# Unit 3: Studio 2
# Projections²

# Projections² Studio²
# Line of Enquiry



(WIP)

How does design contribute to the marginalisation of feminist ideologies in Vogue?

(WIP Questions)

- Feminist ideologies - too vast (tutor)
- ‘Marginalisation’ assumes something
- Feminism is a term I struggle with - turns off many people, has negative associations, alienates certain audiences. Feminism to me is equality
- Is it more commercialism and patriarchy (and capitalism being a form of patriarchy?)
- How can I reword this to be more open and equal and to look at all sides and to be more positive

# Projections² Studio² Enquiry

Use graphic communication design to frame open-ended questions, engage in critical reflection, and structure an independently driven and continuously expanding enquiry.

**UNIT 3: STUDIO 2**
**PROJECTIONS²**

From the pserepctive of post-structuralist feminism I am using deconstruction of discourse to explore the discursive nature of reality of Vogue magazine.

I am going to develop the method of deconstructing by absence, using the frameworks of Roland Barthes Mythologies; Ellen McCracken's "cultural prejudgements" and Stuart Hall's "pre-embedded definitions".

I will refine and redefine my set of rules for deconstructing socially constructed content and non-socially constructed content to explore if, or how, design is a contributing factor to the marginalisation of feminism in Vogue magazine.

# Projections² Studio² Knowledge

Activate positions by using your practice to interrogate or intervene in knowledge, practices, and contexts related to your enquiry.

**UNIT 3: STUDIO 2**
**PROJECTIONS²**

## Decoding Women's Magazines

Ellen McCracken, 1993

McCracken explores the 'Cover as Frame' and deduces "Individually or collectively, the verbal and non verbal signifiers in the cover extend meaning to the material inside. After seeing them, even in a brief glance, readers carry a set of cultural prejudgments to their perceptions of the magazines contents."

McCracken quotes Edward Said to deepen this theory. Said observed liteary texts and found "The beginning A *leads* to B." By defining the beginning as "the first step in the intentional production of meaning," Said draws attention to its position within the sequence, that it signals "consequent intention"

McCracken also cites Stuart Hall's analysis of broadcasting and applies it to magazines; "Headlines or magazine covers present "pre-embedded definitions" of what is to follow; by connecting various events and themes with one another, they "map events into larger, wider frameworks of meaning." Hall notes that when viewers comprehend and decode the messages, they do so "on terrain which the broadcasters first define and delimit. In so far as audiences do not question the framework of assumptions within which these primary significations are made, they 'interpret' within the hegemonic 'definitions of the situations' which the braodcasters provide.""

If I apply this methodology to design, how does this tell me more about the role of design in the social construction of content?

## Counter Argument

Ellen McCracken, 1993

Decoding Women's Magazines, Ellen McCracken McCracken writes in the early 90s when magazines were at an all time high. She notes how "intelligently written pieces on culture" are included to "extend the impression of high cultural achievement to Vogues other ads and features." McCracken goes on to address feminism: "In addition, printing one or two of the responses from feminists gives the magazine the image of a fair, evenhanded treatment of the issues, as well as the appearance of the incorporation of pro-feminism into its editorial pages. The publishers perhaps hope that both feminists and no-feminists will find something to their liking on the pages of Vogue."

This challenges the traces of culture and feminism I found in Vogue that was surprising and unexpected. I wonder how the perception of Vogue has shifted from the early 90s to 2025 where the perception of Vogue is pure fashion and beauty and lacks any real connection with audience (from my survey).

My personal experience of working at magazines is that editorial teams are passionate and invested in the content. McCrakcen is very dismissive of editorial teams who create the content, implying they are all in on this attack on women, which is not my experience. I speculate its the wider systems and structures, but is something I want to explore more through this method. Hopefully I can deconstruct multiple issues of Vogue, over a large time period to explore this.

## Mythologies

Roland Barthes, 2012 (1957)

Barthes argues mythology is both semiology and ideology. Semiology has three parts, the signifier, the signified and the sign. In magazines an image of a woman is the signifier, her body position, clothing, make up and setting are the signified (they create a meaning/ reading), the combined is the sign. An image with embedded meaning.

In mythology there are also three parts, the form, concept and signification. The first part, the form, is the final part of semiology, the sign (the image with its embedded meaning). The concept is its inferred meaning - what it implies. The signification is its global meaning, the combination of the form and concept.

Barthes terms myth as metalanguage "because it is a second language, in which one speaks about the first." This really resonates with me as I always feel I am fidning layers of meaning beneath the surface, and this gives that structure.

Barthes notes the limitations of the theory, through Brecht's *einverstandis* - "at once understanding of reality and the complicity with it." This also resonates as I am constantly conflicted and confused by what I find, and can now explore if both at once is part of the complexity of the construction.

He concludes that mythology is to seek: "a reconciliation between reality and men, between description and explanation, between object and knowledge." I note his presumption that only 'men' can do this. Roll eye emoji. I challenge his men to humans.

Barthes views myth as distorition not deception. The tone of McCracken's analysis is accusatory and implies deception. I shall approach my deconstruction from the perspective of distorition in keeping with the feminist ideals of equality.

## Additional References

**The Medium is the Massage, Marshall McLuhan**
Barthes argues "Myth can be neither defined by its object nor by its material, for any material can arbitrarily be endowed with meaning:"

McLuhan argues the medium is the communication. This is an interesting conflict and great provocation to explore through medium as the project progresses.

**Overture, Matthew Stuart**
Text is the shadow of speech. If text is shadow what is image? Compositon of book as quotes, compose new reading of Vogue through absence?

# Projections² Studio²
# Knowledge

Activate positions by using your practice to interrogate or intervene in knowledge, practices, and contexts related to your enquiry.

**UNIT 3: STUDIO 2**
**PROJECTIONS²**

## Title of Show

Julia Born, 2009

Born exhibited commissioned and non-commissioned works as oversized pages of a book on gallery walls at the Museum of Contemporary Art, creating large scale layouts. She then turned the art back into a catalogue changing the dimensions again. “The exhibition and catalogue now become the subjects of the project in their own right” (Museum of Contemporary Art, 2009). The title referring to the practice, but also the process.

Can changing the scale of something we are use to seeing highlight what we don’t see? If I made large scale reproductions of the deconstructed layouts, what could this further tell me about the marginalisation of feminist ideologies through design in Vogue?

Ref: https://gfzk.de/en/2009/inform-julia-born-title-of-the-show/

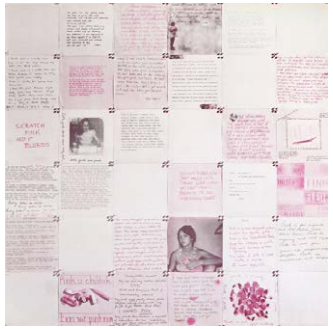
## A Teenager with Promise

Alexandra Bell

Bell takes New York Times newspaper articles and challenges the “deliberate choices made in the newsroom” through graphic communication design. She uses redaction or mark up to highlight bias and racism in the copy and redesigns the feature to tell the story of the marginalised voice. She retains the original layout and places the two side by side to demonstrate “a clear false equivalency”. Posted in unexpected places on unexpected surfaces at unexpected scale, Bell creates place based publishing that challenges the form and function of the original.

How can materiality or unepxectedness alter the readings of my project whilst retaining its original features to communicate as clearly as this project does?

