

Everything I design creates narratives that add to an understanding of the city experience and of seeing old places in new ways.

Paul Stewart, 2020

01 Profile	03
02 Visions	04
03 Complex city	06
04 Look and discover	07
05 See and feel	08
06 Find and define	09
07 Communicate	10
08 Credits/contact	18

01

Hello,

My practice is typographically led, and I have worked on projects in the arts and culture sector for museums and galleries including the V&A and the RA, London.

I have been involved in book projects with Bloomsbury Publishing and V&A Publishing.

My current practice interests are linked to London. They are concerned with how graphic communication can be used to provide an interpretation of place, and how the outcomes can be used to develop culturally protecting place branding design strategies.



Fig. 1 Paul Stewart, 2019

02

I am a London based practitioner, and I view the city as a conduit to revealing and linking its past to the present, and it provides the creative inspiration for my research led practice projects in graphic communications.

The portfolio presents work undertaken in Brick Lane, London E1 as part of the London Characters project, which has looked at other characterful locations including London W1 and WC2.

I am interested in London's unique places which have a diversity of people, histories, atmospheres and urban environments.

My practice aims are to highlight their importance by evoking their character and identity in a visual language that can be used as a way of identifying and protecting their cultural and social value.

As a Londoner, the themes of the project connect to my perception of a city that has always been in a state of flux, but with increased rates of redevelopment, the concern is about the impact that the changes are having on the character and identity of the cities unique locations.

The project uses an alternative walking guide as the means for place branding.

02

Purpose

Developing methodologies and processes for highlighting the identities and cultural value of unique areas of cities to provide sympathetic and protective place branding design strategies that can be applied to cities globally where unique locations are under threat.

To show urban planners what can be learned from places that have evolved organically and have not had structures imposed on them from above and how this could inform how planners view the re-purposing of existing built environments and the planning of new urban spaces.

The London Characters project has highlighted the kinds of places that Londoners and visitors covet, including Soho, Clerkenwell and Covent Garden and the older parts around the City of London. All these have similarities to E1 in that their street plans and urban landscapes have developed organically.

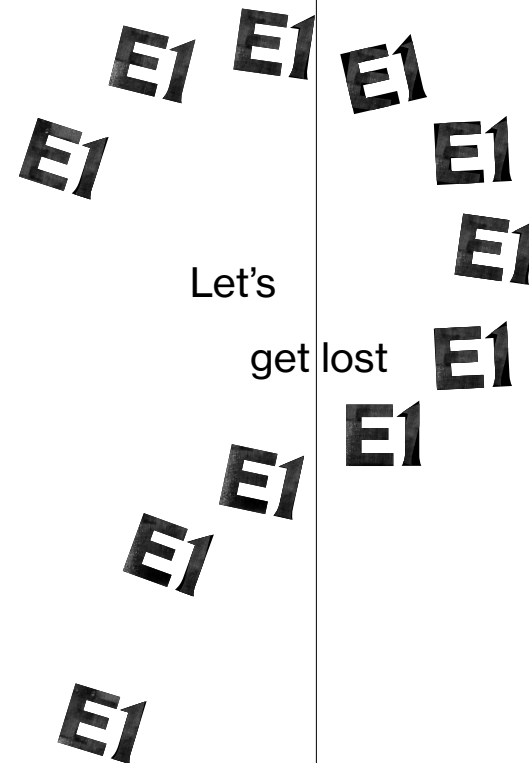


Fig. 2 Let's get lost.

03

I am interested in the concept of complex and open cities and how areas such as E1 exemplify the idea of what the aesthetics of naturally created places can teach us about how to design cities.

The structures and street plans of areas like E1 appear to be the antithesis to much of the often homogenized contemporary urban planning projects in London.

What is it that attracts people to places like E1 and what can students of the city and urbanists learn from such coveted urban environments and the unique place making atmospheres they create.



Fig. 3 Brick Lane street plan and reflective typographic forms.

04

People are drawn to Brick Lane from all around the globe to discover and experience its vibrancy and atmosphere.

