

POST-
AURA

POST- AURA

What is the meaning of authenticity in cultural and artistic production in the Post-Digital, and how can we use it?

“AS WORDS
THAT ARE SACRED
WITHOUT SACRED
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THE JARGON OF
AUTHENTICITY ARE
PRODUCTS OF THE
DISINTEGRATION
OF THE AURA.”

—THEODOR ADORNO [1]

INTRODUCTION

When speaking of technology, it is easy to forget history, to feel that we are in a time entirely new. This is a common trope of technological discussions; we say things like ‘at the dawn of the information age’ or ‘for the first time ever’ or ‘society has fundamentally changed’. And we are not entirely wrong; there is much that is new. But humanity has been grasping at the invisible for a very long time. [2]

While it’s true that technology and society, inseparably intertwined, keep developing in new directions, this phenomenon itself has been, somewhat paradoxically, a long-standing constant. The rate of change has been very high for at least a century and a half, and artists and critics have been attempting to figure out what it all means since at least the revolutionary days of the telegraph and horseless carriage. Even if we look just at the congeries of technologies we call the internet, it’s clear that nothing has remained stable for any considerable amount of time. The internet has always been marked by constant innovation. To say that we are living ‘after’ the effects of the internet is premature, since those effects continue to evolve. So if art and culture have been altered ‘after’ the internet for some time now, why do we want to use terms like post-internet,

the New Aesthetic, and so forth to describe this particular juncture in history? One factor is that increased change also means that certain aspects of culture become rapidly outdated. Terms like ‘new media’ and ‘net art’ today sound hopelessly antiquated, clunky, uncool. Stressing what’s new about the relationship between art and the internet allows us to distance ourselves from this past. At a time when internet culture has spread into all of culture, artists feel a need to carve out a more schooled, historically-aware sensibility within that culture, then create a name for it. This is one way to make sure people recognize it as art, not merely something you might glance at on Tumblr. Despite the distortions such forces might enact upon our thought, attempts to understand what the hell is going on with human culture remain necessary. It just might take a while for us to sort all of this out. We’re too busy catching up with our own moment. **[3]**

What is at stake in such a resuscitation of authenticity? Can it be anything other than reactionary? How might this new fetish for the authentic function as a significant, if sometimes spurious, post-digital cultural formation? **[4]**

INTRODUCTION

POST-AURA

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WHAT IS
AUTHENTICITY?

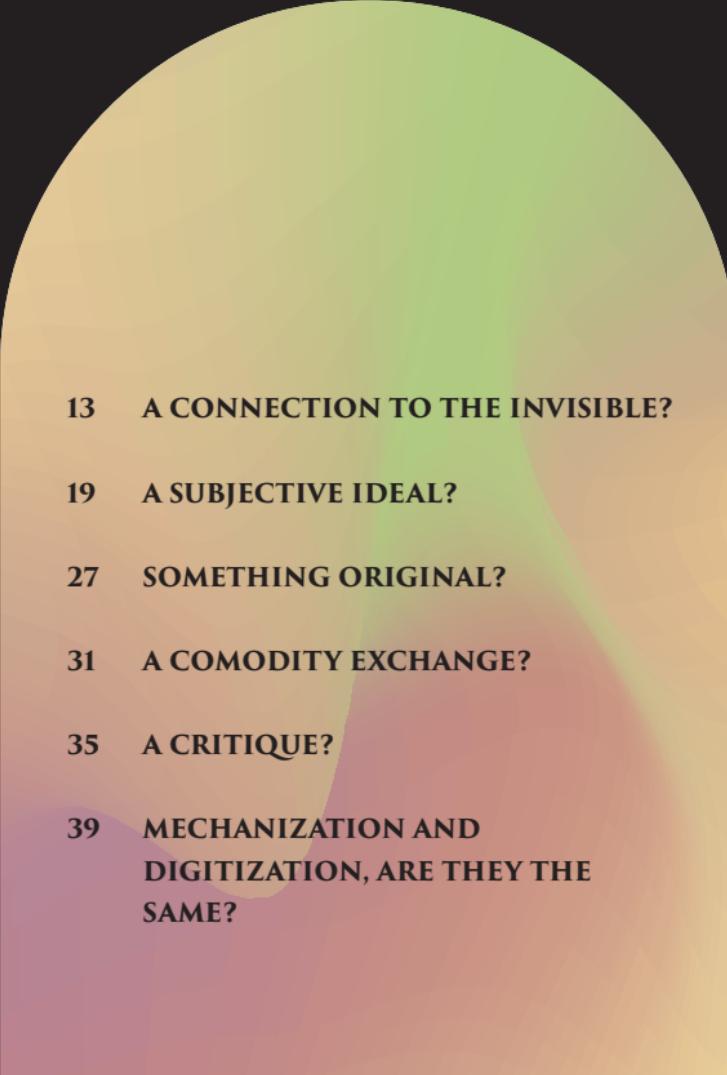
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[A] EMPRESS THEODORA. DETAIL FROM
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A CONNECTION TO THE INVISIBLE?

When we talk about technology, it is so often in the rooted in the Short Now, but I would ask you to cast your thoughts backwards. I'd like to begin in the Byzantine Empire, 11th century. Byzantine philosophy always referred to what is beyond experience and nature, to the existence of God and to the real being. Byzantine worldview has shifted the Platonic distinction of the Greeks between the intelligible and sensible world (the difference between the 'here', this wooden block I hold in my hand; and the abstracted platonic ideal, the 'there', the idea of the wooden block). This split instead points to the distinction between the created and the uncreated being. The created (human civilization, most works of art, economics, the natural world, etc) can perhaps point to the uncreated world, but is fundamentally tainted by its mortal origin and may never reach divinity. In contrast, the uncreated is intrinsically all that is divine. These uncreated energies include the presence of God in scripture, the human soul (without a life yet lived), and various miraculously created artifacts and icons that received particular veneration in the church, called acheiropoieta (which were also known to replicate themselves). The 'un-created' is a tricky subject for contemporary readers, as there is little analog today. It is important to remember that the uncreated and created lived together on Earth, even if their constant connection was generally invisible.

It was in fact this tension and desire to grasp the invisible, either by discursive reason, artwork, or by faith, characterizes Byzantine metaphysics.

IN SHORT; THIS IS A SPACE OF INTERSECTIONAL WORLDS – DIVINE AND MORTAL ARE ON ONE PLANE, TOUCHING ALWAYS.

Perhaps the clearest example of this is illustrated in one of the great arts of the Byzantine Empire, the icon painting. After having looked at several icons of the era, one may notice that these objects only seem to exist on a flat plane; all depth is absent. This is not a mere aesthetic choice—the “third” dimension of an icon painting is not space, but spirit. The realm of the immortal intersects this one, the mortal one, at every point in space and stretches to an eternity; such signifiers have no need for an artificial, painted depth. They are not windows into the divine but literal divine objects that exist everywhere, but are viewable in this ‘thin space’ - the thin space that an icon gathers around itself, cutting through. Iconographic paintings are not signifiers, but are physical structures that exist in both worlds; a picture of a saint is not a picture of a saint is not a picture of a saint, it is the saint, physically in space. The uncreated (the divinity of a saint, of God) is there, in the icon, along with the created (the painting by human hand). They are tools to grasp the invisible. Thinking about icon paintings from a contemporary standpoint, they also feel remarkably technological. As tools, they act as screens;

access points to a world that lives everywhere and also nowhere, or at least- nowhere physical, not a single point. This space was deemed divine because it was constant, accessible, and a thing-into-itself; not a signifier for a not-present idea or a person, but actually present. The divine suffuses all things, and we can cut through normal space to expose it, access it, be transported through it. **[2]**

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[2]



[B] THE TOMB OF JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU
AT ERMENONVILLE. HUBERT ROBERT

A SUBJECTIVE IDEAL?

The rhetoric of authenticity partakes of notions of pure beginnings and implicitly denigrates what comes later, which is marked as corrupting or contaminating. For Adorno, discourses of authenticity offered a rearticulation of the ideology of National Socialism by other means; for the post-structuralists, they were guilty of a metaphysical investment in presence and identity valorized at the expense of recognizing difference. For all of these reasons, authenticity was left behind in favour of hybridity, reproducibility, and purposeful unoriginality.

