

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES, EDUCATION & SOCIAL SCIENCES

**THE POTENTIAL OF INDEPENDENT CHILDREN'S MAGAZINES FOR THE
ILLUSTRATOR: A PRACTICE-BASED INVESTIGATION**

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A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Anglia
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ABSTRACT

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This practice-based research study aims to identify contemporary independent children's magazines and their traits, understand practices and roles involved in making them, and explore the potential they offer the illustrator. It was driven by an awareness of an emergence of new independent children's magazine titles with shared traits, particularly the prominence of illustration within, in European countries, and practitioner interest in engaging with one and its miscellaneous content. This research contributes to the under-researched field of independent children's periodicals, providing a contemporary perspective from a practitioner's standpoint.

A multi-method approach was used, with reflective creative practice at its core. Literature and primary literature review and analysis offered theoretical and descriptive understanding of the form and particular real-world examples. Interviews provided insight into individual contemporary editorial and illustrator practices. Creative practice enabled open-ended experimentation and exploration of the limits of the children's magazine form, allowing insight into the illustrator's process and choices.

In the development of two Prototypes for children's magazines, identified procedural and formal aspects were replicated and subverted toward finding alternative solutions and innovative approaches in making. In so doing, the illustrator's role shifted between editorial and authorial, and the resulting magazine issues further incorporated aspects from other artforms, defying perceived conventions.

This study resulted in new knowledge on the independent children's magazine as a form, identifying specific commonalities with related artforms and disciplines, and proposing a definition. It provides new insight into contemporary real-world cases, identifying two different editorial approaches, one of which is the illustrator collective. Creative practice demonstrates how a children's magazine's format, use of theme and structure may be resolved alternatively. It further shows that the illustrator has the ability to take on every aspect of production, and achieve a holistic development of the magazine and its content.

Key words: children's magazines; illustration; illustrator; practice-based research.

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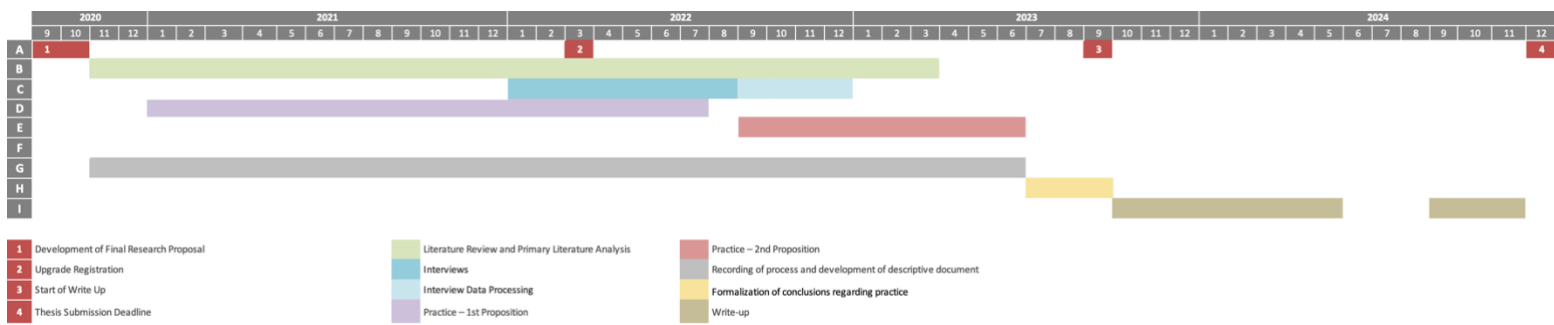
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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS



GLOSSARY

Diegetic	Occurring within the context of the story.
Form	An artistic or literary genre.
Format	The shape, size, and presentation of a book or periodical.
Full bleed	Printing from one edge of the paper to the other without borders.
Illustration Style	The combination of technical, material and rendering choices that constitute a visual identity.
Intraiconic text	Words that appear within illustrations, such as labels or signs.
Spread	A set of two pages viewed together.
Analepsis	A literary device in narrative, in which a past event is narrated at a point later than its chronological place in a story.
Dummy	An early version of a book, a 'maquette', in which design, pace and rhythm may be assessed and adjusted.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is the result of a practice-based investigation into the potential of the independent children's magazine for the illustrator. The research focuses on understanding the independent children's magazine as a form, its traits, the roles and processes involved in its making, and what possibilities it offers as a creative medium from a practitioner's perspective.

Research was conducted through contextual and qualitative research and through creative practice. As practitioner-researcher, I could access first-hand knowledge about the creative process and different creative roles and produce artefacts which embody the potential being investigated.

The literature review highlights a gap in knowledge on contemporary independent children's magazines, their content, roles involved in their making, their development and the principal part illustration plays in them. This thesis represents an original contribution toward filling that gap as, to my knowledge, the first inquiry into contemporary independent children's magazines from a practitioner's perspective. Furthermore, this study examines data from multiple sources of an international scope, establishes connections with related studies, and produces new information sourced from interviews of active practitioners in the field and from primary literature.

This thesis consists of both written and visual components. The written component is composed of six chapters and an introduction. Maquettes for *String* and *Lost and Found*, and visual records of creative practice, constitute the visual component. These are presented in Appendixes D and E. The two components are designed to be read alongside each other.

Chapter 1 defines the research and discusses this thesis' methodological framework. It contextualises the research as practice-based and presents the theoretical foundations for the multi-method approach taken in this study. It further examines each method used. Finally, in this chapter I describe my professional and personal experiences in relation to this study's creative practice.

Chapter 2 provides historical and theoretical context for the research subject. It consists of a literature review on the children's magazine and related studies, which offers a prismatic perspective of the independent children's magazine, culminating in a proposal for a definition. It further examines art forms and disciplines whose traits and practices overlap with those found in independent children's magazines and their multidisciplinary content.

Chapter 3 presents data and findings resulting from the primary literature analysis and practitioner interviews (Appendixes B and C). Findings are discussed through thematic analysis and identify trends and patterns in contemporary independent children's magazines and their creative process. This chapter provides insight into current specific artefacts and practices. The primary literature analysis focuses on observable aspects.

Chapter 4 discusses the first stage of creative practice, Prototype 1. Its resulting artefact, *String*, can be found in Appendix D. The chapter describes the creation and development of *String*, through which the tension between an overarching narrative and the miscellany were explored. It highlights how the illustrator might take on all content creation in a children's magazine, with writing and printing as secondary concerns.

Chapter 5 discusses the second stage of creative practice, Prototype 2 and the resulting artefact, *Lost and Found* (included in Appendix E). The chapter examines aspects of the children's magazine which Prototype 1 did not address. These are format, non-fiction, writing, theme and production. The chapter further discusses the illustrator's involvement in all aspects of production and its outcome.

Chapter 6 consists of this thesis' conclusions. It reviews this study's findings and suggests avenues for further enquiry.

1

METHODOLOGY

This chapter situates the thesis within practice-based research and discusses the methodological framework used. Below, I explain the multi-method approach taken, and how it relates to Christopher Frayling's distinction between kinds of research (Frayling, 1994), and Joyce Yee's concept of 'pick and mix' (Yee, 2010). I further examine the application of crystallisation (Richardson and Adams St. Pierre, 2005). Finally, I discuss each method and how they were approached.

I set out to investigate what the contemporary independent children's magazine is, as a publication form and as a creative practice focused on word-image interplay, and what potential it offers an illustrator. Defining magazines in general is subject to debate, as they are extremely heterogeneous (Holmes and Nice, 2011). Definitions for children's magazines specifically, explored in Chapter 2, either focus on their target audience, or lengthily describe their functions, mentioning some types of content. Additionally, in examined literature, there are no available formal or procedural guidelines, or mention of specific training toward making a children's magazine or its illustrated content. In books on magazine writing, content for children is neglected (McKay, 2001; Holmes and Nice, 2011). In the absence of specialised theory and instruction, I explored these topics from a practitioner's perspective in order to make my own identification of traits and explore the practice's variety, aiming to produce new knowledge.

I formulated two research questions:

- What creative practices, content and formal choices can be found in printed contemporary independent illustrated children's magazines?
- What potential lies in the independent illustrated children's magazine for practitioners' exploration of illustrated forms?

I aimed to answer these questions by:

- Reviewing theory on the subject and adjacent studies;
- Going toward the source, analysing magazines and approaching the people involved in their making;
- Engaging with the magazine as practitioner.

This approach echoes the description of how an illustrator, when faced with a problem or gap in knowledge in an illustration project, will employ a tailored methodology. The illustrator selects methods or interpretative practices that best suit the problem they face, which are determined by their preferences, interests and habits, at times tweaking and combining familiar approaches in inventive multi-methods methodology (Gannon and Fauchon, 2021). I followed this tailored multi-method approach, and it became the basis of my research design, which I describe in further detail in Chapter 1.

The need to dismantle a complex subject into manageable parts led me to identify four different facets in independent illustrated children's magazines:

1. Logistics;
The organisation and functioning of the magazine, its periodicity, distribution, printing and satellite activities.
2. Creators and creative process;
The people involved in making an independent children's magazine (e.g. editors, designers, illustrators, authors, translators, among others) and their processes.
3. Publications and content;
The magazine's materiality, its shape and size, its components, its interior organisation of content and its multimodal content.
4. The reader.
The magazine's audience, the person who experiences the magazine and their relationship with, and participation in, it.

Issues that emerged throughout this research touch on several facets at once (e.g. materiality relates to both logistics and the creative process). Examining each facet individually

is possible but incomplete. Together, they produce a holistic understanding of a complex subject.

The aim of this study isn't generalisation. This would require an enormous effort in interview data collection, archival and publication analysis. Its aims are understanding different creative possibilities within illustrated children's magazines, reflecting on what makes the independent children's magazine form unique, understanding how an illustrator might approach making one and what they might achieve within it.

1.1 Practice-based research

While the desire to create children's magazines is the driving force behind this study, it became clear that creative practice would in fact be essential. Formal and structural aspects of a magazine can be assessed through observation and analysis of magazines and literature review, but insight into the creative process and decision making isn't as accessible. It would require practitioners to share their experiences and thought process in detail, or to allow me to witness their process first hand, not practical to this study. Accessing this insight is partly achieved in this study through conducting and analysing interviews. However, "designers know more than they can say, they tend to give inaccurate descriptions of what they know, and they can best (or only) gain access to their knowledge in action by putting themselves into the mode of doing (...)" (Schön, 1992, p. 3). Donald Schön describes this 'knowledge in action' as mainly tacit knowledge, more sensory than intellectual, that emerges in the act of making.

It can be argued that practitioners' descriptions of their creative process constitute a curated communication of tacit knowledge through language. By creating a children's magazine prototype, I am gaining direct access to 'knowledge in action', while placing myself in a first-person position to dissect that process and identify what emerging issues are relevant toward my research. This verbal account, which could suffer from the same limitations noted by Schön, describes a creative process which is also shown through visual records and outcomes of creative practice. The two combined provide a more complete understanding.

This first-person positioning in creative practice toward knowledge production describes a practice-based approach to research, as defined by Candy and Edmonds (2018, p.32):

“Simply put, practice-based research is a research investigation based in, with or through practice leading to new knowledge.”

While this approach has yet to reach settled status, it has been applied in the academic context for three decades (Candy and Edmonds, 2018). I adopt it in this study, clarifying its nature and the importance of practice farther in Chapter 1.

Christopher Frayling’s (1994) distinction between kinds of research – research *into*, *for* and *through* art and design – highlights the different roles research can take in a practice-based research project. Rachel Gannon and Mireille Fauchon created their own version of the framework, referring specifically to ‘illustration’, and point to how it can also relate to the illustrator’s practice, to which research is intrinsic (2021):

- Research *into* Illustration, the most commonly conducted, refers to an exploration of historical and theoretical clarification and contextualisation of the subject.
- Research *through* illustration relates to research conducted and performed through illustration practices.
- Finally, research *for* illustration, in which research contributes to the development of a project or to produce an artefact.

In this study, research *into* illustration refers to the investigation into the children’s magazine’s historical and theoretical context, as well as into contemporary practices. Research *through* illustration refers to creative practice and the development of children’s magazine Prototypes as a means to gain insights. Research *for* illustration refers to both the collection of information for each Prototype and the initial contextualization that clarifies what the contemporary independent children’s magazine is. In adopting this framework, I am organising the investigation around the illustrator’s practice, in the context of independent children’s magazines.

1.2 Methodological Framework

Joyce Yee's overview of what she described, at the time, as emerging design research methodologies maps a landscape of practice-based research that differs from established science and humanities research practices (2010). Yee is a researcher focused on design and social innovation. The author suggests that a 'pick and mix' approach has become a paradigm for design research, in which researchers select methods to suit their needs. Yee's concept of 'pick and mix' and the idea of a living methodology, prone to transformation throughout a research project, reflect my initial intention for a methodology framework, and the reality of the research process. When applied throughout the study, this flexible adaptive approach is named 'emergent design', which is defined in *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods* (2017):

"An emergent design refers to the ability to adapt to new ideas, concepts, or findings that arise while conducting qualitative research. In contrast to more deductive and structured approaches, an emergent design works more inductively, accommodating changes in the conceptualization, data collection, data analysis, and composition stages of research. "

Pailthorpe, 2017 p.1

This study adopts the 'pick and mix' approach, selecting methods best suited to access research subject's facets – creative practice, interviews, literature review and primary literature analysis. By taking on an 'emergent design', I continuously assess findings, shaping this research's trajectory and methodologies, while maintaining clarity of focus to explore independent children's magazines and their creative processes. For example, interview design was adapted to the needs of interviewees and my own limitations, as discussed farther in Chapter 1. The initial creative work informed subsequent work, and research questions were refined as I learned more about my research subject.

1.2.1 Triangulation and Crystallization

Articulating multiple methods in a research study is explored in theory from the fields of science and humanities. Here, triangulation appears as a prominent methodological

framework for mixing methods. The concept of triangulation draws from the navigation method of intersecting lines from two different points on the map to find one's location (Blaikie, 1991, p.119). Its principle is to use different methods to reach validity or truth (Flick, 2023), which would seem to structurally suit this study. However, the varied methods chosen to answer this study's research questions, particularly reflective creative practice, don't work toward a positivist outcome. They build a complex representation of the research subject, which is itself complex, by investigating its different facets. A facet doesn't seek to confirm another but to complement it in expanding knowledge. Norman Blaikie (1991, p.117), scholar of social research, concedes that triangulation is more useful in adding range and depth to research than finding truth. Todd Jick (1979, p.8) acknowledges the responsibility placed on the researcher who chooses to use triangulation, who must process different data intuitively and piece together a complex whole.

Crystallization, which evolves from the concept of *triangulation*, consolidates the creative and scientific dimensions of research:

“ I propose that the central imaginary for "validity" for postmodernist texts is not the triangle – a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. (...) Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of "validity" (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves), and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know.”

Richardson and Adams St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963

Similarly, while each method employed in this study explores the same phenomenon, they produce a different 'text'. An interview results in a transcript and its analysis. The literature review and primary literature analysis result in a written analysis and a case summary table. The reflective creative practice results in an artefact and materials relating to the creative process, as well as reflective writing. Each illuminates facets of the same subject, providing a deepened understanding of it. Given the familiar yet shifting nature of the research subject – contemporary independent children's magazines – and its many embodiments, it is counterproductive to attempt to confine it to a single truth.

Evidence from interviews and primary literature shows there isn't one single answer to 'What can an independent illustrated children's magazine be?' or how practitioners might approach making one. This study produces knowledge on fragments of a whole that resists synthesising and is characterised by its dispersion and diversity. This research contributes to clarifying a form and provides examples of possible embodiments and approaches, exposing the children's magazine's potential.

1.3 Methods

Having chosen a multi-method approach, centred in making and aiming to provide a multi-faceted understanding of the research subject, it is necessary to define these methods. This study combines qualitative methods, with the primary literature analysis table as the single quantitative tool.

1.3.1 Reflective Creative Practice

Creative practice it is a way of thinking, it is the means through which problems and issues particular to the creative process emerge and a means to produce outcomes that may lead to an original contribution to knowledge (Fauchon, Gannon (2021); Schön (1983); Candy, Edmonds (2018)). It is at the centre of this research, embodied in the development of prototypes for children's magazines through drawing, designing, writing and printing.

It functions as a means for speculation about possible paths, processes and tools employed in making children's magazines. Daniel Fallman's model introduces three activities that, when combined, represent a framework for interaction design research – 'Design Studies', 'Design Practice' and 'Design Exploration' (2008). These partially resonate in this study's approach:

'Design Studies' relates to a more conventional idea of research, that engages with previous knowledge to build new knowledge, with emphasis on networking and exchanges with others who are active in the field, toward understanding and describing. This resonates with this study's effort to define independent children's magazines, and the practices involved in making them, through the literature review, primary literature analysis and interviews.

The second, 'Design Practice', refers to activities that emulate real world professional design activities, providing a similar experience for the researcher. While this study initially intended to replicate real world children's magazine making practices in its creative practice, it shifted toward a more liberated exploration of the form, responding to emerging work and consequent reflection. This new approach is better represented by Fallman's definition of another axis of the model, 'Design Exploration'. This kind of activity is driven by the question "What if?" and looks to test ideas, explore what is possible, provoke, criticize and propose new paradigms. In the end, the prototypes developed in this study's creative practice drew from both real-world practices and a search for possibilities, tensions and boundaries within the form.

My approach to making the prototypes resembles Henk Slager's description of common practice at the art academy, highlighting its likeness to a laboratory setting in which speculative practice takes place and new forms are generated (2015). Slager is an educator, curator and writer whose research focuses on artistic research and education. This exploratory approach is essential for the generation of artefacts, given its open-endedness and allowance for accidents and changes in direction.

Donald Schön argues that in making there is 'reflection in action', the act of "thinking what [you] are doing and, in the process, evolving [your] way of doing it" (Schön, 2008, p.56), aiding in the decisions being made and in dealing with the unexpected. For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to add a reflective stance through which analysis and decision making can be verbalized. This is 'reflection *on* knowing-in-action', through which insight can be extracted and communicated. I analyse tacit knowledge, acknowledge decisions in the process of making and their motivations, as well as outcomes and their effects, shifting between practitioner and researcher roles. This was done by writing decisions, doubts, observations and ideas during the creative process, beside the exploratory drawings or in my research journal. It was also demonstrated visually in the sequence of versions of the work throughout the prototypes' development, and the process timelapse videos of work created digitally. Finally, reflection on knowledge-in-action was clarified at supervisory meetings, both through progress report and feedback received, and formalised at each moment of evaluation, as progress was written up.

As practitioner, I am also the subject of research, in order to look into the often opaque creative process, as my actions and decisions are moved by my experience, skills and limitations. Processes in making the prototypes derive from my work as an illustrator, comics

artist and micro publisher assistant, as well as from my research as a student and teacher of illustration and comics. Knowledge acquired from s informed my approach – for instance, the definition and distribution of sections made by *Kiwi*'s team informed the balance among sections in planning Prototype 2, and the discussion around materiality with *Cuistax* members motivated my exploration of form. The interviews clarified that, in alignment with Gannon and Fauchon's (2021, p.17) overview of illustrators' research practices, I take on many roles in this research's creative practice – illustrator, author, editor, designer and printer.

Drawing is employed throughout the research process as an important tool for thinking, as an exploratory mechanism, rendering thought visible, and enabling knowledge discovery and development (Lyon, 2020). It is used to clarify and define the nature of problems (Habib, Pathik and Maryam, 2014). It materialises ideas, hypotheses and unconscious perceptions (Lyon, 2020). Drawing works as a thinking and brainstorming tool, allowing ideas to be assessed and confronted. It takes the form of sketching and storyboards in the planning stages, and of a refined base for the artwork and layouts developed. It is the vehicle through which the content of the magazine prototypes is communicated. As controlled brush and pen drawings, or digital drawings on an iPad, drawing solidifies and communicates the final artwork or prepares it for the printing process.

The first prototype was developed intuitively and allowed a progressive definition of the aspects of the exploration. It provided a guide for the time required to develop a magazine prototype and its content. The issues addressed in Prototype 2 were defined in response to those addressed in Prototype 1, toward constructing a second artefact that would complement the first, filling knowledge gaps and establishing a counterpoint for productive comparison and discussion.

It was never my intention to pursue the prototypes as viable real-world magazines. This freed me of the pressure of finalisation and real-world viability in favour of unbridled exploration. The two prototypes explore different aspects of the children's magazine form, focusing on the tension between two opposites: coherence and the miscellany. Prototype 1 favours coherence over the miscellany, exploring the unifying effect of an overarching narrative throughout the publication. Prototype 2 is at the other end of the scale, favouring the miscellany over coherence.

The context of a full-time, funded PhD offers particular work conditions, allowing for periods of full focus on the creative practice being developed and total control over its

management, development and creative choices. It entails exceptional access to technical production facilities and printing materials. This context also involves the allocation of time for reflection and critical assessment throughout, something real world scenarios of creative practice with tight deadlines likely don't permit. While the study's timeframe is limited, time can be assigned to whichever stages of making are of most relevance to the problem at hand. Finally, this research degree allows discussion with colleagues and supervisors specialized in illustration for children.

1.3.2 Literature Review

This study's literature review serves several purposes:

- Provides context for the research subject;
- Defines independent children's magazines;
- Identifies gaps in the literature – e.g. texts on the process of making magazines;
- Examines overlap between children's magazine traits and other artforms and disciplines.

The research subject's contemporary and ephemeral nature made drawing on sources in the media and blogs essential. References were catalogued and managed using the software Zotero.

The strategy used can be described as a patchwork of varied sources, creating a larger understanding of the research subject, and a zoom-in motion, from an encompassing perspective to specific roles and traits (Wellington *et al.*, 2005). I examine historical, cultural and literary writing on children's magazines, as well as studies of specific titles. I also look to theory concerning general magazines, independent publishing and related artforms and disciplines in order to identify commonalities with the independent children's magazine.

1.3.3 Interviews

Little information can be found regarding the inner workings of an independent children's magazine. While available media interviews offer insight into these magazines' creators and their motivations (magCulture, 2017; Lourenço, 2017; Ángel Ruiz, 2018; Vergely, 2018; DEUXANT, no date), the details of their development and related activities aren't available. To access that knowledge, I had to go to its source – the people involved in making it.

The interview, commonly used in qualitative research, is the most appropriate method to access people's experiences (Seidman, 1991; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2022). It has the potential to provide direct access to accounts from people involved in making contemporary independent children's magazines, producing new knowledge in the field.

Previous experience and training in interview design, conducting and transcription informed conducted interviews. While the skill of the researcher can determine the quality of the interview study, it is a learning process, and the interviewer will necessarily learn through its experience and practice (Mischler, 1990). This is reflected in the shifts in strategy throughout this inquiry, to adapt to the needs of the research and interviewee demands.

While it is acknowledged that interview as a method is little-standardized, interview study necessarily involves a series of stages: Thematizing, Designing, interviewing, Transcribing, Analysing, Verifying and Reporting (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2022). This time consuming process was simplified and expedited in the cases where the interview was an email exchange, in which text is the medium, ready for analysis, and does not require recording logistics or transcription.

Interviews in this study provide insight into the creative and managerial process of a limited number of practitioners currently involved in making independent children's magazines. While my initial intention was to conduct a higher number of interviews, the data acquired allows access to rich knowledge of particular cases, providing vital information toward understanding real world practices and practical knowledge.

1.3.3.1 Sampling

The present study is qualitative, as it looks to explore the 'why', 'what' and 'how' of the practice around a specific medium. Generalisable conclusions are not sought because of the diversity and continued evolution of the independent children's magazine. This study aims for deep understanding of particular cases. As such, it employs purposeful sampling of "information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 1990, p.169) in order to select interviewees. This form of sampling is pragmatic, as it adapts to constraints and is geared toward practical ends, it's shaped and re-shaped throughout the study through the researcher's judgement and reflection, and it is strategic in selecting a small number of cases that provide depth of information on the research subject (Emmel, 2023). The sampling strategy used is

homogeneous sampling (Patton, 2015), selecting children's magazines that follow similar criteria:

- Present as a magazine or fanzine for children;
This study examines publications that present as children's magazines or fanzines.
- Feature illustration prominently;
Some children's magazines use photography as an illustrative tool, but this study's interest lies in illustrated content, word-image interplay and the role of the illustrator.
- Are active at the time of the study;
This guarantees a current depiction of a functioning magazine.
- Were founded from 1990 onward;
This choice is due to a gradual decline of the form from the mid 20th century onward, giving way to comics centred magazines (Drotner, 1988; Fourment, 1987). This study was prompted by a realisation of patterns in new independent children's magazines.
- Are published in Europe or North America;
This was defined due to a recognition of the need to circumscribe the scope of the research and due to my own language limitations.
- Are independent, as opposed to a product of a franchise or serving the interests of an institution or company.
This study focuses on magazines that are not restricted to the depiction of a limited number of characters, a pre-defined universe and rendering style, nor to a religious ideology or commercial agenda.

A number of magazine titles which fulfilled the above criteria were considered for their popularity and quality, with attention to geographical variation – *Anorak* (UK), *Aquila* (UK), *Okido* (UK), *Georges* (France), *Cuistax* (Belgium), *Kiwi* (Spain), *Illustoria* (USA), *Dois Pontos* (Portugal). Interviews were conducted in order of acceptance – *Cuistax*, *Kiwi*, *Georges*, and *Illustoria*. At a later stage, a second round of emails was sent to randomly selected illustrators who had collaborated with children's magazines considered in the first round of selection. Two agreed to the interview: Joana Estrela and Nigel Sussman.

1.3.3.2 Interview Design

As the purpose of interviews would be unearthing knowledge, some of which may not be anticipated, I determined an exploratory, semi-structured interview as the most appropriate form. It employs an interview guide, with topics and some suggested questions, rather than a list of standardized questions to be used verbatim at every interview. This compromises consistency in favour of specificity and exploration of what each interviewee has to say (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2022), an acceptable compromise given that this inquiry targets a small number of cases. I determined to explore the particular and focus on comparison and overlap, rather than attempt to develop a generalization about the field.

A semi-structured interview requires that the researcher approach it with an open mind, allowing for the interviewee to develop on a subject, describing their experience, and divert towards unpredictable themes. Conducted interviews focus on the content of the answers, rather than on how they are communicated. As suggested by Brinkmann and Kvale (2022), I offered non-leading, open-ended questions, avoiding interruption and sharing throughout the exchange.

Two interviews were conducted through Zoom, which facilitates the recording of video and audio, while allowing for visual contact. This provides an additional layer of communication and naturalness to the exchange. Four interviews consisted of email exchanges. This proved convenient and time efficient, though written answers yield less information, as they are succinct and follow up questions are less of an option. Email exchanges allowed the collection of data from interviewees who would otherwise be unavailable.

Reflexivity manifested throughout the interview process as awareness and continuous checking of my own bias, particularly as a practitioner interested in the children's magazine form. For example, I originally approached the subject with the assumption there was generalised experimentation among illustrators which, I realised during the analysis, I was projecting onto the interview questions, and onto my perception of the real-world cases I was analysing. I became aware there were different approaches to making children's magazines, which led me to check my preconceptions and adjust my standpoint in the analysis of the interviews.

1.3.3.3 Data Analysis

There is no set approach to processing and analysing interview data. It may vary according to the objectives and focus of the research, adapting to extract the most relevant data toward answering research questions.

All recorded interview data was transcribed, allowing efficient analysis. This is advised in the context of a small study (Roulston, 2022). Transcription has been conducted according to the GAT 2 system, using its coding convention, due to its accessibility and appropriateness, given the focus of the interviews is the information provided by interviewees, and not their performance, behaviour or speech. However, some utterances and paralinguistic information have been noted, as they are essential to the full understanding of the meaning of the interviewees' answers.

Review of transcriptions was done using the audio, and video was used to clarify words used when possible. At times, interviewees would refer to examples they displayed in the video, thus making it necessary to the full understanding of the interview data.

Interview transcripts, the convention applied in transcription, and information relating to the interview are detailed in Appendix C, and codes are detailed in the Coding Frame (Appendix C.12). The Coding Frame identifies patterns in the topics discussed by interviewees, allowing the definition of categories (Roulston, 2022). It covers all interview data and helps clarify which content is dismissible and which is relevant toward answering research questions. I achieved it by reducing and analysing data, maintaining a continuous and iterative reflective stance.

1.3.3.4 Presenting Findings

Laurel Richardson (2000, p.923) argues that writing is more than 'telling', it is "also a way of 'knowing'- a method of discovery and analysis". After coding and reduction, I analysed interview data through writing, in which the process of thematic analysis and reflection converged toward identifying relevant themes and answering this study's research questions. As methods in this research are not employed sequentially, but iteratively and in continuous relation with each other, the interviews both inform and were informed by the literature review, the creative practice and the primary literature analysis. They are woven throughout the thesis, highlighting these interactions. For example, the literature review highlighted the distinction between illustrator-led and editor-led publications and pointed to the independent children's magazine's financial fragility. Developing Prototype 1 presented the issues of theme and

overarching unity. Primary literature informed of trends in format and divergences in the illustrator/writer dichotomy. All of which shaped the interview topics. The interviews clarified the issue of the illustrator as writer, taking on various roles, and described strategies like *Kiwi's* distribution of content and illustrator practices.

1.3.4 Primary Literature Analysis

I analysed primary literature with the purpose of gaining practical understanding of the independent children's magazine, to inform creative practice. Borrowing from Christopher Frayling's distinction between kinds of research (1994), this analysis constitutes both research *into* illustration – as I created and interpreted new data toward defining my research subject – and research *for* illustration – as I collected information toward making.

Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblances (1967) is employed by David Lewis to describe how one is able identify certain books as 'picturebooks' because they are "connected through overlapping features that loosely link them together in much the same way that when we look at individual members of a family, we can see that they clearly belong together, although no two members are identical." (2001, p.30). This validates and places an emphasis on phenomenological observation and attention to objects of study as important means of identification of a collective identity. Looking at examples of independent children's magazines allowed me to identify similar characteristics among them and recognise patterns and strategies which bring them together as a possible magazine genre (Chapter 3). Identifying these traits allowed me to develop new similar publications, and to explore new or underexplored possibilities.

Sampling followed the same sampling criteria as interviewees (Chapter 1.3.3.1). It resulted in a sample of ten independent children's magazine titles spanning seven countries. I examined two issues from each title in order to identify recurring elements. I discuss this further in Chapter 3.

