

Recall Gamerz

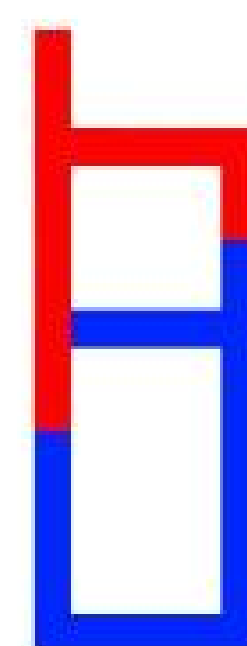
My true first attempt at establishing a visual brand was in 2011: when I used *Microsoft Paint* to draw up the logo for **Recall Gamerz** [see Fig. 1]; a YouTube channel originally conceived to become a series of videogame reviews. The logo was to have a '1990s-early 2000s' feel to it; being shaped similarly to the mobile phones of the era, with the antenna jutting from the top. The red and blue colours were selected simply because they were the favourite colours of ours (mine and the co-creator's); but we found that they coincidentally lent themselves faithful to popular colour combinations of the targeted time period. Although the series never spanned beyond its first episode, it helped introduce the visual appearance of **Kecu** [Fig. 2]. To clarify, **Kecu** is used as my alias, since personal experience has proven that my orthonym is not easy to remember, spell and/or pronounce for a number of people; with **Kecu** naturally being easier in all those elements.



[Fig. 1]: The Recall Gamerz logo; fusing the lower-case 'r' and 'g' letters



[Fig. 2]: The Kecu design. Top-left: original Recall Gamerz logo; Top-right: Recall Gamerz retouch; Bottom-left: Kecu Kritiques redesign; Bottom-right: latest Kecu Kritiques



[Fig. 3]: The Recall Gamerz logo; using sharper angles and starker colour boundaries to create a clearer contrast between the 'r' and 'g' letters

Intro

Initially, I had no intention of, or ideas towards formally branding my more recent personal projects.

However, with the age of the internet cultivating an environment whereby instant recognition has become an essential tool for success, brands of both a formal and informal nature have become a key norm.

This is a step-by-step process that takes you through the brief history that has now become the **Kecu** brand.

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Kecu Kritiques

After the cancellation of **Recall Gamerz**, I still retained my interest in reviewing games. As such, in 2014, I decided to undertake the project on my own. I abandoned the group-playthrough feel in place of re-formatting it into a solo, in-depth sharing of opinion; similar to the film-reviews I'd written & published since 2011, under the same name: **Kecu Kritiques**.

However, since this was a completely new project, I needed to re-brand entirely. **Kecu**'s image changed once more [Fig. 2]; taking on a personal reflection of my own clothes, as well as adding a bandana in reflection of it being a popular item of clothing amongst gaming and cartoon characters (especially during 1980s - 1990s, of whom were the primary target audiences).

While the rough paper sketches of the Kecu Kritiques logo concepts are lost, there were two designs for which I created final renders. The commonality between the selections is that both pay homage to my home location, with the 'Union Jack' being the first of the chosen designs [Fig. 4].



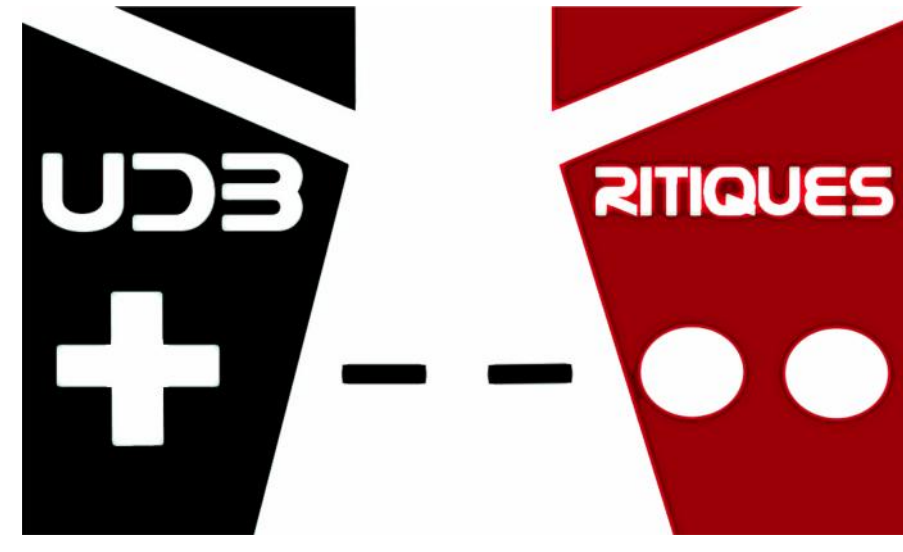
[Fig. 4]: The 'Union Jack' Kecu Kritiques logo, March 2015

My idea was to incorporate the name 'Kecu Kritiques' in with the design of the flag, creating an association of 'Britishness' with my brand via a seamless design. While new to the *Xara Designer* software at the time of creation, I experimented until I was able to mimic the glow and static of a TV set. The font for the 'Kecu' part was of my own making, using the line tool, to help establish a difference between that and the 'Kritiques'; of which was the *Ethnocentric* font. I chose this design because of its futuristic, yet legible style.