Tracing the evolution of the concept of authenticity from its roots in the Romantic imaginary through its mobilization in nineteenth-century critiques of modernity and into the present, might provide a way of beginning to answer these questions. In his 1759 text ‘Conjectures on Original Composition’, Edward Young asks:

‘BORN ORIGINALS, HOW COMES IT TO PASS THAT WE DIE COPIES?’

Young’s question is rooted in a Romantic conviction, primarily associated with the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, that society is destructive of the authenticity and goodness of man.

In the nineteenth century, such ideas found increased currency as new processes of urbanization and technologization forever altered the subject's relationship to nature, time, work, and leisure. Industrial modernity proceeded as a rationalization of all aspects of life driven by a capitalist economy, prompting some to see it not as progress but rather as experiential impoverishment.

**AS AN EMBLEM OF THIS COLLAPSE
OF DIFFERENCE, THE COPY IS
PARTICULARLY DENIGRATED.**

Very much in line with Young's rhetoric, mid-nineteenth-century works of literature such as Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and Herman Melville's *Bartleby, The Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street* (1853) communicated the extinguishing of the soul experienced by their main protagonists by casting the men in the profession of manual copyist. It is worth noting that the conceptualization of copying by hand found in these texts represents a significant shift from an earlier understanding of the activity, namely its practice by monks, whereby it figured as an erudite occupation integral to the transmission of knowledge. Now, copying becomes mere drudgery, a synecdoche used to point to how the interconnectedness and fidelity to tradition that had characterized pre-modern society now found itself destroyed in the rise of the modern *Gesellschaft*, in which atomization and self-interest

prevailed. Copying—long a neutral activity—was degraded and devalued due to its close ties to mechanization and standardization, while objects that evaded the regime of duplicated sameness were exalted as more precious, more human.

Young's assertion that we are born originals articulates a conviction that we begin life as essentially true to ourselves, before experiencing a progressive estrangement from this state that takes the form of a false outer self concerned with being-for-others—something Sartre would much later term 'bad faith'. Rather than a yearning for originality, a term that became attached to the artistic vanguard's penchant for radical novelty, this sentiment is better understood as the desire for authenticity.

**THE AUTHENTIC IS, IN OTHER WORDS,
FIRST AND FOREMOST A SUBJECTIVE IDEAL
INVESTED WITH A HEAVY MORAL WEIGHT.**

It is a polemical concept that seeks to revive a fullness of meaning and an un-alienated state of being at a time when increased secularization and industrialization prompted a crisis of absolutes. In the absence of the transcendent and eternal, the subject turns inward to find his or her 'true' self, different from that of all others. Though authenticity is a subjective ideal, it stems from the world of objects—specifically, from the museum—and quickly returns there, as technology, industry, and the products of mass culture become identified with an inauthenticity that threatens

the individuality of the individual. With an etymology meaning ‘self made’, authenticity is by definition anti-technological and elevates the human over and above the new machines. As Lionel Trilling writes in his landmark 1972 study, *Sincerity and Authenticity*: The anxiety about the machine is a commonplace in nineteenth-century moral and cultural thought... It was the mechanical principle, quite as much as the acquisitive principle—the two are of course intimately connected—which was felt to be the enemy of being, the source of inauthenticity.

**THE MACHINE, SAID RUSKIN, COULD ONLY
MAKE INAUTHENTIC THINGS, DEAD THINGS;
AND THE DEAD THINGS COMMUNICATED
THEIR DEADNESS TO THOSE WHO USED THEM.**

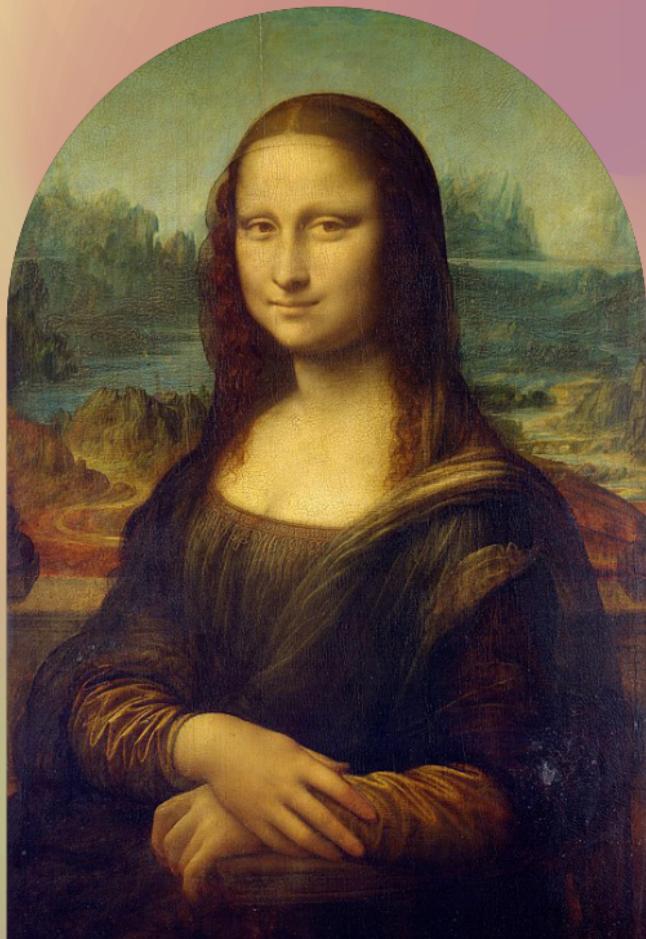
One encounters a partitioning of the world wherein what is authentic is opposed to what is new. Older modes of image making and traditional forms of experience are valorized because they are seen to offer a reassuring escape from the instability and uncertainty of the rapidly changing present. It is in this context that one can begin understanding the fetish for craft and the outmoded view that has prevailed in recent artistic production. Concerns with authenticity were central to lapsarian critiques of modernity and technology in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, whether in Max Weber’s thesis that modernity constitutes the disenchantment of the world technology in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, whether

in Max Weber's thesis that modernity constitutes the disenchantment of the world or Walter Benjamin's notion of the decay of aura. In the nineteenth century, clock time, the cinema, and the assembly line were all inauthentic novelties threatening traditional, authentic forms of existence and image production. **[4]**

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[4]



[C] THE MONA LISA. LEONARDO DA VINCI.

SOMETHING ORIGINAL?

In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Man-made artifacts could always be imitated by men. Replicas were made by pupils in practice of their craft, by masters for diffusing their works, and, finally, by third parties in the pursuit of gain. Mechanical reproduction of a work of art, however, represents something new.

Since the eye perceives more swiftly than the hand can draw, the process of pictorial reproduction was accelerated so enormously that it could keep pace with speech.

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership.

One might subsume the eliminated element in the term "aura" and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many

reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind. Both processes are intimately connected with the contemporary mass movements. [5]

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[5]



[D] THE MONA LISA. UNIQLO TEE.
MUSÉE DU LOUVRE.

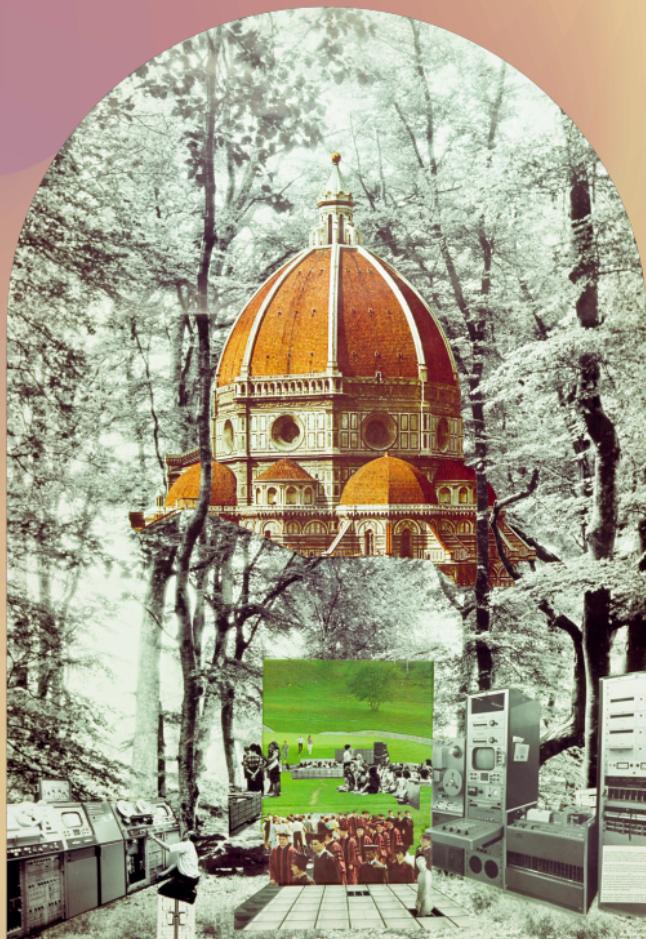
A COMODITY EXCHANGE?