In order to create a systematic record of observed features, I adopted a quantitative method, better suited for describing attributes and phenomena (O'Dwyer and Bernauer, 2014). This analysis is a descriptive study, representing a cross-sectional snapshot of contemporary independent children's magazines. It consists of two parts:

1. A table, systematising independent children's magazine's observable traits (Appendix B);

2. A descriptive analysis, interpreting the data and identifying patterns (Chapter 3.1).

The table features several sections and can be classified as a 'case summary table'. It allows the comparison of properties across cases to identify patterns, while ensuring that similar information is consistently collected across cases (Cloutier and Ravasi, 2021). In this instance, cases are sampled magazine issues. The table helped identify different features and typologies that were initially identified intuitively, by differentiating and articulating them. The table was developed through an emergent and inductive approach, in which artifacts were analysed and features identified and grouped in categories, guided by practitioner concerns and this study's research questions. Categories relate to materiality, peritext, design, content typology, illustration, text and technical information.

The table's variables are assessed on frequency or specific value. For example, I identified the frequency of theme use among sampled issues, and the specific themes used. Because the purpose of this analysis was not generalisation but a snapshot of a small sample, no statistics were calculated. However, frequency measurements were taken on specific variables – e.g. to identify favoured types of content and text among the sample – which I might then adopt in creative practice.

The descriptive analysis interprets processed data toward clarifying trends among the sample that relate to identified variables.

1.4 The Experienced Novice Practitioner

In this section, I provide an account of my professional experience, and how it relates to this research study.

My training spans fine arts, contemporary art and comics. It resulted in experience with freely creating and materialising works of art in various media, as well as a solid drawing and visual storytelling training.

As an educator, I teach comics, drawing and illustration. I've also been part of the educational service team at a contemporary art and outsider art museum (Centro de Arte Oliva), in which I designed and conducted workshops and tours with children and adults. In these, I've had extensive training in creating interactive experiences for all ages and communicating information and skills with clarity.

I have co-organised an international illustration event (Encontro Internacional de Ilustração de S. João da Madeira) and talks in which practitioners discuss their work in comics. This gave me access to a wide variety of work and numerous practitioner's accounts of their process, and problem solving and organisational skills.

I have published my work and others' (*Vial* and *Kra kra* in 2014, *Carne e Osso #1* and *#2* in 2015 and 2016), and have been published in comics and illustration anthologies (*QCDA #2000* (2014), *Mälmo Kebab Party* (2015), *Os Melhores Contos de Edgar Allan Poe* (2017), *Querosene* (2021), *Ditirambos* (2019-2022), *Dreamzine / Soñario – Paseo* (2023), *Aguça N.º 3 - Fobias* (2023)). I've had my own comic books published (*Eco* (2016) *Down Below* (2015), *Bizarrras* (2017), *Cicatriz* (2018)), and illustrations (*Eu Fiz Tudo Pra Você Gostar de Mim – Carmen Miranda* (2019)). I briefly worked with comics micro-publisher Mundo Fantasma, specialised in Risography, assembling layouts and preparing work for print. These gave me editing and publishing experience, and technical knowledge of Risography.

Finally, I had access to Portuguese and French comics and children's illustrated magazines from a young age, which left a lasting impression. I discovered *Triciclo* in 2017, and was impressed at how different it was to the magazines I remembered. This renewed my curiosity toward the children's magazine form as practitioner.

These experiences placed me in the roles of student, artist, author, illustrator, mediator, organiser, teacher, designer, publisher and printer. I had never, however, created a children's magazine. My set of skills allowed me to consider making a children's magazine as a possibility, from my intuitive perception of what it was. I approached this study as a novice children's magazine maker, guided by experience in other areas of creative practice. In doing so, I reprise some of the roles described above, and how I employ my previous experience is demonstrated throughout Chapters 4 and 5.

2

HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT

2.1 Literature review

2.1.1 Introduction

The literature review for this study aims to provide theoretical and historical context to contemporary independent children's magazines. To that end, I reviewed literature from different disciplines and genres:

- Theoretical texts and research about general magazines, and other artforms and disciplines related to contemporary independent children's magazines.
- Historical, biographical and reference publications toward understanding how the form originated and how it's evolved;
- News articles, blog posts and interviews for insight into current practices and forms;
- Texts on practical aspects to inform the process of making;

The magazine has been the focus of research for mainly historical, sociological and literary purposes (Ernst and Scheiding, 2022). Children's literature is an established area of study, yet children's periodicals haven't been considered for much specific analysis (Drotner, 1988). Furthermore, when quality of magazines is mentioned, the writing is the feature most considered and praised (Fourment, 1987; Drotner, 1988; Elsey and Kelly, 2002; Hunt, 2004). There is a gap in research into illustration in children's periodicals, its practice, the roles of illustrator and editor, and into specific content and word-image interplay.

This chapter gathers information from various sources, finding insight that might lead to a better understanding of the independent illustrated children's magazine of today, the people behind it, aspects of its content, and the process of making one.

2.1.2 The magazine form

Etymology connects magazine to ‘magasin’, French for ‘shop’, and the Arabic *aḳzin*, *maḳzan* ‘storehouse’ (‘magazine’, 2020). The French ‘revue’, borrowed by Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian, which use ‘revista’ or ‘rivista’, from the Latin ‘revidere’ draws from the act of reviewing, or seeing something anew (‘rivista’, 2008; ‘revista’, 2020). The origins of these terms point to the miscellaneous nature of the magazine’s content, a defining trait of this periodical, and its role of presenting content for the attention of a reader. Tim Holmes, scholar of journalism, along with Liz Nice, journalist and editor, (2011) provide an exhaustive overview of attempts to define the magazine, concluding that the challenge of a definition remains unresolved. They underline two verifiable traits as fundamental: periodicity and the miscellany. The authors try to arrive at a definition by looking not at formal features but at the reading experience and relationship with the audience, arriving at a “General Theory of Magazines”. Succinctly, it states that magazines target specific readers, provide content that caters to their needs, develop a bond with the reader, foster community and can respond quickly to a changing society. Efforts to be inclusive of all magazine forms paradoxically result in a failure to communicate the medium’s great variety. The authors convey the ineffectiveness of a unified approach to theorizing about a “polymorphous and polysemic cultural artefact” (Holmes and Nice, 2011, p. 142).

Regarding materiality, Holmes and Nice state that magazines are traditionally published in printed form, while pointing to an openness toward other possibilities offered by digital media. Jeremy Leslie, founder of *magCulture*, offers examples which defy any preconception about the magazine (2013). Leslie demonstrates how there are seemingly no boundaries to what format one might take – though the emphasis is on print – to its design, nor to what content one might publish.

This emphasis on print was reinforced in 2018, when Somerset House hosted the exhibition *Print!: Tearing it up* (Gorman and Catterall, 2018), showcasing British independent magazines. It proclaimed a resurgence of the independent magazine, and an appetite for print publications that counterpoint, complement, and co-exist with prevailing digital media. The exhibition’s accompanying publication opens with a description of the physical experience of handling a magazine, flipping its pages, delighting in its images, the smell of ink, the texture of the paper, as fully immersive (Gorman and Catterall, 2018, p. 1). Professor Samir Husni, a leading scholar of magazines, speaks of the form as an experience that engages the five senses (Holmes and Nice, 2011, p. 6). And while at its birth, the magazine might have chosen

cheapness of production over paper and print quality (Beetham, 1989), the norm shifted to be associated with fine production and consideration for materials and overall aesthetic (Ernst, Scheiding and Hoff, 2022).

Several texts mention the importance of materiality in the development of meaning, affect and relationship with the reader, based on recognition, consistency or disruption, and overall design (Beetham, 1989; Abrahamson and Prior-Miller, 2015; Dillane, 2016; Ernst, Scheiding and Hoff, 2022). David Abrahamson points to the difficulty in letting go of materiality as an intrinsic part of the magazine, the value of the linearity of print, and its overall status as an art form and not a mere vehicle for information (Abrahamson and Prior-Miller, 2015).

Still, the survival of the paper magazine has been questioned (Abrahamson and Prior-Miller, 2015). Even with this enduring enthusiasm for printed publications, the potential and novelty of the digital led to concerns regarding the end of the printed magazine, particularly with the introduction of the iPad (Leslie, 2013). The affordability of digital magazines is tempting, as it eliminates or drastically reduce costs relating to printing and distribution (Holmes and Nice, 2011, p. 19), which would result in a further democratisation of publishing. Additionally, in a world where one is more likely to engage in curating social media before having any experience in publishing in print, it is not surprising that the experience of digital platforms might influence the printed magazine.

Some magazines foster complementary relationships with digital forms, introduce print-on-demand services, or magazine apps which attempt to replace print, but there are instances where publishers renew their relationship with print as counterpoint. It is argued that the periodical, with its multimodality, combining text, photos, illustrations, infographics, data visuals, and typographic design, brings forth a new aesthetic, “postdigital neo-analogue” (Scheiding, 2022, p. 185), which aesthetically complements modes of communication associated with computer generated models (Ernst et al., 2022, p. 185). Leslie maintains that the magazine has so far not only survived, but benefited creatively from new technologies, suggesting that magazine creators now face the challenge of engaging in a plurality of cross-pollinating mediums to best communicate their vision (Leslie, 2013).

Periodicity is a defining trait of the printed magazine, (Holmes and Nice, 2011), and distinguishes it from the book, which fosters a permanent and timeless quality. Periodical studies, which in 2016 were “becoming a vibrant field of research” (Van Remoortel *et al.*, 2016, p. 1), examine the periodical’s relationship with time: it is released periodically, it is a part of a series, it is current and ephemeral (Beetham, 1989; James Mussel, 2015; Dillane, 2016). Its periodicity contributes to a lasting emotional attachment with its readers, while providing

rhythm and structure to their lives. As a part of a series, each issue looks backward and forward in time, recalling past content and maintaining continuity, while providing newness and anticipating what is to come. Its potential for immediacy allows it to respond to current events and represent current values, establishing active exchanges with readers, while rendering it ephemeral. This ephemeral quality is contradicted by many modern magazines' material properties, with their selected stock paper, print quality and design, as well as quality fiction traditionally published within them, making them collectible, lasting objects (Johnson and Prijatel, 2007).

Johnson and Prijatel provide a general framework for magazine content: usually determined by the editor, it consists of a mix of advertising pages, departments, columns and features.

There seems to be some consensus that the magazine's production is a collective effort. Susan Greenberg, editor and researcher, notes that the periodical editing practice is inherently collaborative, as the magazine is "the outcome of many hands" and communicates a "distinctive collective identity or persona" (2015, p. 171). Scholar Jutta Ernst claims that periodicals are usually the product of a group of people, though a solitary endeavour in the field is not unheard of (2022). Ernst lists a number of common roles in periodical production: authors, translators, literary agents, editors, photographers, illustrators, graphic designers, paper producers, printers, financial patrons. In their practically oriented book, Johnson and Prijatel list an impressive twenty three roles in magazine making (2007). The absence of a mention of the role of illustrator is justified by the limited use of illustration in general magazines, and of the inclusion of the illustrator in the broader category of 'freelancers' (Johnson and Prijatel, 2007). Jean-Marie Charon, referring to French magazines, claims periodicity influences the size of the editorial team, with monthly titles having core teams of down to three roles – managing editor, editor-in-chief and art director. Core editorial teams commonly commission freelancers such as photographers, authors and illustrators (Charon, 2001). Johnson and Prijatel write of the magazine team's variety from a North American perspective: "Some need two city blocks to staff their offices; others need nothing more than a kitchen table." (2007, p. 4).

Accepting that a closed definition will inevitably be incomplete given the scope of possibilities for the magazine form and its complex multimodal nature, I select the definition for

'magazine' featured in *The Magazine from Cover to Cover* (Johnson and Prijatelj, 2007, p. 14) as starting point, for a later definition of independent children's magazines:

"Magazines are printed and bound publications offering in-depth coverage of stories often of a timeless nature. Their content may provide opinion and interpretation as well as advocacy. They are geared to a well-defined, specialized audience, and they are published regularly, with a consistent format."

2.1.3 Historical Background

The first magazines can be traced back to the 17th century (McKay, 2019). Since then, an overwhelming number of titles and issues have been published around the world, taking on different subject and formats, namely with the advent of the digital. As ephemera, they are not an easy subject to track or examine, and their numbers and span have resulted in a lack of interest from the academic community (McKay, 2001; Holmes and Nice, 2011).

Histories of the children's magazine have been written about various countries in Europe, and in the United States. Some look into magazines for their social impact, from a literary point of view, and many are reference books, surveying and collecting titles from a specific region or time. The most detailed accounts of the form, its beginnings and development that I could access related to the UK (Drotner, 1988), France (Fourment, 1987; Vuaroqueaux, 1990; Charon, 2003; SEPM, 2015), the US (Altstetter, 1941; Kelly, 1984; Radencich, 1986; Stoll, America and Association, 1990), and Spain (Martín, 2000; Chivelet, 2009; Chivelet Villarruel, 2010). Additionally, I analysed less detailed German (Kurtz, 2000; Jabůrková, 2009), Polish (Staniów and Biernacka-Licznar, 2013), Portuguese (Ferro, 1987), Hungarian (Éva Szabolcs, 2017), Italian (Meda, 2011) and Turkish (Sahin, 2012) accounts, which provided a varied picture of the origins of the form in different western geographical contexts. Many state the scale of magazine production is too large to analyse, and that research is necessarily incomplete due to the short life of magazines, their ephemeral nature and issues relating to archiving methods.

The first children's periodical appeared in the UK in 1751 (Drotner, 1988), followed by its French counterpart in 1768 (Fourment, 1987), appearing in many other countries between the late XVIII and late XIX centuries (Kelly, 1984; Ferro, 1987; Martín, 2000; Jabůrková, 2009; Meda, 2011; Éva Szabolcs, 2017). The form emerges with the development of the printing

press, the establishment of mandatory education, higher levels of literacy and the rise of independent publishers (Kelly, 1984; Ferro, 1987; Fourment, 1987; Drotner, 1988; Martín, 2000; Jabůrková, 2009; Meda, 2011; Éva Szabolcs, 2017). It appears as one of the first consumerist commodities for children, while imbued in most settings with a strong educational and moralising intent (Kelly, 1984; Fourment, 1987; Drotner, 1988; Martín, 2000; Jabůrková, 2009; Meda, 2011; Staniów, B. and Biernacka-Licznar, K., 2013). Religious and political children's magazines proved enduring genres, among the general and secular. Most of these historical accounts describe a similar evolution, with the children's magazine maintaining the codex form in which it originated, gradually infusing its literary and educational content with entertainment and amusements. From the beginning of the XX century, aided by technical developments in colour printing, there seems to be an overall tendency for this traditionally literary form to progressively adopt a preponderance of illustration (Kelly, 1984; Ferro, 1987; Fourment, 1987; Drotner, 1988; Martín, 2000; Jabůrková, 2009; Meda, 2011; Éva Szabolcs, 2017). This culminates in an overtaking of the market by comics magazines and recreational, mainly visual print forms, villainised and deemed low quality by several of the writers in the examined literature (Kelly, 1984; Fourment, 1987; Drotner, 1988; Hunt, 2004). While Drotner speculated that perhaps "the magazines in which text matters more than pictures have exhausted their fictional possibilities" (1988, p. 244), Kelly noted a sharp decline in quality among children's magazines in the XX century (1984, p. xvi). Marianne Carus, creator of Cricket magazine, openly admits to ignoring comics and other mass magazines in her international survey of children's magazines, which she argues aren't quality magazines, and which she blames for the demise of native titles in various countries (Carus, 2004). Carus' open disregard for more visual magazines reveals a lack of critical appraisal of, and consideration for, periodicals for children in which illustration takes a prominent role.

A handbook for a Unesco Training Course on Production of Periodicals for Children in Asia and the Pacific offers another perspective on the value attributed to pictures in children's magazines at the time (*Expanding possibilities of periodicals for children in Asia and the Pacific* /, c1997.). While focusing on the importance of children's magazines as tools for literacy, it mentions comics and paper craft activities as simultaneously seductive entertainment able to capture the child's attention, and useful and instructive content. Comics in particular are shown as ideal narrative vehicles for the discussion of important or heavy subjects such as bullying, nuclear devastation, sex and violence. It also showcases interactivity and exchanges particular to the magazine format, such as soliciting children's opinions and input and providing content that responds to them.

Children's magazines enter a period of decline in various countries in the second half of the XX century, with the advent of TV and other audio-visual media, as well as computers and the internet (Fourment, 1987; Drotner, 1988; Kurtz, 2000; Martín, 2000). While some strive to adapt, adopting traits from these new media, many of the magazine's roles, like advising the reader and fostering community, were taken over by them (Drotner, 1988; Charon, 2002). In a demonstration of France's exceptional media context (Charon, 2003, p. 223), in this period a few large French publishers entered the scene and went on to dominate it to this day, namely Bayard, Milan, Disney Hachette and Fleurus (Charon, 2003). With them came the specialisation and segmentation of children's magazines under a same publisher, along with the concept of "chaînage", offering titles featuring the same aesthetic and principles for different age tiers, to guarantee continuity and fidelity among their readers. This model is still practiced today, as observed in independent children's magazines analysed in this study, *Georges* (2013) and *Anorak* (2006).

Carus presents a geographically varied selection of children's literary periodicals active in 2004, and states that 75% of children in the United States and Canada read magazines, writing that "There is no doubt that children's magazines, with their immense variety of content, seem to be the one form of reading best suited for our fast-paced times." (2004). Carus praises their role as bridges to literacy, their ability to foster communities, to provide a creative outlet for readers and their importance for the development of young authors and illustrators. Finally, she states that despite great economic difficulties, children's magazines are a steadily growing form.

2.1.4 Defining Children's Magazines

While there doesn't seem to be an available definition for 'children's magazine', an entry can be found on Encyclopedia.com for 'Children's periodicals': "Periodicals, magazines, and journals targeted towards young and developing readers." (*Children's Periodicals*, 2022). Sociologist Jean-Marie Charon also proposes a description of the children's press as an exercise, arriving at "any title directed exclusively at a young audience ..." (2002, p. 5), while concluding that this segment of the press is not as homogeneous as it might appear. While very clear and to the point, these tautological descriptions are broad, don't provide much insight into the subject, nor are they much use to a practitioner looking to understand how to

approach it. They speak of an audience, not of content or form. Rather than definitions, it is more common among texts on the subject to describe children's magazine's characteristics.

In 2004, Marianne Carus describes the children's magazine's traits and roles from a position that favoured literary content:

“(...) a great selection of different literary genres, fiction, non-fiction, fantasy, poetry, activities, puzzles, crafts, illustrations, and photographs. The relatively short selections, the lively variety of subject matter and format attract children to reading (...). The variety of reading levels in most magazines suits different age groups of readers. Beautiful illustrations and/ or colour photographs make magazines attractive even to reluctant or non-readers. (...) Magazines are bridges to books, bridges to literacy. (...) Magazines can publish the latest discoveries in their pages, and explain them in the context of existing research. (...) they build a community of readers. (...) Most children's periodicals publish and answer their readers' letters and encourage a constant stream of feedback from their audience. Because of this interaction with children, this close reader-editor relationship, magazines are never fixed or static. They are 'alive', ready for change, expansion, dialogue, communication, and adjustment to their readers' wishes. (...) Most children's magazines also provide a vital creative outlet for their young readers - a chance for children to explore the world of the arts firsthand. “

(Carus, 2004, p. 37)

Carus starts by identifying the general 'magazine' traits which the children's magazine shares – the content miscellany, the shortness of the content, the form's immediacy and adaptability and its ability to nurture community –, while reiterating its principal role as a catalyst for literacy and for artistic creativity in children. Carus' description draws a sharp contrast with the previously mentioned descriptions, in that it demonstrates attention given to both the magazine's content, and its dynamic with the reader. Illustration is mentioned as a welcome embellishment with potential to attract readers, and Carus implies that magazines which feature comics and are heavily illustrated lack quality.

Murielle Szac (2013) provides a list of traits common to all children's magazines. While establishing a counterpoint with the book, Szac specifies that the children's magazine:

- Is less intimidating than a book, meant to be handled and intervened in;
- Is something a reader creates an attachment and friendship with through time, and becomes familiar with;

- Is current, speaks to and responds to the needs of today's children;
- Speaks to all children, regardless of cultural, ideological, social, educational or cognitive differences;
- It creates relationships and community, is meant to be shared, mirrors the readers in its content but also shows them other realities;
- It helps children become active citizens and avid readers.

Finally, it states that book and magazine complement each other as different forms of publication. Szac's description once again focuses on the magazine's importance as a stepping stone toward literacy, its roles and its relationship with a reader.

Jean-Marie Charon produced the most in-depth study of the French children's magazine as a commercial press form available, looking into its traits, its roles, its production and financial reality (2002). Charon paints this press form as competitive and vibrant, featuring the most current innovations in writing, illustration and design, while paradoxically being two centuries old. The author further points to a particular mode of communication the children's press developed over time, which favours the visual (design, illustration, photo, layout), the interactive and the direct addressing of the reader.

He claims it is simultaneously the press form which suffers the most from competitiveness with other media forms, such as television and digital media, while being the one which most rapidly evolves and adapts its content to match the demands of the times. Regarding its commercial logistics, Charon states the children's press, not able to resort to advertisements for income as other press forms do, relies on subscriptions, on the allure of trinkets when sold at a kiosk, and on the development of activities and interventions in schools with the aim of finding new readers. Charon concludes by crediting the survival of the children's press on its creativeness, reactivity, editorial rigour, aggressiveness, and commercial inventiveness, describing it as a laboratory for the future of the press form.

Regarding the children's press workforce, Charon (2002) notes that while many roles are common to general magazines, some are particularly vital, such as the art director, the designer, the illustrator and the author, who Charon distinguishes from the journalist, and who may create such diverse forms of content as games, competitions, tests or fiction. Employment of an assortment of specialists is common – psychologists, educators, paediatricians – who may serve as consultants in the production of a children's periodical. The author notes the standard of small editorial teams and a heavy reliance on freelance professionals.

The children's magazine's materiality, design, illustration (as a subject and as a practice), word-image interplay and the value of visual literacy seem to be neglected in texts on children's magazines. Lorena Nóbrega's 2017 dissertation provides the exception, assessing contemporary children's magazines from the point of view of editorial design. She identifies a new wave of magazines, which she determines have been influenced by digital media, accompanying changes in the experience of childhood and its new digital literacies. Nóbrega quotes Buckingham (2006) who identifies three main traits found in much of the popular culture aimed at children:

- Convergence of formal, visual and written media;
- Intertextuality, in their self-reference and use of the hyperlink;
- Interactivity, offering the child a participatory experience.

Nóbrega further presents Marcelo Freire's (2016) list of traits identified in the digital world, among which are immediacy, and the reader's agency to choose and customise content.

It may be argued that these traits have always been in some way part of the children's magazine: image and text work together to communicate with the reader; articles and short-forms connect the reader to other realities and varied subjects; the editorial addresses the reader directly; the zapping effect allows for a curated experience; a self-referencing voice throughout; active engagement and participation in puzzles, games, competitions, activities and correspondence. Perhaps the new wave of children magazines Nóbrega identifies reflects the realisation that, in fact, this old form caters to these new digital literacies among children. It does so while existing alongside new digital forms, or complementing each other as extensions, or part of a larger experience.

Nóbrega's literature review and case study also point to recurrences in contemporary children's magazines: often each issue will feature a theme that the content will explore in various ways; often there is a mascot associated with the title, original or licensed; magazine mastheads' typography contributes to its identity; the spread is often the unit within the publication, often without margins (2017). When it comes to content, Nóbrega states that these magazines emulate the structure of general magazines, with an emphasis on short stories, games, reportage, curiosities, and amusements.

While the above descriptions and listed traits contribute to a clearer understanding of the children's magazine as a publication form, they lack a perspective on illustration, creative

roles and processes and the independent character. In order to develop a proposal for a definition later in this chapter, I first analyse literature on these aspects.

2.1.5 Illustration in Children's Magazines

Drotner (1988, p. 245) speaks of a "pictorial victory" in children's magazines, referring to the decline of the literary children's magazine and surge in interest in comics and "picture storypapers", publications featuring illustrated stories of various natures at the mid twentieth century (Drotner, 1988). Charon states children's periodicals have responded to the cultural trend of increased importance attributed to the visual (2002, 2003). Children's magazines were, for a long time, mostly literary in nature, with illustration serving mainly as a seductive marketing tool and a selling point. Analysed historical texts praise high quality illustration or mention the choice of famous illustrators as an indicator of value, but there is very little analysis or consideration regarding the role of illustration within children's magazines (Fourment, 1987, 1987; Drotner, 1988; Gannon, Rahn and Thompson, 2004). R. Gordon Kelly, scholar of American Studies, calls for more effort be put into understanding and interpreting the role of illustration in children's periodicals, rather than evaluating it (1984, p. xvi).

Mary Alice Hunt (1973), analyses a small number of children's magazines from the XIX century, and identifies two main modes of illustration : integrated part of the text, and decorative. Susa Gannon, Suzanne Rahn and Ruth Anne Thompson note the use of illustration in *St. Nicholas*(1873) to soften the heaviness of subjects in the writing, its loose semiotic relationship with text, and of the intention of depicting the ideal child for the reader to emulate(Gannon, Rahn and Thompson, 2004).

As Kelly describes each analysed North American children's magazine, from 1789 to 1980, he takes note of some relationships between image and text, focusing on the effect or role taken by the illustration (1984). From these notes, some patterns and practices become evident:

At times illustrations could appear separated from the text they relate to by several pages or would have no evident relationship with the text at all. Some illustrations were recycled from other publications.

When illustration did appear connected to the writing, it would take the form of small portraits of main characters in stories, or the rendering of stories' highlights. *John Martin's Book* is mentioned for its careful match between illustrations and stories, as well as its

decorative visual elements. Embellished initials and elaborate decorations surrounding text were common among several magazines. Illustration might also play a part in establishing an overall aesthetic.

Sanitized depictions of poverty and illness were common, avoiding any reference to serious social problems, human suffering, and the darker side of life. *Slave's Friend* exceptionally depicted the true condition of slaves in America, the humanity in black people and the cruelty of slaveholders.

Most magazines seemed to recognize the importance of illustration for children. Some chose subjects to address based on their potential for illustration. Some recognised the equal potential for text and image to please and educate, and encouraged readers to study and examine illustrations to find their meaning. Illustration would be used to depict foreign realities, peoples, creatures and places, allowing the reader to access them.

Illustration might serve commercial purposes, with one title depicting girls dressed in contemporary fashionable clothes that were advertised on the 'parent' magazine.

Common to all these assessments of illustration in children's magazines is the separation between image and text as juxtaposed, with a focus on what each element does alone, not what they do together.

In the twentieth and twenty-first century, illustration reportedly played a significant role in French children's magazines, particularly as the first element that the child encounters. Illustration can provoke an immediate emotional response and encourage engagement with the rest of the content (Charon, 2002). Nóbrega reiterates the cover's role as a showcase of the magazine's content and identity, noting a tendency for technical experimentation in illustrated covers of contemporary independent children's magazines. Nóbrega also states that the back cover, liberated from holding advertisement thanks to business models based on subscriptions, emulates the picturebook by becoming a visual extension of the cover (2017).

Another particular visual element featured in several children's magazines is the mascot. While some of these characters are in fact licensed, borrowed from other media, there are original mascots, created by illustrators for the magazine (Nóbrega, 2017). These characters act as guides: they often appear on the cover and invite the reader to enter the publication, and might take the reader through the magazine's sections, reappearing throughout, addressing the reader and offering an empathic connection.

It appears that illustration permeates every page of a contemporary independent children's magazine, taking a prominent part in the multimodal sections, meaningfully articulating with text and design to produce a reading, visual, or interactive experience. *John Martin's Book* could be seen as the historical precedent, featuring lushly illustrated pages of various types of content. This use of illustration is common to picturebooks, as discussed later in this chapter. Nóbrega validates the comparison, repeatedly writing that children's magazines borrow traits from the picturebook (2017).

After analysing the part illustration plays in children's magazines from an external point of view, I look into the roles of the illustrator, and that of the editor, who oversees the whole publication. There are historical examples of these roles on which much has been written, which might provide insight into the processes behind children's magazine making.

2.1.6 The Illustrator

The illustrator may find in the children's magazine an opportunity to experiment, to showcase their work or to develop short-form content which may be expanded into longer personal projects. It is a print form an illustrator might even create themselves, taking on other roles.

George Carlson (1887 - 1962), whose diverse illustration work varied in style to a chameleonic degree, is an early example of an illustrator using the independent children's magazine as just such an exploratory space (Yezbick, 2013). Carlson was involved in children's magazine *John Martin's Book* (1912) as its major contributor. The editor, John Martin, allowed him free rein to innovate and experiment in his work for the magazine. A quote from a 1937's edition of *The Fairfield News* introduces an analogy to Carlson's creative process:

"Mr. Carlson compares his studio to a laboratory where he is always concocting some idea or feature to interest the young readers. Like a chemist who will experiment with several chemicals to get the right element, the artist takes an idea here, a thought there, a method here, and combines them all to get across what he has in mind."

(Yezbick, 2013, p. 26)

This is felt in Carlson's use of word-image interplay. His work often shows illustration taking on many roles within a section, acting simultaneously as an element of design, as a

sequence depicting a narrative and as an illustration to the – at times pictorial – text (Figure 1). These aspects are associated with picturebooks, as mentioned in the previous section, and appear as precursors to the norm in independent children’s magazines today.



Figure 1

A page by George Carlson featured in the October 1930 issue of *John Martin's Book* (Yezbick, 2013, p. 94)

Marianne Carus writes that illustrators at the start of their careers “regard their work for children’s magazines as an important part of their creative development, and many already established authors and artists welcome periodicals as a way to showcase their work” (Carus, 2004, p. 444). Seemingly reiterating this a decade later, illustrator Stevens-Marzo wrote an article aimed at illustration professionals proposing children’s magazines as a starting point for illustrators and a way to expand one’s repertoire (2014). She mentions how her experience in contributing to children’s magazines led her to experiment, to be bolder, try limited colour palettes, and to then create picturebooks based on those commissions. Cathy Olmedillas, *Anorak* (2006) creator, editor and author discusses her roles and the magazine’s unexpected use as a catalogue for art directors to find illustrators to recruit (Castellano, 2023). These accounts speak of the magazine’s potential for showcasing, expanding and developing illustrators’ work. This makes it unsurprising that several illustrator collectives have

appropriated the form. Independent children's magazines or zines like *Triciclo* (2017), *Cuistax* (2013) and *Kiwi* (2016), are the product of illustrators taking on various editorial roles, something that isn't unheard of in the established children's magazine world in France (Charon, 2002). The same practitioners contributing to a magazine might often navigate between several different roles, such as art director, designer and illustrator (Charon, 2002, p. 94). This phenomenon is a trait of independent publications, and in this case allows illustrators to take full creative control of every stage of the publication process.

