UNIT 1: BRIEF 4: HAZEL GRAHAM

Iterations³

Draft[1], draft[2] and draft[3] of Written Response

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Iterations¹ Draft¹

"Screenprinting is a process where ink is forced through a mesh screen onto a surface. Making certain areas of the screen impervious to printing ink creates a stencil, which blocks the printing ink from passing through the screen. The ink that passes through forms the printed image." {The Met Museum, 2022}

Artist Emma Reynolds challenges the tool of screen-printing by painting directly onto the mesh and producing just one print. In this way she is creating pieces in the form of 'Adhocism' as coined by Jencks and Silver - who claim, "all creations are initially ad hoc combinations of past subsystems" (Jencks and Silver, 1972) - as she combines the subsystems of fine art and screenprinting.

Through trying to create an iteration¹ of Reynolds work, the process raised questions about paper size and boundaries; direction and orientation; space and emotion; layering and colour.

1. iteration1 – refining to get a singular desired output (as defined by Methods of Iterating Brief by MAGCD)

Through the process of making, the boundary of the image, paper and frame drew my attention to the restriction of a frame, within a frame, within a frame. The orientation of the paper to get a horizontal gradient and the directional pull of the ink to replicate the sky drew my attention to standardised practice of screenprinting - of placing the material square on and pulling 'straight'. Through close inspection of the image in trying to iterate it, it drew my attention to the space of the sky; both physically and a *felt* sense, which was heightened by the XY Workshop and Spivak's poetic notion that "rhetoric must work in the silence between and around words" (Spivak, 2020). Alignment and precision are important in the practice. Screenprints are generally made up of layers of colour that you build up. Each layer is aligned to create one meticulous print. A 'professional' print is one that is precise, flawless, smooth, aligned: perfect. In every mechanical sense of the word. Lichtenstein was praised that his work had "the look of mechanical reproduction" (MOMA, 2023). Critical reflection from my peers brought my attention to the multiple layers in my print and thinking about abstracting and extracting them as individual pieces and putting them together in a different way.

These critical reflections took me to the wider practice of screenprinting and the strange relationship humans have with machines. As humans we try to create things that look machine made, professional screenprinting practice for example. Simultaneously we try to make our machines more human; through adding 'distressed' layers in Photoshop or the development of AI. Why don't we each do what we do best? Why do we strive to be one another?

Based on these findings and critical reflections (questions?) of the tool, I propose to create 100 iterations that subvert screenprinting. I will hack a print of my own, by separating the layers and printing each layer on separate pieces of plexiglass. I will then build the image using white tack to create a space between each layer to make the image a 3D object. I will then iterate this 100 times by systematically 'verting'. Vert: To turn. Inverting, reverting, diverting, averting, converting, extroverting and introverting to interrogate the subverting of screenprinting.

References

Jencks, C. and Silver, N. (1972) *Adhocism; the Case for Improvisation*. First Edition. London: Secker and Warburg

The Met Museum (2022). Screenprint. [online] Available at: Metmuseum.org. Available at: https://www.metmuseum. org/about-the-met/collection-areas/ drawings-and-prints/materials-and-techniques/printmaking/screenprint (Accessed: 16th January 2024)

MOMA (2018). Roy Lichtenstein. [online] Available at: The Museum of Modern Art. Available at https://www.moma.org/ artists/3542 (Accessed: 16th January 2024)

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UNIT 1: BRIEF 4: DRAFT² : HAZEL GRAHAM

"I'm a changingable feast, as are all of we." {Bella Baxter, Poor Things 2023}

Bella Baxter was the creation of Godwin Baxter (she calls him God) in the film *Poor Things* (2023)[1]. Godwin was the creator (iterator?), Bella was the created (iterated?). Bella was a real human created/iterated by science (iteration)/desire. Can anything that is created/iterated be objectively 'real'?

Walter Benjamin argues that film is 'reality', by using the analogy of the cameraman to a surgeon in '*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*' (Benjamin, 1986). Drawing a correlation between physical proximity to the subject and this producing 'reality', he argues just as a surgeon "cuts into the patient's body", the cameraman "penetrates deeply into its web", through mechanical equipment (the camera), and it is therefore 'real'. Bella and Godwin's relationship is that of the cameraman and subject too; he cuts into her body to create her and they live together in close physical proximity and she is 'real', supporting Benjamins argument.