For Benjamin, the status of authenticity was vexed. It was valued as a site of resistance to the dehumanization and disenchantment of capitalist exchange, but deplored for its class character. Access to the authentic, after all, tends to be fairly exclusive. Understood in this second sense, the desire for authenticity is no escape from commodity fetishism but its apotheosis: it is a way of dissimulating a relationship to economic privilege by cloaking a yearning for the rare and expensive in spiritual, Romantic terms. Moreover, Adorno fully recognized that despite authenticity's claims to origins and intrinsic value, it is always retroactively constructed and resides fully within the paradigm of commodity exchange: 'Only when countless standardized commodities project, for the sake of profit, the illusion of being unique, does the idea take shape, as their antithesis yet in keeping with the same criteria, that the non-reproducible is truly genuine.' This notion of a false projection of uniqueness stemming from a ground of sameness is particularly apposite in the era of iEverything. If Fordist capitalism succeeded in producing seductive commodities that delivered the ever-same as the ever-new, the contemporary moment witnesses the continuance of this regime, supplemented by a digital marketplace

promising the seemingly infinite variety of the long tail, and the fantasy of totally individualized consumption. When everything appears to be available at the click of a mouse, even more strongly does the idea take shape that 'the non-reproducible is truly genuine' and even more strongly felt is the lure of the authentic. **[4]**

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[4]



[E] DOMUS 509. GRUPPO 9999

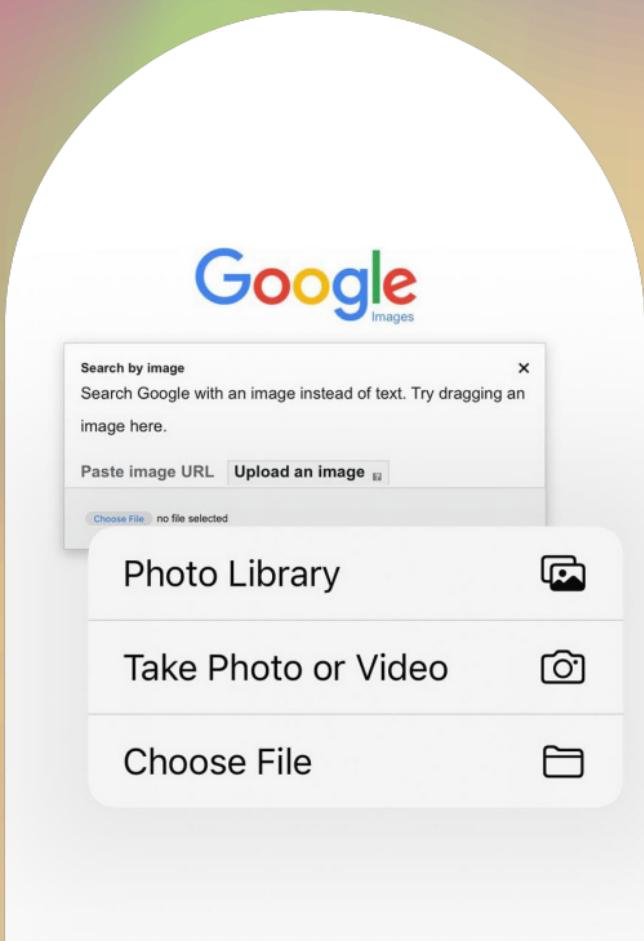
A CRITIQUE?

The 1960s and 70s witnessed an explosion of radical movements questioning design in relation to wider societal and ideological developments. Originating in England and Austria, and then in Italy, anti-design continued a long national tradition of artistic and political discourse in design. An exhibition of Italian design at the Museum of Modern Art in New York surveyed a generation of designers who, “despairing of effecting social change through design, regard their task as essentially a political one” (Ambasz, 1972: overleaf). Three prevalent attitudes were identified – conformity, reform, and contestation – within design culture at the time. Alchemia and Memphis, for example, drew inspiration from Dada, Surrealism, and Situationism, promoting emotional play and symbolism over function, refuting assumptions of utilitarianism and consumption (Kristoffersson, 2003). The critique posed by anti-design is not of design or planning as such, but of design in instilling and enforcing ideology. That is to say, design ‘in service’ to any imposed ideology, whether political, technological, or cultural, determined in advance and from outside. Rather than refusing to design or ‘waiting for the revolution’, proponents accepted the powerful effects of design representations and objects, launching a critique from within the conventions of practice. While engaging theoretically and politically, the activity of designing and design objects in themselves were seen to offer possibilities

for ‘active critical participation’ in larger ideological systems (Lang and Menking, 2003). The ‘products’ of anti-design were not, however, intended as finished or closed forms. While object-oriented, form was often applied provisionally, to open up for ideas, debate, and appropriation – as alternative forms not only of product but ideological consumption. Today, the ideological and political basis of anti-design and related countercultures is not present within society as before – indeed, many aspects of anti-design were rapidly subsumed into the mainstream, as a superficial aesthetic or marketing tactic bereft of deeper ideological engagement. More generally, the basis in capital, industry, and technology that underpin past conceptions of criticality – indeed, of design – no longer hold in the same way, or to the same degree (Jameson, 1985). Such complexity within and surrounding contemporary design make it difficult to locate the terms of criticality. **[6]**

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[6]



[F] GOOGLE REVERSE IMAGE SEARCH

MECHANIZATION AND DIGITIZATION, ARE THEY THE SAME?

Digitization is not mechanization, and duplication within digital space is not autonomy. A digital object appears across a multiplicity of screens both at once and forever. These entities are not individually manipulatable, which is to say they do not exist as individual duplicates that can accumulate a singular history and aura.

INSTEAD, DIGITAL OBJECTS EXIST SINGULARLY, EVERYWHERE.

Although the internet is resplendent with copied (and sometimes stolen) information, images, and other digital objects, their originals are almost indiscernible from copies. They all exist at the same scale, on similar platforms, given moderately equal weight. In fact, stolen digital objects are unique from stolen physical objects in that the original object is rarely gone after the theft. For example, when a car is stolen, the owner of the car has an empty garage (a void where the car used to be) and a thief has a car. But when an image is stolen (perhaps a fraudulent individual claims a drawing is theirs that was lifted off an artist's website), it is still very much on the artist's website, as well as on a new Deviantart account, and perhaps a Tumblr and perhaps again as a header image on Facebook, and as

a print-on-demand t-shirt, and so on.

But with tools like Google's search by image, these are all connected, networked by their shared identity. When networked this way, such objects collapse back again into a single object. In fact, search engines are remarkably excellent at collapsing unique identity back into single idea. Copyright issues aside, a mass of duplicated images used indeterminately across a variety of websites are all one image. We see a picture and say "I have seen that before". Text mirrored off of Wikipedia and onto any of a thousand Wikipedia-like informational sites is still Wikipedia text. Social media sites excel at this type of networked duplication. A retweet of information is not a shift in scale, or a real copying; a retweet impacts the structural bridge of a networked idea (furthering it outwards), but not the intrinsic idea itself. We give power to our objects, and they become windows to the divine. We have sought the autonomous and the miraculous, felt the pull of holy places and gasped at relics and other things of beauty and power that teeter between the uncreated and the created. These are frameworks that are embedded in our histories, our language, and our understanding of the world. It is perhaps no surprise that we have built a system which intrinsically mirrors this long history. We have made a network that lays over our tangible world. **[2]**

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POST-LOST DIGITAL = AUTHENTICITY?

