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Contents

Introduction

Over 10 weeks we have explored several themes relating to Graphic Design, through weekly lectures. This catalogue is comprised of my reviews and thoughts on these lectures, and is concluded by a 2000 word essay answering a question set by the lecturer who's theme I found most intriguing.

The catalogue is formatted in chronological order, with the lecture we received first being at the start, and the final lecture being at the end. I have designed it this way because I wrote each response on the week we received each lecture and in some I have referenced the previous lectures in comparisons; thus it makes more sense to read through them in chronological order.

The Author –
Andrew Slatter
22/01/15

Roland Barthes

"The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author."

The first lecture in the 10 week series was on the issue of authorship in design. Delivered by our CTS tutor, Andrew Slatter, we were made aware of the relationship between designers and readers, and who the author is/ who the author can be.

In preparation for the lecture, we were asked to read Ellen Lupton's "The Designer as Producer" to gather some context. In this she analyses German critic, Walter Benjamin's "The Designer as Author".
Although I was slightly confused after first read, I reread it a couple of times and highlighted the key parts for me to think about.
After reading this, I was made to question the role of a graphic designer. It is not just about the creation, it is about the thought process. Lupton also discusses how in this era, we need to be masters of technology rather than slaves to it; and how doing this will allow us to empower the reader/viewer to become producers as well as consumers.

This point was expanded in the lecture, when Daniel Eatock's work was discussed. Eatock is best known for his branding of the television series 'Big Brother' back when it first started in 2000. However more recently, he has developed 'Indexhibit' a website which allows anyone to become a collaborator. This is achieved through a sidebar on the website acting as exhibition space for content. The website presents the reader with a modernist functionalism; you can take the source code, buy some web-space, implement the code into that, and then you have your platform to add your content to. By doing this you become a co-author. In the credit section of indexhibit.org, it is read "Created by Daniel Eatock, Jeffery Vaska, and You" highlighting the empowerment of the reader, becoming a producer as well as a consumer.

We also learnt that there is more to authorship than writing, and that graphic designers have the capacity to deliver content as well as form. Often in working practices, designers will be given the content for what needs to be produced, and shall work around this to create a design. After this lecture, I have been influenced to continue developing my own ideas though, and creating my own messages through my work rather than conveying

someone else's. Linking back to Ellen Lupton's idea of "designer as producer".

An example of this can be seen in 'Tree of Codes', a book by Jonathan Safran Foer and published by Visual Editions. Visual Editions believe books should be beautiful productions; designed to be read by many not just a few. They are against the high end production books that go for £100 meaning no one can or will read them, as well as being against the 'cheap paperbacks sold in airports'. They pride themselves on publishing books in between the two.
'Tree of Codes' is a delicate book which has been made by die cutting from an existing book to create a new story.

Going back to the concept of readers and viewers becoming part of the production of the idea, Slatter discussed the work of John Cage. One of Cage's most famed pieces, 4'33" (1952), was inspired by Rauschenberg's White Painting (1951), which as suggested in the name is a number of canvases painted fully white. 4'33" is four minutes and 33 seconds of complete silence. Both Cage's and Rauschenberg's work were ridiculed by the art world and were seen as a scandal. Cage's work was said to be an exploration of non intention and he aimed to pose questions rather than to make choices in his work. His work presaged minimalism by a decade.

Other things discussed in the lecture and worth looking into if you are interested in the topics discussed about authorship are:
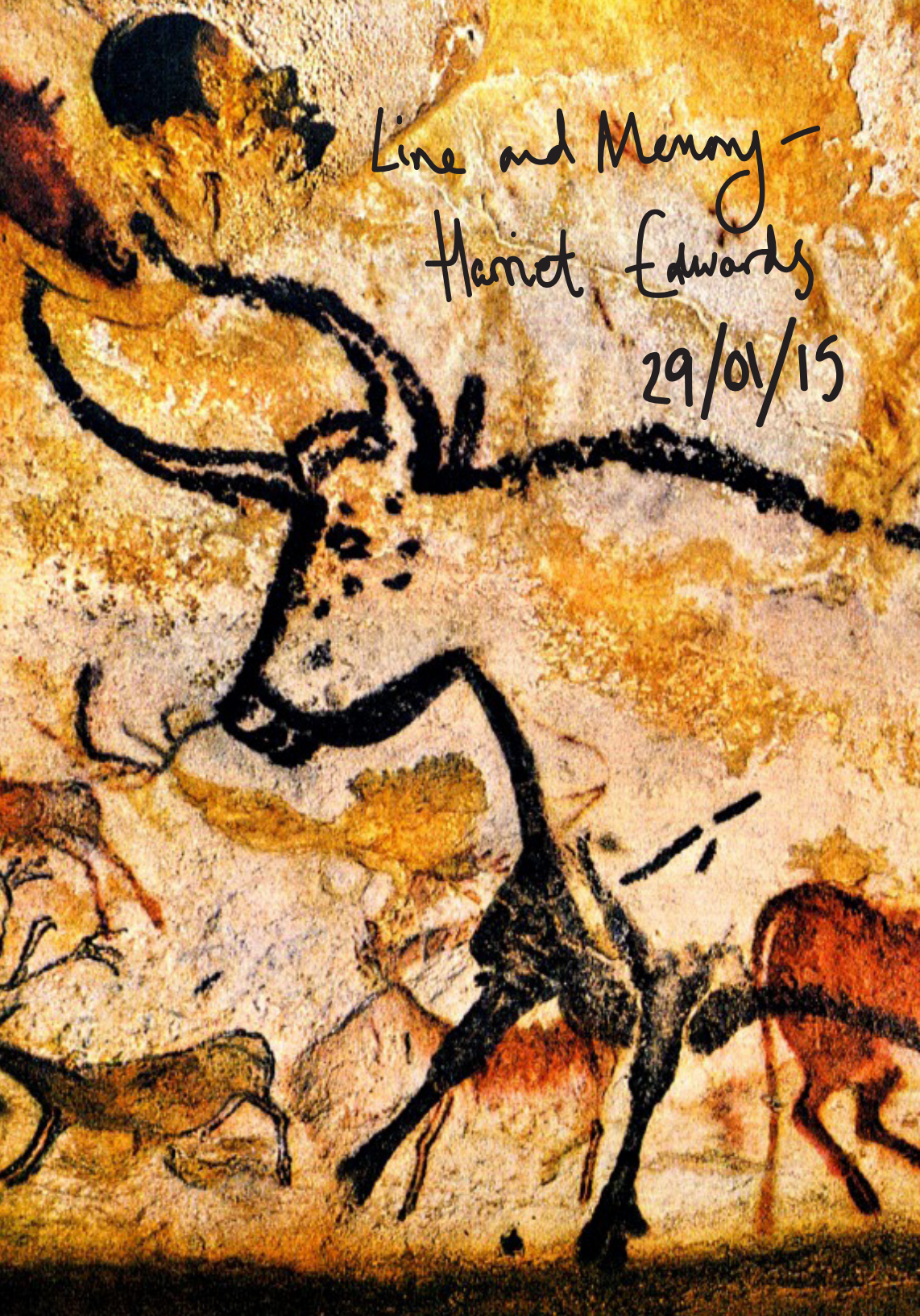Hans Arp – Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance, 1916-1917
Marcel Duchamp – Fountain, 1917