Through the process of subverting screenprinting and hacking my own print to create ten separate layers on ten individual pieces of plexiglass, I inverted the process of screenprinting creating a layered 3D object. I stacked the individual pieces, initially in order, with space between each layer, to expose the process and to challenge the view of the whole. Through a systematic and rigorous process of iterating, I 'verted'[2] one hundred times, one frame at a time. Each formation was the same 'reality' – parts of a landscape – but depending on the orientation, direction and formation of the layers it looked like everything and anything in between; a "changeable feast" perhaps? This process drew my attention to the role of the creator/iterator and the influence they have on the iteration/creation through choice in placement of elements. Just as Godwin was the creator of Bella, his iterative process of science, (and her iterative process of herself) was influenced by his (her) desire and choices, that were pertinent and evident in her (her) creation (iterations). Therefore challenging the view of the ability to create an iteration of 'objective reality'.

1. Godwin created Bella by taking the dead body a woman and inserting the brain of her still alive, unborn child, into her skull to create this feat of science.

2. Verted: Vert is 'to turn'. To subvert screenprinting, I iterated through all the verts I could find: invert (the process of printing on separate layers), revert (from the back), divert (placement of layers in random order), avert (turning the whole stack), vertical (initial orientation of the stack), vertigo (dizzy from the animation of all 100 iterations), convert (changing the order so the whole was something else), extrovert (largest layer first), introvert (smallest layer first).

The process of iterating highlights an argument of creator v created. Benjamin holds proximity as 'reality', but when dissecting the process of film making the numerous iterations involved (rehearsing, acting, wardrobe, make up, lighting, sets, multiple takes, filming out of sequence, editing, grading, sound, publicity, circulation), when stitched together with the director's (creator's) desires or values, will influence the created: an objective reality cannot be achieved. Equally graphic design communication, as a discipline, not only goes through a series of iterations in creation, but the graphic designer themselves (the creator) will always have some part of influence on the 'reality' of what they are creating, as no matter which way you look at it, how elements are ordered, placed, iterated, will affect the output. (Discussed at length by Wim Crouwell and Jan Van Toorn in *The Debate: The Legendary Contest of Two Giants of Graphic Design*, 2008).

Although, if you choose to believe God was the original 'creator' and we are all the 'created', we could question, are we real? In the words of Alasdair Gray "You, dear reader, have now two accounts to choose between and there can be no doubt which is most probable" (*Poor Things*, 1992).[3]

3. In the spirit of being 'real' (transparent?) you should be aware that this is the seventh iteration of this essay, so is it 'real' or a constructed reality? Additionally, this is one iteration of this essay, that could easily have been about adhoc-ism as coined by Jencks and Silver in *Adhocism, The Case for Improvisation* (1972); 'auras' as discussed by Walter Benjamin in conjunction with time and space noted by Spivak in '*The Politics of Translation*' (1993); or Process as manifested by Maura et al in *Conditional Design Manifesto* (2013). All of which would have influenced this creation.

References

Benjamin, W. (1935). *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. London: Penguin Books.

Gray, A. (1992). *Poor Things*. London: Bloomsbury

Poor Things (2023) Directed by Yorgos Lanthimos [Feature film]. UK: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures International.

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Crouwel, W. Toorn, J. V. Poynor, R., Edited by Frederique Huygen and De, V. (2015). *The Debate : The Legendary Contest of Two Giants of Graphic Design*. New York: The Monacelli Press.

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"I'm a changingable feast, as are all of we." (Bella Baxter, *Poor Things* 2023)

Bella Baxter was created by Godwin Baxter (she calls him God) in *Poor Things* (2023). Godwin was the creator (iterator?). Bella was the created (iterated?). Bella was a real human created/iterated by science/desire whom people were drawn to. Can anything that is created/iterated be objectively 'real' and how does iteration exude 'aura'?

1. Godwin, a Victorian doctor, created Bella by taking the dead body of a woman and inserting the brain of her last still alive, unborn child, into her skull to create this feat of science.

Lengthy interrogation into screenprinting through iteration found evidence for and against this argument. In iterations[1] I iterated Emma Reynolds, who creates artwork in an adhoc process of "combining the subsystems" (Jencks and Silver, 1972) of fine art and screenprinting. Through this process I discovered a physical space in her work as well as a *felt* sense (or aura) in the layers of her work.

In iterations[2] my attention was drawn to extracting the layers through subverting screenprinting as a tool and hacking it to create a ten layered 3D object, which I iterated 100 times systematically, rigorously and continuously. Looking at this retrospectively through Benjamin's lens I found that depending on the orientation, direction and formation of the layers the output ranged from a recognised form to anything and everything in between; a "changeable feast" perhaps? This process drew my attention to the role of the creator/iterator and the influence they have on the iteration/creation through choice in placement of elements.

