Brisbane Semi-Permanent Review

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Semi-Permanent 2010

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I trooped off with yet another group of students this year to see the Brisbane Semi-Permanent extravaganza. Unlike Sydney’s two-day speaker fest, we only get one day up here, but boy are we grateful for this one day. They’ve been running in Brisbane for three years now and every year is the same, a depressing, inspiring wealth of knowledge delivered to a consent hall full of eager students and teachers. Everybody is welcome of course, but let’s face it, on a Friday, all you’re ever going to get is university students.

I canvassed opinion from the attendees and first speaker Louise Bannister from Frankie magazine was among the favourites. Looking sweet and adorable and straight out of the pages of the magazine Louise explained how she was working on a girls’ magazine with designer Lara Burke and they both felt that there wasn’t a magazine that spoke to them and their age group, and so Frankie was born. Louise shared her rules for success.

1. Take constructive criticism
2. Be a trouble shooter
3. Hard work pays off
4. Get involved on every level
5. Ask questions
6. 80/20 rule. Everything should count.

And she left us with a great quote ‘Even if everything has been done before, it hasn’t been done by you’. Very inspiring. Visit Frankie here
Next up was a crazy German ball of fun, graffiti artist Mymo. She grew up in Frankfurt and lived in squats as a teenager. She’s worked in Barcelona and says Spain is freaky, she loves toys and creates whimsical cartoon creatures and feels like she’s regressing backwards towards a child. She was a very free spirited artist yet she does work for Adidas, so it was an interesting mix of art and commerce.

After the first break was Toben, a creative duo from Europe, via Sydney. Toben is German for crazy, fun, I guess ‘hissy fit’ in the closest Australian equivalent. They were very much artists with a clear vision rather than commercial designers. I suppose Stefan Sagmeister would be an equivalent and the more European designers I see speak, the more jealous and frustrated I get, especially as a designer in southeast Queensland.

Next up was Stephen Dupont, but I must confess to taking an early lunch, so no review of this speaker sorry. I heard good reports from those who did see him though.

My personal favourite of the day came after lunch in the form of a pint sized blond in high-heeled shoes called Alexa Sinclair. Essentially a digital artist, she’s also an amazing photographer and she trapeses all over the world with a Hasselblad, shooting background plates and beautiful models, then she comes home and goes to work on the images with her Wacom tablet. She gave one away in a live Twitter comp during her talk, very Mellania! So now I’m more inspired than ever to get one and have a go. I found her work conceptual, beautiful and inspiring. It ruined all the standard graphic design I saw for the rest of the day.

First Design was next but instead of Vicca himself coming to speak they sent a studio representative, Sarah Ester, which I found very disappointing. I felt very sorry for Sarah, who not only had to follow Alexa Sinclair but she also had to represent someone else, even though she was showing projects she had worked on. Sarah called herself an ‘environmental designer’ which included signage, installations and public art, again very interesting for a design agency. I came away with the notion that design these days is more about self-expression and less about client service.

The penultimate speakers for the day were Illura, a Melbourne postproduction house. Stephen Van Elst apologised for having lost his voice and proceeded to show videos for most of the talk. The standouts were his work on Charlotte’s Web and the SBS stings, where great technical skill is combined with a creative vision. All of my digital students
were very excited, as if oura have shown for 25 years that Australians can perform on the
world stage in the digital arena.

A jetlagged Jasper Goodall gave an entertaining talk on his life as an artist/iustrator.
Interestingly enough, he started life as an architectural illustrator with some very
impressive building renderings but his love for Helmut Newton, (and I suspect a love for
naked women), explains his style change to the images he’s well known for now. He
showed ‘his stuff’ and also the ‘bread and butter’ work. I don’t particularly like his style, as
I lived through the 80s, and once is enough, but I found him to be a very interesting
speaker and I thought he shared his personal vision in a way I really enjoyed and for me
that’s what these seminars are all about.

Another great Semi-Permanent, well done Andrew and team. We look forward to seeing
you in Brisbane again next year.