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[G] STUDY FOR PORTRAIT OF QUEEN
ELIZABETH II | 002. ALEXANDER VAN GLITCH

A QUALITATIVE SHIFT

Today, supposedly untrustworthy digital images and seemingly depersonalized electronics communications technologies take over this role. We are undergoing something of a parallel moment to that of the nineteenth century: once again, there has been a qualitative shift in the reproducibility of images and sounds, and a major acceleration to the temporality of obsolescence. These technological changes occurred in conjunction with economic deregulation, the restructuring of labour, and the remapping of global flows of people, capital, and information. In short, they occurred as a part of a transformation of experience just as immense and wide-ranging as that of the nineteenth century. Once again, a desire for authenticity has emerged as a reaction to shifts with new media technologies at their core. Scour the discourses of the digital pessimists—from Baudrillard to Virilio and beyond—and echoes of the nineteenth century will ring in one's ears. Against the promiscuous circulation of proliferating copies, the singular event of performance or the uniqueness of the handmade object both emerge as sites of intense cathexis. Even photochemical film—once the exemplary inauthentic image—can now be recuperated as authentic, as the images of electronic reproduction have arrived to occupy the denigrated position it once did. [4]

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[4]



[H] THIS IS FINE MEME

POST-DIGITAL, A TERM WHICH SUCKS BUT IS USEFUL

POST-DIGITAL = POST- DIGITALISATION

Returning to Cascone and Andrews, but also to post-punk, postcolonialism and Mad Max, the term ‘post-digital’ in its simplest sense describes the messy state of media, arts and design after their digitisation (or at least the digitisation of crucial aspects of the channels through which they are communicated). Sentiments of disenchantment and scepticism may also be part of the equation, though this need not necessarily be the case — sometimes, ‘post-digital’ can in fact mean the exact opposite. Contemporary visual art, for example, is only slowly starting to accept practitioners of net art as regular contemporary artists — and then again, preferably those like Cory Arcangel whose work is white cubecompatible. Yet its discourse and networking practices have been profoundly transformed by digital media such as the e-fux mailing list, art blogs and the electronic e-fuxjournal. In terms of circulation, power and influence, these media have largely superseded printed art periodicals, at least as far as the art system’s in-crowd of artists and curators is concerned. Likewise, when printed

newspapers shift their emphasis from daily news (which can be found quicker and cheaper on the Internet) to investigative journalism and commentary — like The Guardian’s coverage of the NSA’s PRISM programme — they effectively transform themselves into postdigital or post-digitisation media.

POST-DIGITAL = ANTI-‘NEW MEDIA’

‘Post-digital’ thus refers to a state in which the disruption brought upon by digital information technology has already occurred. This can mean, as it did for Cascone, that this

**TECHNOLOGY IS NO LONGER PERCEIVED AS
DISRUPTIVE. CONSEQUENTLY, ‘POST-DIGI-
TAL’ STANDS IN DIRECT OPPOSITION TO THE
VERY NOTION OF ‘NEW MEDIA’.**

At the same time, as its negative mirror image, it exposes — arguably even deconstructs — the latter’s hidden teleology: when the term ‘post-digital’ draws critical reactions focusing on the dubious historicophilosophical connotations of the prefix ‘post’, one cannot help but wonder about a previous lack of such critical thinking regarding the older (yet no less Hegelian) term ‘new media’.

POST-DIGITAL = HYBRIDS OF ‘OLD’ AND ‘NEW’ MEDIA

‘Post-digital’ describes a perspective on digital information technology which no longer focuses on technical innovation or improvement, but instead rejects the kind of techno-positivist innovation narratives exemplified by media such as Wired magazine, Ray Kurzweil’s Google-sponsored ‘singularity’ movement, and of course Silicon Valley. Consequently,

**‘POST-DIGITAL’ ERADICATES THE
DISTINCTION BETWEEN ‘OLD’ AND ‘NEW’ ME-
DIA, IN THEORY AS WELL AS IN PRACTICE.**

Kenneth Goldsmith notes that his students “mix oil paint while Photoshopping and scour flea markets for vintage vinyl while listening to their iPods” (Goldsmith, 226). Working at an art school, I observe the same. Young artists and designers choose media for their own particular material aesthetic qualities (including artefacts), regardless of whether these are a result of analog material properties or of digital processing. Lo-fi imperfections are embraced — the digital glitch and jitter of Cascone’s music along with the grain, dust, scratches and hiss in analog reproduction — as a form of practical exploration and research that examines materials through their imperfections and malfunctions. It is a post-digital hacker attitude of taking systems apart and using them in ways which subvert the original intention of the design.

SEMIOTIC SHIFT TO THE INDEXICAL

The ‘maker movement’ — as manifested in fab labs, but also at zine fairs — represents a shift from the symbolic, as the preferred semiotic mode of digital systems (and of which the login is the perfect example), toward the indexical: from code to traces, and from text to context. 1980s post-punk zines, for example, resembled the art manifestos of the 1920s Berlin Dadaists, while 1980s Super 8 films, made in the context of the Cinema of Transgression and other post-punk movements, proposed underground narratives as an alternative to mainstream cinema. The majority of today’s zines and experimental Super 8 films, however, tend to focus less on content and more on pure materiality, so that the medium, such as paper or celluloid, is indeed the message — a shift from semantics to pragmatics, and from metaphysics to ontology. [7]

THE TERM ‘POST-DIGITAL’ IN ITS SIMPLEST SENSE DESCRIBES THE MESSY STATE OF MEDIA, ARTS AND DESIGN AFTER THEIR DIGITISATION.

[7]



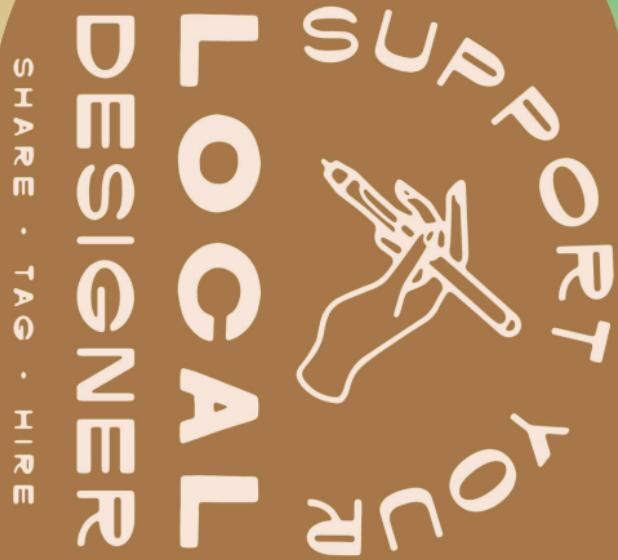
[D] DESIGN'S DELIGHT CAP. BOOT-BOYZ

INTERNET CULTURE IS JUST CULTURE

It no longer makes sense for artists to attempt to come to terms with ‘internet culture’, because now ‘internet culture’ is increasingly just ‘culture’. In other words, the term ‘post-internet’ suggests that the focus of a good deal of artistic and critical discourse has shifted from ‘internet culture’ as a discrete entity to an awareness that all culture has been reconfigured by the internet, or by internet-enabled neoliberal capitalism. Many of the artists who have been working on these questions recently are acting less as interpreter, transcriber, narrator, curator, architect, and more as knowing participants in a system of circulating data in which

**THE LINE BETWEEN ARTIST-MADE,
USER-GENERATED, AND COMMERCIAL
CONTENT IS DECIDEDLY BLURRED.**

[8]



[J] SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL
DESIGNER. NICK QUINTERO.

THE DEATH OF THE SINGULAR GENIUS

Designers are challenging the idea that a single person or movement can do it all, but could they ever? A larger-than-life spotlight puts too much emphasis on the views of star “rulers of taste” who may have played a role in where we are today. The internet expanded the frontiers of design, giving access to more sources of inspiration and opportunities for those outside the inner circle to be seen and heard. While this growing body of references and work circulating to anyone with internet connection creates its own problems, globalization has begun to destabilize the hierarchy of big names in favour of smaller practices and freelance designers from around the world — not just the design capitals. The design stars are dimming, gatekeeping is waning, and clients are more interested in local perspectives with a point of view than agencies with a shelf of Lions. [8]

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AND FREELANCE
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DESIGN CAPITALS.

[8]

AJJKLM NOPQR
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

Bodoni, 1788

ABCDEFGHIJKLM NOPQR STUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

Century Expanded, 1900
ABCDEFGHIJKLM NOPQR STUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

Futura, 1930

ABCDEFGHIJKLM NOPQR STUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

Times Roman, 1931
ABCDEFGHIJKLM NOPQR STUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

Helvetica, 1957

ABCDEFGHIJKLM NOPQR STUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

[K] THE VIGNELLI CANON.
© MASSIMO VIGNELLI.

WHAT IS GOOD AND WHO GETS TO DECIDE?

