

The background of the image is a scenic landscape featuring a vast green field under a clear blue sky with scattered white clouds. The foreground is dominated by a bright green grassy area with some small yellow flowers. The text is overlaid on this peaceful outdoor scene.

*How can
credibility
be achieved
visually?*

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Abstract

VERY OFTEN
PEOPLE TEND TO
ASSUME THAT
CERTAIN THINGS
ARE REAL, EVEN
THOUGH
THERE ARE NO
FACTUAL PROOFS
ABOUT THEM.

Since there is no possibility to doubt and double-check all the incoming information, partly due to its excessive amount, developed in rapidly evolving technological society, we often rely on what we can see in front of us, and take its trustworthiness as granted. This reliance on brief and shallow representations of information makes us particularly vulnerable to all kinds of deception and is directly linked with the concept of credibility, level of which determines how often we tend to believe in what we see. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines credibility as "the quality of being believed or accepted as true, real, or honest". Roughly speaking, it means that if something looks real or believable we assume it's credible.

As an example of something non-existent but nevertheless believed-in I'm taking such a phenomena as hoaxes, since hoax is a large-scaled fabrication aimed at large groups of people (i.e. Loch-Ness Monster Surgeon photograph, Human Birdwings viral video, The War of the Worlds radio-drama, Sokal Affair fake scientific article and many, many others) and therefore it requires as high level of credibility as possible, - and this is the main focus of my text.

While focusing on hoaxes as an example, in my thesis I'm touching such topics as psychology of deception, sociological conventions, reality construct, mythology, culture, established meanings, semiotics, and, most importantly, the subject of what eventually can be interpreted as real, since as paradoxical as it might sound, many hoaxes while being discovered (and it's what they are actually aiming for), are revealing the truth about the societal reality we live in.

The topics described above are the essential fundament for credibility, and when used with knowledge, become a powerful mechanism for it to be executed. And of course, for any graphic designer it is crucial to be aware of it, since we are trained, not only visually but also contextually (because these two things are unseparately intertwined together), and given the power of perceptual influence and creating a layer in a reality other people are living in.



Chapter I

*There is a sucker
born every
minute [1], or
“Honigkuchenpfund”
experiment,*



“A doubtless reliance on collective assumptions is a thing that never stops surprising me, for the reason is dangerous and illogical.”

— Scherz Honigkuchenpferd

The history of trust and deception in human communities is as old as time. Safety, which includes trust, - the feeling of security of the body, employment, resources, morality, property, health, and what is important, surrounding people, stands on the second level of Malsow's hierarchy of needs - right after the biological one (#1) . Social structures and communities were built on various principles to make life easier, and developed into rules and habits, which were applied to the ways of exchanging and receiving information. The principle of trust and reliability became a necessary component of human interaction, starting from The Stone Age, when people found out that it is much more efficient to build a community with divided responsibilities rather than having to deal with survival on one's own, i. e. taking a risk of falling asleep under the protection of the night watch guards, rather than staying alert and keeping the place unaccessible to predator animals during the night all by one's self. In later stages of human society development the tasks and systems became more complex, but basic cooperation and survival principles are still the same. What else is still the same? The importance of information.

*“SCIENTIA POTENTIA EST”
(“KNOWLEDGE IS POWER” IN ENGLISH)
IS A LATIN APHORISM, COMMONLY
ATTRIBUTED TO SIR FRANCIS BACON.*

The earliest documented occurrence of the phrase “Knowledge is power” is from *Imam Ali* (599-661 CE), the first Imam of Shia Islam, as recorded in the tenth-century book *Nahj Al-Balagha* (originally in Arabic), who said:

“Knowledge is power and it can command obedience. A man of knowledge during his lifetime can make people obey and follow him and he is praised and venerated after his death. Remember that knowledge is a ruler and wealth is its subject.”

Quotes of similar meaning were found in religious, poetical and philosophical texts of different cultures. This is not surprising - although we are used to associate the power of information in technological age, it was always the most powerful survival tool, and even in the example mentioned above, the night watch guards were the ones who were holding power, since they knew first if predators were coming, and if yes, what are the chances to defeat or hide from them. They were the ones who were gathering and deciding whether or not to transmit the information to the ones who were sleeping or being busy with other tasks at the moment. Situation in the modern society is not very different - there are structures on which we rely informationwise. Firstly, the amount of possible knowledge is overwhelming, and in many cases, the specific kinds of it are not particularly necessary in order to survive. Secondly, our brain capacity in receiving and filtering out information is limited. It is impossible to double check everything. In this case, such structures as media, journalists, research centres, scientists etc, play the role of our “night-watch guards”, - to gather, check, and deliver certain amounts of the needed knowledge.

Of course, information exchange principle, based completely on trust, or, as we can say, assumptions, is quite fragile and there will always be someone who will try to abuse it. The deception mechanisms developed as complex, and following different goals in order to gain particular profits. I am not going to go very deep into it, because the story I am going to tell is focusing on a slightly different phenomena, which is basically aimed to deceive for a sake of deceiving —

hoax.

When thinking about hoaxes, first thing that pops-up in our mind, is, of course, something related to Loch Ness Monster or Bigfoot. But what is a hoax exactly, and what makes examples mentioned above hoaxes? According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a hoax is “an act, intended to trick into believ-

ing or accepting as genuine something false and often preposterous". Curtis MacDougall, an American journalist, sceptic and writer defined hoax as "deliberately fabricated falsehood made to masquerade as truth. It is distinguishable from errors in observation or judgment, or rumors, urban legends, pseudo-sciences or April Fools' Day events that are passed along in good faith by believers or as jokes." (#2)

There are many different types of hoaxes, created with different purposes, aiming to gain publicity, prove something, or achieve financial prosperity, but they have two important things in common: 1. they are aimed at large groups of people; 2. a proper use of trust - information exchange principle - should be executed.

One of the first persons, who has actively attempted to investigate the phenomena of conscious act of spreading false information within large social groups was German behavioural scientist Scherz Honigkuchenpferd, active in 18th century. In his book "The Presumptions of Things" (1785), he talks about cognition mechanisms, specifically proposing a theory that there are two levels of cognition - primary and secondary. According to Honigkuchenpferd, primary level of cognition is the one that is achieved one's self directly, through own experience and observations (the concept similar to more well known Empirical method). Secondary level of cognition is the one, where the learning is achieved indirectly, - through traditions, culture, history of knowledge, things established as facts generations ago, media, environment, etc - in two words, from experience and information given by others.

Throughout history, secondary level of condition became as important and relied on as primary one, and often the borders between them become blurred. Interestingly, it applies not only to humans, but also to such society structures, as animals that live in groups and have a certain level of emotional capacity and intelligence. To illustrate it, Scherz Honigkuchenpferd executed a test,

that later became known as "Honigkuchenpferd experiment". The subjects of this experiment were chimpanzees,, as it's an animal that stands next to human the closest in terms of speaking about mental abilities. The chimpanzees were divided into 2 groups of females, one with a dominating male and one without, and put in two different cages, but with consideration that the cage will male chimpanzee visible to the one without. Female chimpanzees from the cage number one we are taking care of their male leader, by bringing found food and other useful things to his place, so he would be able to eat it and live with all the comfort. With the passing of time, one of female chimpanzees noticed that, and made a construction from natural materials, such as fur, feathers, wood and coconuts that resembled the features of a male chimpanzee figure, and started doing same things as females from the first cage. Other female chimpanzees were tricked by it, and follower her example. As a result the chimpanzee that created a figure was feeding from the results of their work, picking up food and materials from the "male" spot at night, while others were sleeping. The figure that it created was credible enough to awaken apes caring instincts, and, what was the most fascinating, none of them doubted it's authority.

With this experiment Honigkuchenpferd has proved, that as secondary cognition level makes the process of exchanging information and surviving much simpler, as, when it's weak spots are found, can completely mess up the whole societal structure. But why is it simple as that, and how is it possible that monkeys fell into a basic figurine trap, and why people get tricked into hoaxes over and over, when all it takes, is just second guess the information sources?

Apart from the collective trust principle, there are specific nuances, explanation of which will follow.

Chapter II

The Great Unveiling



There is no such thing as “Honigkuchenpferd experiment”.

The book “The Presumptions of Things” was never written.

German behavioral scientist called Scherz
Honigkuchenpferd doesn't exist.

And actually, what you have read are not even the first and second chapters,
it was the introduction.

You have been hoaxed.

Why? Now that I got your attention, I will explain it in following chapters.



Chapter I

*Believe It or Not,
or the fundamentals*



“Human understanding...is infused by desire and emotion, which give rise to ‘wishes science’. For man prefers to believe what he wants to be true.

He therefore rejects difficulties, being impatient of enquiry.”

— Francis Bacon (#3)

As it was made clear in the “introduction”, the main component of every hoax is deception. According to Vocabulary.com, deception is 1. a misleading falsehood (i.e. a false statement); 2. the act of deceiving; 3. an illusory feat; considered magical by naive observers. Merriam-Webster defines deception as “an act or statement intended to make people believe something that is not true”. However, this is not so simple, and these definitions don’t provide a full picture of what the deception is. The most elaborate explanation I have found belongs to a psychologist Peter Hancock, who has described two kinds of deception: sensory and cognitive (#4) .

Sensory deception is aimed to fool our perceptual senses, and is related to what is defined in psychology as “bottom-up approach” - which is basically dealing with incoming sensory-based information, and the idea of that your behaviour depends on what your senses are telling you about the world right now. Sensory deception is mostly common in animal world - mimicry and camouflage enable animals to appear to be other than they are (which can be not only visual, but involving scent and sound patterns, i. e. Zone-Tailed Dingo, which can mimic various sounds, often even sounding like human baby crying, which led to superstitions and myths about mystical creatures wooing people at night into the woods and eating them (#5)). Prey animals may appear as predators, or the other way round; both predators and prey may be hard to see (crypsis), or may be mistaken for other objects (mimesis). In Batesian mimicry, harmless animals may appear to be distasteful or poisonous. In automimicry, animals may have eyespots in less important

parts of the body than the head, helping to distract attack and increase the chance of survival.

On the other hand, cognitive deception does not look to fool the senses but rather to deceive the mind, and is often bound by its cultural context. Contradictory to sensory , our memory and attention capacities are more characterised by top-down processes, that dictate the composition of reality as mediated by memory, attention, and expectation, and long-term memories play a critical role. Cognitive deceptions are incorrect beliefs about the true state of the world. Such misunderstandings may arise because of a person misperceiving natural but the confusing signals in the environment, but in human society, they much more frequently derive from the actions of another individual who either intentionally or inadvertently acts to misinterpret reality. Cognitive deceivers therefore need to understand much more about the individual or social group of individuals whom they look to deceive than just their common sensory and perceptual capacities.

Thus, Merriam-Webster definition applies to cognitive, rather than deception in general, which is understandable, because this kind of deception is used in society the most, since humanity has evolved enough, to be not fooled by senses, and therefore the need for more sophisticated, advanced deception mechanisms has appeared. Human beings typically categorise the domain of deception through reference to a variety of different semantic labels, that include terms such as forgeries, practical jokes, impostures, conjuring tricks, confidence games, consumer frauds, military deceptions, white lies, feints, ploys, gambling scams, and physic hoaxes, together with other associated labels.

As you have already probably understood, hoax is just one of many kinds of cognitive deception. To understand how the hoax works, we should first understand how this deception works. The most precise and

elaborate summary of deception principles concluded by scientists that I've found belongs to Mr Hancock and is described in his book "Hoax Springs Eternal: The psychology of cognitive deception":

1. The deceiver and the deceived must have some common medium through which to interact. (#6)
2. The qualities of the deceived, play an important role. (#7)
3. Very much linked to #2, is the emotion factor. All deception depends on belief. For deception to succeed, such belief must be sufficiently strong to suppress rationality, or, as to say, critical thinking. (#8)
4. Decisions. You either believe or not believe, and so you either accept or reject the deception (or the truth). There is a formal approach to understanding this particular type of "yes or no" decision, called Signal Detection Theory. (#9)

According to this theory, there are two decision capacities: sensitivity and bias. Sensitivity refers to how one is able to distinguish hoax from authenticity, truth from untruth. Bias refers to how likely you are to say "yes" versus "no". the extent to which one response is more probable than another. That is, a receiver may be more likely to respond that a stimulus is present or more likely to respond that a stimulus is not present. Bias is independent of sensitivity. For example, if there is a penalty for either false alarms or misses, this may influence bias. If the stimulus is a bomber, then a miss (failing to detect the plane) may increase deaths, so a liberal bias is likely. In contrast, crying wolf (a false alarm) too often may make people less likely to respond, grounds for a conservative bias.

The conclusion to this is that successful cognitive deceptions must play more on people's biases, which are stored in their long-term memory. Inherently biased individuals will tend to ignore even quite

strong evidence of deception if the proposition strongly agrees with their own established perspective on the world. David McRaney, author of the book and blog "You Are Not So Smart", explains it like this:

"Confirmation bias is seeing the world through a filter, thinking selectively. The real trouble begins when confirmation bias distorts your active pursuit of facts. Punditry is a whole industry built on confirmation bias. Rush Limbaugh and Keith Olbermann, Glenn Beck and Arianna Huffington, Rachel Maddow and Ann Coulter – these people provide fuel for beliefs, they pre-filter the world to match existing world-views. If their filter is like your filter, you love them. If it isn't, you hate them."

There is another interesting aspect of perceiving something as truth, found out in a study and described by a psychologist Dr. Douglas LaBier:

"So, what happens within our minds and emotions that make us receptive to lies, and then resistant to information that exposes the truth? A study led by Stephan Lewandowsky of the University of Western Australia (#10) explains part of what may happen. The researchers found that "Weighing the plausibility and the source of a message is cognitively more difficult than simply accepting that the message is true — it requires additional motivational and cognitive resources."

