

POSITIONS THROUGH TRIANGULATING
WRITTEN WORK



RADA MUSIKARAT

Exploring the Explicitness of Erotic Imagery and S3xual Communication

The work produced during the first part of this brief has revolved around the explicitness of erotic imagery and the discourse on s3x and s3xual desire. I began by questioning the explicitness of images, challenging the notions of what makes an image considered erotic. Starting with a simple question: How explicit does it have to be? The spectrum of communication on the subject of s3x is remarkably broad. It ranges from unabashed, open discussions to the subtle use of suggestive symbolism. As I experimented with this project and also in my previous one, it led me to think that the use of suggestive communication, the method of cropping, highlighting and filtering some details, can create an imaginary space in people's minds, leave a room for interpretation, almost like a seductive tease that slowly reveals more but at the same time it conceals the explicitness, hiding prescribed presentation of what s3x should be.

Challenges of Communicating About S3x

Communication about s3x remains a formidable challenge, even though it is one of the most natural aspects of human life, since it still remains a sensitive topic in some cultures, especially my own. Discussing it directly can lead individuals to experience feelings of discomfort even within the confines of a group of friends. Not only does it remain a sensitive topic in society but also online, as censorship was created to prevent from saying sensitive words or images, resulting in s3x educators, s3x workers, and anybody in the business of helping bring more openness and health to human s3xuality are being shadowbanned. But how will we ever communicate or begin the conversation in the first place if we are constantly being silenced?

Peech's S3xy Shortcuts

Peech's S3xy Shortcuts is an open-source tool designed to facilitate open discussions about s3xuality and counter the challenges of digital censorship. In an online environment where explicit words are frequently targeted and flagged by algorithms, this tool aims to help individuals and entities looking to normalise conversations about s3x while avoiding content bans. By simply connecting with the keyboard, working around the algorithm by replacing certain letters with numbers whenever words that are typically labelled as forbidden were used. This method not only encourages a more inclusive and open discourse on s3xuality but also empowers individuals to assert their rights to freedom of expression in the digital realm.

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Comparing Approaches: S3xy Shortcuts and My Practice

By using a similar approach, “system hacking”, S3xy Shortcuts explores a way of helping their users “hack” the form of digital communication and proposes a way of bypassing censorship in a straightforward manner by interfering with the writing system. The intention is not to try to change the original context but to modify the level of explicitness by giving a little twist in the form of writing. My practice, on the other hand, centres around the idea of “hacking” people’s minds and perceptions, tricking them into consuming an alternative narrative through the use of suggestive communication and composition.

The difference between Peech’s tool and my practice is S3xy Shortcuts makes s3xual content accessible and fits into the system, while my practice is trying to make non-s3xual content that is already considered fit in the system turn into a s3xual one by giving it a suggestive arrangement. The juxtaposition between the two practices offers a new approach to my work. It prompts me to question: If I take s3xual content but provide it with a non-s3xual interpretation, would it still be considered erotic, or could it bypass censorship?

Position and Audience in Our Practices

Another interesting parallel between our practices is how we position ourselves and our intended audiences. Peech’s position comes from their experience being shadowbanned while trying to promote their s3x-related product, which is considered a marketing way of approaching the subject. In contrast, my position comes from a background in design, focusing on experimentation with visuals as a means to approach the topic. As for the audience, Peech’s S3xy Shortcuts mainly concentrate on online-based targets that are affected by shadowbanning, given that their algorithm primarily functions in software. Meanwhile, I am focusing on both online and real-life audiences by trying to create tangible experiences that engage people and stimulate their senses.

While Peech’s approach still comes off as a Eurocentric way of thinking, given there is only one language they provide in the algorithm and the normalisation of discussions about s3x predominantly in Western cultures. As I was born and raised in Asian culture, where we barely talk about s3x nor are we given proper s3x education, I am trying to work mainly with visuals as a means of bridging cultural gaps, resulting in publications I made because communicating through visuals is globally relatable, understandable and transcends language barriers, making it accessible to audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds. Another significant point of the cultural differences is presented in the level of explicitness or the material that I am working with. While Peech’s project works with text-based material bare in explicitness, I am working with symbolism and implicit forms of communication to avoid talking about s3x directly, as it still remains a taboo subject in Asian society.

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Taking into consideration the cultural differences between Peech and myself plays a part in how the position is formulated and shaping the direction of my practice. As for now, how my roots play a role in this still needs to be clarified and explored further in my practice. Still, I will be taking this into account for the next step of the project.

Thoughts on Diverse Approaches

Even though our projects highlight and centre around normalising conversations about s3x, Peech's "S3xy Shortcuts" offers an ingenious way to bypass algorithmic censorship, empowering individuals to engage in open discussions about s3xuality in the digital realm. In contrast, my practice engages with suggestive communication and composition to challenge societal norms and censorship, seeking to transform non-s3xual content into a suggestive arrangement. The difference does not challenge me to reconsider my position but gives me an additional perspective to explore. It proves that there is a wide range of spectrum to communication on the subject of s3x, from explicit to implicit; there is also an in-between left to consider.

Peech. (2023). S3xy shortcuts - your digital d1ck-tionary.
Available at: <https://peech.dk/en/blogs/samfund/s3xy-shortcuts-your-digital-d1ck-tionary> (Accessed: 21 Oct 2023).

