

Tactile Graphic Props & Narrative Immersion

Critical
Report

GDE751 - Final Module
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Fig. 1: Resin print tests and rejected components

1. Introduction

In the modern art of filmmaking, graphic design is often described as an invisible art: something the viewer is not necessarily supposed to notice when it has been done well. It blends into the background of a scene while quietly helping to establish its time, location and wider fictional world. This can involve something as small as a postage stamp, handwritten letter or ticket stub, all the way up to a shopfront or billboard on the side of a building. Although these objects may only appear briefly, they are designed to feel as though they existed before the camera arrived and will continue to exist after the scene has ended.

The visibility of these details is affected by the technology through which films are produced and viewed. High-resolution cameras and displays can make printed surfaces, materials and typography increasingly legible, while streaming platforms allow audiences to pause, rewind and capture individual frames. A flat digital texture or historically inappropriate typeface may therefore become more noticeable than its position within the background initially suggests. However, visibility does not guarantee attention. Research into cinematic attention and change blindness demonstrates that viewers can overlook substantial visual changes while concentrating on character, movement and story (Levin and Simons 1997; Smith 2012).

This creates an important tension. Graphic props may contribute to the credibility of a scene without being consciously examined, but their absence or inaccuracy does not automatically break every viewer's immersion. Recognition can depend on how closely an object is photographed, whether it is handled by a character, its importance to the narrative and the viewer's previous knowledge. A designer or historian may recognise an anachronistic typeface immediately, while another viewer may only register that the wider scene feels convincing or unconvincing.

My interest in this subject developed from a personal love of cinema and an ambition to move my graphic-design practice towards film and television production. Previous projects completed during this MA explored the relationship between physical making and personal or psychological experience. This final project provided an opportunity to apply that interest to graphic props, miniature environments and stop-motion production. The accompanying Studio Practice developed into a proof-of-concept package based on the Manx folktale of the Buggane of St Trinian's, consisting of character puppets, graphic ephemera, miniature environments, a script and a production storyboard.

This report therefore asks:

To what extent do tactile graphic props and period-accurate ephemera contribute to narrative immersion in motion pictures?

To investigate this question, the report combines a review of academic literature and practitioner writing with two practitioner interviews, an exploratory audience survey of 72 respondents and visual case studies. These findings are then considered alongside the completed studio outcomes. Rather than attempting to prove that physical props automatically produce immersion, the report examines the conditions under which materiality, typography and historical credibility may support a believable fictional world, while recognising the influence of editing, performance, cinematography, sound and individual audience experience.

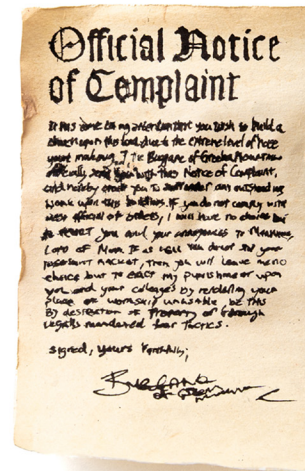


Fig. 2: Official Notice of Complaint

2. Literature and Theoretical Context

2.1 Graphic Props and Physical Materiality

Graphic props occupy a slightly unusual position within film production. They are designed objects, but their success is usually measured by how naturally they belong within a wider fictional environment. Unlike a poster or piece of editorial design intended to attract attention, a graphic prop may need to communicate information without appearing consciously designed. Its typography, materials, printing and physical condition must suggest who produced it, where it has been kept and how it has been used.

Annie Atkins describes this process as the creation of graphic objects that appear to have existed before filming began. Her work includes letters, passports, newspapers, packaging, signage and other pieces of fictional ephemera. Although digital software is used during their development, the objects are frequently printed, assembled, distressed and handled physically so that their surfaces respond naturally to lighting and interaction (Atkins 2020). The designer is therefore working for both the camera and the person holding the object.

This distinction is important because physical construction is not simply an aesthetic preference. Paper weight, ink coverage, creases, abrasion and uneven edges can affect the way an object reflects light or moves in a performer's hand. These qualities may become particularly visible when a prop is photographed in close-up. A digitally simulated crease printed onto smooth paper can reproduce the appearance of damage from one angle, but it does not create the same physical shadow, resistance or change in surface.