Consciously or not, design movements from Europe are still a primary framework through which we evaluate design around us. This predominantly white, Western perspective perhaps has the most power in university classrooms and curricula across the globe, where the few students who come from less privileged backgrounds often feel unrepresented and excluded. There's a sense that Western design movements have ruled from their ivory tower for too long. Designers are challenging the notion that any work that disobeys classical conventions or form-follows-function principles should be labeled trashy, messy, or "too much." As one interviewee put it, "Whose taste matters? Just because you don't like it doesn't mean it's not effective or good." Just take Massimo Vignelli, who famously proclaimed that the proliferation of typefaces "represents a new level of visual pollution threatening our culture" and that designers should only use a few and "trash the rest." Declarations like these start to reveal the body of laws that, upon closer look, only take some views into account. While clarity and utility can't be ignored, the notion that design languages outside of modernist tradition are trash doesn't hold water in 2022. If a radically open understanding of design threatens the old myths of taste, hopefully it can propel design into a more exciting, if uncomfortable, future. [9]

WHITE CLARITY
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NOTION THAT
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TRASH DOESN'T HOLD
WATER IN 2022.

[9]

DESIGN
anything₊



without

KNOWING

how to



DESIGN^X



Learn More



[L] IG SPONSORED POST. SQUARESPACE.

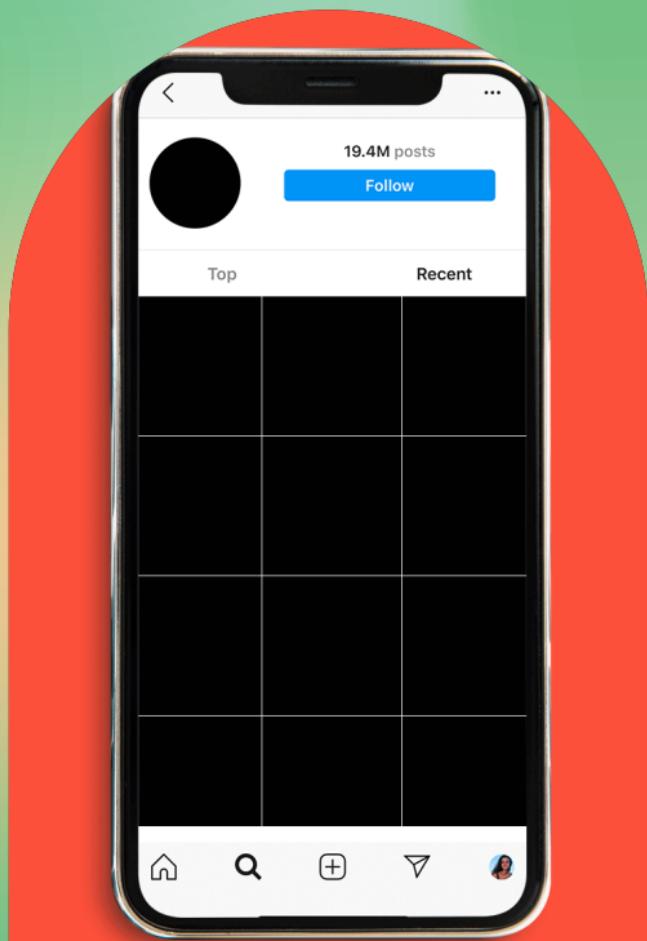
DEMOCRATIZATION DILEMMA

For me! For you! For everyone! Aware of historic and contemporary inequalities in the field, respondents say they want to lower the barriers and make design accessible to all, but worry what happens to the role of the designer if anyone (or anything) can be one. As digital tools get simpler, AI gets smarter, and the web evolves, respondents feel anxious about the decline of craft and losing their jobs in an already strained labor market. The paradigm is shifting, but at what cost? From Figma to Blender, Canva to Wix, the amount of accessible design tools has grown exponentially. With more power and cheaper pricing on average, a wealth of services for hopeful designers are just a click away — without the entry-price of a design degree. If you start seeing ads for “design your own logo in minutes” or “easy-as-ever ad templates” after reading this, you’ll know what we mean. Propelled by the erosion of cultural gatekeeping, “the bar for being able to get into design is lower than it’s ever been” which to designers is both a blessing and a curse. As appetites for (and supply of) quick-and-cheap design pick up pace, a dark cloud surfaces in the minds of designers. “What happened to the value of craft?” “Am I out of a job?” “I didn’t go into debt for this.” In a world that tells us we’re replaceable, no one wants to feel disposable. But the feeling is hard to avoid when designers are told another ‘you’ is waiting in the wings — willing or programmed to do the project for less. [9]

PROPELLED BY
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A CURSE.

[9]



[M] #BLACKOUTUESDAY HASHTAG ON INSTA-
GRAM. NBC

OVERSIMPLIFICATION OF COMPLEX ISSUES

Designing for awareness gained traction as a way to share information about social causes through feed-friendly carousel posts. By the end of 2020, social media was littered with infographics touting the same visual logic of millennial DTC brands — colorful gradients, playful illustrations, and whimsical typefaces — designed to make you stop scrolling and start reading. But as the carousels surged, many began to question their intentions and outcomes. When movements like Black Lives Matter become a design challenge in a field that's predominantly white, even good intentions to bring awareness may be misguided. When does information-sharing become virtue-signaling? What's the line between promoting causes and boosting personal brand? As the instant gratification of going viral became a cycle in itself, many questioned if such slideshows were as impactful as the emoji rounds of applause suggested. When algorithmic approval and personal publicity began overshadowing real, on-the-ground action, we lost sight of what it meant to organize. Distracted by pleasing palettes, the oversimplification of complex issues and slips of misinformation are too often overlooked. [9]



[N] EXCESS OF EVERYTHING.
DESIGN THREADS

PRODUCING AT LIGHTSPEED

The internet is not dead. It is undead and it's everywhere. [...] The all-out internet condition is not an interface but an environment. Older media as well as imaged people, imaged structures, and image objects are embedded into networked matter. Reality itself is postproduced and scripted, affect rendered as after-effect. Far from being opposites across an unbridgeable chasm, image and world are in many cases just versions of each other. They are not equivalents however, but deficient, excessive, and uneven in relation to each other. And the gap between them gives way to speculation and intense anxiety. Under these conditions, production morphs into postproduction, meaning the world can be understood but also altered by its tools. Images are not objective or subjective renditions of a pre-existing condition, or merely treacherous appearances. They are rather nodes of energy and matter that migrate across different supports, shaping and affecting people, landscapes, politics, and social systems. They acquired an uncanny ability to proliferate, transform, and activate. [...] They spread through and beyond networks, they contract and expand, they stall and stumble, they vie, they vile, they wow and woo.

POSTPRODUCING THE WORLD

But by becoming real, most images are substantially altered. They get translated, twisted, bruised, and reconfigured. They change their outlook, entourage, and spin. A nail paint clip turns into an Instagram riot. An upload comes down as shitstorm.” The tools of postproduction: editing, color correction, filtering, cutting, and so on are not aimed at achieving representation. They have become means of creation, not only of images but also of the world in their wake. One possible reason: with digital proliferation of all sorts of imagery, suddenly too much world became available. The map, to use the well-known fable by Borges, has not only become equal to the world, but exceeds it by far. The point is that no one can deal with this. This extensive and exhausting mess needs to be edited down in real time: filtered, scanned, sorted, and selected—into so many Wikipedia versions, into layered, libidinal, logistical, lopsided geographies. This assigns a new role to image production, and in consequence also to people who deal with it. Image workers now deal directly in a world made of images, and can do so much faster than previously possible. But production has also become mixed up with circulation to the point of being indistinguishable.

CIRCULATIONISM

Circulationism is not about the art of making an image, but of postproducing, launching, and accelerating it. It is about

the public relations of images across social networks, about advertisement and alienation, and about being as suavely vacuous as possible. Crucially, circulationism, if reinvented, could also be about short-circuiting existing networks, circumventing and bypassing corporate friendship and hardware monopolies. It could become the art of recoding or rewiring the system by exposing state scopophilia, capital compliance, and wholesale surveillance. Of course, it might also just go as wrong as its predecessor, by aligning itself with a Stalinist cult of productivity, acceleration, and heroic exhaustion. **[10]**

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[10]



[O] WHEN PIXELS COLLIDE.
REDDIT PLACE.

