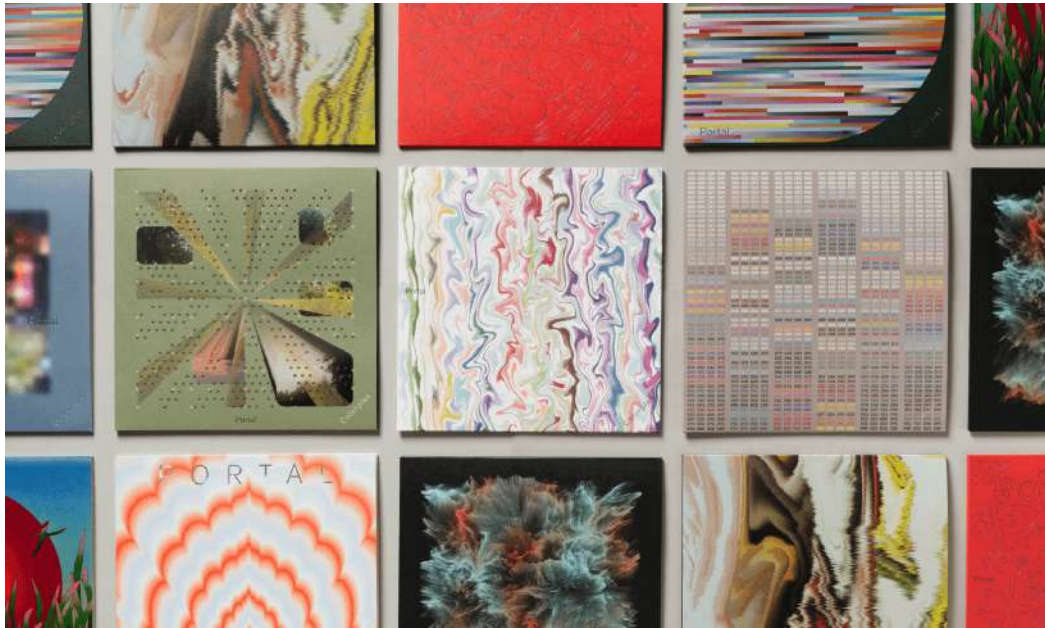


Sound and vision

G . F Smith calls on Manchester design students to create album art for 'the sound of colour'

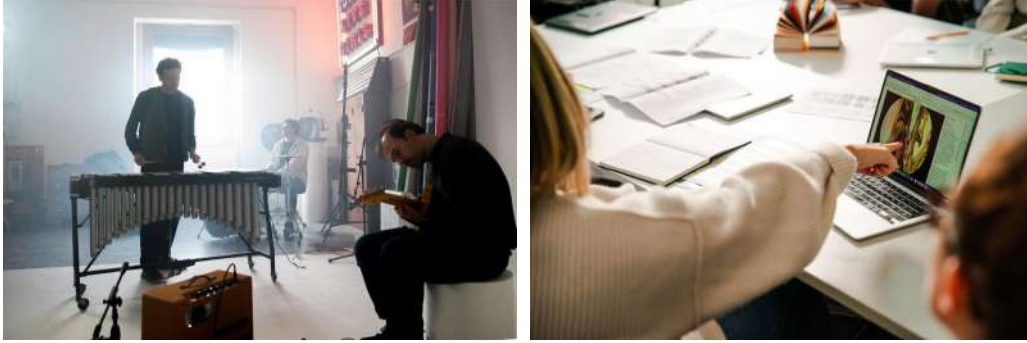


MSOA students' winning album art designs on display at SOUP Manchester. Still life photography by Tian Khee Siong.

