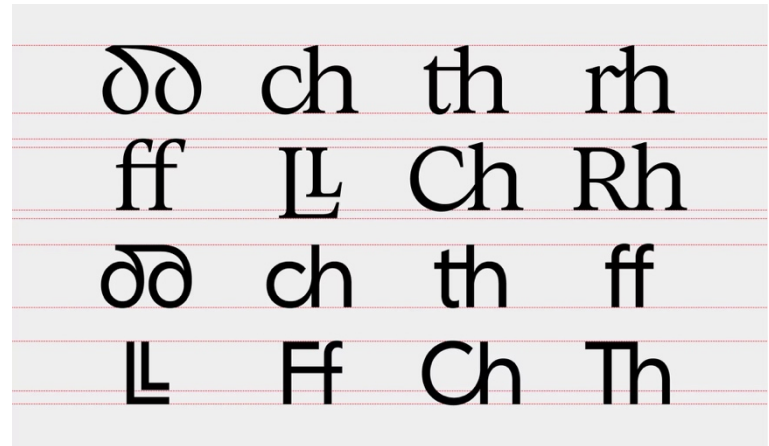


Fig. 8 – Cymru Wales Sans - Smorgasbord

The focus on bringing Welsh history into the present day and using it as inspiration for modern work is something I would like to focus on as well. There is such a rich history in Wales, and it should be celebrated, but not necessarily through a history lesson. This is a creative and natural way to engage people in Welsh culture and use it in day-to-day life.

These are three very different artists with different styles and outputs, and it seems that they could not really work well together. Kleon (2012) would argue that “*you are only going to be as good as the stuff you surround yourself with*” which I have taken on board. With the influence of these artists in my research I can produce work that meets its intended purpose of advancing and celebrating the Welsh language, through the use of letterpress.

My work - Hiraeth

As mentioned throughout this report the focus of my work is celebrating the Welsh language through letterpress, so naturally one of the first pieces of work I created was a poster of the Welsh alphabet using woodblock letters. This was a piece I made last term during the ‘Explorative Praxis’ module. I knew I wanted to create a poster of the Welsh alphabet, but when setting out the type I realised there wasn’t enough letters for all the digraphs, so I had to use different sets of letters. At first, I was not pleased with this and opted towards only creating a single print. However, nearly six months later, I returned to this project and while reflecting on figure 9 I was captured by the potential it had. I decided to turn the print into a typeface, figure 10, that would end up being the foundation of the majority of my projects.



Fig 9 - Letterpress Poster – Jess Pritchard 2025

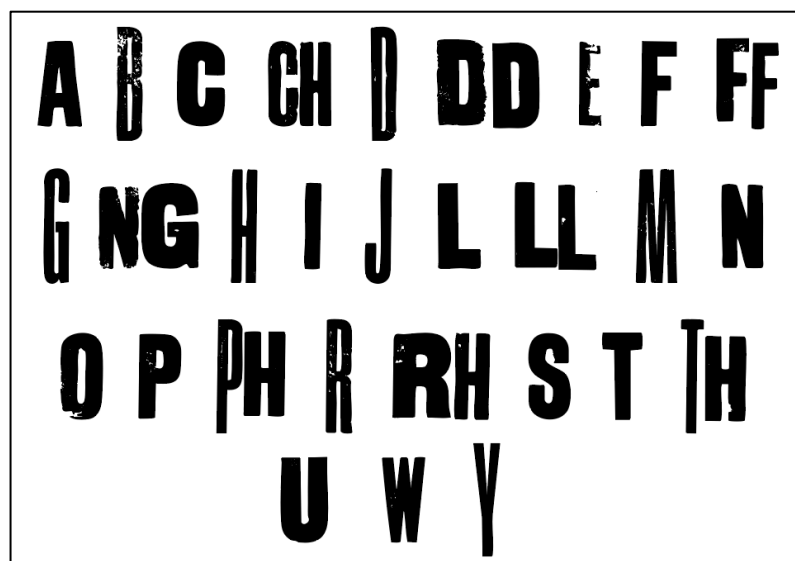


Fig 10 - Hiraeth Typeface – Jess Pritchard 2025

One of my first ideas for a project was to create a campaign that would encourage people to use the Welsh language in their day-to-day life. The target audience would be suited to both those who could speak Welsh and those who can't but want to learn. My first decision was what form this campaign would take would it be a festival that would have a set time frame, a bit like the Eisteddfod, a travelling event held in different towns on rotation or a permanent fixture. I researched other events such as the Brighton 'Snowdogs by the sea' or Bristol's 'Gromit unleashed' to raise money for charities. They were a success in drawing people to the area and viewing the landmarks, and some were placed in shops and businesses.

