

MILPA magazine: editorial design and new perspectives

Revista MILPA: design editorial e novas perspectivas



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ABSTRACT

It is possible to observe that self-published magazines and zines aim to offer readers something that traditional titles, with their search for a large volume of circulation, do not offer. This article had as main objective to discuss new possibilities of the publishing market, based on the creative process of an independent magazine developed as a project to conclude the Design course at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC). From a methodology structured in different creative stages, interviews were conducted with the target audience in question, to recognize the possible needs of users as readers and appreciators of printed material. The doubts raised arose in the sense of seeking a better understanding of the relevance and survival of the publishing market in the current scenario, marked by the consumption of digital and instant information. Thus, it sought to identify interesting resignifications to the permanence of this aspect of design, to explore possibilities of printing, dissemination, and distribution.

KEYWORDS

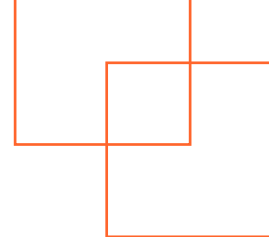
Editorial Design, Graphic Design, Latin American Art.

RESUMO

É possível observar que as revistas e zines auto-publicadas têm como objetivo oferecer aos leitores algo que os títulos tradicionais, com sua busca por um grande volume de circulação, não oferecem. Este artigo teve como principal objetivo discutir novas possibilidades do mercado editorial, com base no processo criativo de uma revista independente desenvolvida como projeto de conclusão do curso de Design da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC). A partir de uma metodologia estruturada em diferentes estágios criativos, foram realizadas entrevistas com o público-alvo em questão, a fim de reconhecer as possíveis necessidades dos usuários enquanto leitores e apreciadores do material impresso. As dúvidas levantadas surgiram no sentido de buscar uma melhor compreensão acerca da relevância e sobrevivência do mercado editorial no cenário atual, marcado pelo consumo da informação digital e instantânea. Assim, buscou-se identificar resignificações interessantes à permanência desta vertente do design, de modo a explorar possibilidades de impressão, divulgação e distribuição.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Gestão do Design; Ferramentas da Web 2.0; Plataformas colaborativas.



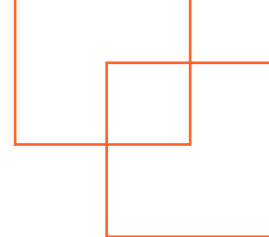
INTRODUCTION

This article presents an account of the process of development of an independent Latin American art magazine, whose creative experience gave rise to a discussion about the production of printed magazines in contemporary times. The MILPA Magazine (ZANATTA, 2019) originated from a project to conclude the Design course at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), developed individually in 2019, and aimed to propose the celebration of the plurality of visual narratives, in order to encourage the exaltation of historical, contemporary and international creativity in Latin America.

In this sense, valuing creativity was decisive in choosing the methodology adopted in the MILPA Magazine project, the Systematic Method for Designers, proposed by Bruce Archer, organizes the project phases into three: Analytical, Creative and Executive. The method was defined by the author as a creative sandwich (LACERDA, 2012), where definitions of objectives and analytical and systematic questions are at the edges, while creativity occupies a central position in the design process.

During the development of the project, it was possible to raise questions about magazine design and its challenges in the current context, characterized by the globalized consumption of digital and instant information. Turning to the characteristics of print media, the creative solution addressed the possibilities of the magazine as an object, highlighting its materiality, and the reader's experience of the free as the protagonist of the interaction with the printed media, without there being pre-defined rules as it happens. on a digital interface.

In addition to materiality, the printed magazine can incite deeper discussions, bring references and provide entertainment to the target audience in question, reinforcing and expanding the Latin American imagination. Thus, MILPA as an independent publication was developed to value different printing possibilities and explore new creative opportunities, in order to materialize a space for identification and visual literacy for professionals in the area.