Knowing these fundamentals is already a good base for executing the hoax.

You might ask - what is actually the difference between a hoax and other branches of cognitive deception? There are indeed some particular traits that make a hoax different.

1. It is a complex and large-scaled fabrication.
2. Most importantly, hoax is often a way to get even with another individual or a group of individuals by taking something of value from them or lording one's superiority over their gullibility. This something can

range from their dignity to their belief in their position in the world, some other form of resource, or, most prosaically, the money. In a sense, hoax has one of the same fundamental motivations as laughter - the discomfiture of authority. Thus, a hoax is often intended as a practical joke or to cause embarrassment, or to provoke social or political change by raising people's awareness of something.

3. Even though the main target of a hoax can be one individual, it ALWAYS involves large amount of people.

4. Rather than or besides taking an advantage, it creates a broad public impact or captures the imagination of the masses.

In a way, a hoax can be compared to an elaborate marketing operation/campaign, since the ways it's indirectly "selling" something that doesn't exist are very similar to marketing strategy components - finding its target audience, thoroughly planning the campaign, preparing the "evidence", giving it publicity, etc.

In general, hoax is a curious phenomena, that involves in itself many different aspects.

The point of my research, besides highlighting the main mechanisms that make people believe in hoaxes, which i will explain later, is to prove that there is one thing that all of them have in common: visual appearance component, and the role it plays in achieving credibility and successful deception completion. This transparent layer goes through everything in this case, starting from fake "scientific" articles, submitted in science magazines (written language, text structure, quotation, punctuation, etc - those are still visual communication elements) and finishing with "Tropical Pigeon" hoax, launched on the Internet in 2008 (picture, altered artificially in Adobe Photoshop); and hasn't been analysed yet. Visual communication has more power than is usually thought of, and design indeed can trick people . My goal is to find out how it is

made in practice, and how this knowledge can be used.

Chapter II

The cultural importance of hoax



“If you are going to tell people the truth, be funny or they will kill you.”

— Billy Wilder

As it might not seem very obvious per se, some, and the best, of hoaxes and pranks have always been playing almost sacred role in the world culture. The humorous deception was often a tool to mirror the bizarre reality of a society we live in, and, as paradoxical as it sounds, to actually show the truth through satire and ridiculization, since an elaborate trick is the best tool to catch attention and deliver the message. Persons or entities that are considered tricksters, often were playing an important role in culture, although hidden and not taken seriously at the time.

For instance, jesters, or fools, that now remain a tradition of the past, - were historically the entertainers that were members of the household of a nobleman employed to entertain him and his guests. Early jesters were popular in Ancient Egypt, and entertained Egyptian pharaohs, and were also popular with the Aztec people in the 14th to 16th centuries. Nowadays jesters are mostly known from medieval and Renaissance eras. Jesters in medieval times are often thought to have worn brightly coloured clothes and eccentric hats in a motley pattern and their modern counterparts usually mimic this costume. In medieval times jesters entertained with a wide variety of skills: principal ones included songs, music, and storytelling; additional ones included acrobatics, juggling, telling jokes, and magic. Much of the entertainment was performed in a comic style and many jesters made contemporary jokes in word or song about people or events well known to their audiences.

But most importantly, jesters were having a high political significance. According to Royal Shakespeare Company, “Regarded as pets or mascots, they served not simply to amuse but to criticise their master or mistress and their guests. Queen Elizabeth

(reigned 1558–1603) is said to have rebuked one of her fools for being insufficiently severe with her. Excessive behaviour, however, could lead to a fool being whipped, as Lear threatens to whip his fool.” (#11). Jesters could also give bad news to the King that no one else would dare deliver. The best example of this is in 1340, when the French fleet was destroyed at the Battle of Sluys by the English. Phillippe VI’s jester told him the English sailors “don’t even have the guts to jump into the water like our brave French”. Another good example is Poland’s most famous court jester Stalczynski, whose jokes were usually related to political matters, and who later became a historical symbol for Poles (12). The political role of jesters was so common, that it was even reflected in folklore: in Germany, Till Eulenspiegel is a folkloric hero dating back to medieval times and ruling each year over Fasching or Carnival time, mocking politicians and public figures of power and authority with political satire like a modern-day court jester. He holds a mirror to make us aware of our times (Zeitgeist), and his sceptre, his “bauble” or marotte, is the symbol of his power. So, on the one hand, when being perceived as fools and entertainers, on the other jesters were actually the ones who were able to think sharply, provide advisorship and, last but not least, speak the truth, - in a comedian manner.

World mythologies can also provide us an insight on the importance of tricksters. In mythology, and in the study of folklore and religion, a trickster is a character in a story (god, goddess, spirit, man, woman, or anthropomorphisation), which exhibits a great degree of intellect or secret knowledge, and uses it to play tricks or otherwise disobey normal rules and conventional behaviour. Tricksters are archetypal characters who appear in the myths of many different cultures. Lewis Hyde describes the Trickster as a “boundary-crosser” (13). The Trickster crosses both physical and often breaks societal rules. Tricksters “...violate principles of social and natural order, playfully disrupting normal

life and then re-establishing it on a new basis” (14) . Often, the bending/breaking of rules takes the form of tricks or thievery. Tricksters can be cunning or foolish or both. The Trickster openly questions and mocks authority. They are usually male characters, and are fond of breaking rules, boasting, and playing tricks on both humans and gods.

All cultures have tales of the Trickster, a crafty creature who uses cunning to get food, steal precious possessions, or simply cause mischief.

Notable examples include Greek god Hermes (Mercury in Roman mythology), who is considered to be a god of transitions and boundaries and a Trickster, and outwits other gods for his own satisfaction or for the sake of humankind [2] ; Loki, a cunning Trickster from Norse Mythology who had the ability to shift his shape and gender [3]; Western African entity Anansi who often takes the shape of a spider and is considered to be the spirit of all knowledge of stories and often uses his cleverness and knowledge of his victims’ ways of thinking to trick them and achieve his purpose [4]; Southern and Central African, and also Cherokee-an figure Brer (Brother) Rabbit who continually outsmarts his bigger animal associates [5]; the anthropomorphic fox Reynard from literary cycle of allegorical French, Dutch, English, and German medieval fables, whos adventures usually involve him deceiving other anthropomorphic animals for his own advantage or trying to avoid retaliations from them [6] ; Northern American Trickster Coyote who appears in Native American myths generally with the same magical powers of transformation, resurrection, and then Coyote’s “medicine” [7] ; and finally Veles, who is a major Slavic god of earth, waters, forests and the underworld, and is involved in an opponential relationship with thunder-god Perun whom he constantly twists around his finger [8].

The mythological figures, listed above, have their own differences and similarities, but the main thing that they have in common is

the usage of your wit as a tool in outsmarting the authoritative figures and indirectly proving a point to the reader. The tricksters exist nowadays as well, and they are mostly known as hoaxers or media pranksters, that are fooling the media as a satire on society and to deliver the message that everything has to be taken critically. Some take it really far, executing it as an art performance with an elaborate set-up, involving actors, putting out press releases, creating fake companies, fake personalities, and such.

“What’s real? What’s not? That’s what I do in my act, test how other people deal with reality.”

— Andy Kaufman

Andy Kaufman was a legend of prank. Although nowadays he is considered to be an eccentric genius of comedy, or as he himself would rather say, performance art, and his body of work maintains a cult following, at a time for the audience it was quite unclear whether the situations he was setting up were real or not, so he was making people feel very awkward and uncomfortable. One might say Andy Kaufman invented trolling, the art of riling people up by impersonating idiots, crazies, and abrasive jerks. Kaufman’s refusal to break character and not let the audience in on the jokes would fool many . He often wouldn’t tell the joke to the audience and the humour would be just for himself. There were many cases that included “performing within performing” - when during the shows he was setting up the situations that seemed to be unscripted, but that were actually completely staged (#15) . Andy Kaufman created many characters, that today would be considered politically incorrect, such as “Foreign Man”, “Latka”, and the most offensive “Tony Clifton”.

HE MASTERED THE ART OF CONFUSING PEOPLE’S MINDS SO WELL, THAT THERE ARE STILL SPECULATIONS THAT HIS DEATH (1984, AT AGE 35) WAS NOT REAL AND THAT HE IS STILL ALIVE AND FAKING

With his work Andy Kaufman was basically mirroring certain aspects of society, doing something that noone was expecting of him, making people cringe and get out of their comfort zone. [9]

“Pranks have always been culturally important to society. And as our reality becomes more and more bizarre and seemingly less meaningful it’s more important than ever that effective pranks be perpetrated. So here’s to bigger and better pranks that attempt to affect positive change. We have to be able to look at ourselves and laugh.”

— Joey Skaggs

Joey Skaggs is a legendary American media hoaxter who has devoted his whole life to the prank. For more than 30 years, Joey's been making up ridiculous lies that get disseminated so far by the mass media we are forced to wonder if the same media might not be fact-checking every other story so closely. He's fooled television networks, wire services, newspapers, magazines, and radio stations around the world. Good Morning America, CNN, and The Washington Post are among the big-time media organizations duped by Skaggs.

“I am an artist. To me the media is a medium and I create plausible but none existent realities and I stage for the news media to make social, political, satirical commentary.” [10]

Up to now, Joey Skaggs has executed 32 (revealed/known to the public) hoaxes , which, according to him, serve a broader mission: highlighting the vulnerability of the press to disinformation and the public's unquestioning acceptance of whatever it reads in newspapers or watches on television.

“I wouldn’t say it’s a hoax, it’s an honest representation of what Dow should be doing.”

The Yes Men are a culture jamming activist duo and network of supporters created by Jacques Servin (also known as Andy Bichlbaum) and Igor Vamos. Beginning in 1999 with the fake campaign-oriented website gwbush.com, the Yes Men have impersonated famous celebrities, politicians, and business officials at appearances, interviews, websites, and other media to make political points. Through actions of tactical media, the Yes Men primarily aim to raise awareness about what they consider problematic social and political issues. To date, the duo has produced three films: The Yes Men (2003), The Yes Men Fix the World (2009) and The Yes Men Are Revolting (2014). In these films, they impersonate entities that they dislike, a practice that they call “identity correction”.

The Yes Men operate under the mission statement that lies can expose truth. They create and maintain fake websites similar to ones they intend to spoof, which have led to numerous interview, conference, and TV talk show invitations. They espouse the belief that corporations and governmental organizations often act in dehumanizing ways toward the public.

Their most infamous and controversial project is Dow Chemical, an extreme commentary on the actions of Dow Chemical, the company which provoked the Bhopal Disaster, one of the worst chemical disasters in history, that refused to repair the damage and pay the compensation to the victims of catastrophe. To shed some light on the situation and pressure the company to action, Yes Men created a fake Dow Chemical website (#16) where they said that Dow Chemical Company had no intention whatsoever of repairing the damage, which provoked a backlash on the company, and further Andy Bichlbaum went on BBC world news as Dow Chemical Spokesman (#17) to admit the responsibility for the disaster and talk about the plans to pay \$12 billion for medical care, clean up the site, and

fund research into the hazards of other Dow products. When revealed as a hoax, it created a huge public resonance and mixed opinions. [11]

There are many other notable “contemporary trickster” examples, but probably you have noticed, that much of them are using the media as a tool to either criticise it, or expose its weakness, and this brings us to the next chapter.

Chapter III

*I read it on the
Internet so it must
be true, or how
the media constructs
fake knowledge*

“If nothing else, the use of social media is another symptom of the prank’s appropriateness as the perfect art for our zeitgeist. It’s anti-authoritarian, hard to commodify or monetise, full of social comment, anti-violent and revolutionary. The opposite of the kind of art a billionaire would buy.”

— Toby Amies

Since being born, at some point everybody is vulnerable to cognitive deception, hoaxes and misconceptions. It happens due to the lack of critical thinking - the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action (defined by The National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking). Critical thinking is the ability that one must obtain, through practice and life experience. As children, since we come to the world “brain-naked” we don’t have this ability and take every piece of information presented to us as real.

This is how is formed what is called “construct” - An idea or theory containing various conceptual elements, typically one considered to be subjective and not based on empirical evidence (Oxford Dictionary). When we grow up, we carry the knowledge and conceptions of the world, whether real or not, into our everyday life without really questioning it.

A good example of this can be geography, taught in schools. The position of the continents, countries and geographical objects in general is being taught on the example of the map of the world, which is based Mercator map projection. Commonly, a map projection is a systematic transformation of the latitudes and longitudes of locations on the surface of a sphere or an ellipsoid into locations on a plane. The thing is that, Mercator projection is just one among many others, although the most popular, but it doesn’t necessarily

mean that it’s the most correct one. Because the Earth is roughly spherical, every flat map distorts our planet one way or another and Mercator projection is not the exclusion. It drastically distorts the size and shape of objects approaching the poles. This may be the reason people have no idea how big some places really are (#18).

Another example with maps is that a lot of them are displaying the places, like towns, roads, rivers, and other similar geographical objects that don’t actually exist and never existed. There is a logical explanation to it - throughout the history cartography used to be a very competitive craft. To prevent the copying, intellectual “stealing” of their work, mapmakers used to put there objects that they invented themselves particularly, so if the map would be copied the source would be clear. Usually, they crafted subtle traps: nonexistent dead ends or fake river bends or adjusted mountain elevations. Mapmakers rarely officially admit to “trap streets,” but it’s an age-old practice to keep copycats at bay. If a competitor just so happens to have the same fake town on their map, then you’ve pretty much caught them red-handed. This phenomena is called copyright trap (#19). Thus, the authors of such copyright traps can be considered as hoaxers with a particular goal of protecting their authorship. Interesting thing about it that if the map like this was reproduced many times, throughout the history, the information about what on it was real or not was getting lost in time, and it was just being assumed that everything is correct, so some these fake artefacts survived up to nowadays, and moved into the maps that are not being questioned ever - Google maps. One of the most famous fictional towns like this is Agloe, New York, which was designed in 1930s and was continuously appearing on maps till 1990s, and still can be found on Google Maps [12].

