

12.12.07

The Library informs me that my design was chosen and invites me to meet with the exhibitions team. I'm happy about the news, and start thinking about how to actually make the installation. The idea is simple – a wall of blank books with Avant Garde-influenced elements in the typography and design. But the logistics of affixing 100 open books might not be.

17.12.07

I go over the project proposal with the exhibitions team, and realise that producing the blank books might also be a sticking point. I optimistically suggest they could be bound on site, but time and budget rule that out. We consider some alternatives, such as printing the books as flat graphic images, but conclude that they really have to be three dimensional to be effective. Alan from the team suggests that we meet with the set maker who made the lovely stone-effect display at the start of the Avant Garde exhibition. Perhaps he'll have some ideas on how to make the books.

5.1.08



The set makers are based in a picturesque studio under a railway in Lewisham. I'm impressed by the work in progress, which includes a barbershop set from the Sweeney Todd premiere and stage props from Wicked. We discuss the size and display of the books and conclude that the main problem is mounting them in such a way that the pages fan out naturally. I suggest putting a small Perspex shelf under the books, while Alan is in favour of stitching them directly to the Foamex backboard. Kevin, the model maker, promises to think about the problem while I work on the books themselves.

15.1.08



After trying out weights of paper and methods of stitching I've created an 8-page 'book' that fits the bill. Now I just need to make 47 more – the number having been reduced, over the various stages of design, from my original estimate of 100! Kevin hits on the idea of a small grooved shelf that can sit below the books, and we cross our fingers that it will all work to plan.

29.1.08



A week of stitching and artworking later, and a grueling day spent cutting Foamex to measurement on Kevin's part, and we have all the elements ready to go. We spend some hours assembling it in the labyrinthine Library offices and breathe a sigh of relief when it's done.

Later I take another walk around the Avant Garde exhibition. My small installation involved some 30 emails, five meetings and several stages of artwork and revision – how much work must have gone into the production of the exhibition itself!