

Research in Practice. Dissertation Proposal. Perception, Judgement & Competition

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Introduction

In this proposal, I will be examining three different keywords that touch upon contrasting elements and themes within the creative world, specifically living as an artist in contemporary times and sentiments that follow. Subsequently, this will lead me towards a question I will develop and research into for my eventual dissertation, relating to the three keywords I have freely selected. In aid of this proposal, I will also be looking at various artists and theorists such as Esther Stocker, Alicja Kwade and Alexander Calder; each constructed and devised installments that reflect upon insightful concepts and supportive notions.

Perception

Perception is the construct of how we view and perceive the environment, objects, and people around us. "Merely a lens or mindset from which we view people, events, and things." (L. Humphreys, PhD) An idea established from personal experiences; formed by our initial primary impressions within a certain moment. Those perceptions that we conclude become our perceived truth, a filtered reality composed of our perceptions, but possibly neither accurate nor valid to everyone's reality as "Perception is reality to the one in the experience." (D. Bernock, Emerging with Wings, 2014).

Nevertheless, we conceptualise to feel a better understanding of a notion and help rationalise these conceived thoughts. Saying that perception is, for example, an interaction between the organism and the environment is clear to say something about a concept, for it is to give an elucidation of what we mean when we say that someone perceives something. Perceptions both negative and positive outlooks help us justify a situation; cultivated by our sensations plus associated ideas to conform an assumption and feeling towards reflecting upon life. To detect and recognize something which then allows us to process the information through enduring an emotional response from the situation we react on. (Alleydog)

It remains true that a statement of the form 'Perception is...' is a conceptual statement, no matter who makes it. Everyone knows what it is to perceive something, in the sense that he has first-hand experience of it. Not everyone knows how to give an account of it. Katz says: "that all objects appear as closed units originally, without experience (Katz, p.23). This implies that perceptions can only be constructed when an individual has had an interaction with that object, environment, or person.

However, sometimes understanding our own internal perceptions can be difficult. In accordant with self-perception theory, it states that often people are uncertain of their own sentiments but can be deduced when looking at their behaviour. In 1967, theorist Daryl Bem established self-perception theory where he suggests that people frequently analyse their own behaviour in the same condition as they would observe and inspect someone else's behaviour. (D. Bem, p.184) Demonstrating how we learn from others, and that our thoughts adapt from seeing different visual perspective, a common practice that is frequently done within Graphic Design. We simply learn from others by viewings existing graphic products, advertisements, and branding that can easily manipulate and change how we perceive something to be either good and bad depending on how that company wants us to think and feel.



Stocker, E., 2011. Lies and Layers.

When considering perception in art in more depth, we perceive visuals similar to how we perceive ourselves; sharing a convoluted relation between a personal understanding and visual stimuli of artworks that surrounds us. The notion that the intent is to define the relation between artworks and separate opinions and appraisals. Our perception within visual communication is conditioned by a context from which evaluation and observation are made; accustomed by numerous factors, including, social, , political gender, cultural and racial views and upbringings.

It alters how we perceive art and what significance we personally refer and associate to it but is also an ongoing factor in artistic creation. It would be challenging to make affirmation about the value of art without the previously established notions of meaning that come from diverse perceptual conditionings. The views of both an observer and an artist serve to the perception of art. To see something in a certain way, however, presupposes an ability; to see two lights as distinct presupposes an ability to distinguish them.

The image above displays the artistry of Esther Stocker's 'Lies and Layers', an open exhibition in which she claims the piece focuses on the question: "How is a perfect system imperfect in reality?" (E Stocker, 2011). Her work demonstrates that when we view shapes and figures from one perspective, they seem one sided and perhaps the full narrative isn't revealed until explored in a new light and angle; merely an 'illusion created by the mind to aid in our sense of temporal presence in the vast ocean of space' (A.Naskar, 2016) hence the title 'Lies and Layers' as beings are often easily deceived. "There's no limit to how complicated things can get on account of one thing always leading to another." (E.B. White) Evident in marketing strategies within Graphic Design, where messages and portrayed meanings can be observed by audiences in different contexts, never fully guaranteed to have the same intended effect on everyone because we each have contrasting past experiences, backgrounds, and perceptions in many shapes and forms.

Similar to looking at an image with two key focus points; if the subject looks at the figure long enough, the individual will notice that their percept changes back and forth from one image to the other. The subject does not choose which figure will occupy their attention at any one time. The attention on one figure rather than another is simply a spontaneous operation (Katz. P47) highlighting the fact that sometimes designs such as a logo can never fully be assured that it will be seen the same way by audiences, but rather individual elements will stand out more to a selective few. For instance, some viewers might only see the letter 'b' within the beats logo while others will immediately notice the headphone imagery elements first.