Banksy – Who is his audience?

Line and Memory —
Harriet Edwards
29/01/15

Tim Ingold

"Everything is a parliament of lines"

We started this lecture looking at the cave paintings of Chauvet in France and El Castillo in Spain, as well as some abstract cave paintings from South Africa. We discussed the possible meanings of the paintings across the different caves and how what some may interpret as art, others will interpret as communication. For example, the cave paintings in France of the bears/lionesses could be interpreted as a warning to stay away, as a message to kill or even as a form of worship. One thing in common was the use of lines to convey memories.

In other parts of history, lines were used to create letters and words; first combined around four thousand years ago on Ancient Egyptian scrolls. Before this, trading and accountancy was recorded by the Sumerians, as seen in Memory in Cuneiform. And later on, more advanced versions can be seen as shown in the Book of Kells.

Also discussed in this lecture was Tim Ingold's 'Lines: A Brief History', 2007. In this book, Ingold explores the concept of an imagined world where everything is made of interconnected lines, making the foundations for a new order; "the anthropological archaeology of the line".

Ingold sees today's writer as a wordsmith not a scribe, believing the intimate link between gesture and inscriptive trace is broken and that the author conveys feelings by choice of words rather than the expressiveness of their lines. He later categorises the types of lines suggesting all of the below follow a line format; Gesturing, Walking, Weaving, Observing, Singing, Story-telling, Drawing, Writing.

We then looked at Tony Buzan's ideas about mind maps, which he describes as powerful graphic techniques which help unlock the potential of the brain and claims them to be applicable to every aspect of life. With this in mind, in groups we were asked to mind map our understanding and knowledge of lines. We chose to concentrate on invisible/metaphorical lines in our group and listed: blood lines, pick up lines, finish line, phone line, body lines, queues, among others. All groups discussed their mind maps to the rest of the class and it was interesting to see everyone else's concept of lines.

The lecture then turned more to the memory side of the theme and we looked at the theories of Frances Yates. 'The Art of Memory' by Yates, 1966 looks at memory techniques, most interestingly the method of loci, also known as the mind palace. This is a mnemonic device which was used by the ancient Romans and Greeks, in which you use visualisation to organise information. You visualise a palace, and when there is something, or a series of things, significant you want to remember, you visualise a room in the palace and put that information in there. When you want to recall that information, you go to the room in the palace and the theory is that you will be able to remember it.

The lecture ended by us all drawing a line to represent our journey to university, based on memory only. Thus combining the two things we'd been looking at (line and memory).

Pose! 'That's Not Me'
— Mark Ingham
05/02/15

"It's just a photograph"

This was my argument when suggesting to our lecturer today, Mark Ingham, that some of Roland Barthes theories on photography were 'wishy washy'. Barthes talks about 'photographs being invisible' and 'the subject experiencing death when the photo is captured', both I can understand, and I follow where he is coming from, but from reading just the extract given to us before the lecture, I felt that Barthes' was conceptualising something that wasn't there to be conceptualised.
I do not disagree with Barthes points at all, and I find them all really interesting, however there were some, like those examples given, that I questioned before the lecture started.

In response to this I was advised to read the whole book; the introductory pages propose these theories, but do not go into enough depth for me. Perhaps this is what Barthes intended when writing it, as I have definitely been enticed to read the rest of 'Camera Lucida' to answer the questions I have.

Ingham started the lecture getting us to discuss our responses to several photographic portraits, asking us to make guesses about what was happening in them or why they were set up in that way.

The one I took notice of most was David Burnett's photograph, captioned "After camping out for days, tourists look up into the sky as Apollo 11 rocketed into space.".

This was one of the only photos in which I was able to guess what was happening; purely due to the 60s clothing, and the facial expressions of the people looking into the sky, conveying a sense of awe.

Ingham questioned that if the caption to the photo instead said "After camping out for days, tourists look up into the sky as three rare birds fly past.", would we still believe it? This goes back to Barthes point about

photographs never having any more meaning than what you can see; it is only when you have secondary knowledge that you can distinguish from the content. I found it ridiculous and unbelievable that these people would be looking at rare birds, but this is only because I had previous knowledge which led me to guess it was not that. To others in the class, who had not guessed the actual context of the photo, this was totally believable and if Ingham had told us that instead of telling us it was in fact the Apollo 11 launch, I'm sure no one would have questioned it.

Going back 130 years from this Burnett photograph, 1839 is the year photography is regarded to have commenced...

Yes, the first photograph was supposedly taken previous to this, in 1826/1827, but there were so many problems with photography back then, in terms of long exposure times and difficulties fixing the image. So, on the 25th of January, 1839, William Henry Fox Talbot presented his results from negative/positive processing to the Royal Institution in London, calling the process 'photogenic drawing', and photography as we know it today resulted from this.