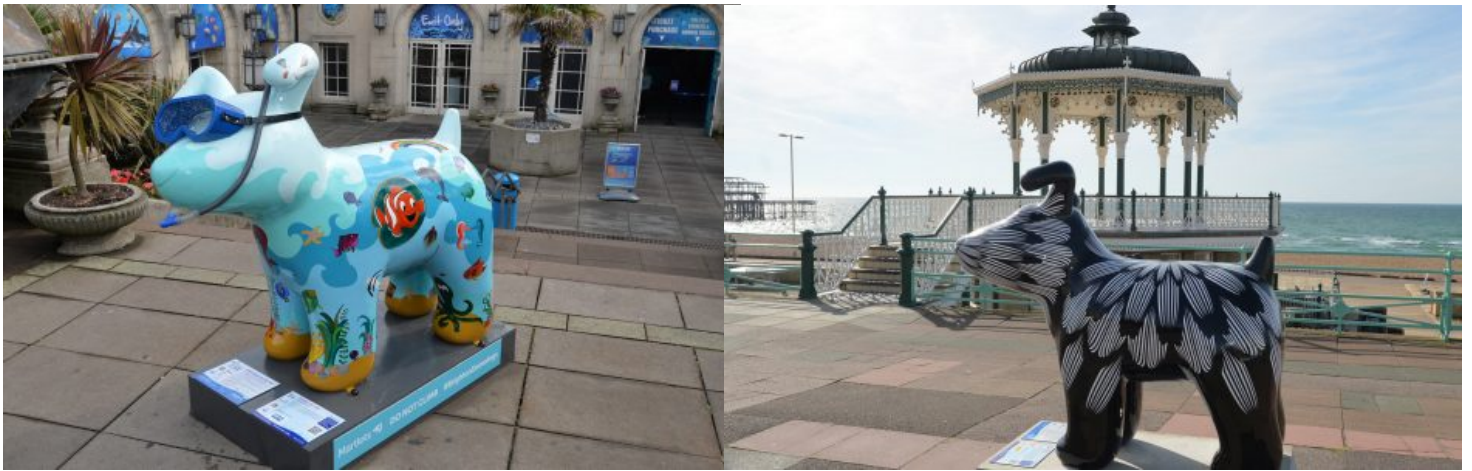


Fig 11 – Snowdogs by the Sea - Brighton



Fig 12 – Gromit Unleashed - Bristol

I decide to make this campaign one that would be based permanently in Swansea but with the potential to scale to be organised in other locations too. I called this campaign ‘Hiraeth’ (a longing or wistfulness) I settled on this name because it conveys the attitude I want my work to leave people with about the Welsh Language. It is also probable someone not Welsh might have heard this word and have a knowledge of its meaning. It was my desire for this campaign to benefit small businesses in the local area, so their inclusion was essential for my project. I choose 5 local businesses in Swansea, a potential customer would enter each establishment asking a question in Welsh and be rewarded with a stamp, after collecting all 5 stamps a reward would be available to be redeemed. I designed a series of posters advertising each shop and the required question with a QR code taking you to an app, phonetically spelling the question.

