STREET ART

DESIGN BOOKLET
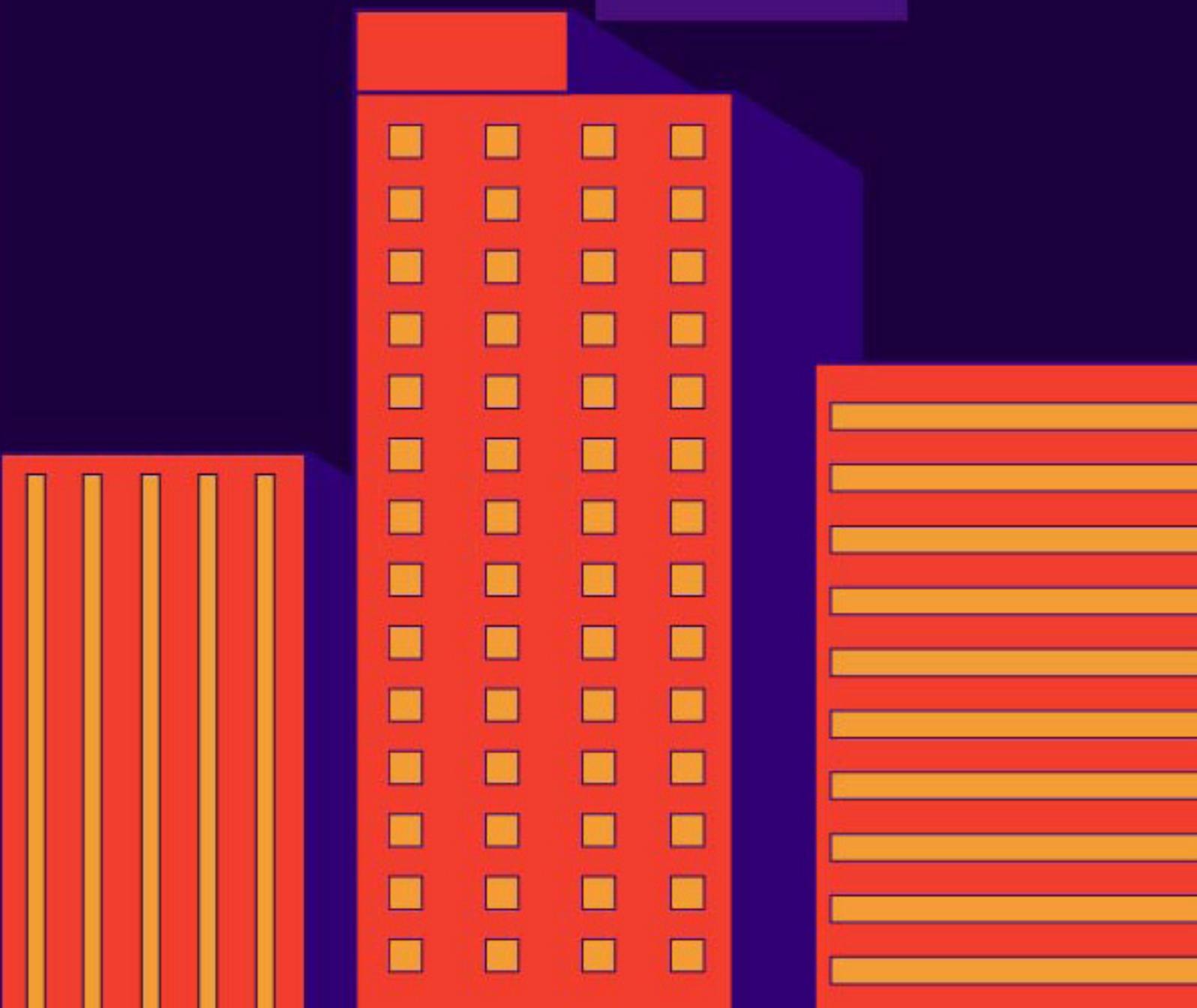
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1 BRIEF