The lecture then skipped forward to the Victorian era, and Ingham showed us an image of a strange looking pole. My first guess was some sort of tripod, something to hold a camera. Other guesses in the class were fire tongs, lantern holder, etc.

Nope.

We were all shocked to find out that it was actually a device to keep people in the same position whilst having their photo taken. Keeping the same pose for so long proved hard when we tried to pull the same facial expression for just one minute. Some were better than others... I spent the whole minute laughing.
We then realised why Victorians are so

famous for not smiling in photos; it took so long for the photograph to be captured, that it was impossible to keep any facial expression other than a straight face.

The lecture then got slightly more morbid as we were shown a series of photos of Victorian children, seemingly fine, but actually dead and posed to look alive for photographs, as a form of remembrance. This was a concept we all struggled with in the class, questioning why this was acceptable and why the Victorians were normalising death this way. However when more thought is put into the issue, you realise that photographs were not something easily obtained for those without a financial and social status, so photographing children alive would be very rare, as most families would wait until they are fully grown. Yet if their child has died, then this new concept of photography is a perfect way for them to keep a memory of the deceased.

Looking back, this is thankfully something that no longer has to occur in our society as photographs are so easily obtained. So easy in fact that there are now trends in photography, which almost everyone is involved in… A lecture on photography in 2015 of course couldn't go without mentioning the 'selfie'...

In this self portrait, you can see that Robert Cornelius has scratched out the camera he used when taking a photo of his reflection in October/November 1939. On the back of this photograph it reads "The first light picture ever taken".

The thing that I was most interested by in this lecture, and in Barthes' work, also relates to the selfie. It is the concept of who you are conveying in a photo of yourself; whether you realise it or not, you will always pose when you know there is a camera on you. We all tried to take a selfie in the lecture without posing but it was literally impossible, we could act natural, but it was still acting, not being.

Even if you forget the camera is there, you still have to press the button with your finger, and as soon as you do that, you go back to posing. When it is not a self portrait, Barthes argues that there are four versions of yourself, intersecting at once. You as you think you are, you as you want others to think you are, you as the photographer thinks you are, and the you the photographer wants to exhibit. Regardless, the image is never of YOU, it is of the body you are making for yourself; as soon as you pose, you are transforming yourself into the photo, before it has even been taken.

Bleached Dreams.
Troubling Places

— Greta Hauer
12/02/15

"Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyper-real and of simulation."

It was after this quote came up in the slide-show of Greta Hauer's lecture that I became rapt with the concept of Places and Non Places. Baudrillard quite poignantly describes Disneyland as the most real place in America, somewhere with a self titled 'Fantasyland', in-dicating it not pretending to be anything more than it is; a theme park. Other places, and not just in America, create a fake environment, and strip places of their historical and cultural context of origin, to the point that we do not know what is real anymore. This leads on to the concept of 'Disneyisation'.

Disneyisation, or Disneyification, is a term neg-atively used to describe the transformation of a place becoming somewhere focused on consumerism and consumption; resembling the Disney theme parks. It is about the increase in appeal of goods, services and settings, leading to more and more custom, with the goal for people to stay captivated and stay longer, thus spending more money. This can be seen all over America especially, with examples such as Las Vegas, a city stripped of its natural beauty, with recognition focusing purely on the casinos, shops, nightclubs and of course, lights.

Las Vegas is an example of a 'non place'; somewhere not real. Other examples of disneyisation and non places can be seen in shopping malls. A complex made entirely of merchandisers pushing products, yet still a place many will chose to spend their week-ends socialising at, a place where Americans will even go to vote, and somewhere that every road leads to in American suburbs. Evidence of this concept can be seen here in the UK as well, with places such as Milton Keynes, a town made up of a grid structure of blocks and roundabouts, with no seemingly natural flow and somewhere impossible to get around without owning a car. A 2007 Guardi-an article described this 'non place' as having "an absence of soul", somewhere in which you would "struggle to find to any 'there', there".

Hauer went on to stress how the development of these 'non places', has changed society and the way we live, like how we would rather go to an aquarium than to the ocean. Marc Augé describes 'non places' as though "space had been trapped by time", like the only history of that place is whatever occurred in the last day; "an unending history in the present".

I particularly like how the concept of places and non places was explained to us in this lecture through contemporary examples of film and television, all of which we were able to identify with, and were even able give our own examples of 'non places' conveyed in film.

David Cronenberg's 'eXistenZ' (1999) is a film about a virtual world that people go into, in which the characters start doubting reality and which of the worlds is actually more real.

Marlen Haushofer's 'The Wall' is a novel, which was then adapted into a film, where a woman is trapped by an invisible wall, around her holiday home in the Austrian mountains, cut of from the rest of the world. The unnamed character writes an account of her isolation as she struggles to come to terms with the situa-tion. This story intrigued me, and it's a book I aim to read, especially if I choose to base my essay on this lecture topic.

And of course, Peter Weir's 'The Truman Show' (1998) was discussed. The well known film about Truman Burbank who has been brought up in a false world, a giant Television studio, in which his family and friends are all actors. "We accept the reality of the world with which we are presented."

These films are enthralling metaphors for what some consider everyday places to have become.

Holding Text
(Un)Creative Writing
in the Digital Age

—Andrea
Mason
19/02/15

Prior to Andrea Mason's lecture today, we were asked to read an article from The New Yorker by Kennth Goldsmith, titled 'Why I Am Teaching a Course Called "Wasting Time on the Internet"'. This argued against the criticisms of people, students in particular, being distracted by the internet, and suggests that this 'distraction' is still a way of learning and taking in information, it just isn't something accepted yet as a form of education.

"We are reading and writing differently—skimming, parsing, grazing, bookmarking, forwarding, retweeting, reblogging, and spamming language—in ways that aren't yet recognised as literary."