- G . F Smith commissions album and art to communicate colour
- Project responds to a unique soundscape created to represent the 55 colours of Colorplan paper
- Students of Manchester School of Art invited to create cover art for 12" vinyl record
- 10 winning designs selected, printed as record sleeves, and exhibited at SOUP Manchester

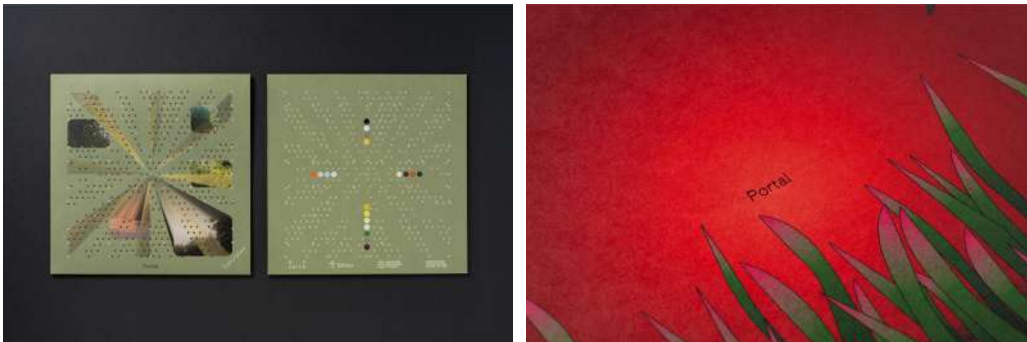
As the brand behind Colorplan – the world-leading family of coloured papers – G . F Smith has spent decades thinking about colour, what it can signify, the ideas it invokes, how it makes us feel. This year, the brand has asked students of Manchester School of Art to turn their creativity towards the exploration of colour – filtered through the lens of sound – in a competition to create an album cover and inlay for a truly one-of-a-kind 12" vinyl.

The music of colour



Left: the Father team making music. Right: album design in progress at Manchester School of Art. Photography by Cameron Brown.

In the summer of 2023, G . F Smith teamed up with the music and sound design agency Father, and set them the unusual task of developing a soundscape inspired by the 55 colours of G . F Smith's Colorplan paper range. The project took as a starting point the phenomenon of synaesthesia, whereby the senses become intertwined such that stimulus of one sense is experienced in another. Scents could be interpreted as shapes, words could have distinctive shapes, and colours might be heard as sounds.

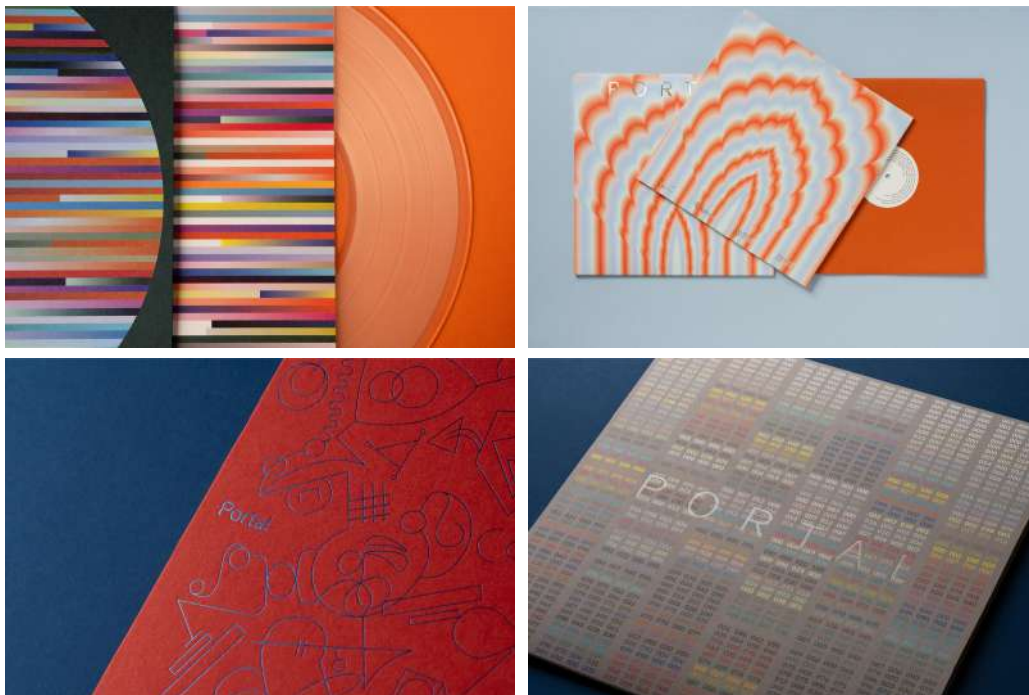


Album art by Adomas Lukas Petrauskas (left) and Lucy Michaela (right). Photography by Tian Khee Siong.