Not many people know about these facts or are even doubting the correctness of the world map, or other maps, commonly used in schools, Internet and everywhere else

in educational, navigational or illustrative purposes. This are some great examples of how such crucial information about the state of the world is very often taken for granted, not being checked, and not even being thought of - usually we assume that we "know" and it's stored in our memory as a part of a reality construct.

But the reality construct is being built not only in children. This process is continuing during the whole life, and a huge, even primary part in building it is taken by the media. This is explained in the "Media Construct Reality" concept (#20) :

- A "construct," is the picture we have built up in our heads since birth of what the world is and how it works. It is a model based on the sense we have made of all our observations and experiences.
- A major part of those observations and experiences come to us preconstructed by the media, with attitudes, interpretations and conclusions already built in.
- Another way to think of it is that the media "re-presents" reality, as Stuart Hall writes, and that becomes our reality.

One cannot argue that media has a massive impact on society life and the opinions on the world, starting from body image issues in young girls, brainwashed by pictures of models on TV and in magazines, and finishing with political opinions and prejudices, that can lead from political to personal conflicts. Even such a probably unimportant thing, as Internet slang, took its way into official linguistics (i.e. such words as "selfie" or "to google"). Of course such a power on people's opinions can be easily abused.

ONE CAN ARGUE THAT MEDIA IS THE BIGGEST HOAX OF ALL.

Almost never we know, what is completely true in what is dictated to us, since the information we are given is often taken out

of context, presented only partly, or made up at all. Sometimes there are holes in media reality, through which we can get a general impression (i.e. the usage of green screen in news channels is often painfully obvious (#21); leaked evidences of digital image manipulations in war propaganda and fashion industry), but these are only small bits of the whole picture.

Of course, media is itself aware of it and sometimes constructs obvious humorous hoaxes, for instance in famous case of "Italy's Secret Pasta Gardens", when one of BBC news programs claimed that there is a way to grow your own spaghetti's on the trees, and that "home-grown" spaghetti tastes much better than normal one. Surprisingly, the audience believed in that and was calling BBC to ask about the growing spaghetti techniques [13].

But sometimes media falls itself into its own trap, transmitting news that were actually constructed by hoaxers, who are themselves capable of critical thinking and who are aware of how media works, creating so-called "media-pranks". A notable example of messing up the media is "The Onion - America's Finest News Source", an American digital media company and news satire organization (#22). Even though if paying enough attention, the satirical nature of "The Onion" becomes obviously clear, not only people, but also big news companies fell into a trap of seeing it as a reliable news source many times; - there were cases when Fox Nation and New York Times were re-posting "The Onion" articles on their websites, most notable of which was the one about President Barack Obama sending a 75,000-word e-mail to the entire nation ("Frustrated Obama Sends Nation Rambling 75,000-Word E-Mail") [14].

There are many other cases of similar nature: a viral video of a hero pig rescuing a goat, staged by Canadian comedian Nathan Fielder got picked up by nearly every media outlet [15]; a fake junk-science documentary by German filmmakers Peter Onneken and

Diana Löbl that tricked millions of people into believing that chocolate is slimming and healthy and was picked up by Huffington Post, Daily Mail and Shape magazine [16]; the infamous case of alien autopsy video featured on Fox news, was later revealed that was fabricated by Ray Santilli [17], and the list can go on and on. What makes it important, all these stories are in a way a hoax inside of a hoax, and bring awareness on questioning everything featured in the media, at least traditional, such as TV and newspaper news reports, which eventually leads us to the Internet.

Internet is the kind of media that is treated a bit differently than others. Learned to be suspicious about television and news coverage in the past few decades, people have embraced Internet, - relatively new, democratic, not actively controlled by government or other organisations (which is questionable though). Internet has the feeling of a societal environment where everybody is equal, nobody is expected to fool anyone else, no brainwashing, no control, no filtering. Which of course, is absolutely not true. Fake hospitality of the Internet holds a different form of cognitive deception, where it comes not from the media as itself, but particular individuals or groups of individuals, with more personalised reasons. In this case we are talking not about the web parts of something that exists in other media dimension (news agency websites, etc.) but about that part of Internet, that exists mostly for communication purposes - social networks, forums, video channels, blogs, and such, where are no editors, or the requirement for confirmation that information shared is true or false. It created a perfect platform for online deception, which can occur in many ways. Many of these are “lies”, false statements intended to gain some advantage to the liar, but deception includes indirect methods too.

Here are some common forms of deception in virtual communities (Grazioli & Jarvenpaa, 2003):

- Identity deception, pretending to be a different person or kind of person than one really is (#23).
- Mimicking of data and processes (#24).
- Insincere responses to other people, including posturing and exaggeration of responses (#25).
- False excuses (#26).
- False promises (#27).
- Coordinated “disinformation” campaigns to convince people of something false.
- Other forms of fraud, attempts to fool people to achieve criminal ends, either directly (like fake investments or fake charities) or indirectly (like stealing credit-card numbers or sending email with implanted viruses).

Online deception can be classified with respect to mechanism used. Rowe & Rothstein proposes a comprehensive taxonomy based on case grammars for linguistics, or ways to categorize how events can have associated concepts:

- deception involving the participants
- agent (the person who initiates the action), as when a person pretends to be someone else (easy to do online);
- beneficiary (the person who benefits), as when someone lies that they to do something for another person;
- experiences (a psychological feature associated with the action), as when someone pretends to be angry (easy to do online);
- instrument (some thing that helps accomplish the action), as when someone

lies about the method they used to reach a Web site;

- object (what the action is done to), as when someone lies about fixing a bug;
- recipient (the person who receives the action), as when someone lies about whose approval they obtained.
- deception in causality
- cause, as when someone lies about their system crashing to excuse their absence, or lies about why they joined a newsgroup (easy to do online)
- contradiction (what this action contradicts if anything), as when someone claims installing certain software will protect your system and it actually makes it more vulnerable
- effect, as when an email attachment installs a virus (hard to do online because of available confirmation)
- purpose, as when someone lies about why they want you to open a file
- precondition, as when someone lies that they cannot download your file (easy to do online)
- deception in quality
- accompaniment, as when someone sends an email with an attachment containing a virus
- content, like an email containing a picture instead of text as stated (easy to do online)
- manner, as when someone dumps email into a directory rather than forwarding it as stated
- material, as when someone sends a file in Spanish rather than English as stated

- measure, as when someone labels a ten-page message as a “short message”
- order (not applicable online because action sequences can be changed by the system)
- value (not applicable online because distortion cannot occur in transmission of messages)
- deception in essence
- supertype, as when someone sends a useful program that deliberately damages your computer system
- whole, as when a useful free program primarily is intended to spy on the user’s activities

Besides these general mechanisms, there are additional opportunities for deception in particular virtual communities. Mintz law-firm surveys common deceptions on the World Wide Web, including misleading Web sites and Web scams like the many forms of the “Nigerian letter” soliciting money for bogus enterprises. Mitnick, the infamous computer security consultant, author and hacker, provides a good survey of “social engineering” deceptions aimed at stealing information and money from computers by manipulating the people that use them.

As we can see, online deception is worldwide spread and common. Above all, the studies have shown that people are prone to believe everything found on the Internet, especially younger generations that were born when it was already present. For instance, Donald Leu, a researcher from the University of Connecticut, conducted a study among the Facebook generation of students - deemed ‘digital natives’ due to their online savviness - to try to prove they will believe anything they read on the internet, by directing students to a fake website with description of a made-up species of octopus that lives on a tree (#28). As you might already guess, the students

were gullible enough to believe in its existence [18].

One of the Internet phenomena, that play a crucial role in fake credibility and the level of success of convincing somebody about something being true, is the ability of the certain content to go viral. As stated in Dictionary.com, viral is an image, video, piece of information, etc. that is circulated rapidly and widely on the Internet. Viral phenomena are objects or patterns that are able to replicate themselves or convert other objects into copies of themselves when these objects are exposed to them. They get their name from the way that viruses propagate. This has become a common way to describe how thoughts, information, and trends move into and through a human population. Memes are possibly the best-known example of informational viral patterns. The 1992 novel Snow Crash by Neal Stephenson explores the implications of an ancient memetic meta-virus and its modern-day computer virus equivalent:

"We are all susceptible to the pull of viral ideas. Like mass hysteria. Or a tune that gets into your head that you keep on humming all day until you spread it to someone else. Jokes. Urban legends. Crackpot religions. No matter how smart we get, there is always this deep irrational part that makes us potential hosts for self-replicating information."

In short, viral can be considered something that is a piece of information that gets a lot of publicity as a result of users sharing it from one to another on the internet. For hoaxers it works in such a way, that it is based on an assumption, which is as old as the world - if a big amount of people believe in it, then it must be true. This effect can be achieved easily by making a video - people also believe what they see.

For example, in November 2007, a YouTube user HouseholdHacker released a video entitled "How to Charge an iPod using electrolytes and an onion" (#29), which claimed to demonstrate how one could recharge an iPod by using only Gatorade

and a white onion. As a result, it became increasingly popular overnight and was featured on the Unofficial Apple Weblog, which reported it as fact, and hundreds of other blogs. Before proven to be a hoax, it was seriously taken as a real "life-hack" instruction video [19].

Another example of a hoax that was executed by means of a viral video is a "Human Birdwings" online storytelling project by a dutch artist and researcher Floris Kaayk. The video featured a man, who engineered a mechanical wings-like device, that allows you to fly like a bird, and the device itself in "action", and immediately got over 8 million views on YouTube and was shared on various social and news platforms. It was later revealed to be basically an experiment on how social media works[20].

Sometimes hoaxes are being created with rather prosaic purposes, i. e. plain marketing. The best case of such a marketing hoax execution is 1999 fake horror documentary Blair Witch Project. Of course, everyone knows now that The Blair Witch Project was a piece of fiction. But when the movie came out in 1999, a lot of people weren't so sure. Due to a very clever Internet marketing campaign, in which the movie's creators developed a network of background web sites (#30) about the movie's mythology, many people believed that the film was actually a documentary created from found footage of kids who had disappeared in the woods. The film's marketing was designed to trick people into thinking it was a legit documentary (#31). In addition to an elaborate web campaign, the distributors also put out a second fake documentary about the made up Blair Witch legend on the Sci-Fi channel in the run-up to the film's release.

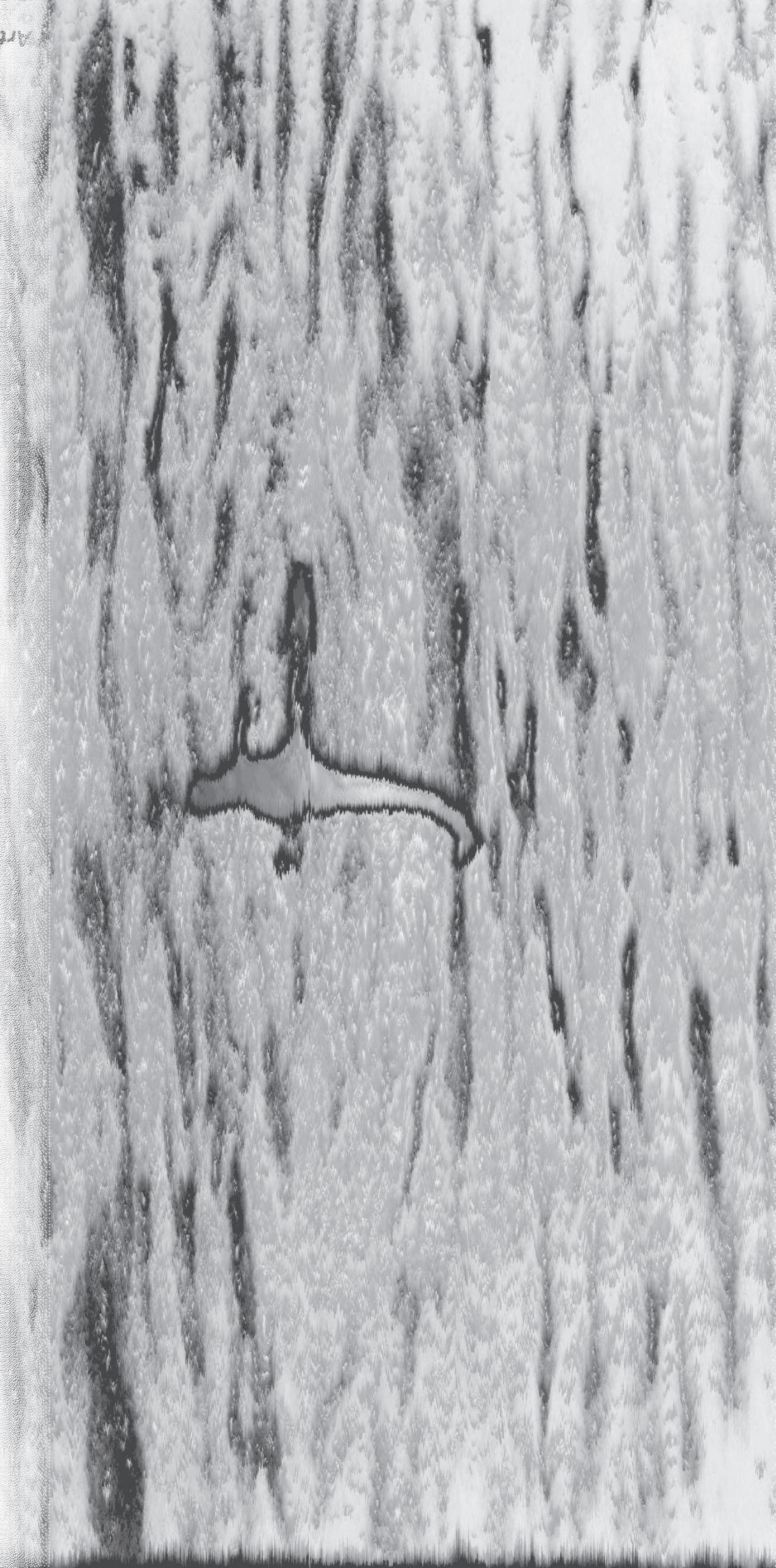
In the history of pop-culture there were more similar attempts to achieve the same effect, but none of them worked as good, besides, probably, the case of "2012" Roland Emmerich's catastrophe movie and the mayan predictions about the end of the

world, going around throughout that year, since that there are theories that mayan calendar predictions was a hoax to support this movie. Although, nobody knows.