Goldsmith goes on to describe web surfing as a form of self expression. "Every click is indicative of who we are: indicative of our likes, our dislikes, our emotions, our politics, our world view." He believes we shouldn't be made to feel guilty when we emerge from a sleep like state of internet browsing. I don't particularly agree with Goldsmith trying to redefine 'dead time' spent on the internet as something that has been engaging and creative; it all depends on the person and whether they take inspiration from what they have read or watched. If it contributes to something productive then the 'dead time' is not longer 'dead time'. However I do agree that the internet is NOT making us less intelligent, as many would argue. We are reading and writing more than ever, it's just making us more intelligent about issues other than the ones contained in libraries.

Mason started the lecture by comparing the 'writing world' to the 'art and music world'. Despite all being within the creative industry, it is only acceptable for a piece to be reworked if it is in the form of art or music, this is even celebrated; however for a piece of writing to be acceptable it has to be completely original, if it is found to have been copied in any shape or form it will be slated. An example of this can be seen in Sherrie Levine's 'After Walker Evans', a photograph of a photograph. This was both a scandal and success in the art world, both praised and attacked. More can be read about Levine's work here.

The lecture then moved on to psychogeography, more specifically dérive, which is an unplanned journey through a landscape. Guy Debord defined it as "a mode of experimental behaviour linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances.", methodologies can be seen in William Burroughs' cut ups.

Many of us knew Burroughs from his novel Naked Lunch which I didn't realise was made using the cut up method. David Bowie is another artist who uses this technique, inspired by Burroughs.

Bowie would cut up his diaries and rearrange them, he claimed this was a great way to find things out about himself. This concept would be interesting if you combined it with Goldsmith's idea about all of our 'clicks' on the internet defining us, (a more contemporary version of a diary), if we did cut ups of pages from our internet history I'm sure we would also find out more about ourselves and our likes, dislikes, emotions, politics, and world view. Like Naked Lunch, examples of cut ups in famous writing, can be seen in some of Bowie's songs.

Below are different examples of cut outs:
—Flarf, done with Google searches
—Alt Lit, where the author draws its motif from the interent
—Blackout poetry, where the words you don't want to keep from a text are scribbled out to reveal a new piece of writing from the words left. Similar to 'Tree of Codes', discussed in Andrew Slatter's lecture on Authorship.

These are influenced by Dada poetry, Dada was an art movement in the early 20th century. We then looked back at Kenneth Goldsmith's work again, this time looking at poetry which draws from Dada traditions, i.e. Traffic, a transcription of travel reports, and The Weather, a transcription of weather forecasts.

I thought today's lecture was really interesting and I was entertained creating my own piece of writing by manipulating the words of others. However creative writing, the ideas behind it, and where it is going is not something that I am particularly captivated by and never have been therefore I don't think this lecture topic is one that I will be likely to answer the essay question on at the end of the lecture series.

Typography and Communication

— John Patrick Hartnett

26/02/15

Robert Bringhurst

"The craft of endowing human language with a durable visual form, and thus with an independent existence."

Typography is something I have never been interested by and something I dread when it comes up as a topic; probably not an ideal line of thinking if I'm going to be a graphic designer, but forcing myself into the lecture made me a lot less sceptical of the subject.

Prior to John Patrick Hartnett's lecture, I read several pages from Robert Bringhurst's 'The Elements of Typographic Style' – 1992. This book explains the coherence of type to content, stressing the importance of using relevant type to get the text's message across. Bringhurst explains the origins and contextualises typography whilst contrasting it to other art forms. Compared to some of the other readings in this lecture series, I found this book quite repetitive, with only a couple of interesting concepts which seemed to be brought back up over and over again. Bringhurst constantly uses the analogy of typography to literature being the same as musical performance to composition, suggesting that both are "an essential act of interpretation, full of endless opportunities for insight or obtuseness". More compelling, he recounts "Letterforms that honour and elucidate what humans say deserve to be honoured in their turn. Well-chosen words deserve well chosen letters." this translates as the typographer needing to respect the text, to reflect and pay attention to the context of the writing.
What is typography?
Hartnett presented us with several definitions for 'typography'.
– "A craft that's been practiced since Coutenberg's invention of moveable type"
– "Concerned with determination of appearance of the printed page"
– "The art and craft / process of composing type and printing from it" – Colins English Dictionary, this definition suggests that there was no typography before the mid 15th century, and that digital letters aren't a form of typography either.
– "Typography is writing with pre-fabricated letters" – Gerrit Noordzij, this definition

doesn't connect typography to any specific medium and therefore makes it a more accurate description.

Other definitions I have found suggest typography to be:
– "The art and technique of arranging type to make written language readable and beautiful"
– "The style and appearance of printed matter, the art or procedure of arranging type or processing data and printing from it." In his book, Bringhurst explains typography as "the craft of endowing human language with a durable visual form, and thus with an independent existence.".
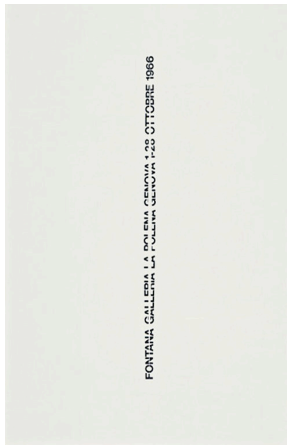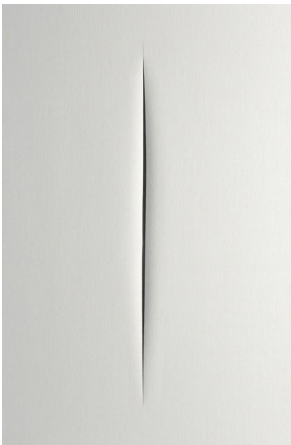
Examples of where typography has followed Bringhurst's ideas can be seen in 'The Road' by Cormac McCarthy, 2006. McCarthy uses a certain way of setting dialogue in this novel about a man and son hopelessly travelling after an unspecified disaster hits Earth. He believes speech marks to be superfluous and therefore eliminates them from the text, and the result is arguably much easier to read and interpret.