The street art design for Dickson College must exude positivity by utilising an inspiring quote and expressive visuals. It is necessary to create a design that will engage students with their environment whilst uplifting the overall mood of the school space. Due to that, this design must be created with the students of Dickson College in mind as they are the main audience. This demographic involves 16-18-year-olds who are likely experiencing confusing or stressful changes in their lives. Year 11s may feel some confusion due to being in a new learning environment where they are required to be more independent. Likewise, Year 12s may experience stress due to being in their final year of mandatory education, signifying adulthood is approaching. After graduation, some may feel anxious about going to university, a full-time job, a gap year, or something where they require full independence from adult figures. Due to this, the design should convey themes of being confident in oneself and using that confidence to stay true to their convictions and follow their ambitions. It may also have an underlying theme that talks about appreciating the present as much as the past and future to remind students of the importance of living in the moment as opposed to their worries about the future.

Another aspect to keep in mind about the target demographic is the fact that they are diverse. Due to this, the design will have to be "unisex" to appeal to as many students as possible. Also, due to a majority of Dickson College students being exposed to crowded places (the city and the school itself), the design will need to be attention-grabbing. To achieve this, it will have to be large-scale and readable from afar, consisting of bright and saturated colours, and short and simple (while still being meaningful). This involves utilising sans-serif or bold fonts and creating a high contrast between the design and its background. Finally, the final artwork should be seen by students and teachers across as many different subject areas as possible. This means the art should be designed for the walkway downstairs that connects the "S" corridor (STEM and the arts), and the "N" corridor (humanities and languages).

2
RESEARCH

CLASS INEQUALITY

Class inequality is defined as "resources unevenly distributed across different groups of people in society" (Class Inequality Awareness Toolkit, n.d.). Due to this, class inequality inherently intersects with other social issues such as race, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, and ableism (Gerard and Threadgold, 2022) - but it is not limited to those factors. It is also such a persistent issue because a lack of resources can limit access to healthcare, employment opportunities, and education for those in lower classes (Class Inequality Awareness Toolkit, n.d.) -- therefore limiting the growth of their income and keeping them in a cycle.

This issue has become more relevant and urgent in recent years. According to Analysis & Policy Observer in 2023, the wealth gap in Australia has grown over the past two decades with the average wealth of those in the top 20% growing four times more than those in the lowest. More specifically, the average wealth of the top 20% increased by 82%, while the lowest 20% only experienced a 20% increase (Davidson et al., 2023). As for the US, the wealth gap between the richest and poorest has more than doubled between 1989 to 2016 (Schaeffer 2020). Class inequality occurs in different parts of the world and it negatively affects many individuals as well as households, and yet it is not widely addressed by the people in power. This is due to the belief within a lot of them that society is meritocratic for the most part.

"Meritocracy" is the idea that one's hard work and achievements will allow one to join the elite class (Jin and Ball, 2020) - but it is also the idea that encourages people to overlook social and economic inequalities in society.

Acknowledging that prejudices influence what social class a person falls under does not fit in with that idea, therefore people (particularly people in power) ignore that such prejudices exist at all. An example of this is Gina Rineheart -- Australia's richest citizen and mining magnate -- telling Australians to work harder and cut down on leisurely expenses and activities if they want to become wealthy (Bourke, 2012). She says this as the daughter of Lang Hancock, whom she inherited "Hancock Prospecting" from -- a company worth about 75 million dollars (Finnegan, 2013). As important as hard work and budgeting are for creating a stable income, it is not the only reason one becomes "wealthy". Taking her as an example, it is much easier to enter the elite class if the individual was born into it. So, while this society values meritocracy, people are more likely to become wealthy through hereditary factors.

It is time to acknowledge that modern society is no longer purely meritocratic and to see the immorality that comes from being a billionaire. By understanding these, it becomes easier to see the dangers of billionaires pushing that idea down into the minds of working-class people. They are made to feel guilty for not working hard enough, which could lead to them potentially being exploited for the sake of the elite classes, therefore continuing the cycle in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Fortunately, more people have begun to discuss this issue on a larger scale -- including artists.