Ref: https://www.culturetype.com/2019/03/05/public-editor-alexandra-bell-highlights-bias-in-the-news-and-rewrites-racist-headlines/



## Pink

Shelia Levant De Bretteville, 1973

Based at the Womens Centre in 1973, Shelia Levant de Bretteville created this quilted design of squares of what pink meant to different women. A community piece created by others with no ‘editorial’ voice, designed through the feminist form of quilting, not editorial design layout, brings meaning to the layout that is based in and arises from feminism.

The squares are similar to Instragram. Can I use Instagram to circulate and distribute my project findings and how can using the grid as a layout tool add meaning to the investigation of Vogue and the marginalisation of feminist ideologies?

Ref Art and Graphic Design, George Maciunas, Ed Ruscha and Sheila Levrant De Bretteville by Benoit Buquet, 2021 (2019)

## Additional References

**Vogue: Inventing the Catwalk, Lightrooms, 2024**
An immersive audio visual experience exploring the development of the catwalk through *Vogue*. Layouts were displayed at 12m high, challenging form / function.

**Camera Obscura, Edinburgh, 2025**
The first moving image in the UK was created by Maria Theresea Short in 1835. Victorians passed out and vomited when seeing the moving image and decided it was witchcraft!

**are.na Printed Matter, 2025**
A variety of textural experiments where text isn’t formatted in prescribed columns, but still retain a heavy text feel.

**Item, Magazine, It’s Nice That, 2025**
Every page has a different graphic design, the grid is used loosly, the logo, format and some fonts are the only predefined elements to bind it to its greater whole.

# Projections² Studio²
# Semiology/Mythology



IMAGE

SEMIOLOGICAL ANAYLSIS

SIGNIFIER
Man sitting in a room, in profile, looking down, with his hand by his chin.

SIGNIFIED
Pose of 'The Thinker', a bronze statue and the universal sign of 'deep thought'. Wrinkled forehead and slightly sallow skin suggests middle age. The room is empty bar for a blurred out picture that is a dark square behind his head. This draws the eye to his face, which is central in the frame. The colours are dark and rich, the lighting dramatic and strong, suggesting elegance, luxury, sophistication and seriousness. He wears a coat that covers his body exposing skin only on his hands and face. He is wearing a coat indoors which is weird, but goes unnoticed in the abundace of other signifiers that combine to create one sign.

SIGN
Middle aged men are serious, wise, deep thinkers. With age comes wisdom (even if you wear a coat indoors)

MAN ON WIRE

ADRIEN BRODY IS DRAWN TO HIGH-RISK ROLES AND FILMS THAT PUSH HIM TO EXTREMES. NOTHING HE'S DONE COMPARES TO *THE BRUTALIST*. BY WENDELL STEAVENSON. PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANTON CORBIJN.

A

Adrien Brody was just 29 when he won the best-actor Oscar for *The Pianist*, Roman Polanski's haunting film set in the Warsaw Ghetto. He was the youngest ever recipient, a record that still stands. The immersive effort of preparing for the role, moving out of his New York apartment, avoiding friends, and starving himself to understand loss and isolation, left him depressed and exhausted. He did not work for a year afterward. The next role he took was a developmentally disabled murderous boy in M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village*, a gothic tale of monsters in the woods; hardly leading-man material.

"I accepted that role without my agents even reading the script," Brody told me with a wry expression. "Night didn't want anyone to read it, so I honored his request." Brody had come up working with directors like Spike Lee, Ken Loach, Barry Levinson, Steven Soderbergh, and Terrence Malick, and he wanted more of the same: interesting roles, collaborations with great artists. "I didn't want to say: Okay, now I'm only looking for an overtly heroic character. I wanted to have a creative journey. But that is the problem."

It's a choice that has led to a career that can look, at superficial glance, like a slide after an early peak. But the optics are misleading. To date, Brody has made almost 60 movies playing a multiverse of characters, from punk rocker to ventriloquist to bull fighter to Roman general; he's played Arthur Miller, Houdini, and a wonderfully whimsical Salvador Dali in Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris*. He has defied genre and typecasting, headlining big action movies like Peter Jackson's *King Kong* and the *Predators* reboot; done sci-fi, thrillers, and horror; and become a recurring member of Wes Anderson's film troupe. Some of his movies are critically acclaimed, plenty have bombed, but his performances are never less than wholly committed.

Brody is sanguine about the business of show business. In conversation he was open about the strange alchemy of moviemaking, and about the interplay of fame, publicity, and marketability. He told me that before winning an Academy Award, actors tend to be judged on their performance; afterward they are more likely to be held responsible on how well the movie did as a whole, critically and commercially.

"That is an actor's dilemma," he said. "But an actor's journey should

**WORK ETHIC**
Brody is constantly acting, painting, making music. "It all connects," he says. Gucci trench coat. Fashion Editor: Edward Bowling III.

IMAGE

MYTHOLOGICAL ANAYLSIS

FORM
The sign from the semiological anaylsis. Middle aged men are serious, wise, deep thinkers. With age comes wisdom.
The history of the image is distanced, but can be recalled as it is still there. The concept takes dominance as it is "filled with situation" and "a whole new history which is implemented into the myth."

CONCEPT
The concept of the feature is an interview with actor of the moment Adrian Brody, a serious actor with integrity and authenticity. Portraying Bordy as serious, intelligent, thoughtful and deep through image is compounded by the photographer (and journalist) who are both acclaimed in their respective fields. The lighting and tone of the image is reminiscent of the aesthetic of the film *The Brutalist* (the film Brody stars in and is interviewed about) which is Oscar and Academy Award nominated. As is Brody. Simultaneously compounding integrity and intelligence, as well as modernity, aspiration, glamour and being part of an exclusive group.

SIGNIFICATION
Vogue is a magazine of the highest level of integrity, seriousness, intelligence, contemporary culture, society and classy.

SPECULATION
Multiple layers of meaning are combined through the image that reinforce the same ideals - intelligence, integrity and wealth. The sex, the pose, the age, the photographer, the lighting, the colours, the clothing, the background create eight layers of meaning. Through repeated exposure to imagery in society, we don't interrogate images, we just accept their signification unquestioned. Middled aged men are intelligent, sophisticated and wise.

**Semiological and Mythological analysis:** of the image of the feature from the method I am developing.

**Process**: I analysed the image semiologically, I took the sign (the final stage of semiology) to then analyse the image mythologically. The first stage of which is the form, which is the final stage of semilogical analysis. I then progressed to concept and signification following Barthes example in Mythologies of the sentence My name is lion.

**Findings**: I had found layers of contexts in my iterations and wasn't sure how to articulate or handle them, this process of mythology is helpful is understanding the layers of contexts and articulating them.

**Reflections**: I was going to use this analysis to further define my set of rules, but I actually think it will help explain the findings of the deconstruction rather than the rules.

**Development**: I need to go over this and follow Barthes examples again to make sure I am understanding correctly. I can then take this method into the analysis of the deconstructed magazines as a whole to interrogate further.

# Projections² Studio²
# Semiology/Mythology

**Semiological and Mythological analysis:** of the text and design of the feature from the method I am developing.

**Process**: I analysed the text semiologically, then mythologically. Some were easy to do some were more challenging.

**Findings**: I found layers of contexts reinforcing each other for a preferred reading of the text.

**Reflections**: I noticed things I hadn't noticed before. How case reflects tone. How length reflects direction.

**Development**:How can I explore this in a graphical way that deepens the meaning and communication? Can I print on layers of acetate and stack them to show the complexity of what audiences are having to digest and what the top line narrative is? Can I make the image as text to explore this further?