We then looked at conflicts in typography, 'righter' and 'wronger' approaches.

One of the most notable conflicts was between Jan Tschichold and Max Bill. In a published debate, we see Tschichold turn his back on his previous theories about typography to become a modernist. Bill believed in and had followed Tschichold's work and was disappointed by his actions, creating the reason for the debate.
Wim Crouwd and Jan van Toorn, in the 1970s also had an intense discussion about the role of the designer, linking back to Andrew Slatter's lecture about designers today conveying their own message through their work rather than designing for something already thought up.

The one I found most interesting, was the typographic poster for Lucio Fontana's 'Spatial Concept: Expectations.', 1964. Fontana's was famous for slashing canvases. The poster for this was created by AG Fronzoni, and there was a divide in its reciprocation, some argued it destroyed the piece, whilst others suggested it added to the artwork. I personally think it's a really clever way of presenting the piece, however as a poster it possibly reveals too much as it is very literal, a typographic copy.

After a Fashion

— Dene October
05/03/15

Edward Bernays

"We are governed, our minds are moulded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of… who understands the mental processes and which control the public mind"

To encourage loyalty, department stores such as 'Kay's' introduced fashion catalogues; this too enhanced patterns in consumption, aimed particularly amongst women.

The success of these catalogues through the 1920s to 1960s was largely owed to psychological techniques used in the advertising, and balance of image and text according to modernist principals. This is an example of October's chosen lecture topic linking in with graphic design and the importance of the layout reflecting the message the designer wants to communicate. We also looked at this concept in John Patrick Hartnett's lecture; how the choices the designer makes, are essential in communicating the appropriate message to the reader, although in Hartnett's case in terms of typography.

An example of psychological techniques used in advertising can be seen in the 1933 issue of a Kay's catalogue. The chosen phrase 'Hike for Health' encourages readers to purchase the clothing by suggesting inner health goes hand in hand with outer appearance.

Due to growth in youth styles, and developments in media, the fashion catalogue is now perceived as dated; however the relationship between the consumer and the catalogue is being revived thanks to title updates and the proliferation of internet shopping.
In contemporary society we can see an evolution in catalogues and a drastic difference in the way clothing is sold to us. Increasingly we are exposed to more sexually displayed models; a selling technique used by many businesses.
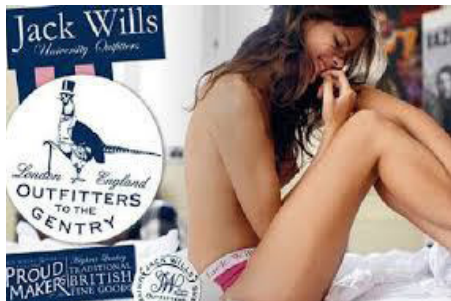
A 1940 Kay's catalogue compared to a 2011 Jack Wills catalogue.

The perception of which of these is a better selling technique would depend on the generation you asked; our tastes as society have changed and this is all due to updates in fashion and decisions made by designers…
"We are governed, our minds are moulded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of… who understands the mental processes and which control the public mind" – Edward Bernays, Propoganda (1928)

"Art for us is an occasion for social criticism and for a real understanding of the age we live in" – Hugo Bell

The lecture I was perhaps most captivated by in this series, in terms of issues discussed, was delivered by Adriana Eysler, in which the social purpose of design and the social responsibility of the designer was questioned.

Design as a profession emerged at the end of the 19th century as a result of the industrial revolution and capitalism; "The pivotal position of design within contemporary culture traces back to the turn of this century [20th], and its growth in importance is inextricably linked to the rise of industrial mass production." Ewen, S, 1990.

Opposing the mass production of art and design was the Arts and Crafts movement, which started in Britain and spread to the US, Europe and Japan. Key people in this movement such as Augustus Pugin, John Ruskin, and William Morris believed that mass production doesn't speak to individual needs of users and is of poor quality. This links to the designer as author concept of Slatter's lecture; and the idea is still present now with art and design websites such as 'Etsy' where everything is handmade by individual artists and items can be personalised to the customers preferences.

After this came Industrial Modernism; The Bauhaus was a design school in Germany running between 1919 and 1933. This was a response to industrialisation and its effects. Bauhaus embraced functionalism, geometric formalism and machine aesthetics, with the iconic phrase "form follows function" being associated with the movement.

Both of these movements coincided with the belief that design has the task of building a better life and society for people; that designers are "agents for social change".

In WW1 designers became key in propaganda, they took on the role of selling war to the public, convincing them it was just. Designers had already worked with psychologists to make their work more effective, as discussed in October's Fashion lecture, and posters such as James Montgomery Flagg's Uncle Sam 'I Want You' are examples of how designers were able to encourage people to sign up and fight. The posters for war were very similar to the pre-existing advertisements for consumerism; the two were sold in the same way in an attempt to make war seem like a continuity of life.

Here you can see similarities in the way designers approached ordinary advertisements for products, such as 'Johnnie Walker' Whisky, and in the way they approached propaganda and posters to encourage men to enlist.

"Repelled by the slaughterhouses of the world war, we turned to art" — Hans Arp.

In 1933 the Nazis closed the Bauhaus, declaring most avant-garde art as 'degenerate'. Many of the designers therefore emigrated to the USA, where their influence on design was very prominent. An example of this can be seen in the evolution of the IBM logo; going from being very decorative to having more simplistic but effective aesthetics.

In 1964, British graphic designer, Ken Garland and 20 other designers published the First Things First Manifesto. This is a declaration of principles, calling for a return to a humanist aspect of design. Garland practised what he preached and was involved in lots of design projects contributing towards a better society, i.e. the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) March poster.

Following this, in the 80s and 90s activist design groups used their work to confront social issues such as AIDS and Homophobia. Many designers started changing their profession to 'artist', wanting more freedom with their work, not wanting to design for large corporations with messages they didn't agree with.

Barbara Kruger's influential work (influential if you are at all concerned by this issue) is a great example of this. Her work serves as a guilt trip, a reminder of how wrapped up we can become by consumerism, and it encourages us to look what's really important.

