

In Conversation with Rita Jules

Zoe Bunce and Endie Hwang 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:

Zoe Bunce: Do you see the art in what you're doing? Which part do you think has the most creativity? Or freeform? Or where you take the most initiative?

Rita Jules: I feel like all the parts of the design - like choosing the typeface and coming up with the grid and then actually laying out the whole book with all the real material when you do the first complete 600 pages - all of that is like the big creative effort. Every spread you're trying to figure out: "What is satisfying to me compositionally here, and what does it mean further on?" And you start to - you design from the front to the back usually - so you're going through, everything's okay, things are fitting and then suddenly there's a big problem like (In reference to a portrait in *Enlightened Princesses*) she ended up too small for instance - like a really important thing - and you have to go back and unravel something back here to fix it. So there's like this whole creative in and out like back and forth. Usually we finish the whole book and then we page through it slowly and are like "I don't like that" "I don't like that" how am I going to change it to make it better?

Zoe: Everything shifts everything else?

Rita: Yeah, and it's all codependent, so we really get in there, you know, trying to figure it out, and that whole arc, like that entire part, is all creative.

Audio Excerpt #2:

Zoe: How much of this book (In reference to *Enlightened Princesses*) did you do? Like were you guys responsible for?

Rita: Well, for instance we would recommend all the materials for the book, so we advise them on what kind of paper the inside should be and the thickness and the weight of it. This (*Enlightened Princesses*) is a really thick book with many pages, right, so there's a balance between having it be thick enough not to have showthrough, which is where you

can see through the page; if the papers are thicker then you have less of that. So we advise on all the material, like the binding cloth, the color of the stamping, how this is bound - you know this one (*Enlightened Princesses*) has a jacket, this one (*Roberto Burle Marx: Brazilian Modernist*) doesn't, so all the material, the trim size for instance, we often decide that in conjunction with the museum and then the typeface and the grid. The grid is this organizing structure, for this museum the director (Amy Meyers of the *Enlightened Princesses: Caroline, Augusta, Charlotte, and the Shaping of the Modern World* exhibition at Kensington Palace) always liked single column text, which eats up a lot of pages because there's all this white space, but that was a directive that we can't avoid, so that's part of why this book is so long. And then when you get into this part which is a catalogue section, the grid is changed to this three columned structure to allow better fit for the text. We help advise which images work as the bleed details to open an essay. This might be a spot color, so we would choose a color to use and the type. We decide the basic sizes of all the figures in an essay, and part of it is to control how they relate to the text. So you're supposed to be able to, ideally, you're reading the text and when it mentions an image you can quickly look up and find it. No one ever wants you to have to turn the spread a page. So that's a big puzzle element in the design because sometimes an author writes with like three references right here and you can't quite fit them and there's a whole back and forth.