A handmade object can still be historically incorrect, visually unconvincing or unsuitable for its narrative purpose.



Nevertheless, tactility should not automatically be treated as evidence of authenticity. Physical ageing can become exaggerated or generic, particularly when tea staining, torn edges and distressed typography are applied without reference to how an object would actually have been produced or used. A handmade object can still be historically incorrect, visually unconvincing or unsuitable for its narrative purpose. Materiality is therefore most useful when it responds to the object's intended encounter: its relationship to the lens, the person or puppet handling it, and the fictional circumstances in which it exists.

2.2 Narrative Transportation and Perceived Realism

Narrative immersion can be discussed through Green and Brock's theory of narrative transportation. They describe transportation as a state of cognitive, emotional and imaginative involvement in a story. When transported, an audience directs attention towards the narrative world and may temporarily become less focused on evaluating its construction (Green and Brock 2000).

Their studies did not investigate filmmaking, production design or graphic props specifically. Narrative transportation therefore cannot be used to prove that a tactile object will cause an audience to become immersed. It instead provides a framework for understanding the wider state that coherent production design may help support. Props operate alongside performance, editing, sound, cinematography and the audience's own willingness to engage.

Busselle and Bilandzic distinguish between different forms of perceived realism. External realism concerns whether a story is consistent with a viewer's knowledge of the real world, while narrative realism concerns whether events and details remain coherent within the rules established by the story itself. An inconsistency may interfere with the viewer's mental representation of a narrative, but its effect depends on whether it is noticed and judged to be significant (Busselle and Bilandzic 2008).

Within this project, I use the phrase 'cognitive bump' as informal shorthand for the moment when an unexpected detail draws attention away from the story and towards its construction. It is not a term used by Busselle and Bilandzic and should not be presented as a guaranteed neurological response. Their model suggests that inconsistencies can affect engagement; it does not claim that every inaccurate prop will be noticed or that a single mistake will completely destroy immersion.

2.3 Cinematic Attention, Inattentional Blindness and Change Blindness

Research into visual attention complicates the argument that accuracy is always consciously recognised. Inattentional blindness describes a failure to notice an unexpected but visible object because attention is concentrated on another task or event.

Simons and Chabris demonstrated this through an experiment in which participants watched two teams passing basketballs and counted the passes made by one team. Across different versions of the task, an unexpected person carrying an umbrella or wearing a gorilla costume crossed the scene. Despite passing through the central area, a substantial proportion of participants did not report seeing the unexpected figure. Detection was affected by the difficulty of the task and the similarity between the unexpected figure and the objects receiving attention (Simons and Chabris 1999).

The experiment provides a useful comparison with cinematic viewing. An audience concentrating on dialogue, performance or action may not consciously examine every graphic object within the frame. However, the basketball-counting task was more demanding than ordinary film viewing, so it does not demonstrate that audiences will routinely overlook inaccurate props. It instead establishes that visibility alone does not guarantee conscious perception.

Change blindness provides further evidence of this limitation. Levin and Simons asked ten participants to watch a filmed conversation containing nine deliberate continuity changes. During the first viewing, 89 of the 90 possible changes went unreported. Even after being instructed to find mistakes, participants detected an average of only two changes. In a further experiment, one of the central actors was replaced during a cut, yet only approximately one third of viewers noticed the substitution (Levin and Simons 1997).

Smith and Henderson later examined edit blindness using eye tracking and excerpts from seven feature films. Participants were instructed to detect edits but still missed approximately a quarter of cuts within the same scene. When a cut coincided with continuous movement, the proportion increased to almost a third (Smith and Henderson 2008). Smith's Attentional Theory of Cinematic Continuity subsequently argued that editing manages viewers' attention and expectations, allowing a sense of continuity to emerge from discontinuous images (Smith 2012).