How and why did E1 become so unique? Because of socio-economic and cultural reasons the mythologies and narratives that have evolved around Brick Lane have helped imbibe the location with a distinct character and atmosphere.

I use narrative, storytelling and historical archival methodologies to unveil the unique aspects of Brick Lane and its importance to London's and the UK's social, cultural and political histories, through the lens of a contemporary position.



Fig. 4 Brick Lane Poster.

Using action research methods with a series of posters in situ, on designated street art locations (Fig. 1), that became part of the street art vernacular of the location.

Although it might have appeared to be an experimental art piece, I was able to gauge my audience perceptions of Brick Lane, by the comments that were graffitied on them.

From the responses, I was able to obtain a sample of the expectations and experiences of those drawn to the area. This informed the vivid aesthetic that I began to develop as the visual language of Brick Lane.

Research poster sample responses

It is layered with history, and it seems old yet contemporary.

It feels like real London

You are free to be what you want; nobody cares what you look like.

You can get pleasantly lost.

The juxtaposition of buildings and people makes it feel unique.

It is chic yet edgy, and the energy is positive, however.

We love street art and vintage fashion.

05

How to highlight and evoke the essence and identity of place.

By using action research methodologies of urban geography and topographic exploration, I gained insights into the people, and the atmospheres and fabric of the urban the environment of E1.

My research also asks how and why did Brick Lane become such a unique area?

My findings discovered socio-economic and cultural factors that help explain why Brick Lane is particularly atmospheric.