2.1.7 The Editor

The work of editors John Martin (1865 – 1947) and Mary Mapes Dodge (1831 - 1905) is celebrated for its exemplary quality and inventiveness. Both were demanding, dedicated practitioners whose first concern when it came to children's magazines was their young readers and the quality of content presented to them (Gardner, 1990; Gannon and Thompson, 1992; Gannon, Rahn and Thompson, 2004; Yezbick, 2013). However, their approaches were very different. Even with the chronological and geographical specificity and distance (between 1873 and 1933, North America), these accounts are useful toward understanding and illuminating practices involved in creating children's magazines through time. It is also possible to draw parallels between their approaches and those of practitioners interviewed in this study.

Mary Mapes Dodge was the editor of *St. Nicholas* (1873), often called the best of all children's magazines, albeit by anglocentric texts (Gannon, Rahn and Thompson, 2004). In this role, Dodge controlled every aspect of the magazine. Her first editorial (effectively a manifesto) proclaimed *St. Nicholas* would fill the gap in quality children's magazines available, asserting a non-patronising approach to content tailored to children's entertainment and educational needs (Mapes Dodge, 1873).

Dodge commissioned renowned illustrators that would produce high quality illustrations, accompanied the production process to guarantee their quality would prevail in print, and would exert control and censorship over images toward projecting an ideal, innocent image of the child, the parent and the world. No evidence is provided regarding concern for illustration's role, or its articulation with text, except to achieve the latter.

The quality attributed to *St. Nicholas Magazine* is in great part the fruit of Dodge's control and efforts to ensure quality content, literary or otherwise, along with an understanding

of children's needs and a continued investment in communication with readers, building a community.

Martin Gardner, in his article on the life and work of John Martin (1990), depicts Martin as an eccentric and an entrepreneur. John Martin was the pen name of Morgan van Roorbach Shepard. He held many jobs before he found himself writing poems and letters to children for magazines. Shepard signed his letters 'John Martin' and would draw numerous illustrations in them. He turned this practice into his own monthly periodical, a letter children could subscribe to. His letters were addressed to each child and contained poems, whimsical stories, illustrations, secret codes, riddles, rebuses, puzzles, and pages to be folded or cut, all of these anticipating what would be found in *John Martin's Book*. In 1912, he changed the format from letter to codex and engaged quality freelance writers, artists and puzzle makers, among which George Carlson. Gardner claims that the content developed in *John Martin's Book* innovated beyond what other children's magazines had offered until then.

Martin and Carlson became regular collaborators and contributed greatly to the identity of *John Martin's Book*. Both men held a strong conviction that what children needed and wanted above all was play and to be challenged in a fun way. While their work did not present itself as educational, it did require active participation from the reader, visual and verbal literacy as well as mental engagement, observation skills, problem solving, mathematical thinking and motor skills. As practitioners, one can infer they took pleasure in inventing content, finding new ways to engage the child reader over a period of 20 years.

Comparing the two editors, both Dodge and Martin employed and trusted talented artists and authors in whose work they saw value. While Dodge had a literary background, Martin had experience in freeform creation for children, dabbling in illustration. Dodge's reliance on an idea of quality from an outside perspective and her controlling approach appear in contrast with Martin's philosophy of experimentation and collaboration, and allowance for illustration and the visual to take a prominent role.

Having analysed the magazine form, the history of the children's magazine, what has been written on the children's magazine, its illustration and the roles of illustrator and editor, I examine what the independent character of such a magazine might entail.

2.1.8 Independent publishing

Susan Hawthorne, writer, publisher and performer, defines 'independent publishing' as opposed to 'big publishing', free from corporate or ideological influence, as a platform for innovation, quirkiness and risk taking, and as a source of cultural diversity (2014).

Jeremy Leslie presents the independent magazine as the ultimate democratic medium for disseminating new ideas and challenging existing ones, facilitated by easy access to design and print tools (2013). Among Leslie's examples is *Anorak* (2006), a UK independent children's magazine created by Cathy Olmedillas. Referenced often by other independent magazine makers as a source for inspiration, *Anorak* was a product of both Olmedilla's drive to make a magazine of her own, and her frustration with an underwhelming landscape of magazines available (*Cathy Olmedillas - Founder, Anorak Magazine*, n.d.).

This independence is also associated with 'zines', self-published, non-commercial print-works that are typically produced in small and limited quantities, favoured by illustrators as one of the first print forms to experiment with and disseminate their work in (*What is a zine?*, 2020). This phenomenon is visible at illustration and comics events, such as ELCAF and Festival Central Vapeur, and is promoted by the Association of Illustrators, whose website quotes illustrators praising zines as a platform for exploration and experimentation, particularly for new illustrators (*Top Tips to Make Zines!*, 2019).

Scholar Julie Chu introduces the zine as one of the oldest print forms for disseminating ideas or questioning prevailing ones, and notes that the term has become a catch all term for self-published works covering varied subjects (1997). Chu argues that zines are mostly used by young creators to carve a place of their own in a media landscape shaped by corporate adult interests, moved by a "for love, not profit" ideology. "Sunfrog" Smith states that "most zine publishers take responsibility for every aspect of production - writing, typesetting, layout, fundraising, printing, collating, stapling, mailing, selling, distributing - the work done by dozens of paid people at professional magazines." (Chu, 1997, p. 79).

Hawthorne paints independent publishers as struggling and driven not by profit, but by their will to publish. This aligns with Jean-Marie Charon's description of established French children's magazine publishers, whose businesses exist in a state of financial fragility, driven by strong editorial convictions and a creative imperative, only stabilised by strategies such as internationalisation or the multiplication of products, which are not accessible or appealing to all magazine publishers (2003). Ten years later, Jeremy Leslie hints at a multiplicity of business models adopted by independent magazines, no longer tied to the single model of selling ads and selling copies (Leslie, 2013).

interviews and reviewed texts touch on the practice of non-remunerated work as a means to stay in print, attracting younger contributors, or those who accept the dissemination of their work as a satisfactory return (Le Masurier, 2012). This is sustained in face of what many refer to as a passionate, joyous editorial experience (Hawthorne, 2014; Gorman and Catterall, 2018; Schierloh, 2022), in which editors and contributors represent a community of makers, based on horizontality rather than hierarchy. Artistic direction happens at the moment of selecting contributors, rather than upon receiving work to be published, as the editorial team avoids interference to compensate for the lack of payment. This results in total creative freedom based on the initial brief and a serendipitous quality to the publication, as artistic direction is not enforced.

While independent publications were long associated with lesser material and print quality, contemporary independent magazines, including children's magazines, often show great care in choice of paper and print technique and are prone to experiment with different formats and paper stock. As technology provides more appealing alternatives to print, it simultaneously enables small scale publishers to produce high quality publications in an accessible way, and to make physicality a central feature of their magazines (Le Masurier, 2012; Leslie, 2013; Ernst, Scheiding and Hoff, 2022).

Some independent magazine publishers question the concept of regular periodicity, publishing issues once they are ready and up to standards, rather than on set dates (Le Masurier, 2012). This influences the relationship with the reader, who has to accept these terms. Instead of setting a rhythm to the readers' lives (Beetham, 1989), these magazines' issues come, to a certain point, as surprises to their subscribers, demanding loyalty and patience. This may be difficult to apply with children, as they can be impatient and may disconnect from their relationship with the magazine.

The independent quality of children's magazines is palpable in their experimental and non-profit nature, team horizontality, unconventional financial philosophies, lax approach to periodicity and their origins, often in response to a gap, or from a dissatisfaction with available choices.

2.1.9 The Contemporary Independent Children's Magazine

It's interesting to consider how independent children's magazines, as described in this chapter, by interviewees and in the primary literature analysis, differ from the general magazine form. The main differences appear to be the education, entertainment, and interactivity imperatives, employing writers instead of journalists, and, most notably, the predominance of illustration, its symbiosis with text, the range of allowed creative freedom, and the role of the illustrator in the development of content.

Departing from Johnson and Prijatel's definition of the magazine, quoted earlier in this chapter (Johnson and Prijatel, 2007, p. 14), I propose the following definition:

Independent children's magazines are printed, illustrated, original publications for children without a commercial agenda. They are published periodically, in a consistent format and feature a theme in each issue. They offer a variety of entertaining and educational content, made up of diverse short-forms featuring varied word-image interplay, are highly interactive and promote visual and verbal literacy, critical thinking and creativity.

Additionally, I propose that the independent children's magazine is unique as ground for experimentation and risk taking in word- image interplay in short-form content.

2.2 Related Studies

Nóbrega's dissertation compares several of her case studies to picturebooks in their design. She quotes the statement by Yoyo (2013), self-identifying as "a mix of book, zine, magazine and activity book for children" (2017, p. 153). In her conclusion, she mentions this multiple identity each of the analysed case studies feature, sharing traits with other print media such as picturebooks, activity books, comics, and digital media. I look to theory on related artforms and disciplines to sustain and clarify this comparison. Below, I summarise the formal and procedural commonalities each holds with independent children's magazines.

I propose that the fact that independent children's magazines share traits with all these artforms and disciplines renders them privileged ground for exploration and experimentation of illustration and word-image interplay.

2.2.1 Short-forms

- 'Short-form' refers to content that is short in length or duration. It may also refer to the length of time a receiver takes to engage with or consume said content (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024).
- Various artforms appear in long-form and short-form: writing (fictional or journalistic), comics, film, video and animation, music, with written fiction and film having originated as short-form (Elsey and Kelly, 2002; Kahn, 2021).
- Some artforms that are short-forms are predominant in analysed magazines and are identified in Chapters 2 and 3: colouring, craft and drawing activities, puzzles, games, recipes and reviews.
- The short-form has been associated with experimentality, risk taking and exploration, in contrast with long-forms which involve higher responsibility and commitment, as the result of making appears more prominent and lasting (Elsey and Kelly, 2002; Holdefer, 2014; Kahn, 2021; Michel, 2021; Walker, 2022).

2.2.2 Picturebooks

- In picturebooks, words and pictures are designed holistically to produce meaning and, ultimately, an experience for the child reader (Bader, 1976, p. 1).
- Illustrations communicate a greater part of the information. Text may take the form of narration, dialogue, single words or be absent altogether. (Nodelman, 1990; dPictus, 2022).
- The picturebook appears predominantly in the codex format, with the spread as unit, and uses its properties, such as the turning of the page, for narrative effect (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2018).
- Dimensions can vary. Page count follows convention: thirty-two pages, or a limited number that is a multiple of eight due to print restrictions (Dowd Lambert, 2018).
- Content may be characterised as fiction or non-fiction (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2018).
- Picturebooks feature colourful covers that might elicit curiosity, and the back cover offers a possible narrative space (Alaca, 2018).

- The picturebook is meant to be easy to read, held and experienced by the reader alone or accompanied by a more advanced reader (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2018, Walker, S. 2012).
- Word-image interplay is achieved in various ways and may be symmetrical (each conveying similar information), or complementary (each communicating different information to various degrees) (Lewis, 2001; Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006; Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2014).
- Making sense of complementary word-image interplay may act as a source of pleasure for a reader (Nodelman, 1990).
- The first occurrence of word-image interplay in a book sets a schemata for the perception of the following pages (Nodelman, 1990).
- While picturebooks most often display sequential coherence, the relationship between words and pictures can change throughout a single picturebook (Lewis, 2001).
- Postmodern picturebooks borrow traits from other forms, such as the comic book and artists' books. They blur the boundaries among author, narrator, and reader, subvert conventions and undermine the diegetic border. They may feature intertextuality as pastiche, or a blend from multiple sources, and multiple pathways through the narrative. They are playful and self-referential, drawing attention to the text as a text instead of a secondary world (Sipe and Pantaleo, 2008; Nóbrega, 2017).
- Design might be done by a graphic designer or by the illustrator, as typography, illustration and design are inseparable. The latter is more common with small publishers (Salisbury, 2004).
- Illustrations may appear inside frames or panels, sectioning the narrative, or as full bleed larger images (Dowd Lambert, 2018).
- Text, mechanical or hand drawn, acts as a conveyor of verbal and visual information, offering various levels of meaning. It can also characterise, with different styles assigned to different character speech, or, when hand drawn, suggest information about the writer (Dowd Lambert, 2018).
- While the use of colour in picturebooks was for a long time conditioned by printing technologies to a limited number of colours and techniques, options are now virtually unlimited. Choice of colour is either a stylistic, narrative or financial decision. Much illustration is still created with limited colour palettes, at times replicating the colour separation processes in a digital context (Salisbury, 2022).

- Colour plays a prevalent role, establishing mood, giving insight into characters' emotions, highlighting objects, and signalling links between narrative elements. Colour palettes may be used to represent the real-world appearance of things, or in a less literal way, to establish contrast and differentiate elements (Salisbury and Styles, 2012; Martinez *et al.*, 2020).
- Picturebooks are a collective effort, involving authors, illustrators, editors, designers, and technicians (Sipe, 2010; Mallan, 2018).
- There is no template for the creative process, which is often non-linear, in a mix of intuitive and conscious decisions (dPictus, 2022).
- Starting points for the creative process may be lingering fragments of ideas, developing on a character that emerged in a sketchbook or exploring graphic choices or form (dPictus, 2022).
- The picturebook maker is informed by experiences and childhood memories, core themes such as friendship, emotions, obsession, values and basic concepts, and cultural references (dPictus, 2022).
- Research is a part of the creative process (dPictus, 2022).
- Exploratory drawing is crucial to the creative process, in which accidents, improvisation and coincidences are integrated. It plays a role in testing ideas and approaches, developing page designs and narrative structure, and creating and developing characters. (dPictus, 2022; Salisbury, 2022).
- Material testing, writing and thumbnails and storyboards are employed in the planning stages (dPictus, 2022).

2.2.3 Artists' books and magazines

- The artists' book and magazine are exercises of inquiry into their respective forms, in which their intrinsic traits are highlighted and their boundaries explored (Drucker, 2004).
- Making artist's books and magazines is a naturally independent endeavour, in which experimentation is led with no concern for commercial potential (Drucker, 2004).
- The artist considers the book as a whole, creating both content and format as one (Drucker, 2004).

- The artists' book is at the intersecting point between various artistic activities (Drucker, 2004, p. 2).
- It is a means for publishing what would not be considered for exhibition by established galleries and museums, or commercially viable to produce by established publishers (Lyons, 1985).
- Artists' books can make the reader question the reading experience itself, or their relationship with a book, and propose alternative engagement with the printed page (Lyons, 1985).
- Artists' books work to push the boundaries of the relationship between image and text (Lyons, 1985).
- Format in artists' books and magazines, intrinsically linked to their content, can depart from the conventional codex format. (Boivent, 2008; Stromberg, 2018).
- Artists' books may be fine productions or budgetless DIY projects (Drucker, 2004).
- Artists gather in clusters and networks (Drucker, 2004).
- The artists' magazine is plural, exists as a sequence, is ephemeral and has a close relationship to its time (Boivent, 2008).
- While artists' magazines are periodicals, they often reject regularity and many see editorial approaches change through time, rendering each issue unpredictable, and a title a mutating thing (Boivent, 2008).
- Artists take charge of production, dissemination and creation of artists' magazines, as solo artists, or often as collectives, either permanent, or ever changing (Boivent, 2008).
- Two examples were used as formal and conceptual references for Prototype 2: *Aspen* magazine, published from 1965 to 1971 by Phyllis Johnson, and *S.M.S.*, published during 1968 by William Copley. Each issue consists of a collection of varied publications presented in a container, conceived by artists who were given creative free reign.

2.2.4 Design

- Graphic and Information design are concerned with clarity in communicating a message (Coates and Ellison, 2014).

- Text, image, proportion, space, colour and scale are articulated to create composition and form. A designer, faced with a 'design problem', will make use of these elements to solve it (Dabner, 2023).
- Every aspect and element of the design process and used medium is broken down and considered beforehand, and steps planned toward an ideal result (Dabner, 2023).
- At the base of graphic and information design are structure, hierarchy, the use of a grid, and composition. These help the reader or observer navigate the information presented, indicating where to look first, what the most important information is and providing a fluid movement around the page (Coates and Ellison, 2014; Dabner, 2023).
- The designer considers the platform the content is designed for – e.g. a book allows the use of codex attributes, such as the turning of the page (Dabner, 2023).
- Colour is a vital element in design and is always perceived in relation to another. The contrasting or harmonious combination of different colours can produce an immediate effect in an observer. It is used to differentiate, unify, and organise information (Coates and Ellison, 2014; Dabner, 2023).
- The properties of format and materials, and how an observer might interact with them, also produce meaning (Dabner, 2023).
- Typography is a crucial visual element, and fonts are designed for specific functions. Additionally, it may suggest a 'personality', character, feeling or mood, that can influence perception of the information (Dabner, 2023).
- Typography used is often mechanical, as opposed to handwritten or drawn, serving the constant imperatives of legibility and readability. Legibility refers to clarity in letterforms for a reader. Readability relates to typefaces, font families, and their effective articulation with the overall composition, including images (Coates and Ellison, 2014; Dabner, 2023).
- The design process is both methodical and exploratory, fuelled by curiosity and informed by the designer's experiences and interests. Stages of linear reasoning and of lateral thinking complement each other through the process (Dabner, 2023).
- Designers often work for a client and are presented with the raw information to be used, the desired look or "feel" of the work and the desired audience. The

information used is coded according to importance, establishing a hierarchy (Dabner, 2023).

- Research is an essential step in the design process (Dabner, 2023).
- Exploratory drawing and sketching are essential to the creative process. They give concrete form to ideas, enable testing and comparison, and refine ideas (Dabner, 2023).
- Visual instructions and infographics are effective in communicating information, as they can highlight particular aspects. They communicate to audiences of varying levels of literacy and different nationalities (Coates and Ellison, 2014).
- Step-by-step instructions are visual sequences of 'small multiples' that describe what something looks like, should look like or how to do something. They borrow narrative strategies from comics. Text and numbers can help guide through the sequence and provide clarity, and the use of text and choice of colour palette or scale can vary greatly depending on the age of the intended reader (Tufte, 1990).

2.2.5 Interactivity, Puzzles and Activities

- Design scholars Claire Timpany and Nicholas Vanderschantz defined two categorisation systems for the interactive experience of picturebooks (2012). These relate to the physicality of a book (Physical Enhancement) and the sequencing of content in a book (Content Sequencing):

Physical Enhancement	Content Sequencing
<u>Level 0</u> - Reader is required to open book and turn pages	<u>Level 0</u> - Reader's attention is guided in a linear course through page content
<u>Level 1</u> - Reader is required to open book and turn pages with some additional interaction with the book	<u>Level 1</u> - Reader's attention is intentionally guided in a non-linear course around page content
<u>Level 2</u> - Reader is required to open additional inner pages to reveal further content	<u>Level 2</u> - Reader's attention is guided in a non-linear course around page/book content and drawn back and forth between set areas of contrasting content
<u>Level 3</u> - Reader is required to lift flaps, turn wheels, pull tabs, push buttons etc.	<u>Level 3</u> - Reader is required to solve puzzles/challenges to/or determine the order in which the pages are read
<u>Level 4</u> - Reader is required to interact with multiple layers of interactive elements or create/arrange content themselves	<u>Level 4</u> - Reader is required to progress through the book by making decisions that will affect the ultimate story line
	<u>Level 5</u> - Reader is required to carry out activities or actions guided by content of the book externally

(Timpany and Vanderschantz, 2012, p. 102)

An independent children's magazine could be categorised at a level 4 in the Physical Enhancement continuum and at a level 5 in the Content Sequencing continuum.

- The puzzle is an ancient art form, short and compact, and has a right answer, or right answers (Kim, 2008).
- Creating a puzzle is a puzzle in itself. Both solving and creating a puzzle can be challenging and pleasurable activities, and creation can be intuitive and addictive (Kim, 2008).
- Puzzles are not only a form of recreation, they allow us to gain knowledge through playful formats (Danesi, 2002).
- People engage with puzzles for no apparent reward other than the satisfaction of solving them, whatever their age, skill or background (Danesi, 2002).
- Puzzles reflect our own minds and reasoning, and incorporate seriousness and trickery (Danesi, 2002).

- There are three types of puzzle, with each using a different mode of thought – Image, Logic and Word puzzles – which aren't exclusive and can be combined (Pajitnov and Kim, 1999).
- Visual puzzles engage visual perception and visual logic, explore the nature of human perception and how it engages in knowledge production (Danesi, 2002).
- Illustrators have been known to create visual puzzles in book form – e.g. *Where's Wally?* (Martin Handford, 1987) and *Pierre the maze detective* (Hiro Kamigaki, 2014).
- Illustrators creating visual puzzles may favour the 'ligne claire' technique, in which a contour of consistent thickness defines elements, and colouring in flat colours for clear differentiation and readability (Salisbury, 2004).
- 'Wimmelbooks' are picturebooks that feature panoramas filled with numerous characters and details. These can be puzzles, non-fiction or narrative sequences, and invite multiple readings (Dolan, 2017).
- Illustrators describe the process of creating a visual puzzle as intuitive. Motivations are varied: an interest for architecture, map making, drawing crowds or faraway places, and an aim to provide an experience they enjoyed or craved for their readers (Handford, 1990; Salisbury, 2004; Walsh, 2015).
- Children's activity books are designed to be used independently by children to accomplish some goal (Spiegel, 1991, p. 594). They offer instructions or prompts and involve a limited amount of text with a clear hierarchy (Spiegel, 1991).
- Interaction with a book may appeal to all five senses (Keskinen, 2023).
- Activities such as paper craft often require cutting or the destruction of a page. Engaging in them may render the codex dysfunctional and unreadable while remaining available for sensory experience and contemplation (Keskinen, 2023).
- In drawing or colouring prompts, the reader is invited to act as co-creator, making each final work different and individual (Keskinen, 2023).

2.2.6 Comics

- Comics are a language composed of words and pictures, of which the panel is the unit. They are the articulation of a sequential plurality of juxtaposed, solitary images (Groensteen, 2011b).

- In comics word-image interplay, image is dominant, and is vital to sensemaking (Groensteen, 2011b).
- Clearly separated or not, a series of images will result in their interpretation as moments of a narrative (Groensteen, 2011b).
- The frequency and size attributed to each individual image or panel, as well as shapes and colours contained in them, establish a rhythm that can guide the reader's progress through a narrative (Eisner, 1985).
- The juxtaposition of panels results in a composition at the level of the page, spread or screen, that the reader perceives before diving into individual panels. Composition may be premeditated or generated accidentally in the process of creating the visual sequence (Eisner, 1985).
- Some traits, used in comics over time, have become recognisable and associated with the form, though they may not always be used: panel divisions, the use of speech bubbles and captions, the use of kinetic lines to signify movement and the 'ligne claire' style (Groensteen, 2011b).
- Human or anthropomorphic bodies are one of the essential ingredients of comic art (Eisner, 1985).
- The absence of characters is extremely rare (McCloud, 2006), and when it occurs, the presence of a character might be felt in a subjective point of view or a narrator's voice (Mikkonen, 2017).
- Text may be enclosed in a balloon shape signifying speech, or in a rectangle signifying verbal narration, facilitating legibility. It may also be integrated within the image as intraiconic (Eisner, 1985).
- Traditionally, text in comics is hand drawn. Hand drawn letters exhibit the same visual identity as the artist's drawings, providing visual harmony, carrying individualised expressivity and allowing subtle inconsistencies and mistakes. Text may also be 'mechanical' or drawn by another artist (Gerbier, 2012, 2017).
- Colour used ranges from "classic" flat naturalistic colour within black contours, to more painterly effects (McCloud, 2006).
- While comics can be abstract sequences and don't require a script or story, they traditionally feature stories and plots. The three-act structure is prevalent (O'Neil, 2001). Act one introduces context and an inciting incident, act two develops and complicates the initial situation, and in act three the story reaches its climax and conclusion.

- The creative process may be the work of a team or of a single practitioner (Eisner, 1985).
- A conventional creative process starts from a script. Text is ‘broken down’ into a sequence of pictures organised in pages. Thumbnails are drawn in pencil and a dummy, storyboard or layout made, at which stage there is malleability in making changes and corrections. Finally, the pages are pencilled in the intended final format and dimensions, and inked. (Eisner, 1985).
- Comics creators may take a freestyle approach, experimenting and improvising. The artist may work from memory and use reference material. They may engage in exploratory drawing to brainstorm possible narratives and characters (Clowes, 2003).

2.3 Conclusions

This study’s literature review investigated available texts on children’s illustrated magazines through time, while also pursuing related avenues that provide a prismatic understanding of the subject.

An examination of the general magazine form from etymological, definitional and formal perspectives framed the research subject. It established core traits that apply to contemporary independent children’s magazines – periodicity, miscellany, short-content, multimodality, collective production and print.

A historical perspective showed that the children’s magazine form originated as an independent enterprise in the eighteenth century and evolved alongside the concept of childhood in society. It appeared and thrived in print and the codex form, with educational, moralising and entertaining concerns, and its quality was long defined by its writing. Illustration evolved from a secondary embellishment, to being valued as a marketing tool, to taking a prominent place over text and overall design, with comics becoming overwhelmingly popular and leading to a transformation of the children’s magazine form as it was known. This shift, along with children’s magazines being traditionally valued as stepping stones toward literacy, led to illustration and comics being villainised and considered responsible for a general decline in quality.

Combining recent attempts to define the children's magazine form in the twenty-first century with academic writing in the subject, it is possible to sketch a definition. The contemporary independent children's magazine maintains the core traits of periodicity, miscellany, short-content, multimodality, collective production and print, provides inventive educational and entertaining content, and embraces illustration as a principal conveyor of meaning. Furthermore, it complements digital forms and is shown to be particularly relevant now, for a childhood in which visual and digital literacy is the norm. As independent, children's magazines are projects moved by a desire to publish and don't aim for profit, existing as fragile financial endeavours. They may be created in response to a perceived gap, or to a dissatisfactory publishing landscape, pursuing creative freedom and experimentation.

The figure of children's magazine illustrator emerges from texts as someone embarking in their profession, who finds in the magazine a platform for disseminating their work and for experimentation. The illustrator can also become a multitasker, taking control of the magazine production and other roles within it.

It becomes evident that discussion of children's magazines has long been led from a literary perspective, and that there is a lack of texts examining and critically assessing illustration and illustrated content in the context of children's magazines, and how they contribute to the form's quality and identity. There is also a gap in texts discussing the following children's magazine aspects, particularly in a contemporary context:

- Materiality;
- Design;
- Word- image interplay;
- Its value regarding visual literacy;
- Creative processes behind making it and its content.

The children's magazine's plural identity required this literature review to expand beyond texts that looked at the form but refrained from touching on content. It then explored different identified forms parallel to, or converging within, the independent children's magazine, and reviewed theoretical texts and practitioner accounts in order to gather insights and prepare for the development of this study's creative practice. The **short-form** provides opportunity for creative exploration. The **picturebook** provides a formal and functional model, particularly regarding the use of the codex format, the prominence of illustration in conveying meaning and

structuring pages, and the illustrator's creative process. The **artists' book and magazine** are examples of uninhibited creative freedom in questioning a form, what it could be, and what experience it could provide for a reader. Studying **design** offers an understanding of the effects of different choices in organising visual and textual information, as well as grounding exploration in method and structuring principles. Understanding levels of **interactivity** and the nature of **puzzles, games** and **activities** clarifies how the apparent paradox between education and entertainment is embodied in this type of content. It further reveals illustrators' frequent incursions into their creation, with images taking on a prominent role, and informs about prompts, and the engagement of the reader as co-creator and destructor. Finally, **comics** are a staple of children's magazines and lend their sequentiality, visual codes and process to their creation.

3

CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES

The gap in literature on contemporary independent children's magazines required sourcing data directly from their analysis and from accounts by those involved in making them. Beyond reviewing practitioner interviews in the media, I systematically analysed a pool of ten independent children's magazine titles (Appendix A), examining two issues each, and interviewed four editorial teams, as well as two illustrators. These two avenues allowed me to gain clarity on trends and patterns and privileged information on the practices and concerns behind them. Section 3.1 refers to the table in Appendix B, while section 3.2 refers to interviews documented in Appendix C.

3.1 Discussion of Descriptive Table and Primary Literature Observation

I designed a method for identifying contemporary independent children's magazine traits, based on Cloutier and Ravasi's 'case summary table' (2021). A quantitative method allows for systematisation of observable data, its easy comparison and the quick confirmation of trends and divergences (O'Dwyer and Bernauer, 2014). The sample consisted of ten independent children's magazine titles spanning seven countries, as described in Table 1. For each title, I examined two issues to identify recurring elements.

As described in Chapter 1, the criteria for this selection are:

- The publication presents as a magazine or fanzine for children;
- Illustration is featured prominently throughout;
- The magazine is actively publishing at the time of the study;
- Was founded in 1990 or later;
- Published in Europe or North America;

- Is published independently, as opposed to a product of a franchise or serving the interests of an institution or company.

Country Titles	Spain	Belgium	France	UK	Portugal	Czech Republic	US
Anorak (2006)				●			
Aquila (1993)				●			
Cuistax (2013)		●					
Dois Pontos (2019)					●		
Georges (2011)			●				
Illustoria (2016)							●
Kiwi (2016)	●						
Namaka (2017)	●						
Raketa (2014)						●	
Triciclo (2017)					●		

Table 1

This selection aims for an encompassing snapshot of current magazines' traits:

- Format and Materiality;
- Peritext;
- Design;
- Content typology and Structure;
- Illustration style and framing;
- Text typology and Authorship;
- Approaches to writing and illustration;
- Themes;
- Roles.

Data on these traits and their patterns provides understanding of current independent children's magazines and informs creative practice. By knowing the sample's trends, I am able to follow or subvert them.

Format and Materiality

- Most titles show consistent dimensions between issues. Many are approximately A4 (21 cm x 29,7 cm), with two issues closer to A5 (17,5 cm x 21 cm). All titles are codices, in 'portrait' orientation.
- Most titles are printed using either offset or digital technology. Two opt for Risography, which imposes a limited palette.
- Most titles feature uncoated paper, with one exception. Covers are often coated.
- Two titles offer additional print forms with their issues. Only one announces them on the cover.
- The spread is the prevalent unit for content sections. Many single pages seem to be assigned for practical reasons (as the reverse of a page which is meant to be cut, or as the first and last pages alongside endpapers). Endpapers are often used to include content.

