

WHERE'S YOUR HEAD AT?

It's not you, it's me. No, wait, it's you.
No, it's me. Hold on, who's this? Is it them?

I want a divorce. My twenty-five year marriage with Print is over. Turns out it's been cheating on me and I never knew. My co-evolving relationship with Print has flourished over time, but now I need space. It's been cheating on me with digital. Their co-evolving relationship is virulent and I want out. I've been lured into a false sense of security. Sharon says this is because of affordance*. She told me a fish lure is designed to look and act like a fish, to attract predatory fish, to eat it (/to be caught)*. I asked her did she mean that a magazine cover is designed to look and act like an aspirational human, that attracts other humans to consume it (/be caught by it)? Is the magazine cover a lure?

To lure: To tempt. Temptation: Created by desire. She said I had been blind. Blinded by my co-evolving relationship with commercial editorial magazine design. I thought *I* created *it*. She said it creates me just as much. I said "How?" She said make something. So I did. I made some magazine articles exploring my apparently co-evolving relationship with Print. Turns out she was right. It works on me, as much as I work on it^{ab}. I noticed that language and image have a similar co-evolving relationship. Or should I say co-dependent? It's toxic. Each spurs the other on to be a more lurid, alluring, lure. I sought advice from Uncle James. He's a bit softer,

and kind. He said it wasn't unusual to find yourself in this situation and he explained perception^{^b} to me. Turns out perception is sneaky. Far more subtle and nuanced than affordances lurid luring. I said to him it felt normal, expected and accpeted. Maybe that is why it goes unnoticed and unquestioned? I told him I now feel that glossy women's magazine covers masquerade as 'aspirational', 'for women', 'for independent women', 'for independent socially savvy women' 'happy face'. But I realise now that this is a mask, I

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have uncovered the cover that is covering up what it really is. I asked him if this is a perceived perception of affordance? Sad face. Esther^c dropped in. She's over from Switzerland and showed me something she had been working on. Some very cool, digital, audiovisual collages. They were funny and made me laugh. Then they made me sad. They reaffirmed my fears. Print had been cheating on me again. Esther had a whole series of Vogue covers[~] with

^{*}Sharon Helmer Poggenpohl, a designer and educator, defines 'affordance' in the context of the psychologist Gibson, who coined the term through an ecological approach to "human-environment relationships, stating that they co-evolve; we work on the environment and the environment works on us" (Poggenpohl, 2018).

[^] James J. Gibson situates himself in the field of perception. He acknowledges physics, optics, anatomy and physiology, that describe facts, but challenges them all by looking at objects through illumination, or what he describes as "ambient optic array" (Gibson, 1986). Gibson's notion of perception, how humans perceive things, is a combination of association of the environment, light and affordance, to create a perceived reading of a thing

A (POGGENPOHL, 2018) B (GIBSON, 1986)

AB (HTTPS://23042320.MYBLOG.ARTS.AC.UK/2024/04/30/02.02.03/)

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aleins / monsters / humanoids covering the top half of the model, rendering the elegant and beautiful covers ugly and illusory. WTF? She had taken my beloved form and subverted it in rhetoric, medium, production and perception. Mutilating flawless print covers into adhoc¹, in-bred, hybrids.

It dawned on me, as I observed this growing family of oddities, how awfully contrite the traditional cover is. The ugly aleins actually drew my focus to what was left of the model, her exposed breasts, her stick thin legs, her couture clothing. These things that signify luxury, aspiration, body type and beauty. But here they were, in a new environment, a new recontextualised context, exposing them for what they really are. The ‘real’ cover was the ugly and illusory. The illusory was more real than the real.

One spoke to me, can you believe what it said? I’ll tell you, it said “Look at me,” (arrogant...) “we’re all just looking out for something real”. It sent a shiver down my spine. How was this alein speaking more truth than my faithful Print? Esther’s subversion had broken the affordance of the cover and exposed its true self.

Uncle James came to comfort me. He told me about the misinformation of information in affordance, stating “the danger is sometimes hidden”² How right he was. The affordance of the environment created a perceived misinformation. Hidden in plain sight!

Surely this makes the original cover a deception? Creating a deception-perception paradox? I wondered how I could help Print be less deceitful, more open, more transparent, more honest. So I made more things. Pages of articles, pushing each one further than the one before, looking for answers. I found some, of sorts, in transposing the images and text. Causing a break up of their insufferable relationship by placing the text in the image box and the images in the text box. That upset them alright. Didn’t feel so comfortable and sassy then did they? Showed themselves right up to be exactly who they were. Text wore the trousers in this relationship for sure.