# Projections² Studio²
# Evaluation



- The method found multiple layers of contexts building inference and reinforcing the dominant narrative within the text.
- The text, combined with imagery and design compound, deepen and reinforce this narrative further.
- I thought this method would help make my set of rules more specific.
- On reflection it's more helpful in understanding and analysing my iterations.
- I will continue with my set of rules to decontruct a whole issue and lean on mythology in helping analyse the iterations.

# Projections² Studio²
# Set of Rules - WIP



Socially constructed content

- Text or image in context of other socially constructed content i.e. celebrities, Royalty, titled dignities, events, awards, promotional activity with a capitalist end etc.
- Text or image in context of commodification (to purchase) or commercially (to sell).
- Text or image in context of capitalist systems and structures (job, money, hierarchy from working).
- Text or image in context of patriarchy – construction of any form of gender, gender is marginalised, patriarchy is advocated as fact / the right way / the way.
- Text or image that suggest capitalism, patriarchy and men are the dominant / assumed correct / assumed right / assumed fact / assumed truth.
- Text or image in context of appearances.
- Images that are sexually suggestive.

- Designers: As workers as part of capitalism are included.
- A Fashion Designer: When used as a brand name suggesting connotative associations with brand that is constructed is included.
- Locations: Paris, LA, New York, London where attributed as fashionable and desirable destinations creating a social construct. So are included.
- Institutions: When used in a context of elitism and enhancing the social construct of a person or object is included.
- Credits: All included as all part of a capitalist system?
- Travel: Text and images that evoke luxury lifestyle (drivers, chauffeurs, limousines, unthoughtful flights, private flights, flights as regular mode of transport) is included.

# Projections² Studio²
# Set of Rules - WIP



Non-socially constructed content

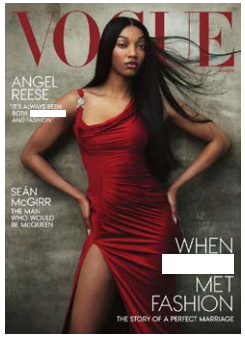
- Text or image in context of objective surroundings – as in places that exist without inference, people that exist without inference, things that happen without inference.
- Text or image in context of diverse / cultural backgrounds that are not white, upper class.
- Text or image that challenges patriarchy –champions any form of gender and or diversity, challenges patriarchy as fact / the right way / the way.
- Text or image that challenges capitalism, patriarchy and men are the dominant / assumed correct / assumed right / assumed fact / assumed truth.
- Text or image that highlights 'critical issues of the time' without bias, prejudice or elitism.
- Text or image that highlights preservation of the planet and acknowledges future generations.
- Text or image that highlights 'as many views as possible'.

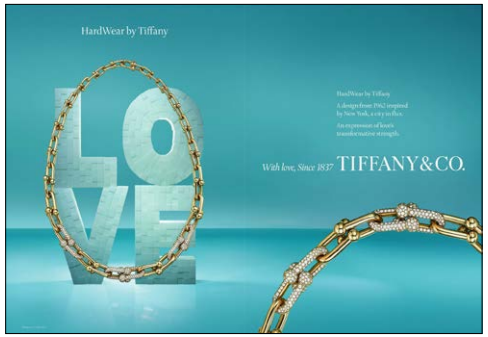
- Designers: As working to improve self included (although part of capitalism hints at self awareness and growth and therefore objective?)
- Fashion Designer: When used as the name of the person and their activities included as it is their objective self?
- Locations: When in context of a cultural, diverse or marginalised view are included.
- Exhibitions, galleries, sharing of knowledge/skill without hierarchy, exclusion or elitism.
- Institutions: When used in a context of objective assistance, not to embellish or elevate the subject.
- Credits: If text or image challenges the patriarchy, capitalism, commodification, science, reason, appearance, trends, fashion?
- Travel: Text and images that use travel in the context of localised movement (driving oneself and/or others, walking, trains, commuting within reason) although this too is all socially constructed this falls within diverse and cultural? Is included

# Projections² Studio²
# Deconstructing by Absence 2025



**Socially Constructed Content**





# Projections² Studio²
# Deconstructing by Absence 2025



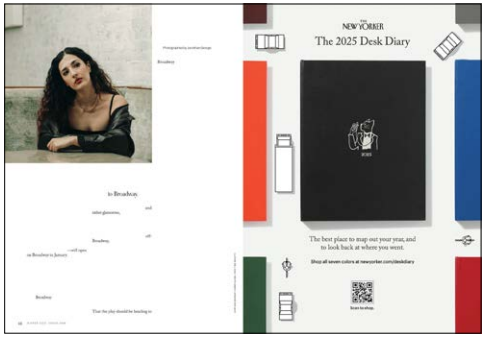
**Socially Constructed Content**

# Projections² Studio²
# Deconstructing by Absence 2025

**UNIT 3: STUDIO 2**
**PROJECTIONS²**

---

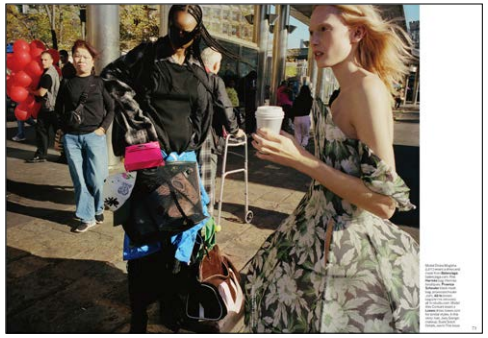
**Socially Constructed Content**



# Projections² Studio²
# Deconstructing by Absence 2025

**UNIT 3: STUDIO 2**
**PROJECTIONS²**

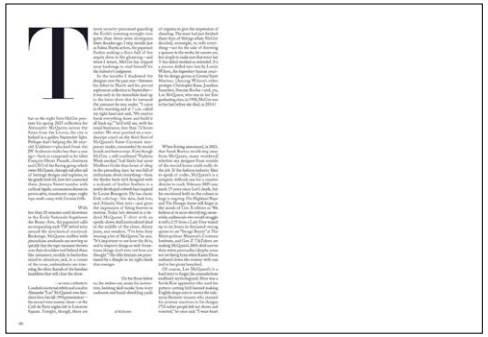
**Socially Constructed Content**

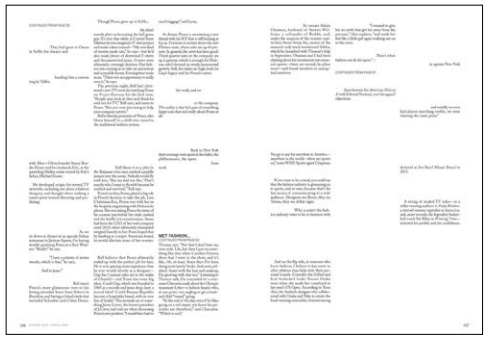


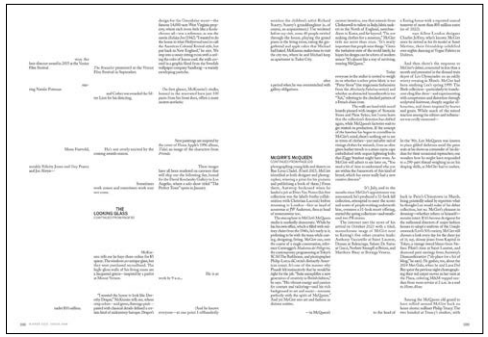
# Projections² Studio²
# Deconstructing by Absence 2025

