

POSITIONS THROUGH CONTEXTUALISING

Written Response

01

Annotated Bibliography

The Medium is the Message by Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore

In *The Medium is the Message*, McLuhan states that the medium has a profound impact on how we think and interact with each other, and that the content of the message is secondary to the medium that carries it, which emphasizes that the way we receive information is just as important as the information itself. As presented in the book, McLuhan lets the reader experience the content in a visually engaging way which is seemingly similar to my approach. By introducing different ways of seeing and engaging with the erotic imagery, using transparent paper, folding and overlapping, it challenges the viewer's perception and how it influences the way we consume and understand the content. Moreover, it shows how the images are presented is actually the message that is being carried.

McLuhan, M. and Fiore, Q. (2001) *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects*. Berkeley: Gingko Press.

The Queer Art of Failure by Jack Halberstam

Halberstam argues that many female artists use collages as a way to subvert traditional images and narratives about women and femininity, creating new meanings and possibilities for transformation. This led me to question the use of collage in the work and how erotic imagery is often associated with women's bodies and often presented in a male's glaze; as Berger states in *Ways of Seeing*, the "ideal" spectator is always assumed to be male, and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him. Another thing to consider from Halberstam's book is the example of Ono's *Cut Piece*, where he points out that though the work is not a collage, it can be seen as using similar principles. By using her body as the canvas, Ono introduces a way of exploring the role of gender, body and violence. She situates herself in her work, and I hope to do that with my project as well, being able to situate and use my position of being a woman to introduce the female narrative to challenge a way of seeing erotic imagery in this patriarchal society.

Halberstam, J. (2011). *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Studio and Cube: On the Relationship Between Where Art Is Made and Where Art Is Displayed by Brian O'Doherty

O'Doherty's essay explores the relationship between where art is made and where art is displayed; how they shape our understanding and experience of art. By using this as a lens to view and reflect on my project, it prompts me to consider the medium or think carefully about how I display or design the experience of consuming erotic imagery. As O'Doherty states in his article, the way in which an artwork is presented can affect its meaning, context, and reception. For example, the traditional "white cube" gallery space was designed to create a neutral environment that would allow artworks to be viewed without distraction. So, using a suitable medium to communicate my work can enhance the work's meaning or engage viewers in new ways.

O'Doherty, B. (2008). *Studio and Cube: On the Relationship Between Where Art Is Made and Where Art Is Displayed*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

The Art of Looking Sideways by Alan Fletcher

In *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Fletcher introduces the reader to a new way of reading a book because the book itself is not meant to be read like a regular book from cover to cover. Instead, it's designed to be explored and discovered in a non-linear way, allowing the reader to make their own connections and interpretations. Fletcher's approach encourages me to see things from different perspectives and angles, look beyond the obvious, and discover new ways of seeing things. Not only that, but it also inspires me to think about how to take this way of thinking and use it in my design as well, to challenge the audience's perception of erotic imagery and, at the same time, celebrate the human imagination.

Fletcher, A. (2001). *The Art of Looking Sideways*. New York: Phaidon Press.

Au Naturel by Sarah Lucas

Sarah Lucas' practice is often known being irreverent humour and the creation of visual puns and vulgar euphemisms through the use of everyday objects as a substitute for the human body, especially "Au Naturel" Lucas explores the ways in which society constructs gender and sexuality, and how these constructions can be subverted and challenged. By presenting the viewer with an unconventional representation of the human body. Lucas' work introduces me to the idea of "preconceived notions." how a person perceives and understands new information can sometimes lead to biases or judgments that may not be accurate. To project it on my work, I try to create a way of using objects associated with people from different backgrounds and consider the ways in which erotic imagery, especially human bodies and gender, are constructed and performed in society.

Sarah, L. (2019). *Au Naturel* [Exhibition or Online exhibition]. The New Museum, New York. 9 June–1 September 2019. Available at: <https://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/2019/sarah-lucas-au-naturel> (Accessed: 7 May 2023).

Frankie Colamarino's Visual Diary

Colamarino's visual diary introduces me to a new way of situating myself into the work and also provokes multiple thoughts and emotions in the viewer. With the use of video footage archives, Colamarino creates the form of a collage representing a personal moment in his life. He pairs together videos of real-time life events and the emotions that come with them. Though it is not directly related to the topic of erotic imagery that I have presented with my work, I find that the way Colamarino uses that footage and patches them together and let the viewer decode the image or video is interesting and valuable because these contents would be perceived by each of the audience coming from different backgrounds and cultures so it offers the viewer to use their imagination and interpretation to create their own way of seeing.

Angelos, A. (2017). "*Real-time life events and the emotions that come with them*": *Frankie Colamarino's visual diary*. Available at: <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/frankie-colamarino-film-140717> (Accessed: 7 May 2023).