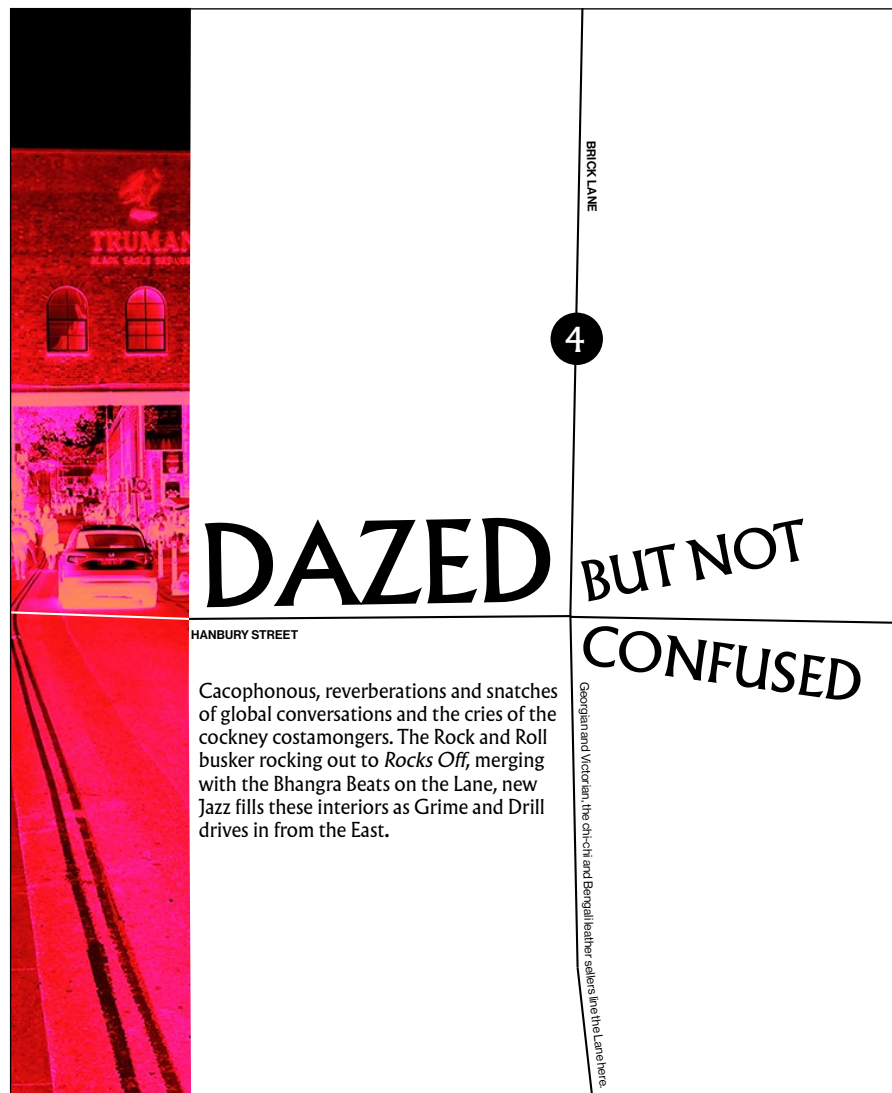


Fig. 5 E1 guide spread detail.

06

How I developed a visual language for E1

By synthesis of historic, storytelling and archival methods and using urban geography and topographic methods and processes, I was able to link them to colour and typographic semiotic theories and practice to highlight and evoke the essence and identity of Brick Lane and its environs.



Fig. 6 Brick Lane, mapping experience and memory with experimental linguistics.

07

My practise interests are concerned with issues around redevelopment and corporatization of the unique areas in London. In Brick Lane, there are signs that the neighbouring City of London is beginning to encroach upon the area, and its character is under threat.

Fig. 7 E1 guide spread detail.



07

An alternative walking guide that evokes atmosphere through a visual language that combines image, linguistics and historical archival methodologies and urban geography exploration.

Fig. 8 E1 guide spread detail.



07

Narratives across time tell of the routes to freedom that provides the alternative walking guide with the essence of the human experience in E1 for over four hundred years, told through the religious symbolism and usage of one space at number 59 Brick Lane.

Fig. 9 E1 guide spread detail.



07

Narratives now and then – the guide uses distorted imagery and linguistics that reflects the ambient landscapes of those who have made new lives for themselves in E1 after fleeing religious or racial persecution in other nations.

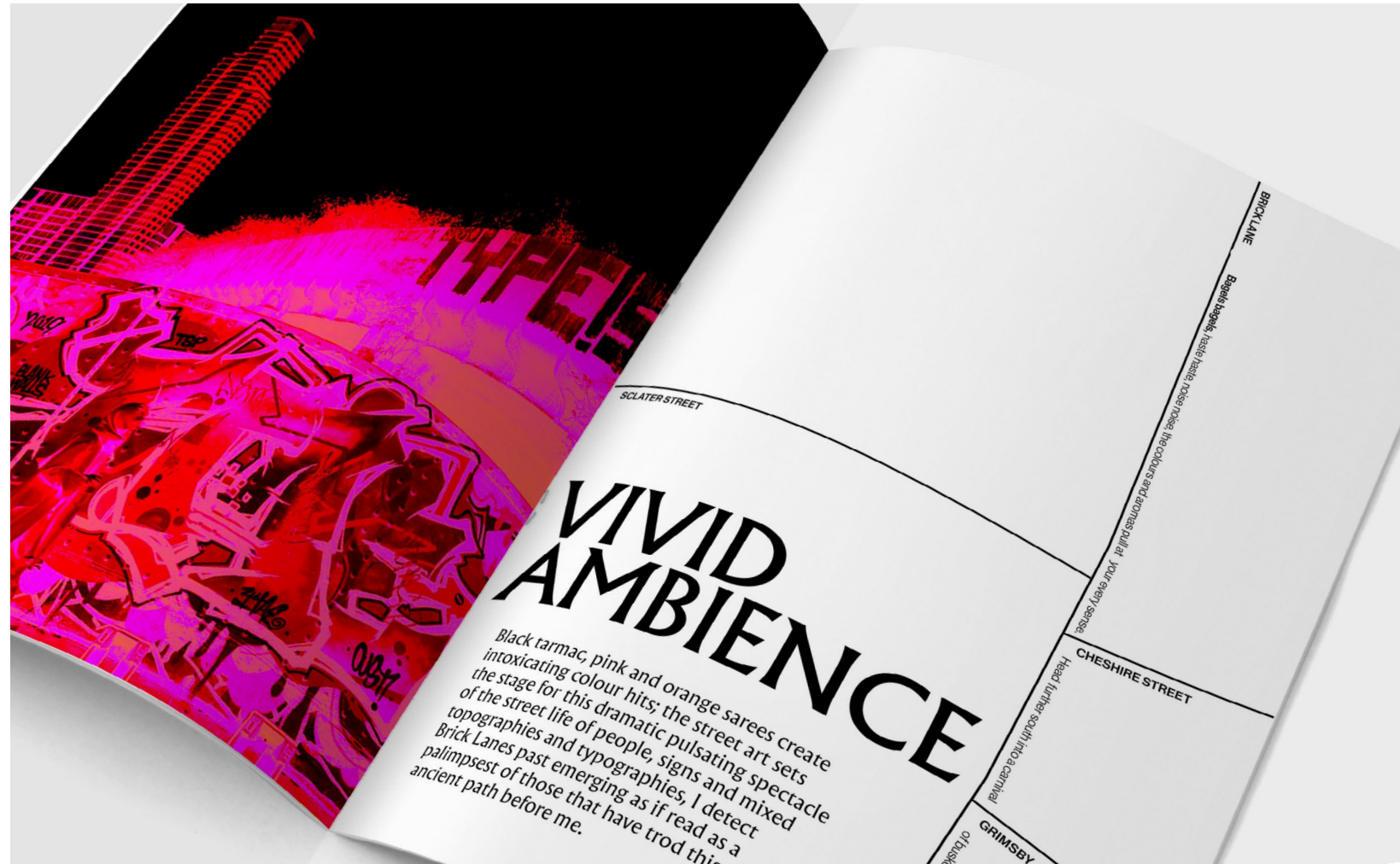
Fig. 10 E1 guide spread.