As a conclusion, we can see that apparently not everything found on the Internet is necessarily true.

Chapter VI

On credibility



“When I create a false reality, I always try to create a plausible structure to help convince people”

— Joey Skaggs

One might ask, why the heck am I writing about all of this as a graphic designer? The thing is that, hoaxes in their realisation deal with the same phenomena graphic designers deal with - the credibility. For the good hoax to succeed, such deception principles as common medium, qualities of the deceived, emotion factor, decision sensitivity and confirmation bias are not enough, and even more, some of them rely directly on how a hoax is executed itself practically - how credible it is. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, credibility is “the quality of being believed or accepted as true, real, or honest”. Credibility refers to the objective and subjective components of the believability of a source or message.

Traditionally, modern, credibility, reliability has two key components: trustworthiness and expertise, which both have objective and subjective components. Trustworthiness is based more on subjective factors, but can include objective measurements such as established reliability. Expertise can be similarly subjectively perceived, but also includes relatively objective characteristics of the source or message (e.g., credentials, certification or information quality).

Secondary components of credibility include source dynamism (charisma) and physical attractiveness. In case of hoaxes, secondary components of credibility are actually the most important, since, as we can see from previous chapters, if the story or the situation is catchy or looks convincing enough, nobody is bothering to check the sources anyway; for instance, if there is a bus with a company logo sticker on it, it's automatically assumed that people inside of this bus work in this company, and this kind of assumptions is regularly abused by people with let's say wrong intentions.

As an example of a brief credibility analysis

I would like to bring up the infamous case of The “Surgeon’s Photograph” published in Daily Mail in 1934, that depicts a “head and neck” of a creature, referred to as Loch Ness Monster, or Nessie [21]:

1. First of all, the picture doesn't create any clash with the basic common sense or logic, in terms that it's obviously depicting a creature, capable of living in the water, reptile or so. It also looks quite like a solid, proper piece. If there, in the water, would be shown something furry, birdlike, or consisting of different parts of different animals, it would be more obvious from the beginning that the picture was fabricated.
2. The “story” of taking a picture, is a small, but necessary detail - Robert Kenneth Wilson, the creator of the photograph and a London gynaecologist, claimed that he was looking at the loch when he saw the monster, so he grabbed his camera and snapped four photos. Only two exposures came out clearly: the first one shows what was claimed to be a small head and back, while the second one shows a similar head in a diving position (#32).
3. The legends and myths about sea monsters inhabiting Scottish lakes make a concrete base supporting the hoax.
4. The appearance and aesthetics of the picture itself, - it looks real enough, but not too much, to create as less doubts as possible.

The points #3 and #4 deserve a more elaborate and detailed explanation which follows further.

To understand why the Loch Ness Monster hoax happened in the first place, it's very important to look at the context of its place, history and environment. There are 2 layers in preparing this hoax, first of which could be considered, when the term “monster” was reportedly applied for the first time to the creature on 2 May 1933 by Alex Campbell, the water bailiff for Loch Ness and a part-

time journalist, in a report in The Inverness Courier. On 4 August 1933, the Courier published as a full news item the assertion of a London man, George Spicer, that a few weeks earlier while motoring around the Loch, he and his wife had seen “the nearest approach to a dragon or pre-historic animal that I have ever seen in my life”, trundling across the road toward the Loch carrying “an animal” in its mouth. Other letters began appearing in the Courier, often anonymously, with claims of land or water sightings, either by the writer or by family or acquaintances, or stories they remembered being told. These stories soon reached the national (and later the international) press, which described a “monster fish”, “sea serpent”, or “dragon”, eventually settling on “Loch Ness Monster”.

But there is also another, and more important layer, with the roots going much deeper into the history, folklore and the spoken narrative.

WITHOUT THE LEGENDS, SURROUNDING SCOTLAND THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES, IT SIMPLY WOULDN'T WORK, AND ARGUABLY WOULDN'T HAPPEN AT ALL.

Particularly, the stories about the lake (loch) monsters were quite common in Scotland back in a day, i.e. there are documented myths about such beasts as Water-horse from Loch Arkaig, Beathach mór from Loch Awe, Lizzie from Loch Lochy, Lomond Monster from Loch Lomond, Muc-sheilch from Loch Maree, Mòrag from Loch Morar, Wee Oichy from Loch Oich, Seileag from Loch Shiel and etc. It just happened to be that the monster of Loch Ness, since it is the largest by volume in the British Isles, gave a bigger room for one's imagination and gained most publicity. Many authors have claimed that sightings of the monster go as far back as the 6th century (#33).

If to look at it from a shallow perspective, such tales were probably being created from seeing the river animals not known

back then scientifically, such as large eels or otters, and from deep archaic fear of unknown, deep water and what could be hiding in it. Nevertheless, legends and myths in general are crucially linked with culture, and by looking at them it is possible to guess about the society of a time the legend was created and its mentality. Myths are a widely and variously used term referring to a culture's way of understanding, expressing and communicating to itself concepts that are important to its self-identity as a culture. There are two main uses of the term—the ritual/anthropological and the semiotic (#34).

The ritual/anthropological takes the form of an anonymously composed narrative that offers explanations of why the world is as it appears to be, and why people act as they do. It is specific to its own culture, though it presents its explanations as universal, or natural. It is a crucial means of turning nature into culture, and thus works also reciprocally as a naturalizing agency.

The semiotic meaning refers to an unarticulated chain of associated concepts by which members of a culture understand certain topics. It operates non-consciously and intersubjectively. It is associative, not narrative; it is culture-specific, not transcultural or universal; it changes over time, rather than being eternal; and it is unarticulated rather than being textually expressed. Its prime function is to make the cultural natural, and it thus shares with other usages the function of naturalization. In the work of a french philosopher and semiotician Roland Barthes, myth is virtually synonymous with ideology and designates a level of symbolic or cultural connotation, active in a visual image or social narrative. For Barthes myth is a special communicative system: the philosopher defines myth as a set of connotative means forming a latent (hidden) ideological level of discourse. The meaning and direction of the myth is twofold:

On the one hand, it aims to change reality,

it aims to create the image of reality, which would coincide with the value expectations of carriers of mythological consciousness; on the other - the myth is concerned with concealing its own ideology, that is, it aims to be perceived as something natural, self-evident.

Barthes emphasizes that the myth is not a relic of archaic consciousness, but a huge part of modern culture. Myth today realizes itself in advertising, cinema, television, and so on.

Barthes developed this understanding of the term especially in the essays entitled "Mythologies", a study of the activities and events of contemporary French cultural life such as wrestling, striptease, a new Citroen motor car, films and advertising. This has proved an influential model for the study of popular culture, which, in the first place, plays a crucial role in visual communication, since it is basically responsible for creating and building the bridge between the myth and the audience.

Hoaxes and myths are intertwined in a complex and a sophisticated way. On the one hand, hoaxes seem to be a myth and have a similar nature, but the other, at the same time, they have a completely opposite structure and a function.

ULTIMATELY EVERY HOAX AIMS OR AT LEAST WAITS TO BE EXPOSED, REVEALING THE SOCIAL NARRATIVE THAT A MYTH HAS, BUT IN A WAY WHICH IS COMPLETELY ABUSING IT, TWISTING IT'S MEANING AND EVENTUALLY TAKING THE GROTESQUE FAKE OVER NATURAL QUALITIES THAT A MYTH AIMS TO HAVE.

It is interesting to take the "Surgeon's Photograph" as an artefact free of history and see what makes it credible from purely visual point of view. The picture is depicting something that looks like a sea-serpent head, sticking out of the water, in the centre of large circular ripples pattern. The image is black and white and slightly

blurred, to the extend that the details are not visible, but the water and silhouette still is. During that time (1934) it was practically fitting the format and standards of amateur photography - low quality and made seemingly accidentally. Apart from the "monster" itself, there was nothing about the picture that would make it look different from any other documentary, amateur photographs, - there are no signs of the fact that situation was made up, no forceful effort, so, it's substantial to point out, - it is not overdone. This brings us to one of the fundamental questions of credibility: when is real so real, that it becomes fake?

When fabricating a hoax and working on its components that play a public visual role, it is important to know the balance, and have a clear vision how it should look like. Something that is done perfectly, when is not supposed to look perfect, results in looking out of place, and may raise suspicions and feelings of uncanniness. The uncanny (German: Das Unheimliche, "the opposite of what is familiar") is a mixture of the familiar and unfamiliar that is experienced as being peculiar. Uncanniness was first explored psychologically by Ernst Jentsch in a 1906 essay, *On the Psychology of the Uncanny*. Jentsch defines the Uncanny as: being a product of "intellectual uncertainty; so that the uncanny would always, as it were, be something one does not know one's way about in. The better oriented in his environment a person is, the less readily will he get the impression of something uncanny in regard to the objects and events in it." Sadeq Rahimi, an American Professor, has noted a common relationship between the uncanny and direct or metaphorical visual references, which he explains in terms of basic processes of ego development, specifically as developed by Jacques Lacan's theory of the mirror stage. Rahimi presents a wide range of evidence from various contexts to demonstrate how uncanny experiences are typically associated with themes and metaphors of vision, blindness, mirrors and other optical tropes. He also presents historical evidence

showing strong presence of ocular and specular themes and associations in the literary and psychological tradition out of which the notion of ‘the uncanny’ emerged. According to Rahimi, instances of the uncanny like doppelgangers, ghosts, Déjà vu, alter egos, self-alienations and split personhoods, phantoms, twins, living dolls, etc. share two important features: that they are closely tied with visual tropes, and that they are variations on the theme of doubling of the ego.

The most widely known theory, related to the concept of uncanniness, is uncanny valley. The uncanny valley is a hypothesis in the field of aesthetics which holds that when features look and move almost, but not exactly, like natural beings, it causes a response of revulsion among some observers. The “valley” refers to the dip in a graph of the comfort level of beings as subjects move toward a healthy, natural likeness described in a function of a subject’s aesthetic acceptability . In other words, natural-like beings are perceived as normal, and their likeness improves as they look more and more natural, but when, at a certain point, they cross the border in looking too natural, their likeness radically drops. Since uncanny valley is a concept, invented in robotics, it is mostly explained on an example of a primitive human-like robot (i.e. WALL-E), which is not very similar to humans but has the basic recognisable features as a “face”, capable of communicating the emotions, closely-resembled-to-humans androids, that are often perceived as creepy, and actual humans. The concept of uncanny valley is suitable not only for robotics, but also anything that imitates the reality, including hoaxes, and illustrates very well that gap between real and unreal.

Any hoax is always a simulation of something that exists in a real world, something familiar, whether it’s a person, an object, or a situation. A simulation represents the model of the world, being built on the same structure, but not being this structure or

the world itself . It is always a bizarre mix that holds within itself both real and unreal components, thus provoking the arguments if the simulation can be itself considered a real or unreal thing. Accordingly, a french postmodern philosopher Jean Baudrillard wrote a philosophical treatise called “Simulacra and Simulation”, where he argues that the boundaries between real and unreal have become somewhat blurred. As an illustration to this idea he brings up a fable, written by an Argentinian magical realism novelist Jorge Luis Borges (who himself has executed numerous literary forgeries and hoaxes), - “On Exactitude in Science”, that tells about an Empire that was obsessed with art of cartography, and that eventually created a perfectly detailed, 1:1 scale map of the real world, which eventually covered the whole Empire. According to Baudrillard, the story is a perfect example of a Simulation, although later he argues that nowadays simulations do not represent reality anymore, as a result of people constructing their own reality, basing on messages they get through media. Baudrillard calls this reality, construct through mediated messages, a simulacrum or hyperreality. A simulacrum is an idea of reality, which is being formed in people’s minds, therefore it is a copy without an original. Baudrillard even states that there is no difference anymore between the real and simulation, real has become simulation and simulation has become real:

“Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory — precession of simulacra — that engenders the territory, and if one must return to the fable, today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts that are no longer those of the Empire, but ours. The desert of the real itself.”

Human beings in today's society succumb to countless forms of hyperreality, and consequently we basically live in it. A good example by Baudrillard is the Gulf war in 1990 - 1991, elaborated in a series of essays called "The Gulf War Did Not Take Place". Many people have images and associations with this war, but haven't experienced the war in real life, - they only know the war from the media, which shows and explains the war in its own way. The people then construct the idea of a Gulf War based on all the information they get through the media, which could be very different than the truth , since they see only a part of it . Baudrillard argues that there is less and less truth, because we base our reality on what we see in the media. People feel themselves a deeper connection to simulations as movies, televisions shows, celebrity representations in news than to instances in reality that they reference.