The Velvet Bandit

Banksy

This street artwork by The Velvet Bandit depicts a more cartoony and playful take on billionaires and class inequality. It depicts Abraham Lincoln wearing a mask that says "Tax the rich". For some context, this art piece was tagged in the U.S. during 2021, one of the peak years of the COVID-19 pandemic (Bull, 2021), and this reflects the prevalent social issues of the time (such as the dichotomy between frontline and white-collar workers). In a way, the bright colours represent the state of the world. On a surface level, it looks beautiful and harmonious -- but upon further inspection or thought, some issues lie within.

This street art by Banksy is visually different from The Velvet Bandits as it takes on a bleaker perspective on class inequality. It depicts a man in a suit driving children, mothers, teenagers, the elderly, and animals away using a rising graph that emulates a whip. It is definitely up to interpretation, but it shows the issue with class inequality, and how the uber-rich can harm the rest of society. Only two colours can be seen: red and black, making it high contrast and easy to spot on the street. These two colours evoke anger and rebellion. The shapes of the painting are rough around the edges. It evokes a spontaneous and angry tone, but the fuzziness of it all also makes it look like a negative memory.

STREET ART

Street art has been utilised to communicate messaging for decades, but its public perception and purpose have not always been the same. During the earliest years of its emergence, it was known more as "graffiti" with strong links to gangs and territories in 1920s to 1930s New York (Malo, 2022). Due to this, it was seen mostly as vandalism that evoked fear due to its association with violence (Bloch, 2023). By the late 20th century, larger artworks with diverse messaging grew in prominence, and they became an outlet for struggling civilians (Malo, 2022). In more recent years, it is considered a professional art form that can be admired in museums rather than shunned (Bloch, 2023). The normalisation of street art not only has allowed artists to convey a visual reflection of their environment, but it has also allowed them to enhance it.

DONDI WHITE

Donald "Dondi" White was a famous street artist based in New York City, USA who was prominent during the 70s through to the 90s (Dondi White, n.d.). His most known works appear to be focused on typography, especially ones where his nickname was the main feature. There is a sense of spontaneity that can be observed in his works, and this can be attributed to the shapes of his typography, as well as the variety of saturated colours in each of his pieces.

His chaotic graffiti style can be seen in "Development Overcome" and "Mathematics" (see on the right). The letters consist predominantly of triangular and rectangular shapes. The harsh corners and straight lines suggest tenacity and echo the rebellious grit that is often associated with graffiti. To support the underlying impulsive aesthetic of his art style, he applies an asymmetrical balance and leaves minimal negative space between elements. In "Mathematics" (see on the right) he even placed elements on top of each other. Doing so makes the art pieces appear busy and handmade - as if he threw the imagery together in any way he felt was right.

Even with that sense of spontaneity, his works are still cohesive and visually pleasing. For example, he emphasises the texts in his works by colouring them in a hue that is different from the background. This allows for them to be readable despite their unconventional forms. Additionally, the colours he chooses are harmonious. Whether it's because they originate from warmer hues (like in "Development Overcome") or are complementary (like in "Mathematics"), they all help create a sense of unity that balances out the messy aesthetic of his art style. With all things considered, it is evident that he does graffiti not to communicate a political, inspiring,

or territorial statement -- but rather to present the artistic merit of the art style, and to show off his artistic abilities.

"Development Overcome" by Dondi White

"Mathematics" by Dondi White

TYPOGRAPHY INSPIRATION

While typography is not a mandatory part of the street art style, it is still important. Understanding how text and other visual elements can come together will not only allow messaging to be conveyed straightforwardly, but it may also help attract attention and/or make it more memorable.