Father created a distinct sound to reflect each of the 55 colours that make up the Colorplan paper range, resulting in an expansive palette of sounds that could then be used to compose a series of different pieces of music. These include 'A Journey through Colour' – an extended soundscape that acts as a sonic exploration and interpretation of the complete Colorplan collection – and 'A Journey Through Creativity' – a sequence of four pieces, each comprising a specific colour grouping

and reflecting the various stages in a creative project. These compositions form the A and B sides, respectively, of G . F Smith's new Colorplan vinyl – in effect, the brand's debut album.

The art of sound



Clockwise from top left: album art by Alice-Skye McEwen, Rupinder Kaur, Bradley Sansom and Connie Wooddisse. Photography by Tian Khee Siong.

To create the cover art for this landmark piece, G . F Smith turned to the new generation of creative talent currently incubating at Manchester School of Art – the second-oldest design school in Britain. Students currently enrolled in the 2nd and 3rd year of the school's BA (Hons) Graphic Design course have been challenged to create an album sleeve, channelling their own unique response to, and understanding of, colour into their work, as well as their personal interpretation of the soundscapes created by Father. The only constraints of the brief are the limits of their imagination.

"G . F Smith has been committed to supporting people at all stages of their creative journey – from education to professional practice – since the 1960s.

We will continue to do whatever we can to help emerging creative generations with projects like this one, because we believe creativity is essential both to the UK economy and society as a whole.

It is our hope that, one day soon, the Importance and value of the creative industries will be properly understood, and appropriately recognised with meaningful Government investment in creative education.”

– Ben Watkinson, creative director, G . F Smith



Winning designs are revealed at SOUP Manchester. Photography by Cameron Brown.

G . F Smith has selected 10 winning designs, each of which has been printed on sleeves and exhibited at a special launch event at SOUP Manchester on 18 April 2024, ahead of Record Store Day on the 20th. All winning designs are available to view here: dropbox.com/scl/fi/8zp7p0squebhf2ibycwu5/Portal-Vinyl-Designers.pdf?rlkey=nosmhuoskt53zg6brb9z3ojbf&st=r4kth0ah&dl=0

As well as having their work professionally produced and exhibited, each winner receives five copies of the final product, a tour of G . F Smith HQ in Hull, up to £250 of G . F Smith papers to use for their final project, and a contribution of £250 towards their personal print costs while they complete their course, courtesy of G . F Smith’s partner printer Pressision.

Investing in the next generation



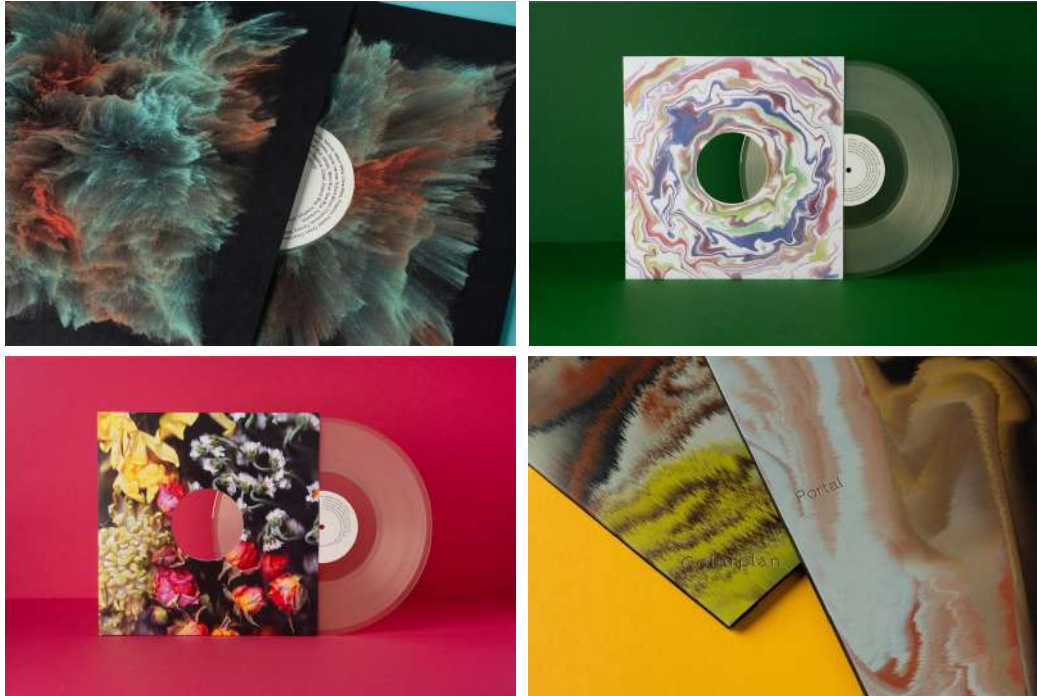
Vinyl production at Pressision. Photography by Louis Jones.