2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1 Independent journals

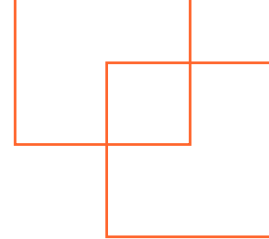
Print media has always been one of the most used means of communication and newspapers have long become one of the main sources of information for the population. In the 19th century, the consolidation of industrialization and mass consumption popularized illustrated magazines. These emerged as a counterpoint to the excess of news in the newspapers, a break in the daily rush by demanding continuous, concentrated, and dedicated reading (RADFAHRER, 2018).

In this way, different from the immediacy presented by other daily news media, such as the printed newspaper, the radio, or, more recently, the internet, magazines are published on their own calendars. Authors such as Ali (2009) and Silber (2009) highlight the particular periodicity of magazines.

In addition to periodicity constancy, journals can be characterized by other basic properties, such as: being measurable, that is, paginated, and having a beginning, middle, and end. Present a curatorship that defines themes and content, be edited. Also, be edited by designers. It has a set date for publication. Present a permanent editorial line, which, once created, cannot be changed (SILBER, 2009). Ali (2009) highlights, in addition to periodicity, that a magazine is defined by being durable, pleasant, and with its own identity, which establishes a relationship with the reader.

Thus, magazines seek communication strategies that increase reader engagement. For Benetti (2013) more than presenting information, magazines need to establish an emotional bond with the reader. In this sense, verbal communication uses texts that speak directly to the reading public, seek to establish a familiarity with them, call them “you” (SCALZO, 2013).

The editorial design area deals with the language and visual cohesion of the magazines. Authors such as Zappaterra (2007) and Samara (2011) converge in defining the main objective of editorial design: to communicate an idea through the organization of texts, images, and other graphic elements. This objective is more evident in the design of magazines, where distinct and fragmented texts are interrelated by graphic-visual elements, creating a coherent and identifiable visual set



that communicates effectively with the segment to which it is intended.

The segmentation of magazines is also very closely linked to the establishment of a relationship with the reader. A very generalist magazine, which intends to address a wide range of topics for a diverse audience, ends up not talking to anyone (SCALZO, 2013). Segmentation is yet another strategy adopted by magazines to approach a specific reader profile, seeking to retain them. If, on the one hand, segmentation responds to market needs, which makes the magazine a commercial product (SCALZO, 2013); on the other hand, the segmentation adopted in independent magazines allows experimentation and editorial daring that are not always possible in commercial magazines, which depend on advertisers and need larger print runs.

For Baptistella (2020) the popularization of the internet changed the scenario of commercial print magazines, hegemonic as information and entertainment vehicles between the 1950s and 2000s. The ease of free access to content made possible by the internet, made printed magazines cease to be the main source of information for a large part of the population, causing a decline in the sector. As a strategy to stay active, many magazines started the process of migrating to the digital environment, believing that the problem would be the consumption of printed material, ignoring the changes in the profile of readers, who start to seek increasingly specific and individualized information.

Zumalde (2018) observes that in contrast to the decline of commercial magazines, the internet has enabled the rise of independent publications, editions that no longer aim at mass communication, but assume the function of meaning, creating links, being an object of desire for a targeted audience, passionate and in search of identification.

In this sense, the understanding of the editor as the first reader of a magazine, whose pages reflect his personality and his motivation for the theme dealt with in the independent publication. In this way, a bond and identification are created with the magazine, which leaves the sphere of impersonality and becomes unique, humanized. The reader no longer perceives the magazine as a commodity and starts to understand it as an object endowed with personality and expression (ZUMALDE, 2018).

In this scenario, independent publications occupy a distinct place. Self-published magazines and zines aim to offer readers something that traditional titles, with their quest for a high volume of circulation, do not. By



serving specific niches around the world, they position themselves within emerging graphic trends, influencing and being influenced by areas such as art, architecture, photography, fashion, and music (ZAPPATERRA, 2014).

In the United States and Europe, as ubiquitous as electronic publications are, unusual print magazines have emerged to compete with the digital medium. Art directors and designers have been exploring the strengths of printing, creating portable and collectible objects from different graphic materials (THOMAS, 2007). This type of initiative allows experimenting with new visual proposals while relevant discussions are deepened.