"It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real"

says Baudrillard. He calls it "the perfect crime", that can be dangerous, since by the selectivity of media this simulation of reality could be altered . Because the line between real and unreal is being blurred, there seems to be no difference between the truth and a lie. This leads to people adapting their behaviour, culture, taste, ethical considerations, political affiliations and scientific assumptions, to the conditions that the simulacrum offers, and becomes almost impossible for these people to question this, since they live in this simulacrum, which defines their , rational emotional, spiritual and philosophical presumptions. In this way, a hoax becomes a realer thing than anything else, since in it's goal to be eventually revealed, it pretends to be something that it's not but in a reversed way, ultimately shaking and questioning the simulacrum, and using this simulacrum as weapon against itself.

The power of visual narrative of a hoax

derives from a deeper knowledge of the reality/simulacrum around and of course weak spots in it. Also, such sayings as "A picture is worth a thousand words" and "Pics or didn't happen" were not invented just out of the blue - it is proven that a message is more convincing when accompanied with an image. More often then not, the aesthetics are not about the attractively, although it helps, but about fitting in the context they're placed in. As we have examined before, a photograph of Loch Ness monster fits in the field of somewhat low quality quick amateur snapshots.

There are many other examples, for instance, The Onion, - an American digital media company and news satire organization, is often confused with the real news, since the media it communicates through is the same - newspaper (1988 - 2013), and an online portal, featuring video and audio news, and written articles followed by photographic illustrations.

Another American satire news company is Daily Show, which has never claimed to be real and makes itself obvious through a non-subtle use of humour and irony, is nevertheless using same and well crafted visual attributes of more traditional news shows, - broadcast elements and interface animations, and apart from canned laughter on the background it looks entirely credible. Besides, through the use of satire it offers a more objective and critical point of view on current events and phenomena than a majority of the "real" news channels.

Although might not be perceived as done visually, a publishing hoax called "Sokal Affair" , perpetrated by Alan Sokal, a physics professor at New York University and University College London, follows the same principles as the others. Sokal affair is a fake scientific article submitted and published in Social Text, an academic journal of postmodern cultural studies, written by professor out of frustration with scientific journals publishing gibberish which back then was a trend considered

to be a postmodern science writing. The aim of Sokal was to investigate whether “a leading North American journal of cultural studies – whose editorial collective includes such luminaries as Fredric Jameson and Andrew Ross – [would] publish an article liberally salted with nonsense if (a) it sounded good and (b) it flattered the editors’ ideological preconceptions”. On the day of its publication in May 1996, Sokal revealed in Lingua Franca that the article was a hoax, identifying it as “a pastiche of left-wing cant, fawning references, grandiose quotations, and outright nonsense ... structured around the silliest quotations [by postmodernist academics] he could find about mathematics and physics.” In this case the writing language played the role of a visual facade, or a decoration, mimicking the tone of articles published previously in the magazine, so it worked [22].

In the age of mass publicity and the Internet, fake images and videos became the easiest and most accessible medium of executing a hoax, and Photoshop and video editing software became powerful tools in helping in it, although the principle of uncanniness should be considered as carefully as ever, since a video or an image without a context is the only thing given away to public, except the times when it’s a part of a big campaign. Every smallest detail is exposed to the eye of the viewer and should be so thought-out that it will be able to withstand any attempt of analysis: the video cuts, ways of shooting, the quality, the aesthetics, the correspondence to the laws of physics, the effects, the behavior of people involved and etc.

A good example of analysis and what makes particular viral video hoaxes convincing but also not completely presented by a YouTube talk show duo Good Mythical Morning in their video “4 Biggest Viral Hoaxes” (#35), examining “Crazy Guy Runs Into Outback Tornado To Take Selfie”[23], “Pig rescues baby goat” [24], “Walk on water (Liquid Mountaineering)” [25] and “Golden Eagle Snatches Kid” [26]. The duo is

arguing about whether these viral videos are believable or not, and that some are more believable than others, pointing out that 1st one, although later proven to be a part of guerilla marketing campaign of a movie called “Into the storm” is quite credible due to well-done computer effects, acting and facial expressions of the actor (“Look at that face! It’s completely believable!”) and the fact that the scene depicted in the video doesn’t look like something completely impossible to happen; in second one they’re pointing out that the video looks a little fake because the pig which is claimed to save the goat didn’t actually do anything - it just swam to the goat and then they together swam to the shore; the third one is the most obvious for two reasons: the poor acting and the impossibility of doing such a thing (denial of laws of physics); and the 4th one that turns out to be the most believable, since it’s not going against the logic, - the detail of an eagle not carrying the kid away completely but dropping him because of heaviness, - the way of editing the video (first the actual footage is shown, where you mostly see the grass and running feet of the man behind the camera, and afterwards you see the repetition of the fragment in slow motion, where then you see more clearly how eagle is picking up and dropping the baby), and extremely well executed video effects - it was revealed that the whole thing was a 3d animated models of eagle and the baby mixed with real footage.

Another channel called YouTube Nation in one of their videos is providing an insight on some special video editing trick, often used by many viral hoax videos - a hidden cut (#36). A hidden cut allows you to stitch together two separate shots, while maintaining the illusion that it was all shot at once. The easiest way to produce such a cut is through camera shake - the blurriness and fast movement of an image provides a smooth transition that doesn’t let you recognize that something in the surroundings has changed. This effect was, for instance, used in “Crazy Guy Runs Into Outback Tornado To Take Selfie”, mentioned above.

These were just a few among many examples, proving the point that the visual execution of a hoax is an inherent attribute of credibility, which is no less important than any others.

Chapter VI

*Massaging the
Medium, or Graphic
Design and hoaxes*



Graphic designers are among those people who are substantially aware of the power of the image and how it can manipulate other's perceptions. One can argue that the way of perceiving the message depends on the content. But it is only partly true - it also, and actually same importantly, depends on the context the content is placed in, and this context is often built by means of graphic design. It means that designers might not be involved in creation of the content directly, but they have the power of shaping the way it is being presented, and therefore perceived and that matters equally. Also, design is not only a choice of the typeface the message is delivered in, but the choice of medium in general, the creation of the hierarchy and the angle through which information presentation is built, and therefore creation of value or importance of its certain pieces.

This peculiarity of presenting and perceiving the information related to the importance of the medium was noticed by a Canadian philosopher of communication theory Marshall McLuhan, who was the author of an infamous concept "Medium is the message" and co-author of the iconic book "Medium is the Message" published in 1967. The central theory behind "the medium is the message" is that the medium through which content is carried plays a vital role in the way it is perceived.

"Media, by altering the environment, evoke in us unique ratios of sense perceptions. The extension of any one sense alters the way we think and act—the way we perceive the world. The way we perceive our own bodies. When these ratios change, men change."

— Marshall McLuhan

McLuhan argued that modern electronic communications(including radio, television, films, and computers) would have far-reaching sociological, aesthetic, and philosophical consequences, to the point of actually altering the ways in which we experience the world. Although McLuhan's

understanding of media was not indicated only by electronic communications listed above. Extending the argument for understanding the medium as the message itself, he proposed that the

"CONTENT OF ANY MEDIUM IS ALWAYS ANOTHER MEDIUM"

– thus, the content of writing is speech, print is that of writing and print itself is the content of the telegraph.

McLuhan understood "medium" in a broad sense. He identified the light bulb as a clear demonstration of the concept of "the medium is the message". A light bulb does not have content in the way that a newspaper has articles or a television has programs, yet it is a medium that has a social effect; that is, a light bulb enables people to create spaces during nighttime that would otherwise be enveloped by darkness. He describes the light bulb as a medium without any content. McLuhan states that "a light bulb creates an environment by its mere presence." As it's often assumed, it doesn't actually mean that the context is more important than the content, but that it is equally important, and in the process of communication it creates its own meaning.

To narrow it down to design point of view, if you read an article in a newspaper, the way you read it, perceive it, and even the amount of attention you pay to it, depends on this newspaper, the way it looks/ is designed, and the format/kind of periodical publications - i.e. the context of New York Times is essentially different than, let's say, Cosmopolitan's.

On top of that, the established value of such editions is shaping a certain impression in our mind, which leads to the unconscious assumption that if some edition looks similar, then it's similar in its trustworthiness and its content. So again, if to take New York Times as an example, the newspapers that are designed similarly, are embraced with the same level of seriousness and attention,

despite of the quality of the content (at least, at first).

A good example to illustrate or test this effect, is Clone Zone art project [27] by Brooklyn based creative studio 4REAL (#37). Clone Zone is the app, that allows you to literally clone any website you want, by just entering the URL in a required field and there you have an exact copy of the it, but with a crucial difference - the content is editable. You can upload your own images, link videos, write your own text, and what is also important, you can share it. The concept of cloning websites is not particularly new - In 1998, the Italian artists Eva and Franco Mattes gained notoriety for buying the domain name vaticano.org and using it to undermine the Catholic Church's official website; they later cloned the websites of their contemporaries and exhibited them as their own works [28]. The Yes Men, a culture-jamming collective, have created and maintained plenty of fake websites — for George W. Bush [29], Dow Chemical, the World Trade Organization [30], and the New York Times—in their ongoing attempt to impersonate and lampoon figures of authority. The thing that makes CloneZone project different though, is the fact that it is in itself a public tool, accessible to anyone, and demonstrating how easily credibility can be achieved.

"This is probably the most exciting part for us — the possibility of transforming the viewer's sense of reality, even if for a short time. Some uncomfortable situations will inevitably occur."

— 4REAL

The shown tendency of people falling into a trap of believing in these websites authenticity without checking the sources or URL (in case with CloneZone, the URL is the exact thing which makes everything clear) only proves the point that often we rely on the incoming information from purely visual point of view, especially now, in time of fast growing information consumption and “like and share” cultural phenomena.

Taking visual credibility from another point of view, I would like to bring as an example the infamous NSA secret presentation files leaked by Edward Snowden, which are made in PowerPoint and contain information about PRISM surveillance program (#38) . Taken out of the context, the presentation appears to be extremely poorly executed and almost childish looking, and if you see it without having any background information about the subject chances are that you will not realise that it is in fact top-secret quality information that refers to such a serious subject of global importance as civilian privacy threat, produced by a governmental organisation. It looks rather like a middle school presentation on biology matters or whatnot, so if you accidentally stumble upon it on Google search, and if you never heard of such thing as PRISM , you will probably will not be interested in looking through it. On the other hand, it is very true that visual quality of data presentation is not an important issue for NSA since it is meant to be insiders information exchange, so this, makes it, in a way, credible, which is, again, a topic related to visual means - if something is not meant to look attractive and is created by non-designers for purely informative purposes (and not only by top-secret information agencies, but also scientists, researchers, etc) chances are that it will have certain amateur-looking aesthetics. It means that if you want to achieve a particular effect, you have to imitate these very particular kind of aesthetics.

Talking about rather “credible” power of design, rather than hoaxes, there are interesting investigations in the field of typography.

"What if the font in which that sentence is expressed influenced our perception of that truth somehow? Would there be a way of testing that, to test our capacity for credulity? Whether we're more willing to accept it as true because it's written in one typeface or another?"

— Errol Morris

A filmmaker and author Errol Morris ran an experiment in 2013 in collaboration with New York Times, where he asked 45,000 people to take an online test [31]. The test allegedly measured whether or not readers were optimists or pessimists, but in reality, Morris was trying to find out if the typeface a statement was written in had any impact on a reader's willingness to agree with that statement, thus asking a question if some typefaces are more believable than others. Turned out, that Baskerville, a 250-year-old serif originally designed by John Baskerville, was statistically more likely to influence the minds of readers than Computer Modern, Georgia, Helvetica, Comic Sans or Trebuchet. The New York Times experiment found that readers were more likely to agree with a statement written in Baskerville than other fonts. This experiment works as a proof that such, at the first glance, non suspicious visual elements as the typeface choice actually have the real power to influence the viewer's perception of the content, despite of the content itself.

It is interesting to mention, that sometimes fake is being perceived as real even when it is openly stated that it's fake, due to the viewers lack of attention or focus on the obvious. This year (2016) Snickers, an American candy bar brand company, released a super interesting and clever, in my opinion, ad, featuring a classic "model-on-the-beach" poster with a caption "Photo Retouchers Get Confused When They're Hungry". When looking closely one might notice various Photoshop fails - horizon is levelled on different heights, belly button located right under the breasts, a third hand appearing out of nowhere on the shoulder, and many others (the creators of the ad claim that there are 11 photoshop fails, some of them are much more or less obvious than others therefore easier or harder to find). Thinking logically, even without seeing the caption you come to a conclusion that all those mistakes are being intended - their amount is overwhelming for only one poster, the way some of them are being hidden reveals that each was carefully thought

through, and eventually, no way such a large corporation as Snickers would allow a sincerely tacky advertisement to be released publicly. To my surprise, not everyone was thinking the same way as me - stumbling upon the image on Facebook newsfeed through one of common entertainment pages, I noticed that the reaction of 70% of community was furious and confused. People were leaving such remarks that the one who created the image was an idiot, that a 3-year old could handle the same task better, that advertisement makers are being paid for nothing and that Snickers failed really hard this time. It is especially surprising, since the caption reveals basically the whole concept, and still, some people refused to realise that it all was a carefully though trough advertisement. Without being intended to be a hoax, it became it somehow anyway, for certain people, and illustrates very well that we often tend to focus on the obvious, "in-your-face" kind of imagery and message, without paying attention to the actual message which is hanging right there.

There are multiple pranks related to the field of graphic design that make their own statements, about which I am going to tell below.