LEX WILSON
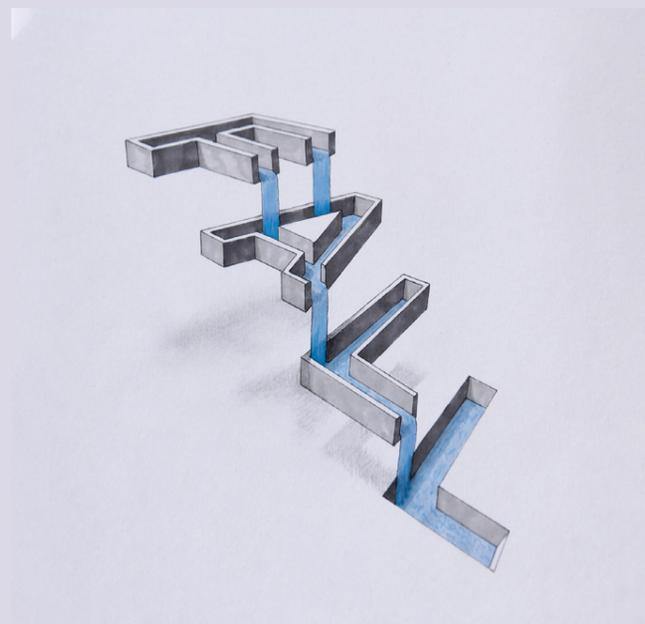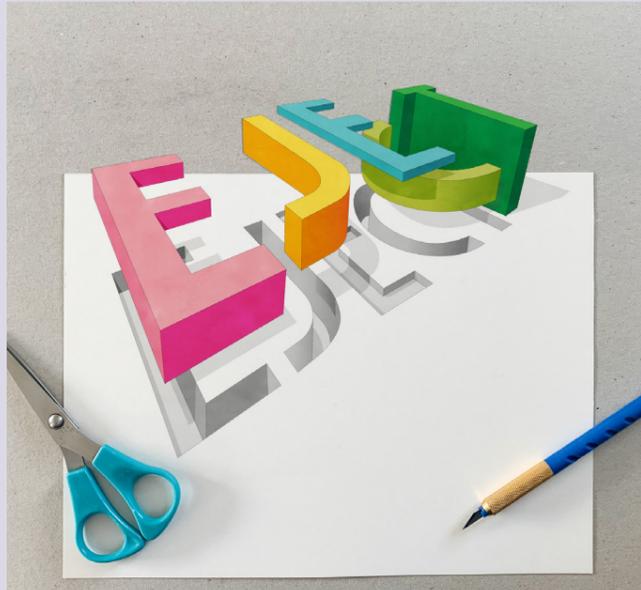
One of my favourite typographers is Lex Wilson for his literal "3D" style. His works are usually based around one word or a short phrase, but what matters to him most are verbs. The design revolves around that verb, and as seen in the images below/above, he manipulates letters to emulate the action suggested by the verb. Creating such designs can risk making a word unreadable, but he manages to avoid that issue as much as possible. For one, he sticks to sans-serif typefaces which have sleek lines that make them easier to read. It also seems like he keeps each letter on a "foundational" straight line so the eye can follow a path that will lead them through the word or phrase seamlessly. Despite how simple and short his messages are, he still manages to create dynamic and visually interesting works. It goes to show that suggesting movement in static design is highly effective as long as the message (or word) can still be understood.

A MOODBOARD OF MODERN TYPOGRAPHY

To gain some inspiration and to get an idea of what characteristics of type are currently trending, I looked over Pinterest and a list of styles. While it is the modern age, many designs are taking inspiration from 20th-century styles. As seen in the mood board, the '60s and '70s decade have a significant influence on the colour palettes and shapes that are popular in today's designs. The flowy, bold lines of the letters, and the bright, diverse colour palette come together to create designs that evoke energy and catch people's eyes. Along with that, designers have also begun taking inspiration from more "antique" styles like Art Nouveau (Wilson, 2023). Another popular design aesthetic is the "handmade" look. So, inconsistencies, scribbles or sketches, the illusion of texture, and general imperfections can make a design look more appealing to audiences today (Wilson, 2023). Overall, popular typography styles seem to exude happiness, or at least imply some movement, which will be an important aspect to consider for this street art design task.