It wasn't long, however, before I decided to abandon this concept; considering the design itself hindered the readability, with early feedback confirming that the two 'K' letters were not easily visible, making the flag read 'Ecu Ritiques'. Furthermore, I felt the logo did not reflect the nature of the content it was supposed to be representing (i.e. game reviews).

Working upon the design some more, I discovered that there were already a number of video creators that associated themselves with 'Britishness'. This is when I decided to no longer make use of anything that overtly associated my brand with nationality, and rather focus inward towards the lesser-used association with my county: the Black Country. By this time, the Black Country flag had been established, and became my new focal point.

From here, I adopted a similar type layout from before, but was sure to alter the flag pattern in order to establish a better readability. I removed the custom font choice for 'Kecu', since it felt somewhat unnecessary, and instead opted to keep the *Nasalization* font for both words. Not only was I more satisfied with the readability this time around, but also with how the curves of the letters complemented the harsh angles of the flag, when compared to the stiffer *Ethnocentric*. Moreover, I removed the glow in order to make the design softer on the eye and easier to replicate on a number of mediums. I also added a set of NES-style controller buttons onto the flag in order to improve upon my previous failure to correlate the logo with the product's intent. I specifically chose the NES due to three reasons: the first being personal, due to it being the childhood console that introduced me to gaming; the second being that it is easily recognisable within the gaming community; and the third being to create a harmony between the flag and button designs, with no overcrowding or overuse of white space. I kept the Black Country flag colours due to their striking contrast and timelessness. As such, the **Kecu Kritiques** logo was complete [Fig. 5].



[Fig. 5]: The Kecu Kritiques gaming logo, May 2015

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Kecu Logo

The first project, and the one that outlives even **Kecu Kritiques**, would be the publishing of my artwork. This was, for a long while, conducted through my now-discontinued website, **Kecu Art**, hosted via a *Vistaprint Webs* domain. The art was shared with my *Facebook* page (formerly named both 'Kecu' and 'Stephen 'Kecu' Aitcheson'), of which was (and still is) intended to act as a hub for all my formal and casual uploads,

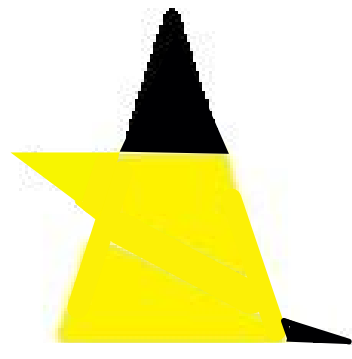
as well as updates. It was during 2017 that I decided to change the Facebook page name to 'Kecu Kreations', in order to align with my plans to rename **Kecu Art** as **Kecu Kraftwork** under the planned *Weebly* website. It was also during this time that I converted over my *Webs* **Kecu Kritiques** page to a *Weebly* domain.

For a long time, I had not considered creating any visual branding to link the two concepts (**Kraftwork** & **Kritiques**) together. In my eyes, they were two separate entities, only ever brought together via the third: social media. However, it was in late 2018 that I came to realise that I had successfully branded myself via the **Kecu** name; and as such, all three were intrinsically linked, and should behave as such for the sake of consistency and ease of findability.

The first idea I had was to create a visual design that would tie in all three productions under the same logo. When considering sources of inspiration, my dominant traces of thought lay heavy on Bob Ross, and his fascination towards mountains. I then considered how this tied in with my brand, and concluded that mountain peaks are both an element of landscape art and a metaphor for reaching exceptional standards.

All of the logo drafts were produced digitally, in order to save time on re-drawing the same concept repeatedly, should I overwork it. However, it is to my dismay to report that I did not account for future reference when sketching these out, and so I never saved a stage-by-stage process; meaning that the only designs remaining are those closest to the finalised logo.

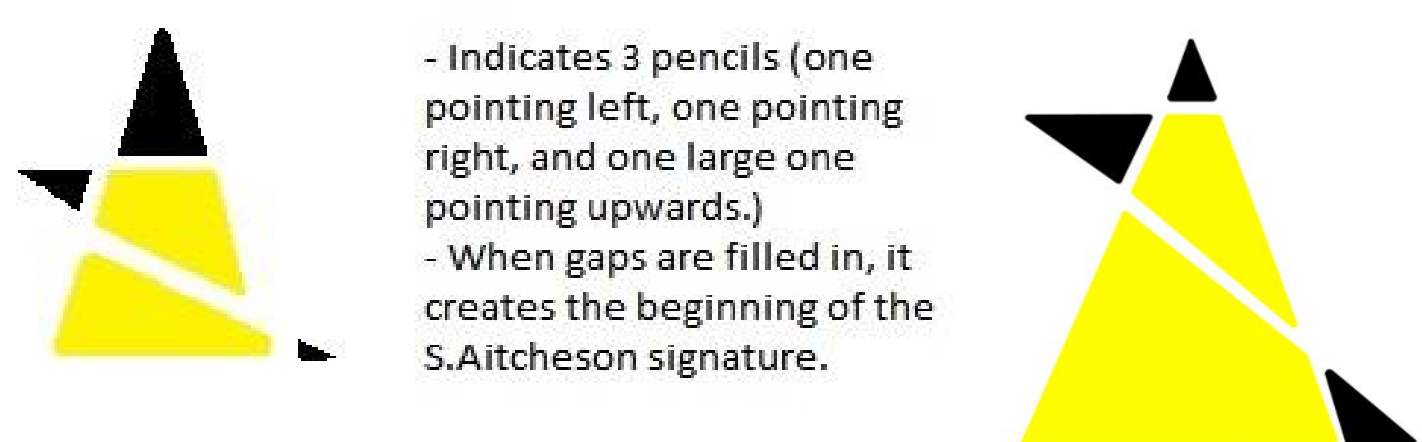
The earliest concept still does retain some of the mountain theme that I originally intended to implement [Fig. 6]. Reconstructed for demonstrative purposes, it shows that the clear line that now strikes through the yellow was originally not present. My train-of-thought saw this: the top black triangle as being a mountain-peak; the bottom-right black triangle being a lake; and the yellow body being the base of the mountain, with an extending plateau.