One of the hoaxes aiming to prove and show how easily false information found on the internet can be perceived as credible was executed by a dutch graphic design student Zilla van den Born, who conducted an interesting experiment on the power of phoney and misleading photos on social media. For five weeks, Zilla tricked her family and Facebook friends into thinking that she was on a long and exciting vacation through South East Asia. In reality, she never even set foot outside of her home city of Amsterdam, and was merely setting up situations in which you expect a traveling tourist be, by taking pictures in her room with a set up background so it looks like a fancy hotel, photoshopping fishes into her swimming pool photographs to make it look like sea diving, taking pictures in buddhist temples in Amsterdam and etc. It was an

experimental project for her school, about which only her boyfriend knew, the rest of people thought she was having a legit vacation. The objective was to explore how simple it was to put up a façade and fake a persona on social media. In speaking with local news in Amsterdam, she said:

"I did this to show people that we filter and manipulate what we show on social media, and that we create an online world which reality can no longer meet. My goal was to prove how common and easy it is to distort reality. Everybody knows that pictures of models are manipulated. But we often overlook the fact that we manipulate reality also in our own lives."

This experiment also illustrates that there is no need for an “authoritative” source to succeed in a hoax, and that people might believe you without questioning anything because of the assumptions going along with social media [32].

Another fabrication I want to talk about is Ernst Bettler, who is a fictional Swiss graphic designer, who was invented by Christopher Wilson in a 2000 hoax article published in the second issue of Dot Dot Dot, a magazine of visual culture. It is particularly interesting because of causing a lot of frustration and anger in graphic design community by revealing a deeply hidden secret wish of any designer to prove that design has a real power to make real social change and “save the world”. According to the article, Bettler was asked in the 1950s to design advertisement posters for Pfäfferli+Huber (P+H), a Swiss pharmaceutical manufacturer. The article states that Bettler knew of the company’s involvement in Nazi concentration camp experiments and decided to accept the commission with the intention of damaging P+H. The four posters he created, Wilson’s article recounts, were exemplary works of International Typographic Style design, advertising P+H drugs such as “Contrazipan”. However, according to the article, the posters featured abstract compositions that could be read as capital letters – spelling out “N - A - Z - I”

when displayed in sequence . Wilson’s article states that the public outcry that followed the public display of the posters ruined P+H in a matter of weeks. Even though it was highly detailed and featured many photographs and illustrations, the article was a complete fabrication. Ernst Bettler, Pfäfferli+Huber and its drugs do not exist, and neither do the Swiss towns “Sumisdorf” and “Burgwald” that feature in the article – their names are presumably based on the real Swiss towns of Sumiswald and Burgdorf. Nonetheless, the story was well received in graphic design circles. Among others, the September/October 2001 “Graphic Anarchy” issue of Adbusters magazine hailed Bettler’s work as “one of the greatest design interventions on record”, and the 2002 graphic design textbook Problem Solved by Michael Johnson covers Bettler as one of the “founding fathers of the ‘culture-jamming’ form of protest”.

WHEN THE STORY WAS REVEALED TO BE A HOAX, DESIGN COMMUNITY WAS FURIOUS, WHICH LED TO MANY ARTICLES CRITICISING IT'S CREATOR, ONE OF WHICH WAS EVEN WRITTEN BY RICK POYNOR AND PUBLISHED IN EYE MAGAZINE.

The purpose of the creation of this fabrication was not very clear, but in its own way, it basically became a satire on how seriously designers take themselves, showing something that they were secretly hoping to see, to gain importance, and that is the exact reason why they were so disappointed when finding out that it has never happened [33].

The project that is an actual satire on the world of Graphic Design is “Grafik BS” (which, as you might guess, stands for “Graphik Bullshit”) created by Amy West, - a fake graphic design studio. Amy West set up this studio after noticing the superficiality of an online community that practices design “with the understanding that the entire process consists solely of applying

style to anything”, and just basically follows trends. She created a creative director persona called Bjorn Svenson (a reference to scandinavian graphic design), who she also filmed in an “interview”, where he talks about the importance of trends in graphic design , and created an online portfolio of poster designs that is completely fictional—the designs are based on trend tags provided on Trendlist and created by the website’s poster generator, while being arguably attractive but completely meaningless. The most interesting about this project is the reaction of public it’s actually aimed to, that proves Amy’s point. Those designers liked it and were very much pleased with “Bjorn Svenson”’s work, liking and sharing on various design platforms [34].

“A fake Behance page for the studio received hundreds of appreciations, positive comments on the style of the posters and even a job application for a position in the studio.” - said Amy. “Grafik BS was an experiment set up to catch the attention of those who have come to rely on the aesthetic qualities promoted by new technologies within graphic design,” West concludes. “Designing stylish posters with meaningless messages was made to see if this is what people thought graphic design should be.”

This project personally for me reflects many things surrounding graphic design nowadays. The whole field becomes in a way a hoax, since the aesthetics are very often covering the message, overlay it, distract from it, and become more important than the message itself eventually replacing it. The power of the image is fooling you, and while being impressed by it you create your own interpretation of the meaning that might be not even there.

A project of similar kind was created by Portugal’s Royal Studio. It was not exactly the hoax, but an open but nevertheless working statement that for the viewer’s visual aesthetics are indeed often more important than the content. The project is called “The Dishonest Manifest” and consists of a series of posters that aim to prove the

very statement above (#39) . Here’s how they describe it over on their Behance page:

“The unknown is the key. Taking it as a manifesto regarding the global language, the beauty of globalisation, and how pure form tends to overlap conceptual meaning. You’ll enjoy it for the visuals.

If you get the language, you’ll notice the poster is in fact the acknowledgement of not knowing a single detail about it. All of them. Ultimately we are telling you how ignorant you might be: though it doesn’t matter – you’ll love it.”

“Single-handedly, this would be funny. Though they are a serious compilation of posters for single events and clients. You may never eat cheese, Palestine may never find understanding, Europe may never be on time, Berlin and Vienna may never play it fair, we may never speak Japanese in the day nor at night, and we may not give a fuck about content.”

The project was originally published on Behance and immediately met with praise and gained a lot of exposure, which eventually lead it to become noticed and featured by It’s Nice That, which editors themselves admit that Studio Royal’s point about importance of visuals strongly proved itself - the credibility sometimes relies on attractiveness .

One might perhaps get an impression that I am trying to prove an opinion which states that the way the subject is visually presented, or designed, is more important than the subject itself. This impression is far from true - what I’m trying to do is to deliver a message that the presentation is equally important to the content, and is capable of mutating it. Perception and angle of view on the problem is the reality, or rather say, “hyperreality” we live in, and often we are not aware that it is shaped by structures that provide and choose the way of presenting the information. Besides psychology and concepts of selectivity it is also important that we as humans are very visual creatures - there are 5 physical senses that we possess and receive information

with - hearing (audioception), taste (gustaoception), smell (olfacoception or olfacception), touch (tactioception) and sight (ophthalmception). Sight was proven to be the most dominant sense - we perceive up to 80 per cent of all impressions by means of our sight, neurophysiologically, visual sense is dominant. Thirty to forty percent of our cerebral cortex is devoted to vision, as compared to 8 percent for touch or just 3 percent for hearing (auditory sense). Hence it is not surprising that the way we perceive information visually has the most impact on our vision of the world, and plays an important role in what aims to be considered credible.

Conclusion

Our reality is shaped by bits of information, selectively given to us, and the way these bits are shown. In a way, we can say, it is curated by the structures that hierarchically own the power of knowing and revealing. We tend to believe in the notion of objectivity, and even if we approach the media input - most obvious example - critically, we still speculate on the different fields, looking for conspiracy theories and whatnot.

How nihilistic it wouldn't sound, through the generations there have developed countless layers of interpretation, meanings and opinions, in many cases sources are lost, and there is no way to know what is objective anymore. Even more - objective is defined as " (of a person or their judgement) not influenced by personal feelings or opinions in considering and representing facts.", but the thing is that, what we are used to call facts is very often being speculated, warped and influenced by different angles of view, - for example, what is learned in history classes in different countries are different, since each side has had its own perspective on series of events, and, of course, it was often documented in a way that would be beneficial for some. Concepts and definitions we know, opinions we think we have, everything is delivered (not to mention in many cases created or interpreted) to us by other people, - hyperreality is the new reality.

Hoaxes, in its turn, are in a way a hyperreality within hyperreality. a simulation of a simulation. By taking bits of what we consider as "real", hoaxers are adding their own layer of meaning into it, creating the new "real", new opinion, new objective, but in a more obvious, grotesque way, so everything becomes clear when a hoax is revealed, and most of the time the revealing is the ultimate goal of hoaxers. Even without an intention to state something, hoaxes often become a statement, about the society around or the context they are being placed in, the very subject of what is believed in shows a lot about the people who got

tricked into it by the reasons why it was believed in. When we unsuspectedly see an elaborate construct to be revealed as a hoax, it creates a moment of clash and doubt in our mind: *"This seemed to be so real, and if I believed in it, what are the chances that I believe in other things that are basically made up?"*. I think this is the most important effect of the hoax - disruption of our usual sense of reality.

Graphic design hoaxes show more directly that they are partly simulations based on the "real" thing - fake websites that are visually copies of the real websites, photoshopped vacation pictures imitating vacation photos we see so often in our newsfeed, nonexistent studio imitating the existent ones, designs imitating designs, and always, always warping its meaning in the end. Very often non-hoax designers do the same, in order to achieve an effect which would be the most profitable for them or the client they are working for, by using various visual and psychological tricks to communicate a certain content in a certain way, and the way this content is communicated doesn't necessarily represent it.

So how can we make sure that the information is communicated in an honest and fair way?

One might say that the solution might be as easy as that - just make things look as they are - newspaper as a traditional news newspaper as a way of communicating news, corporate company must have a corporate looking identity, advertisement should communicate the real properties of the product and make sure that it is intended to make us buy things, and etc. No hiding, no tricks, no decoration. Well, if to look behind the surface, this solution doesn't really contribute to communicating the meaning in a more honest way, and here is why - the concept of credibility - a perceived believability of the source or the message - is directly linked with concept of familiarity and established meanings.

For instance, you can choose to present news in a traditional way, so the viewer

doesn't get confused, but the key word here is "traditional". We tend to perceive things as sincere, but this perception is based on the established notion of what is sincere and how it should look like. To put it easier, we see newspaper as an honest way of communicating news because we were trained to perceive it like this by generations of people who came up with, developed and established a concept of a newspaper, and because we were trained to consume the news this very particular way.

There is really no way of designing things a sincere and fair way, because most of the existing ways we are communicating visually are based on the meanings that are already established and therefore look credible or familiar. Besides that, we shouldn't forget the personal aspect of designing, - graphic designers are people too, and therefore are being subjective, perceiving and designing things from their own perspective, even in cases when trying to avoid that.

Still, could there be a solution? Can absolute honesty of representing information be achieved designwise?

On a personal level, probably not. Even more, it is particularly wrong to put all this responsibility on a designer - the viewer should train himself to approach everything consciously and critically.

But, I believe, there is a thing that can help - we can try to "break" the usual ways of presenting the information, question and step out of the established norms, conventions and notions of how things should be designed and look like, like it never existed, because all of it is basically a construct brought to life by other people.

And, since complete objectivity cannot be really achieved and everyone sees the world in their own way,

*IF YOU CANNOT MAKE IT REAL FOR
EVERYBODY, MAKE IT REAL AT LEAST
FOR YOURSELF.*

[Index of hoaxes]

[1] “There’s a sucker born every minute” is a phrase presumably spoken by David Hannum, in criticism of both P. T. Barnum, an American showman of the mid 19th century, and his customers. The phrase is often credited to Barnum himself. It means “People are foolish, and will always be fools.” Phineas Taylor “P. T.” Barnum (July 5, 1810 – April 7, 1891) was an American showman and businessman remembered for promoting celebrated hoaxes and for founding the Barnum & Bailey Circus. Although Barnum was also an author, publisher, philanthropist, and for some time a politician, he said of himself, “I am a showman by profession... and all the gilding shall make nothing else of me”, and his personal aim was “to put money in his own coffers”. Hoaxes executed by Barnum included the infamous “Feejee” mermaid.

[2] In some Greek myths Hermes (Mercury in Roman mythology) is considered to be a god of transitions and boundaries, - and the Trickster, - and outwits other gods for his own satisfaction or for the sake of humankind. He is the patron of thieves and the inventor of lying, a gift he passed on to Autolycus, who in turn passed it on to Odysseus. Another example of a supreme trickster from Greek mythology is Prometheus, one of Titans and a god of fire, who famously gave the human race the gift of fire and the skill of metalwork, an action for which he was punished by Zeus, who ensured everyday that an eagle ate the liver of the Titan as he was helplessly chained to a rock.

[3] In Norse mythology there is Loki, a cunning trickster who had the ability to shift his shape and gender. Although his father was the giant Fárbauti, he was included among the Aesir (a tribe of gods). Loki was represented as the companion of the great gods Odin and Thor, helping them with his clever plans but sometimes causing embarrassment and difficulty for them and himself. He also appeared as the enemy of the gods, entering their banquet uninvited and demanding their drink. He was the principal cause of the death of the god Balder. Loki was bound to a rock (by the entrails of one or more of his sons, according to some sources) as punishment, thus in many ways resembling the Greek figures Prometheus and Tantalus. Also like Prometheus, Loki is considered a god of fire.

[4] The trickster of West Africa is Anansi, who often takes the shape of a spider and is considered to be the spirit of all knowledge of stories. West Africans originally considered Anansi to be responsible for creating the world: the sun, the stars

and the moon, as well as for teaching mankind the techniques of agriculture. He often acted as a go-between for humans in their dealings with the sky god Nyame, and he supposedly persuaded Nyame to give both rain and the night to people. In most stories, however, Anansi is a crafty and cunning trickster who makes life more enjoyable for himself (or more difficult for others) by fooling humans, other animals, and even the gods themselves, often using his cleverness and knowledge of his victims’ ways of thinking to trick them and achieve his purpose.