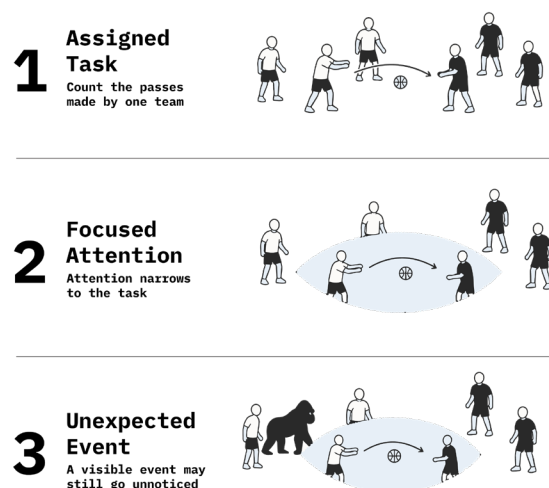


Fig. 3: Selective Attention Test—assigned task and unexpected event

Fig. 4a:
Contextually
informed
typography

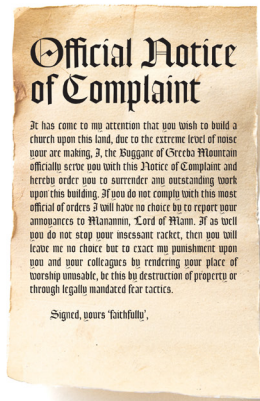
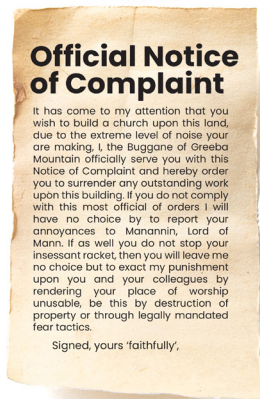


Fig. 4b:
Deliberately
incongruous
modern
typography



Specialist knowledge may also affect perception. Werner and Thies found that American football experts were more sensitive than novices to meaningful changes in American football-related images, but not to unrelated material (Werner and Thies 2000). This raises the possibility that designers, historians or typography specialists may recognise details overlooked by other viewers, although the study does not demonstrate this directly.

None of these experiments tested typography or material tactility. Nevertheless, they challenge the assumption that all visual errors are automatically detected. Background ephemera may support the coherence of an environment without being individually noticed, while an object shown in close-up, handled by a character or made important to the plot is more likely to receive focused attention.

2.4 Historical Accuracy and Constructed Authenticity

Historical accuracy and perceived authenticity are related, but they are not identical. Lees argues that historical filmmaking contains competing ideas of authenticity. Productions often rely on recognisable visual cues that correspond with an audience's existing understanding of the past. A reconstruction could be supported by historical evidence but still appear unfamiliar or unconvincing if it conflicts with the visual conventions through which audiences have learned to recognise a period (Lees 2016).

This presents the designer with a negotiation between evidence, narrative clarity and audience expectation. A typeface may be historically appropriate but illegible at the size required by the camera. Conversely, a later typeface may communicate the intended period effectively while being chronologically inaccurate. The first decision privileges historical evidence, while the second prioritises communication. Neither should be treated as automatically correct; what matters is that the choice is researched, deliberate and consistent with the wider production.

Brako's audience study of three Ghanaian period films found that settings, costumes and props helped viewers interpret historical period and cultural context. Participants also identified inappropriate objects as details that could reduce credibility or create confusion (Brako 2022). The study supports the importance of production design, although its qualitative sample of 22 viewers was culturally specific and did not isolate graphic props from the rest of the visual environment.

The literature therefore suggests a conditional relationship between graphic props and immersion. Physical materiality can support the visual and performative credibility of an object, while typographic and historical research can reduce avoidable inconsistencies. However, these details only become influential through the way they are photographed, handled, edited and interpreted. Tactile graphic props are one component of narrative world-building rather than an independent mechanism capable of producing immersion by themselves.