Au Naturel by Sarah Lucas

Lucas' practice is frequently recognised for delving into the realm of sexual ambiguity, exploring the interplay between the familiar and the absurd, and appearing to be erotic, humorous, or reconfigured into anatomies of desire, notably her widely known exhibition "Au Naturel". By arranging everyday objects in suggestive and unexpected ways as substitutes for the human body, ranging from a mattress and melons to oranges, a cucumber, and a bucket. With a deliberate blend of suggestion and humour, the arrangement of these items purposefully mirrors the forms of male and female body parts. Through this artistic composition, Lucas provokes a reconsideration of our perceptions of sex and its representation. Lucas' *Au Naturel* challenges societal norms and expectations surrounding the body and sexuality and encourages viewers to question preconceived notions.

As presented in Lucas' practice, the idea of "preconceived notions" plays a crucial role, and it is something that should be considered into account when posing the work, whether it is an art form or even the field of graphic or communication design. Preconceived notions can affect how a person perceives and understands new information based on past experiences. The use of everyday objects in *Au Naturel* is an excellent way of introducing preconceived notions to invite the viewer to engage in a critical examination, eliciting a sense of unease and forcing viewers to confront their own assumptions, prompting them to reconsider established norms and giving a sense of the relationship between the experience of the person and the object.

Not only introduces us to the idea of preconceived notions, but Lucas' also situated her own position into the work. As a woman herself, Lucas brings a unique perspective to her art, especially a feminist spin, utilising it as a platform to expose and critique the ways in which the female body has been reduced to a function of male desire. As Berger states in *Ways of Seeing*, the "ideal" spectator is always assumed to be male, and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him (Berger, 1972, p.64). Showing through *Au Naturel*, there is a deliberate denial of conventional satisfaction, disrupting the narratives that have perpetuated the objectification of the female body throughout history. Instead, Lucas confronts and subverts the male gaze, turning it upon itself and forcing viewers to question their own preconceived notions and assumptions. By reclaiming and recontextualising everyday objects, she asserts the agency and autonomy of the female body, fostering dialogue and encouraging a reevaluation of gender dynamics and power structures.

Reflecting on Lucas' practice and my own line of inquiry, there is a clear connection in our shared goal of challenging the patriarchal society's perspective on body parts and introducing the female narrative. While Lucas employs sculpture, I use graphic design as a communication tool to embrace a broader and more inclusive perspective. In both cases, our aim is to foster a deeper understanding of the intricacies and fluidity of human sexuality, ultimately transcending societal limitations. By utilising art and design as mediums for challenging preconceived notions, we contribute to a broader cultural dialogue that encourages critical thinking.

Sarah, L. (2019). *Au Naturel* [Exhibition or Online exhibition]. The New Museum, New York. 9 June–1 September 2019. Available at: <https://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/2019/sarah-lucas-au-naturel> (Accessed: 7 May 2023).

Ways of Seeing by John Berger

Berger's *Ways of Seeing* explores the relationship between power, politics, and images and challenges conventional ways of seeing and interpreting art, questioning the influence of social, cultural, and economic factors on our perception of images. Berger argues that seeing is not a neutral or passive activity but an active decision. He also states that we never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves (Berger, 1972, p.9).

Not only how we view art but also how we consume design as well. Berger's argument opens up questions about how to deconstruct visual language and question the underlying assumptions and meanings conveyed through design choices. We as designers should become more aware of the potential biases, our own positions and ideologies embedded in our work, leading to more conscious decision-making in visual communication and prompting us to create visuals that are sensitive to diverse cultural perspectives and engage with audiences in a meaningful way.

Like Sarah Lucas' practice, the concept of preconceived notions can also be seen throughout Berger's book. Berger encourages readers to question and challenge the traditional interpretations of art that have been ingrained in our cultural consciousness. He suggests that preconceived notions about art can limit our understanding and appreciation of different perspectives and alternative interpretations. Particularly in the third chapter, Berger reveals how preconceived notions about gender and sexuality have shaped the portrayal of women in art.

By highlighting these biases, he invites readers to critically examine their own preconceived notions about gender and challenge the stereotypes perpetuated through visual imagery by choosing an image of a traditional nude from the book and transforming the woman into a man.

Another significant aspect to be taken into account is Berger's analysis of gender and representation in art. He challenges the historical objectification of women in art and questions the power dynamics in such representations, prompting a critical examination of the underlying power structures. Even though Berger's argument is not specifically focused on erotic imagery, it addresses broader themes of representation, power dynamics, and cultural context that can be applied to the topic. Berger emphasises the importance of understanding the cultural and historical context in which images are created and consumed. This lens can be used to explore how societal attitudes towards sexuality and eroticism shape the production and interpretation of such images. Different cultures and time periods have varied approaches to depicting and perceiving erotic content. In the age of the internet and widespread access to explicit content, the reproduction and dissemination of erotic images have become more prevalent and influential. This raises questions about the changing perception and consumption of such imagery. *Ways of Seeing* also highlights the role of images as tools of power and control. This can be applied to the realm of erotic imagery, where the production, distribution, and consumption of such images can be influenced by power dynamics and social norms. The book's insights on the political aspects of images can be used to analyse how erotic imagery can reinforce or challenge existing power structures and cultural conventions.

Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of Seeing*. 1st edn. London: Penguin Books.