[5] In Southern and Central Africa, and also among Cherokees, a popular Trickster figure, similar to Anansi, was Brer Rabbit, later adapted in Uncle Remus tell stories of the Southern United States as Br'er (Brother) Rabbit. Many stories about Brer Rabbit were brought to America by slaves. Br'er Rabbit is a trickster who succeeds by his wits rather than by brawn, provoking authority figures and bending social mores as he sees fit. The character's adventures embody an idea considered to be a universal creation among oppressed peoples—that a small, weak, but ingenious force can overcome a larger, stronger, but dull-witted power. Brer Rabbit continually outsmarts his bigger animal associates, Brer Fox, Brer Wolf, and Brer Bear.

[6] Reynard, the anthropomorphic fox is the main character and the trickster in a literary cycle of allegorical French, Dutch, English, and German medieval fables. His adventures usually involve him deceiving other anthropomorphic animals for his own advantage or trying to avoid retaliations from them. His main enemy and victim across the cycle is his uncle, the wolf Isengrim. While the character appears in later works, the core stories were written during the middle ages by multiple authors and are often seen as parodies of medieval literature such as courtly love stories and chansons de geste, as well as satire of political and religious institutions.

[7] A similar figure, but from North America, is Coyote, an anthropomorphic coyote trickster figure. The Coyote mythos is one of the most popular among western Native American cultures, especially among indigenous peoples of California and the Great Basin. As the culture hero, Coyote appears in various mythic traditions, but generally with the same magical powers of transformation, resurrection, and then Coyote's “medicine”. He is engaged in changing the ways of rivers, creating

new landscapes and getting sacred things for people. Of mention is the tradition of Coyote fighting against monsters. According to Wasco tradition, Coyote was the hero to fight and kill Thunderbird, the killer of people, but he could do that not because of his personal power, but due to the help of the Spirit Chief. In some stories, Multnomah Falls came to be by Coyote's efforts; in others, it is done by Raven, a figure of a big resemblance to Coyote, also a trickster and the Creator of the World. More often than not Coyote is a trickster, but always different. In some stories, he is a noble trickster, "Coyote takes water from the Frog people... because it is not right that one people have all the water." In others, he is mean, "Coyote determined to bring harm to Duck. He took Duck's wife and children, whom he treated badly."

[8] The last mythology example i want to bring is Veles, who is a major Slavic god of earth, waters, forests and the underworld. His attributes are wet, wooly, hairy (bearded), dark and he is associated with cattle, the harvest, wealth, music, magic and trickery, although he was also a shape-shifter. He is the opponent of the Supreme thunder-god Perun, and the battle between two of them constitutes one of the most important myths of Slavic mythology. This battle started from a story about Veles stealing Perun's wife, and later her giving a birth to a baby, which resulted into her being turned in a lady-bug by Perun, and a three-day fight between Perun and Veles, where nobody could win and eventually these two gods became rivals and enemies. This conflict between the god of sky and the god of the underworld is not viewed as a fight between good and evil but rather the opposition of Earth's forces which bring about the new season each year.

[9] Andy Kaufman was a legend of prank. Although nowadays he is considered to be an eccentric genius of comedy, or as he himself would rather say, performance art, and his body of work maintains a cult following, at a time for the audience it was quite unclear whether the situations he was setting up were real or not, so he was making people feel very awkward and uncomfortable. One might say Andy Kaufman invented trolling, the art of riling people up by impersonating idiots, crazies, and abrasive jerks. Kaufman's refusal to break character and not let the audience in on the jokes would fool many. He often wouldn't tell the joke to the audience and the humour would be just for himself. There were many cases that included "performing within performing" - when during the shows he was setting up the situations that seemed to be unscripted, but that were actually completely staged, for instance when he invited his ex-girlfriend Elayne Boosler for an interview and they started arguing during the commercial break, in front of the whole audience,

or when during film of the sketch comedy series Fridays, Kaufman, performing with cast members including Seinfeld star Michael Richards, refused to say his lines on camera, prompting a brawl between Kaufman, Richards, and series producer Jack Burns. This was later revealed to be a practical joke that all three were in on.

Andy Kaufman created many characters, that today would be considered politically incorrect, such as "Foreign Man", an awkward person who was having a strange foreign accent, telling bad jokes, and finishing the performance with Elvis Presley impersonations; "Latka", that basically was an advanced version of "Foreign Man", and that gained a huge popularity; and eventually, the most offensive "Tony Clifton" - an absurd, racist, obnoxious and audience-abusing lounge singer who began opening for Kaufman at comedy clubs and eventually even performed concerts on his own around the country.

Perhaps, one of Andy Kaufman's most controversial pranks was woman wrestling, where he was publicly wrestling unarmed and untrained overweight women. He claimed himself as the 'World Inter-gender Wrestling Champion', taking on an aggressive and ridiculous personality based upon the characters invented by professional wrestlers. He offered one thousand dollars to any woman that could beat him. Most of the public was largely unaware of this being a joke. He later wrestled professional wrestler Jerry Lawler to achieve a reputation of being an arrogant villain. When late night talk show host, David Letterman had both Lawler and Kaufman on his show, Andy made an infamous scene. The obscenities flew, as did the insults and attacks. Said Kaufman, 'I am sorry, I am sorry to use those words on television. I apologize to all my fans! I'm sorry. I'm sorry! But you? You're a [bleep][bleep]! This became one of the most famous things Kaufman ever did. As he said, 'There's no drama like wrestling.'

He mastered the art of confusing people's minds so well, that there are still speculations that his death (1984, at age 35) was not real and that he has faked it.

With his work Andy Kaufman was basically mirroring certain aspects of society, doing something that noone was expecting of him, making people cringe and get out of their comfort zone.

[10] Joey Skaggs is a legendary American media hoaxter who has devoted his whole life to the prank. For more than 30 years, Joey's been making up ridiculous lies that get disseminated so far by the mass media we are forced to wonder if the same media might not be fact-checking every other story so closely. He's fooled television networks, wire

services, newspapers, magazines, and radio stations around the world. Good Morning America, CNN, and The Washington Post are among the big-time media organizations duped by Skaggs.

Up to now, Joey Skaggs has executed 32 (revealed/known to the public) hoaxes, among which are infamous Cathouse for Dogs (1976), for which Skaggs published an ad for a dog brothel in The Village Voice and hired actors to present their dogs for the benefit of an ABC news crew; Celebrity Sperm Bank (1976), for which Skaggs organized a sperm bank auction in New York, the sperm bank was then “robbed” and semen was supposedly taken hostage; The Fat Squad (1986): in which Skaggs played Joe Bones, the founder of a disciplinarian diet program where musclemen watched the customers 24 hours a day to make sure they stuck to their diets, at a cost of \$300 a day; The Fat Squad (1986), in which Skaggs played Joe Bones, the founder of a disciplinarian diet program where musclemen watched the customers 24 hours a day to make sure they stuck to their diets, at a cost of \$300 a day; and Portofess (1992) where Skaggs played Father Anthony Joseph, appearing with a portable confession booth at the Democratic National Convention.

Skaggs says his hoaxes, which he sets up with the help of volunteers and friends, serve a broader mission: highlighting the vulnerability of the press to disinformation and the public’s unquestioning acceptance of whatever it reads in newspapers or watches on television. “I am an artist. To me the media is a medium and I create plausible but none existent realities and I stage for the news media to make social, political, satirical commentary.” says Skaggs.

[11] *Their most infamous and controversial project is Dow Chemical. On December 3, 2004, the twentieth anniversary of the Bhopal disaster, Andy Bichlbaum appeared on BBC World as “Jude Finisterra”, a Dow Chemical spokesman. Dow is the owner of Union Carbide, the company responsible for the chemical disaster in Bhopal, India on December 3, 1984. An estimated 3,800 people died immediately from the hazardous chemicals and thousands more were killed by the plume from the UCC plant during the next few days. The Indian government reported that more than half a million people were exposed to the gas, leading to numerous early and late health defects. The Bhopal Disaster became one of the worst chemical disasters in history and the name Bhopal became synonymous with industrial catastrophe. Immediately after the disaster, UCC began attempts to dissociate itself from responsibility for the gas leak. The Indian Supreme Court eventually mediated a settlement in which UCC accepted moral responsibility and*

agreed to pay \$470 million to the Indian government to be distributed to claimants as a full and final settlement. The average amount to families of the dead was \$2,200.

On their fake Dow Chemical website, the Yes Men said that Dow Chemical Company had no intention whatsoever of repairing the damage. The real company received considerable backlash, and both the real Dow and the phony Dow denied the statements, but Dow took no real action.

The Yes Men decided to pressure Dow further, so as “Finisterra,” Bichlbaum went on the news to claim that Dow planned to liquidate Union Carbide and use the resulting \$12 billion to pay for medical care, clean up the site, and fund research into the hazards of other Dow products. After two hours of wide coverage, Dow issued a press release denying the statement, ensuring even greater coverage of the phony news of a cleanup. In Frankfurt, Dow’s share price fell 4.24 percent in 23 minutes, wiping \$2 billion off its market value. The shares rebounded in Frankfurt after the BBC issued an on-air correction and apology. In New York, Dow Chemical’s stock were little changed because of the early trading.

After the original interview was revealed as a hoax, Bichlbaum appeared in a follow-up interview on the United Kingdom’s Channel 4 news. During the interview he was asked if he had considered the emotions and reaction of the people of Bhopal when producing the hoax. According to the interviewer, “there were many people in tears” upon having learned of the hoax. Bichlbaum said that, in comparison, what distress he had caused the people was minimal to that for which Dow was responsible. The Yes Men claim on their website that they have been told by contacts in Bhopal that once they had got over their disappointment that it wasn’t real, they were pleased about the stunt and thought it had helped to raise awareness of their plight.

[12] *In the 1930s, General Drafting Company founder Otto G. Lindberg and an assistant, Ernest Alpers, assigned an anagram of their initials to a dirt-road intersection in the Catskill Mountains: NY 206 and Morton Hill Road, north of Roscoe, New York. The town was designed as a copyright trap to be able to catch others who might copy their map. In the 1950s, a general store was built at the intersection on the map, and was given the name Agloe General Store because the name was on the Esso maps. Later, Agloe appeared on a Rand McNally map after the mapmaker got the name of the “town” from the Delaware County administration. When Esso threatened to sue Rand McNally for the assumed copyright infringement which the “trap” had revealed, the latter pointed out that the place had now become real and therefore no infringement*

could be established. Eventually the store went out of business; Agloe continued to appear on maps as recently as the 1990s, but has now been deleted. It still appears in Google Maps. The United States Geological Survey added “Agloe (Not Official)” to the Geographic Names Information System database in February 2014.

[13] On April 1, 1957, the BBC news program Panorama tackled the question with a segment about a Swiss town’s robust spaghetti crop, brought on by a warm spring and the disappearance of the spaghetti weevil. “For those who love this dish, there’s nothing like real homegrown spaghetti,” anchor Richard Dimbleby said. Viewers ate it up. On April 2 the BBC was flooded with hundreds of phone calls from people eager to grow their own noodles, then a rare treat for British diners. Keeping the whimsy going, the BBC instructed anyone interested in a pasta-bearing tree to “Place a sprig of spaghetti in a tin of tomato sauce and hope for the best.”

[14] The publication’s origins are rooted in its distribution as a weekly college print publication beginning in 1988, but in the spring of 1996 The Onion put its content online in the form of a website featuring satirical articles reporting on international, national, and local news. Starting in 2007, the organization began publishing satirical news audio and video online, as the Onion News Network. If it’s not clear yet, all the “Onion” news are fabricated, although in a very clever, credible and detailed way. Very often people who are not familiar with what “The Onion” is, think it’s a real news organisation, which, as it turned, led to the real media coverage. I.e., in November 2010, Fox Nation site re-posted a joke from the satirical website The Onion Friday about President Barack Obama sending a 75,000-word e-mail to the entire nation (“Frustrated Obama Sends Nation Rambling 75,000-Word E-Mail”). Before the article was called out as obviously a joke and taken down, commenters on the site were really getting fired up. “This should be enough to have him removed from office immediately.....he is now the highest security risk to this nation,” Obamababble observed (one of the comments). Another takes seriously Onion case was a fake teen-magazine cover with Obama on it, and was picked up by New York Times that stated that “the cover had helped Obama gain popularity within teens”.

[15] Pig rescues a baby goat (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7WjrvG1GMk>)

[16] Chocolate diet (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZouZJSG4ic>)

[17] Alien autopsy (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZouZJSG4ic>)

[18] Donald Leu, a researcher from the University of Connecticut, conducted a study among the Facebook generation of students - deemed ‘digital natives’ due to their online savviness - to try to prove they will believe anything they read on the internet. He directed students to the website <http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus>, created in 1998 by Lyle Zapato, where they found details about the fabricated endangered Pacific Northwest tree octopus, that was given the Latin name “Octopus paxarbolis” (the species name being coined from Latin pax, the root of Pacific, and Spanish arbol meaning “tree”), in order to test students’ ability to evaluate information they find online. It detailed the creature’s appearance and habits, including how it uses its suckers to move along tree branches in a form of ‘locomotion’ and steals eggs from the nests of birds. It even claimed that it was endangered mainly due to the penchant of wealthy ‘fashionistas’ to use the tree octopuses as ornamental hat decorations. Surprisingly, the students not only believed all of the fabricated information, but also insisted on the existence of the octopus, even when researchers explained all the information had been made up.