The independent magazine as a means of communication allows exploring design as a social tool, provoking relevant discussions about the new Latin American visual narratives. Print material, in particular, provides deep conversations, less dispersed than online media. (ALDERSON, 2018).

2.2 Latinity and decolonial thought

Like magazine design, the idea of Latinity has been rethought and discussed. Representations of Latinity are made in a stereotyped, reductionist, and even folkloric way, ignoring the multiplicity of ethnicities and cultures that make up Latin America. Torres (2016) notes the existence of thousands of Latin Americas, each one immersed in different ethnic and national origins; subject to the climatic, social, and political patterns of individual countries.

Despite the differences, all Latin American countries bear marks of the colonization process to which they were submitted. Torres (2007) differentiates the concepts “colonialism and coloniality”, and defines that colonialism is linked to the economic, military, legal, and political power that one nation exerts over another. While the idea of coloniality is deeper and affects the mentalities of colonized peoples. According to the author, coloniality: “remains alive in didactic texts, in the criteria for good academic work, in culture, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in the aspirations of subjects and many other aspects of our modern experience” (TORRES, 2007, p. 131).

For Quijano (2005) the term coloniality alludes to the invasion of the other's imagination, that is, its westernization. In this sense, the colonizer destroys the colonized's imaginary, making it invisible while reaffirming the imaginary itself. Thus, the coloniality of power represses the modes of



production of knowledge, knowledge, the symbolic world, beliefs, spirituality, images of the colonized, and imposes new ones. There is a naturalization of the imaginary of the European colonizer, the epistemic subalternation of the non-European other, and the very denial and oblivion of non-European historical processes.

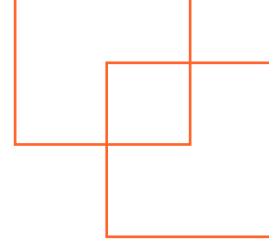
Decolonial thinking is an expression of colonized peoples who begin to become aware of their history, their otherness, their identities, their ways of being and being in the world as presuppositions of their existence (ADIB, 2019). In this sense, the resumption of Latin imaginaries, based on their artistic representations in material culture, aims to make visible rich and profound knowledge and practices, which were historically marginalized and inferior.

Throughout history, different movements emerged to break the unique history, an expression of coloniality, and propose a new guise to the contemporary idea of Latinity. Postcolonial or decolonial thinking constitutes a discourse, and in graphic design and the visual arts, it can be argued that it acts in the sense of political commitment to the critique of colonialism and the deconstruction of the artistic experience as a reproduction of colonial structures of understanding of art (OLIVEIRA, 2016).

As representations of material culture, printed magazines have played an important role throughout history, playing vital roles in different avant-garde movements by signaling cultural positions, through content and design, and attracting new adepts (HELLER, 2003). Thus, the choice of print media as a platform for the MILPA Magazine is suited to the deepening of emerging cultural issues related to decolonial thinking, which would disperse in ephemeral and fast media such as digital. In addition, the printed format allows for creative experimentation, inspired by traditional and ancestral techniques.

3 CREATIVITY AT THE HEART OF THE DESIGN PROCESS

To support the work, the "Systematic Method for Designers" (Archer, 1984) was adopted. Despite being a model guided by Operations Research (OP) and containing the behaviorist traits of the first generation methods, this method is more focused on the creative stages than other contemporary methods. Thus, Archer does not see creative activity as a mechanical process, but as the crucial act of design activity (Neves et al., 2017).



The proposed method foresees three linear phases: Analytical, Creative, and Executive. Archer's understanding is that the design method would be a creative sandwich, where the edge stages (Analytical and Executive) bring objectives and metrics, while the central phase would be creativity.