3

CONCEPTS

POSSIBLE QUOTES

- Carpe diem (seize the day)
- Do, or do not/Dream it, do it
- Do your time, before it does you
- Stay gold

CHOSEN QUOTE: Carpe diem (seize the day)

ILLUSTRATIONS

This concept takes on the most inspiration from Dondi White's style, and the general "graffiti" style. "Carpe Diem" is written this way because the style provides a spontaneous and fun feel that conveys a sense of energy. These letters are also bold and made up of straight lines which makes it look firm, linking the message with courageous or bold qualities. As for the colouring, the main one to look at is yellow. It was chosen due to its association with feelings of happiness and its energetic look. The rest of the colours (blue and hot pink) exist to make the yellow stand out, but they also support the overall confident feel of the message. There are also stick figures within the design that are running toward the sun or "the day." They represent people, more specifically the students of Dickson. If anything in this design could be changed in the development, I would like to lean more into the Dondi White style by playing around with the placement of the letters and by creating straighter, firmer lines.

Rather than using the "sun" to represent the "day," this concept uses an alarm clock instead. It symbolises a call to action as if to say: "Wake up, it's time to seize the day". The main quote (Carpe Diem) is incorporated into the street art as the hands of the clock. It is exaggerated to let it stand out and look like it wants to reach out to the reader, and it forms these diagonal lines that give it a dynamic look. It is also coloured red and yellow, two warm and bright colours that are associated with intensity, happiness, and passion. The other text in this concept design is the English translation of carpe diem, and it is written on a curved path which imitates the look of a smile -- a subtle way to evoke happiness in the onlooker. Overall, this design is meant to look loud as suggested by the zig-zags representing the ringing alarm. Due to this, the monochromatic blue alarm clock could be recoloured to support that lively tone, while still allowing the typography to stand out. The "noise zig-zags" could also have colour to help attract attention and support the messaging of the art.

This design concept is simplistic to maintain focus on the typography. It depicts the sun in a simplified form to represent the "day" in "seize the day". The core of the sun is taken up by text where the letters are organic in shape. This is so it can be mouldable into that circular shape, but it also creates a sense of spontaneity. The sun also provides shapes that can convey an excited tone. This is largely due to the sun's rays that take on a triangular form which provides diagonal lines. These sun rays also act as arrows that lead the eye back to the message, making it the focal point. To further the simplicity of the design, the only colours utilised are yellow and blue. Yellow solidifies that the design is based on the sun, but it also gives it a joyful mood. The colour blue represents the sky, but it was chosen mostly to let the yellow stand out. If this concept were chosen for the development stage, though, the blue elements would likely be replaced with red or purple to maintain the warmth of the design. Because blue is a cool colour, it cools the design down which detracts from the intended energetic feel it has.

This concept is another simple design that uses few visual elements other than typography. The main text is written in a sans-serif font to make it easy to read from afar. It is designed to appear 3D to grab attention and make it look like the text is popping out to speak to the students of Dickson. It is also italicised to create a sense of movement and convey a "call to action". The yellow circle in the background is meant to represent the sun for the same reason as the other concepts that have it. However, if this concept were to be developed it would be better to switch the colours around. The text being blue makes the message look dark, possibly difficult to read from a distance, and it takes away its intensity. Another element that could be changed is the other text in the design (the English translation of "Carpe Diem") which can be found on the edge of the letter "M". It is difficult to read due to its positioning and colouring, and to fix that, its colour can be changed to either pink or yellow, or the text can be moved to be separate from the main text.

4

DEVELOPMENT
concept #2

no. 1

no. 2

To develop concept #2 further, I used Procreate to establish what design choices would best convey my chosen message. In the first stage of development, the alarm clock was recoloured to a darker blue shade due to its links to knowledge and authority, and any grey components of the clock were removed since they made the artwork feel dull. The recolour also meant that the typography could stand out better as the bright red and yellow heavily contrasted against it. Other major changes included the tilting of the clock, which was done to create a clearer sense of movement and increase the lively tone of the illustration. In this stage the line art was removed for experimentation purposes as I wanted to see if I could play with shadows and light to create focal points, however, I ultimately decided that sticking to a cartoon art style worked better to convey my message.