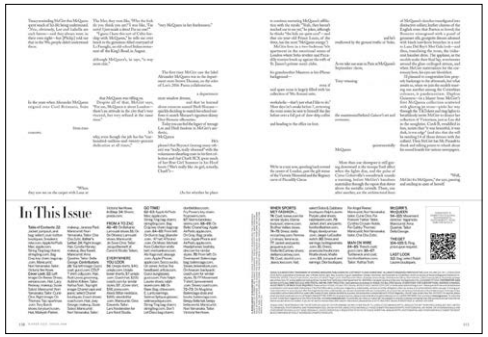
**UNIT 3: STUDIO 2**
**PROJECTIONS²**

**Socially Constructed Content**





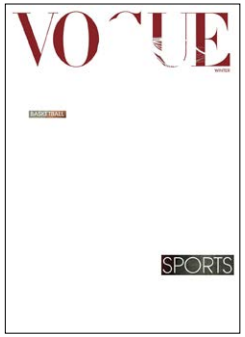




# Projections² Studio²
# Deconstructing by Absence 2025

**UNIT 3: STUDIO 2**
**PROJECTIONS²**

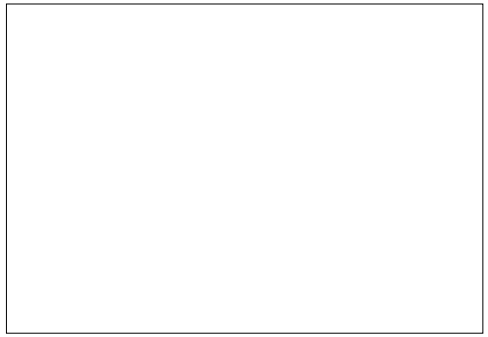
**Non Socially Constructed Content**

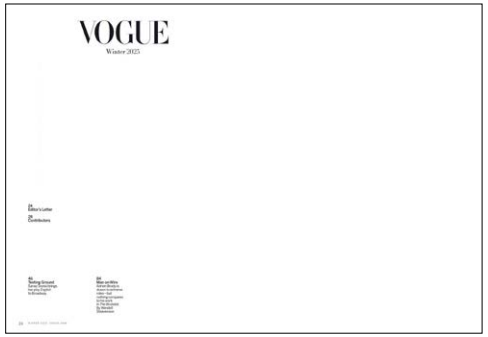


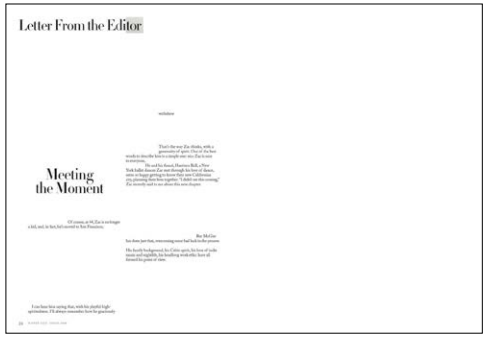
# Projections² Studio²
# Deconstructing by Absence 2025