Peritext

- Covers across issues display a masthead over a full bleed illustration, or illustration over full bleed background, relating to the theme. Most feature the issue's theme, slogan, number and date. Most cover illustrations relate to their issue's theme. The masthead typography and design are consistent across all issues except one, while aspects like colour, contour or texture invariably change from issue to issue.
- The back cover is frequently used to provide information about the issue and its content and will often feature an extension of the cover's illustration.
- Many issues feature an index or contents page and page numbers for navigation. These may feature a preview of content in the form of framed details from its illustrations, be organised as part of an illustration, or be juxtaposed with an illustration relating to the theme.
- Many titles feature editorials, some signed by the editorial team or by the editor-in-chief. Observed editorials feature direct address, and either summarise an issue's content, or offer a short reflection on the theme.

Design

- Most issues feature visual diversity throughout, particularly in drawing styles, typography, layout and colour palettes. Visual cohesion was identified where the same colour palette or consistent graphic design are used throughout an issue.

- Illustration and graphic design were fused in most of the sample. Pages or spreads may feature a full bleed illustration in which text is arranged. Where text is not embedded within an illustration, it is often placed over colour backgrounds. Content section headings are often a graphic extension of the illustration in said section, offering visual unity.
- Content sections may be organised according to a predetermined structure, but are most often presented as miscellaneous sequence.
- A small number of titles feature a mascot, which might appear as a character in a comic or appear throughout the issue as a spot illustration.

Content typology and Structure

- Featuring a theme per issue is an overwhelmingly used strategy. Only two of the examined titles forewent using a theme: each *Triciclo* (2017) issue establishes a narrative in which the content is embedded in, and *Namaka's* (2017) first issue does not identify a theme, but the following issue does.
- Types of content appearing in half or more of reviewed issues were colouring, craft and drawing activities, maze puzzles, search and find and spot the differences games, comics, non-fiction features, recipes, stories, reviews and magazine presentations or subscription invitations. Content is often hybrid, with types fusing together (e.g.: a colouring activity which is also a non-fiction feature about mushrooms). Every observed content section incorporates illustration or, seldomly, photography.
- Most issues feature both fiction and non-fiction, with the two genres often blending (e.g.: fictional characters communicating facts, fictional diary entries by historical figures).
- Most issues feature recurring content sections or structure.
- Most titles don't feature advertising. Notably, an *Anorak* (2006) issue features a 'spot the differences' puzzle in which products are advertised by integrating the illustrations.
- Most titles involve their readers, by featuring reader-made content or calling for their contributions.

Illustration style and framing

- Across the sample, there is a variety of illustration techniques and styles, mirroring the variety in contributing illustrators. Notably, some issues featured different styles of illustration credited to the same illustrator.

- Most rendering is stylised, at times nearing abstraction with figures reduced to geometric shapes, and characters or objects shown over flat colours and abstract compositions. Yet, some depictions are realistic, including renderings of naturalistic or real places.
- Digital drawing appears to be a dominant trend among identified techniques, and contour, shapes, shading and textures were observed in most issues.
- Chosen colour palettes vary among content, with limited palettes used more frequently than full colour. In a given issue printed digitally or by offset, use of colour will change from section to section. Where Risography is the chosen printing technology, the same limited palette is used across the issue.
- Illustration is presented diversely throughout examined magazines, as full bleed, as framed, as illustration over a solid background and as spot illustration.

Text typology, typography and authorship

- The most commonly used types of text are title, editorial, dialogue, informational text, story, prompt, how-to, caption, description, list, synopsis, and review.
- Character speech may take on functions other than diegetic speech, introducing a section, delivering non-fiction information, vocabulary, theme, prompting the reader or appearing as a reader's voice.
- In many cases, typography differs throughout an issue's sections, with one dominant type font, in others there is uniform typography across the issue. Hand drawn type is often used in section headings and most comics.
- Sections feature a title in most issues.
- While some content is written and illustrated by a single contributor, most titles feature content created by two people – a writer and an illustrator. Most of *Anorak's* (2006) text is credited to the magazine's founder and editor in observed issues.

Conclusions

Format and materiality are consistent among primary literature. While digital and offset printing accommodate virtually any illustration technique and palette, paper stock and dimensions, Risography limits all of these aspects. Its use affects a magazine's overall

aesthetic, demands particular technical skill and colour use from illustrators and is aligned with contemporary illustration trends.

Peritexts, a traditional magazine trait, are present in all primary literature with conventional configurations and functions, but overwhelmingly incorporate illustration and typography to varied effects, often referencing an issue's theme. This creates additional sections illustrators can work with. Covers are also overwhelmingly consistent across issues and display conventional magazine elements. Offering printed gifts replicates marketing strategies from commercial magazines and allows for an additional recurrent varied output for illustrators.

Magazine design can be either overarching, structuring the sequence and bringing cohesion to content and visual diversity, or used differently in every section, reinforcing a sense of miscellany. Graphic design is often fused with illustration, with typography authored by the illustrator, or a full bleed illustration as layout, for example.

The use of theme is prevalent, as is illustration. Content typology is varied and favours reader involvement. Intentions for entertainment and education are reflected in the mixing of fiction and non-fiction and in hybrid content.

Magazines feature many different text types and configurations. Some titles may be more open to illustrators writing content, but the norm is a writer-illustrator partnership.

3.2 Thematic Interview Analysis

Interviews were conducted in order to illuminate an understudied area of activity and those involved, as well as provide insight toward making a children's magazine prototype. The sample selection targeted magazines reviewed as primary literature and followed the same criteria. Interviewees are:

1. Four representatives of contemporary independent magazines: Jorge Garcia Valcarcel, one of *Kiwi's* (2016) founders who spoke for its core collective; several of *Cuistax's* (2013) core collective members; *George's* (2011) co-editor Anne Bensoussan; *Illustoria's* (2016) editorial team members represented by Editorial & Marketing Manager Claire Astrow. I will refer to each of them by the name of the magazine they represent.

2. Two illustrators who have been commissioned by contemporary children's magazines: Joana Estrela and Nigel Sussman, referred to below by their first names.

Two interview designs were employed, both exploratory. I used a semi-structured format for the *Kiwi* and *Cuistax* interviews, in which Zoom was the agreed medium. Topics and questions were based on issues surfaced in the creative practice and in the analysis of primary literature (Chapters 3.1, 4 and 5). *Georges* and *Illustoria*'s interviews were conducted as written open-ended questions and answers via email, due to their demanding schedules. I reduced the number of questions and thus the number of topics they might cover (Appendix C). This resulted in an imbalance in the amount of data collected among interviewees. *Kiwi* and *Cuistax* explored all themes and questions in depth, while *Georges* and *Illustoria* did so superficially. Table 2 illustrates to which themes each interviewee contributed.

Themes Interviewees	Two editorial approaches	Collectives' initial motivations and general intent	Independence reflected in financial strategies and constraints	Similar processes and planning strategies	Periodicity as an attractive trait	Materiality and design as identity
Cuistax (2013)	●	●	●	●	●	●
Georges (2011)	●	●	●	●		●
Illustoria (2016)	●	●	●	●		●
Kiwi (2016)	●	●	●	●	●	●
Joana Estrela	●		●			
Nigel Sussman	●		●			

Themes Interviewees	Different postures in art direction	Content for children offers advantages and concerns	Varied forms of experimentation and risk taking	Reliance on untrained writers	Readers kept close	International reach and location specificity
Cuistax (2013)	●	●	●	●	●	●
Georges (2011)	●		●	●	●	
Illustoria (2016)	●		●	●	●	
Kiwi (2016)	●	●	●	●	●	●
Joana Estrela		●	●	●		
Nigel Sussman		●	●			

Table 2

The strength of this research design is that it provides an in-depth snapshot of current individual practices in independent children's magazines. The necessary limitation to the number of magazine creators interviewed is embraced in favour of detailed and specific insights.

Themes discussed in this chapter emerged through interview data coding and analysis and are reflections on real-world practices.

Two editorial approaches

interviewees' accounts highlight two different approaches to the independent children's magazine editorial team structure: a hierarchical editorial team structure (described by *Georges* and *Illustoria*), and a horizontal dynamic as collectives, in which roles overlap (described by *Kiwi* and *Cuistax*). These collectives are composed of illustrators, who take on editorial responsibilities and content creation. The core group and most contributors for *Kiwi* and *Cuistax* are friends or acquaintances. All approaches rely on a core team who discuss and exchange views. An editor-in-chief might take on a variety of tasks in all areas of production.

Both approaches rely on commissioning external contributors. Joana and Nigel have acted as external illustrators who were given briefs. While Joana wrote and illustrated a content section, Nigel only illustrated, and describes his work as making the editor's vision come to life, highlighting different attitudes and degrees of contribution.

Georges name multiple roles involved in making the magazine: the editorial board who collectively establish themes and content, the editor in chief who approves ideas, the designer who commissions illustrators, illustrators who produce content, long-story editor who commissions and oversees illustrator's work, the review section editor who reads featured books and commissions journalists, a professional proofreader who goes over the whole publication, and distribution team. Beyond the core team, *Cuistax* highlight the importance of the designer who creates a visual identity for the magazine and a translator, as content is bilingual. *Kiwi* core members take on all roles.

A single person creating a magazine is considered impossible by *Kiwi*, Nigel and Joana, citing complicated logistics and the importance of sharing workload.

Collectives' initial motivations and general intent

Kiwi and *Cuistax* emerged in response to: the identification of a market gap, a lack of control over publishing aspects, the lack of creative freedom in publishing, the intent to recreate and update a childhood experience and the current children's magazine landscape.

Cuistax saw a gap in 'fanzines' made for children and wanted control over all aspects of a publication featuring their work, something they couldn't find working with established

publishers. *Kiwi* emerged from a desire to make something that related to the collective's childhood experiences with children's periodicals, replicating that experience for new readers with updated format and content. They also wanted to provide an alternative to the philosophy of commercial magazines. Neither claimed a desire for profit or growth, due to a reluctance in taking on more professional editorial roles, preferring to maintain a small scale and their roles in content creation.

There is overlap in intention among interviewed magazine teams, with a focus on pedagogy and entertainment. *Cuistax* specifically intend to educate their readers on illustration and visual diversity, and *Illustoria* are focused on stimulating creativity.

Current children's magazines like *Anorak*, and institutions like *Maison ABC*, an eclectic children's library which offers activities, are references named by collectives. *Cuistax* don't analyse other contemporary independent children's magazines to avoid being influenced by them.

Independence reflected in financial strategies and constraints

Financial aspects are closely related to these publications' identity as independent: illustrator-led titles show a non-profit philosophy and foster volunteer work. They are small scale and don't strive for expansion.

Illustrator-led magazines have total creative freedom, control of all aspects of the process and allow flexible periodicity. These teams see the magazine as a side project, alongside their main employment, while for editor-led teams their work in magazines is their main occupation.

Illustrator accounts vary, with Nigel finding editorial work in general badly paid while Joana finds her payment for a children's magazine commission fair and matching other magazines' rates. Nigel relies on other employment for financial security, but also expressed his availability to work for less on projects he expects to enjoy. Illustrator-led teams seem to compensate for the lack of fair remuneration by not enforcing art direction, and by being lenient regarding deadlines and publishing dates.

Both *Cuistax* and *Kiwi* founded an association in order to deal with the financial responsibilities and bureaucracy the magazines entail. They have also benefited from government funding. They regularly rely on volunteer work from the core collective, and in *Cuistax's* case, from the contributors as well, with the exception of the designer and translator. Both titles maintain a non-profit oriented model where the sales of an issue serve to finance

the next. *Kiwi* relied on crowdfunding for their start and later on subscriptions that allow them funds and security for the year.

interviewees recognise financial and time constraints, but don't consider the magazines being affected by them negatively. *Cuistax* note the positive effect of having a deadline for creators. *Illustoria* find that financial and time constraints lead them to make quick decisions and condition their choice of artist to meet their budget.

Similar processes and planning strategies

Process seems to be similar among all interviewed magazine teams, who describe a first stage of brainstorming and discussion in order to find a theme for each issue, define content types, and distribute content among contributors. Contributors then hand in their work, there might be a back and forth for adjustments, content is assembled and edited, and the publication is printed.

Planning is essential, and a requirement of the subscription model, as *Kiwi* define a year's worth of themes at the end of the previous year for potential subscribers. *Georges* issues are sent to their distribution team three to five months before appearing at bookshops. *Illustoria* require 4 months to develop each issue. *Cuistax* plan for their yearly issue four to five months beforehand. Specifically, a contributing illustrator is given between three weeks to two months to develop content. Both *Kiwi* and *Cuistax* allow for flexibility when a contributor needs more time, accepting an issue might be slightly delayed.

An illustrator might be commissioned for a series of issues in order to have those sections designated in advance, something that the illustrator collectives do habitually, as an amount of content is assigned to the core team in each issue.

Themes are a ubiquitous strategy and guarantee content unity, while differentiating issues. The magazine may be formally consistent, but contributors' diverse responses to each issue's theme are surprising. Themes are decided in different ways: *Kiwi*'s core team sets them; *Cuistax* foster discussion and suggestions from the core team and contributors toward settling on a theme; *Georges*' themes are established by the redaction committee and might be influenced by readers' suggestions. Themes set by *Cuistax* and *Kiwi* vary in specificity and level of abstraction, and seem universal (storm, sleep, food, cats and dogs, magic, dinosaurs). *Cuistax* and *Kiwi* approach theme differently, with the former's issue-specific colour imposition

contributing to theme, and the latter using an onomatopoeia representing universal concepts ('Zzz' for sleep and 'Ñam' for food).

Periodicity as an attractive trait

The two collectives discuss what periodicity, a core magazine trait, offers to them and how it affects their work.

Cuistax were initially attracted to the periodical aspect of the publication, as it seemed deceptively easier to manage a small recurring publication than create a whole book. *Kiwi* maintains that making a periodical requires planning and an assurance in the project's aims and future.

Collectives appreciate the ability of a periodical to allow reinvention within familiarity, by managing changes within constraints. They recognise a magazine can't change radically.

A periodical is mailed to readers who don't usually receive mail. A magazine comes to you, while you have to go toward a book. Due to their irregular periodicity and long period of time between issues, *Cuistax* don't feature content like a correspondence section. Subscribers renew in time, as readers grow older and unsubscribe while new younger readers subscribe for the first time, and so even though there is a repetition factor in the magazine, its perception is renewed with its readers. *Cuistax* see the publication as a living object.

Materiality and design as identity

interviewees aim to provide quality publications. *Kiwi* aimed to update the format they found in magazines they enjoyed as children, particularly in choosing heavier paper stock. They value the materiality of the envelope in which the magazine is sent, and how important it is as the first contact the reader has with the magazine. These envelopes might feature illustrations as well.

Cuistax see their publication's materiality as an extension of their independent, small scale, artisanal philosophy. While *Cuistax* initially featured an A5 format, looking to avoid waste, a larger size was later adopted toward better showcasing illustration. Its material traits are conditioned by their choice of printing technique, Risography, which imposes a limited colour palette and requires specific paper characteristics and size. A poster is regularly included with issues, as well as other printed gifts, allowing the team to work with different formats while maintaining the magazine's identity.

Design creates identity and structure. A designer creates peritextual elements of the magazine – the cover and back cover, contents page, and the whole sequence of content. *Cuistax* credit their designer with defining their identity, valuing that she doesn't make illustrations and thus provides a different perspective to theirs. Format, once consistent through several issues, becomes a part of a magazine's identity and is not likely to change. With *Kiwi*, it seems that design is done internally, by the core collective. In briefs given to external illustrators, page or spread layout specifications may be provided, establishing parameters that condition the contribution.

Different attitudes in art direction

Art direction seems to be most enforced at the moment of contributor selection, with teams expecting content submissions will match the quality of commissioned illustrators' previous work. *Illustoria* describe working with the illustrator to make small adjustments after they've handed in the work, claiming the detailed instructions given to the illustrator prevent the need for any deeper editing. *Georges* speak of artistic direction in the sense that the editorial team makes sure the whole of the publication is harmonious.

Kiwi and *Cuistax* express a lack of intervention in their external contributors' work, suggesting it happens at the moment of selection and that they are usually satisfied with submissions. *Kiwi* also describe voicing insecurities in their work and getting feedback within the collective, as a discussion between friends, rather than art direction. Additionally, collectives seem more ready to intervene and correct text than image.

Content for children offers advantages and concerns

interviewees discuss what led them to making content for children and what concerns it entails.

Cuistax's collective's higher education training on illustration focused on materials for children, such as picturebooks, and they found their work visually catered to a younger audience. They suggest making content for children is more exciting, and more challenging than creating for an adult audience, as it includes games, more fun and crazier content, with prominent illustration. Making content for children can lead the practitioner to think as a kid, and imagine what a kid might like, adopting a freer and more playful stance. Adult audiences might enjoy engaging with content made for children as well, allowing them to feel childlike.

Creating for a young audience can invite more caution than making content for adults. There is concern for comprehensibility and not featuring too much text, due to age related developmental limitations. There is also a concern with content being entertaining and not overly pedagogical.

From an illustrator's perspective, there might be no distinction between creating pictures for adults or for children, except for particular associated content types – e.g. puzzles and games. Nigel is concerned with making fun, engaging, universal illustrations in all of his work.

While creating for young readers, *Cuistax* don't have a specific age tier in mind, avoid patronizing their audience and illustration clichés. They accept that some content will be harder to understand. They make content for themselves rather than for a child, without preconceptions, trusting that the readers will enjoy it too.

Varied forms of experimentation and risk taking

All interviewed teams claim they take risks. For *Cuistax*, it was at the publication's genesis: the risk of creating a bilingual fanzine for children, which diverts from mainstream trends in illustration and content, was something they hadn't seen before. *Kiwi* sees creating and managing a magazine as an illustrator as the main risk, as it is extremely time consuming and financially challenging, equating it to embarking on an adventure. In terms of content, they point to embracing risky themes, things some might find improper for children, such as direct representation of bodily functions and things deemed scary. *Illustoria* admits taking risks by experimenting with new content, series and artists.

Cuistax find experimentation happens in their personal work, rather than their work for the magazine, which has a consistency that they prefer to keep. Joana feels the same, due to imposed time restriction associated with commissions. Nigel is open to the opportunity to experiment, but usually works toward what the editor is looking for.

Reliance on untrained writers

Writing may be done by illustrators within or outside a collective, by authors who are acquaintances of a collective, by journalists or by young people associated with writing centres.

Cuistax have texts written by external contributors. Content is often written and illustrated by the same person, but there are also collaborations between writers and illustrators. *Cuistax* edit texts to improve comprehension and reduce length. The editorial is written by the core collective and brings content together. The magazine is bilingual, with every section featuring Flemish and French writing. This reduces the amount of text they can accommodate per section. They employ a translator for written content, and they enjoy the practice and challenge that translation poses.

Kiwi describe distributing the task of writing among the core collective as a decision, with the short story being penned by an external contributor in various issues. They regularly include a foreign language section, in which the language varies, in part due to interest shown by reader's families. They claim however that there isn't an educational program, and these sections stem from the core collective's own knowledge and training.

Editor-led teams resort to external writers: *Illustoria* collaborate with youth writing centres and *Georges* with journalists.

Joana is an example of an external illustrator successfully proposing writing and illustrating content for an independent children's magazine. Because her content was non-fiction, she found she needed to have specialists revise it. This concern with accuracy suggests the illustrator's awareness of their lack of specialisation and demonstrates how that might be compensated, while legitimising their use of text as medium.

Readers kept close

Readers are kept in mind and in contact and can be both the recipients and the sources for content, directly through feedback and participation, or indirectly.

Kiwi's readers motivate them to work harder than they might if the only motivation was payment. The team is concerned that the magazine could only be accessible to a privileged audience, because their issues can cost twice as much as a commercial magazine, and gift issues to libraries and institutions who show interest, to make the magazine accessible to a wider audience.

Cuistax respect their audience but don't attempt to please it or cater to what is expected a child might like. *Illustoria* consider how to 'hook' readers when defining the content sequence, beginning with easier content.

Regarding reading experience, *Cuistax* note that a child with previous contact with books and other publications might be more receptive to, and engage more, with magazines. Some readers will "zap" through content, going toward that which pleases them the most.

Readers value the experience of receiving the magazine by post and seeing their name on an envelope. Faced with delays in issue publication, readers can be impatient but understanding after an explanation is given. Readers send letters with feedback and their parents interact with the magazine on social networks. *Georges* uses feedback from their readers to inform future themes.

Satellite activities with reader participation are of great importance to the collectives. *Kiwi* and *Cuistax* conduct presentations and workshops, in some cases aligned with current issue themes, something they enjoy and find enriching. These activities allow them to interact with their intended readers and receive feedback. While these interactions don't affect collectives' work directly, they have an essential indirect influence – *Cuistax* derive ideas and creative energy from them. *Cuistax* show children how to replicate their practice in fanzine making workshops, which is more impactful to readers than to future issues. *Kiwi* issues feature drawings made by participants in activities.

Both *Cuistax* and Joana express a desire for young reader contributions, either through interviews, sending in drawings, or a collaboration between a child and an illustrator. *Illustoria* features writing from young writers and *Kiwi* regularly features their readers' drawings.

International reach and location specificity

Cuistax and *Kiwi* discuss geography and reach, with language both tethering them to a location and connecting them to other countries. Both publications are distributed by the core collective, which might result in a short reach for their titles. In fact, their readership and networking are international.

Cuistax have a strong connection with Brussels, depict its locations and interview inhabitants. Brussels' independent publishing scene influenced the creation of *Cuistax*. Simultaneously, they have an international reach, partly due to their participation in European independent publishing and illustration events, where they met other creatives. *Cuistax* have been approached by collectives making children's magazines in Portugal and Canada seeking advice, and who have replicated aspects of the title. *Cuistax* describe their scale as "human". Connections, at times serendipitous, with other creatives, and events in the city, have led to new content in the magazine.

Kiwi don't claim an attachment to a particular location. They focus on universal experiences and values, which might surpass borders and cultures. They discuss their reach, as they have subscribers from remote areas in Spain to other countries and continents.

Language acts as a tether, with *Kiwi*'s grounding them in Spain. *Cuistax* are bilingual, and publish in Flemish and French, which also constitute a connection to Brussels. The word 'cuistax' in particular is specific to Belgium. As they feature French, their issues can be found on sale in other European countries, particularly France.

3.3 Conclusions

All interviewed magazine teams and analysed issues, though aesthetically and structurally varied, seem to follow an undeclared framework, sharing underlying traits, which was used in this study's creative practice: the codex form, the sequence of varied content, visual diversity and the use of a theme. A theme and illustration are overwhelmingly used in the primary literature. Design has a unifying potential along with theme, allowing for unity in varied content and visual diversity.

Choices like Risography as printing technique are evidence of illustrators incorporating contemporary illustration trends into the form, accepting technical limitations as part of the magazine's identity, in place of the most advanced production technologies.

Two different editorial approaches were identified: one resembling conventional magazine editorial hierarchies and consisting of a core team of editors; the second based on horizontality and collegiality among friends, a core team of illustrators. Both approaches rely on external contributors for content. Magazine teams ubiquitously rely on communication among a core group of people, believing a children's magazine is necessarily the product of collective effort, and that it cannot successfully be done by a single individual. All teams share a similar outline of their creative processes.

While the role of editor seems to be a more administrative position, it is creative in envisioning an issue's content, art direction and curation. The role of illustrator can be external to the magazine, and it can be passive, or it can be a vital part in the magazine's making. An illustrator can act as editor and take on various administrative roles, write, design, create standalone images, create games, puzzles and activities and conduct workshops. Content written by illustrators might draw on their experience. An editor may also take on non-specialised writing, with *Anorak*'s founder writing many of its texts. Joana sought

knowledgeable consultation from experts on a scientific subject that she wrote about, and the Kiwi team discussed creating content in foreign languages as they are learning them themselves – this presents the issue of illustrators who are not deemed experts on a topic regularly writing varied content with an implied pedagogical function in independent children's magazines.

Various reasons may lead to creating an independent children's magazine – filling a perceived gap, recreating a childhood experience, or an intention, such as promoting creativity in readers, are some. Making a profit is not among these reasons, nor is it an ambition among interviewees. Interviewed illustrator-led magazines in particular stem from a desire for an outlet for their creative work, as a community of friends who studied illustration that can take control over all aspects of production. The two interviewed collectives do not see their magazines as their main employment and do not wish to evolve beyond a 'human' scale. They value creative freedom and joy, their wellbeing and relationships over monetisation and expansion, effectively providing a publishing platform for creative exploration. All these magazine teams believe they take risks, which might pertain to content or the act of making a magazine as an illustrator. There is an overall emphasis in content being both educational and fun.

Making for children is appealing due to specific associated type of content, such as puzzles. Illustrators may be trained in making illustrated forms for children, leading them to more readily pursue it. While a child audience might limit subjects or comprehension, some interviewees trust their readership with possibly challenging or transgressive content. Making for children allows illustrators to play and be child-like.

Art direction differs among the two described editorial approaches, with editor-run magazines applying it over contributions toward improving quality, and illustrator-run magazines avoiding it when it comes to illustration. Selecting contributors appears as a form of art direction.

The **children's magazine** is a living thing, which reaches the reader and renews with its readership as they age. Its identity is developed through content, format and design choices, and crystallises in time. The implications of periodicity, a core magazine trait, are appealing to illustrator collectives. The magazine's unpredictability within stable and predictable formal and structural parameters is also a valued characteristic.

Language grounds magazines to a particular geography, but they transcend international borders through subscription systems, international events, and book shop interest.

Readers are kept in mind as receivers at the stage of development of a magazine, for instance when establishing content order. But they may also act as contributors, submitting drawings and writing, or providing feedback which affects editorial choices. Collectives value direct contact with children, particularly through workshops, in which they familiarise themselves with their readership, who become sources for motivation and creative energy.

4

PROTOTYPE 1 – EXPLORING THE TENSION BETWEEN LINEARITY AND THE MISCELLANY WITHIN THE CODEX

4.1 *String* magazine

This study's creative practice is an exploratory investigation into the creative potential for the illustrator within the parameters of the independent illustrated children's magazine. I'm adopting the definition of 'exploration' to mean becoming familiar with a subject through experimentation, and entering new territory with the purpose of discovery ('Exploring', 2024). Regarding illustrated content, this exploration refers to identifying novel ways to articulate illustration and text, or to use illustration alone, to convey meaning or an effect.

Motivated by practitioner curiosity for this form and by the possibility of accessing tacit knowledge and new understanding, I began developing a prototype for a children's magazine. My previous experience working in comics, illustration, teaching and in micro publishing provided me with knowledge and tools to take on this task.

I approached magazine-making, historically usually a collective effort, by taking on multiple roles. This would enable understanding the implications of different roles involved in making a children's magazine, particularly those of illustrator, author and editor. I adopted the stance I would outside of the academic research context, if I were to create a children's magazine: I aimed to create original content within the perceived limits of a form, exploring different conceptual and formal approaches for content and format. I appropriated traits and patterns identified in the primary literature, while introducing elements I found to be absent in most of it.

The first prototype would not be addressing aspects relating to content and format. This prototype focused on its starting points, development of content, and its layout and organisation in the codex form. Final artwork and printing were secondary concerns. The first prototype would not lead to the creation of a finished product with commercial viability, but instead to a digital draft of a hypothetical children's magazine, featuring different degrees of completion. This removed the financial element from the process, disregarding budget or any limitations it might impose on making. This first prototype is titled *String*.

4.2 Conception and process

Prototype 1 aimed to explore the creation of illustrated content within and beyond identified parameters of the children's magazine form.

Its conception had three main starting points:

1. Analysis of, and early experiences with, primary literature;
2. Personal experiences and memory;
3. Experimentation, trying out new ideas, materials and techniques, particularly through drawing.

1. Analysis of, and early experiences with, primary literature informed what a children's magazine's content, format and reading experience might be. Regarding format, I considered that every analysed independent children's magazine presents itself in print, in codex form, featuring a cover and back-cover. I also noted their average dimensions and page numbers. They feature peritexts such as title, editorial, index, and technical information sections, which I aimed to resolve alternatively. Regarding content, I focused on short-form content and varied content types. The ones identified in primary literature served as blueprint for the type of content I included in *String*. I also took into account sections found, for example, in *Cuistax* (2013) and *Georges* (2011), which seemed to defy categorisation (Figure 2). Regarding reading experience, I looked to create a sense of miscellany, a core trait of independent children's magazines, and to provide a sense of surprise at the turning of a page, a device used in picturebook making and design, as discussed in Chapter 2. Finally, I aimed to offer interactivity for the reader throughout the publication.



Figure 2

Spread from *Cuistax*'s 'Collections' issue (above) by Adrien Herda, Spread from *George*'s 'Magie' issue (below) illustrated by Gaël Beullier

In a shift from the prevalent tendency among primary literature to feature miscellaneous content connected only by a theme, *Triciclo*'s (2017) issues feature an overarching narrative. In them, each spread is a moment of a character's daily routine, or a step on a path that characters take. Each spread features a puzzle or drawing activity. These narratives don't have complex plots, they are sequences of events and serve as background or pretext for the content the reader is prompted to interact with. While characters are identified in texts, the geometric, abstract rendering style, along with the limited character appearances throughout

the publication, prevent the reader from developing a connection with them. Empathic connection is generated through, among other factors, repeated contact with characters (Nikolajeva, 2013). The combination of the plot's simplicity, the fact that it is narrated rather than shown, and the visual and textual importance given to puzzles and activities render the story secondary to the magazine's interactive content.

Review of *Triciclo's* (2017) issues touched on aspects that I am interested in exploring as a practitioner – storytelling, character development and diegetic immersion. It features an overarching narrative, which I might develop in my prototype and take further. Departing from Fallman's Design Exploration activity (2008), described in Chapter 1, I took on the premise 'What if a magazine featured an overarching narrative with developed characters and plot?'.

2. Personal experiences and memories from my childhood, and observation and experiences working with children in the context of workshops, informed content.

I focused on the memory of the discovery of a reptile head poking out of a hole in the ground at primary school, and how us children engaged in speculation around what animal it belonged to, where hypotheses and facts were shared. After sketching this scene and reflecting on it, I concluded this memory interested me not because of the particular situation, but because it touched on the potential for children to learn from their interaction with the world around them, speculation and each other. I was also interested in the thrill of discovery and the unknown I felt at that moment. Given the immediacy in accessing knowledge today, I couldn't confidently assert that the situation I experienced with my friends would be relatable to children now. But while a reptile can be identified through research, the contents of a locked box cannot. I then took these core elements – children's autonomous investigations into the world, the thrill of discovery and facing the unknown – and fused them into the new developing fictional contemporary story I would use as overarching narrative, with the box at its centre, discarding context-specific details that might alienate an audience.