EMPHASIS ON CROWD CREATIVITY

Beyond the speed that our brains work to process a flood of “content”, we’re also losing how these images, quotes, gifs, videos, memes, and texts originated in the first place. Social-media scholar Danah Boyd coined the term “context collapse” to describe what happens when different audiences occupy the same space and information is passed to them without preserving the original context. Armed conflict intersects with NYFW coverage. Neighbor Go-FundMe’s are sandwiched between gnocchi recipes and newly minted NFTs. Our resulting attention spans are both desensitized and disoriented, and designers face even more pressure to create work that breaks through to them. [9]

As the web spills over into a different dimension, image production moves way beyond the confines of specialized fields. It becomes mass postproduction in an age of crowd creativity. Today, almost everyone is an artist. We are pitching, phishing, spamming, chain-liking or mansplaining. We are twitching, tweeting, and toasting as some form of solo relational art, high on dual processing and a smartphone flat rate. Image circulation today works by pimping pixels in orbit via strategic sharing of wacky, neo-tribal, and mostly US-American content. [10]

SOCIAL-MEDIA
SCHOLAR
DANAH BOYD COINED
THE TERM “CONTEXT
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OCCUPY THE
SAME SPACE
AND INFORMATION
IS PASSED TO
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PRESERVING
THE ORIGINAL
CONTEXT.

[9]



[P] SAME. ENERGY.
JACOB JACKSON.

SEA OF SAMENESS

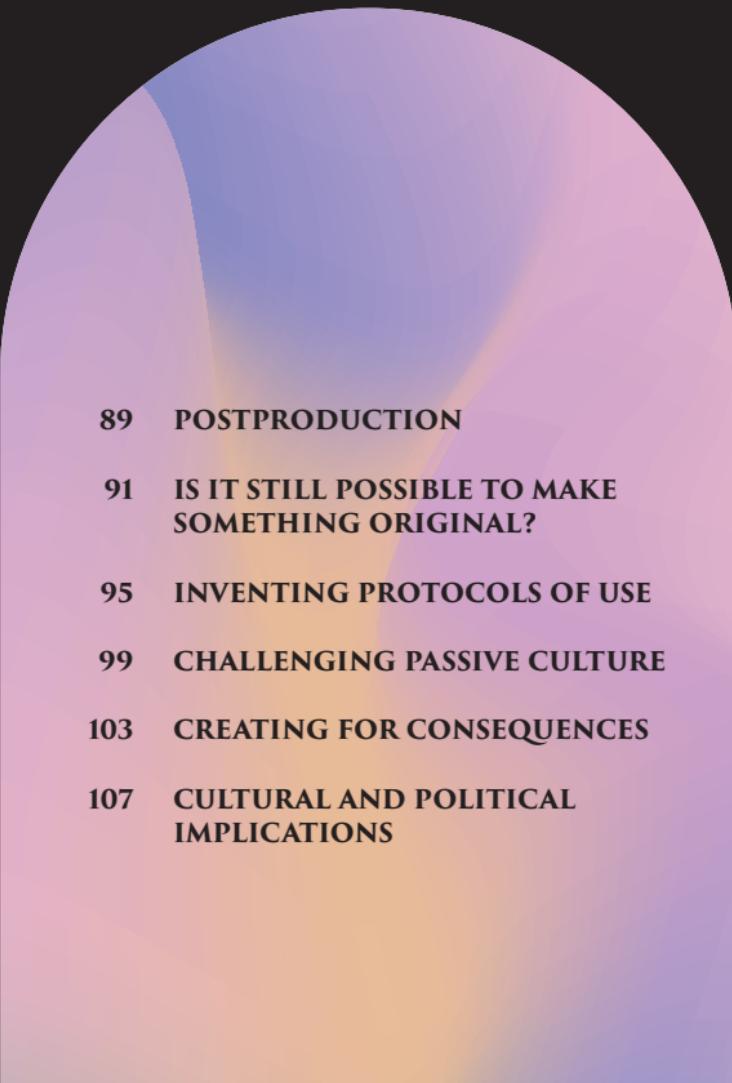
Abundant access to references plus 24/7 internet connection is one recipe for aesthetic sameness. “What does originality mean in today’s post-modern, post-web, post-social, post-AI world?” asked one interviewee. When every designer is looking at the same decontextualized images, moodboards, posts, and campaigns, that new bland looks so familiar because it is. And when CAC-driven clients ask for more of the same, designers are being paid to replicate rather than invent: “I worry about being innovative and developing new ideas when clients ask for reinterpretations of existing design ideas rather than something new.” When the measure of a designer’s work is based on engagement — likes, follows, clicks — there is data to support playing it safe, and pushing outside the known can be a hard sell. If the amount of designers expressing concern over “same-y” designs is any indicator, we could all be victims of what Elizabeth Goodspeed terms the moodboard effect. When design is shared and remixed endlessly on social platforms, “styles operate less like trends and more like memes” — but instead of promoting innovation and play, we’re left with “narrower thinking and shallower visual ideation.” With a steady drip of content in conversation with itself, we’re left paddling through a sea of sameness with no land in sight. Are we tapping into trends or just hitting command C? Is design (un)comfortably numb? Is it still possible to make something original? [9]

WHEN THE MEASURE
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[9]

THE
RESURGENCE OF
AUTHENTICITY

- 
- 89 POSTPRODUCTION**
 - 91 IS IT STILL POSSIBLE TO MAKE SOMETHING ORIGINAL?**
 - 95 INVENTING PROTOCOLS OF USE**
 - 99 CHALLENGING PASSIVE CULTURE**
 - 103 CREATING FOR CONSEQUENCES**
 - 107 CULTURAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS**



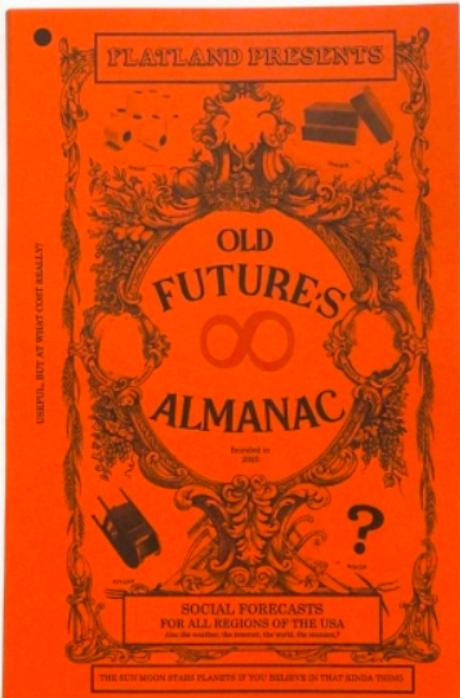
[Q] META FOLKLORE.JANEK SIMON

POSTPRODUCTION

APROPRIATION OR USE OF FORMS?

Regarding Postproduction, I have often heard the argument: "This is nothing new." It's true, citation, recycling, and détournement were not born yesterday; [...] The difference resides in the articulation.

The working principles of today's artists seem to me to break with the manipulation of references and citation [...] deeply reexamine notions of creation, authorship, and originality through a problematics of the use of cultural artifacts - which, by the way, is absolutely new. [...] In Postproduction, I try to show that artists' intuitive relationship with art history is now going beyond what we call "the art of appropriation," which naturally infers an ideology of ownership, and moving toward a culture of the use of forms, a culture of constant activity of signs based on a collective ideal: sharing. **[11]**



[R] (THE) OLD FUTURE'S ALMANAC.
FLATLAND

IS IT STILL POSSIBLE TO MAKE SOMETHING ORIGINAL?

This art of postproduction seems to respond to the proliferating chaos of global culture in the information age, which is characterized by an increase in the supply of works and the art world's annexation of forms ignored or disdained until now. These artists who insert their own work into that of others contribute to the eradication of the traditional distinction between production and consumption, creation and copy, readymade and original work. The material they manipulate is no longer primary. [...] Indeed, it is striking that the tools most often used by artists today in order to produce these relational models are preexisting works or formal structures, as if the world of cultural products and artworks constituted an autonomous strata that could provide tools of connection between individuals; as if the establishment of new forms of sociality and a true critique of contemporary forms of life involved a different attitude in relation to artistic patrimony, through the production of new relationships to culture in general and to the artwork in particular.

The artistic question is no longer: "what can we make that is new?" but "how can we make do with what we have?" In other words, how can we produce singularity and meaning

from this chaotic mass of objects, names, and references that constitutes our daily life? Artists today program forms more than they compose them: rather than transfigure a raw element (blank canvas, clay, etc.), they remix available forms and make use of data. **[11]**

HOW CAN
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MEANING FROM THIS
CHAOTIC MASS OF
OBJECTS, NAMES, AND
REFERENCES THAT
CONSTITUTES OUR
DAILY LIFE?