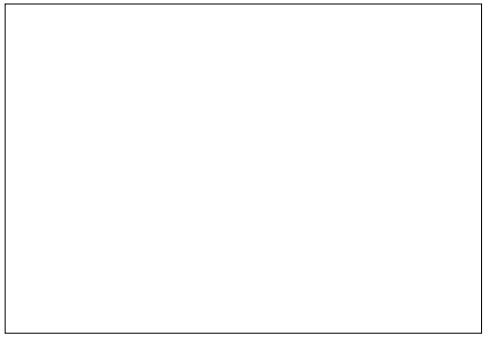
**UNIT 3: STUDIO 2**
**PROJECTIONS²**

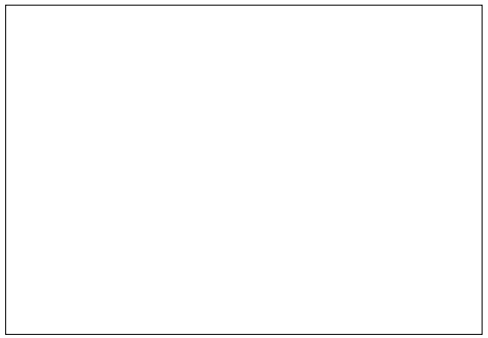
**Non Socially Constructed Content**

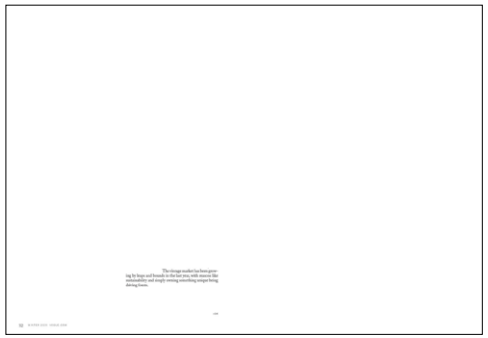


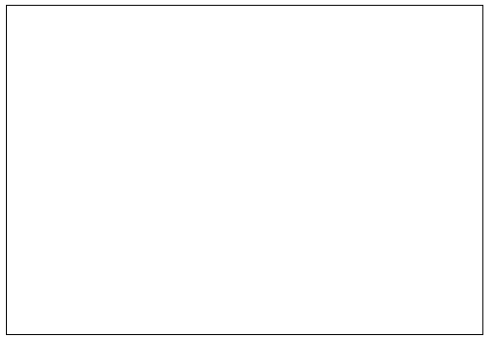


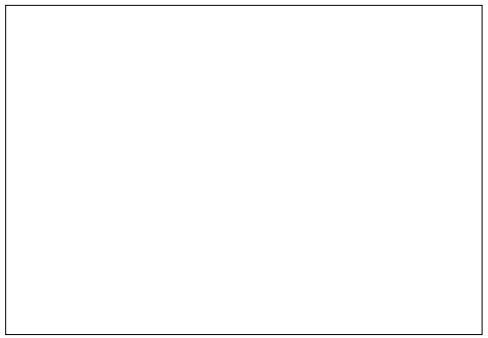



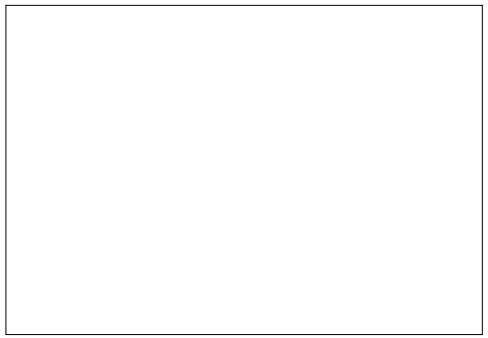



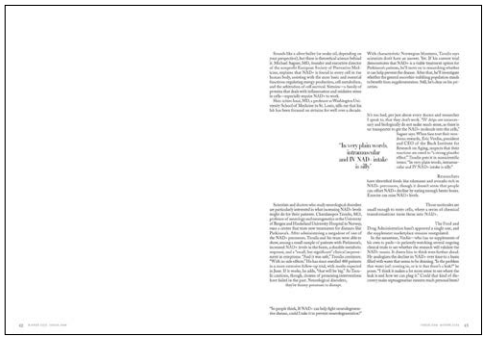








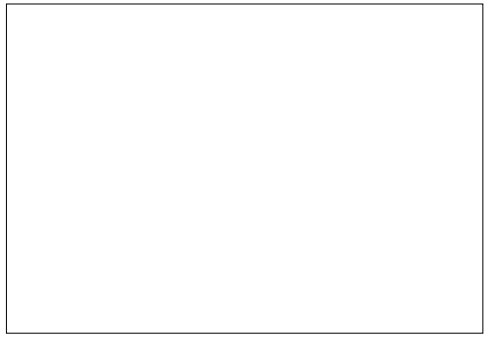


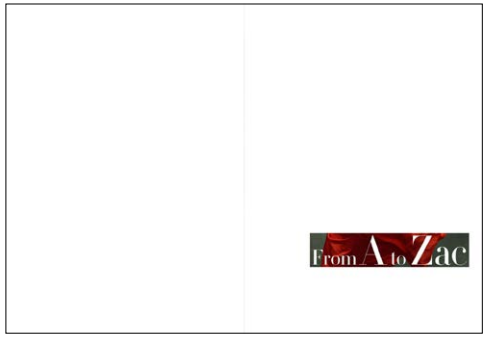


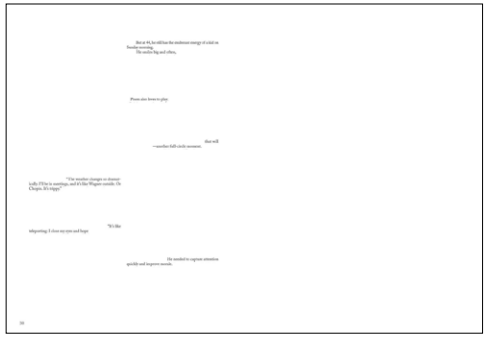
# Projections² Studio²
# Deconstructing by Absence 2025

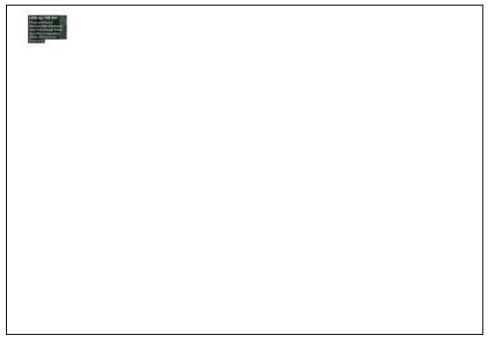
**UNIT 3: STUDIO 2**
**PROJECTIONS²**

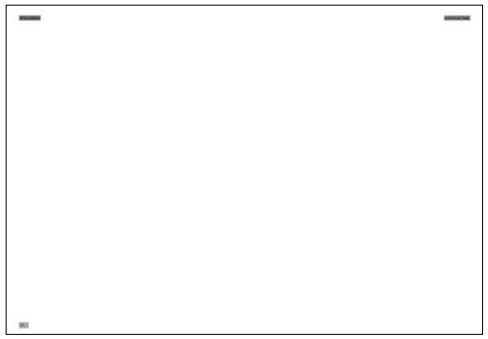
**Non Socially Constructed Content**

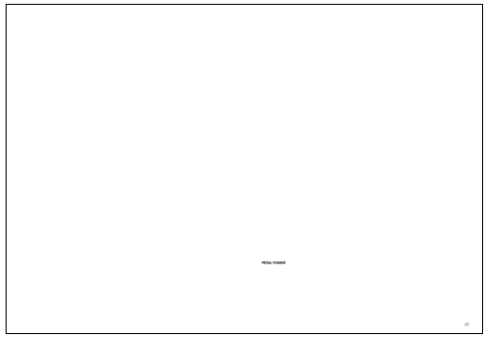






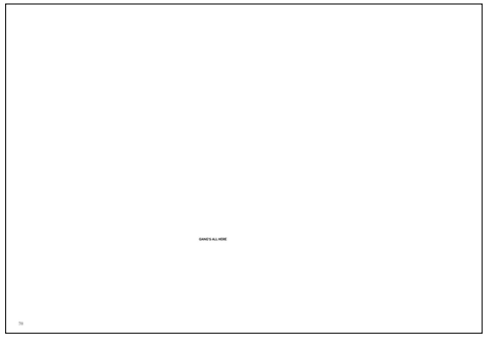


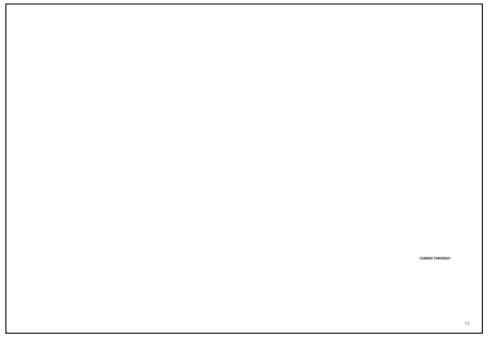


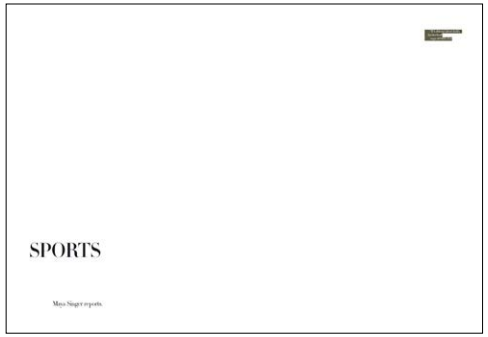
# Projections² Studio²
# Deconstructing by Absence 2025