In retrospect, it became clear that discarding cultural and setting specificity toward universality and timelessness was a recurring choice of mine throughout this first prototype. I discuss this further in this in this Chapter's conclusions.

Experiences in conducting workshops with children provided a sense of the effects some devices might have on a reader, particularly that of the mystery of an unopened box. The context of a summer workshop series at *Viarco* pencil factory in 2020 gave me the opportunity to freely devise practical sessions with children. I based a session on my experience receiving a box as a gift, hypothesising about its contents, and the effect of surprise upon opening it and finding what was inside. Participants would be shown the original box

(Figure 3) and allowed to handle it, then asked to create comic strips depicting their opening of the box and finding out what was inside. It proved to be a very powerful device in holding their interest until the moment the box was opened at the end of the session, and both the guesswork and surprise at the content seemed enjoyable. This led me to adapt the experience into the overarching narrative in *Sting* magazine, merging it with the childhood memory described earlier in this section.



Figure 3

Original gifted box, used as reference for the one featured in *String*

Additionally, throughout the publication, I incorporated real world phenomena and settings, such as speech diversion in conversation, unexpected occurrences within a routine, passing different settings in the course of a walk, and maze-like allotments.

3. Experimentation through drawing and use of different materials resulted in materialising ideas, unexpected creative choices and changes to emerging content. Drawing and exploration of materials and techniques are central to any creative process I've engaged in and serve as important tools for generating ideas and surfacing unanticipated issues, as discussed in Chapter 2. In this study, drawing was the means to 'think' on paper, making mental images and ideas visible. It was a tool for creating a narrative timeline and storyboard, in which pages and spreads were designed, and for developing characters through their depiction and redrawing.

Experimenting with different materials resulted in core decisions for content. Gombrich (1960) describes a human pre-disposition to project meaning into abstract shapes. He argues that blots, natural abstract shapes, and accidents in making can be a part of an artist's creative

process, namely as a starting point which can stimulate invention. In Prototype 2, testing a dry pastel tool while drawing freely led to drawing a magpie, as marks made with this material have a feathery look. Visualising the bird led to connecting several elements in the story which at that point still lacked definition: magpies are known for stealing shiny trinkets, and so mentioning them and their habits could trigger guilt in a character for keeping something that isn't theirs, leading them to confess that they had found a box. I considered bird watching clubs for children, which could be both the activity to which one of the characters is rushing to after school, and the reason they would have information about magpies.

Other aspects, like the magazine issue's colour palette, were settled on through experimentation. I attempted to work with a naturalistic palette, as a challenge, having little experience doing so in the past, and to facilitate the assignment of colours. My assumption that choosing a naturalistic palette would be easier possibly derived from generalising associations we make between colours and natural objects based on our experiences, such as the colour blue and the sky (Bang, 2016). In fact, there cannot be a single specific 'naturalistic palette', as it is a relative concept, and colour in nature is affected by many variables, like light intensity and direction (Hyman, 2006) – for example, a sky can be orange or grey. While choosing a naturalistic palette would make use of colour's ideational role in representing the real world appearance of things (Painter, 2014), it would still require a choice of which value and saturation of the blue hue might represent the sky.

Retrospectively, I consider it was influenced by my early contact with visual narratives for children such as popular animation series, picturebooks and comics that employed a 'ligne claire' style and a naturalistic use of flat colour, as well as by ingrained expectations of what artwork for children should look like, despite much of the analysed primary literature depicting non-descriptive colour choices.

After testing different possibilities for colour technique and palette digitally (Figure 41), working with a large range of colours to achieve a naturalistic effect, my impression was that the emerging results seemed too literal, not contributing particularly to the narrative, and lacking visual sophistication. Retrospectively, my perception of descriptive colour attribution was that it was inferior to the unexpected colour effects of limited, exaggerated or unnatural palettes, of which examples exist throughout time, and can be found in the work of contemporary illustrators, such as Jillian Tamaki, Amanda Baeza or Jérémy Moreau. I was associating sophistication with unusual and surprising use of colour and wished for that effect in my own work.

I worked with layers of colour and transparencies through which colour overlay and mixing might occur. This choice was influenced by magazines that use Risography (Riso) as a printing technique, and by my review of illustrators' accounts of printmaking and how it shaped their use of colour. In both cases colour separation was a necessity and colour palettes were required to be limited. Riso printing combines high production speeds and cheap costs with attractive material properties, such as paper texture, an aesthetic akin to screen printing, with limited colours and the use of overlap, as well as irregularities usually indicative of a non-industrial, handmade product.

I settled on a limited palette of two colours, as previous experience assured me I would be able to use them to create contrasts that might serve narrative and visual composition, aiming to achieve an unexpected effect. Martin Salisbury suggests that the use of a predetermined limited palette of two colours, one warm and one cool, represent a useful 'way in' to working with colour (2022, p. 84). My first chosen colour was yellow ochre, due to the gold box, central to the story, and the second was chosen based on the first, guided by a need for contrast and harmony – a dark magenta hue. While aiming for both contrast and harmony might sound paradoxical, I am leaning on the musical interpretation of 'harmony', which allows for both concordance and discordance, with the latter being useful for generating tension (Hornung and James, 2012), which in this case is visual. Contrast is indicated by their position on the colour wheel, as approximately opposed, and so, near complementary, defining one as 'warm' and the other as 'cool'. Harmony would be found in their similar darker value and diminished saturation, making them both muted colours. I used them as opaque without mixing them, using three values of each of the colours. This would avoid mimesis, already prevalent in the rendering of characters and settings, and allow me to manage effects such as directing focus on the image or differentiating elements. I chose the iPad and Procreate as the main tools for developing final sketches and finalised spreads, due to their portability, versatility and speed.

Critical reflection throughout the process led to further changes in intuitively generated content and structure. For instance, reflecting on a drawing I had made led to drawing something unexpected, moving the project in a new direction. Reflection also looked back, when retrospective examination would lead to redefining the project as it progresses.

4.3 Development and Creative Process

I approached the overarching story as I would a graphic narrative, and in it I embedded types of content found in primary literature. The creative process behind this children's magazine issue then borrowed from the processes of making comics or picturebooks. Some descriptions of these processes by artists can be found in interviews and collected accounts, providing first-hand insight.

The creative process for *String* magazine took place in stages, sharing similarities with the processes described in Chapter 2:

The first stage saw drawing as a tool for thinking and exploring, in order to visualise images, ideas and memories which spark interest or are meaningful. Shaun Tan describes how his regular habit of sketching produced thumbnails of scenes in which he could identify patterns that might suggest a narrative, such as several vignettes of two boys playing, which he connected to his childhood experiences with his brother (dPictus, 2022). Beatrice Alemagna describes how an unexpected drawing of an electrified dog led to feel a need to tell its story (dPictus, 2022). In both examples, the drawing is done without a concrete goal, intuitively producing images that upon reflection prove interesting and meaningful. The very first step in my creative practice was sketching fragments of memories and tentative characters onto paper freely, producing images that I could look at and assess whether an idea, character or scene was to be pursued or abandoned (Figures 35-38). Once put on paper and juxtaposed, it was possible to establish connections between images, leading to a search for references linked to the emerging themes and visual materials, similarly to the functioning of hyperlinks. These connections consist of associative thinking, free and goal-directed association connecting concepts and information, an important part of creative thinking (Beaty and Kenett, 2023). For example, sketching a cat grooming on a page in which I had drawn a child marvelling at a box connected to the 'Schrodinger's Cat' theory, which I then read on, and decided it could be made a part of embedded content. This generative method produced a rhizomatic network of information and potential content, and continued to be used throughout the development of the magazine.

The second stage consisted of organising this network of drawings and ideas into a linear, narrative structure. To this end, I established a story timeline, organising its events chronologically, and drew thumbnails, creating a storyboard. Drafting the story was at first based on improvisation, then as it was put to paper, it was restructured, and changes were

made to incorporate causality and describe a consistent narrative arc. The story's first version was a sequence of scenes along a path that had no specific sense of direction, serendipitous and without consequence. Editing, cutting and remaking scenes was necessary toward providing a sense of one event affecting the next, with each scene leading the reader toward the resolution of a mystery (Figure 39). The narrative shaped its own progression as it emerged, combining construction and improvisation, in a process similar to those identified in comics and picturebooks in Chapter 2.

The third stage consisted of incorporating types of content identified in primary literature into the narrative and developing a dummy of the magazine. At this stage, I made changes to the spreads and tested alternative solutions as the narrative was transported from the storyboard onto pages. I made choices toward improving the spreads' layout and text placement, rhythm of the overall sequence, and narrative clarity. For example, I realised that the maze required more space than the half page I'd originally assigned to it, as it looked far too small to be challenging and readable. I eventually dedicated a full spread to it (Figure 28).

The fourth stage consisted of sketching all the spreads in their final dimensions. It also involved finalising some of the spreads. This required committing to spread layouts and to a final rendering style and colour palette. This stage served the purpose of exploring graphic homogeneity and differentiation, as well as providing a sample of the completed result.

4.3.1 Story structure and its elements

The story, with its narrative arc and plot, developed around two characters and their interaction with a box. Scenes combining these elements emerged during exploratory drawing, where I identified a possible sequence, finding interesting possibilities for causality. Mieke Bal, artist and scholar in literary theory, suggests that story creation follows a kind of "story logic", quoting Herman (2002), and that, as the story emerges, there is an expectation that it should feature certain consistencies in time, place and focalization (Bal, 2021). In Prototype 1, scenes that were created through improvisation were retrospectively altered and reorganised to fit a sense of causality and to draw a story arch. The latter consists of a three section structure, in which the first provides context and introduces the characters, Sara and Hanna, and a problem – Sara found a box and kept it, but feels guilty. The second develops the problem – Sara and Hanna try to guess the box's content and find its owner –, and the third wraps up the story, providing a conclusion to the problem – Sara and Hanna find Zak, the owner of the box, who dispels the mystery of its contents. The simple nature of the three-act structure was useful both for quick definition of the story and for introducing the embedded content.

A story with more than one storyline or several time shifts might become overwhelming and difficult to manage on the limited number of spreads. In this sense, I mostly followed the temporal linearity and single storyline found in *Triciclo*'s issues, which in every case feature a linear progression from a point A to a point B. That is to say, "the events are chronologically in succession and logically in a causal relation" (Bal and Boheemen, 2009, p. 133).

I did include one instance of analepsis through the character Sara's account of how she found the box providing context to the story. It replicates a structure commonly found in western classic literature, in which the narrative begins *in media res*, or mid action, and an explanation of what led the characters to that point is given later (Bal and Boheemen, 2009). The fact that it is introduced and resolved in the space of a spread creates a break in the 'zero degree' narrative, as Gerard Genette calls the moment that is shown to be the 'present' in the story (1990), giving the analepsis space to develop within a capsule, while maintaining a connection to the story. I considered that this demarcation would limit any disorientation a reader might feel with a jump in time.

Characters in *String* are focalised within the narrative, in the sense described by Nikolajeva (2002), according to which the reader experiences events, and the overall plot, through observing them, their actions and interactions. This is due to the absence of verbal narration in the story, instead having dialogue and visual dramatization and clues convey the story and situations. This choice places the reader both outside the narrative in terms of cognition – they know as much as the characters give them, verbally and visually – and within the time of the narrative – story time and discourse time are simultaneous, and dialogue implies the reader is getting unmediated access to the story (Thomas, 2012). It further suggests that the story is being 'shown', not 'told', erasing the narrator figure.

These choices were influenced by my practice of making comics. Aligning comics with cinema and theatre, as mimetic or dramatic art forms, Thierry Groensteen adopts Gaudreault's cinematic term 'monstration' to characterise a mode of communicating a story that consists of showing, rather than telling, events that happen (2011a). When rendering mimetic images, framing is decided and optical perspective, level and distance are conveyed, placing the reader in a specific position in relation to what is shown. Inevitably, a drawing offers an interpretation and a point of view which will affect the reader's assimilation of the graphic narrative. In the case of *String*, while perspective as a drawing system is used loosely, the characters are kept in view in all spreads, with some distance being employed to give protagonism to the setting, for example (Figure 23). Repeated exposure to the characters could potentially generate empathy, which is generated gradually in a reader, who might then become more invested in

the story (Nikolajeva, 2013). Additionally, characters and plot were conceived as mimetic, in the sense that they might be called 'plausible', drawing heavily from reality. Nodelman argues that mimetic characters are perceived as real and serious to a child reader (1990). This choice meets my interests as an artist, as I favour realism in my work and have trained extensively toward that end.

These characters emerged at the start of the exploratory drawing process, and were settled on after drawing several iterations, as they solidified through repetition. As Salisbury describes, "it is often only when two or more characters are drawn interacting with each other that they really begin to assert their respective identities and eventually start to dictate the development of a narrative"(2022, p. 78).

Sara and Hanna's early appearance was very different from their final iterations', as I progressively changed them on the first sketches, the storyboard thumbnails, the dummy, and even in the final spreads (Figure 4). This process was intuitive, with reflection on each iteration resulting in changes, more drastic at first, progressively becoming fewer and subtler as I felt their appearance was suitable for the narrative. Unintentional variations in their appearance in the final spreads also led to small adjustments in favour of coherence.



Figure 4

Character iterations throughout creative process drawings

Personal preference for, and professional interest in, drawing people and using the human figure as conveyor of meaning, determined that characters would be human and realistic to a degree. Towards a sense of realism and visual interest, all characters feature different proportions and visual traits. Choices in rendering, such as the shape and largeness of the eyes, for example, were similar in each of them, conveying a sense of graphic unity. While these characters are meant to be children with some autonomy, their age wasn't explicitly defined. There was a conscious concern with incorporating contemporary clothing

into their designs, something that is more evident in the choice of shoes, which derived from everyday observation (Figure 5).



Figure 5

Choice of characters' shoes was influenced by observed current trends

I worked to avoid their characterisation as mascots, that exist as visual identities and representatives of a brand or title. A mascot can take any form, and represent a human being, an animal or an object, and it often features a backstory giving it context and a personality (Jon, 2022). Its function is to embody concepts and ideas related to a brand, provide a friendly face standing for that brand for the observer to engage with, and provide a lasting impression (Jon, 2022). *Okido* (2007) and *Anorak* (2006), for example, both feature mascots, which the reader might associate with their titles and series, and which at times are featured as characters in stories within issues, as well as other media. While these are narrative opportunities the reader is given to familiarise with these characters, their personalities seem to be little explored and performative, as their stories provide little opportunity for their discovery, focusing on action and pedagogy (Figure 6). With the characters in *String*, care was taken to provide them with inner lives – varied feelings, motivations – and active participation within a story that would plausibly extend beyond the span of the magazine issue. A relationship between the two main characters allowed for the use of dialogue as natural

narration, providing a continuous thread throughout the story, introducing sections without breaking the diegetic immersion of the reader.



Figure 6

Excerpts from comics in *Anorak's Under the Sea* issue (above) by Cathy Olmedillas and Jürg Lindenberger, and the December 2017 *Okido* issue (below) by Rachel Ortas, featuring their mascots

The box used as centrepiece for the story was modelled after a real-life box, mentioned earlier in this chapter. I changed its design to include a locking mechanism. In order to render it realistically, and make sure the character would be able to construct such a box, I designed one myself (Figure 7). This process resulted in a new consciousness of this particular character's mindset, and in the inclusion of a paper craft activity, that offers the reader the opportunity to construct the box following instructions. The box served as a 'MacGuffin' in the story, a term used to describe the plot device of a central element that moves the story along (Kurland, 2006). The box serves this purpose as an object that incites characters to face conflict and resolve the mystery of what it contains and who it belongs to. It further worked as the embodiment of theme, by setting the tone for the publication and content, evoking the concepts of curiosity and mystery.

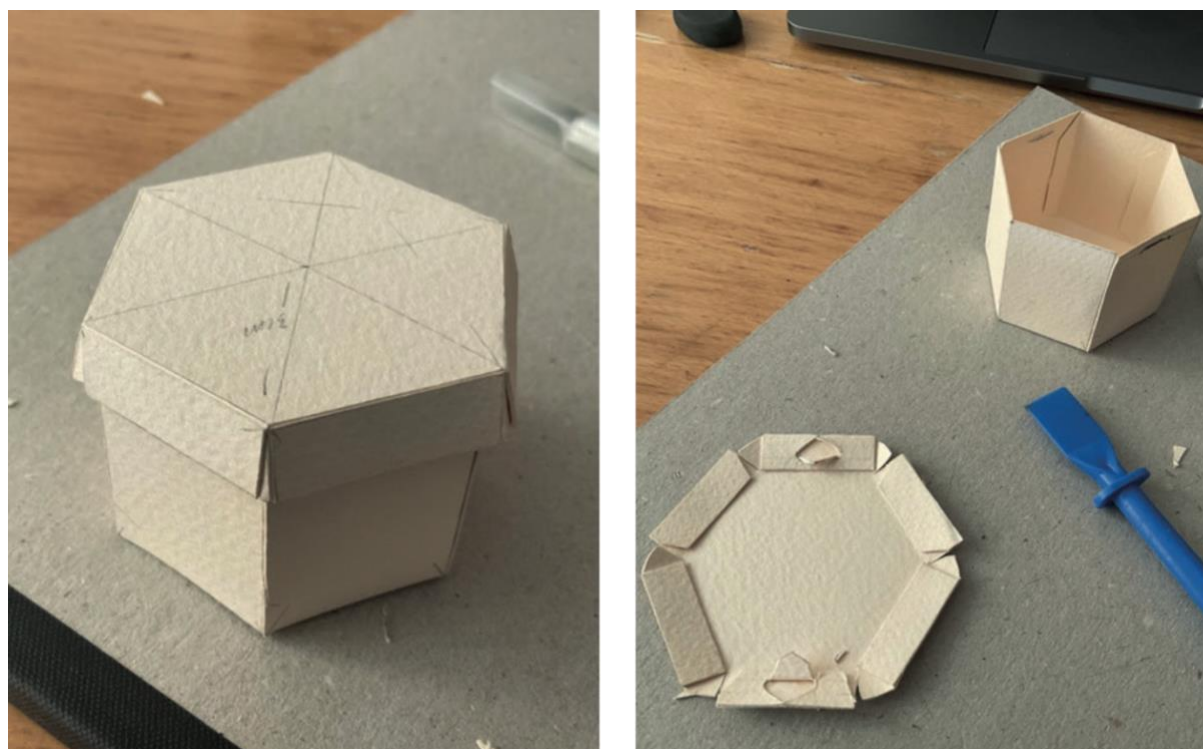


Figure 7

Box designed for Prototype 1

Nikolajeva and Scott discuss how settings in picturebooks establish the nature of the story-world, providing a sense of time and place, as contemporary within a vaguely European context (2006). This is also the case in *String*. Its mimetic rendering of buildings and scenery offers an expectation of genre, as realistic and non-fantastical, of register, as a depiction of the

everyday, and of plot consistency, as there are no dramatic shifts in locations. The spaces shown are mostly impersonal or public, and as such are limited in their role of characterisation.

These settings oscillate between full-spread mimetic depictions of locations, one or multiple mimetic spaces on a same spread, and void areas that characters and text are placed in. Each of these setting configurations has implications regarding 'validity' (Kress and Leeuwen, 1996): complex settings provide a higher sense of specificity and realism, fragmented settings characterised by a few props or patches of scenery reduce that impression, and abstract or void settings decontextualise what is shown, implying a 'generic' nature. By varying degrees of detail throughout the publication, the sense of validity functionally varies too, with more complex settings working toward anchoring the story's action to a concrete location, and decontextualization being used to shift focus to the character's speech and interaction. Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) make a distinction between integral and backdrop setting, with the former being indissociable from the narrative, and the latter not essential to the plot. I'll argue that all settings in *String* are configured purposefully, either serving **the narrative**, serving as a **functional part of embedded content**, or to serve the **layout and composition**, often simultaneously.

As narrative elements, depicted settings are either locations the characters routinely inhabit or traverse, or locations they deviate to, motivated by the story. They are integral in the sense that they are fused with the action in the story, relate to the character's everyday lives, and are often alluded to by them. For example, the park is a place that Zak crosses routinely on his way between home and school, and where he lost his box. It is also where Sara has lunch and finds the box, where Sara and Hanna feel they will be able to sit and reflect, and finally where the three characters cross paths (Figure 23). This setting is not solely decorative because it can be a walking path between locations, and where people might sit to socialise and rest. Moreover, while the school area, street and park are locations characters predictably might inhabit, as they expectedly regularly move to and from school, the allotment and Zak's home are places they would not go to if not for the quest they embark in. To serve the narrative, locations are sometimes depicted using conical perspective, offering a specific point of view for the reader to take, approximate to the character's eye level and at a distance that might suggest the reader is inhabiting the same space (Figure 24).

As functional parts of embedded content, settings can be informative, as in the first spread where the story's path is drawn (Figure 20), they can embody a puzzle and provide its essential elements, such as the allotment maze or the park's crossword puzzle (Figure 28). In the case of the maze, the setting is rendered in an axonometric perspective. Leeuwen and

Kress point out that this perspective does not offer a specific point of view, distancing the observer from the scene, and showing things objectively (1996). This visual device, used broadly in wimmelbooks, as mentioned in Chapter 2, provides visual clarity over the whole setting, its paths and elements, which is essential to the resolution of the puzzle.

Regarding layout, setting may be used to create different sections within a spread, through the mixed use of mimetic renderings and negative space, of which the second spread, featuring the magpie, is an example. While a mimetic rendering of the scene would have been possible, the use of the void results in directing the reader's attention toward character interaction and the two described areas, potentiating the finding of connections between them.

Mimetic settings became hybrid renderings of UK and Portuguese places and traits. This was a result of interest in including site specific characteristics from both countries, and a concern for readers not being able to identify with the story-world. For example, *String* features English park, which, as a Portuguese national, I was fascinated by in a recently post-pandemic Cambridge. I was interested in the different ways people inhabited parks, particularly how they would casually sit on the grass to socialise or study. However, the kiosk depicted in this park is based on Portuguese hexagonal kiosks, whose shape resonated with the story's central element – the hexagonal box. Salisbury discusses a tendency for publishers to coerce artist to portray generic locations in picturebooks, which facilitates globalisation, and argues that this imposition can result in a loss of “sense of the atmosphere and character of real place” (2006, p. 8). He praises the use of everyday detail of a place, its richness and ability to convey a heightened and more convincing sense of reality. In this case, I oscillated between both familiar locations, mirroring my real-life living arrangements at the time, using site-specific details on the basis that they would better serve the story, at times venturing into a generic result.

4.4 Narrative and Miscellany in tension

While developing the frame-story structure and its embedded content, a tension between linear narrative and the miscellany became evident. Making *String* became analogous to walking the line between the two, as an exploration of whether a balance could be reached. Texts on the magazine form, reviewed in Chapter 2, describe it as paradoxical. It is simultaneously familiar and surprising, both a unit and a sequence, and looks to the future while simultaneously looking to the past (Beetham, 1989; James Mussel, 2015; Dillane, 2016).

I concluded that such tensions are natural to the magazine and pursued the challenge of exploring the one between narrative, in the form of the overarching story or frame-story, and miscellany, in the form of varied embedded content such as puzzles, a recipe and activities. With the thematically unifying narrative as starting point and a baseline, I attempted to break perception of linearity through sectioning the story into spreads as scenes, changing layout, word-image interplay, and type of content within each one, and colour scheme in particular cases.

4.4.1 Frame-Story

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the overarching story follows two friends, Sara and Hanna (a synopsis can be found in Appendix D). The overarching narrative is sectioned into 15 scenes, each one a spread, with the exception of the final page, which serves as a 'denouement' (Genette, 1990) where Sara verbalises the takeaway from the narrative, after the plot has come to a conclusion.

Dialogue, as a continued conversation, guides the reader through the magazine sections, in lieu of introductory texts and direct prompts for each section. The story developed around the interaction between two characters, and introducing a narrator could interrupt the continuous flow of the story, and reader immersion. Dialogue in fiction can be a powerful tool toward immersing the reader in the story world and can be vital in advancing the plot (Thomas, 2012). Additionally, read dialogue results in a real time assimilation of the story – the time implied in its speech coincides with the time in which events we are witnessing take place. (Thomas, 2012).

Most narrative sections in reviewed magazines feature a title, narration, dialogue or visual clues that introduce the story's time, place and actors, providing the necessary information to convey context and introduce an informed starting point for the reader. In *String*, the reader enters the overarching narrative *in media res* (Genette, 1990), dropping immediately into the middle of a discussion between the characters, without an introduction or title. This real-world situation of overhearing a discussion is meant to spike the reader's curiosity and provide information gaps that they might want to fill.

Filling gaps is a feature of the assimilation of narratives across different media (Mikkonen, 2017). Umberto Eco proposes that filling gaps is a mechanism present in the reader's relationship with a text (Eco, 1979). The author claims the reader has an essential

role in co-creating texts, as interpreter, and by inferring information about the ‘possible world’ of the story as they read, employing their imagination, and reaching beyond what is given by the text. In comics, Scott McCloud (2017) discusses the reader’s necessary role in filling literal gaps – the gutters between panels – in order to achieve what the author calls ‘closure’ and make meaning of the narrative from its given fragments, connecting what is told and shown with their own contribution. Narrative scholar Kai Mikkonen argues that fragmented sequences provoke meaning making in the audience, by making connections and filling the gaps (2017). He proposes that a cartoonist might choose to omit information with the intent to increase narrative tension and heighten the reader’s interest and curiosity about the story.

By beginning the story halfway through a discussion, an information gap is purposefully created, activating the imagination and curiosity of the reader, and providing a mystery they might engage with – what caused Sara’s odd behaviour?

4.4.2 Embedded Content

Throughout *String*, different types of content sections are embedded into the story. Embedded content draws on types of content found in the primary literature and is tightly related to events and settings within the narrative. The boundary between frame-story and embedded content is clear to me as its creator, but might appear blurred to a reader. Embedded content can be categorised as puzzles (short-form games, to be solved, featuring a single solution), activities (prompts which lead the reader to achieve some purpose), and stories (short visual and/or textual narratives).

Having enjoyed *Slylock Fox*’s detective visual puzzles, and *Spirou*’s puzzle sections as a child, in which puzzles are presented in narrative contexts, I value the deeper engagement they offer and noticed its absence in non-narrative puzzles. The first featured puzzle appears on the second spread (Figure 21), and it’s based on correlation between two groups of elements in the layout: objects in a magpie’s nest, and people realising they’re missing things in a street scene. This entirely visual puzzle serves to illustrate non-fiction information conveyed in the dialogue, while introducing humour, such as with a man holding his trousers that are missing a button. The puzzle doesn’t feature a prompt or instructions.

A crossword puzzle is drawn as if on a crumbled piece of lined notebook paper, on the ground of a park the two characters stop in (Figure 24). While this item appears as parallel to the action in the story, it is tethered to its story world. The drawn rubbish serves as an element of the story’s scenery and a functional part of a puzzle. The paper is integrated into the virtual

space to which the spread serves as a window, and might be understood as something a character might have left behind.

A maze consists of an allotment the characters must cross to get to Zak's building (Figure 28). Its development drew on my experience observing allotments in the Cambridge area, reading an essay anthology about gardens (Various, 2021), and researching London allotments and their maze-like nature. Obstacles in the maze are realistic and fictitious setting-related incidents, such as a large lounging cat on a path, and a gardener being intimidated by a flock of birds. Text is positioned at the entrance and the exit of the maze. I make use of the western reading strategy, starting at the upper left corner and ending at the bottom right corner of a page or spread (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006; Dowd Lambert, 2018), and design hierarchy, to guide the reader.

A final puzzle, based on correlation, appears when characters examine seeds contained in one of Zak's 'time-machines' (Figure 31). This puzzle highlights non-fiction information about how seeds exhibit aesthetical similarities with the flowers their plants generate (drawing on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's work *The Metamorphosis of Plants*, originally published in 1790). I crossed this knowledge with the idea that a seed is analogous to the story's box, in the sense that its content, or what will germinate from one, is a mystery to a layman. As with a seed, this mystery is only solved in time, through its germination and growth. It seemed fitting to have seeds be the content of a box, or a 'time-machine', that points to the future. The visual puzzle juxtaposes seeds and flowers, and challenges the reader to connect the two, identifying each 'before' and 'after'. While the dialogue suggests a guessing game between seed and flower within the diegesis, this puzzle's elements are presented as images in a void, deprived of context, suggesting an objective rendering of information. One of the flowers has a hexagonal shape and is native to Syria (*Fritillaria Meleagris*), as are the other chosen plants. I discovered these plants as I was researching Syrian box making traditions (Bager, 2014). They connected to other elements in the story. There is no direct instruction addressed to the reader, but Zak suggests that the visual elements might be connected indirectly. The choice to avoid prompts in *String* aimed to promote immersion in the story, by not interrupting the dialogue between characters through an address to the reader. I also wanted the reader to infer connections between words and images toward gap-filling and sense-making, rendering the reading process similar to a puzzle.

There are three activities embedded in the overarching story. The first is a recipe for a hummus wrap (Figure 22). Sara describes how she found the box, and diverts toward the recipe, suggesting she is easily distracted. The account is depicted as a comic, with sequential

images throughout the spread. The recipe was chosen because it is familiar to me, flavourful, and very simple to make. The illustrations were drawn from memory. In a recipe, image and text can complement each other in different ways: the illustrations may be a step-by-step guide, a representation of the result or of it being enjoyed; accompanying text may be descriptive or briefly enunciate steps. It can go farther than that. Pointing to Minton's illustrations for Elizabeth Davis' *French country cooking* (1951) and *A book of Mediterranean food* (1951), Martin Salisbury (2022) described how Minton opted for creating lived-in scenes, rich depictions of the setting and atmosphere that could only have come from someone who had experienced them and could communicate that experience through illustration. In the recipe in *String*, I employ three complementary strategies (Figure 22):

- A frameless panel shows the character holding the wrap – an image of the recipe's final result – in the foreground, introducing the recipe as part of a visual sequence. There is symmetry in the interplay between words and images, as words describe what is being shown;
- Linear text serves as a visual divider, and it introduces a break in the embedded analepsis. While words and images are separated by empty spaces, their framelessness, void background and general visual grouping suggest unity (Kress and Leeuwen, 1996). The words "you need:" appear as character dialogue and could be interpreted as addressing another character or the reader. Ingredients are then clearly displayed and identified, as images within a void, toward clarity and objectivity. The sequential rendition of a tomato, an arrow, and slices, from left to right, suggest a causal relationship between a 'before' and an 'after', indicating an action toward that transformation – slicing. All of the described elements are grouped as visual block within the design, further indicating their unity.
- Finally, three blocks of text aligned horizontally, each introduced by a number, describe the recipe's steps succinctly and in chronological order. The first step is textual. The second step is illustrated with a single image, and what is told and shown is similar. The image provides specificity to a generic description of an action. The third step shows a sequence of three small images, in which a complex action is broken into three stages, complementing the text, which alone would not be sufficient as instruction

While these strategies were chosen intuitively, they were refined through different versions. They provide narrative context, indicate the needed ingredients and their initial preparation with the utmost clarity, and described instructions through word-image interplay.