[Fig. 6]: The reconstructed 'mountain' step for the Kecu logo

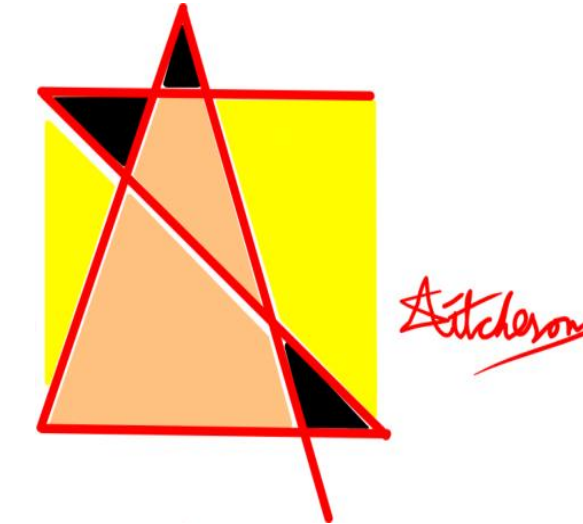
Learning from my previous experience, I quickly realised that, while aesthetically pleasing, the logo still didn't represent anything in regards to my products. I took a while to consider a main theme between them all, before landing upon the notion that my own hand - be it through drawing, typing or writing - is the key recurrence that ties them all together.

With this in mind, I drew my signature - another unique aspect to my brand - through the logo. It was only through doing this, that I dawned upon the realisation that the logo had now taken on the appearance of two, arguably three, pencil points; with the yellow now acting as the wood and the black representing the lead. Recolouring the plateau to accommodate for this, the design below [Fig. 7] was created.



[Fig. 7]: The early 'pencil' step for the Kecu logo

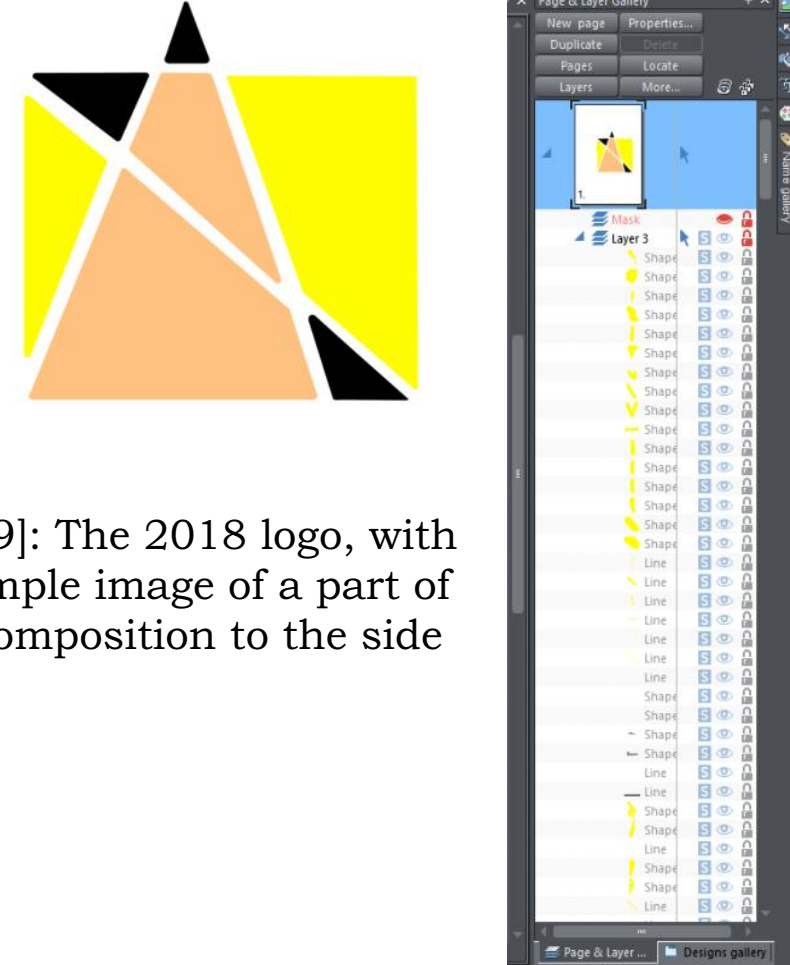
After neatening up the sketch [Fig. 7], I realised that it still didn't look quite complete; that the signature wasn't clear, and that something was missing. It was then that I added the side-shapes, coloured yellow in [Fig. 8]; and re-coloured the middle areas to better represent wood. Yellow was chosen because of its connection with the iconic *Stadler-Noris* line of pencils. I wanted the design to look clean and modern, and so I opted to line up the outer-boundaries with the triangle edges to create a square. The yellow shape on the right-hand side had me experiment with whether it should reach to the top of the upward-facing triangle; but I chose against this, in order to not only create the illusion of a pencil body for the left-facing triangle, but also to incorporate that 'pinnacle' metaphor from the early mountain design. I re-drew the signature through the design and found a much clearer symbolism than before [Fig. 8].