3. Research Methods and Limitations

Research Design

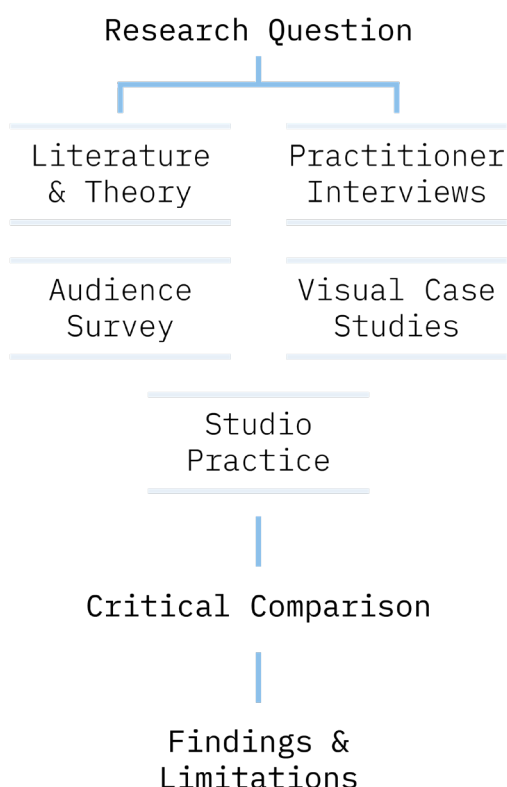


Fig. 5: Research design

3.1 Research Design

This project used an exploratory mixed-methods approach combining practitioner interviews, an audience survey, secondary research, visual case studies and practice-based investigation. These methods were selected to examine the research question from several positions: the intentions of designers producing graphic props, the reported experiences of viewers, existing theories of narrative engagement and the practical consequences of turning digital designs into physical objects.

The different methods were not intended to produce a single experimental measurement of immersion. Instead, they allowed findings from one area to be compared with evidence from another. Practitioner testimony could be considered against audience responses, while both could be questioned through academic studies of attention and perception. The completed Studio Practice then provided an opportunity to test how these ideas affected actual design decisions.

3.2 Practitioner Interviews

Primary qualitative research was conducted through two asynchronous written interviews with graphic designers working within film and television production. Flora Fricker responded by email on 13 April 2026, while Thomas Love responded through WhatsApp messages on 16 May 2026. Their answers have been retained verbatim rather than rewritten or presented as direct observation.

Written interviews were appropriate because they allowed both participants to respond around professional commitments and provided a clear record of their wording. The questions focused on materiality, historical research, typography, camera technology, actor interaction and the balance between accuracy and narrative communication. These subjects directly corresponded with the practical decisions required by the Studio Practice project.

Fricker and Love provided informed practitioner perspectives based on professional experience. However, two interviews cannot represent the full range of practices used across the film and television industries. Their responses are qualitative accounts rather than controlled evidence of audience behaviour. The written format also limited the opportunity to ask immediate follow-up questions or observe the physical examples being discussed. Their testimony is therefore used to explain professional reasoning and working methods, rather than to prove that a particular prop caused audience immersion.



**We are
essentially
building a
physical safety net
for their
performance.**



*Flora Fricker, personal
communication, 13 April 2026*



**Historical
accuracy is our
starting line,
but it is rarely our
finish line.**



*Thomas Love, personal
communication, 16 May
2026*

3.3 Audience Survey

An exploratory online survey was used to investigate how viewers reported noticing and responding to graphic props. It received 72 responses and was distributed through university networks, LinkedIn, film-related forums, friends and colleagues. Participants were also invited to share the survey further. This created a combined convenience and snowball sample rather than a representative sample of the wider viewing public.

The questionnaire used closed-response questions alongside an optional written response. It asked participants how frequently they noticed background graphic details, how distracting they found a prompted historical inaccuracy, which features made a hypothetical handwritten letter appear authentic, and whether detailed physical props helped them connect with a fictional world. It also recorded whether respondents worked or studied within the creative, film or design industries.

Survey Sample 72

Total Respondents

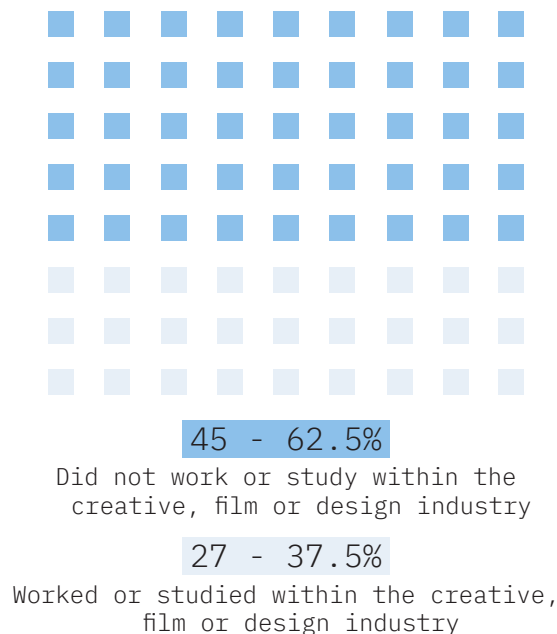


Fig. 6: Survey sample profile (n=72)

The survey provided useful descriptive evidence but contained several limitations. Participants chose to complete a survey specifically concerned with film props, meaning that people already interested in visual detail may have been more likely to respond. Some questions were positively framed or asked participants to imagine a hypothetical example. This may have encouraged agreement or made respondents more conscious of details that they would not ordinarily notice during uninterrupted viewing.