A drawing activity appears as an extension of the hypothesising process among a group of children in the park, who want to figure out what the box contains (Figure 26). Three hypotheses are illustrated, establishing a rhythm and precedents for reference. The bottom of the page features an arm holding a pencil followed by white space, with a piece of dialogue: “Here, I’ll make a drawing of what I think is inside:”. While not a direct prompt, the arm holding a pencil, the white space and the dialogue mentioning the action of drawing and its purpose – to show the artist’s own hypothesis – suggesting to a reader to draw this themselves. The reader’s creation could become another illustrated hypothesis, as if the reader joins the group of children.

A paper craft activity stemmed from the need to make sure a paper locking mechanism featured in the box in the story was realistic (Figures 32-33). I designed a few possible solutions and realised it could become a paper craft activity for the reader to make. As building it connected me to the character who did the same it in the story, I hoped a reader might experience the same. I also imagined it might be impactful for the reader to be able to hold an object central to the story they’d been engaged in. Similarly to the recipe, the needed tools are depicted as clearly distinguished elements, followed by a sequence of three images illustrating steps. Further instructions are depicted alongside the cutting areas.

In all three activities, as with puzzles, I tried to reconcile narrative continuity and reader immersion with requesting the reader’s interaction. This was done using words, dialogue as indirect suggestion, and images, as visual sequences and representations of desired actions. Through this strategy, I offer multimodal clues for the reader to connect and interpret, allowing them to infer how they might participate. By encouraging inferencing, these strategies engage what Kendeou, McMaster and Christ describe as a general skill which children develop from a very young age (2016), and one of the mind’s resources activated when one engages in solving a puzzle (Danesi, 2020). Format, materiality, design and peritextual elements, such as the magazine’s soft cover, the configuration of the title on it, along with inconsistencies in layout and style, may also play a role in this process. Previous engagement with the magazine form and familiarity with the book and other codex forms might lead the reader to expect higher levels of interactivity from a children’s magazine, facilitating the reader’s understanding of what

they're expected to do in this publication, making an indirect prompt sufficient in engaging them.

There are two embedded narratives within the overarching story. The concept of a structure based on a frame-story and embedded stories, or to put it simply, stories within a story, is a literary tradition (Baldick, 2015, p. 134), of which a classic example is *The Arabian Nights* (Bal and Boheemen, 2009). The first embedded story in *String* is a comic. It is an analepsis, narrated by one of the characters, Sara (Figure 22). This account is necessary for the understanding of the narrative and contextualising the character's emotions, as well as provide insight into her personality. The comic, which is a linear sequence, at one point mutates into a recipe section, then continues the retelling of events. This emulated diversion in real-world conversations, in which a speaker might diverge from the focus of a narrative toward subjects that are of interest to them. In order to differentiate the different levels in storytelling, I used a stylised rendering for the character, distorting proportion.

In the second embedded story, two characters share narratives that they are reminded of when reflecting on the box (Figure 25). The stories are retold versions of narratives prevalent in popular culture: the description of the physics theory of 'Schrodinger's cat', and the myth of Pandora's box. Both touch on the concept of the mystery of a closed box, with the former examining hypotheses and how they are valid until the box is open, and the latter serving as a cautionary tale on curiosity. I concluded with a small exchange in which they demonstrate critical thinking about what they had just told and heard. These shared narratives are not essential to the evolution of the plot, but they provide an example of sharing and reflecting on knowledge, while developing on the themes of this publication.

4.4.3 Reaching a balance between frame-story and embedded content

I approached the frame-story and embedded content as separate elements, as it helped to manage and assess the creation, development and articulation of each element. As my intention was to provide narrative cohesion and meaning to the magazine's characteristic miscellany, I found that I needed to merge the contrasting frame-story and embedded content into a unified sequence. During the process of establishing the embedded content within the story, such as puzzles and activities, the two levels began to merge, becoming tightly woven

in the final version of Prototype 1. While it can be argued that the maze could be removed from the publication without affecting the overall narrative or plot, the reader learns that crossing the allotment is a part of Zak's routine. Sara and Hanna also learn this about him and are impressed by his navigating skills. Even if a section isn't vital in advancing the plot, it can enrich the story, for example, through character development. But for miscellany to be perceived in the form of varied sections, it was necessary to highlight the two different levels, otherwise the narrative would become prepotent. Differentiation was achieved through design, illustration style and colour choices.

Visual hierarchy of layout elements played an important role in the balance between narrative and embedded content. Manipulating scale and placement of different elements altered their perceived prominence within a spread or created a separation between narrative and embedded content. This is supported in theoretical texts on design, discussed in Chapter 2. Graphic design projects combine visual and textual elements, with attention to their relationships and consequent effects as a whole, as well as the hierarchy they communicate, to guide the reader's eye (Dabner, 2023). Texts on information design emphasize that a designer should first decide the order in which information should be assimilated, then establish a visual hierarchy through the manipulation of scale, weight, colour, tone, graphical elements, space and placement of elements (Coates and Ellison, 2014).

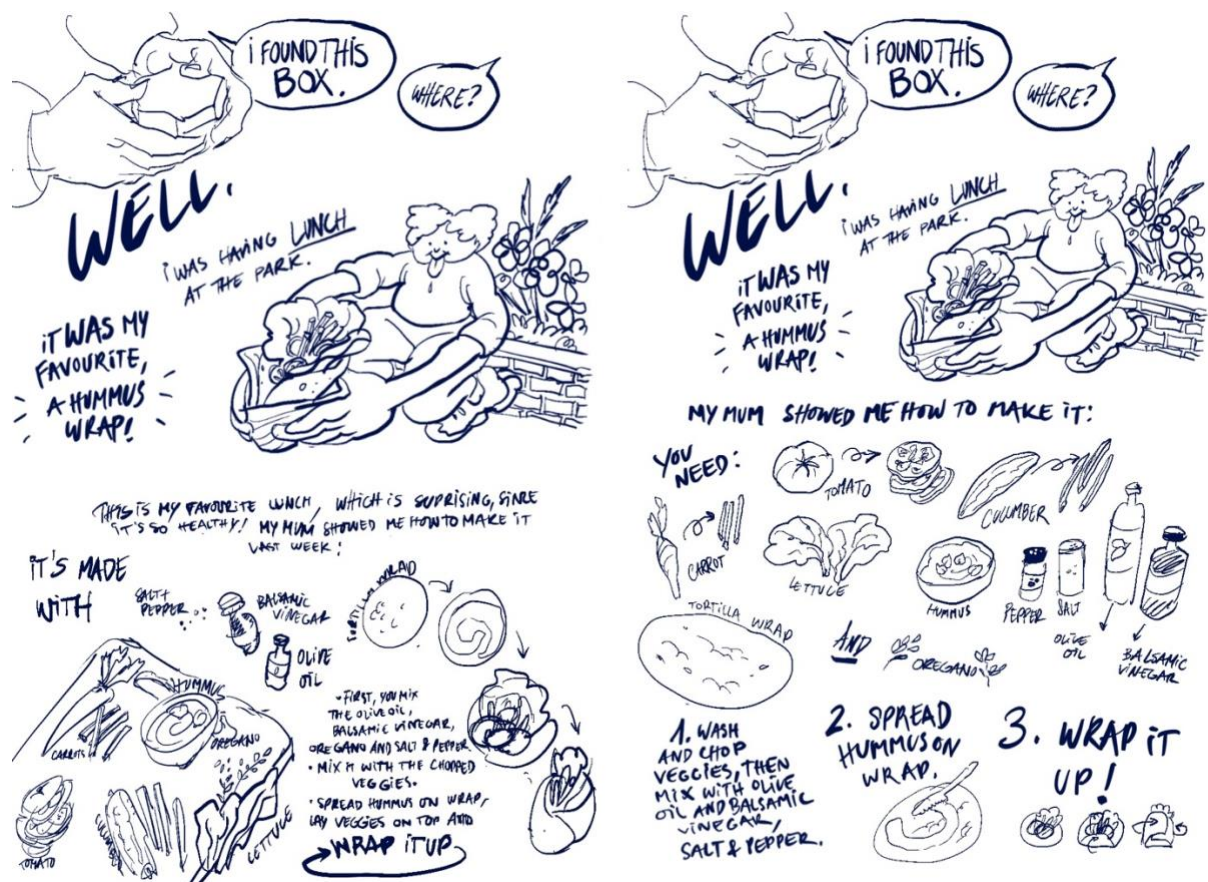


Figure 8

Initial layout (left), final version (right)

The recipe section showcases the consequences of graphic choices on communicating hierarchy in content and differentiating it (Figure 8). On the left page, I initially allocated around two thirds of the page to images of the character's hands in the present, and her past self holding the wrap. The size of the wrap is exaggerated to signify its importance and transition to the recipe. On the bottom third of the page, I included visual and textual information describing the wrap's contents and steps to make it, as a cluster of smaller type and images. The small type and illustrations for the recipe seem to communicate the recipe's lesser importance, and something one might dismiss in favour of assimilating the story. In the final version, the ratio of allocated space in the page is reversed: the elements that tell the story occupy around a third of the page, with the rest containing the recipe. I reorganised text and changed type size and boldness throughout the page in order to make certain words more prominent. This shift visually attributes a greater importance to the recipe over the story. Additionally, while in the first version ingredients are arranged on a cutting board, anchoring them in the story world, on the second version ingredients are arranged floating on a flat colour background, breaking with the story world, communicating objective description rather than

narrative. Scale, weight, positioning and allocated space were defining factors in changing the balance and shifting the perception of importance, between frame-story and embedded content.

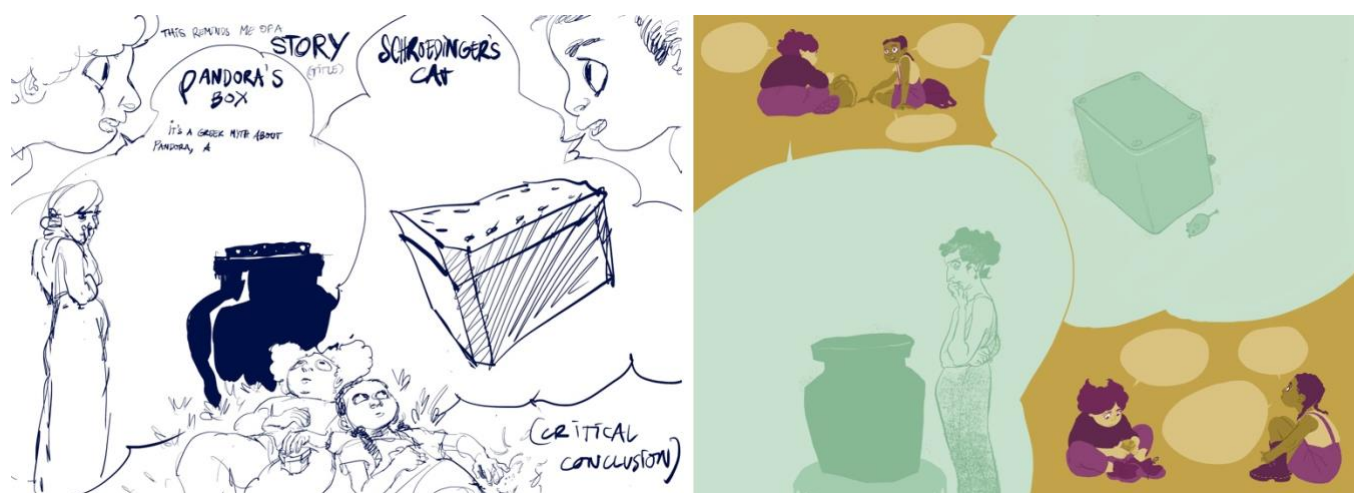


Figure 9

Initial layout (left), final version (right)

In the story spread, it was necessary for the articulation of text and image to communicate that the two characters are sharing stories (Figure 9). The main issue here was not the perception of importance, it was differentiating the two levels of narrative – frame-story and embedded stories. I used speech bubbles to separate the story-world of the overarching narrative from the characters' stories. In the first version, I opted for a symmetrical structure and had the heads of each character in a large scale at the top corners, looking at each other. Two large speech bubbles, with each 'tail' pointing at the corresponding speaker's mouth, feature text and an illustration relating to each story, in a different rendering style from the characters'. At the bottom, I drew the two characters laid back, looking at the speech bubbles, as if listening to, or reflecting on, the stories. A hint of grass reminds the reader of the scene's context. I found that both the symmetry of this composition and the simultaneous depiction of the frame-story characters as speaking and listening, caused temporal stillness and potential disorientation.

In the final version, I included space for critical reflection on the stories at the bottom of the spread. While the gutter still acted as divider between told stories, I favoured an asymmetrical structure, according to the western reading strategy, drawing an eye path from the upper left corner to the lower right. The top left and bottom right corners feature the two characters in a smaller scale than the illustrations in the speech bubbles. The large character

depictions in the first version shift importance to the frame-story, even though the speech bubbles occupy much of the spread, while in the second version their smaller scale shifted perceived importance to the stories being told.

Colour proved crucial toward differentiation. I had determined the same two-colour palette would be featured throughout the publication. Nodelman describes how, of all the visual elements, colour is the most impactful (1990, p. 141). By introducing a new colour on this spread alone, a shock could be produced, effectively defining this colour as foreign to the rest of the magazine, and to the frame-story. By using the speech bubbles, signifying dialogue and its origin, as frames, and depicting them and their content as monochromatic in a different colour, I visually and semiotically separated the content from the frame-story, while making clear that it is subordinate to it.

4.4.4 Word-image interplay

All of *String* is built on the interplay between images and words and the effects of ‘silent’ illustration. While many of the choices described below stemmed from a tacit understanding of the use of verbal and visual codes to achieve narrative and compositional effects, reflection allows me to communicate how these effects are produced.

Most of the text is presented as dialogue but takes over various functions. It implies a speaker and contributes to characterisation, alongside the characters depictions. It also provides a thread across the magazine that guides the reader through the evolution of the plot and the embedded content. The dialogue is presented either within speech balloons that point to the speaker, or as blocks of text, with a speaker identified by context, or a character’s open mouth in its proximity.

Type can also convey meaning as a visual element. Variations in typography communicate tone and importance of specific words, particularly with the use of bold letters and different scales (Serafini and Clausen, 2012; Coates and Ellison, 2014; Dabner, 2023). *String*’s lettering is hand drawn throughout, providing graphic unity and allowing the type to have plasticity and change organically to produce different effects, such as the impression of change in pitch in the character’s speech, communicating the text’s function as heading or integration within the image’s perspective and composition (Gerbier, 2017).

In conjunction with images on a spread, the issue’s text has the following functions:

- **It takes over traditional index and content page functions.** The reader is given the tools to navigate and anticipate the overarching narrative in the first spread.
- **It promotes reader immersion.** Devices borrowed from picturebooks, such as full bleed illustrations, are combined with text that carries the narrative, avoids calling attention to the publication as device, and at times includes the reader as character.
- **It is used to convey a visual path for the reader.** In the second spread, floating dialogue accompanies the characters' iterations along a diagonal (Figure 21). The causality of the speech helps guide the reader from the top left corner, toward the bottom right corner.
- **It is used to point to elements on the spread.** In the maze, characters mention items that can be found within it (Figure 28).
- **It takes the role of narration,** as when Sara describes how she found the box (Figure 22).
- **It provides factual information,** as in the maze, where a character explains how the hexagonal rocks in his garden are basalt columns native to Northern Ireland (Figure 28).
- **It instructs,** as when Sara enumerates the steps involved in making her wrap (Figure 22).

I prioritized my interests as practitioner, and preference as a reader who enjoys being challenged, by having the reader infer meaning from word-image interplay. Readability and comprehension are often secondary concerns, with the possible outcome of hindering engagement from younger, more inexperienced or distracted readers. The function instruction makes the most use of inference, indirectly prompting the reader to engage with content. Perry Nodelman states that “all pictures provide images that demand further explanation” (1990, p. 175). I concur that careful observation of images can lead to questions. Some based on the acceptance of the diegesis as reality, such as why a character might be wearing a specific garment or showing a particular expression, or how an object came to be where it is. Some questions might pertain to graphic aspects and their meaning, such as why two distant objects share the same colour. I often construct images that require the reader to carefully observe, actively question, and engage in abductive reasoning. Abductive reasoning proposes that an observer derives hypotheses from the observation of indices, or surprising facts, which beckon an explanation, and constitutes a first step in the process of inquiry (Bellucci, 2018). When

creating the spreads for *String*, I had the reader identify a puzzle through visual indices, leading them to question an unexplained scene and use of colour, as in the example described below.

In the second spread (Figure 21), dialogue states that magpies steal, a quality the reader could transpose to the magpie in the spread, serving as a clue to its actions in this context. The magpie is featured repeatedly, indicating a progression through space and time. This simultaneous succession creates an eyepath, of which lived experience and logic might suggest a point of departure and one of arrival, describing the magpie's flight movement. This path bridges two parts of the spread not mentioned in the dialogue: the magpie's nest and a street scene. It is an absence of text, of a written explanation, and of a mention in the dialogue, regarding these parts of the image that might generate questions for a reader. These absences, combined with the suggested flight path of the magpie suggest that it is through examination of the images that sense-making can occur. I intend for the reader to infer connections between the contents of the nest depicted in the spread with the missing objects in the street scene, guided by the magpie's flight and colour (Bang, 2016, p. 97).

The crossword puzzle is not mentioned in the dialogue as I wanted to create a distinction between this embedded content and the frame-story. However, words point to the puzzle and anchor it in the story-world: one of the characters mentions rubbish on the ground, the paper features the title "things I found in the park (and wish I hadn't)", and the words to be found are names of rubbish pictured among the grass. I employ a complementary word and image interplay (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006), amply explored in picturebooks, having words suggest the more encompassing concepts of "rubbish" or "things" in the setting of the park, and pictures offer specific objects under those categories which the reader can name, within a depiction of the grassy ground. Words and images, which alone would not convey the same information, work together to fill each other's gaps.

In *String*, there is one wordless spread: a full bleed rendering of a park which the characters traverse (Figure 23). Like Rémi's description of 'wimmelbooks' (2011), it offers several focus points for a reader to settle their attention on. Visual hierarchy is suggested through realistic employment of perspective, with elements closer to the observer appearing larger than those in the distance. Only one other visual code was used to indicate visual hierarchy: blocks of a darker tone in the form of silhouettes were used to identify the two characters featured in a small scale through contrast with surroundings. The choice to insert this spread between others featuring multiple images derived from reviewing *Cuistax* (2013) magazine issues, which often feature wordless sections. According to picturebook and comics

theory, it can result in slowing down the rhythm and pace of the story, offering a picture the reader can spend time examining (McCloud, 2017; Dowd Lambert, 2018). The absence of text on a visually busy spread, further imprints a sense of silence in the scene.

4.5 Format, design and reading experience

When it came to format in Prototype 1, I emulated the primary literature. This was because my research questions led me to first focus on exploring content rather than form. I determined that format was an avenue worth exploring in greater depth, due to how it might affect content and the experiences of creating and perceiving the magazine. A second prototype would consider exploration of format from its start. This allowed me to dedicate Prototype 1 to reflection on the tension between narrative and miscellany in content. I stopped working on Prototype 1 at an unfinished stage, when sufficient material and experimentation had been achieved for this purpose. *String*'s final form is digital, while being created for print. It takes the codex format in the conventional A4 dimensions, and spans 32 pages, including the cover. Peritext, specifically cover, index, editorial, was considered and subverted in this prototype.

String features a cover, back cover and title, the last elements of the publication to be designed. I intended to have them provide an accurate expectation of this *String* magazine issue's content, while compelling the reader to pick it up and open it. The cover features the issue's theme: 'curiosity'. I identified retrospectively that this was the main leitmotif throughout the narrative. While in the primary literature, as confirmed by the interviews, theme is often determined before content development, finding it after content is developed echoes what seems to be the norm in writing. In literature, theme often emerges intuitively as the writer puts words to paper, identified through retrospective clarity (Burroway, 2019).

The title, *String*, was defined through reflection on Prototype 1's final publication, but with continuity and hypothetical future issues in mind. Initial contenders for title were actions, onomatopoeia and objects one might associate with childhood. 'String' emerged as something a child might find in a pocket and represents raw material for crafts. It resonated with the idea of a linear narrative, which I saw as an element this hypothetical magazine might feature in every issue.

For the cover, I designed two illustrations: one highlighting the characters Sara and Hanna and their quest, the other highlighting the box that serves as a centrepiece for the story

(Figures 18-19). The former makes use of the title visually, integrating a depiction of the string as a graphic element of aesthetic interest, and as a part of the image's scene, entangling the characters. I used the colour scheme and rendering style of the frame story. The characters are shown falling, implying danger, excitement and a sense of urgency. This cover introduces the characters to the reader before opening the publication and has the potential to raise questions about who they are and what will happen to them, generating curiosity.

The other cover sketch, highlighting the box, features hands opening the box for the reader. The colour palette used differs from the one inside. I ultimately found it didn't contribute meaningfully to the experience of the magazine, or communicate its contents effectively. It additionally presented the risk of offering an unrealistic chromatic expectation of the contents to the reader. In picturebooks, where a picture is always featured on the cover, it is desirable for the cover illustration to create adequate expectations of the book's interior, through the use of an illustration present in the story, or through the creation of a new illustration which might reflect the story's essential nature (Nodelman, 1990; Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006).

In both sketched covers, the illustrations take over both the cover and the back cover, leaving voids for text on the latter, as several analysed magazines included information there. I considered the provocation 'Curious about what's inside?', which would serve the same function as the cover, in terms of impelling a reader to discover the magazine issue's content.

In both versions, the title is drawn similarly, with hand drawn cursive typography, in a single continuous line, emulating string. In primary literature, and theory on the subject (Nóbrega, 2017), the title is one of the elements that contributes to familiarity in magazines, through its consistent appearance in every cover, with minimal changes, such as colour. If I were to make future issues, I would replicate its effect in the two described sketches, integrating the word and line in the composition of the illustration as a prominent graphic element. The loose but similar typography, along with the device of its integration in the illustration, would work toward that familiarity.

Two prevalent peritext sections, the editorial and the index, were replaced by dialogue and its interplay with images. In primary literature, the editorial often appears in the first pages of the magazine, and its function is to provide a voice to the magazine, written by the editor or editorial team, serving as guide while setting a tone, addressing the reader. It also provides a narrative overview of the magazine's content, mentioning an overall theme and at times anchoring it in present day issues, as shown in *Aquila's* (1993) January 2021 issue (Figure 10). The index or table of contents is a clear list of sections, their titles, often including page numbers and at times visual previews for each one, and its function is clarity in navigating the

publication. *Aquila's* (1993) analysed issues featured the index and contents integrated in a large illustration, without a clear interplay beyond juxtaposition, and a continuous line connecting each section title and description, with the image relating to the issue's theme (Figure 11). In *String*, I experimented with having the functions of editorial and index be taken over by the dialogue and embedded in the visual narrative.

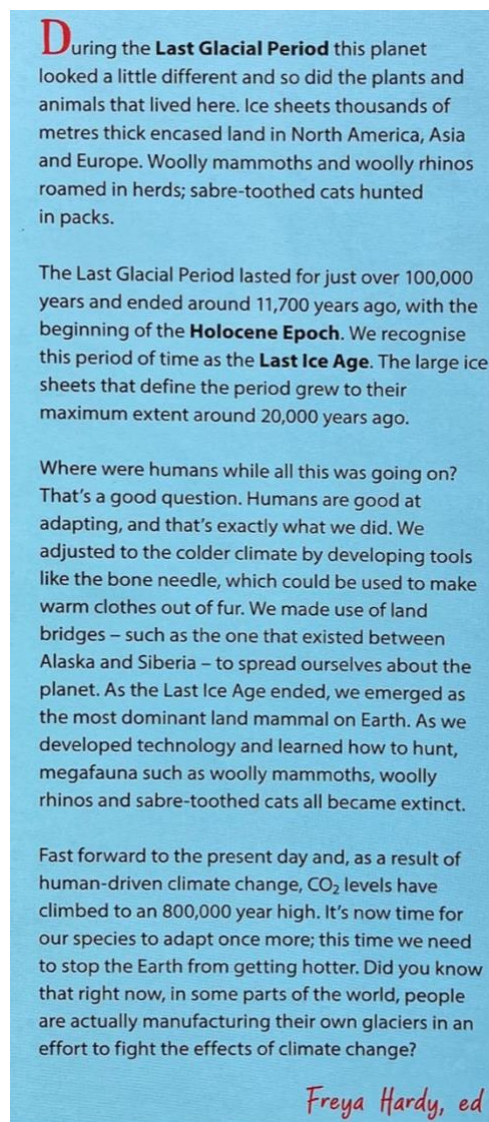


Figure 10

The editorial in *Aquila's* January 2021 issue



Figure 11

The contents page in *Aquila's* January 2021 issue, illustrated by Kaley McKean

The first spread in *String* features an aerial view of all the locations in the issue (Figure 20). A dotted line describes the path the characters will take through the city: this is the path through the issue's sections. This line resembles a ribbon or string and serves as visual representation of linear navigation through the magazine's content. A close up of the characters stands over the landscape, as their conversation continues, describing the places they will be walking through. My intention was to have the map-like rendering of the story's setting with a drawn route, along with the verbal description of a sequence of locations, introduce a guiding voice and clarifying navigation through the story and the overall publication. Zak's flat isn't mentioned in the dialogue, as the characters aren't aware at the start that their path will take them there, but its building is rendered in the visual overview of the city, without any sign to its importance. This is an instance in which the need to serve the narrative realistically – a character has the intention to take a path, but no knowledge of a detour they will be taking – was incompatible with the intention to replicate a function found in primary literature – to help navigate the entirety of an issue.

I later found a similar device was used in the picturebook *The Shopping Basket* (John Burningham, 1980). The book's first spread introduces different settings through juxtaposed captioned illustrations, in which the scenes of the story will take place (Figure 12). Together they identify a path and anticipate the story's events. Settings and their order are shown in *String*, but embedded content isn't. While the index was borrowed from children's magazines, it only helps navigate the narrative, not the content embedded in it. The final version of the first spread might be closer to the peritextual maps found in literature and picturebooks, which, as Goga and Kümmerling-Meibauer explain, anchor events to a specific field, stimulate the reader's imagination and prepare the reader for the story (2017). Maps in this context can further contribute to helping the reader organise their reading experience and to develop their own mental maps of places they inhabit. The magazine index is necessary to the navigation of a non-linear collection of sections, and to individual selective reading experiences particular to the form, in which a reader might prefer to jump to a type of content over another. In *String*, I found the linearity of the narrative itself served as a guide.



Figure 12

A spread from John Burningham's *The Shopping Basket*,
(Reproduced with kind permission of the [John Burningham estate](#))

Other navigational devices such as page numbers, were not present in all primary literature. I did not choose to include page numbering in the final version of *String* because as a non-diegetic element within the illustration (all spreads are full bleed, leaving no margins to accommodate it) it would call the reader's attention to the format and potentially disperse the immersive effect that guided many of my choices.

I chose not to have titles in each section for the same reason, as it would highlight the segmentation of the story. I experimented with rendering some of the first lines of dialogue on each spread in bigger or bolder typography, so that it could be assimilated as a heading style. I chose words that would adequately capture each spread's scenes, while maintaining their role as speech. This strategy has the unwanted potential to communicate variations in tone, as often bolder, larger words identified as spoken words in comics or picturebooks are interpreted as shouting, with their size and boldness analogue to their noise level (Dowd Lambert, 2018).

Texts on design suggest rendering text in capital letters hinders reading speed (Coates and Ellison, 2014, p. 121), and similarity between letters makes reading difficult (Albers, 2013). In contrast, in comics the majority of hand drawn type is depicted in all caps, which is said to aid legibility due to its visual regularity, as opposed to lowercase or cursive writing (Gerbier, 2017). It was my training in comics that led to using capital letters throughout *String*, and the belief that lowercase letters, as I draw them, would hinder legibility.

I've detailed in this chapter how each spread was built on complex relationships between images and text. Choices regarding layout and variation in graphic aspects of the images within a single spread also influence the perception of the magazine issue as a whole, and its reading experience. Sudden changes in aspects like visual rhythm, underlying structure, amount of information and rendering style among spreads result in a jittery reading experience, forcing a reader to readjust to the content presented to them at each page turn. This produces the effect of surprise, through formal means, in a sequence that would be linear and uniform in a purely narrative publication. Figure 13 shows an alignment of several spreads, highlighting their different underlying structures and visual compositions. I felt that this effect would visually emulate the experience of reading an independent children's magazine, in most of which these changes happen naturally, aided by the fact that different illustrators create content throughout.



Figure 13

Alignment of spreads showing variety in layouts

Additionally, I actively pursued the effect of **immersion** in the story as I developed this prototype. I intended for the reader to take the place of an observer within the narrative, intervening and participating in the story world. I did this by rendering most of the issue's text as dialogue, introducing the story in media res, and avoiding framed content, using full bleed illustrations in each spread. In the context of picturebooks, scholar Clare Painter, describes how presenting an illustration within a border renders it as a 'sight' for a viewer, while a full bleed page illustration renders what is depicted as part of the viewer's immersive world (2017). I also avoided using graphic design elements such as lines as dividers, frames within the spread, or text addressing content directly, as these would shift attention from content to form, interrupting the illusion created by the visual narrative.

In many of the spreads, particularly ones in which the reader is invited to intervene, I looked to create the phenomenon of diegetic border crossing (Mackey, 2003), the illusion that the reader crosses the border between reality and the story world. An example of this effect is the crossword puzzle (Figure 24), in which the scene's point of view places the observer close to the ground and away from the characters, as if the reader's sitting in the park nearby, finds the crumpled paper on the ground, and is able to write on it.

4.6 Conclusions

The creative practice described in this chapter aimed to provide answers to the research question 'What potential lies in the independent illustrated children's magazine for practitioners' exploration of illustrated forms?'. It consisted of creating a new children's magazine issue, combining traits found in primary literature and elements and strategies drawn

from other disciplines, such as comics and picturebooks, as well as my experiences and preferences on both personal and professional levels. The resulting process and publication embodied a tension between narrative and miscellany, and much of its development consisted of attempting to find a balance between them, through word-image interplay, design and graphic choices.

