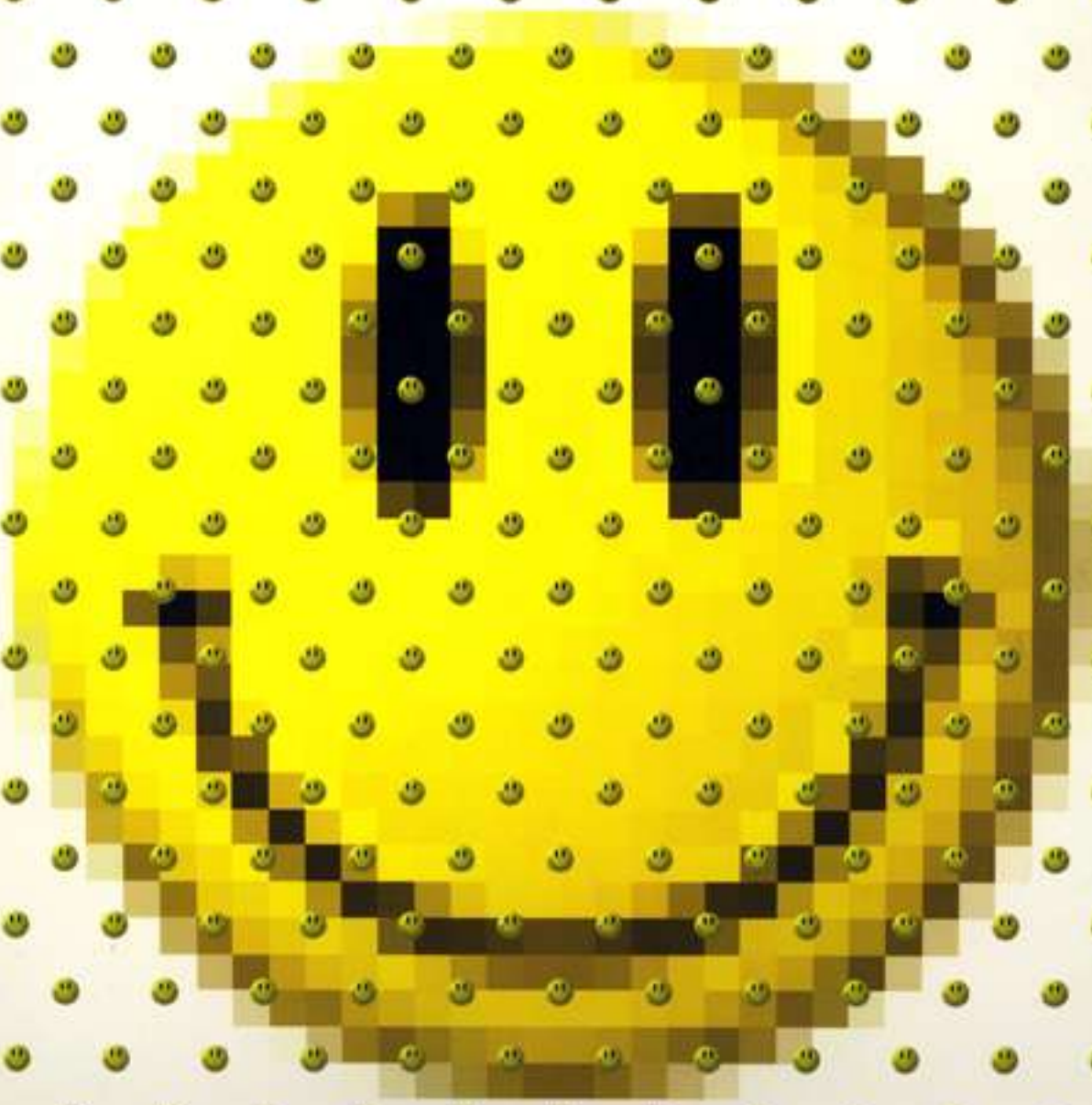


# ASignAL

Interactive Special



# cCurious about ffurious

*Designer magazine develops a stutter in the company of Little Ong, who guides us through some of recent project by the ffurious crew.*

**Little Ong graduated from NAFA in 1996, after which he worked in a new media company for only 5 months before deciding to split and do his own thing! He spent the next 3 years freelancing. Learning the secrets of the trade from the school of hard knocks, Little co-founded design collective fFurious with a group of friends, and now, a few years later on they have a strong pool of clients and a cool studio in Chinatown... Oh yes, they also have their independence!**

**Designer: What got you interested in the creative field?**

**Little Ong:** Throughout my life, I've been interested in creating things. When I was young, I lived in a shop house and helped my grandfather tend the shop during the day. I had a lot of spare time in the afternoon after school, so I would make things by nailing bits of wood and pipes together, or draw all over his furniture! When it rained, I would make paper boats and float them in the storm drain, so I always created a lot of stuff. I remember that I was given cameras at a young age, these ones with the disposable flashes. That progressed when my dad gave me his old Pentax camera, so I was always involved in art in one way or another. When I went to college I was looking at Andy Warhol, Matisse and Picasso, those were my favourites back in 88 when I was started studying art. But as a kid, I was always entering drawing competitions and winning boxes of colour pencils.