I actively engaged with Benjamin's views during my studio practice in iterations[3] and found myself drawn to his theory of aura. Aura was most definitely lacking in iterations[2], which felt like a mechanical, systematic, logical process that lacked creativity and joy. I had misunderstood systematic as logical. Channelling my inner Benjamin and Bella in iterations[3], I worked systematically, rigorously and continuously, but with creativity and freedom and found I *felt* the elusive "aura" in the process. This deepened my view that the creator/iterator influences the created/iterated as it was my personal values and state of mind during the process that ultimately transcend aura in my work. (discussed at length by Wim Crouwell and Jan Van Toorn in *The Debate: The Legendary **Contest** of Two Giants of Graphic Design*, 2008). Just as Godwin was the creator of Bella, his iterative process of science, (and her iterative process of herself) was influenced by his (her) desire, choices and values, that were pertinent and evident in her (her) creation (iterations).

Iteration[1] refining to get a singular desired output

Iteration[2] versioning to produce a set of interrelated final outputs (usually identified by a shared visual, methodological or conceptual structure)

Iteration[3] engaging in a process, where the process is the output

2. In the spirit of being 'real' (transparent?) you should be aware that this is the seventh iteration of this essay, so is it 'real' or a constructed reality? Additionally, this is one iteration of this essay, that could easily have been about adhoc-ism as coined by Jencks and Silver in *Adhocism, The Case for Improvisation* (1972), or Process as manifested by Maura et al in *Conditional Design Manifesto* (2013). All of which would have influenced this creation/iteration.

Although if you choose to believe God was the original 'creator' and we are all the 'created', we could question, are we real and where do our auras come from? In the words of Alasdair Gray "You, dear reader, have now two accounts to choose between and there can be no doubt which is most probable" (*Poor Things*, 1992)[2].

References

Benjamin, W (1935), *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, London, Penguin Books.

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Crouwel, W and Van Toorn, J. *The Debate: The Legendary Contest of Two Giants of Graphic Design.* New York. Monacelli Press.

Looking at the process of iterating highlights an argument of creator/created (iterator v iterated?). Benjamin holds proximity as 'reality'. When dissecting the process of film the numerous iterations involved (rehearsing, acting, make up, lighting, sets, multiple takes, filming out of order, editing, grading, sound, publicity, circulation) combined the director's (creator's) desires and values, will have an affect on what is created. An objective reality cannot be achieved, in Benjamin's view. Equally, graphic design communication, is created only through a series of iterations in creation. Designers themselves (the creator) will always have an affect on the reality of what they are creating, as no matter how elements are ordered, placed and altered, the designers desires and values, will affect the aura. As it did in my iterative process, as it did in Godwin's Bella's.

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1. Godwin, a Victorian doctor, created Bella by taking the dead body a woman and inserting the brain of her still alive, unborn child, into her skull to create this feat of science.

Empirically Walter Benjamin argues that it's the "aura" found in original pieces of art, that is lacking in "mechanical reproductions" (Benjamin, 1986), which makes them authentic. He goes on to argue that film is 'reality', by using the analogy of the surgeon as cameraman, in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Drawing a correlation between physical proximity to the subject and this producing 'reality', he argues just as a surgeon "cuts into the patient's body", the cameraman "penetrates deeply into its web", through mechanical equipment (the camera), and it is therefore 'real'. Just as Bella is a 'real' human created/iterated by science and desire. The physical proximity of Bella and Godwin is that of the cameraman and subject as they live together and she exudes an "aura" (or "authenticity") as Benjmain describes, like a work of art.

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Reflection

Iterations of written response of draft¹, draft², draft³

Draft 1 was functional and explanatory, which was really helpful in understanding the project, the boundaries of the project and the focus of the project.

Draft 2 moved the writing on from explanatory to exploratory by looking retrospectively at the project through the lens of one of the readings. This drew my attention to, and highlighted, parts of the project that I wouldn't have got to in isolation. Looking through the lens made me critque the writers' theories more deeply as well as critiquing how they wrote. I noticed Benjamin wrote through analogy, so adopted this for my writing, which gave my writing a completely different tone of voice and feel and gave me a contemporary hook, which I always like. It also helped me explain and support my findings more clearly, The lens also drew my attention to how the project could relate to the wider discipline of graphic communication design, by pulling out from the project and looking for wider links to the practice. My initial focus of investigation was altered by this lens.

Draft 3 was challenging as by this point I had so many things I wanted to say, that it was hard trying to keep the word count down and fit everything in whilst remaining succinct and comprehensive. I don't think I achieved this as I tried to keep too much of draft2 in, instead of pulling back and really starting over. Interestingly, in actively practicing my studio work through the lens of the reading, rather than looking retrospectively, my focus returned to my initial focus of the investigation. Reading the three drafts together now I feel I could do this much better, in terms of structure, argument, analogy and linguistically. Rendering the essay in my tool adds another layer of thought to all of this, that I could also use to pull all three drafts and all three practices together more tightly.

A full reflection of the rendering of draft3 can be found on my blog
https://23042320.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2024/01/29/01-04-12/
PDF titled WEEK-12_WRITTENRESPONSE_ITERATIONS_DRAFT3