The survey measured self-reported attitudes rather than actual behaviour. Participants were not shown controlled versions of physical and digitally simulated props, and their attention or immersion was not measured during a film sequence. The findings therefore cannot demonstrate that tactile materiality caused narrative transportation.

The results were analysed descriptively at the level of the full sample. Although 45 respondents, or 62.5%, did not work or study within the creative, film or design industries, responses were not cross-tabulated by professional background. It is therefore not possible to determine whether the creative and non-creative groups noticed or interpreted graphic inaccuracies differently. This limits comparisons between participant groups but does not alter the whole-sample results reported above.

3.4 Secondary Research and Visual Case Studies

Secondary research combined academic literature, practitioner publications, production interviews, film criticism and visual analysis. Academic sources were prioritised when discussing narrative transportation, perceived realism, inattentional blindness and change blindness. Practitioner books and interviews were used to understand production methods and professional decision-making.

Visual case studies included tactile and stop-motion productions such as *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (Anderson 2009), *Isle of Dogs* (Anderson 2018), *Kubo and the Two Strings* (Knight 2016) and *Yn Shenn Dooiney as ny Ferrishyn* (Lancashire 2026). These examples were selected because their physical construction, material texture or cultural relationship to the project made them relevant to the developing Studio Practice. They were examined in relation to typography, scale, surface, material imperfection and internal visual consistency.

Online databases and audience-submitted lists of cinematic errors were treated more cautiously. IMDb goofs and similar entries were useful for identifying possible examples of typographic or historical anachronisms, but they were not treated as verified academic evidence. Where these examples informed the argument, they were considered alongside information about typeface dates, production methods or other independent sources.

The case studies were selected purposefully rather than systematically and therefore cannot represent production design across all genres or industries. Their role was to provide visual comparisons and generate design considerations, rather than establish general rules about audience response.



Fig. 7a: *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (2009), 01:15:37



Fig. 7b: *Isle of Dogs* (2018), 00:15:58



Fig. 7c: *Kubo and the Two Strings* (2016), 00:09:00



Fig. 7d: *Yn Shenn Dooiney as ny Ferrishyn* (2026), 00:01:16

3.5 Practice-Based Investigation

The Studio Practice functioned as an exploratory method through which six working considerations concerning materiality, typography, scale, immersion, artistic licence and audience evidence were applied to a stop-motion proof of concept based on the Buggane of St Trinian's.

Making the objects allowed paper staining, ink, carved surfaces, fabric, wool, clay, foam and resin printing to be examined through construction and photography. It also demonstrated where digital tools could support planning, visualisation and fabrication without assuming that either physical or digital production was automatically superior.

The practice was not an audience experiment. The proposed film, animatic and motion tests were not completed, and the objects were not evaluated through controlled viewing. It can therefore demonstrate how research informed the design process and how materials behaved physically, but not that the completed props caused narrative immersion.

4. Findings and Critical Discussion

4.1 Selective Attention and Audience Response

The audience survey initially appeared to support the argument that graphic props are widely noticed. Fifty-seven of the 72 respondents, or 79.2%, reported noticing background graphic details at least sometimes. When prompted with a modern digital typeface appearing on a 1920s document, 36 respondents, exactly 50%, said that it would be highly distracting or completely shatter the illusion.

These results demonstrate reported attitudes rather than observed behaviour. The questions directed attention towards graphic props and historical errors, potentially making respondents more conscious of details

they might not inspect during ordinary viewing. In contrast, inattentive and change-blindness research shows that viewers can overlook highly visible events or substantial continuity changes when their attention is directed elsewhere (Simons and Chabris 1999; Levin and Simons 1997).