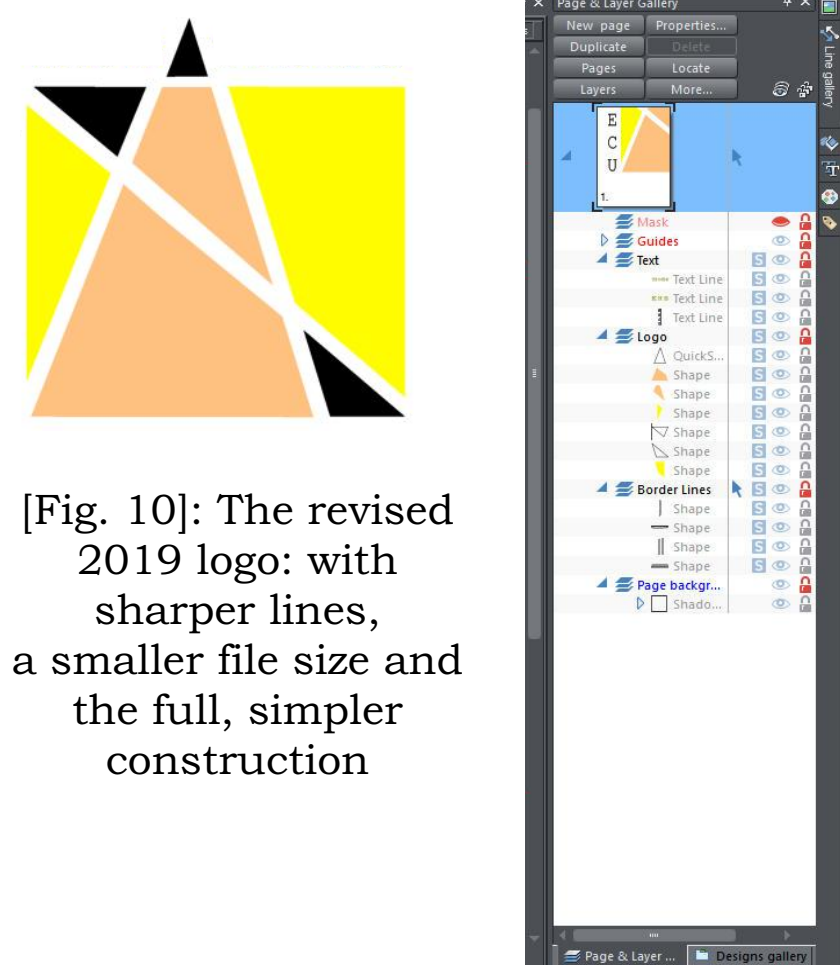
[Fig. 8]: The revised 'pencil' design, with the red lines being a guide on how the signature is incorporated, and an example of the signature to the side

This logo, created initially in July 2018, was used for the **Kecu Kreations** Facebook page since its conception. However, I was for a long while aware of my lack of technical skill and knowledge when producing it; making it a larger file size than necessary, with flaws in the spacing of the signature itself, and with an inefficiently complicated layer process [Fig. 9].

In response to this, I chose to clean up the design after learning more about the *Xara Designer* program in late 2018. By using *ruler guides* & the *grid* to create a balanced white space for the signature, and by using the *quickslope* tool instead of manually filling in gaps using the *line* and *shape painter* tool, I was able to reduce the file size, make a cleaner, more uniform design, and greatly reduce the inputs required for each segment of the logo [Fig. 10].



[Fig. 9]: The 2018 logo, with a sample image of a part of its composition to the side



[Fig. 10]: The revised 2019 logo; with sharper lines, a smaller file size and the full, simpler construction