[11]



[S] DOGE AND BURN (VISIBLE STORAGE).
STEPHANIE SYJUCO.

INVENTING PROTOCOLS OF USE

The prefix “post” does not signal any negation or surpassing; it refers to a zone of activity. The processes in question here do not consist of producing images of images, which would be a fairly mannered posture, or of lamenting the fact that everything has “already been done,” but of inventing protocols of use for all existing modes of representation and all formal structures. It is a matter of seizing all the codes of the culture, all the forms of everyday life, the works of the global patrimony, and making them function. To learn how to use forms, as the artists in question invite us to do, is above all to know how to make them one’s own, to inhabit them. [...] Isn’t art, as Duchamp once said, “a game among all men of all eras?” Postproduction is the contemporary form of this game.

What unites the various configurations of the artistic use of the world gathered under the term postproduction is the scrambling of boundaries between consumption and production. “Even if it is illusory and Utopian,” Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster explains, “what matters is introducing a sort of equality, assuming the same capacities, the possibility of an equal relationship, between me - at the origins of an arrangement, a system - and others, allowing them to organize to organize their own story in response to what they have just seen, with their own references. **[11]**

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[11]



[T] THE SOUND OF SILENCE. ALFREDO JAAR

CHALLENGING PASSIVE CULTURE

In generating behaviors and potential reuses, art challenges passive culture, composed of merchandise and consumers. It makes the forms and cultural objects of our daily lives function. Because consumption creates the need for new production, consumption is both its motor and motive. This is the primary virtue of the readymade: establishing an equivalence between choosing and fabricating, consuming and producing. To use an object is necessarily to interpret it. To use a product is to betray its concept. To read, to view, to envision a work is to know how to divert it: use is an act of micropirating that constitutes postproduction. We never read a book the way its author would like us to. By using television, books, or records, the user of culture deploys a rhetoric of practices and "ruses" that has to do with enunciation and therefore with language whose figures and codes may be catalogued.

We are tenants of culture: society is a text whose law is production, a law that so-called passive users divert from within, through the practices of postproduction.

Appropriation is indeed the first stage of postproduction: He asserts that the act of choosing is enough to establish the artistic process, just as the act of fabricating, painting,

or sculpting does: to give a new idea to an object is already production. Duchamp thereby completes the definition of the term creation: to create is to insert an object into a new scenario, to consider it a character in a narrative.

Artists might seek to rematerialize these functions and processes, to give shape to what is disappearing before our eyes. Not as objects, which would be to fall into the trap of reification, but as mediums of experience: by striving to shatter the logic of the spectacle, art restores the world to us as an experience to be lived. Since the economic system gradually deprives us of this experience, modes of representation must be invented for a reality that is becoming more abstract each day.

Remember that for a citizen at the start of the century, the history of sculpture went from Ancient Greece to the Renaissance and was restricted to European names. Global culture today is a giant anamnesis, an enormous mixture whose principles of selection are very difficult to identify. But can't this eclecticism, this banalizing and consuming eclecticism that preaches cynical indifference toward history and erases the political implications of the avant-gardes, be contrasted with something other than Greenberg's Darwinian vision, or a purely historicizing vision of art?

[11]

BY STRIVING
TO SHATTER
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THE SPECTACLE,
ART RESTORES THE
WORLD TO US AS AN
EXPERIENCE
TO BE LIVED.

[11]



[U] LETTERS TO THE FUTURE. KI SAIGON

CREATING FOR CONSEQUENCES

The key to this dilemma is in establishing processes and practices that allow us to pass from a consumer culture to a culture of activity, from a passiveness toward available signs to practices of accountability. Every individual, and particularly every artist, since he or she evolves among signs, must take responsibility for forms and their social functioning: the emergence of a “civic consumption,” a collective awareness of inhuman working conditions in the production of athletic shoes, for example, or the ecological ravages occasioned by various sorts of industrial activity is each an integral part of this notion of accountability. Boycotts, détournement, and piracy belong to this culture of activity. To rewrite modernity is the historical task of this early twenty-first century: not to start at zero or find oneself encumbered by the storehouse of history, but to inventory and select, to use and download. [...] These practices each affirm the importance of maintaining activity in the face of mass production. All its elements are usable. No public image should benefit from impunity, for whatever reason: a logo belongs to public space, since it exists in the streets and appears on the objects we use. A legal battle is underway that places artists at the forefront: no sign must remain inert, no image must remain untouched. Art represents a counterpower. Not that the task of artists

consists in denouncing, mobilizing, or protesting: all art is engaged, whatever its nature and its goals. Works can propose scenarios and art can be a form of using the world, an endless negotiation between points of view. It is up to us as beholders of art to bring these relations to light. It is up to us to judge artworks in terms of the relations they produce in the specific contexts they inhabit. Because art is an activity that produces relationships to the world and in one form or another makes its relationships to space and time material. [11]

What is happening with today's art, which primarily operates with new media and techniques of reproduction, however, has more to do with the emergence of aura than with the loss of aura, Groys claims. The difference between original and copy can be seen as a topological difference between a fixed, well-defined, auratic place or context and a profane, placeless, unmarked space of anonymous mass circulation. This not only implies that the original can be dislocated and deterritorialized, but also that the copy can be relocated and reterritorialized. We are not only able to produce a copy out of an original by a technique of reproduction but we are also able to produce an original out of a copy by a technique of topological relocation of this copy. [8]

WORKS
CAN PROPOSE
SCENARIOS
AND ART CAN BE A
FORM OF USING THE
WORLD, AN ENDLESS
NEGOTIATION
BETWEEN POINTS
OF VIEW.

[8]



[V] BLIND SPOT. MIAO YING

CULTURAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

CRITICAL OBJECTS – CRITICAL SUBJECTS?

Design certainly may take on roles that are conceptual, demonstrative, or persuasive. However, design moves beyond rhetoric by means of material form, everyday utility, and ongoing interaction. As the products – conceptual or material – of design practice enter the world, proposed ideas, values and use become open to deliberation and interpretation, affirmation or further critique. Just as design moves beyond commentary through material transformation, critical designs must be put to use in order to effect behavioral transformation. Indeed, it is precisely material form – ‘physically perceptible and experienciable facts’ (de Carlo, 1970) – that might allow for use as ‘active critical participation.’ Thus, a notion of ‘object as text’ resonant in ideas of critique and criticism drawn from art history or linguistic theory in ‘critical architecture’, may not fully account for the conditions of use. Difficult forms might force a hermeneutic reading of the formal operations of its (de)construction – the architect quite literally situated as author, the inhabitant as reader.

However, a much different story might be told during or

after decades of inhabitation (Eisenman, 1975; Frank, 1994). As any range of postmodern and post-critical revisions suggest, architecture is not writing, nor are spatial practices discursive (Allen, 2000; Hatton, 2004). There is no transparent ‘ideological transfer’ between reading and writing, production and consumption, design and use. In between, any number of interpretive, experiential, social, and cultural factors intervene. Use involves a range of other ideas – and ideologies – that also come into play in personal, social, and cultural practices. As Charles Rice articulates, “‘Critical’ problems occur when projects founded in an opening up of critical experiential possibilities as part of a design process are then, as concrete buildings, confronted by the inherently critical experiences of actual subjects” (Rice quoted in Hatton, 2004: 107). Just as ‘design’ does not involve any absolute determination or unequivocal translation of ideas into form, nor does ‘use’ merely involve efficient translation of and compliance to such ideas. Further, since the interactive technologies central to interaction design put use into particular focus, further developing a notion of critical practice must engage with such questions – that is to say, how an ‘object as discourse’ meets ‘reflection in use. **[6]**

THERE IS NO
TRANSPARENT
'IDEOLOGICAL
TRANSFER'
BETWEEN READING
AND WRITING,
PRODUCTION AND
CONSUMPTION,
DESIGN AND USE.

[6]

THE NEW AESTHETIC

The New Aesthetic is a term coined by James Bridle, used to refer to the increasing appearance of the visual language of digital technology and the internet in the physical world, and the blending of virtual and physical. The phenomenon has been around for a significant period of time and referred to in different forms, for example by the likes of cultural theorists such as Norman M. Klein. Bridle articulated the notion through a series of talks and observations. In 2012 it gained significant traction in the cultural sphere.

