

EDUCATION

Designs on the theory

Many experienced workers are hitting the books to make things official, writes **Sarah Thomas**.

After 10 years working in the design industry, Jason Brown thought it was time to formalise his skills.

Having moved into design in his early 20s after doing artwork for bands, Brown carved out a lengthy career despite having no formal training or qualifications.

Brown became the full-time group design and creative manager after contract work at his present company, the building and engineering services firm Norfolk. Then he decided the time was right to study. "With the role I have taken on at work, and with the responsibility and major decision-making, I just wanted to know that those choices and decisions that I'm making might be backed up with training of some sort," he says.

Brown, 38, started his master of design course at Raffles College in April and now devotes two evenings a week to his studies. While it was daunting to return to education, he says already he is discovering

subjects that he would not have on his own, such as the history of the design of the Australian banknotes. Brown is currently writing an essay about the designer of the notes, Gordon Andrews.

"I just thought it was fascinating," he says.

"Prior to [the course] I never would have thought that someone was behind the design - they're just dollar bills that you use. But they are actually quite beautiful."

Raffles College runs the master of design program as three full-time semesters over 18 months or six part-time semesters over three years. The program has four specialisations: digital media, fashion design, graphic design and interior design.

Brown's job sees him heading up design for the company, with a wide range of responsibilities including marketing materials, branding and the company newsletter. He says he hopes the course will improve his skills, give him a greater



Eyes open ... designer Jason Brown hopes study will widen his scope for his current role. Photo: Angela Brkic

understanding of formal theory and expand his interpretation of design.

"It's more than just a certificate," he says. "It's what I hope to get out of it. There is something that I wanted to open up to me."

The course is aimed at both recent graduates and professionals, including those without pre-qualifications, returning to study to further their skills.

Although Brown's decision was not influenced by the economic downturn, Raffles College associate professor Patrick Bernard says the climate is influencing people's

decisions to return to education. "There's a lot of people who think it's an opportunity to spend time upgrading a qualification, or embark on studies when they've gone straight into a job from high school but find that there's not enough openings or opportunities," he says.

Bernard estimates about 30 per cent to 40 per cent of the college's 600 students have been out in the workforce before starting a course.

He says education is one of the few sectors unaffected by the economic crisis as people are

looking to improve their prospects. "People are highly motivated - that's [why] we are doing very well at the moment. We are one of the industries that is really thriving."

Bernard says the college focuses on sustainability in its programs. "It's built into all of our subjects, whether it's interior design or fashion. And it's not just awareness but giving students the ability to apply those ideas and principles as designers themselves."

The master of design program costs \$18,000 and has start dates in July, October, February and April.

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