



Editions At Play’s latest book challenges the conventions of publishing

Words Jyni Ong

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Editions At Play was created back in 2016 as a collaboration between Google Creative Lab and Visual Editions as a way to explore what a digital book might look like if it made use of the many possibilities of the internet. Rather than succumbing to the

limitations and conventions of the publishing industry, Editions at Play – founded by Anna Gerber and Britt Iversen – investigates these notions of print and its increasing digitalisation, where everything seems to live nowadays.

“We’ve been intrigued by the connection between the stories readers choose to read online, and the ones they choose to read in print for a while,” Visual Editions’ two founders Anna Gerber and Britt Iversen tell *It’s Nice That*. In their recently published and eighth book so far, *We Kiss the Screens*, Anna and Britt connect the two styles of reading by the retelling of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in eight different voices. The project combines experiments in a narrative form using mobile user interface, and print-on-demand to express how digital culture can be utilised in the creation of beautiful and personalised physical objects.

“It’s about moving on the conversation, beyond both the #hashtags and having your name printed on a Coke can,” explains Anna and Britt. Designed by Nina Jua Klein, *We Kiss the Screens* starts off as a personalised book on mobile which then, “gives birth to a beautiful printed object.” The book is bespoke to each reader, as they choose a colour spectrum and story stream which can then be locked into a one-of-a-kind, print-on-demand copy. And as it stands, there is a limited edition of 250 free copies made available, reflecting how “digital personalisations can intersect with cultural objects.” Available entirely for free, readers can experience the project at wekissthescreens.com.

The project kicked off with this idea of a colour spectrum “as a neat metaphor for demonstrating a wide diversity of thought.” After this was decided, Nina and the team faced the design challenge of creating a mobile book that felt “digitally native” while also complimenting a printed book that feels worthy of the physical form.

For Anna and Britt, “The real delight comes when we see people experience the colour gradient on their phones for the first time. They probably don’t know what they’re choosing, or even why, but that doesn’t matter because the idea of controlling a rainbow on your phone and watching that change before your eyes, is a magical thing.” The partners witness a similar joy when readers receive their own printed copies for the first time too: “There’s a simple beauty in seeing a different colour on every page [of the physical book]”, continues Anna and Britt, not to mention an excitement when the reader realises that they actually made this, and no one else in the world has a copy that is the same.

With a mission to generate conversation around multiple narratives to “ensure perspective and diversity of thought”, Tea Uglow moulds a narrative around “how a scandal is dealt with.” Retold eight times against the backdrop of “a siloed, hashtagged landscape of information”, neither account can agree on exactly what has happened,

and one of the accounts is even written by an AI named George who was “fed an awful lot of Ovid and Herodotus, and some Homer” to tell his version.

“We think of it as a book of many truths”, assert Anna and Britt. Always up for exploring new modes of thought that delve into the connection of cultural content and tech innovation, this new project inspires fresh ideas and conventions around how we perceive books. Fundamentally, *We Kiss the Screens* reveals how reading on your phone doesn’t have to be just a dull scrolling session backlit with a harsh white light. It can “enrich audiences through the magic of the internet.”



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Editions At Play: We Kiss the Screens



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About the Author

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Jyni joined It's Nice That as an editorial assistant in August 2018 after graduating from The Glasgow School of Art's Communication Design degree. In

March 2019 she became a staff writer and in June 2021, she was made associate editor.

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