

In Conversation With Rita Jules

Endie Hwang and Zoe Bunce are Teen Thinkers at the Bard Graduate Center. They spoke with Rita Jules, a senior graphic designer at Miko Books on July 24, 2019. Below is an excerpt from their interview.

Location: Miko Books, Brooklyn, New York

Audio Excerpt #1:

Endie Hwang: I see through these images — we haven't been able to find this book at the BGC — that you color altered a lot of the images.

Rita Jules: We did in this project. This is unusual that way and that the director of the Jewish Museum is really interested in making things fresh feeling and new and so she's willing to do things that other people are not. This material, so it's a photograph of a garden design so it's a little more free for interpretation than like a painting might be. They wouldn't necessarily, many people wouldn't reproduce this painting in this fashion, right? But we can do this kind of wild treatment of a black and white image of something that's really supposed to be experienced as a garden.

Audio Excerpt #2:

Endie: I keep getting caught by the fonts of the book. *Elegant Princess* has a more structured kind of elegant font and this¹ is much more modern. Is it just based on the time period or just the aesthetics of the artist that you decide fonts or colors?

Rita: Yes. I mean it can be any — you want it to feel true to the material. So sometimes it means limiting it in a historical period. Like if it was after the birth of printing you can find it something appropriate to that country and that time period, maybe, you know. Or if it's like a key moment, like a book about the thirties or something, you might find a display face that's most common in the thirties. But it's also more free, like, depending on the material sometimes people let you play against what would be expected. You could do a sans serif for some *Enlightened Princesses*. Like, you have letters without the serifs. Do you guys know the serif, sans serif? Like serif is this little crossbar on the little letter form and these don't have them. So, choosing the type is one of the big design gestures that we get to do. We do research for different foundries and go online and we try things out.

¹ Roberto Burle Marx *Brazilian Modernist*

We borrow typefaces from the type designers and test them out and have a whole exploratory period. You try and find one that feels really satisfying and exciting for that particular imagery of the book and subject matter.

Endie: Are there ever limitations for them? Like, to make them legible or that the viewer understands and comprehends it?

Rita: Yes. The degree to which your publisher or author worries about that differs. Some people are very anxious that it be extremely legible from across the room. Other people are more flexible about it. I'm trying to think of one we've done recently where the type is a little bit more buried in the image and it's not as easy to discover. So both approaches work, it just depends on what people are comfortable with. You try to imagine in a bookstore all in a row what's gonna function the best.