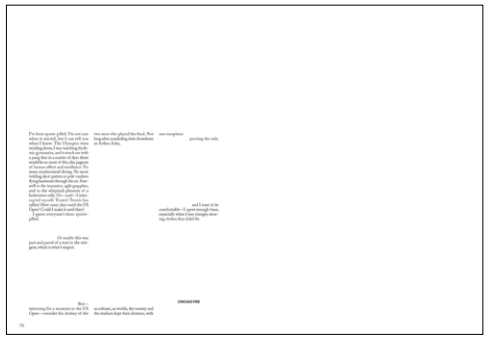
**UNIT 3: STUDIO 2**
**PROJECTIONS²**

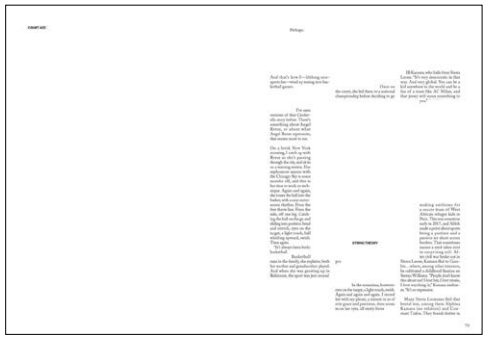
**Non Socially Constructed Content**

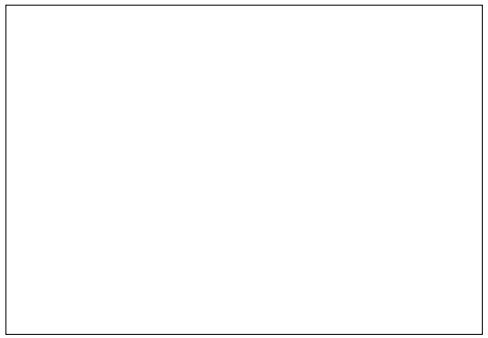


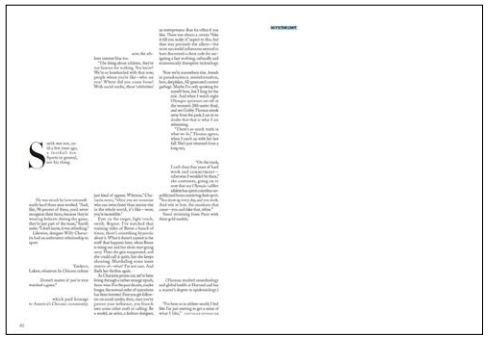


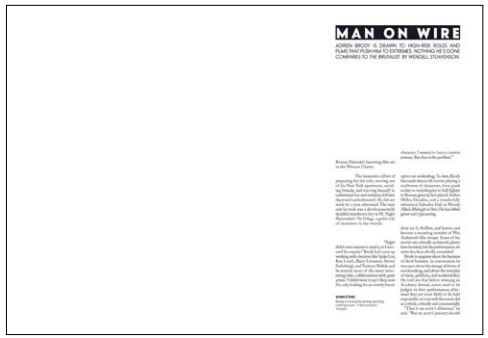


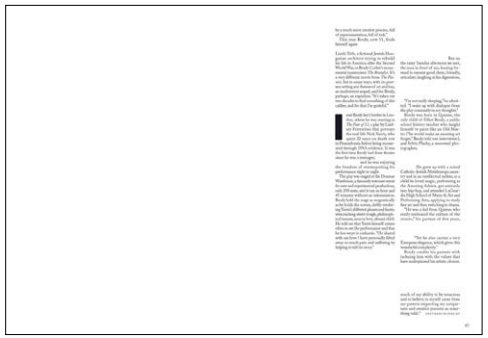



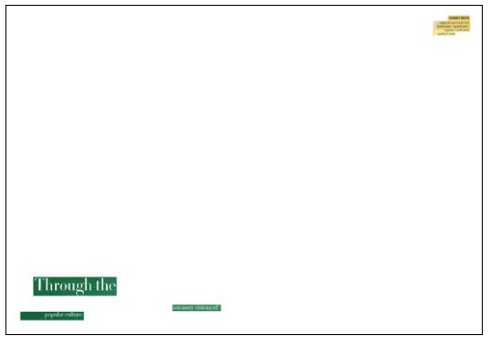








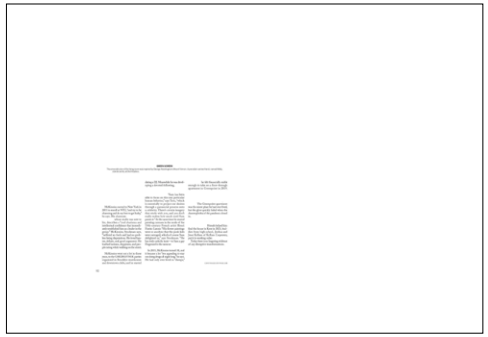
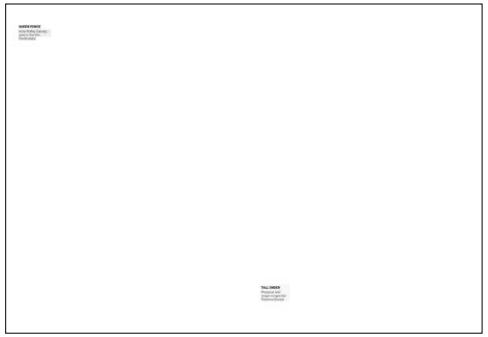



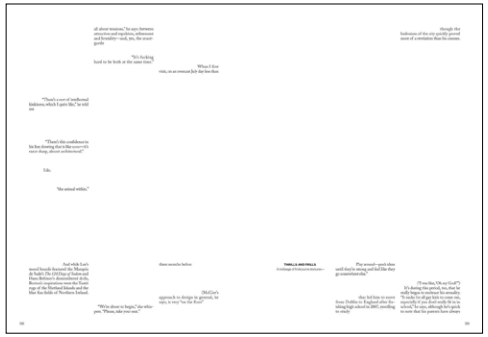
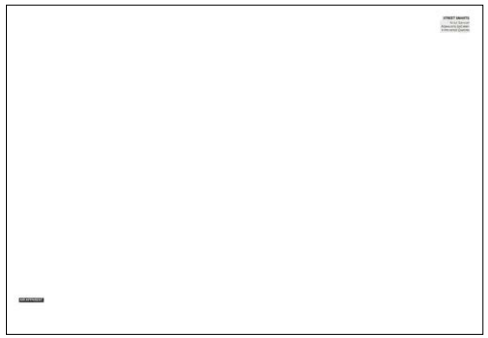
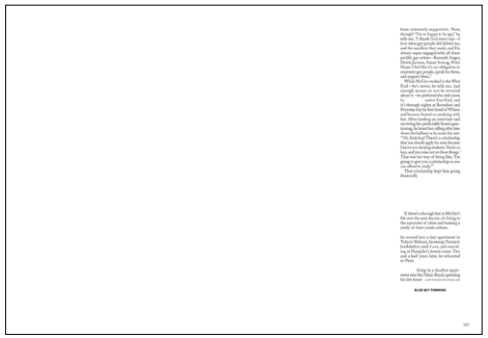


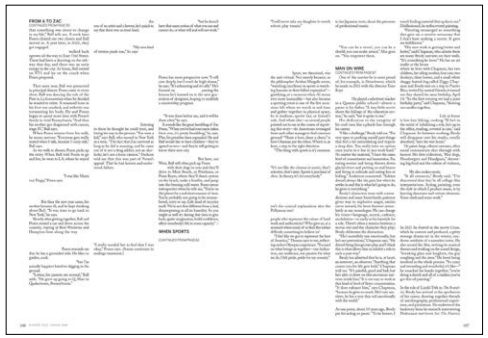
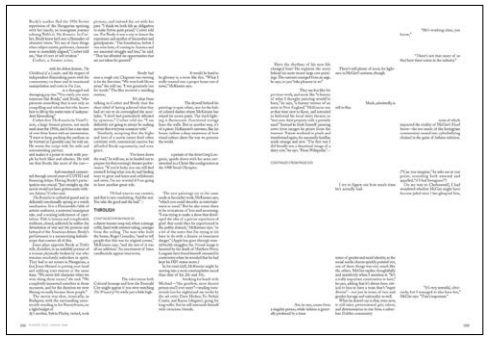
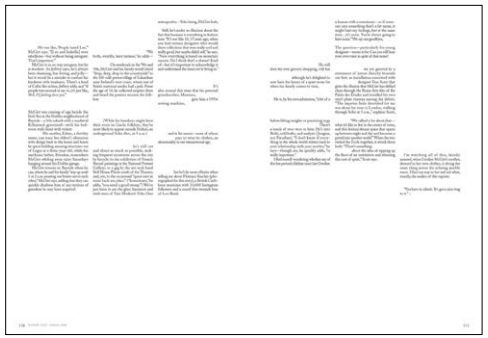
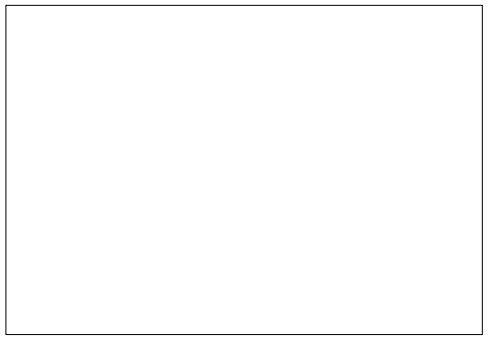
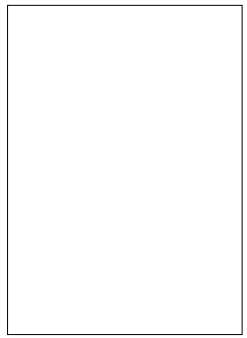
# Projections² Studio²
# Deconstructing by Absence 2025