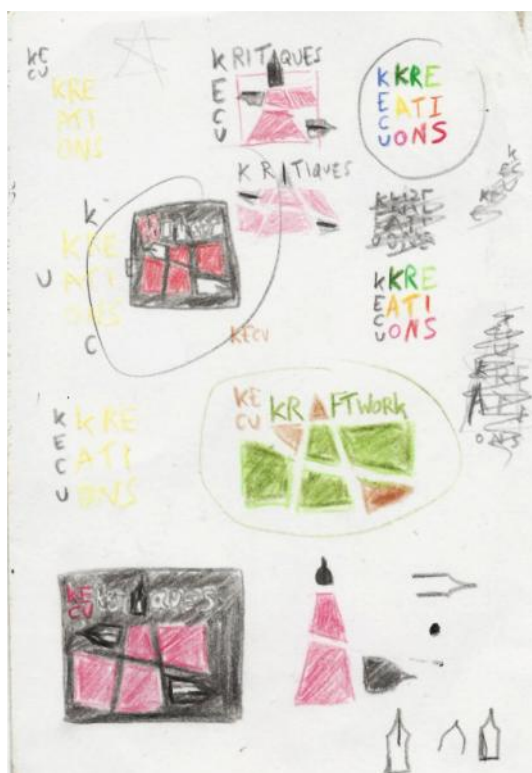
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Kecu Kraftwork, Kritiques & Kreations

As mentioned above, there were originally no intentions to unite **Kraftwork** and **Kritiques**; and despite having now created a logo to do so, I remained unconvinced that a single representation for two unrelated entities - in terms of content - would project a strong and clear brand. Therefore, I set about to create what I now consider to be my most flexible logo to date.

First and foremost, I sketched out a few designs by hand [Fig. 11]. These included a possible redesign of the **Kecu Kreations** logo, so as to not give the impression that similar content is produced under the **Kreations** branch as it is under the **Kraftwork** and **Kritiques** branches. However, upon second thought, I considered that this mindset would not provide leeway for any future changes, should I wish to utilize **Kreations** to produce separate content. Therefore I decided that **Kreations** would keep its current logo, and that **Kraftwork** and **Kritiques** would simply each have their own, respectively.

I decided to keep the logos similar for each project, since they could be easily altered to possess unique styles under a single base shape; ergo creating differentiation and uniformity simultaneously. Such familiarity, I felt, would create a strong sense of recognition for the audience - making them aware of my brand, regardless of which logo they see.



[Fig. 11]: The rough sketches of the trio of logos

The colours I chose for each logo are as follows:

- **Kecu Kreations** with clear background:  
Outer-shapes: Yellow [#ffc00]  
Middle shapes: Light brown [#ffc00]  
Triangle shapes: Black [#000000]
- **Kecu Kreations** with dark background:  
Outer-shapes: Yellow [#ffc00]  
Middle shapes: Light brown [#ffc00]  
Triangle shapes: White [#ffff]
- **Kecu Kraftwork** with clear background:  
Outer-shapes: Green [#5b7635]  
Middle shapes: Dark brown [#301d01]  
Triangle shapes: Black [#000000]
- **Kecu Kraftwork** with dark background:  
Outer-shapes: Green [#5b7635]  
Middle shapes: Light brown [#ffc00]  
Triangle shapes: White [#ffff]
- **Kecu Kritiques** with clear background:  
Outer-shapes: Red [#9a0005]  
Middle shapes: Black [#000000]  
Triangle shapes: White w/ black outline [#ffff w/ #000000]
- **Kecu Kritiques** with dark background:  
Outer-shapes: Red [#9a0005]  
Middle shapes: White [#ffff]  
Triangle shapes: White w/ black line [#ffff w/ #000000]