Beats Logo

Despite this, Stocker finds "There's a beauty in things you can't figure out" (E Stocker, 2011) showing how she does not believe in order and strict systems as it disables us to truly develop fundamental parts of our individualities and grants less room to flourish our own perceptions. Thus, a problem that arises that the majority of our perceptions are constructed through others to a significant amount, we are simply sheep following the crowd and do not recognise we have the ability to think freely "Ideally a society doesn't have any order, it should more have a rhythm, because it is something that is constantly changing".

Judgement

"The ability to make decisions or to make good decisions, or the act of developing an opinion, especially after careful thought. A decision that you make, or an opinion that you have, after considering all the facts in a situation" (Cambridge Dictionary). Putting yourself out there as an artist can be tense for some people, the fear of judgment and unknowingly what to expect. As David Bayles words it, "Making art now means working in the face of uncertainty; it means living with doubt and contradiction". (D. Bayles, P.2)

The idea of failure always lurking and the potential of people disapproving the work you gift to others while only yearning for acceptance and approval. Alarming voices in your head shouting that; 'Your work is not good enough', 'You are clueless at you are doing', 'What makes you believe you can constitute?'. However, "The difference between acceptance and approval is subtle, but distinct. Acceptance means having your work counted as the real thing; approval means having people like it." (D. Bayles, P 45)

According to Anne Lamott, "Perfectionism is the voice of the oppressor, the enemy of the people. It will keep you cramped and insane your whole life" (A.Lamott, Bird by Bird). We all strive for perfection within our creations but by doing so puts more pressure on ourselves to get everything absolute, we miss the opportunity of having fun with what we are creating and focus more on what other people will be thinking "The perfect is the enemy of the good", (A. Adams. P. 30). Nevertheless, despite how judgement can help us improve and develop when wanted or not, judgement will always follow Graphic Design or any creative job, and we all must make peace with this somehow. "To survive as an artist requires confronting these troubles... those who continue to make art are those who have learned how to continue." (D. Bayles, P 9)"

In the end, "perfection" does not truly exist, and we could never experience life entirely free from pain in a profession with such high expectations. Artists so worried of these things that they shelter themselves into smaller creative spaces away from others, something I have personally experienced but have tried to endure for the end accomplishment, "Making art is dangerous and revealing." (D. Bayles, P 13) Focused on perfection, feared designers struggle to witness the artistic gifts that commonly lie ingrained within their own imperfections; they lose hope, joy, the ability to take risks, their confidence, and in some cases, the ability to progress at all. "One of the basic and difficult lessons every artist must learn is that even the failed pieces are essential." (D. Bayles, P 5-6)"

How then do we cope with "fear of judgement"? We must cultivate the art of acceptance and learn to live with balance. In reality, this world is what it is, not what we hope it could be. The art we create is what it should be. We are who we are, and we should not change that. And that alone is good enough. Not everyone will understand or appreciate what it is we strive to do but we must please ourselves and learn to accept ourselves so that we can continue to produce great quality of art that makes us elated and gives purpose. If we do not choose to accept our work now then who knows what opportunities we could be missing out on, "Life is what happens while you're busy making other plans. "(J. Lennon).



Kwade, A., 2017. Weltenlinie.

The installation demonstrated above is the work of Alicja Kwade titled 'WeltenLinie' meaning 'world lines' in which is an observation of the human need to establish the unknown and unexplored (A. Kwade). Kwade states "It's a kind of tragic thing to be a human being because we are trying so hard to understand the world, but actually, there is no chance.", displaying the values of how challenging and merely impossible it would be for us to truly be 'perfect'. We are only human and in the words of Bayles, "Art is human; error is human; ergo, art is error. (D. Bayles, P 29)"

Set in an all-white room, the installation uses mirrors to echo upon an image, which evidently here primarily focusing on the crafted objects (Tatiana Trouvé's) but not dismissing our own reflections; revealing how others view us. Understanding that we simply cannot control world's thoughts towards our work; it is unnecessary stress, takes away precious time and contentment, However, it cannot prevent us from working hard, the desire to strive, learn and grow as people; we will bring all our, skill, knowledge, dignity, and heart to the worktable and for this alone, judgement can be expected but it will all be worthwhile. "Life is short, art long, opportunity fleeting, experience treacherous, judgement difficult (Hippocrates, 460-400 B.C)"

Competition

Similar to the concept of judgement, in the artistry community, competition naturally follows alongside our demand to be noticed; where the idea of wanting to out-perform others or exceed people's expectations typically falls within our competitive characteristic's instincts. There are many different forms and factors of competition. For instance, various competitive processes can be outlined by their ambition and objectives such as winning, surpassing your 'peers', self-enhancement, or gaining mastery skills etc

(Shields & Bredemier, 2009). Driven by variable functions like incentive, growth, self-reflection, and our objective fulfilment; and focus upon ourselves, the target, the competitor as a rival to beat, the ambitious groups as a joint unit to be developed (Fülöp, 2004, 2009).