'No Logo' 1999 was an influential book at the time; author Naomi Klein explores how brands really operate and the lengths they go to to mask and beautify their methods of manufacturing i.e. sweatshops. This is where Culture Jamming/Guerilla Communication comes in; a tactic used by many anti-consumerist social movements. The Anti-Sweatshop culture jamming in the 1990s key issue was 'uncooling the billion dollar brands'.

I was particularly gripped by Eysler's culture jamming example of BP vs Greenpeace. BP rebranded their company, originally standing for 'British Petroleum' they changed the meaning to 'Beyond Petrolem', suggesting they're no longer an oil company and that they're all about renewable energy sources. Bullshit. Their green sunflower logo fell victim to a Greenpeace campaign in which they were fighting against this issue.

I have been so engrossed by this lecture, and have decided that this will be the topic I chose to base my essay on. I have just ordered Klein's 'No Logo' to read not only as a form of research but out of genuine interest. Once this lecture series is finished I shall read much further into the social responsibility of designers; I am most interested in the culture jamming topic and therefore will focus my research and essay on this in particular.

Left Brain,
Right Brain

– Harriet
Edwards
19/03/15

Looking at the way the brain works, particularly focusing on the functionality of the two hemispheres; this lecture followed on from Edward's previous, about Line and Memory. In preparation we were asked to read an extract from 'The Master and His Emissary' by Iain McGilchrist, 2009. This introduced us to the idea that the left and right hemispheres are extremely different; however elaborates by explaining that there hasn't been enough research to identify their uses as individuals. Since the 19th century the left hemisphere of the brain has been identified as being responsible for our analytical, logical and literal skills; we later identified the right side of the brain to be the creative and imaginative side; responding to visual imagery. It was therefore believed that the left hemisphere dealt just with words, and the right side just with images; however this has since proved not to be true. Both sides of the human brain deal with both of these things in different ways. Despite both sides cooperating, McGilchrist uses the analogy of their being a power struggle between the two sides; perhaps being what makes some people more creative than others. We started the lecture by creating a visual interpretation of our own brains; I remember being extremely tired and stressed with upcoming deadlines at the time so my interpretation isn't the finest of my drawings…

It shows an unorganised mess, featuring drawings of what I was thinking about at the time and with arrows pointing outwards, representing things escaping my mind. This doesn't reflect my brain on an everyday basis, just that particular morning.
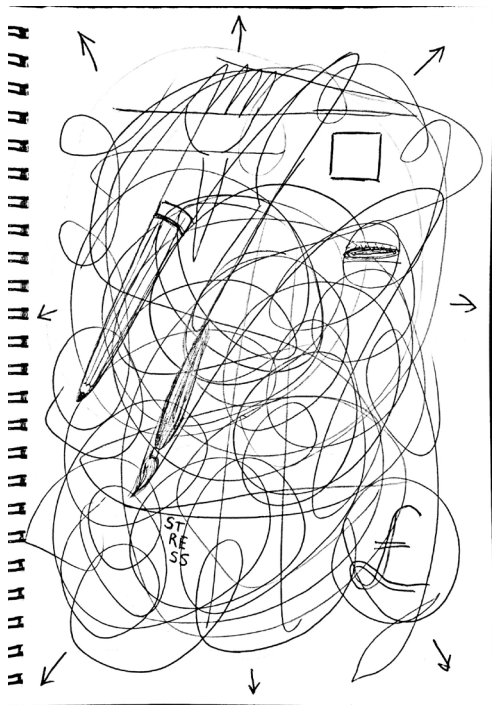
After this, we compared each others 'brain'. It was really interesting to see the different ways people had approached this exercise; whether illustrative, abstract, or by what they felt physically as well as mentally.

A discussion based on McGilchrist's concept of us living in a world dominated by the left hemisphere then started. During this, we were asked if we agreed that the world is governed by left hemisphere characteristics, starting a heated discussion in the group about responsibility in design and the influence individuals can have in society. Some believed that they can not directly make changes to improve society whilst others argued you definitely can and you should always try. This links to Adriana Eysler's lecture about designers being agents for social change.

Despite being interested by the concepts raised by Edwards, this lecture didn't captivate me as much as the previous ones did and it's perhaps not a topic I will read further into after comparing it to some of the other issues and themes talked about.

Language as Material: Materiality and Method

— Andrea Mason

26/03/15

Kenneth Goldsmith

"Even in their most abstracted form, letters are embedded with semantic, semiotic, historical, cultural and associative meanings."

This lecture continued on from the theme of Uncreative Writing, previously explored in Mason's 'Holding Text' lecture. This time looking at literary texts which put emphasis on form, over plot; whilst questioning the political aspect of language and art.
We were asked to look at writing not as text, but as art. Offering a new way of seeing and provoking a more personal response to the piece.

"Like a logo, a poem should be instantly recognisable."

Concrete poetry, a term coined in the 1950s, is the treatment of words and letters as building blocks with the intention of using letter arrangements to enhance the meaning of a poem. Examples of concrete poetry:

After the Concrete Poetry movement, came Oulipo,in the mid 20th century. It had similar characteristics, working with restraints and non emotional writing. 'A Void', written by George Perec, a key member of this movement, was written entirely without the use of the letter 'E' whilst following the Oulipo style, which links to the non emotional aspect, as he cannot make reference to his own name, or his family and their names.

In the lecture, we were asked to create our own concrete poetry. This is my attempt.