The findings are not necessarily contradictory. The survey indicates that many respondents remember noticing graphic details and believe inaccuracies can be distracting, while the experiments demonstrate that not every visible detail reaches conscious awareness. Together, they suggest that a prop's influence depends partly on its narrative position. A document read by a central character is more likely to be examined than a poster at the edge of the frame.

Viewer knowledge may also affect recognition. Although 45 respondents, or 62.5%, did not work or study in the creative, film or design industries, their answers were not cross-tabulated against the creative group. Werner and Thies's research suggests that specialist knowledge can increase sensitivity to meaningful changes within a familiar subject (Werner and Thies 2000). A designer, historian or sign writer may therefore recognise an error that remains unremarkable to another viewer, although this was not tested by my survey.

The evidence does not support the claim that every inaccurate prop breaks immersion. Props appear most likely to become influential when they receive narrative emphasis, conflict with a viewer's knowledge or disrupt the visual rules established by the production.

Survey: Key Findings

79.2%

57 of 72

Reported noticing background graphic details at least sometimes

50%

36 of 72

Said a modern digital typeface on a 1920s document would be highly distracting or completely shatter the illusion

Fig. 8: Key survey findings (n=72)

4.2 Materiality: Designing for the Lens and the Hand

The survey also indicated a positive response towards physical materiality. When asked which feature made a hypothetical handwritten letter appear most authentic, 35 respondents, or 48.6%, selected the physical texture, creases and ageing of the paper. This was the most frequently selected answer. A further 44 respondents, or 61.1%, agreed or strongly agreed that highly detailed physical props helped them connect emotionally with the world and characters on screen.

These responses demonstrate an interest in material qualities, but they do not establish that a physical prop is always more effective than a digital alternative. Participants were not shown controlled examples and were not asked to compare the same object produced through different methods. The questions were also positively framed around authenticity and connection. The results should therefore be treated as justification for practical investigation rather than proof of a material effect.

The practitioner interviews offered a production-based explanation for why these qualities may matter. Flora Fricker described the relationship between surface and cinematography, arguing that lighting behaves differently across textured paper, smooth modern stock, creases and manually applied ink. Her observation that the camera records the physical behaviour of light helped shift the project away from treating material distress as a purely decorative layer (Fricker 2026).

Thomas Love similarly emphasised that a prop should be designed in relation to how it will be encountered. A background graphic may only require enough information to support the environment, while a document held close to the camera must withstand greater scrutiny. He also described the importance of designing for the person handling the object. Weight, flexibility, surface and functionality can affect the way a performer interacts with a prop, although the degree of influence will vary between performers and productions (Love 2026).



Fig. 9: Church architectural plans and construction details



Fig. 10: Steve Toussaint discussing the Hall of Nine set

An actor's account provides a useful counterpoint to the designers' perspectives. Discussing *House of the Dragon*, Steve Toussaint recalled that the charts in Lord Corlys Velaryon's Hall of Nine contained meaningful information rather than placeholder text, alongside paintings and details that might never be visible on screen. When Brittany Broski suggested that this level of detail deepened immersion, Toussaint replied that "it helps enormously" (Royal Court 2026: 05:29). This is anecdotal evidence from a promotional interview, and Broski's question prompted the connection with immersion. Nevertheless, it supports Fricker's and Love's argument that fully resolved objects can assist performers even when audiences never consciously inspect them.

This principle translates imperfectly but usefully into stop-motion. The animator effectively controls the character's physical performance, and a miniature prop must work with the puppet's scale, pose and available movement. An object that is too stiff, heavy or detailed may be difficult to position, while writing that appears legible during digital design may disappear once reduced and photographed.

This problem became visible in the church architectural plans. The completed plans combined a digitally established layout with hand tracing, ink, tea-stained paper and distressed edges. At full size, the annotations, line variation and paper surface gave the document a sense of use and construction. Once reduced to puppet scale, however, some of the smallest writing became difficult to read. The material qualities remained visible as texture, but not all of the designed information survived. This demonstrated that physical detail only contributes effectively when it is appropriate to the scale and intended shot.

Materiality should therefore be understood as a relationship rather than an automatic quality. Its potential value comes from the interaction between the object, lighting, camera distance, handling and narrative purpose. A physical prop can still fail if these conditions are ignored, while a hybrid or largely digital workflow may succeed when it is designed intelligently for its final encounter.