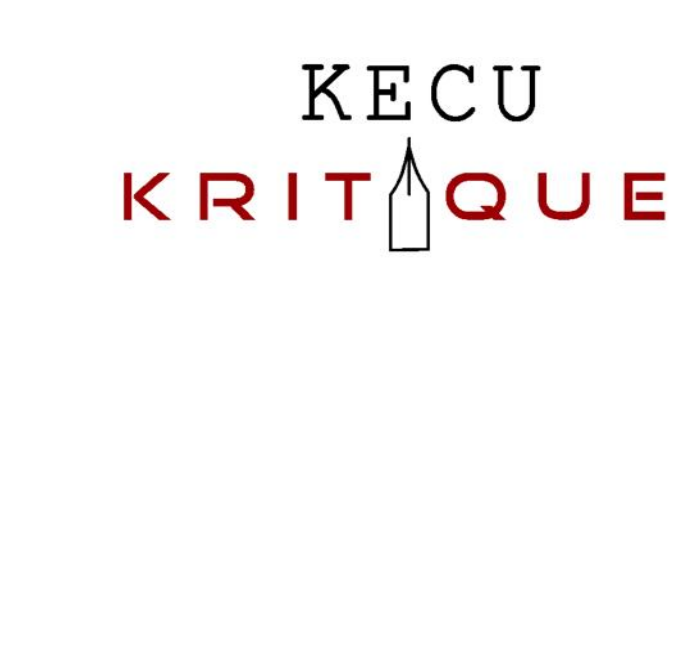
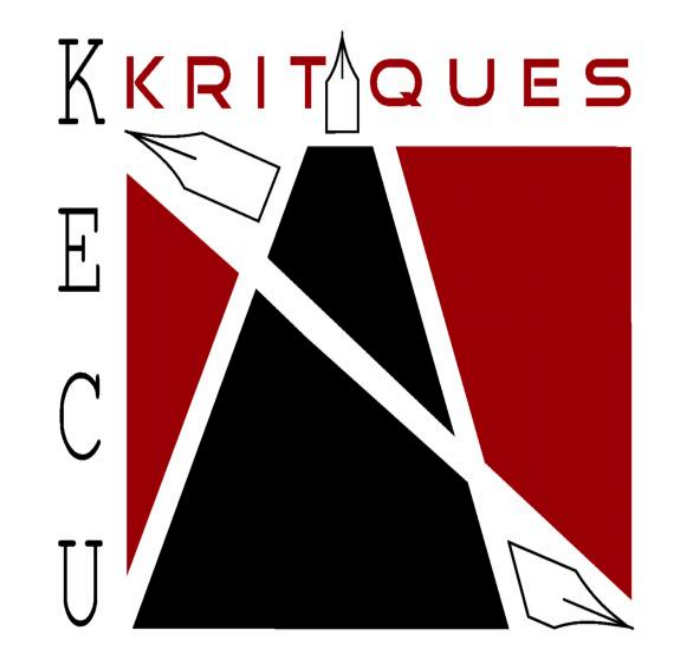
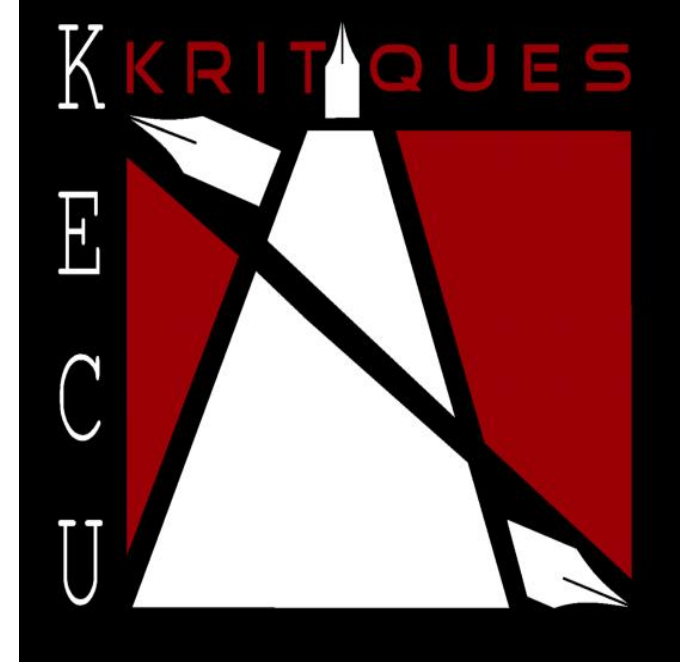
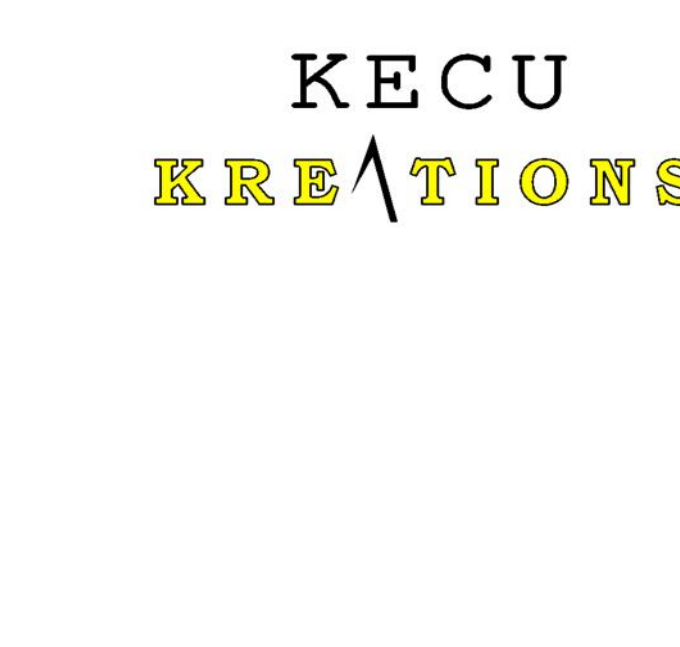
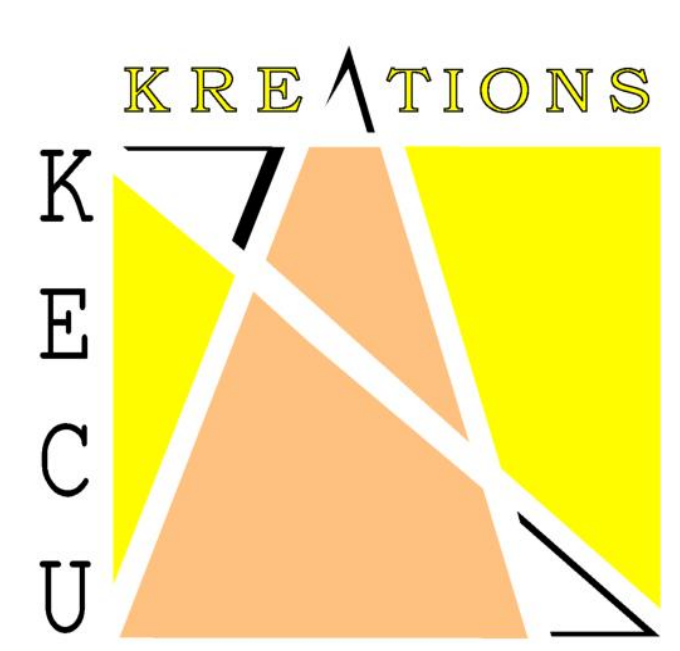
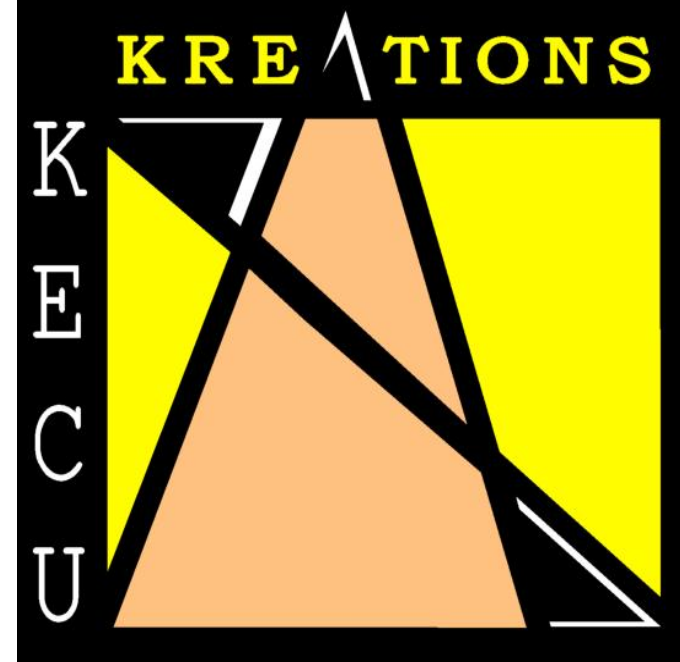
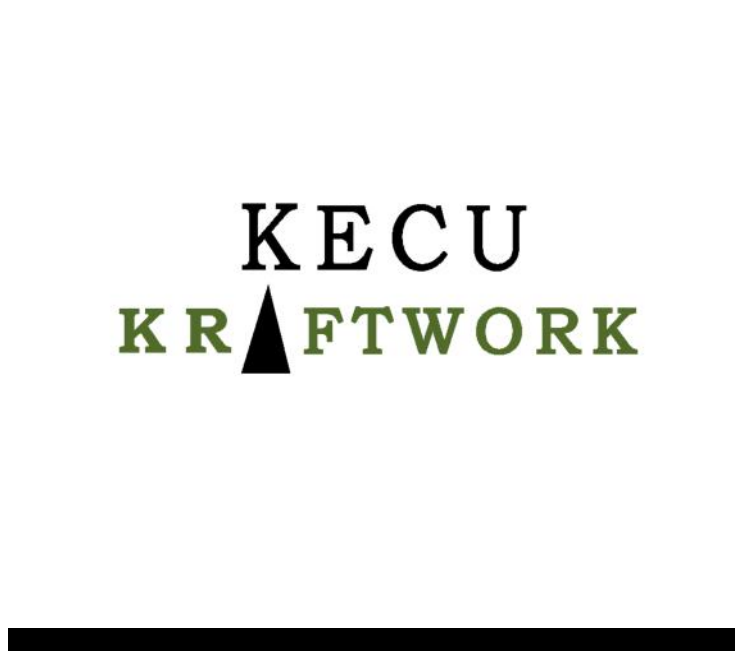
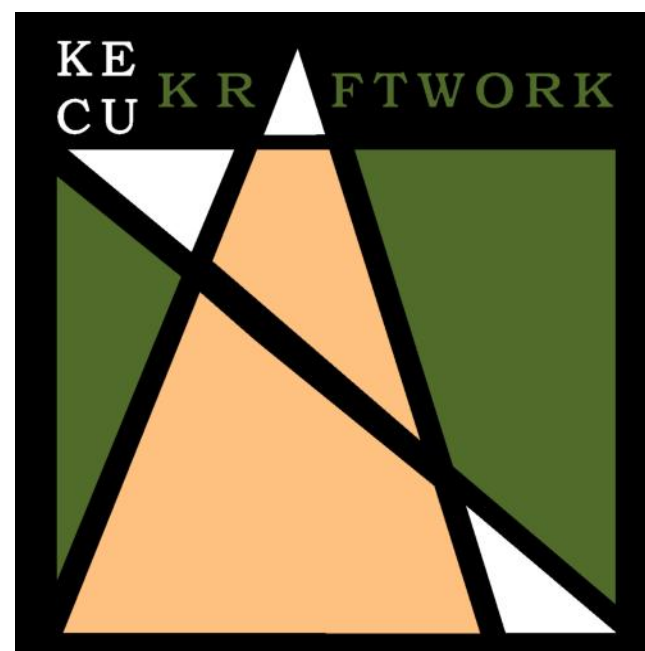
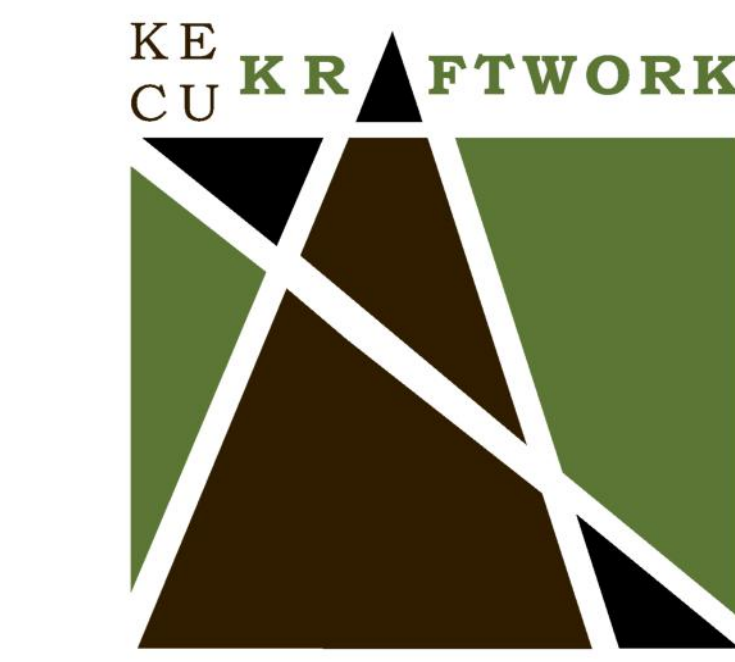
These colours were selected for their specific alignments. **Kreations** remained as yellow; being not only faithful to the original design, but also a neutral colour (being compatible with both the hot and cold sides of the spectrum). The colours for **Kraftwork** were taken directly from the **Kecu Kraftwork** website, with the exception of the light brown. The dark brown had low visibility against a dark background, making it unsuitable for darker screens or non-colour printing onto a dark surface. Therefore to balance the contrast, I used the **Kreations** middle colour, of which I felt didn't detract away from the colour theme for **Kraftwork**. The colour scheme for **Kritiques** uses an identical list of colours from the **Kecu Kritiques** flag design [Fig. 5], partnering the written reviews with the YouTube videos.