NO

speaking
from above,
at such accelerated
virtue   dark outside
than in.
you're
more
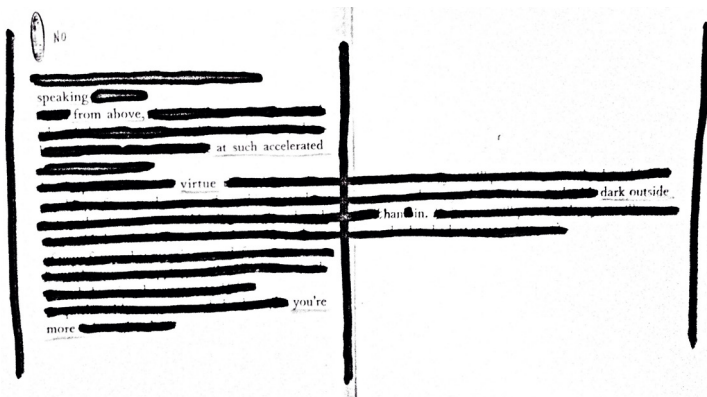
"Speaking from above, at such accelerated virtue, you're more dark outside than in."

This lecture, despite more interactive than others, didn't keep me captivated, perhaps because I was already set on basing my essay on Eysler's First Things First lecture/topic. I learnt a lot about the different movements in poetry and I have been taught to view written language in a more extensive range of forms however it is not a theme I am particularly interested in perusing.

WE ARE HERE

"We will uncool their billion dollar brands." What is the Culture Jammer's Movement's analysis of our culture, and what is Culture Jamming trying to do? How successful is Culture Jamming as a technique?

Immersed in their advertisements, we live not as people but, as targets for visual stimulation from the 'billion dollar brands'; as suggested by New York based consumer culture lecturer, Stuart Ewen (1976, p. 84). The billion dollar brands achieve their mass profit by using well implemented and manipulative branding to encourage consumption. However, it is important to understand that branding goes beyond the visual aspects. What makes a brand is invisible; it's an ethos, a set of values, and unfortunately the marketing skills of these corporations make us blind to lies and exploitation. Often mistaken simply as a vandal, a Culture Jammer is someone against these billion dollar brands, with a goal to expose the true price we are paying for these products, a price not of money, but of ethics. A Culture Jam is an interception, "an X-ray of the subconscious of a campaign" as described by 'No Logo' author Naomi Klein (2010, p. 282), which can be achieved in a number of methods. The origins of Culture Jamming shall be explored, as well as the Culture Jammer's analysis of our culture; I shall discuss their efforts to rebel against our culture, and the level of success their techniques can have.

The way in which contemporary society came to be the way it is now, and the origins of Culture Jamming itself, must be first explored in order to explain the Culture Jammer's analysis of our culture.

Working in the early 20th Century, Edward Bernays was the founder and leader of modern and commercial public relations and can be identified as the man who shaped the consumerist society we live in today. As written by Guardian journalist, Tim Adams (2002), Bernays was one of the first to recognize that the subconscious of the human mind could be appealed to in order to sell. He therefore "treated all people as mechanically identical" and called for a "mass psychology" to be implemented in order to control the public (Ewen, 1976, p. 83). As a result of this, Bernays and therefore the advertisers of this time knew how to appeal to the masses. This is evidenced by the 1929 'Torches of Freedom', a campaign created by Bernays to encourage women's smoking. At this time, it was not publicly acceptable for women to smoke, meaning cigarette companies were not profiting to their full potential. Under the

American Tobacco Company's employment, Bernays staged a dramatic public display of women smoking in New York City, during the Easter Day Parade. The campaign was considered successful as sales of cigarettes to women increased after this. As a result, cigarette companies followed Bernays's lead and created ad campaigns that targeted women. (Christensen, 2012). Manipulating the, then current, issue of women's rights to sell cigarettes highlights Bernays' using psychology to push products on the masses.

Using similar techniques, soon advertisers didn't even need to work as hard, they had already created 'a fear'. "The individual was constantly judged by others... fear in women of being frumps, fear in men of being duds." (Ewen, 1976, p.96). This fear ensured that people kept buying what was sold to them as the new trends and ensured the 'billion dollar brands' would keep profiting. The alternative for those of whom did not buy into the new trends? As suggested by Ewen (1976, p.95), rejection, quizzical looks and doubtful stares. This is the Culture Jammer's dubious analysis of our culture, and this is what they are fighting against.

The term Culture Jamming was coined in 1984, however its origins can be traced considerably further back. Formed in 1954, The Situationists International, were a group of agents for social change; their notion of détournement is very similar to Culture Jamming, in which expressions of the capitalist system and media culture were turned against themselves (Holt, 2010, p.252). However authors Heller and Vienne (2003, p.210-211) believe the act of Culture Jamming can be traced further back than even the Situationists. The trans-historical and ancient figure of the trickster serves as a foreshadowed characterisation for Culture Jammers. "The trickster is a boundary crosser and a speaker of profanities... The trickster can bring to the surface a distinction previously hidden from sight. He disrupts and reshapes the world around him." (LePore, 2012). This description strongly emulates the intentions of the Culture Jammer; it highlights their analysis of our culture by suggesting there is something to be exposed, and that there is a need for a reshaped society.

Prominent examples of contemporary Culture Jams, influenced by the Situationist's concept of détournement, and similar to the acts of the trickster shall be explored; however, before discussing how Culture Jamming is being used to reshape our society, we need to know the shape it is now in, and how it came to be molded this way…

Through their many methods, Culture Jammers are trying to give people a free and authentic life, which founder and editor of Adbusters magazine Lasn, (1999) believes is made impossible today. "Our role is mostly to listen and watch — and then, based on what we have heard and seen, to buy." (Lasn, 1999). Adbusters, based in Vancouver, use Saul Alinsky's analogy of jujitsu to explain Culture Jamming; "You slap the giant on the back. We use the momentum of the enemy" (Klein, 2010, p.281). Translating simply as using the billion dollar brand's own influence on the public to take them down, by distorting their messages to reveal what the Culture Jammer sees as the truth. Adbusters has railed against consumerism since 1989 using several different types of Culture Jams. Most notably Adbusters popularised the annual 'Buy Nothing Day' (Kingsley, 2012). In 1992, 'Buy Nothing Day' was promoted by Adbusters, with the aim to convince people not to purchase anything on Black Friday, the Friday after Thanksgiving in America; a highly popular day for shopping due to reduced prices for 24 hours. Evidently this was a near impossible task, and didn't stop people spending, however Heller and Vienne (2012, p.168) suggest that although it didn't work as such, the campaign gave out a serious message about consumption and still made people think twice. As well as events like this Adbusters and Culture Jammers alike, use many other techniques to uncool the 'billion dollar brands', some with more success than others…