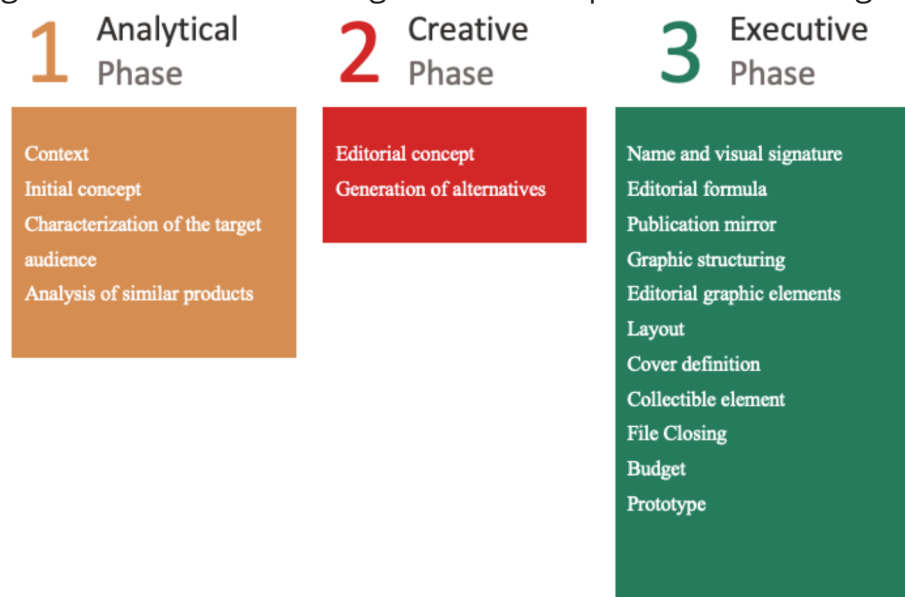
For Lacerda (2012, p. 57) the main merit of the systematic method, pointed out by Archer, would be "to reduce the tedious tasks that suppress the imagination that the designer now has to learn, freeing him up to dedicate more time to prepare for the main act, the creative leap."

The MILPA Magazine project went through the stages of the method with its adaptations, Figure 1, glimpsing the specifics of an editorial project and reinforcing the emphasis on creativity and experimentation possibilities.

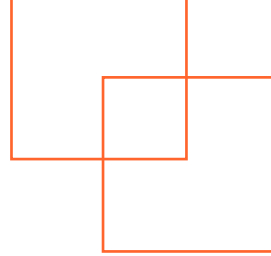
Thus, in the Analytical Phase, the context and initial concept of the magazine were defined, the target audience was characterized and similar independent magazines were analyzed, either by the form or the content presented. The Creative Phase, on the other hand, focused on defining the editorial concept and generating alternatives that would explore the expressiveness and materiality of the concepts raised.

Finally, the Executive Phase encompassed all the unfolding of concepts in the formatting of the magazine. At this stage, the name and visual signature of the magazine, editorial formula, publication mirror, graphic structuring, the definition of editorial graphic elements, layout, the definition of the cover, and collectible element were defined. Finally, the file was closed, budgeted and prototypes were printed.

Figure 1: Phases of the Design Method adapted for MILPA Magazine.



Source: Own composition.



4 THE DESCRIPTION OF THE DESIGN PROCESS OF MILPA MAGAZINE.

During the development of the project, different tools were used to collect and analyze information, as well as creativity techniques that allowed the exploration of a wide range of design solutions. Even in the analytical and executive phases, which would respectively focus on collecting information and setting the parameters of the project, there were moments of creation and experimentation that defined the final result of the magazine.

The Analytical Phase provided for the survey of the initial questions of the project, which started from the definition of its context, from bibliographic research that aimed to determine the scenario of independent journals and the possibility of a Latin expression, based on decolonial thinking, in this segment. Having established the initial assumptions, a first concept was chosen as a starting point for the project. This one was inspired by the image "Inverted America", created by Joaquín Torres Garcia.

Although independent magazines bring a more personal expression of the editor, a deeper recognition of the target audience was chosen. For this purpose, interviews were carried out with five specialists from areas related to the publication, namely: (A) Editorial design; (B) Latin American Studies; (C) Visual Arts; (D) Illustration and (E) Fashion. The interviews were conducted between April and May 2019, guided by structured scripts. The treatment of the interviews generated a cloud of words. It also served as a basis for understanding the trends and specificities of the area, expressed in the design of personas and scenarios.

