WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM

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ORDINARY ANYWHERE

To investigate something properly we need all three: archives, dreams, memories . . . MARTIN EDMOND

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Extraordinary Anywhere

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EXTRAORDINARY ANYWHERE

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Extraordinary Anywhere

Essays on Place from Aotearoa New Zealand

This collection of personal essays, a first of its kind, re-imagines the idea of place for an emerging generation of readers and writers. It offers glimpses into where we are now and how that feels, and opens up the kinds of stories we can conceive of telling about living here.

DESIGN COLOPHON

Designing Place

Jo Bailey and Anna Brown

What is this process of design? How and where do you start? We start by leafing through maps, encyclopaedias and artists' books. We visit Unity Books to scope the topography of the New Zealand nonfiction table—a landscape of covers, broadly two types: typographic (perhaps the simplest way to unify a multiplicity of voices); and image-based (tending towards illustrative rather than metaphorical). How, we wonder, to capture and reconcile a profusion of place, 16 distinct voices? If, in the geographical field, 'place' is defined as 'space which people have made meaningful',[1] how will the design of this new space that is the book be imbued with meaning?

Our bearings set, we begin. We read the essays separately, then explain to each other what they mean to us; a new journey each time we talk. Jo gets her computer to read them to her and writes down evocative phrases—accidental found poetry. Out of context, the phonoaesthetics of the words deposit new strata of meaning. Aloud (especially in Alex-the-computer-voice's metallic monotone), they feel like the rhythmic clackety-clack of a train journey.

We choose two typefaces by New Zealand typographic designer Kris Sowersby: Tiempos and Calibre. As designers we say it's important that if the words are from *here*, the typefaces should be too—but this is partly post-rationalisation. Tiempos, our serif font, is based on a typeface for a Spanish newspaper.[2] Calibre, our sans serif, is inspired by street signage,[3] and though this wayfinding lineage feels pertinent, it is happenstance. We choose it because it is a consistent favourite of ours—like a typographic version of our own handwriting. It's the other way with Tiempos; the chance to explore something familiar but different. Later we add Domaine, also by Sowersby. It is elegantly curvaceous, 'Latin detailing on a Scotch skeleton'.[4]

We try different formats and grids, leafing through paper mock-ups, seeing where our thumbs grip the page. The edges of the page become the edges of a map. The asymmetric column layout leads the eye along the top then down the side; the twisting of the page reminiscent of lining up a map to find north.

We agree, this is a green book. We pick a selection: lush forest, earth and moss. We talk of an old and favourite cover of *The Hobbit*, which features a single tone somewhere between greenstone and grass; British Ordnance Survey Pathfinder maps with green covers; of landscape. We try green layouts, but there is a mismatch between intent and articulation. It comes across hackneyed, too obvious; the 'clean, green' allusion heavy-handed.

We look through more vintage bookplates, finding old building blueprints—deep blue pages with intricate structural details. It becomes clear—it is not green, it is blue—rich, changeable, complex. We choose Pantone 315U blue.

Tentatively, we illustrate some essays. We fossick through out-of-copyright images, searching for multiple ideas of place. The current swirls us in different directions—a psychogeographical dérive. The process of collage offers a way to create a narrative through bringing the ephemeral together.

By April we have been working on the book on and off for six months. We show Ingrid and Cherie a dust jacket that unfolds like a map to reveal a grid-based system, marked with emblems placed using coordinates based on the location of each essay in the book. It is unresolved, but it resonates with us as a unified visual system that both creates and charts our new territory. We embrace the tactile exercise of unfolding and refolding (the frustration of a map that won't obey the creases), the wayfinding system, the bringing together of symbols for each essay. It gets a lukewarm response. We try again. This time, a typographic approach. Again the response is cordial but not excited.

In frustration we try a completely new tack: photographic, with new typefaces, retreating to the safe ground of the Unity table. It is an appeasement, reactive, scraped out in leftover corners of time during a particularly hectic period. Positive noises come back, but instead of being a comfort, this actually makes it harder. After heartfelt discussion we realise that we don't want this expedient option to be *it*. We have become embedded in this as a process, involved and deep, that what we want is to render *our* extraordinary, *our* journey. We have become territorial, protective. This book-map is *our* visual territory. We realise, rationally, that this isn't our book. It isn't about us. But it is, too. It's about all of us, now.

We ask for one more attempt to get to a place that is both ours and theirs, yours and mine. Another day of iterations—seven straight hours punctuated by a working lunch with covers spread across a café table. One of our lunchtime iterations is a giant E with an owl in it. It makes the B pile. However it is capital letters we come back to, fuelled by caffeine and adrenaline. Domaine, when used large, is beautiful, strong, and has a slight eccentricity. We are intrigued by the way the flatness of the typography works with the intricacy of the images. The images—some literal, others metaphorical—respond to the emotive and objective content inside each essay. This cover could *only* be about this book, this place. The map, now on the inside of the cover, is a secret key—a navigational tool. We send only this version. *This is it*. The responses come back positive. Relief.

Through this choreographic process, this traversing of boundaries between word and visual, author and designer, we have created a place that allows for multitudes and pluralities. For us, this book represents an extraordinary journey, and for you, we hope, a space made meaningful.

Notes on sources

1 Cresswell, T. Place: A Short Introduction. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 7.
2 Tiempos Design Information, Klim Type Foundry, 2012. Accessed 17 May 2016. https://klim.co.nz/blog/tiempos-design-information/
3 Calibre, Typographica, 2012. Accessed 17 May 2016. http://typographica.org/typeface-reviews/calibre/
4 Domaine Design Information, Klim Type Foundry, 2013. Accessed 17 May 2016. https://klim.co.nz/blog/domaine-design-information/