These distinctive targets, actions and goals regulate qualitatively contrasting competitive practices, another being that competition can also be driven by teamwork and does not necessarily mean you must compete alone to achieve greatness. For instance, cooperating with others is something that has strengthened many businesses we see today, and leading companies would not be able to efficiently run without teamwork, "The act of working together with a person or company who is your business competitor in a way that benefits both of you" (Cambridge.org)

Despite teamwork being a vital skill within the design industry, based upon Hawley's theory about "resource control", the preferred resource control strategy that results within control and domination in today's society is implementing both communal and coercive means (Hawley, 2010). Understanding that society is a convoluted scheme of competitive and cooperative connections along with modern prospect that competition and cooperation are neither jointly independent nor opposite motivational and behavioural constructs, but they can be concurrent, and their interconnection cannot be characterised with plain uniformity (Fülöp, 2004; 2008; Chen, 2008).



Calder, A., 1940. Little Spider.

Upon comparing the behavioural and emotional ramifications of both defeat and victory within competitive challenges, recent research has shown that they are not independent but link and interrelate together. It is far easier to predict how one might respond to winning an art competition for instance in comparison to how one might respond to loss and defeat. Various coping patterns have been identified as a response towards dealing with competition in which each trait might be seen within a Graphic Designer. These trends consist of the balance response, the dominant aggressive response and the avoidant response resulting in giving up; each can be noticed and reflected upon within the following art sculpture.

When viewing upon Alexander Calder's sculpture seen in the exhibit titled 'A Balancing Act', you can identify this flowing, assembled piece with a sense of balance from the levitated metal strands that each harmonize in free formation. This abstract piece demonstrates to us how important it is for an individual to find their balance, especially when referring to one's ambition in competing against another.

Within competitiveness, finding a balance is the most preferred way of accepting the potential outcome. A pattern that involves the potential of winning while feeling gratifying emotions of bliss, pride and searching for new trials. However, if defeat occurs, then sadness, frustration and a mixture of deactivating but also stimulating feelings might be apparent, still retaining ambition and not giving up but subsisting after setbacks, understanding that not everything should be taken too seriously, and most importantly enjoying what you are creating; to not feel pressured, perfectly summed up by Calder, "Above all, art should be fun." Thus, it is not always about winning but the enjoyment from making a piece (A. Calder)

Moreover, another coping form that is less ideal is called the 'dominant aggressive response', considered to be less flexible. Winning would result in the reaction being narcissistic, overly self-boosting and feeling superiority over others, while on the other hand, defeat would lead to negative emotions such as hatred and aggression towards the winner. This response can also be identified within Alexander's balance piece through the spiralling black metal pieces that point within a different tangent opposed to the colourful metal shapes that connote to the balanced competitive response.

Lastly, the avoidant response commonly known for giving up involves a paradox reaction of embarrassment after winning and rather than trying to succeed another time, the avoidance of ambitious situations and of new challenges. On the contrary, being defeated would lead to emotional response of self-depreciation, disengagement and even giving up (Fülöp & Berkics, 2007; Bronson & Merryman, 2013), a response that can be seen on the furthest left metal strand in Alexander's sculpture. These other forms of expressions share the same theme of striving for perfection, however when in this state of mind, you truly cannot feel inner elation with the work you gift to others as the primary focus on superiority disables you from finding balance. "They are sick that surfeit with too much, as they that starve with nothing." (W. Shakespeare)

Conclusion

While inspecting the three words I have chosen, it has led me to a series of questions I wish to further delve into for my proposed question while still relating to the sentiments that follows an artist. There are many factors that contribute towards one's victory and accomplishment within the creative field, thus, leading me to the main potential research question 'What traits and knowledge is needed by the graphic designer both historically and in today's modern world to reach success.' or perhaps will act as a starting point for my proposed independent document. A few sub-questions that I have generated and would like to explore from this proposal in more detail will be, 'What are the perceptions of a Graphic Designer?', 'Why art professionals are commonly more judged/misinterpreted?', 'How to sustain yourself within a competitive industry?', 'How the perception of Graphic Design is slowly shifting', and 'Is competition necessary for success within Graphic Design?'.

The key themes and concepts of audiences, experience, self-reflection, social views, identity, ideology, balance, acceptance, awareness, and recognition have also been considered for additional exploration within my future research document.

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