**UNIT 3: STUDIO 2**
**PROJECTIONS²**

**Non Socially Constructed Content**

# Projections² Studio²
# Evaluation

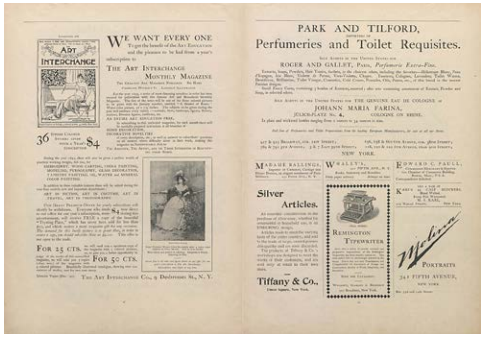


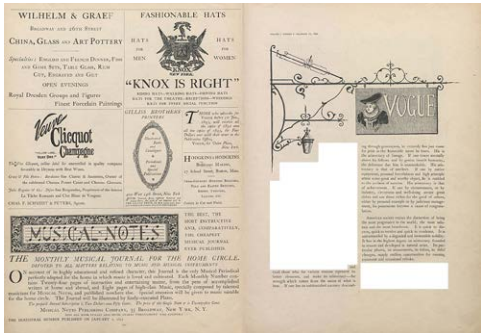
- There is a stark visual contrast between the socially constructed and non socially constructed content.
- The socially constructed content is busy, full, domineering, leaves no space to thought or contemplation: the colours, busyness, onslaught of messaging is overwhelming and powerful. No wonder the message is clear.
- The non socially constructed content is quiet and calm. The physical nature of the pages expose the paper it's printed on, rather than suffocating it. This in turn gives the reader space to move around the page, quietly contemplate, which in turns becomes a calming reading experience. A quiet and soft experience.
- The non socially constructed content highlights design as contributing to the social construction as it is mainly body copy. Few headlines or pull quotes feature. This creates an equality in the text as opposed to a hierarchy.
- Some of the texts make sense and some are more disconnected and fragmented. A reflection on society in a digital world? Or magazine consumption in a digital world, as features are chopped out of their contexts and placed in other contexts - Apple news, websites, social media.
- How impactful are these stories when extracted and placed in other contexts? Do they lose their dominating narrative power?
- Who's story is being told? The subject of the interview, the interests of the audience, the interviewer, the magazine, the brand? Why? Who does this benefit?

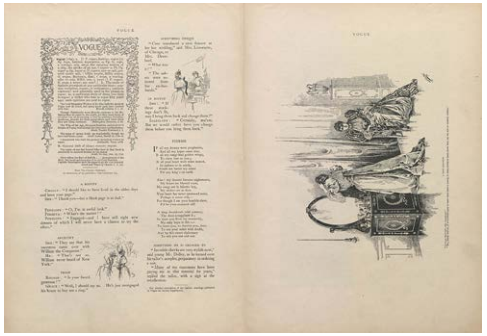
# Projections² Studio²
# Deconstructing by Absence 1892

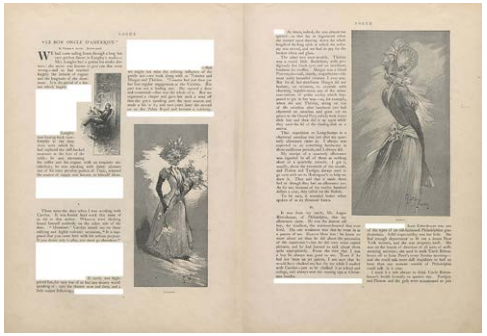
**UNIT 3: STUDIO 2**
**PROJECTIONS²**

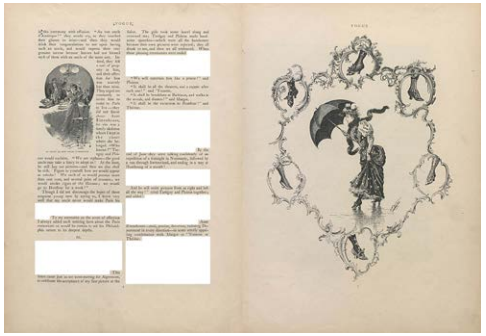
**Socially Constructed Content**

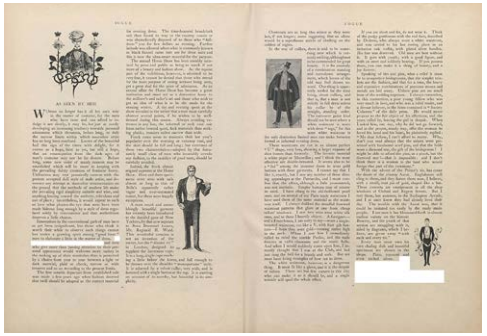


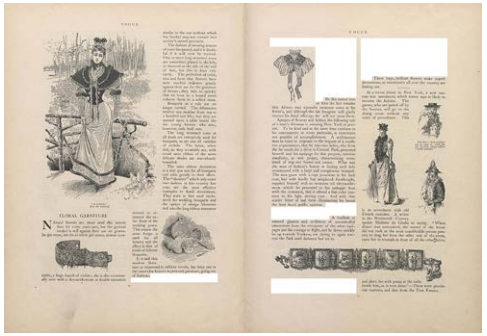



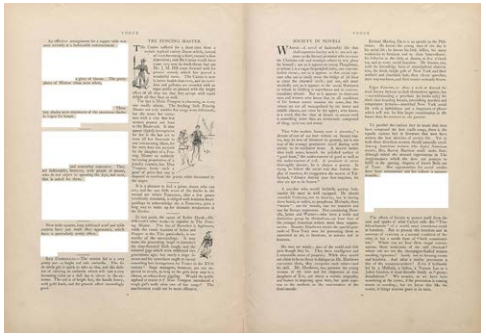





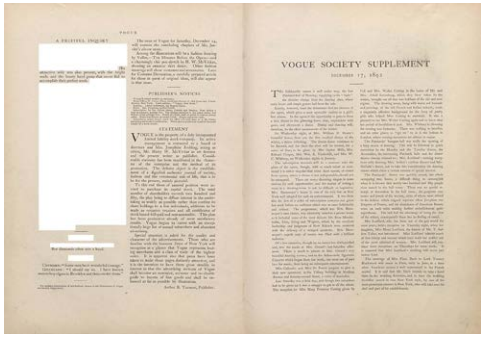


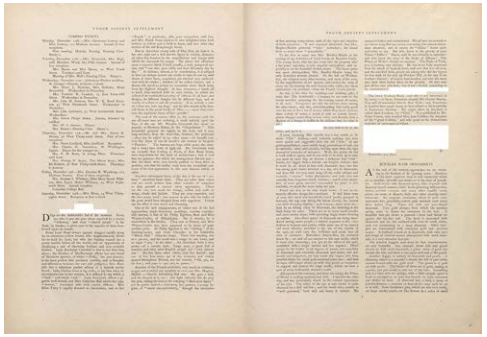


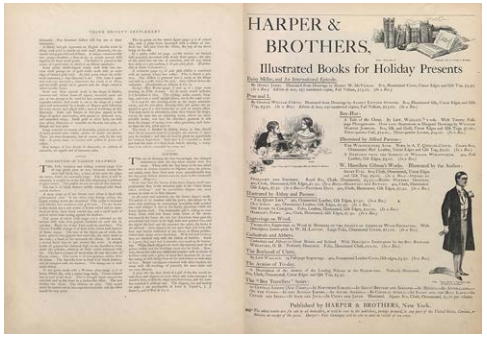
# Projections² Studio²
# Deconstructing by Absence 1892