G . F Smith has a long-standing reputation as a preferred partner of the creative industries, working closely with an ever-widening network of artists, designers and makers around the world. As well as collaborations with established creatives, the company also actively engages with art and design schools and courses around the UK to support emerging talent. The Colorplan vinyl project is the perfect example of this approach in action.

“For the new generation of creatives, exposure to the possibilities of paper and print is sometimes limited, so this project provides a perfect opportunity to understand not only paper’s beauty and tangibility but also its power to communicate. These creatives are changing the design landscape as we know it, and G . F Smith is more invested than ever in supporting them.”

The vinyl project has allowed us to see first-hand both the excitement and the challenges that specifying paper and print can bring. It’s been an invaluable learning curve for all of us, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with the students in the future.”

– Vanessa Fletcher, education manager, G . F Smith



Clockwise from top left: album art by Harley Whitney, Ishita Garg, Salem Ahmed and Amelia Renny. Photography by Tian Khee Siong.

Manchester School of Art was selected as the ideal collaborator for the project both because the emphasis its Graphic Design course places on experimentation, imagination and independent thinking, and because of Manchester's own rich historic relationship with the UK music scene. For a project that fuses different creative disciplines, crosses and re-crosses the boundaries between sound and vision, there could be no better setting.

"Graphic Design at Manchester School of Art wanted to work in collaboration with G . F Smith and Father as the project has a unique concept and gave a 'real world' experience for our students. It has furthered their creativity, while building their skills in working with industry professionals."

– Andy Ellison, course leader and senior lecturer, Manchester School of Art

The winning designs were exhibited on 18 April at SOUP Manchester. For more information about the project and the winning designs, please contact gfsmith@zetteler.co.uk.

Notes for editors

G . F Smith

Obsessed with the beauty and possibility of paper, G . F Smith is the UK's largest specialist paper company, and the dedicated supplier of creative papers to the creative industries. The company was founded in London in 1885 by globe-trotting stationery salesman George Frederick Smith. Over the following century, George's paper merchants built a reputation for quality and service, and became renowned as passionate pioneers of the paper industry. G . F Smith became a certified B Corp in June 2023.

Colorplan remains one of G . F Smith's most extraordinary achievements in paper making. Over the last 80 years, it has continually refined and evolved the range, which now spans 55 colours, 25 embossings and 10 weights – all made sustainably in Britain and available worldwide.

gfsmith.com

Father

Father is a creative music and sound design studio, born out of the belief that sound and image should elevate and contextualise one another to amplify emotion, engagement and recall. Working with international brands and creatives, Father specialises in translating a collective vision into a tangible piece of music or sound design.

wearefather.com

Manchester School of Art

Manchester School of Art is an innovator of art and design education in the UK. Based in the vibrant and multicultural city of Manchester, it is the second-oldest design school in Britain. It places an emphasis on experimentation and has a playful approach to media, materials and processes.

BA (Hons) Graphic Design is a hands-on, ideas-driven course. Students are actively encouraged to develop intellectual curiosity and approach design in an unconventional manner using both print-based and digital solutions. Students are encouraged to take risks and challenge boundaries, while considering context and audience. The programme produces conceptual creative thinkers and maverick designers who go on to key roles within the design industry.

art.mmu.ac.uk