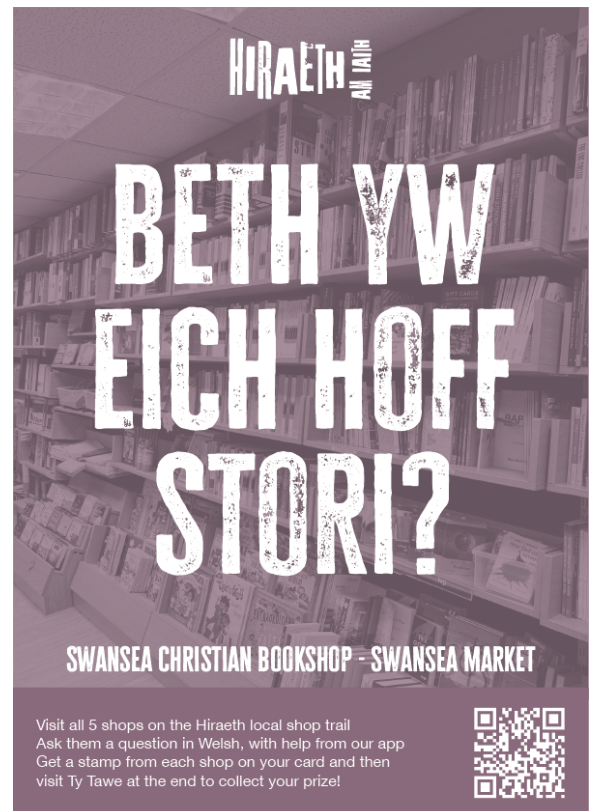


Fig 13 - Hiraeth Posters – Jess Pritchard 2025

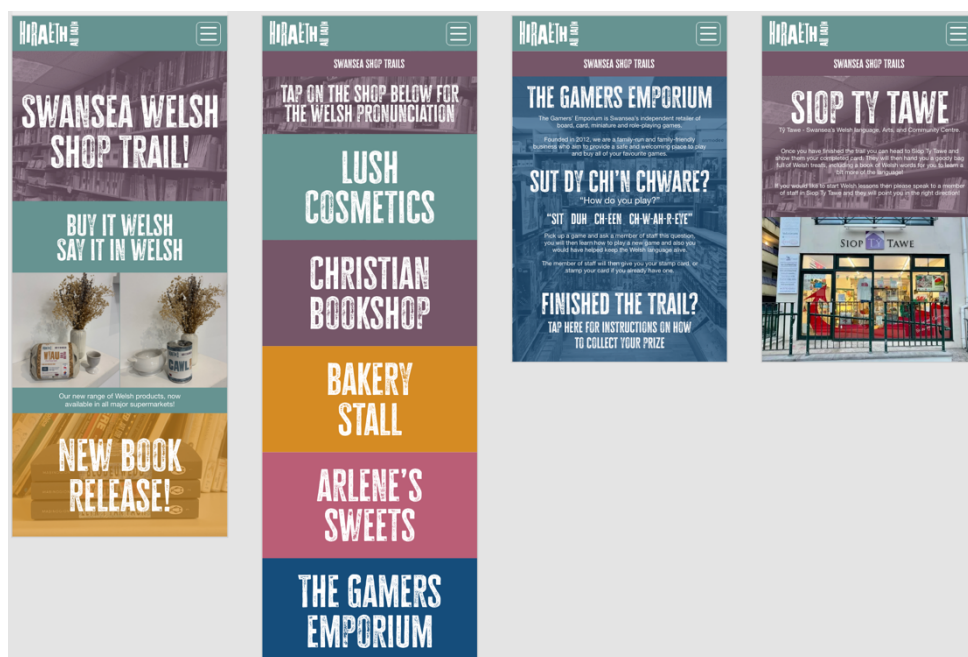


Fig 14 - Hiraeth App – Jess Pritchard 2025

My biggest dilemma when designing this brand was the choice of colours. The obvious choice for a Welsh brand would seem to be red and green, as these are in no doubt the colours that are most closely associated with Wales, but I wanted to avoid the obvious! I also thought that these widely used colours would blend into the background in a city centre containing Welsh flags and other merchandise. I made a colour palette, where each colour was named after something in Swansea, that was eye catching and fun to draw attention of people passing utilising the familiar and to have a fun and bright feel to it.

My work - Packaging

However, as well as this idea might work at getting people into a location and speaking a Welsh sentence, there were limitations to embedding the language into everyday life. To combat these issues, I contemplated what most people will see and interact with, packaging of everyday items came into my mind. During explorative praxis I started this project by designing the packaging of three different products, with the name in Welsh and instructions on how to pronounce it. I went back to this project, keeping the idea and concept, and decided to change the branding and designs to match that of the Hiraeth campaign, making Hiraeth more of an overarching brand rather than just one event.

The purpose of this packaging is obviously to teach people Welsh words, but also to give those who are Welsh speakers an option to purchase food with packaging in their own language. In some large areas of Wales using Welsh can be a gamble as there is no guarantee the retailer can speak in Welsh, this makes English the default language even if both parties would rather communicate in their first choice of language. As a Welsh speaker, this confidence to speak Welsh knowing that it was something the shops were wanting to promote too would be a considerable draw to enter, engage and even make a purchase. Having certain

products in Welsh enables people to be reminded of the language long after the shopping transaction is complete as they see it displayed on their shelves at home. I also decided to expand the range of products that I had initially designed, as the plan I had was there to be an item in every aisle of a supermarket. I also wanted the challenge of having to create designs displayed on different shape and size nets, to test if the information could be clearly displayed across a variety of designs.