4.3 Typography, Historical Accuracy and Constructed Authenticity

The project began with an emphasis on period accuracy, particularly in relation to typography. Examples identified through film criticism and databases of cinematic errors demonstrated how modern typefaces can leave an unintended visual trace within a historical setting. However, the research also showed that perceived authenticity is not produced by chronology alone.

Love argued that historical evidence should provide a foundation rather than an absolute restriction. Graphic information may need to remain readable, communicate a plot point quickly or contribute to the wider visual tone of a production. A historically documented typeface or printing method may not always fulfil those requirements at the necessary scale. The designer must therefore negotiate between accuracy, communication and consistency (Love 2026).

This corresponds with Lees's argument that historical cinema constructs authenticity through recognisable visual effects and conventions. Audiences approach the past through previous films, photographs, museums and popular imagery. A historically accurate detail may still appear unfamiliar, while a less accurate but recognisable convention may be accepted as credible (Lees 2016). Internal narrative consistency can consequently become as important as complete historical reconstruction.

The church plans were informed by historical references including the ninth-century Plan of St Gall and the sketchbook of Villard de Honnecourt (Stiftsbibliothek St.

Gallen ca. 827; Villard de Honnecourt ca. 1230). Neither source represents a twelfth-century Manx construction document, so the finished plans cannot be described as a reconstruction of how St Trinian's church would have been designed. They are historically informed graphic props that combine relevant visual references with the needs of the fictional story.

The Official Notice of Complaint moves further away from historical accuracy. Its bureaucratic language and formal structure are deliberate comic anachronisms intended to characterise the Buggane as an unusually particular and frustrated creature. LTC Goudy Text was used as a visual reference for its lettering despite being designed in the twentieth century (Goudy 1928). Printing and tracing the lettering by hand introduced physical variation, but this process did not make the typeface historically accurate.



Fig. 11: Official Notice installed in the church-wall diorama

Within a strictly documentary reconstruction, these decisions would be significant errors. Within the proposed stop-motion story, they help communicate character and tone. The relevant question is therefore not simply whether an element existed within the historical period, but whether its departure from history is informed, acknowledged and consistent with the fictional world.

The Marown marker followed a similar approach. Its English place name was selected for immediate audience comprehension, while the secondary marks were inspired by Ogham rather than presented as an accurate transliteration. Clay, layered paint and the moss-covered miniature landscape gave the object physical presence, but its design remains an act of stylised folklore world-building.



Fig. 12: Marown marker and miniature landscape

Because the project adapts Manx folklore, historical research is also a question of cultural representation rather than visual styling alone. The English place name and Ogham-inspired marks aid narrative legibility, but neither should be mistaken for evidence of a specific twelfth-century Manx practice. Describing them as stylised decisions makes the limits of the research visible and avoids presenting invention as cultural fact.

These outcomes changed my understanding of the phrase ‘period-accurate ephemera’ within the research question. Complete accuracy was neither achieved nor always desirable. Historical research instead became a method for making informed decisions, identifying where artistic licence had been used and avoiding accidental anachronisms. Deliberate departure can support a narrative; unexamined inconsistency is more likely to expose the production process.



Fig. 13: Monks encountering the Official Notice

4.4 Translating Research into Studio Practice

The research was translated into six working considerations: test physical materiality, treat typography as contextual evidence, design for the lens and handling, support rather than guarantee immersion, balance research with artistic licence and interpret audience evidence carefully. These considerations provided criteria through which the practical work could be developed and evaluated.

The final Studio Practice changed substantially from the original proposal. A complete stop-motion film, Buggane cave, full church environment, matchstick models, motion tests and finished animatic were initially planned. Following a reduction in scope, the outcome became a proof-of-concept package consisting of a completed Buggane puppet, three monk bodies with two completed costumes, church architectural plans, an Official Notice of Complaint with a church-wall and door diorama, a Marown marker and miniature landscape, a script and a twenty-six-panel production storyboard.

This change limits the claims that can be made, but it also provides a more accurate framework for assessing the work. The completed objects demonstrate material and visual development without pretending to demonstrate audience immersion within a finished motion picture.