**D: During the Eighties, what was the scene like in Singapore?**

**LO:** Back then as a teenager, I wasn't interested in what was going on around me too much! Certainly not in politics of any sort. In the Eighties, there were more shopping centres being thrown up and more arcades to go to...

**D: When did the design scene really start happening here?**

**LO:** In the Eighties, there were things like the OUB Painting of the Year competition; the first Singapore-produced musicals were also staged. But I felt that in design, really things have only picked up over the last two or three years. Suddenly you see a lot of exhibitions and people collaborating with each other. The government is stepping in to provide more funds. I think that the design scene has picked up, whereas the arts scene has always been around in one form or another.

**D: We were poking around in your studio before and noticed that you have things like *Sonic Youth* and *Pixies* posters. Were you looking more towards the independent and alternative cultures?**

**LO:** When I was 17, I was buying *Smash Hits* and *Number 1* magazines, and I found out about the *Jesus and Mary Chain*, that was the first band that got me into independent music. From then, I watched 'Some Kind of Wonderful', great soundtrack, lots of indie bands... I think music was a big influence because it got me buying LPs and taking notice of the artwork on the covers. I was always hoping to get a gatefold edition because there was more art inside!

**D: Which were your favourite album covers during that period?**

**LO:** Probably 'Rio' by *Duran Duran*, also 'Color by Numbers', and *New Order's* 'True Faith'. The simplicity of the *New Order* cover designs was what sold me. I was also into 4AD covers in a big way... When I went to Art school the biggest influences were Vaughan Oliver and Ray Gun (David Carson).

**D: What was the thing about Ray Gun that made it so popular? Was it the design or the music it covered?**

**LO:** I think it was the attitude, just we don't give a \*\*\*\* and we can do whatever we want! We love to be independent! We love to be free! When we see something expressed in print like that, it makes it so exciting! I think when I was in school, I wanted to tell my lecturers, "Hey, that's wrong, you can do it another way!"

**D: Carson did seem to hook a lot of people into graphics though...**

**LO:** Yeah, I think that after that, a lot of people realised that anyone can get involved in graphics and start receiving some of the same sort of attention, although nobody has become such a big personality since Carson, but as a result there has been so much more graphic work around to indulge in!

**D: If there was going to be new wave of popular graphic designers, who would do you think would be riding it?**

**LO:** No, there's nobody that big at the moment... no more waves... haha! Currently, I like the art director for 'Tokion' magazine, Deanne Cheuk... What I find so refreshing about this magazine is that she works hard with the typography. Every issue reflects a different typographic style for titles.



**D:** She can come and work for us! Do you have a kind of hot-list of people or styles that you are looking at, or are you less prescriptive than that?

**LO:** No, I'm really not too influenced by what's going on. We have such a range of clients that they are always demanding different things, so it comes down to what is suitable for each job. What's good for an arts centre like the Esplanade wouldn't be suitable for a corporate client. We've done a lot of work for clients like HP and Chesterton, and APL group which are really clean cut. For clients like HP, our end of the bargain is to stick with their style guidelines, choose appropriate images from their huge stock libraries and turn the work around really fast, but having said that, the other thing we have to do sometimes for big clients is to educate them. Whatever their background, there is no way they will be as exposed to design as we are, and that really is part of our job now. We concern ourselves with design, whereas our clients concern themselves with their business, so it's hard for them to come to a point to appreciate design. It's part of the process that we expose them to other design work that might have been done for similar clients in order to show them their options. It helps them to be braver and to accept non-conventional design solutions. It is an issue in Singapore that the press covers a lot about architecture or products, but don't cover graphics or interactive, so people don't know how to judge: "What is a good piece of graphics?" They are not so exposed to those sorts of opinions so we have to help them understand...

Little Ong takes *Designer13* editor through a selection of projects which provide some insight into the synergy between web and print based-media. Can print work be considered interactive? Why should interactive work stand alone?

**WEBSITES:**

**72-13: The home of Theatreworks: Creative Space to support the Arts.**



**LO:** The intro to the site allows the user to grow some trees in a landscape. It's a simple metaphor for how user interaction can help to progress or delay the user's personal growth or appreciation of the arts. Although

the interface is quite simple, the mystery of growth acts as a precursor to the second concept for the main content area, which is that of the escalator. This represents the concept of transition or of a journey. The audience for a performance are undergoing a perceptual journey of discovery when they watch the theatre. We kept the rest of the site simple and clean so that users have quick access to promotion or archived materials.

What was nice about doing the promoting for this artspace is that we got involved in organising their opening night, curated opening nights events, installations by a group of local creatives such as the 2nd Rule and Momorobo.

We produced a gatefold brochure which supports the site. It's the same escalator design, but de-bossed into the paper, complimented by some die-cut. The design has carried through into the brochure to keep continuity in the brand identity.