In the second stage of development I reverted to using contour lines as it gave my illustration higher contrast, therefore giving it a louder quality. Moreover, by using contour lines, the "noise" and "movement" lines looked more compatible with the main drawing since those lines can typically be found in comic illustrations. The colour of the alarm clock was changed again in this stage to a dark shade of purple. It offers the same benefits as using the colour blue when it comes to helping the main typography stand out. Still, it also works better because it is the complementary colour to yellow, and it symbolises creativity and bravery.

no. 3

The third stage of development involved translating the Procreate drawings into a vector graphic through Adobe Illustrator. One reason this was done was so the final illustration could fulfil the assignment's requirements, but also to ensure that the design can be freely resized to fit whatever surface it may be placed on. The illustration was very simplistic at that stage and more similar to the concept sketch as the priority was to get the main shapes from the initial sketches onto the program. Finally, I experimented with the colour of the alarm clock again, and I coloured it light blue. While it made the illustration look more cheery, it also made it look too lighthearted, as opposed to bold and confident. It also reduced some of the contrast in the artwork, therefore reducing its expressiveness.

no. 4

By this development stage, the design started to look more polished. Here, I recreated the sketch from the second development stage by rotating the design slightly, colouring the alarm clock purple, and making the text appear "louder" by warping it into a triangular shape. In this development stage, I also added little lines to suggest movement and noise, but instead of making them multi-coloured, I coloured them a dark purple to maintain the typography as the focal point. I also re-coloured the "Seize the day!" text in that same hue to give a sense of unity between the elements.
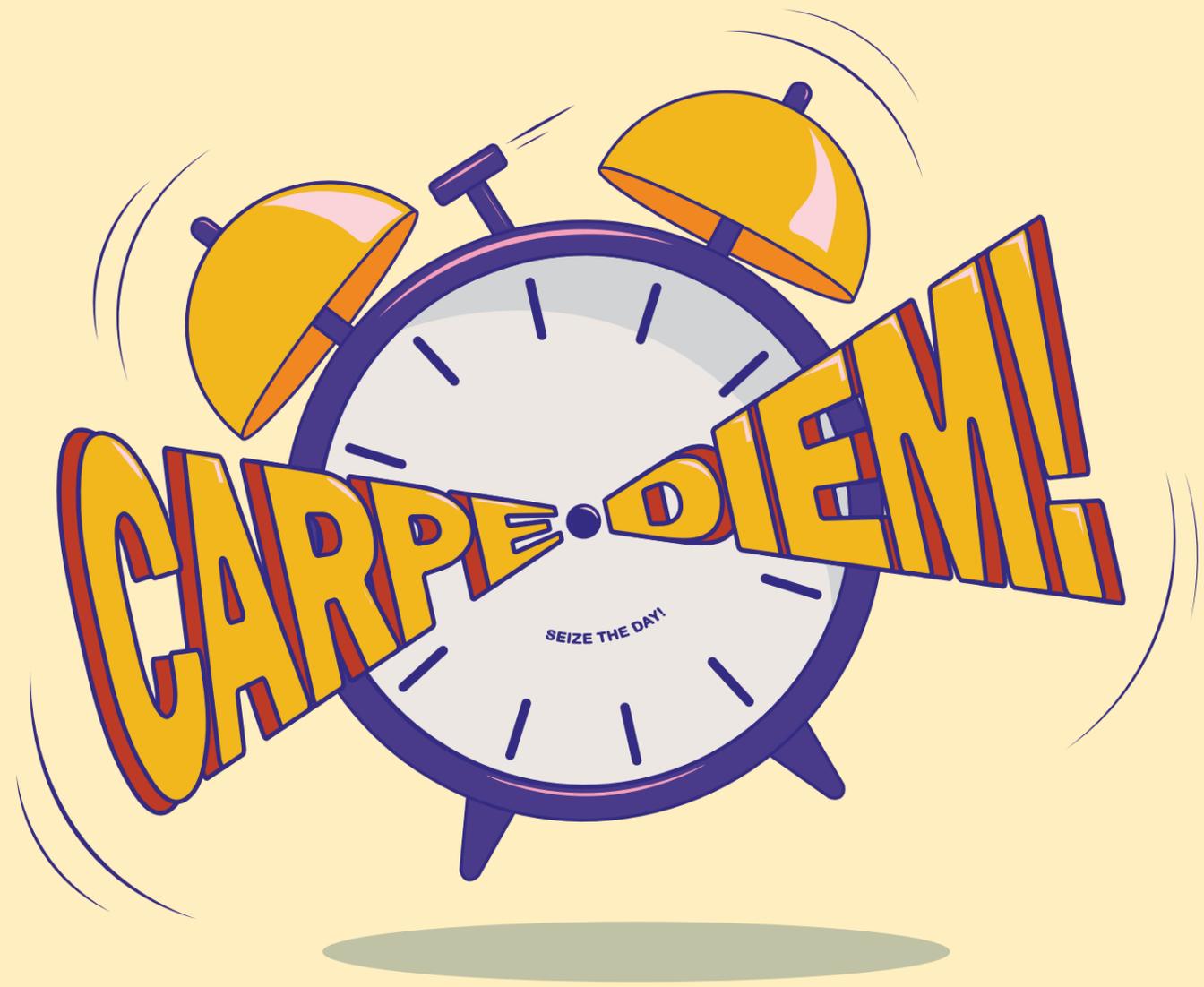
no. 5