The Buggane and monk puppets established the scale and visual context in which the graphic props would operate. Raw wool, fabric, foam, resin, clay and painted surfaces helped connect the characters with the handmade environments. The missing monk hands and unfinished third costume prevent the figures from being described as production-ready animation puppets, but their proportions remain useful for evaluating the scale of documents and environmental graphics.



Fig. 14: Overview of completed Studio Practice outcomes

The three principal graphic outcomes each serve a different narrative function. The architectural plans provide information required by the monks and establish the construction of the church. The notice externalises the Buggane's frustration and connects typography with characterisation. The Marown marker communicates a change of location after the church roof is thrown. Their narrative roles make them more likely to receive directed attention than general background dressing, responding to the findings from inattentional-blindness research.

The project also challenged the initial opposition between physical and digital production. Illustrator was used for layouts, generative AI contributed to early concept visualisation, digital sculpting helped develop character components, and resin printing translated those components into physical forms. These processes were followed by assembly, painting, staining, sewing, carving and distressing.

The digital stages did not automatically produce finished or reliable outcomes. AI-generated hands contained errors, digital models required adjustment, and printed components had to be reconsidered at physical scale. Equally, handmade processes were not automatically successful: adhesives failed, materials reacted unexpectedly and small details became illegible. The strongest outcomes emerged through movement between digital planning and physical correction rather than the complete rejection of either approach.



Fig. 15: Completed proof-of-concept assets

5. Conclusion

This report investigated the extent to which tactile graphic props and period-accurate ephemera contribute to narrative immersion. Academic literature, practitioner interviews, an exploratory audience survey, visual case studies and practice-based investigation indicate that graphic props can support the credibility of a fictional world. Their influence, however, is conditional and cannot be separated from the wider filmmaking process.

Physical materiality affects how an object responds to lighting, scale and interaction. Paper weight, ink variation, surface wear and carved lettering influence how props reflect light and behave during handling. The interviews with Flora Fricker and Thomas Love reinforced the importance of designing for both the camera and the person interacting with an object. The Studio Practice tested this through the construction of plans, documents, puppets and miniature environments.

The survey indicated that many respondents remembered noticing background graphics and believed inaccuracies could be distracting. Material texture was the most frequently selected feature for making a hypothetical letter appear authentic. Nevertheless, the survey was prompted and self-reported, and participants did not compare controlled versions of the completed props. It cannot establish that tactility directly caused immersion.

Inattentional and change-blindness research challenged my original assumption that visible errors are automatically noticed. Audience attention is selective and influenced by narrative action, editing and individual knowledge. A prop is more likely to receive scrutiny when shown in close-up, handled by a central character or used to communicate information. Designing for this intended encounter is more useful than applying the same level of detail to every object.



Fig. 16: Buggane and monk puppets at scale

The project also complicated the idea of period accuracy. Historical research can identify accidental anachronisms, but complete reconstruction is not always possible or desirable. The church plans, Official Notice of Complaint and Marown marker are historically informed rather than period-accurate. Their departures from history support character, location and comedy while remaining consistent with the proposed visual world.

The aim is not to advertise how much work has gone into an object, but to make it feel sufficiently used, considered and connected to its surroundings.

The completed Studio Practice is a proof of concept rather than evidence of a finished cinematic experience. It demonstrates how the research influenced material and typographic decisions, but the missing puppet components, unbuilt full environments, motion tests and animatic prevent the work from being evaluated through animation. A future stage would involve producing a short test scene and showing controlled variations to an audience, allowing attention and perceived credibility to be compared through direct viewing.

The answer to the research question is therefore one of contribution rather than control. Tactile graphic props and historically informed ephemera can support immersion through material credibility, visual coherence and narrative interaction. They cannot create it independently, and an inaccurate prop does not guarantee its collapse.

For my developing practice, the project has brought together graphic design, digital production, physical fabrication, storytelling and Manx culture. It has also changed my understanding of successful prop design. The aim is not to advertise how much work has gone into an object, but to make it feel sufficiently used, considered and connected to its surroundings that the audience can accept it and continue following the story.

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- Fantastic Mr. Fox* (2009) Directed by Wes Anderson [Film]. USA: 20th Century Fox.
- Isle of Dogs* (2018) Directed by Wes Anderson [Film]. USA: Fox Searchlight Pictures.
- Kubo and the Two Strings* (2016) Directed by Travis Knight [Film]. USA: Laika and Focus Features.
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