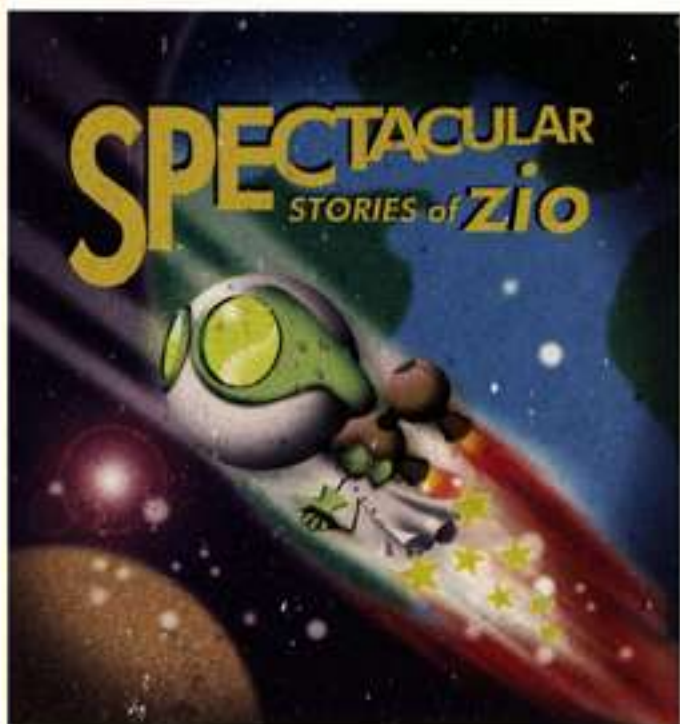
**ZIO: Integrated web/print branding for Spectacles Design Company.**

**LO:** We thought that instead of producing brochures, it would be more cost effective producing a folder. Although it may be a bit more costly in the beginning, it's easier to update with loose leaves if the client produces different product ranges throughout the year. The Folder design has a strong retro feel, looking back to old childrens' books for inspiration. For the inner sheets, we designed some cartoons, but we wanted it to have a memorable quality, that's why it's designed in red and green. You have to put on these 3-D specs to view it, which is kind of suitable for a spectacle manufacturing company.



**D:** It's interactive in a basic but highly enjoyable way. I'm not sure that interactive media should always be about point and click, in fact if anything, that's rather a narrow viewpoint.

**LO:** We also built a website for Ziocs which uses a similar style of character development and animation, but we kept it clean on a white background. It's an integrated approach to branding.



**D:** The 3-D catalogue takes precedence for me over the website anyway. I think it's more interactive, although you probably wouldn't want to do this for every project. 3-D specs just make the whole thing more memorable. This is a great illustration for people to see just how



print can support and enhance a user's experience of a website. When working in tandem, print and web offer a much stronger user-experience of the brand. This is cool! It's the same technique they used on the front of the Sagmeister book...

**LO:** It is interactive! I don't care what anyone else says, because you've got to mess around with it! It's a cheaper version of a lenticular...



**D:** In the Seventies, lenticulars were either pictures of Jesus with a glowing Halo, or of pre-historic animals. I'm sure they are collectibles now, particularly some of the more kitsch religious icons. I wish I had some of those!

**LO:** I have a small collection of them. My favourite is a Japanese girl who winks at me everytime I open my book... Which leads me on to this.



#### Singapore: Call for Creatives Animated Card

**LO:** This was designed to encourage creatives to send entries for the Singapore Arts festival. You pull the tab, and you get to see a hidden message behind the coloured bars. It's cheaper than making a real lenticular but just as interactive in its own way.

#### Peach Blossoms Project: A Pop-up Corporate Brochure

**LO:** A corporate brochure using interactive print medium. If people play with the information, they are more likely to remember it... Just why should corporate design be boring? In here, readers are encouraged to read the cartoons; but also play with the stickers and cut-outs. There is a die-cut paper phone on the back page, so readers can make it into a 3-D paper model. The cover is based on Chinese Children books that I used to look at in the Seventies. We faded out the dyes on the originals then scanned it back in to get that effect.

**D:** I'm amazed that a firm has been open minded enough to do something like this, anybody who looks at this wants to know more about the company! It sends out all the right messages, that this is a forward-thinking company!



**LO:** That can be the problem with a lot of corporations, they just don't understand how design can give them the edge or make them more effective. We were so lucky to work with an open-minded client on this occasion.

**D:** Maybe I don't see enough corporate work, but this is the first time I've seen a business brochure of this kind. You guys are really out there with this project... you might have invented a whole new genre of corporate design... at last!

#### X' Ho Sux.com Website

**LO:** And finally, Look!  
You can see Chris Ho nude!

**D:** Haha! Thank God for photo-montage!  
It's good old-fashioned punk-rock styling for one of Singapore's favourite sons! I think that perhaps I should skip any interactive elements in this site!  
Or let's go back to lenticulars perhaps?



If you want to experience the full range of work that Little and the fFurious crew are undertaking, please check out their website at <http://www.fFurious.com>. For any of you interested in photography, fFurious are also active in their support for Lomography Asia. Have fFun!