This creative practice brought insight into my role as practitioner in making a children's magazine. Having control over all aspects of this magazine's production, I could create short-form illustrated content without a brief or previous experience, enjoying total creative freedom within selected parameters identified in primary literature. In this process I stood as the main source for raw material:

- I introduced elements from personal experiences and observation – memories, cherished objects, a recipe, real-world details and phenomena that have affected me, texts I read;
- I employed skills, knowledge and training acquired in other professional practices and areas of study – conducting workshops with children, comics making, picturebooks, narratology, colour;
- I continued to explore preferences and tendencies in my creative practice – to encourage inference, to explore narrative and character development, to draw from reality.

In this process I developed my knowledge and references by researching *for* illustration and felt a need and responsibility to continue to do so in order to gather material for further content. It seems likely that in the long term, with so much varied short content depending on one person, a lack of learning, skill evolution, discussion of ideas and outsider input could lead to repetition and stagnation, limiting the publication's potential for growth.

The creative process was characterised by two alternating approaches: relinquishing of control and managing emerging work. Improvisation at the idea generation stage and the storyboarding stage allowed for the release of control from the work being developed, and for the emergence of unexpected ideas and solutions. Materialising ideas through drawing was essential for reflection on the work being made and its evolution.

I intended that embarking on this task alone, taking over all aspects of the publication, excluding printing, would provide insight into the different roles involved in the making of an

independent children's magazine. This autonomy allowed me to continuously shift from the spread to the whole, and rework them. It made me realise that in a real-world context, with multiple contributors separately submitting different work, at times with the oversight of an editor, there are two levels of perception:

- An editor has a privileged view of the whole, the power to rearrange sections to serve the overall experience, and may even be able to ask a contributor to make small changes to their submission;
- A contributor works with a view of a page or spread, rarely the whole publication.

In independent children's magazines in which there is a horizontal editorial team, where no one person takes the role of editor, illustrators might gain access to a view of the whole as contributions are planned and as they are submitted, and have a role in organising the overall experience.

I realised that while an editor might have considerable power in shaping the publication, they cannot fully anticipate what illustrators will deliver when giving them freedom to author and illustrate a section, there being an element of surprise natural to the process. It must also be impractical to make significant changes to each submission, and a refusal to publish one implies a financial loss. There must be a trust in the contributor and their process underlying any invitation to participate.

Making decisions and changes to the publication and content was immediate, without the delay of communication between multiple people, but led to the entire process spanning several months. The advantage of delegating sections to several contributors is the simultaneous creation of multiple sections, and the consequent reduction in production time. The major advantages for a sole creator producing an independent children's magazine are full creative freedom and control and visual and graphic unity, at the expense of visual and conceptual diversity, multiple perspectives and discussion, and time efficiency. From my experience in making this first prototype, it would be impossible to maintain such an activity alone, releasing issues multiple times per year, in a real-world context, even less so without some alternative form of financial support.

In primary literature, theme seems to be the starting point for the development of content, something validated in the *Kiwi's* (2016) interview's description of their editorial yearly planning. It assures there is unity throughout an issue, as in real-world contexts magazines work with multiple contributors, and each is given the same leitmotif. Still, submitted content is

visually varied, often at a structural level when contributors are responsible for designing a full spread. If the strategy employed in *String*, namely having a theme or narrative organically emerge from content, was employed in a real-world context, where a number of contributors would submit work beforehand, there would be very little unity to the magazine issue. This is visible in *Namaka's* (2017) first issue, as discussed in Chapter 3. It would be interesting to see other starting points, beyond a textual theme, being used in the conception of an issue, and how editors, illustrators and authors might approach the creative process in such a case.

Finding a balance between narrative and miscellany was the primary crux. The creative process became a back and forth between the two, manipulating words and pictures to achieve effects that would serve to either unify or differentiate. Variations in layout and word-image interplay were necessary to create a compositionally diverse sequence of spreads, avoiding predictability while maintaining graphic unity and narrative linearity. This exploration of a tension and search of balance led to unexpected results, and to a hybrid form, which might resist quick categorisation.

Word-image interplay is featured throughout *String* and is wielded toward serving key functions: anticipating the narrative, storytelling, guiding a reader through a spread, prompting the reader to engage, and demanding inference toward sense-making. The intent to immerse the reader in the story and avoid direct prompts led to employing word-image interplay to turn the reading experience itself into a puzzle. This is something that interests me and is prevalent in my professional visual narrative work, and it can be said I'm prioritizing my interests over readability and comprehension. Additionally, this could potentially hinder engagement in games or puzzles for younger, more inexperienced or distracted readers.

By integrating magazine content categories, peritexts and reading experience traits with a narrative, I could create a publication whose hybridity allows it to claim the magazine identity. The key elements for this recognition are the cover design, the finding of puzzles and activities within it, as well as its intended materiality and periodicity.

Graphic and layout choices worked toward simulating the experience of reading a real-world independent children's magazine, offering changes and the effect of surprise from spread to spread. Other key aspects of the magazine reading experience, such as the zapping effect and the reader's freedom to customise their reading path, were harder to achieve in *String*. A reader might choose to not engage with a puzzle or activity, but if they choose to skip an entire spread, they risk missing a link in the overarching narrative, compromising the

understanding of the story. Additionally, an overarching narrative made the function of a magazine index redundant, as the linearity and causality inherent to it served the purpose of navigation.

Retrospectively, I displayed a general tendency to discard any personal, site/specific and cultural details from source memories and experiences while making *String*. I realised it was the product of several other factors, beyond a fear of nostalgia and alienation of readers. Firstly, I have always had a resistance to portraying myself in my work, something that might have invertedly extended to the faithful representation of my memories. Secondly, the choice might have been influenced by current trends in illustration and namely in picturebook publishing, as described by Salisbury (2006), in which illustrators are encouraged to avoid details that are too specific to a culture or setting. This trend stems from a desire for internationalisation, venturing into foreign markets, and access to readers who inhabit very different cultures and settings. Finally, my own circumstance as a Portuguese natural working in the United Kingdom led me to have two audiences in mind, never settling on a particular one as a target, leading me to depict hybrid settings and depicted culture and behaviours.

Regarding time and periodicity, *String* appears as a publication that isn't anchored to a specific time frame and could be enjoyed far beyond its launch date, due to an investment in content that explores timeless values and issues. It still bears traits from its time, such as the refugee subject and character clothing.

Periodicity and strategies for reader involvement such as correspondence or competitions weren't considered in this prototype. Many of *Cuistax's* (2013) issues are an example in primary literature which doesn't feature content that makes use of periodicity or exchanges with their readers. In their interview (Appendix C), they explain that this is due to their issues being launched irregularly, and that their readers would not wait a year for their contributions to be featured in an issue. Upon reflection, while I kept the hypothetical reader in mind throughout the creative process, I did not consider their involvement beyond the issue's narrative and associated content.

Thinking about continuity, I hypothesised about how to transfer this making experience to future issues, and how this issue's creative process could be streamlined and replicated. Admitting the same format would be adopted, I arrived at a possible method for the creative process, at the base of which would be the practice of drawing :

1. Begin by establishing a centrepiece, which in this first issue was the box;
2. Brainstorm and generate synapses around the centrepiece, and research emerging subjects and references;
3. Define story elements, plot and dialogue, resorting to writing, exploratory drawing, a timeline and thumbnails, with the spread as unit;
4. Define embedded content for each spread, noting the first spread would incorporate the index or contents page;
5. Define colour palette for frame story and differentiated embedded content;
6. Sketch spreads in the intended final scale;
7. Review the whole before finalising, making adjustments towards balance;
8. Finalise spreads.

This method could be followed by a collective from the outset or could incorporate contributions once the frame-story and type of embedded content are defined. It would be the following of this method, the use of dialogue throughout, and a structure of a frame-story and embedded content, that would serve as underlying aspects toward continuity from issue to issue. It would be interesting to view to what extent different styles and content within a linear narrative would affect the tension between narrative and miscellany.

PROTOTYPE 2 – EXPLORING FORMAT AND THE MISCELLANY

5.1 *Lost and Found* Magazine

This chapter discusses the second prototype of creative practice – a children's magazine titled *Lost and Found*, composed of several small publications.

In Prototype 1, I was unable to explore the following aspects of the independent children's magazine:

- **Format and production.** Analysed primary literature appeared overwhelmingly in codex form, with proportions approximate to the A-series ISO paper convention. Aiming to answer the research questions, I determined format would be an avenue of exploration in this study. As the magazine has historically, and more recently, emphasised its relationship with print (Holmes and Nice, 2011; Gorman and Catterall, 2018), exploring issues surrounding printing and materiality would also be relevant;
- **The miscellany.** The miscellany is presented as a core trait of the magazine (Holmes and Nice, 2011), extending to the children's magazine. Having explored the tension between narrative and the miscellany with a focus on the former in Prototype 1, I determined to explore the latter in Prototype 2;
- Diversity in **types of text**, as defined by Karolina Puchała (2011). Magazines traditionally feature different types of text, such as columns, horoscopes, quizzes, news articles, to name a few (McKay, 2001). I identified varied types of text in primary literature (Appendix B) and decided to explore them.

Prototype 2 was subsequently rendered complementary to Prototype 1. It presented an opportunity to also further investigate **using observation and non-fictional elements in creative practice**, creating conditions for **reader immersion**, and finding **alternative solutions** for peritextual elements. These facets were touched on in Prototype 1 and were under-developed in primary literature.

This prototype was significantly influenced by the access I gained to the university's print room and 3D workshop, along with my eagerness and curiosity to learn new techniques.

5.2 Creative process

In contrast with Prototype 1, I chose a real-world, specific reference as starting point for Prototype 2.

Looking to create a magazine issue that represented the essence of the miscellany, I examined a naturally occurring miscellany, specifically a lost property room. In a lost property room, objects are gathered with no curation. They are only connected by the fact that they were lost and then found, and placed in the same location, as a random collection of objects. I assessed two lost property rooms in very busy locations: Serralves, Porto's most prominent museum, and the Porto Metro, used daily by great numbers of local and tourists. In September and October 2022 I visited, spoke to staff and photographed both lost property rooms. Given the very small and homogenous sample found in the former, I used the latter as reference.

My approach borrows from Jon McNaught and Frank Newbould's accounts of creating images depicting real settings (Salisbury, 2022). Both illustrators describe a first moment of inhabiting a location, when they absorb details and atmosphere. Rather than drawing while on location, they later use notes, memory and documentation to produce images filtered by their experience. Photographs allowed me to slowly re-examine the location and its objects, making it possible to identify new details and new connections, and refresh my initial perception with each viewing (Figure 98). Development of *Lost and Found* is anchored in its source material, with the creative process involving a continuous back and forth with it. As described by Donald Schön in a design context (1992), the creative process was a conversation between myself and the artefact I set out to create, in which I alternate between making and seeing, with initial work informing that which follows.

Working from real objects in the lost property room, which I wouldn't otherwise have sought out as starting points, resulted in a relinquishing of full creative control. I distanced myself from my usual frame of reference, making unpredictable connections. For example, an orthodontic retainer drove an investigation into its use and nature, and to discover which of its traits would interest me and a potential reader. I was faced with the questions 'What about this object appeals to me or affects me the most?'. And, at a later stage, given the multiplicity of content options identified in the children's magazine form, 'What type of content that I'm interested in developing would best highlight this subject and communicate it to a reader?'.

Brainstorming was done through drawing, rendering objects from the lost property room along with emerging ideas (Figures 99-103). The first drawings reflected what interested me the most when visiting the location and indicated my choice of objects to work with before I consciously articulated it. Again, exploratory drawing and writing were essential for the generation of ideas, fixing them onto paper and allowing reflection, connection making and associative thinking, as discussed in Chapter 4. I reflected on each drawn object and what connections they suggested: the make-up pouch made me think of the marks and textures different tools make and of different faces, a notebook suggested schoolwork and an essay, or scribbles.

Online research on each object and their related themes resulted in new knowledge and connections to additional external references. References used are mostly non-fictional and may consist of factual information, real practices, and true stories. For example, the 'Retainer' section showcases examples of strange teeth in nature and practices of shaping fruits using moulds, while the 'Lunchbox' features the true origin story of Matchbox cars.

Influenced by formal and structural choices in *Aspen* (1965) and *S.M.S.* (1968), described in Chapter 2, and motivated to explore format, I determined that *Lost and Found* would be deconstructed, with each section appearing as an individual publication (Figure 42). In the brainstorming process I identified and isolated aspects of interest for each object and developed a format that would best communicate these aspects. The original objects and the experience of seeing them on location informed format quite literally. The sections appear as facsimiles, simulations, or translations of the source material into the printed publication form and the codex. Both the 'Key bag' and the 'Bags' sections were taken beyond the codex to explore three-dimensionality, as their content would be best communicated beyond the two-dimensional page.

Due to type of content, deconstructed structure, and format, *Lost and Found* sections require high levels of interactivity from the reader, according to the continuums for physicality and content presented in Chapter 2. I aimed for these sections to replicate the experiences of being in lost property room, or of finding real objects. 'Replicate' in this case does not mean a literal depiction or a faithful reproduction, but a translation into new visual and verbal content which can, for example, solicit the same feeling of surprise and the action of opening a bag and discovering what it contains. The maker acts as mediator between the reader and a real-world experience. These sections further combine real elements with fictional ones, such as the passengers in 'Start here', as well as some bags and their contents in 'Bags', the products contained in the make-up pouch, described locations and key shapes in the bag of keys, pattern and character depictions in the lunch box, to name a few. Each of these fictional elements still involved research and reference from reality.

My approach to characters in Prototype 2 is in stark contrast with the one taken in Prototype 1. While *String* featured the same characters from cover to cover in the context of a narrative, *Lost and Found*'s characters change with each section, and some sections simply don't feature any characters. Although most lost and found objects suggested a person who owned them or made them, I chose not to use them as characters, as this prototype would not be narrative-centred. This was a challenge, as characters had up to that point been the centre of my creative practice. This is another aspect of the practice where I distanced myself from my preferences and as illustrator.

The 'Bags' section suggests characters through the objects shown, and both it and the 'Key bag' section suggest unidentified characters in their texts alone (the orator/writer who uses direct address, the owner of the bag of keys who would have written the location descriptions, and ultimately the reader). The 'Start here', 'Retainer' and 'Make-up pouch' sections feature fictional characters who are silent and passive participants in illustrations, with the latter also featuring characters named as volunteers for an activity, each emitting a short sentence from which an identity can be inferred.

Both the 'Make-up pouch' and 'Start here' sections feature characters depicting real people. The 'Make-up pouch' character, Joana, is assigned edited speech from an exchange with Joana Silva, the interviewee, while the 'Start here' character, Gisela, emits fictional speech introducing the property room, inspired by a conversation with the person she represents. Joana's interview gives the reader access to both her appearance and her history, thoughts and motivations, in a sequence defined by the chronology of the text. Gisela appears at the

end of a sequence defined by the turning of the pages, in two perceived moments created using the transparency of the section's pages, inducing the illusion of repetition.

Finally, the 'Lunchbox' section features a narrative in comic form, featuring a main character, secondary character, extras and a narrator. The story, along with the main and secondary characters, are based on real occurrences and people – Ann and Jack Odell – but their appearance is fictionalised.

In *Lost and Found*, writing emerged as a creative challenge, and an opportunity for reflection. The creative process required I write types of text I had not developed before in my practice, such as essays and descriptions, and in doing so I discovered a pleasure in writing I was not aware of. Among a variation of interpretations of 'types of texts', I'm taking Karolina Puchała's synthesis (2011) as reference for the definition used in this study: text types are moulds into which linguistic material is recast, writing designed after patterns defined by conventions and expectations, and whose identification is dependent on context and function. The 'Make-up pouch' section, for example, features a variety of types of text: an essay on the meaning and history of make-up, a prompt and short dialogue for an activity, short descriptions of professional practices, and a processed and reduced interview of a real make-up artist. Both the essay and descriptions stemmed from a need to think about the subject of make-up and its practice, and present it. Diversity of types of text, along with illustration styles and formats, contributed to *Lost and Found*'s miscellaneous character.

In Prototype 1, theme was created intuitively in the process of writing. The analysis of primary literature demonstrated that themes are often a word or expression describing a universal concept, such as 'Home', 'Fun' and 'Magic'. Exceptions are *Triciclo* (2017), which features a narrative context instead of a theme in each issue, *Anorak* (2006) which often features content that ignores the issue's theme, and *Namaka* (2017) whose first issue doesn't feature a theme. In Prototype 2, theme was replaced with a particular location and its context. While 'lost property' is the overall theme, I created each section with its own theme, based, and expanding, on the object that inspired it. For example, the 'Retainer' section explores the themes of conditioned growth and teeth. The result could be described as a two-tier theme structure, in which the contextual theme 'lost property', justifies the collection of miscellaneous objects/publications, and a secondary set of themes determines content for each publication.

While Prototype 2 complies with the norm of pre-determining the magazine theme, it diverts from the norm by proposing a specific location, context and objects as starting point,

instead of a universal concept. It further features sub-themes for each section. As I have yet to observe other instances of this two-tier theme structure in primary literature, I propose that its invention is one of the consequences of this study's exploratory practice and an example of the potential of the illustrator's involvement in all aspects of production.

5.3 Development

Initially, the collection of publications was developed as a whole, allowing for management over diversity in content type, format and aesthetic choices. Once I defined each publication's format and ideas, the focus shifted to individual content development and refinement. I resumed overarching management between working on each section, with adjustments to publication dimensions of unfinished sections being made in response to finished ones, for example.

I identified slight imbalances in the amount and complexity of content in each section, with the 'Make-up pouch' being a more content-heavy section than the others, and a lack of homogeneity in content complexity. These imbalances can be found in much of the primary literature, often attributed to the variety in type of content, and to each contributor working on their content section separately, with limited editorial changes being applied once handed in. This is described by *Kiwi* (2016) and *Cuitax* (2013) in Appendix C. Traditional magazine-specific content, such as articles and features, may also account for different length of text in the same issue (McKay, 2001). I then embraced these imbalances as a trait of the children's magazine, as they contribute to its miscellaneous character.

Prototype 2 benefitted from input from external sources, namely supervisors and peers, akin to discussion with an editor in picturebook development, as described by Musgrave (2023), magazines' traditional collective nature (Greenberg, 2015), or real-world independent children's magazine collective development, as described in interviews (Appendix C). I'll further discuss cases in which feedback was crucial to a section's evolution and final configuration.

Development was also continuously permeated by learning, either on subjects explored in sections, or on production techniques. This resulted in a process marked by trial

and error, of a nature novel to me as creator, expanding beyond my previous knowledge, skills and references.

5.3.1 Format

As discussed in Chapter 3, children's magazines have been known to incorporate appendixes such as posters and trinkets, and offer the possibility of transformation when intervened on by the reader (e.g.: cutting, drawing).

Each section of *Lost and Found* was purposefully developed in different formats and dimensions (Figure 107). I stipulated maximum dimensions for the publication's container, based on those found in the primary literature. Each section's unique shape, proportions, and materiality were designed alongside content to introduce diversity and reflect and enhance the miscellaneous character I pursued.

Some sections are codices, such as 'Start here' (Figures 43-47) in which transparency plays with perception, creating an effect analogous to Bruno Munari's picturebook *Nella notte buia* (1956), that simulates atmospheric perspective, as described by Minichiello (2019). 'Start here's dimensions favour horizontality, replicating the effect of human vision and conventional video and cinema proportions. The 'Retainer' booklet (Figures 71-76) is a traditional saddle stitched codex, but its corners are rounded and its dimensions closer to a square proportion, copying the shape of the original retainer box. The 'Lunchbox' section (Figures 48-51) features hard covers, whose shape and proportion replicate those of the original lunchbox, with the reading direction set from top to bottom.

Some sections deviate from the codex form, and don't feature codex related devices such as page-turning. 'Bags' (Figures 65-69), 'Make-up Pouch' (Figures 80-86) and 'Key bag' (Figures 55-62) are a slab, a concertina, and a bag and box with objects inside, respectively. The 'slab's proportions are meant to replicate those of the lost property room cabinets in which varied bags sat, as well as my experience of opening each bag to reveal its contents. The concertina borrows its proportions and dimensions from the original pouch, with the concertina opening representing the spilling of contents.

The sections are not copies, but translations, impressions of the real objects and experiences in paper and printed form. The 'Bags', 'Key bag' and 'Lunchbox' sections were only able to materialise in these formats due to access to laser cutting and printing technology, as well as screen printing facilities and equipment. Access to these, and engaging in learning and experimentation with them, led to entertaining possibilities for this prototype I would

previously not have considered. Production techniques conditioned the choice of materials for some sections, instead of being defined conceptually. Engaging with these techniques involved the invention of solutions for practical problems through trial and error, such as devising matrices and techniques involving adhesive for successful results in screen printing unconventional formats. This consisted of new knowledge created through making, which may be reapplied in future projects, or communicated to people willing to pursue similar results.

5.3.2 Writing

In contrast with *String*, in which nearly all text presented as a dialogue, *Lost and Found* provided the opportunity to explore different types of text: **prompts, descriptions, essays, informational texts, dialogue, titles, captions, and narration.**

As an illustrator and comics maker, I'm familiar with writing stories, dialogue, narration and description, mostly of a fictional nature. This prototype required a different approach to writing in the absence of narrative. I wrote non-fiction, which was more akin to my voice as workshop conductor or museum guide. The writing allowed my voice to emerge, as though I am addressing the reader. In narrative theory, a distinction is made between narrator and author, which are often confused (Abbott, 2011). A narrator is a device used by the author to communicate something that is constructed and therefore partially fictionalised. As a writer in this prototype, that confusion remained, particularly in writing essays and prompts, where an orator isn't identified. Exploring non-fiction illustrated content in Prototype 2 led me to fuse communication strategies from previous professional experiences – fiction-based creative practice and work as an educator – resulting in a discovery of new skills and approaches to writing for children.

My voice permeates particularly in prompts and essays, in the guise of a narrator, and often addresses the reader in the second-person. While a narrator's voice is most likely assimilated as an adult's (Nodelman, 2010), their identity is purposefully left open to the reader's interpretation. It may be attributed to a supposed writer or editor, or inferred as the lost property room guardian's voice, who is introduced in the 'Start here' section. Each utterance could also be perceived as coming from a different person. My voice appears as the catalyst for Joana's monologue in the 'Make-up pouch', with a greeting and a prompt for her character to present herself and her work, and as curious facts are presented to the reader in the 'Retainer' section. This writing is characterised by the use of the second-person – 'you'–

and the first person plural – ‘we’ – marked by frequent exclamation and interrogation. These are text traits identified in some of the primary literature, with most reviewed issues featuring direct address. Addressing the reader is a strategy in literature used to engage and animate them, constitutes a sign of interaction, and is capable of emotionally implicating them in what they are reading (Herman, Jahn and Ryan, 2010). Additionally, the roots of children’s literature’ are grounded in oral storytelling traditions and didactic concerns (Lesnik-Oberstein, 2023), and its writing often replicates the adult-child relationship and its real-world forms of address (Rudd, 2010).

By not identifying the orator and by addressing the reader directly, I intend to disconnect from the notion of story-world and narrative, to call attention to the device of the publication, and to blur the boundaries between fiction and reality by engaging a real person in a fictional situation, based on real experiences.

In *String*, prompts for puzzles, games and activities are embedded in the characters’ speech and ignore the reader. Prompts in *Lost and Found* consist of a combined use of the narrator’s voice, visual cues and format to invite action. They provide context and suggestions, questions or invitations, never direct instruction or command. It is my intention that this combination will lead the reader to infer the opportunity and mode of interaction, providing both the enjoyment derived from inference, and a sense of autonomy and control.

Descriptions are part of the ‘Key bag’ section (Figure 64), in which real and imaginary locations are described in the first person. These descriptions mention sensory information (mainly visual and olfactory), observations on inhabiting these locations, suggestions and thoughts. These personify the addresser, pointing to their physical presence and familiarity with each space. The descriptions were written for the reader to visualise and inhabit each location in their minds, an effect used in literature toward immersion (Bodola and Isekenmeier, 2017). They are reminiscent of those featured in text-based computer games, such as *Zork* (1980), with which I have experience as player. The descriptions originated as I communicated the illustrations I intended to make to my supervisor, when it became evident that descriptions could be successful in engaging the reader’s imagination. This feedback made me question my practice, as my main creative drive had always been image-making. By attending to the needs of the content and not my own preference, I redefined my creative identity, to embrace text as a medium equivalent to pictures in creative practice. The descriptions derive from my own experiences in the locations, or locations similar to the ones described. Some passages,

like the reference to standing inside the pool, are fictionalised. Writing the fictional and more subjective parts of these descriptions allowed me to step into the shoes of the character who would have written them – the owner of the keys – making the character clearer.

Essays in the ‘Bags’, the ‘Make-up pouch’ and the ‘Retainer’ sections are a reflection of my sense-making process. I answer my own questions about what a used bag or a retainer are and mean to a person, while also providing some factual information. Though I don’t refer to myself in the first-person, I see these texts as my voice, aware that it will likely not be perceived as such by a reader. These essays derive from my personal experiences – like many, I’ve accumulated used bags over the years and use them regularly, I have curiosity and appreciation for make-up, and I use an orthodontic retainer daily. The writing process is still creative, and my role authorial, but there is also assimilation and incorporation of information to present to a reader.

There are two instances of informational texts in *Lost and found*: one in the ‘Retainer’ section about the practice of moulding fruits and vegetables and one in the ‘Make-up pouch’ section about professional make-up practices. The former showcases a curious fact, alongside a visual instructional sequence and illustrations, the latter presents each practice, explaining what each is and its implications. Both texts were written after researching each subject and cross-referencing information. Their process consisted of assimilation, synthesis and structuring, to have an introduction, development and conclusion. As a form of research *for* practice, it required learning and processing information in order to present it to a reader in simple and short terms, like preparing and delivering a very short class. In these cases, I’m presenting information I’m not an authority on, curating which aspects I find most relevant.

For the ‘Lunchbox’ section I wrote a script for a comic which presented the anecdote of how Matchbox cars were created, using Liz Odell’s account (*CR-Talks - The History of Matchbox Toys By Liz Odell*, 2021) as source material. Writing consisted of crafting a script for a comic by editing and structuring Liz’s account into a three-act visual narrative, to which pictures contribute significantly. There is only narration and no dialogue, as any dialogue would be an invention. While it was necessary to fictionalise characters’ depictions for my retelling of the story, I did not want to fictionalise their speech. The narrator too is fictional, and the words are an adaptation of the story conveyed by Liz. The narrator’s voice presenting information to the reader resembles my own, is extradiegetic and speaks in the third-person.

Speech of characters in illustrations is a feature of the 'Start here' and 'Make-up pouch' sections. The writing in 'Start here' isn't unlike the essays mentioned before. It invokes the reader's attention and reflection on a subject, but it is delivered by a character in context, with the purpose of introducing, grounding and indexing the magazine for the reader. While Gisela is the reference for the character, her speech is not necessarily something she would say. Gisela's traits that transpire in her character are her appearance, kindness, readiness to help and interact, and neutral expression.

In the context of the make-up theme, I interviewed Portuguese professional make-up artist Joana Silva. Considering her heterogeneous portfolio, her testimony would be that of a professional aware of the implications of very different make-up practices. The interview was conducted via email. Writing consisted of crafting a minimal narrative consisting of character monologue, from Joana's answers. I omitted the questions, and edited and structured her words into an introduction of herself, how she decided to do this professionally, what she does exactly, and finding a good sentence to end on. Ira Glass, radio producer and writer, believes radio is a didactic medium, in which a reflection can be given at the end to explain the meaning of what we heard, and skilled interviewers will try to coax such a sentence from an interviewee (Abel and Glass, 1999). I used Joana's comment on how different outcomes can be achieved with a brush – a simple tool the reader is likely familiar with – hoping it might resonate with and inspire them.

Engaging in writing non-fiction and exploring different types of text resulted in a discovery of new skills and an appreciation for writing as a medium in my creative practice, alongside illustration. It led me to integrate strategies in crafting communication from my experience as educator and museum guide, as well as to employ my own voice in the texts. Writing was marked by a blurring between fiction and non-fiction, with people and interviewees being appropriated as characters, my voice merging with that of a character and the narrator, and true stories being fictionalised. The various types of text created in this prototype required different approaches and processes in constructing them, such as preliminary research and interview processing. Their variety also conveyed the concept of miscellany. Prototype 2 highlighted the magazine's potential for the illustrator to use writing and image-making to develop concepts within short-forms.

5.3.3 Illustration Style

I adopted different illustration styles for each section of *Lost and Found*. This approach aims to visually communicate the miscellany, much like in primary literature, and is a consequence of chosen production methods. In independent children's magazines, each illustrator has their own style, though I observed more than one instance of the same contributor illustrating with different styles in one magazine issue (Figure 14). The idea that using varied visual styles can be seen as adopting different personas by the artist (Silvestre, 2015) resonates in this context. I made images for every section in a publication that traditionally relies on multiple illustrators.



Figure 14

Examples of style variation within *Illustoria's* #7 issue by illustrator Elizabeth Haidle

Each section is intentionally visually consistent within its bounds, avoiding impractical excessive variation. Choices in style emerged in conceptual alignment with each object and section, and were then influenced by the intended printing technique. The 'Make-up pouch' section is discussed below in detail:

The first image included in this section was a rendering of make-up products and their markings. I wanted material aspects of make-up, such as thickness and viscosity, to be communicated as visual didactic information for the reader. I drew the illustration on paper, to produce palpable, complex and textured effects, which digital tools, with their predetermined and repetitive markings, are only able to mimic. Line work was done in indian ink with a brush. I intended the materiality of the ink to convey the impactful materiality of make-up. The limited colour palette used throughout this section was directly extracted from the original pouch's saturated embroidery and worked as separate colour layers in order to be screen printed. Colours were softened after conducting and examining initial screen print tests. Shading was initially intended to consist of a fine pencil texture, similar to an eye pencils' texture, but evolved to a large dot halftone mesh that would be easier to screen print, also determined after testing in the print room (Figure 15). Rendering is relatively realistic, aiming to accurately represent the human figure and face on which make-up is applied, facilitate assimilation of real-world make-up tools, and to recognisably portray Joana.