In addition, the interview with experts helped to identify similar materials for analysis. These were divided between similar in form and content, the first being printed magazines, while the second also considers digital materials, as long as the theme was compatible with that of the project.

Table 1 summarizes the objectives, tools, and directions and, finally, the partial results of each goal of the analytical phase.

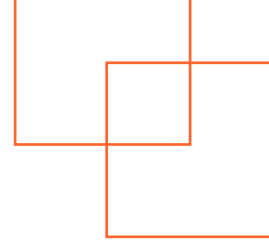

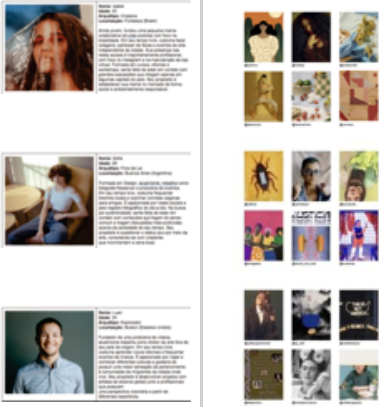
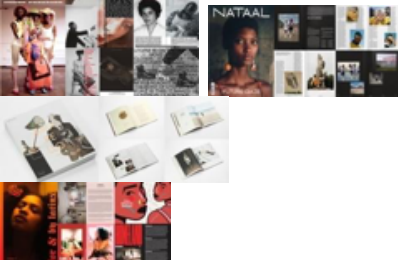
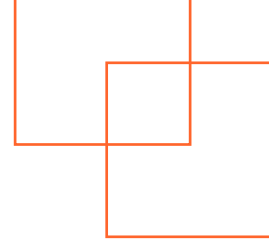


Table 1 - Summary of Analytical Phase activities.

1 Analytic Phase	Set the Context	Bibliographic research	Magazines, independent magazines, print magazines. Latinity, decolonial thought, Latin American art.
	Raise the initial Concept	Analysis	<p>“Inverted America” (1943)</p>  <p>Joaquín Torres Garcia</p>
	Characterize the target audience	Interview Editorial Design (A), Latin America (B) Visual Arts (C), Illustration (D) and Fashion (E)	<p>design materiais contato lugares referências ideias artistas opiniões consulta cultura qualidade oihar</p>
		Creating personas and scenarios	
Analyze similar ones	Content		

Source: Own composition.

Based on the research and analysis carried out in the Analytical Phase, the Creative Phase began. First, terms from the literature review and interviews were retrieved and the project concept was defined, based on the organization of a mental map. The magazine's concepts were developed to refer to different temporal moments: past (ancestry), present (contemporaneity), and future (anthropophagy). From the interaction of



these three main concepts, and from the idea that the sum of the whole is greater than the parts, secondary (decolonization, coexistence, connection, and reconnection) and tertiary (perspectives, questioning, and pause) words were chosen.

The generation of alternatives aimed to sketch different possibilities for the final product, to explore which proposal best fits the defined concepts. Alternatives were generated from the main concepts (ancestry, contemporaneity, and anthropophagy). Thus, three visual panels referring to different alternatives were developed, exploring different proposals for textures, graphics, and finishes from the same conceptual definition.

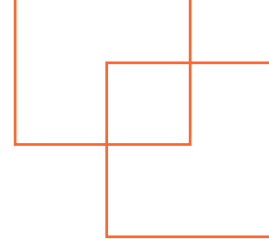
In the first alternative, which ended up being chosen, the ancestry was expressed in the proposal of the manual application of textures added to the use of pollen paper, which offers a welcoming and comfortable reading. For contemporaneity, a size smaller than A4 was thought, valuing portability. With anthropophagy, the possibility was established of exploring the magazine insert as an object capable of resignifying itself, like a poster.

The creativity stage explored the materiality of the magazine, observing characteristics of the paper, binding, textures, and other elements that stimulate other senses, in addition to the visual, and instigate less planned and more intuitive interactions. Table 2, shown below, presents a synthesis of the creative phase.