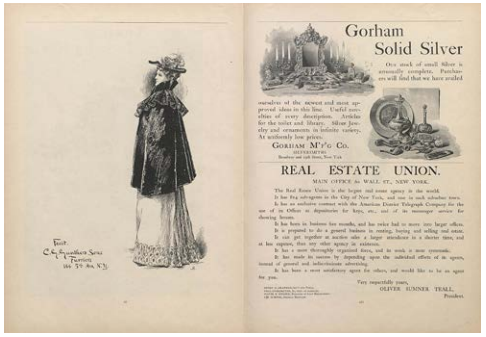


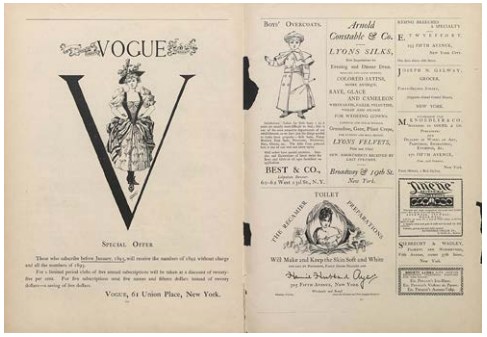
**Socially Constructed Content**





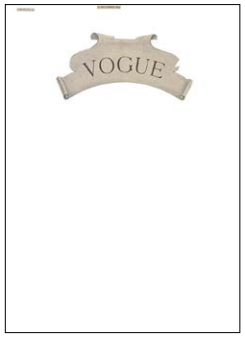


# Projections² Studio²
# Deconstructing by Absence 1892

**UNIT 3: STUDIO 2**
**PROJECTIONS²**

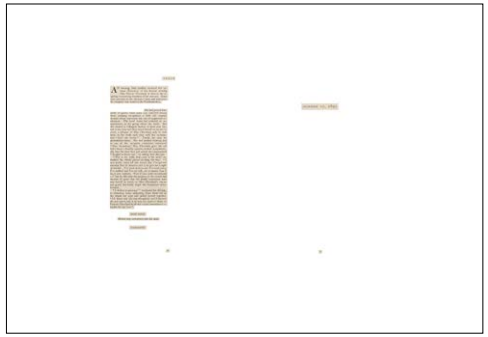
**Non Socially Constructed Content**

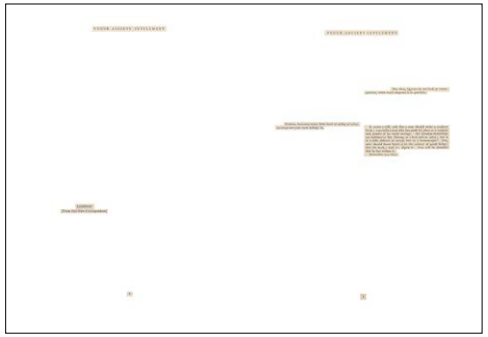


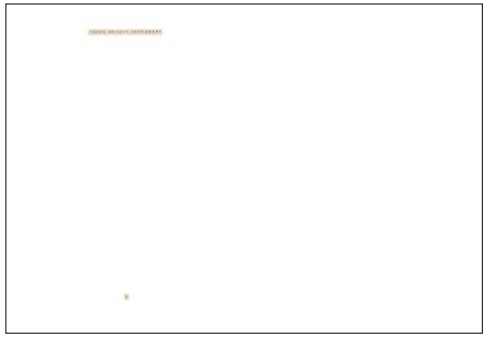
# Projections² Studio²
# Deconstructing by Absence 1892

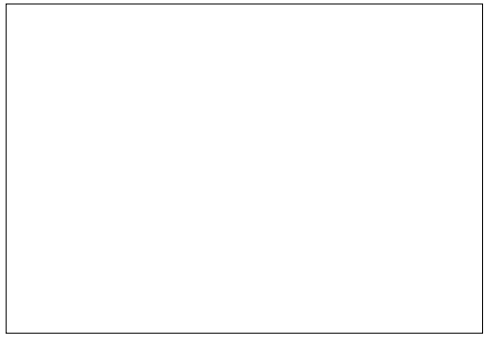
**UNIT 3: STUDIO 2**
**PROJECTIONS²**

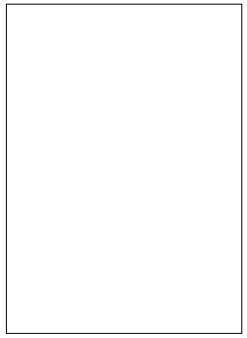
**Non Socially Constructed Content**











# Projections² Studio²
# Evaluation



- There were as many socially constructed contexts in 1892 as there is in 2025.
- There is a clear and obvious change of use of language and phrasing.
- There is a clear shift in imagery - illustration becomes photography, black and white becomes colour, covered up women become scantily clad women. How were these decisions made? A timeline of technology, changing social and cultural values, feminism?
- Column grids are practically unchanged.
- Advertising was placed at the front and back.
- Adverts were smaller and text based.
- Were adverts more service based as well as fashion based.

# Projections² Studio²
# Process



Reflect

I like this method and process as it drew attention to the onslaught of a news stand magazine that leaves no space to questioning it almost forcing the reader to read it in the intended way, perpetuating the social construct.

I like that by removing this content (that I think audiences are tired of) what is left is more human and connected and also challenges the perception of Vogue.

Project

How else can I communicate this other/hidden narrative in Vogue? What value does that have? What can emerge from pushing this other narrative further?

# Projections² Studio²
# Communication



Reflect

I am still exploring methods and finding out what my intention is. I am still unsure who my audience is.

Project

Maybe I can reconnect with my audience from Unit 2 to progress the interrogation?

Maybe I can explore ways of making this work more public to see how that feels?

# Projections² Studio²
# Realisation



Reflect

I am still contained within the container of ‘a magazine’ which has hardly changed size and shape over 132 years. This lack of change creates very deep rooted habits.

The length of teh deep rooted habits allow text, context, language and imagery to continue to develop and push. Language was functional and pratical, now its so rooted with intonation, implication, inference that it rarely seems to be used practically. This resonates into society and how we live our lives, are we pastiches of ourselves?

If we create lives around objects in our lives that are already a construct and not a reality are our lives a construct and have we lost connection to reality?

Project

I need to explore other media, contexts and materials to explore these notions.

How can placing content in other contexts add or take away meaning, alter meaning or offer new perspectives?

# Projections² Studio²
# Tutor feedback



Discussed how from my experience editorial teams are not pushing this narrative. I think many are unaware of the prescribed conditions magazines are created in. ‘In defense of the other content’?

Discussed that I am not focused enough and need to decide if I am looking at content, structure or language. Or is it all about cover lines? Or images?

Discussed that I need to categorise the content to analyse it. Tutor isn’t convinced that design is something to interrogate as that is the container and it’s the content that needs analysing. Not sure I agree, I feel that has been done many times, but looking at the role of editorial design in creating the construct is interesting to me. How can I articulate this more clearly that makes more sense to others? Or do I need to let go of this?

Need to compare layout and design to feminist magazines - Spare Rib.

# Unit 3: Studio 2: Projections²
# End