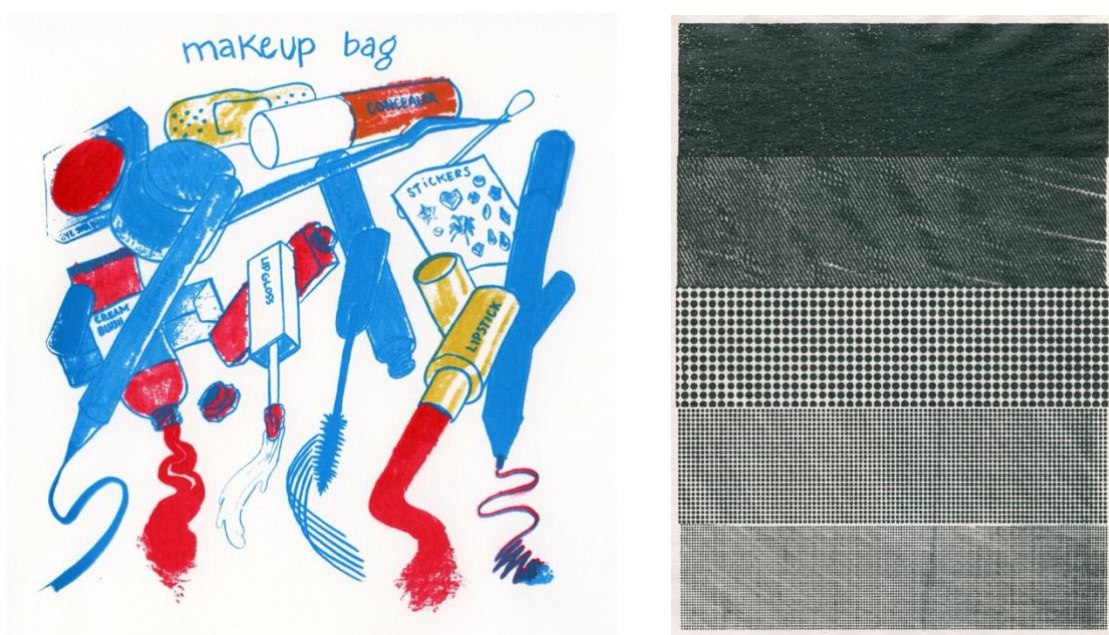


Figure 15

Screen printing tests using fine organic textures resulted in technical issues and a lack of definition (left), mechanical halftones yielded better defined results (right)

Each section has its own colour palette. 'Bags' has a two-colour palette of contrasting warm and cool hues, while 'Start here' features a wider range of colours, to communicate diversity and realism in the Metro's passengers and objects. Aspects of drawing, such as line, blocks of colour and shading, also vary in use.

Illustration style in primary literature is heterogeneous, with each content section presenting its own visual experience. I aimed to replicate this effect in *Lost and Found*. While it is the work of a single person, each illustration style is not an artificial imposition, but something that evolved alongside content development, working holistically from the start toward each section's needs and functional goals. Choices were not dictated exclusively by the practitioner's preference, leading to new and possibly unpredictable outcomes. An illustrator may find in the children's magazine a form that naturally accommodates graphic exploration, an activity commonly led by illustrators without a specific output in mind (as described in Chapters 2 and 3), but that can be taken to finalisation and publication in a short period of time. Graphic exploration can potentiate new ideas, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, and impede stagnation in an illustrator's work, by involving learning new skills and expanding their practice.

5.3.4 Design

In *String* and primary literature, access to content and section hierarchy are dictated by the codex format, and its linear content presentation, which can be subverted only by a reader looking to forge their own reading path through the publication. *Lost and Found* presents sections as separate print forms in different formats, some different from the codex, offering no guidance and potentially challenging predictable reader engagement and hierarchical presentations of content. Each section's different shape and dimensions had repercussions on access to content, information hierarchy, readability and manipulation, and so layout and overall design were considered individually.

'Start here' serves as editorial and contents page/index by introducing the overall context of the magazine and pointing to each publication, visually and verbally. The objects referring to each section are shown on a carriage and within the text, and are assimilated in some order, likely according to western reading traditions, from left to right and top to bottom. I did not include numbering, to communicate that there is no set causality among sections, and that the reader has autonomy in choice of order.

Three sections feature cover and back cover, and another features a container. These either mimic the original objects' casings or were created to impart the same effect found in

the object – for example, while the original lunchbox featured licensed characters, the ‘Lunchbox’ section features a new pattern, reinforcing its intended purpose to hold food, deceiving the observer regarding its contents. These covers precede and delay the reader’s discovery of contents, while sections like ‘Bags’ and ‘Start here’ reveal content promptly, though partially. In the case of the ‘Make-up pouch’, a concertina format allows for visual juxtaposition of all information once open. The act of unfolding, like the codex’s turning of the page, displays content progressively and in an order. As a slab, the ‘Bags’ section doesn’t offer a hierarchy as to which side should be looked at first, and one side isn’t dependent on the other for comprehension. Opening to reveal contents is more dramatic in the two versions of the ‘Key bag’, as the unfamiliar formats of a paper bag and a folded box containing loose print forms require an extra step of examination that the more familiar codex and accordion forms don’t.

Layout in *Lost and Found* sections is often defined by illustration, particularly when the intention is reader immersion and the illusion of a subjective point of view, using full bleed pictures. For instance, the ‘Retainer’, ‘Lunchbox’ and ‘Bags’ sections feature full bleed trompe l’oeil backgrounds, depicting the inside of containers over which visual and verbal information is organised. In ‘Start here’, full bleed illustration dictates placement of text, which is either intraiconic or nestled in empty areas within the image, like in many picturebooks. Where background is absent, as in the case of the ‘Make-up pouch’, text and illustrations share the space in balanced measure, with text block shapes adapting to the shapes of the figures. The absence of a spine and traditional pages allowed me to use the surfaces defined by format and fold marks as ‘pages’. The concertina format made it possible to have different sized subsections by using several ‘pages’ as one larger area.

Limited space in each section conditioned wordcount and resulted in an overall effort to reduce text and synthesise information – in cases where reduction could not be taken further, type size and therefore readability were reduced. Readability issues were often only evident after printing a dummy, and contributed to the impression that, depending on type size and amount of text, parts of content were intended for different aged readers – type is often bigger and text less dense in books for younger children (Walker, 2012).

Text was mostly hand drawn among sections, with a few exceptions. As discussed in Chapter 2.2, this allowed for aesthetic cohesion, as the same gesture underlies both verbal and visual elements. Inexperience made me unaware of issues fine text might cause in screen printing, and trial and error led to drawing thicker type. Two type fonts, ‘Blofeld’ and ‘Linotte’,

were used sparingly to achieve better printing results and to speed up the creative process. I chose them for their roundness and boldness, which I associate with materials made for children.

Using different formats for each section required a case-by-case approach to layout design, and prioritising illustration resulted in borrowing strategies for text placement in picturebooks. Access to content and its hierarchy varied, at times toward achieving a specific effect for the reader, and subverting conventions associated with the codex form. Experimenting with type translated into a choice between readability and visual unity, and revealed that inconsistencies in type size and density could suggest readers of different ages.

5.4 Content and word-image interplay

Most *Lost and Found* sections are primarily visual, with their content communication depending on word-image interplay. Format too acts as a vehicle for meaning. Illustration, writing and format were considered together from the start, aiming to effectively communicate content and achieve desired effects.

Translating real experiences into print forms was a consistent concern throughout this prototype. I experienced visual, sensory and interactive aspects of a location, which I then sought to replicate for a reader using words, pictures and format. For example, 'Start here' uses text as speech, illustration depicting setting, objects and characters, with the overlap and flipping of translucent paper to simulate the visual experience of entering a location, traversing it and being welcomed by a member of staff. My intention became to immerse the reader in this experience, as main character in situations that stem from the real-world but are fictional. I resorted to some of the strategies for immersion in picturebooks discussed in Chapter 4, namely the use of full bleed illustration and the omission of graphic design elements. I additionally employed the following strategies:

- Direct address, by characters and the narrator;
- Characters' acknowledgement of the reader through eye contact;
- Facsimiles, as the faithful reproduction of shape, dimensions and visual traits of some of the original objects;

- Trompe l'oeil, as the convincing rendering of space beyond the page, used to signal the opening of a container from the perspective of the reader.

These strategies resulted in diegetic border crossing throughout *Lost and Found*, with the diegesis in this case consisting of a fictionalised context, not a conventional story. All sections feature fiction and reality intertwined, a phenomenon common to non-fiction picturebooks, in which factual information is often communicated in the context of a fictional narrative (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2023). In some cases the distinction is clear-cut, such as with the fictional passengers in the 'Start here' section, inserted in non-fictional rendition of setting. In others, the distinction is harder to make, such as with the comic in the 'Lunchbox' section, in which a true story is retold, featuring characters who represent people, whose rendering and actions are made up.

Text and images are used according to how best each medium serves the communication of content and desired effects. Because I acted as editor, writer and illustrator, I had the agency to choose. The comic format offered narrative potential: a simpler and shorter sequence in the 'Retainer' for describing a process, a longer and more complex one in the 'Lunchbox' for retelling a story. 'Start here' features a sequence in which each full bleed picture gives way to the next, aiming for a cinematic effect of an observer's movement. Both images and text, along with format, suggest interaction, such in the 'Make-up pouch' where text provides context and suggests an activity, and images are used to demonstrate an action, or the 'Bags' section, where the visual distinction and physical border between the bags and their background solicit lifting them.

Illustration is brought to the fore where I deemed it the best medium to communicate content, at times in a didactic role, such as in the 'Retainer' section when displaying strange teeth in nature, or the 'Make-up pouch' when illustrating make-up products. It is also the protagonist of activities, games and interactive sections, such as in the 'Retainer', 'Make-up pouch' and 'Bags' sections.

In some instances, text appears alone, separated by the section's limits, gutter or fold, such as in the 'Bags' and 'Make-up pouch' sections. While these texts still carry visual meaning, through their typography, colour and general shape, their isolation aims to have the reader pause and value their content. They relay reflections on a theme and propose the reader engage in reflection as well. Though isolated, these texts will still be assimilated in the context of their sections and exist in a relationship with the remaining content. An isolated

paragraph on the outside of one of the versions of the 'Key bag' works as introduction and prompt, potentially delaying the opening of the bag and generating anticipation.

Intraiconic text is a recurring feature in *Lost and Found*. By using areas where text might usually be featured in depicted places and objects, text appears organically integrated in the page, there being no need to create areas for it (Figure 16). This space can then be used for the benefit of illustration – in each instance of intraiconic text, the crux of the content is visual, such as the puzzle in the 'Retainer' section. Intraiconic text serves as title, as a reproduction of text found on original objects, as legend, or as a prompt.



Figure 16

Examples of intraiconic text

The 'Key bag' versions suggest word-image interplay beyond the page and make use of text to produce images, exploring different dynamics in this interplay and engaging the reader as co-creator. As a game, the section's mechanics are based on the reader connecting visual elements (keys), with text (titles and location descriptions). These visual elements are three-dimensional and separate from the texts, placing responsibility on the reader to determine which juxtaposition and interplay works best. The keys, with different configurations, serve as points of departure for speculation, and suggest aspects such as a lock's likely size or age. Descriptions lead the reader through imaginary visits to locations, making use of literary descriptive texts' potential for imaginative visualisation (Horstkotte, 2017). The descriptions go beyond visual information to evoke other senses, such as smell and touch.

As writer, illustrator and publisher, I could use every aspect of the publication toward my goals, a creative freedom more familiar to the artists' book. While most word-image interplay described in this chapter is symmetrical and complementary in nature, mirroring or referencing each other, weight between image and text and their roles shift consistently among sections.

5.5 Reading experience

As discussed, immersion is fostered through visual means, format and direct address. It is an immersion in an implied experience: the reader visits the lost property room and finds these objects. The materiality of the sections reinforces the replicated experience, aiming to provide a sense of surprise and discovery. Additionally, the reader is addressed by an unnamed voice throughout the sections, which suggests a fellow character or narrator. The use of direct address is an important element in this illusion, both verbally and visually – for example, a character's gaze turned to the viewer constitutes a form of visual direct address, and a demand for a relationship (Kress and Leeuwen, 1996) (Figure 17). This attempt at the immersion of the reader as protagonist is provoked by the absence of an explicit narrative and main character, something Bruno Munari, for example, appreciated and explored in his revolutionary books for children (Campagnaro, 2016).

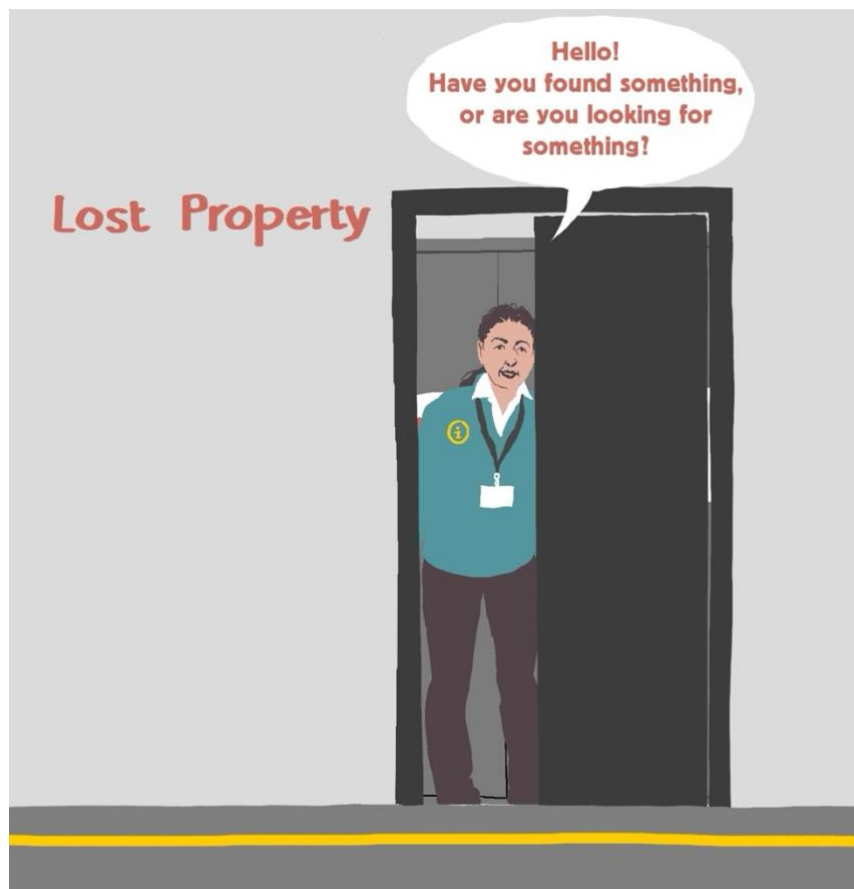


Figure 17

An example of visual and verbal direct address

Inference is often required to make sense of content, particularly in games, activities and their prompts. The reader is given suggestions or posed questions in lieu of instructions and placed in a position where bridges must be built between pictures and text in order to make sense of content. The reader is also repeatedly prompted to reflect on subjects and themes, as well as their own experiences. Illustrations combine abstract and mimetic elements, and the minimalist rendering in some sections creates a participatory role for the reader, who reconstructs images and their meaning, an effect described by Druker and Kümmerling-Meibauer (2015).

Lost and found is a multi-sensory experience, relying on sight and physical manipulation. Each section, with its varied format and design, requires a readjustment of the reader's handling of the book-object and reading process, with different sections requiring different levels and forms of interactivity – for example, the 'Retainer' section demands only the familiar turning of the page, the 'Make-up pouch' offers a choice of sequence of pages or

simultaneous juxtaposition once fully open, and the 'Key bag' section asks the reader to figure out how to open the container and display and assimilate its contents and their order. Additionally, some elements can be removed from the context of the magazine and used as toys or tools, such as the contents of the 'Key bag' or the bags from the 'Bags' section, and the water-soluble graphite patch, expanding the uses the magazine can offer.

5.6 Conclusions

Lost and Found was based on identified independent children magazine traits (e.g. the miscellany and interactivity) and ventured into unexplored avenues in the print form (e.g. deconstructed format, multi-layered theme). In the process, I took the roles of editor, designer, writer, illustrator and printer. As content was developed holistically, each role informed another. For instance, text design and choice of materials were conditioned by experiences in print making and publication design was developed alongside illustration and text.

I communicated the miscellany visually and physically, by employing varied illustration styles, design choices, types of writing and formats. Cohesion was achieved through content emulating the functions of index or content page and editorial, and consistent theme structure. I created a novel two-tier theme structure, by conventionally predetermining an overall context, while allowing for each publication to develop content on individual themes. In doing so, I gained insight into the possibility of further exploration beyond the familiar strategy in contemporary independent children's magazines of pre-determining a theme that consists of a universal concept – could other specific things, places or events, for instance, constitute themes?

By engaging in writing different short types of text, I incorporated communication strategies from previous professional experiences in education and mediation into my creative practice and developed new skills in crafting written content. I also began adopting writing as a form in my creative practice, which had up to that point been centred on image-making. As writer and illustrator, I explored word-image interplay toward a desired purpose or effect, shifting balance between illustration and text as required throughout the creative process. I further explored the reader's role in creating word-image interplay from a selection, in the form of a game.

By taking ownership of production methods, I gained knowledge and agency which inspired new image-based content and formal aspects, like the possibility of unconventional

publication shapes and the incorporation of a water-soluble graphite patch. I was also able to incorporate format into the creative process, alongside writing, illustration and design in serving an effect, and defining unconventional information hierarchy and access.

Finally, having a real location and experience as a starting point led me to find interest in source material I wouldn't otherwise use, building on my knowledge and references. I acted as a mediator between my real-world experience with location, people and objects, translating it into print-forms, images and words, and their interactions. I could blur the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction in different ways, toward entertainment and information, identifying the possibility to take on a didactic role without constituting an authority in a subject. In some sections, I could shift the focus from characters to the reader as protagonist, by using strategies for immersion and interaction such as *trompe l'oeil* and the facsimile.

CONCLUSIONS

This research set out to investigate the contemporary independent children's magazine, and what an illustrator might be able to achieve within it. This thesis posits that the independent children's magazine harbours particular potential for an illustrator's exploration of an illustrated publication and short-form content. Four avenues were pursued in order to carry out this investigation: literature review, primary literature analysis, interviews and reflective creative practice. These methods provided context and allowed for a definition of the contemporary independent children's magazine, offered a snapshot of its current form and practices, and allowed for an intimate understanding of traits and potential practices. The study resulted in two prototypes for children's magazines: *String* and *Lost and Found*.

Literature on the children's magazine's history in different contexts describe a progressive shift toward the end of the twentieth century, from a literary imperative to a visual one. Writing on the matter is at times biased, framing the transformation as a loss of quality, with literature as the scale by which it's measured. These statements are reductive, ignoring the value of illustration beyond traditional illumination of text and marketing appeal, and predate the emergence of magazines examined in this study. I argue that, possibly influenced by the modern picturebook and other visual media, the contemporary independent children's magazine evolved to feature illustration and text working together to produce meaning, in a way that each alone could not. This constitutes not a loss of quality, but a valorisation of illustration to the same extent as text, and new forms of word-image interplay for which new scales of quality must be established. I developed an updated definition for children's magazines based on reviewed and analysed literature in Chapter 2:

Independent children's magazines are printed, illustrated, original publications for children without a commercial agenda. They are published periodically, in a consistent format and feature a theme in each issue. They offer a variety of entertaining and educational content, made up of diverse short-forms featuring varied word-image interplay, are highly interactive and promote visual and verbal literacy, critical thinking and creativity.

This study identified two distinct editorial approaches through interviews in Chapter 3. These are foreshadowed in Chapter 2. The contrasting descriptions of the editorial approaches in *St. Nicholas* (1873) and *John Martin's Book* (1912), two highly regarded North American children's magazines, show the dichotomy of editorial leadership and horizontal artist partnership. The former favoured great quality writing and illustration juxtaposed, while the latter featured content in which illustration text and design merged. *John Martin's Book* is the product of practitioners' exploration of illustrated short-forms and illustration styles. Interviewed illustrators touched on their concerns about the illustration's quality or their intent to educate readers on illustration's diversity. I posit that an illustrator making children's magazines will inherently consider illustration and the varied ways in which it can be articulated in content in the development of their publications.

Drawing from general and particular statements from literature review, primary literature and interviews, it can be argued that contemporary independent children's magazines feature a combination of traits that distinguish them from other magazine genres that appeal to an illustrator:

- Illustration is foregrounded throughout in varied dynamics and content types;
- A pre-determined theme is used as a unifying strategy;
- Content consists of varied short-forms that an illustrator can choose from;
- Predominantly interactive, educational and entertaining content;
- Offers the possibility of constant change within a consistent set of parameters.

Illustrators' higher education training often involves the students' engagement with creating publications, printing, design, drawing, various materials and techniques, and writing, to an extent. The creative practice and interviews suggest that the graduate illustrator displays many of the skills needed to create an independent children's magazine. The similarity across creative processes in design, picturebooks and comics shown in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5, means that an illustrator is likely to be able to apply processes they've learned to this context. It may

not follow established magazine publishing practices or constitute their commercial competition, but will contribute to bibliodiversity, innovation and affect readers on a small scale.

By the last year of this study, both *Triciclo* (2017-2023) and *Cuistax* (2013-2024) communicated their magazine's end, while declaring continuity as a collective engaged in other publishing projects. While this may relate to their financial models, which reject professionalisation, profit and expansion, their relative longevity may suggest they'd reached a depletion of their exploration of the form, or the desire to explore others. I suggest an illustrator-led children's magazine could perhaps be accepted as a short-lived self-sustained project for young illustrator collectives looking to explore illustrated publications and content for children while disseminating their work.

The primary literature and interviews showed the possibility for illustrators to take over the children's magazine and all aspects of its production – while interviewees don't print themselves, they may work closely with printers. An illustrator may take a complete authorial role in content and the publication as a whole, or simply illustrate a brief. Content created for a magazine may be an extension of the illustrator's practice, or an opportunity for experimentation. The latter is evidenced in primary literature and creative practice, in which the same illustrator creates different sections of varying content types, using different illustration styles. Furthermore, Chapters 2 and 3 show that the creative process behind content for children and puzzles may be a source of enjoyment for the practitioner, and place them in a child-like mindset.

creative practice allowed me to explore children's magazine traits like varied illustration styles and the use of peritexts, while subverting them and introducing new traits, like an overarching narrative with a plot and a deconstructed format. I could apply processes I was familiar with and engage with aspects of content creation and editing, becoming aware of issues real-world practitioner's must consider – e.g. location rendering, editorial writing, content complexity and printed type size.

Through creative practice, I demonstrated some of the potential the independent children's magazine presents to an illustrator, given complete creative freedom:

Absolute control over production

By taking on all aspects of production, I could create the magazine issues holistically. I could act as editor and control the sequence of content, while being able to anticipate

content developed. I could subvert conventions such as the editorial and peritext, use format to contribute to meaning and write and devise different kinds of content without impositions, guided by my interests. I could use illustration as layout design and use all elements toward effects like immersion or having the reader infer information. I could anticipate possibilities in content according to the production means available to me. Finally, I could edit and manipulate all aspects of the publication in order to achieve a desired effect or reading experience. I reflected that while working alone makes for a holistic creative process, working collectively would allow simultaneous development of different content, providing time efficiency, and foster productive discussion.

Subversion of theme

I challenged the conventional use of theme, which in primary literature is determined beforehand, and arrived at two variations. One consisted of using a narrative with a plot and central leitmotif as theme, the other took the form of a novel two-tier theme structure, in which the first-tier was a location, and the second a theme per publication based on objects connected to the location. These two approaches materialise alternatives to convention. I also allowed theme to change my practice, by committing to subjects I wouldn't otherwise engage with.

Making format meaningful

I challenged format conventions and explored the potential of its manipulation. In Chapter 3, the persistence of the codex form and proximity to A standard dimensions in the primary literature, as well as the commitment to a format from the start, became apparent. Being able to consider format in the creative process led to its incorporation as an essential part of meaning making. It blurred the lines between print form and toy, contributed to the goal of reader immersion, and was crucial to the translation of a real experience into print.

Communicating miscellany

I found that the concept of miscellany is communicated in a number of ways, and employed them purposefully to that end. The miscellany can be attributed to the variety in type of short-form content, type of text, and the commissioning of different contributors. Visually, it is communicated through numerous rapid changes in illustration style and page or spread layout design, as well as typography and colour

palette. I found that materiality could also contribute to the miscellany by featuring a different format for each magazine section.

Discovering writing as a medium

I explored text's ability to produce visual experiences in a reader. I engaged with writing as I would a visual medium, creating a setting and placing the viewer within it. In descriptions, as if creating a graphic narrative, I led the reader through space, at times guiding their attention to details. Writing appeared as a new material I could experiment with, and a new way to engage in image making.

Directly addressing the reader in the text resulted in the emergence of my voice in the writing and in the employment of my experience as educator and mediator. I identified different processes in editing text – processing and restructuring an interview, researching and reconfiguring factual information, developing on a topic in essays. The reliance in unspecialised writing in primary literature validates that an illustrator may inform a reader on topics they have sufficient knowledge of or are able to research, and interviews suggest they may resort to specialised counsel while engaging with the medium.

Borrowing aspects from other artforms

I employed processes and strategies from other media, such as the storyboard and exploratory drawing, to create a children's magazine. I used classic literary devices such as the frame story and in-media-res, as well as comics conventions such as the speech bubble and character simultaneous succession. I approached prototypes with the holistic open-mindedness I would an artists' book or magazine, and considered design issues like information hierarchy. Finally, I used several aspects found in picturebooks, such as the full bleed spread as unit, the dramatic page turn, the fusion of fiction and non-fiction, and a reliance in complementary word-image interplay to convey meaning.

Groundwork for future projects

Each content section developed could stand as a starting point for longer projects. For example, a drawing activity using water soluble graphite could be expanded to an anthology of activities using the same device, an informational section about different kinds of professional make-up practices could evolve into a non-fiction book, or a section about bags and their unpredictable contents could be adapted into a workshop.

Much like writers who would first publish chapters in magazines, then publish them as a finished book, an illustrator might find in the children's magazine an incubator for ideas to be developed later, extending the yield of their initial creative investment.

The independent children's magazine's ephemerality, small scale and short-form content offer the conditions for an illustrator to take risks, make mistakes and learn. It further presents a form that an illustrator has the skills to entirely produce, with complete creative freedom. I propose that this, combined with the prominence of illustration and the concept of miscellany, render the independent children's magazine an ideal medium for the illustrator's experimentation in illustrated print forms and content.

While I concede creative freedom and financial limitations or affordability are rarely compatible, I suggest that there is room for exploration in the independent children's magazine beyond established conventions. Familiarity and continuity may be introduced through a recurring strategy or principle instead of static format – e.g. that each issue be a different cluster of varied publications, or that each issue use the same two-tier structure. Theme may be something other than a universal concept, or text that is conveyed to both contributors and the reader – e.g. an experience each contributor engages in beforehand, an object, an image, sound or smell.

I present that the illustrator is more than a commissioned image-maker: given the opportunity and a willingness to do so, an illustrator may make use of other media and play a more engaged and holistic role in the magazine's creative process.

This research lays the foundations for further study on different editorial approaches to making children's magazines, particularly illustrator collectives. It suggests theme as an editorial device and use of format in children's magazines offer opportunities for innovation and investigation. Finally, this study invites research into the potential for illustrators' deeper involvement in, and contribution to, other platforms.

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Appendix A

Primary Literature Information Sheet

This appendix contains a table providing information on each analysed primary literature title.

Title	Date of Inception	Country	Periodicity	Intended Reader Ages	General Description	Editorial Team Structure	Distribution	Website
Anorak	2006	UK	Quarterly	6 - 12	<i>Anorak's</i> creator and editor also makes a major contribution as writer of content for each issue. <i>Anorak</i> claims to have pioneered a new aesthetic and concept for a children's magazine. It features ads.	Team led by an Editor	Subscription Online Shop Selected Bookshops	https://anorakmagazine.com/
Aquila	1993	UK	Monthly	8 - 14	<i>Aquila</i> favours educational, history and science themed content. <i>Aquila</i> features a challenging puzzle section and is welcoming of a dual audience.	Team led by two Editors	Subscription Online Shop Selected Bookshops	https://aquila.co.uk/
Cuistax	2013	Belgium	Biannual	From 6	<i>Cuistax</i> is bilingual, identifies as a fanzine, and is printed in Riso. It features a variety of contemporary illustration styles in a limited colour palette.	Illustrator Collective	Subscription Online Shop Selected Bookshops	https://cuistaxfanzine.com/fr/
Dois Pontos	2019	Portugal	Quarterly	7 - 11	<i>Dois Pontos</i> commissions a principal illustrator for each issue and favours educational content. It consults specialists on informational content.	Team led by two Editors	Subscription Online Shop Selected Bookshops	https://www.instagram.com/revistadospontos/?hl=em
Georges	2011	France	Bimonthly	7 - 12	<i>Georges</i> is a magazine in which design plays a significant unifying role, and recurring sections are carefully organised and divided.	Team led by two Editors	Subscription Online Shop Selected Bookshops	https://www.maison-georges.com/magazines/magazine-georges/
Illustroria	2016	US	Triannual	6 - 12	<i>Illustroria</i> celebrates visual storytelling, makers and DIY culture, and often features contemporary artists and their work, as well as reviews. It favours illustration made with non-digital materials.	Team led by an Editor	Subscription Online Shop Selected Bookshops	https://www.illustroria.com/
Kiwi	2016	Spain	Quarterly	5 - 10	<i>Kiwi</i> consistently features a cheerful tone and bright palette. It makes a point of having readers see their work featured in its issues.	Illustrator Collective	Subscription Online Shop Selected Bookshops	https://www.revistakiwi.com/
Namaka	2017	Spain	Bimonthly	6 - 11	Namaka features content that may be perceived as difficult or political while maintaining an entertaining nature.	Team led by an Editor	Subscription Online Shop Selected Bookshops	https://revistanamaka.com/
Raketa	2014	Czech Republic	Quarterly	6 - 12	<i>Raketa</i> features varied illustration styles, including realistic, and a balanced miscellany of content, as well as challenging puzzles.	Team led by two Editors	Subscription Online Shop Selected Bookshops	https://www.raketa-casopis.cz/
Triciclo	2017	Portugal	Biannual	-	<i>Triciclo</i> features geometric illustration styles in a limited colour palette and is printed in Riso. It features a narrative in each issue and mostly features activities.	Illustrator Collective	Subscription Online Shop Selected Bookshops	https://www.tricicloeditora.com/

Appendix B

Primary Literature Case Summary Table

This appendix contains the full primary literature case summary table (B.12), as well as its individual sections (B.1-B.11).