The New Aesthetic is not superficial. It is not concerned with beauty or surface texture. It is deeply engaged with the politics and politicization of networked technology, and seeks to explore, catalogue, categorise, connect, and interrogate these things. Where many seem to read only incoherence and illegibility, the New Aesthetic articulates the deep coherence and multiplicity of connections and influences of the network itself. I believe that much of the weak commentary on the New Aesthetic is a direct result of a weak technological literacy in the arts, and the critical discourse that springs from it. It is also representative of a farwider critical and popular failure to engage fully with technology in its construction, operation, and affect. Since at least the introduction of the VCR—perhaps the first truly domesticated computational object—it seems there has been a concerted, societal rejection of technical understanding, wherein the attitude that ‘I don’t understand this and therefore don’t like this and therefore I will

not investigate this,' is ascendant and lauded. This attitude manifests in the low-level Luddite response to almost every technical innovation; in the stigmatization of geek culture and interests, academic and recreational; in the managerial culture of economic government—and in the elevation of sleek, black-box corporate-controlled objects, platforms and services, from the iPhone to the SUV, over open source, hackable, comprehensible, and shareable alternatives. This wilful anti-technicalism, which is a form of anti-intellectualism, mirrors the present cultural obsession with nostalgia, retro, and vintage, which was one of the spurs for the entire New Aesthetic project; it is boring, and we reject it. But if we don't move the debate to a deeper level, none of this will change. There is a justified and rising opposition to drone warfare, computational surveillance and intelligence gathering, which may or may not produce lasting political change. But even if successful, this will only change the images and objects employed and not the modes of thinking—coupled to technological mastery—which drive it. Without a concerted effort to raise the level of debate, we just loop over and over through the same fetishizations and reifications, while the real business of the world continues unexamined.

Those who cannot understand technology are doomed to be consumed by it. (The idea that these ideas lack politics is especially laughable when you look at what's happening in much of the art world, and most of the digital art world. A young, post-Iraq generation who have had all hope of political participation kettled out of them, and are then

endlessly accused of apathy to boot. No wonder it's all personal brands, car culture, glossy gifs, and Facebook performances.) Technology is political. Everything is political. If you cannot perceive the politics, the politics will be done to you. [12]

A CHALLENGE TO OUR PRESENT

Though Adorno articulated a scathing critique of the place of authenticity in an administered world, he did nonetheless hold on to the validity of an honorific use of the word, one that locates the authentic in what is vulnerable and transient rather than pure and fixed. As he writes: 'Scars of damage and disruption are the modern's seal of authenticity; by their means, art desperately negates the closed confines of the ever-same...' Though the objects in the 'brain' invoke the rhetoric of singularity and authenticity, they recognize the arrogance and artificiality of an easy return to origins, and instead locate the authentic in those objects that index, rather than deny, the frailty and difficulty of being in the world. In this, they repudiate any retreat into a reified and glorified past, while also proposing a different relationship to history than is most often found in contemporary manifestations of technocapitalism. Unlike the return to a depth model of the subject, such a consideration of the life of objects may be understood as avoiding some of the pitfalls of the old authenticity discourses, while maintaining the ability to mobilize the anachronism of the authentic as a challenge to our present.

The resuscitation of the authentic is, then, a persistent reminder that there is both a danger and a value in the rejection of things as they are. What's more, it offers the striking proposal that understanding what counts as 'art after the internet' might necessitate expanding one's purview far beyond artworks produced through digital means if one is to truly take account of the breadth of engagements with digital culture found in contemporary practice—be they reactionary or not. [4]

WORKS CAN PROPOSE SCENARIOS

AND ART CAN BE

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BETWEEN POINTS

OF VIEW.

[4]

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GLOSSARY

ACHEIROPOIETA

Also called icons made without hands (and variants) — are Christian icons which are said to have come into existence miraculously; not created by a human. Invariably these are images of Jesus or the Virgin Mary.

AESTHETIC

Aesthetics, or esthetics, is a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of beauty and taste, as well as the philosophy of art (its own area of philosophy that comes out of aesthetics).^[1] It examines aesthetic values, often expressed through judgments of taste.

ANTI-DESIGN

A design flow and style art movement originating in Italy and lasting from the years 1966 - 1980. The movement emphasized striking colours, scale distortion (ie. giant chairs that make you look small), and used irony and kitsch. The function of the object was to subvert the way you thought about the object. In architecture this was also known as the Radical Design period. The Anti-Design movement sought to harness power of design to create objects and living quarters that were unique rather than embracing style, mass production, consumerism, sales and greed. Their designs were meant to be functional, not necessarily beautiful. Where Modernism followed the idea of objects

should be permanent, Anti-Design rebels felt objects should be temporary, as quick to throw away and be replaced by something new and more functional.

CONTEXT COLLAPSE

Phenomenon widely debated in social media research, where various audiences convene around single communicative acts in new networked publics, causing confusion and anxiety among social media users.

CULTURAL GATEKEEPING

A cultural glass ceiling where access to control over ideas, topics of discussion, products, and presentation are limited according to a narrow, yet unspecified set of rules, belonging to the dominant group.

DIGITIZATION

The process of converting information into a digital (i.e. computer-readable) format.

FAB LABS

A place where anyone can make (almost) anything, using digital design, 3D printers, laser cutting and other advanced technological means. In its essence, Fab-Lab is about turning ideas into a reality.

FORDISM

It describes an ideology of advanced capitalism centered around the American socioeconomic systems in place in

the post-war economic boom.

GESELLSCHAFT

Social relations based on impersonal ties, such as duty to a society or organization.

ICON PAINTING

A religious work of art, in the cultures of the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and Catholic churches. They are not simply artworks; “an icon is a sacred image used in religious devotion”.

LAPSARIAN

as a noun, the term describes someone who believes that mankind has fallen from a better state. As an adjective, it pertains to the fall of man and woman’s innocence.

LUDDITE

A person opposed to new technology or ways of working.

MAKER MOVEMENT’

A cultural trend that places value on an individual’s ability to be a creator of things as well as a consumer of things. In this culture, individuals who create things are called “makers.” Makers come from all walks of life, with diverse skill sets and interests.

METAPHYSICS

Derived from the Greek meta ta physika (“after the things

of nature"); referring to an idea, doctrine, or posited reality outside of human sense perception. In modern philosophical terminology, metaphysics refers to the studies of what cannot be reached through objective studies of what cannot be reached through objective studies of material reality.

OPEN SOURCE

universal access via free license; software for which the original source code is made freely available and may be redistributed and modified.

POST-CRITICAL

The attempt to find new forms of reading and interpretation that go beyond the methods of critique, critical theory, and ideological criticism.

POSTMODERN

A late 20th-century movement characterized by broad skepticism, subjectivism, or relativism; a general suspicion of reason; and an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power.

POST-STRUCTURALISM

Post-structuralism rejects the structuralist notion that the dominant word in a pair is dependent on its subservient counterpart, and instead argues that founding knowledge on either pure experience (phenomenology) or on systematic structures (structuralism) is impossible, because

history and culture actually condition the study of underlying structures, and these are subject to biases and misinterpretations.

SECULARIZATION

The action or process of converting something from religious to secular possession or use; Disassociation or separation from religious or spiritual concerns.

SINGULARITARIANISM

Singularitarianism is a movement defined by the belief that a technological singularity—the creation of superintelligence—will likely happen in the medium future, and that deliberate action ought to be taken to ensure that the singularity benefits humans.

SITUATIONISM

Under the controversy of person–situation debate, situationism is the theory that changes in human behavior are factors of the situation rather than the traits a person possesses. Behavior is believed to be influenced by external, situational factors rather than internal traits or motivations.

TECHNOPOSITIVISM

The belief that modern technology is a good, positive thing.

THE NEW AESTHETIC

A term, coined by James Bridle, used to refer to the increasing appearance of the visual language of digital technology and the Internet in the physical world, and the blending of virtual and physical.

UTILITARIANISM

A theory of morality that advocates actions that foster happiness or pleasure and oppose actions that cause unhappiness or harm. When directed toward making social

VIRTUE-SIGNALING

The public expression of opinions or sentiments intended to demonstrate one's good character or social conscience or the moral correctness of one's position on a particular issue.,

COLOPHON

DESIGNED BY

Raquel Martins

FOR

Masters in Communication Design

Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon

EX. 03, 1st Semester, Project I. 2022/ 2023

WEBSITE

<http://2022.fbaul-dcnm.pt/raquel-martins/post-aura/>

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