In the final stage of development, I focused on the smaller details to elevate the overall design. I added a shadow underneath the alarm clock to exaggerate its movement as it indicates that it had jumped up from a surface. Shadows and highlights were added to the alarm clock as well to create an illusion of depth and texture to make the design look more lifelike. Highlights were also added to the "Carpe Diem" text to further the idea that it is popping out/reaching out to the students. I also found that adding highlights and shadows helped make it look more dynamic. Finally, I shifted some of the noise lines around to create a better balance between the left and right sides while still attempting to maintain its initial asymmetry.

5

FINAL DESIGN

providing diagonal lines that give it a dynamic look. Additionally, it emerges out of the alarm clock to make it appear as though it were popping out, explicitly directing it towards the reader, and making it look like it is directly communicating with them. Finally, it is coloured yellow and red so it can stand out against the purple alarm clock. Yellow is commonly associated with happiness and idealism while red is representative of impulsivity and passion. Both are powerful colours, giving them an eye-catching quality while exuding confidence.

If the design could be improved in any way, I would give it a background component of some sort. For example, a yellow background that emulates the shape of a spark could bolster the loud and bold appearance of the design. For the "Carpe Diem" text, some shadows could be incorporated behind the letters to further its 3D effect and help it stand out better. I would have also liked to make the contour lines darker and thicker to increase the contrast of the artwork and therefore promote its expressiveness.

EVALUATION

The final mural design for the downstairs corridor connecting the "S" and "N" corridors was designed around the short, but meaningful, phrase: "Carpe Diem". Carpe Diem, or Seize the Day, encourages confidence in oneself while appreciating the present moment and the opportunities it brings. This is an important message to broadcast to college students, but also other staff in the school due to its positive connotations. The final artwork is designed to convey the emotional aspects of the message while mainly appealing to the students.

The design is based around a ringing alarm clock to indicate that the message is a sort of call to action. Since alarm clocks are typically what people hear in the morning to wake them up, the design acts as a reminder for the people of Dickson College to wake up and face the day head-on with confidence. In the illustration, the alarm clock is made to look like it's ringing by slightly rotating it and by utilising "noise" lines. This was done to give the overall design a dynamic appearance and to evoke energy, which can increase vitality within the school space. The alarm clock itself is coloured dark purple to symbolise bravery and creativity but also to allow yellow elements -- such as the text -- to stand out.

The dominant element in the design is the text that writes "Carpe Diem". To ensure it stands out and is readable from a far distance, it was created from a sans-serif typeface with thick lines. The bold qualities of the original typeface created a sense of loudness, almost like the message was waking the reader up. To further the idea of loudness, the text is warped to take on a triangular form,

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