I chose the slogan “Buy it in Welsh, Say it in Welsh” and put this prominently on each design as this summarises and encapsulates the whole purpose of this brand. I also had to make sure the pronunciation guide was clear and easy to read on each design. If it was too cluttered this could actually hinder people making purchases (especially those who only speak English). This was a challenge for me as packaging already has a lot of necessary information on it, so I tried hard not to make the design look too crowded, and each bit of information was clear.



Figure 15 – Packaging Nets – Jess Pritchard 2025

This was evidently easier to do on some of the larger packaging, like the soup tin, but proved to be a more complicated process on the smaller pieces such as the salt and pepper shakers. I am happy with the balance on all designs and feel that the logo that was designed worked perfectly for all sizes. The sectioned design allowed for each piece of information to have its own space and create an information hierarchy.

I was very happy with the change of colour in this design as well, the brightness and playfulness of the colours worked well with the patterns that were created for this design. The Hiraeth typeface was a great fit creating a contrast between the uneven, textured feel of it and the symmetrical patterns and organised sections of the design.

To create these designs, I printed out (many) different versions to get the sizing and alignment perfect ensuring they fit correctly on each of the items. As effective as the designs looked digitally when printed they came into their own, adding to their charm. Adding the labels onto actual products surprised me at how realistic and professional they were – looking like something that would grab my attention on a shelf. Knowing that these designs worked functionally, before even considering the Welsh element, filled me with confidence and the thought that these could become a real product one day.



Fig 16 – Packaging mock-up – Jess Pritchard 2025

As some anecdotal evidence and further testing while printing out the final version on printer paper, as a final test, in the graphics computer room, a friend came over and asked what I was working on. I showed them the products made up, and as they were not a Welsh speaker, they gave the pronunciation instructions a go, and it worked. They were able to pronounce words they did not previously know, and really liked the idea, which was a huge encouragement as they represented the target audience I was trying to reach. This further boosted my confidence in the products and helped me realise this project hit the targets I had set. At this point I decided to make these products one of the main focal points of my display within the exhibition, so others could pick up the products and have the same experience.

My work - Exhibition

Originally, I wanted to display these products as if they were in shop, so create multiple versions of each one lined up, to give the viewer the experience they would have if these were in production. However, I felt that this would almost detract from each product and if there were too many on display, they would lose their artistic appeal. While these products would undoubtedly work on display at a supermarket, for my exhibition I wanted to present in a more artistic fashion. I changed the idea to displaying the items as if they were positioned on a kitchen shelf, with accessories to give it a homely feel.



Fig 17 – Exhibition 1 – Jess Pritchard 2025

I chose supporting items that were white in colour, to make the colours in the designs pop and to not take away any attention from them.

The packaging was a great example of how letterpress could be used in combination with the digital, but I did not want this to be the only work in the exhibition. I also wanted to include pieces that were purely created by letterpress, to show the beauty of the process and the results that come from it. I had previously created five prints with my favourite Welsh words that had no English translation, and I wanted to show them as well.



Fig 18 – Exhibition 2 – Jess Pritchard 2025

At first, I was concerned these two projects would seem disjointed and the exhibition would lack a singular narrative and flow. I decided to include a common element between the two by adding a plinth in the middle of the area I had and putting an Adana press on it, to show the machine that was responsible for creating the work, and to celebrate the process as well as the results. As a final touch I decided to make stickers of the Hiraeth typeface and have these ‘spilling’ from the machine and wrapping around the pole.



Fig 19 – Full Exhibition – Jess Pritchard 2025

I was very happy with how these pieces blended together and how they filled the space they were in. Watching people walking over and reading the packaging was exactly what I hoped would happen, but also hearing conversations about the words on the prints. Discussions over which one was their favourite or even discovering a new one, and I even heard someone say “I would have that in my home” which was an amazing feeling.

My work – Exhibition Branding

As well as the exhibition itself a large part of preparation for this was the branding for the show, that the whole class worked towards. I offered to create the catalogue, as booklet printing was something I had done in the past so was happy to work on this. One of the main challenges was to create a design that would work well in both English and Welsh, as this was a requirement of the university but also, obviously, it is something I was passionate about as well. The name was an easy design as it was already in Welsh, so there was no need for two different designs with different titles, so the only change needed to be the information itself. The class had originally decided on a foldable leaflet in place of a booklet; there was enough room for the English artist statements but not enough room for the translation. There were two choices at this point; one was to get everyone to shorten their statements to be able to fit the translation in, or to change the design from a leaflet to a booklet. We went with a booklet and that meant everyone had plenty of space in the design to show their work.