With the goal to "reclaim public space from the increasing 'contamination' of commercial messages" (Harold, 2007), Culture Jammers use a variety of methods in their communication. The recent development of technology and software such as Photoshop has meant that the anti-brand communication can be a lot more effective. It has helped distinguish the culture jammer from the common vandal, and has therefore made more people susceptible to the 'Jammer's'

messages. Using photo editing means Culture Jammers can communicate a conflicting message to what a brand intended, whilst using that brands own aesthetic characteristics; resulting in the onlooker being humored by it. Adbusters use photo editing to parody a lot of adverts, their 'Absolut Craze' series is an example of this, where they use similar aesthetics to that of Absolut Vodka's advertising campaigns, but instead use it to convey an opposing message about the dangers of their product. As suggested by Klein (2010, p.281), sophisticated Culture Jams aren't just 'ad parodies', they're interceptions and counter messages. This is evidenced in the Absolut Craze series of posters. These hard hitting and powerful images counteract Bernays concept of appealing to the subconscious of the human brain, by using the same technique to instead create a disapproval towards the product in the viewer's mind. Making the intended viewer associate the product with death, thus preventing their desire to purchase it. This fits in with Klein's (2010, p. 281) description of sophisticated Culture Jams sending a message which is "starkly at odds with the one that was intended". Making the brand 'Absolut' about death, rather than drinking with friends and having fun.

The 'Absolut Craze' series of posters, created by Adbusters.

In contrast to using photo editing as a technique for Culture Jamming, there is the method of physically defacing adverts to convey a message. Culture Jamming is executed by individuals so many still chose to graffiti and deface billboards, however generally speaking it has evolved from simply spray-painting a billboard to actually adapting it in much more innovative way. This is evidenced in the Liberated Landscapes - Anti Advertising Campaign video (Liberated Landscapes, 2012). The video acts as instructions or advice for Culture Jammers on possible techniques for physically adapting street adverts. One example exhibits a protester blocking a bus stop advert with a custom made cover, written on it, the message "Advertisement Board Suspended, this advert has been deemed hazardous and therefore has been suspended by ARS".

An 'Advertisement Board Suspended' cover on a bus stop advert, taken from a screenshot in the 'Liberated Landscapes – Anti Advertising Campaign' Youtube video.

The reactions of the public are filmed, and it is evidenced that many members of the public try to lift up the cover to see what's underneath. This highlights the success of the protest as it has provoked human interaction; people have read the message and are intrigued as to what has been 'blocked', when they lift up the cover and see that underneath is an everyday advert it triggers a curiosity. It makes them think more into the advert than they would have ordinarily; which is the aim of the Culture Jammer.

Measuring the success of Culture Jamming is difficult due to the many variety of methods within it, all gaining different levels of success. Using an interview I have conducted on the issue of Culture Jamming, I shall gage an overall idea of the method's success.

Culture Jamming is used to provoke a personal response; to make a viewer rethink about purchasing from the billion dollar brands. Based on this idea, I interviewed student, Elliott Lyttleton, someone who often purchases clothing from brands such as Nike and Adidas; brands that frequently fall victim to Culture Jamming protests due to being notorious for exploiting their workers. After presenting him with examples of Culture Jams against these brands he stated "I am aware that brands such as Adidas exploit their workers, and I have seen several different Culture Jams against these brands, however that's not what's going through my head when I buy my clothes, and it's the same for most other shoppers." To some, this may suggest that Culture Jamming is not a successful technique, however more accurately it means that the interviewee likes the brands no matter what, the intention of a Culture Jam is to get a message across, it was successful in this because the interviewee is aware of the brands unethical exploitation; he's just made a conscious decision to continue buying from them. It indicates that it is not the Culture Jamming failing to get a message across; it has just failed to change someone's intentions to purchase from those brands.

These were the Culture Jam's I presented to interviewee Elliott Lyttleton, they are campaigning against the brands he often purchases from, thus I was trying to gage their effectiveness and influence on him.

Overall the Culture Jammer's Movement's analysis of our culture is that we as consumers are oblivious to the true nature of the billion dollar brands; that they exploit us as customers as well as their workers. They believe we are not living life to its full potential and as indicated by 'Jammer's' such as Lasn (1999) we have no freedom and are living an unauthentic life. Culture Jamming is trying to change people's views of the 'billion dollar brands'…

Looking too much at examples of Culture Jammer's such as Adbusters with their 'Buy Nothing Day', would suggest that their ultimate goal is to fully stop people purchasing from these brands; however this is not their primary focus… It is more about allowing people to make a conscious decision about what they purchase; to stop people being brainwashed by the advertisements that surround them, as achieved by Bernays. Based on this analysis, Culture Jamming as a technique is hugely successful, as through their various methods, such as Adbuster's ad parodies, and physical adaptations to billboards implemented by the Liberated Landscapes Organization, amongst others, they get highly poignant messages across to consumers. Consumers are given the option to think twice by Culture Jammers; allowing them to know the full picture before purchasing. Some may argue that Culture Jamming could be made more successful by being so effective that it completely stops people from purchasing from the billion dollar brands; but this primarily would be taking people's freedom of choice away from them and would go against everything the Culture Jammer fights against. This point is suggested in the interview I conducted, where Lyttleton was aware of Nike and Adidas's exploitation towards workers based on the messages he had received through various Culture Jammer's campaigns; yet he makes the choice to continue shopping with them. Culture Jamming in its many forms has been around for centuries and with growing technologies shall continue to thrive; it is important that these 'tricksters' carry on campaigning, and encourage freethinking for the public.
"We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of." (Ewen, 1976, p.94).

(Ewen, 1976, p.94).

"We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of."

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List of Illustrations