Time passes. Maybe we can just consciously uncouple... I can see where Print was coming from. Digital popped up all young and edgy and cool and current and fast, deliveroo on speed. Anything you want, whenever you want it. Who wants to be a granny, when you can be a toddler. All fearless and fun. Everything now and sod the consequences.

Wise Sharon cast caution, “the natural and artificial environments are related yet people increasingly live in the artificial, created by design to serve human purpose and desire.”³ It seems to me print is confused. Who would want to be with digital? The artificial world (or environment) humans create of their online selves; filtered, edited, created, curated; narrated by a series of hashtags or 140 240 characters (both figures a result of affordance, fyi). Another lurid co-evolving relationship? A de-volving relationship?

There is nothing real there. Stuart agrees! He told Sharon, “millenial culture is characterised by how it wants to project itself. How it wants to appear to be rather than just being what it is, and this gap between appearance and actuality is getting bigger.”

Projections Stuart says. As we all know, projections aren’t real, just merely illusory fragments of time and space, illuminated by ambient light, perceived through a constructed narrative. This projected perfection is a spiralling ever decreasing circle of homogenisation and one dimension. Intensified by the personalisation of information and algorithmic streaming of content (Cath and Yolanda told me that)⁴, reducing our multi-faceted selves to limited content, that is already limited by “large corporations who limit our choice” (Charles and Nathan told me that)⁵.

I reflected, (the digital perception-deception homogenisation of one dimension idea of projection), back onto Print and asked them outright, is this what you do? Print didn’t reply, but when I look back I find that all the covers, of all the glossies, from the last 100 years, are all the same. Did Print start this devolution?

Why would Print do this? Print blamed me. Print said, that Stuart said “the role of designers has rotated



© Esther Hunzkier is a Swiss artist whose interests lie in the “clash between apparent realities and real illusory worlds” (HEK, 2024) explored through surveillance, deconstruction and montages.

¹“Vogue Cover Creatures (Hunziker, 2022). subverts a series of printed Vogue covers by inserting a monster / alien / humanoid, over the cover model, and creating digital audiovisual collages, that question and “subvert the mechanics of seduction of the fashion and of the entertainment industry” in a “humorous manner” (Librarystack, 2024).

C (GIBSON, 1986) D (POGGENPOHL, 2018) E (CALDWELL AND ZAPPATERA 2000)

F (JENCKS AND SILVER, 2013) G (BERTOLOTTI-BAILEY, 2020) H (KHANDWALA, 2024)

180 ° from solving problems to creating desires.”⁶ I’m a designer. Did I subconsciously create desires through editorial design? Do I create subconscious desires through editorial design? This was uncomfortable and forced self-reflection.

Time passes. maybe it’s just a lovers tiff... I had a moment of enlightenment, literally through Enlightenment. Anoushka had a fancy dress party and everyone had to go as a Way of Seeing⁷. Seems I’m kind of really not seeing. My education, geographical location, my lifelong *environment* (oh, the irony) has been shaped by the Enlightenment of the 17th Century, financed by the British Empire (an army of white men who pushed ‘their way’ as ‘the way’). I am implicitly implicit to this, and I had no idea. Anoushka challenged us to see in other ways, to learn from other cultures, particularly the Global South. She asked “How would a woman design it?”

I liked Anouskhka. Everything she said made sense to me and gives me a whole new view of how to recify



“Do I create subconscious desires through editorial design? Uncomfortable...”

my relationship with Print and Digital. A whole new way for us to co-evolve. Through values.

To prove to Print I was ready to change I laid this layout first and wrote to fit it. Breaking the hierarchy where text always came first. I put the ‘acadmeic bits’ in the picture captions. I put the Harvard referencing where the picture credit sits, used fonts by women⁸ and no implicitly sexualised imagery of females⁹.

I have subverted the layout in a subtle way, so it’s perceived as a commercial editorial design, that for anyone who takes the time to read it, will uncover the deception under their nose. Armed with this new knowledge I look forward to rekindling our relationship, to see how we can co-evolve to be better.

¹¹Adhocism; the combination of two subsystems to create a new adhoc form (Jencks and Silver, 2013)

¹²Thank you Femke de Vries and Hanka van der Voet (Critical Fashion Publishing, 2024)

¹³Inspired by the ‘Default Male’ courtesy of Caroline Criado Perez, Invisible Women (2019)