Table 2 - Stages of the Creative Phase.

2 Creative Phase	Define the Editorial Concept	Mental map	
	Alternative Generation	Visual Panel	

Source: Own composition.



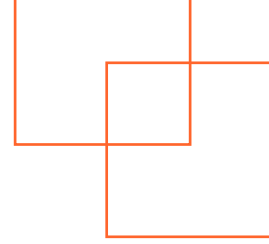
In the executive phase, whose synthesis is presented in table 3, the steps relevant to the editorial design of magazines were developed. At this stage, the name and identity of the magazine were defined: milpa. The term was identified in the bibliographic research of the analytical phase and refers to the millenary system of cultivation, used throughout Mesoamerica. Based on the circular concept of life, many Latin American native peoples refer to the combination of corn, beans, and squash as sacred gifts (MINISTÉRIO DA AGRICULTURA, PECUÁRIA E ABASTECIMENTO, 2016). The visual identity was inspired by the representations of corn, an element that will also be used in the design of the magazine cover and the collectible element. The editorial formula highlights various Latin American artistic references, such as painting, architecture, illustration, and music. The content is divided into three sections related to the main concepts defined in the creative phase, namely: (1) rooting, which deals with ancestry; (2) Radiate, related to anthropophagy; (3) Voar, which addresses contemporaneity. The magazine would be published quarterly and would bring some texts in Portuguese and others in Spanish.

The publication mirror predicted the positioning of the content on the magazine's pages. The concept of the work *América Invertida*, by Joaquín Torres Garcia, was taken up again, and the inversion movement was emulated in the pages of the magazine. The reader rotates the magazine to follow the content, that is, the magazine is turned upside down at the end of the reading. This feature also makes it possible to start reading from any side of the magazine.

Next, the graphic structure of the magazine was developed, which defined the graphic-editorial parameters for the realization of the layout. From the most technical definitions, such as the page shape, choose typographic, leading, module, diagram, and grid, as well as the most sensitive: the chromatic palette and editorial graphic elements. The layout organized the content, based on the graphic structure, to create a more dynamic rhythm in the reading, avoiding a homogeneous composition.

The construction of the cover and the collectible element came from an experimentation process, stains were created from the application of a try on the ear and the corn leaves, and these were pressed on the paper, then the textures were digitized and diagrammed with the respective texts.

Once the cover, core, and collectible element (poster) were finished, the files were closed and sent to a print shop, whose cost for 3000 units was



within the range of values practiced by the competitors. Finally, a prototype was printed to identify possible flaws and make adjustments before a larger-scale production.

Table 3 – Summary of the Executive Phase.

<h1 style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">3 Executive Phase</h1>	Set the name and visual signature	Research review; Semantic panels; Generation of alternatives Selection and Choice	 
	Develop the editorial formula	Resumption of concepts - creative phase	Sections: "Eraizar": 5 articles, between 3 and 5 pages; "Irradiar": 5 articles, between 3 and 5 pages; "Voar": 5 articles, between 3 and 5 pages.
	Develop the publication mirror	Review of the initial concept - analytical phase	
	Create the graphical structuring	Definitions: Page shape; Typographic choice; Leading; Module determination; Grid creation; Modular Scale; Diagram; chromatic palette; Editorial graphic elements.	  
	Layout	  	  

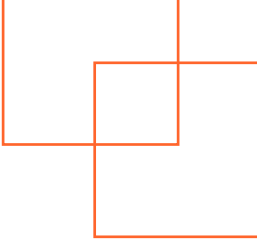


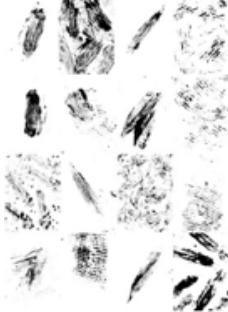
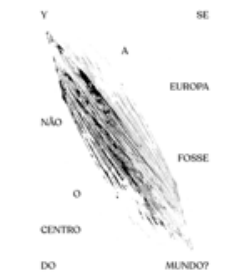