After creating digital renders of the sketched logos, I found that each looked too similar, despite the colour differences. Each design was effectively no more than [Fig. 10], but with different colours. The example in [Fig. 11] shows that during the sketching process, I played around with the idea of **Kritiques** having a fountain pen nib triangle, rather than a pencil lead design. It also came to my attention that when making a dark background for the [Fig. 10] design, I removed the pencil lead design in place of a shape that imitated light reflecting from a pencil lead. It was through these changes that I found further potential in the design's flexibility; the triangle shapes. Now, not only could each logo alter in colour, but with a particular purpose, but also in their shapes. After some thought and experimentation, I landed upon the conclusion that **Kreations** should have arrows for the triangles, in order to represent a guide of sorts; pointing a variety of directions towards my various products. **Kraftwork** should continue to have the pencil leads, as is unchanged from the original design; for the obvious intent to promote the idea of it being art-aligned. After some deliberation, I finally felt satisfied with **Kritiques** having fountain pen nib designs; chiefly because my reviews are often written with fountain pen on paper before being typed, but also to advise the website as being literature-based.

With the colours and final designs now chosen, all that was left was to further clarify upon brand ownership via the logo text. The fonts I chose were, once again, to each source's purpose. **Kraftwork** uses the serif *Bookman Old Style* font throughout, because of its classic, professional look and readability, without sacrificing its style. The word 'Kecu' had to be condensed into a square shape in order to allow for the triangle to appear as an 'A' letter; if done otherwise, there may have been too much white space between the 'Kecu' and 'Kraftwork'. At first I was unsure about the legibility, but found it to be a stylistic chance worth taking; not only for uniformity's sake, but also because such a compromise may have to be used again for a future project for much the same reason; providing the logo with yet more adaptability. Furthermore, a smaller square above a larger one only adds to the aesthetic appeal.

**Kritiques** was the one I found hardest to make my mind up on. The word 'Kecu' is written in *Courier New*, due to its obvious connection with typewritten text and professional journalism. But as mentioned for [Fig. 5], the font for the flag design is *Nasalization*. However, despite liking this font, I much preferred *Ethnocentric*, due to its more rigid angles that played better with the new logo at hand. Not wanting to choose a similar, yet different font, due to concerns that it may look like an unintentional mix-up, I dedicated some time to consider other options. I wanted something with a style that looked handwritten, yet not quite script; something easily legible, with a modern look to fit in with the flag design. In the end, I chose the sans-serif font *Good Times*, due to it fitting in with said requirements, as well as it having a minimalist and quiet, yet dynamic command on both black and white backgrounds.

The **Kreations** font choice was a simple mix & match of the **Kraftwork** and **Kritiques** choices, based on which combination I felt worked best. In the end, 'Kecu' looked most natural as a semi-modern *Courier New*, when placed against the almost-Arthurian and thicker *Bookman Old Style*. Easy to read, the thin *Courier New* followed by the bolder *Bookman Old Style* gives it a voice that highlights which branch of the brand is being represented (it being **Kreations**).



The final 2019 Kecu Kraftwork, Kecu Kreations & Kecu Kritiques logos; with the default colour-scheme being on the top of each logo-type (default logo and text logo).