Fig 20 – Adbanod Branding– Jess Pritchard 2025

I was very pleased with the results of this, and the rest of the class were thankful as well, which was a great encouragement. Seeing them all laid out the table of opening night and people carrying round my design was a great feeling. But it was after the exhibition the most encouraging moment came, when I was tagged in an email from Gwen Beynon asking for a PDF of the catalogue as “a great example of bilingual design”. This was a reminder for how important it is to have both languages in a design and how encouraging it can be for Welsh speakers to experience, and this should be the norm in Wales.

My work – Some Welsh Art

However, on top of the work created for the exhibition, my favourite project I carried out this term was my “Some Welsh Art” project. This was inspired by an exhibition I saw last summer in the National Library Aberystwyth called “No Welsh Art” which was debunking the myth that there was no art in Wales and displayed a collection of art from Wales’ history. It was an interesting show, and I think it was needed, but part of me wanted to see art that wasn’t as historical, by current artists, to encourage them to keep creating art and making sure no one could ever say that again and this is what I decided to do.



Fig 21 – No Welsh Art

I started out with this just being a conceptual project, something that I could create assets for as part of my portfolio, but while in a tutorial the question was asked “why not make it real and do it?”. My first thought was to dismiss this and just carry on, because I did

not think I would be able to pull off something like that. But the idea was floating in the back of my mind, and during a second tutorial I mentioned the idea again and someone else was encouraging me to make it a reality, so I was convinced and I went and planned it.

I booked the upstairs space of Studio Griffith and put out a call for work amongst students in different courses. I advertised it as an opportunity for Welsh artists, but also for those who had work celebrating “Cymreictod”. Many lecturers helped me by spreading the word and emailing out to students themselves, but I was quite anxious that there would not be enough work to make it worthwhile. But I knew I wanted to test the concept so got enough of my work ready to display as a contingency, but it was not needed. Twenty students from eight different subjects, which

was great as I was hoping there would be a variety of disciplines, and one member of staff were willing to give their work. This was also what inspired the design choice for the poster. I created this gel print one day, with no real purpose or project in mind, while I was testing out textures and colours. I had the scan on my hard drive and when looking through it was perfect for this project, as it was not synonymous with any one discipline.

Curating the show was the most difficult aspect as it was not something I had done previously, I had been to a lot of shows and remembered back to my BA show and the organising. I laid out the work on the floor and looked for themes or similarities to create a flow throughout the work. When it was complete, I felt a huge amount of pride that I was able to organise something like this, but the greatest feeling was seeing the reaction of the



Fig 22 – Some Welsh Art poster – Jess Pritchard 2025

students to having their work up in a show, many for the first time. They were excited, some took photos and others brought friends to show their work to, and this was exactly what I was hoping for. Welsh artists being excited and celebrating to show their Welsh art.



Figure 23 – Some Welsh Art Exhibition – Jess Pritchard 2025

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My work – Some Welsh Art

Images

Figure 1 – Gutenberg Press - <https://www.britannica.com/technology/printing-press>

Figure 2 – Yny Lhyvyr Hwnn, National Library – Jess Pritchard, 2025

Figure 3 – 1588 Welsh Bible, St Asaph Cathedral – Jess Pritchard, 2025

Figure 4 – Welsh speaker statistics 2021 – 2025 <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-language-data-annual-population-survey-october-2022-september-2023>

Figure 5 – Grow your own food - Games, N., Moriarty, C. and Rose, J. (2003). Abram Games : Graphic Designer

Figure 6 – Design is hope - <https://www.alankitching.com/portfolio>

Figure 7 - work process - <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/inspire-me/alan-kitching/>

Figure 8 – Cymru Wales Serif - <https://the-brandidentity.com/typeface/smorgasbord-colophon-foundry-create-type-family-captures-spirit-wales>

Figure 11 – Snowdogs by the Sea - <https://www.mybrightonandhove.org.uk/category/topics/snowdogs>

Figure 12 – Gromit Unleashed - https://gromitunleashedshop.org.uk/?srsltid=AfmBOoqfQcUI2b9QFW34_qCMqYz8fLIYdT1xXUU0LBKzIiO5M5BtJKEO

Figure 21 – No Welsh Art – Jess Pritchard, 2025

My Work

Figure 9 – Letter press poster

Figure 10 – Hiraeth Typeface

Figure 13 – Hiraeth Poster

Figure 14 – Hiraeth App

Figure 15 – Packaging Nets

Figure 16 – Mockup

Figure 17 – Exhibition 1

Figure 18 – Exhibition 2

Figure 19 – Full Exhibition

Figure 20 – Adbanod Branding

Figure 22 – Some Welsh Art Poster