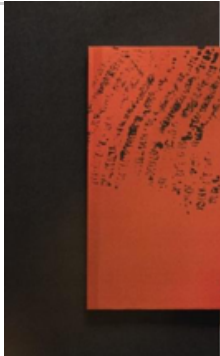
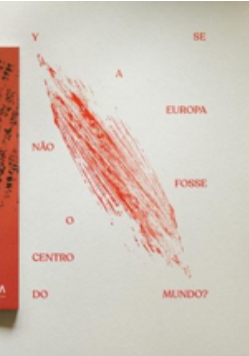


Table 3 – Summary of the Executive Phase. (continuation)

	Cover definition	Experiments with corn 	
	Collectible element		
	File Closing and Budget	Value raised for production meets the cost of similar ones raised in the survey	
	Prototype		

Source: Own composition.

5 PROCESS DISCUSSION

From the first contact with the interviewees, in the analytical phase, it was possible to glimpse different directions regarding the proposed graphic-editorial project. Regarding the contribution of independent publishing design to the decentralization and visual literacy of the creative community around the world, the needs observed were as follows:

- Treat print as a protagonist, explore different materials and finishes;

- Addressing, both in content and in form, issues of ancestry and territoriality;
- Present a strategic communication, aligned with the language of digital platforms;
- Explore design as a tool for communication and social transformation.

The conceptual and referential basis established in the analytical phase allowed certain design decisions to be developed relatively naturally, leading to the structuring of the graphic-editorial project aligned with the proposed visual identity.

The choice of name and visual identity of the publication demonstrates this development in the design process. The name "milpa", related to an ancestral knowledge of agriculture of the native peoples, brings the image of corn as an identity element. Its symbolic representation, as found on a postcard from the Ixchel Museum in Guatemala (figure 2), is a source of inspiration for the magazine's logo.

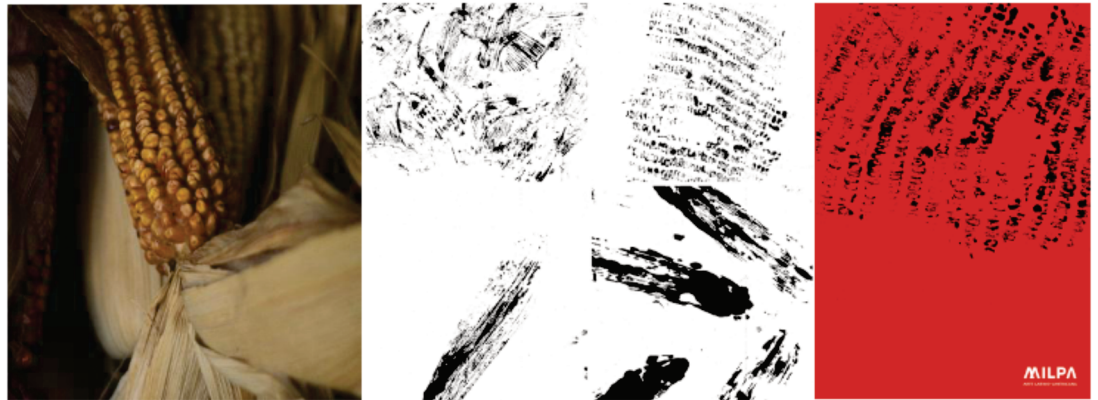
Figure 2 – Ancestral representation symbolizing corn and the identity of MILPA Magazine.



Source: Own composition.

The indexical representation of corn, more specifically of criollo corn, stamped on the paper, generated the textures of the cover and the collectible poster (figure 3). The use of an indexical sign reinforces the appeal to the materiality of the magazine object, as the stains refer to the physical contact between the corn and the paper.

Figure 3 – Criolo corn, graphics created, and the cover of MILPA.



Source: Own composition.

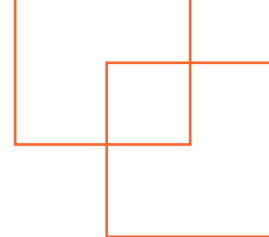
Another unconventional solution adopted by MILPA Magazine was to change the orientation of the page throughout the publication, as described in the previous item, inspired by the work "América Invertida", which proposes the inversion of the map as a change of perspective. In the layout, this interaction was intended to provoke the reader to experience different points of view, since the reading can be initiated from both sides.