07

Provide the alternative walking guide with a sample of the urban theatre that evokes the essence and the energy of the street art and life of Brick Lane, and it will lead the direction for a culturally protective place branding design strategy.

Fig. 11 E1 guide spread detail.



07

Narratives and visual languages that evoke contemporary life through historical means. The Truman brewery has provided a looming presence in Brick Lane from the 1660s, it ceased brewing in the late 1980s, and is now the focal point for social and cultural life in E1.

Fig. 12 E1 guide spread detail.



07

The research and practice undertaken for the alternative walking guide provided the start of the place branding design strategy, firstly with a poster campaign on Brick Lane that aims to communicate the experiences and values connected to Brick Lane past and present.

Fig. 13 E1 Place branding campaign.



07

The alternative walking guide provided a concept for an AR element to develop an immersive audiovisual element to the place branding design strategy, using the numerals of the route in situ to delve into and bring alive the social and cultural histories and narratives of Brick Lane.

Fig. 14 E1 AR Place branding campaign.



08

Fig. 1 Paul Stewart, 2019.
Photograph by Jacqui Stevens.

Fig. 2 *Let's get lost*,
Paul Stewart 2020

Fig. 3 Brick Lane street plan and
reflective typographic forms,
Paul Stewart, 2020.

Fig. 4 Brick Lane Poster,
Paul Stewart, 2020.

Fig. 5 E1 guide spread detail,
Paul Stewart, 2020.

Fig. 6 Brick Lane, mapping
experience and memory with
experimental linguistics.
Paul Stewart, 2020.

Fig. 7 E1 guide spread detail,
Paul Stewart, 2020.

Fig. 8 E1 guide spread detail,
Paul Stewart, 2020.

Fig. 9 E1 guide spread detail,
Paul Stewart, 2020.

Fig. 10 E1 guide spread detail,
Paul Stewart, 2020.

Fig. 11 E1 guide spread detail,
Paul Stewart, 2020.

Fig. 12 E1 guide spread detail,
Paul Stewart, 2020.

Fig. 13 E1 Place branding
campaign, Paul Stewart, 2020.

Fig. 14 E1 AR Place branding
campaign, Paul Stewart, 2020.

London Characters E1 was conceived, written
and designed by Paul Stewart, 2020.

Photographs © Paul Stewart

E1 is part the London Characters research
led practice project.

Further information can be found at:
paulstewartdesign.co.uk/london-characters-e1

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