

Your first Media Design assignment: Design a currency



Instructions: First, I'm not concerned at all here with facility with software or how "slick" your design looks in terms of presentation. I'm interested in the concept behind the rendering, the thinking.

Here's what you're going to do: Design a currency in at least two denominations for our fictitious country, Berryland:

£ a ONE
£ a TWENTY

Our currency unit will be called Vikes, as in one vike, five vikes, 10 vikes.

Keep two things in mind: Audience and Purpose (or Message). Who is your audience? What is the message? What do you need to communicate the message to the specific audience(s)? We are problem solvers. What is the problem? What is a good solution?

What: Sketches or mock-ups of the three paper currency denominations.

Due: At the beginning of next class, and be ready to present your 'solution' with explanation.

Designing a currency, a few considerations:

Security: The currency has to be difficult to forge or copy, easy to trace and easy to verify. Typically this is done with watermarks, fiber woven into or the paper, holograms, bar codes, and with seals and signatures.

Clarity: The design must be clear and instantly recognizable in a very small space at a very low level of relief.

History and culture: A currency is a valuable opportunity to celebrate and commemorate culture, history, milestones and important figures. France used its franc to commemorate authors and painters; the United States prefers past presidents and founding fathers . . . Oh, and Susan B. Anthony. What will you commemorate?

Creative freedom: This assignment is rare in that you have near total creative freedom. In the "real" world, we are almost always designing to fairly specific requirements and specifications. Enjoy it while you can.

Cost: Ironically, in designing money, we have to keep cost in mind. The currency has to be mass produced. Choice and number of colors is, therefore, important, as are embellishments and anything else that might drive up the cost.

Typography: The lettering and numerals must be clearly, quickly read, distinguished and understood. This puts a premium on typography. Also, the tone should be sober, serious, communicating authority and trust, so Jokerman Text or other novelty fonts would be a poor choice. Type — no matter how simple or complex — conveys its own message within each word it spells. Culture and technology are joined together in the typeface.



Have fun! We'll discuss our solutions during the next class.