Figure 4. Demonstration of variations in page orientation in the prototype.



Source: Own composition.

Given the reception of the prototype developed with the target audience, the final proposal was considered aligned with the initial expectations. The main aspirations established during the process were met: to arouse interest in the topic in question, to bring the reader a provocative reading experience, in addition, to stimulate the desire to acquire and store the presented publication. It was also noted that users



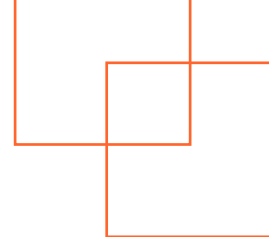
In general, it was possible to observe that the future of editorial design does not seem to be in direct competition with the digital medium, nor at the end of printed material as a platform. It is, therefore, the resignification of the magazine as an object, bringing possibilities that the online medium is not able to provide. In this sense, material research in niche magazines becomes even more significant, to experiment with the use of special papers and different finishes, which does not occur in high-run productions.

In addition, there is the rise of magazines that bring timeless content, to incite relevant and deep discussions, with quality and originality, since it has become impossible to compete with online platforms in terms of updating. Given this, it can be beneficial to explore published stories in the context of a larger theme, rather than existing in isolation at a specific URL. For Drumm (2019), when read as part of something bigger, each printed story is connected to a broader type of conversation that can be generated.

Finally, it is possible to verify that the publication of independent magazines today is conditionally linked to digital platforms. This aspect directly influences the layout of these materials, which bring characteristic visual aspects of the internet — such as typography, grid construction, and alignment — to the printed object. It is also possible to observe that the independent magazine as a platform has been transcending the physical material and is intrinsically related to the construction of communities from shared interests, resulting in different cultures that transit between the physical and digital space.

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were receptive to active interaction with the proposed material, to experience the magazine as a tool for discovery and visual reference.

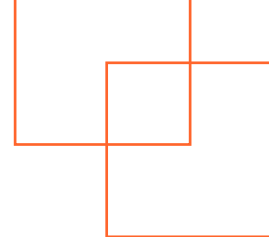
6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Despite the imminent end foreseen, it is possible to infer that the publishing market remains current and even more relevant than in the past. While book design has been leading the discussion on the subject, it is necessary to note the creative potential of independent magazines and zines — due to their small but periodic circulation, it was possible to observe the ease of the prototype in dialoguing with the digital environment, to build the necessary openness to invite the reader to share different experiences in print media.

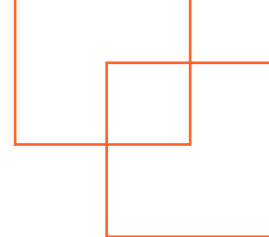
For Caldwell and Zappaterra (2014), the worldwide appetite not only for magazines but also for their creation seems to be insatiable, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the rise of independently published zines and special interest publications, which serve niche audiences worldwide. They are seen as a powerful force within emerging graphic trends, influencing and being influenced by other areas such as art, architecture, photography, fashion, and music.

In this sense, the potential of the physical magazine to surprise the reader becomes an expressive differential. While in the online algorithm the logic is to show more than what each user is already used to, reinforcing the sedimentation of digital bubbles, print is capable of arousing the particular sensation of turning the page and facing something that you never knew could be interesting (Alderson, 2019). In addition, it is also possible to identify the issue of materiality and the infinite possibilities of spontaneous interactions, which a digital platform does not offer.

Another challenge for the new generation of designers is the repositioning of the user as an active part of the reading experience. Here, it is necessary to explore new ways of bringing the printed matter as an interface, provoking the participation of the reader. With the prototype developed, it was possible to consolidate the magazine as a small portable exhibition, which references the breathing spaces of the page to the walls of a museum and brings the variation of reading guidelines as a provocation to pre-established perspectives, capable of generating discomfort.



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