[19] In November 2007, a YouTube user HouseholdHacker released a video entitled “How to Charge an iPod using electrolytes and an onion”. The video, which claimed to demonstrate how one could recharge an iPod, using little more than Gatorade and a white onion, was an overnight success. The video drew the attention of the Unofficial Apple Weblog, which reported it as fact, and hundreds of other blogs. Within its first week, the video had been viewed over 4 million times. By the following November, the video had been viewed more than 7 million times (Currently over 9 million) and attracted the attention of ABCNews.com, who asked “Can an Onion Charge an iPod?” ABC put the video to the test, but failed to obtain the promised result. Reporter Emily Friedman remarked “this appears to be an iFraud.” The TV show MythBusters also put the onion video to the test in 2008. In a segment dubbed “iOnion”, Grant Imahara was unable to get any charge from the onion setup found in the HouseholdHacker video. He explained that the setup lacked the crucial anode and cathode that would be required to get the electrolytes found in Gatorade moving and concluded the video was a complete hoax.

[20] “Human Birdwings” is an online storytelling project by a dutch artist and researcher Floris

Kaayk. He came up with a fictional character, called Jarno Smeets, who “created” a device, that allows people to fly like a bird - a dream that is being kept for centuries, but still unfortunately not achieved. The process and ambitions of creating these artificial wings took around 8 months and was distributed on such online platforms YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and a blog, and got millions of followers and supporters of the idea. In total there were 14 videos, posted on YouTube channel, with interviews and the footage of how the device was being created. The last, featuring the “result” video got more than 8 million views and was showing Jarno Smeets flying above a dutch park and recording the footage through a GoPro camera. Afterwards Floris Kaayk confessed media that everything was faked and that there was a team of professionals involved in this hoax (specifically it was produced by Revolver Media and initiated by the Dutch public service broadcaster NTR). Basically it was an experiment on how social media works.

[21] The Loch Ness Monster is a cryptid that reputedly inhabits Loch Ness, a lake in the Scottish Highlands. It is similar to other supposed lake monsters in Scotland and elsewhere, though its description varies from one account to the next, with most describing it as large. Popular interest and belief in the creature's existence has varied since it was first brought to the world's attention in 1933. Evidence of its existence is anecdotal, with minimal and much-disputed photographic material and sonar readings. The most common speculation among believers is that the creature represents a line of long-surviving plesiosaurs. Much of the scientific community regards the Loch Ness Monster as a modern-day myth, and explains sightings as including misidentifications of more mundane objects, outright hoaxes, and wishful thinking. Despite this, it remains one of the most famous examples of cryptozoology. The creature has been affectionately referred to by the nickname Nessie since the 1940s.

[22] An article bearing the portentous title “Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity” ran in the Spring 1996 issue of the cultural studies journal Social Text. At first glance the article appeared to be an unlikely candidate for controversy. It was written in the typical style of academic articles, slightly overbearing and verbose, and it came armored with a bristling flank of footnotes (more footnotes than actual text). But on the day that the Spring issue of Social Text appeared in print, the author of the article, New York University physics professor Alan Sokal, published a letter in the academic trade publication Lingua Franca revealing his article was actually

intended as a parody, a fact which the editorial board of Social Text had failed to recognize. “Any competent physicist or mathematician (or undergraduate physics or math major) would realize that it is a spoof,” Sokal asserted. He suggested that his article’s acceptance by the journal pointed to “an apparent decline in the standards of rigor in certain precincts of the academic humanities.” He also fumed over “how readily they [Social Text] accepted my implication that the search for truth in science must be subordinated to a political agenda.” The New York Times ran the story of Sokal’s revelation on its front page on May 18, and from there the controversy grew. The hoax elicited many different reactions, but the most common response was laughter. Social Text, and by extension the rest of the cultural studies community, had been made to look like egghead intellectuals adrift in their ivory tower. Social Text responded angrily and self-righteously to the parody, but only succeeded in digging itself deeper into the hole that it had fallen into.

[23] Crazy Guy Runs Into Outback Tornado To Take Selfie (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7aRR86VfTY>)

[24] Pig rescues a baby goat (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7WjrvG1GMk>)

[25] Walk on water (Liquid Mountaineering) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oe3St1GgoHQ>)

[26] Golden Eagle Snatches Kid (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CE0Q904gtMI>)

[27] Clone Zone is the app, that allows you to literally clone any website you want, by just entering the URL in a required field and there you have an exact copy of the it, but with a crucial difference - the content is editable. You can upload your own images, link videos, write your own text, and what is also important, you can share it. With this tool anyone can treat themselves to publishing a The Guardian article or the announcement of a lucrative round of funding on TechCrunch, what the creators of the app actually did as April Fools joke. They shared the cloned site to their personal networks, and immediately the likes and reposts came pouring in, along with congratulations from friends and strangers. According to Analisa and Slava, founders of 4REAL, the story was even being passed around the Genius offices—an actually well-funded startup whose core product is in many ways similar to Clone Zone—along with murmurs about the necessity of acquiring this competitor. The concept of cloning websites is not particularly new - In 1998,

the Italian artists Eva and Franco Mattes gained notoriety for buying the domain name *vaticano.org* and using it to undermine the Catholic Church's official website; they later cloned the websites of their contemporaries and exhibited them as their own works. The Yes Men, a culture-jamming collective, have created and maintained plenty of fake websites—for George W. Bush, Dow Chemical, the World Trade Organization, and the New York Times—in their ongoing attempt to impersonate and lampoon figures of authority. The thing that makes *CloneZone* project different though, is the fact that it is in itself a public tool, accessible to anyone, and demonstrating how easily credibility can be achieved.

DesignObserver

[34] *Grafik BS*

<https://vimeo.com/67627359>

[28] “*vaticano.org*”

[29] YesMen “*Bush*” website

[30] YesMen “*The World Trade Organization*” website

[31] *Errol Morris* test

[32] *Zilla images*

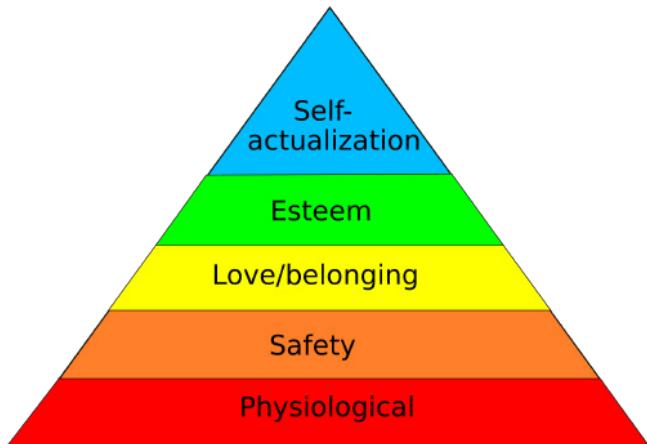


[33] Reactions on ernst bettler hoax:

Eye Magazine

(Footnotes)

(#1) *Maslow hierarchy of needs*



(#2) MacDougall, Curtis D. (1958). *Hoaxes*. Dover. p. 6. ISBN 0-486-20465-0

(#3) Bacon, F. (1620). *Novum Organum: The new organon or true directions concerning the interpretation of nature*. Translation of James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath.

(#4) Hancock, Peter (2015). *Hoax Springs Eternal: The Psychology of Cognitive Deception*. Cambridge U.P. pp. 182–195. ISBN 9781107417687

(#5) I would recommend you to double-check on that...Yes, Zone-Tailed Dingo doesn't exist. Although, there are many real animals of a similar kind.

(#6) The medium can be an artefact, a physical entity, but it can equally well be information expressed in the form of spoken or written language. In today's world, the medium is often computational in nature and based on information networks like the Internet. What is important, the medium itself presumes some common and shared assumptions.

(#7) The origin of communicated information and its transmission medium are necessary but not sufficient conditions for deception, for there must be an individual or group of individuals who receive and interpret this information about the state of the world. The inherent capacities and biases of this person, or group of persons, directly influence the degree to which any deception is successful.

(#8) Emotion-laden situations are frequently the site of triumph of hope over reality. Deception provides a material foundation for some dearly held hope or belief. It accords with what the individual or group wants to be true and full fills their wishes in a way that is not obviously contradictory to what

is possible. Hope and desire are very important survival skills, and deception perverts these characteristics in order to be successful. (Although, in case of hoaxes, this is not always true, since it is possible that you believe in a thing that you don't necessarily want.)

(#9) Signal detection theory (SDT) is used when psychologists want to measure the way we make decisions under conditions of uncertainty, such as how we would perceive distances in foggy conditions. SDT assumes that the decision maker is not a passive receiver of information, but an active decision-maker who makes difficult perceptual judgments under conditions of uncertainty. In foggy circumstances, we are forced to decide how far away from us an object is, based solely upon visual stimulus which is impaired by the fog. Since the brightness of the object, such as a traffic light, is used by the brain to discriminate the distance of an object, and the fog reduces the brightness of objects, we perceive the object to be much farther away than it actually is. Signal detection theory can also be applied to memory experiments, where items are presented on a study list for later testing. A test list is created by combining these 'old' items with novel, 'new' items that did not appear on the study list. On each test trial the subject will respond 'yes, this was on the study list' or 'no, this was not on the study list'. Items presented on the study list are called Targets, and new items are called Distractors. Saying 'Yes' to a target constitutes a Hit, while saying 'Yes' to a distractor constitutes a False Alarm. Signal Detection Theory has wide application, both in humans and other animals. Topics include memory, stimulus characteristics of schedules of reinforcement, etc.

(#10) Lewandowsky, Stephan; Stafford, Tom (13 November 2014). "How to debunk falsehoods". BBC. Retrieved 15 November 2014.

(#11) "Notes on the Fool". Royal Shakespeare Company. Archived from the original on April 4, 2009. Retrieved 2009-10-29.

(#12) Janusz Pelc; Paulina Buchwald-Pelcowa; Barbara Otwinowska (1989). *Jan Kochanowski 1584-1984: epoka, twórczo, recepcja* (in Polish). Lublin: Instytut Bada Literackich, Polska Akademia Nauk. pp. 425–438. ISBN 978-83-222-0473-3.

(#13) Hyde, Lewis. *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998.

(#14) Mattick, Paul. "Hotfoots of the Gods", New York Times, February 15, 1998

(#15) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Enf3zyziKQM> (andy kaufman ex)

(#17) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiWlvBro9el> (yes men bhopal bbc)

(#16) <http://www.dowethics.com/> (dow chemical fake website)

(#18) A few major misconceptions based on this map:

- Alaska is nearly as large as the continental U.S.
- Greenland is roughly the same size as Africa.
- Europe (excluding Russia) is only a bit larger than South America.
- Antarctica dwarfs all the continents.

In reality:

- Alaska can fit inside the continental U.S. about three times.
- Greenland can fit inside Africa about 14 times.
- South America nearly doubles Europe's land mass.
- Antarctica looks like the second-smallest continent.

(#19) Cecil Adams. Do maps have 'copyright traps' to permit detection of unauthorized copies? The Straight Dope, August 16, 1991.

(#20) Five principles of media literacy. Quoted from Media Literacy Resource Guide. Ontario Ministry of Education, 1989. pp. 8-9.

(#21) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLSwvZd17Qw> (green screen fail video)

(#22) www.theonion.com/

(#23) This is intrinsic to online fantasy worlds but occurs not infrequently in other interactions, as when participants in a discussion group pretend to a different gender, background, or personality than their true one. It can also occur in failure to reveal a critical bias, as when an employee of a company endorses their company's product in a discussion group without revealing their employment ("shilling"). The frequent lack of aural and visual clues in cyberspace particularly facilitates identity deception.

(#24) Examples are fake Web pages intended to steal credit-card numbers, fake bills for services not rendered, and hijacking of sites and connections. Such events are increasingly common.

(#25) This can include substitution of a different emotional response for the one actually felt, or "trolling" by deliberately seeming stupid to provoke people. Insincerity is also facilitated by the lack of

visual and aural feedback.

(#26) Alleged reasons for not doing something are common online because they are often hard to confirm.

(#27) False advertising is an example, where limited ability to view and feel a product online permits inflated claims by the seller. In news groups due to the sporadic appearance of members of a virtual community, there may not be as much social pressure to fulfill commitments as in the real world. This can lead to strange phenomena such as fake virtual suicide.

(#28) <http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/>

(#29) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfPJeDssBOM> how to charge an iPod with an onion

(#30) <http://blairwitch.com/filmmakers.html>

(#31) <http://mwpdigitalmedia.com/blog/the-blair-witch-project-the-best-viral-marketing-campaign-of-all-time/>

(#32) "The Loch Ness Monster and the Surgeon's Photo". Museumofhoaxes.com. Retrieved 28 May 2009.

(#33) The earliest report of a monster associated with the vicinity of Loch Ness appears in the Life of St. Columba by Adomnán, written in the 7th century. According to Adomnán, writing about a century after the events he described, the Irish monk Saint Columba was staying in the land of the Picts with his companions when he came across the locals burying a man by the River Ness. They explained that the man had been swimming in the river when he was attacked by a "water beast" that had mauled him and dragged him under. They tried to rescue him in a boat, but could only drag up his corpse. Hearing this, Columba stunned the Picts by sending his follower Luigne moccu Min to swim across the river. The beast came after him, but Columba made the sign of the Cross and commanded: "Go no further. Do not touch the man. Go back at once." The beast immediately halted as if it had been "pulled back with ropes" and fled in terror, and both Columba's men and the pagan Picts praised God for the miracle. The oldest manuscript relating to this story was put online in 2012. Believers in the Loch Ness Monster often point to this story, set in the River Ness rather than the loch itself, as evidence for the creature's existence as early as the 6th century.

(#34) O'Sullivan, Tim. (1994) "Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies", Routledge

(#35) <https://www.youtube.com/>

[watch?v=YAJO1MKtVG0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAJO1MKtVG0) 4 biggest viral video hoaxes

(#36) These Viral Videos Were FAKE?! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAeqpBUxZJ8>

(#37) clonezone.link/

(#38) <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2013/jun/12/prism-nsa-powerpoint-graphic-design>

(#39) <https://www.behance.net/gallery/20508851/The-Dishonest-Manifest>

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