# Ref. 1
John Cage's
Graphic scores

Graphic scores by John Cage offer new ways for combining different forms of art and science. By discarding traditional musical notation, artists seek alternative means of expression. Picture-language inventions enable artists and composers to explore questions about sound and the environment. What is the essence of sound? How can sound be presented in innovative ways? How can sound help to detect the truth from lies? This visual language is more accessible to viewers, requiring minimal expertise while evoking emotional resonance that fosters increased interest in the subject matter.

Interpreting from one language to another inevitably results in some loss, yet it also sparks a wealth of new ideas. In my project, I employed a consistent phrase spoken by six individuals and me. Through graphic notation, I highlighted various methods of distinguishing between them, considering factors such as volume, syllable length, intonation, and clarity. Speech recognition serves as another distinguishing feature, aiding in the identification (authenticity) of individual voices in the group. Overlaying all of these methods helps to see the personification of the people, the complexity of the language in all its details. It is a call to embrace fresh modes of listening and communication.

**Reference:** Cage, J. (1969). Notations.
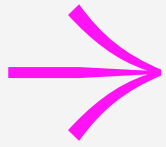
Ref. 2
The Creative Act:
A Way of Being

Given the overwhelming amount of media that fills our daily lives — news, advertisements, conflicts, data — our brains instinctively seek moments of respite. Rick Rubin, in "The Creative Act: A Way of Being," notes that most people aren't used to being fully listened to, which can be surprising for them. Sometimes, we stop information from being shared and don't truly listen (Rubin, 2023, p. 74).

Despite the intense zooming in on the mouth, there's a deafening absence of sound, leaving only noise or silence. Words begin to lose their significance, reminiscent of the confusion during the construction of the Tower of Babel. Even between those who speak a common language, communication is inhibited, increasing the feeling of disconnection. In the wake of digitization and constant surveillance, individuals feel increasingly exposed, leading to the lack of trust among people. This results in societal fragmentation and self-censorship, as individuals strive to control their thoughts and creative expressions. Self-censorship leads to the diminishing of our authenticity. As a result, social progress slows down because people hesitate to act, uncertain and hesitant.

Reference: Rubin, R. (2023). The Creative Act: A Way of Being. Penguin.

Written Response: Personal research.

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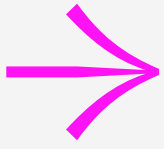
In George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, the protagonist works as a government employee in a totalitarian state. His role involves removing references to individuals who have been arrested or killed by altering news articles and manipulating photographs in the media. The idea of my project explores the influence of propaganda on humans using software tools. The hierarchy system is pervasive, encompassing visual, typographic, informational, and structural aspects, which are fundamental to software design.

In the end of Orwell's story, the main character succumbs to the system. In my project, I demonstrate that the world cannot be changed without altering our thinking (Einstein A.). We need to learn to think like children in order to restore our authenticity. This will enable us to think unconventionally and stop being just tools in the political system. The central question raised is how we can attain truth, freedom, and individuality in a world where conformity and obedience are enforced through fear and manipulation via mass media.

Reference: Orwell G. (1949). Nineteen Eighty-Four. Secker & Warburg.

Written Response: Personal research.
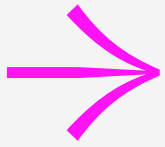
Ref. 4 Conditional Design Workbook

The authors' concept revolves around the loss of control when a process becomes subjective, suggesting that we can only manage input derived from external sources like nature and social interactions (Maurer, Paulus, Puckey and Wouters, 2013, p.iv). It also reflects the loss of control over our data, as we never know how it might be transformed, sometimes against us. The output, however, remains unpredictable. The authors describe that, from a contrary perspective, it appears to be a deliberate effort to introduce unpredictable and uncontrollable elements that can change the course of events.

Throughout the creative iteration process, there is a flow, but the guiding force remains the initial idea. This idea establishes a set of rules that create a systematic approach to iteration (2013, p. xiii). Digital replication becomes variable and no longer adheres to the notion of "copy as another replication."

Each step presents a fresh perspective on the same concept, ultimately leading to the reincarnation of the initial idea, which began with the threat of data manipulation and ended with the importance of authenticity. Through various methodologies, I explore the endurance of subjectivity in these images. Subjectivity gradually transitions into objectivity as it acquires consistent meaning across different viewpoints.

Reference: Maurer, L., Paulus E., Puckey, J. and Wouters R. (2013). Conditional design workbook. Amsterdam: Valiz.

Written response. Reading list.

Ref. 5
Exercises in Style

To deepen my exploration, I took Marshall McLuhan's "The Medium is the Massage" and Raymond Queneau's "Exercises in Style." Similar to Queneau's experimentation with different styles to convey one situation, my project takes a single phrase and reinterprets it across various contexts: from a pub dialogue to a children's game, scientific language, backwards speech, and using only punctuations, among others. Through methods like contextualising, iterating, and juxtaposing, I aim to demonstrate how a change in context can dramatically change the perception of an idea.

As Rubin R. emphasises in "The Creative Act: A Way of Being," expanding our perspectives enhances our understanding of the world. By embracing diverse viewpoints, we deepen our awareness and broaden our comprehension of complex systems. This openness cultivates reflexibility, inclusivity, and heightened awareness, empowering us to navigate the world with greater insight and sensitivity.

In this way, my project highlights the flexibility of ideas and the profound impact of context on interpretation, inviting viewers to consider the multiple perspectives and the richness of understanding that comes from embracing diversity in thought and expression.

**Reference:** Queneau R. (1947). Exercises in Style.   Oneworld Classics Ltd.

Written response. Reading list.
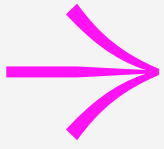
bell hooks emphasises the importance of intersectionality, examining how various aspects of identity (such as race, gender, class, and sexuality) influence one another within systems of power and oppression.

In my project, I applied this idea through critical analysis of popular culture, media, and representations, highlighting how they shape and reinforce societal norms and values. Like bell hooks, I represent one of McLuhan's pages with the use of lowercase typography to protest the patriarchy and hierarchical systems, symbolised by the pervasive surveillance (CCTV) used by governments against their citizens. The main character in the picture is a woman whose words are being dissolved and censored, representing many stereotypes about women. With the use of media, the threat to women's authenticity is much higher, as media manifests an ideal example of how women should look, attempting to create a collection of copies in patriarchal society.

Reference: bell hooks. (1997). Cultural Criticism and Transformation.
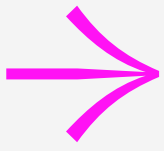
Ref. 7
Google Maps

Google Maps serves as one of the examples of the themes explored in my iterations. It vividly demonstrates the lack of privacy within the digital 3D realm, where both mental and physical boundaries dissolve, allowing unrestricted access for all. This invasion into personal space facilitates easy manipulation of content, as users' movements and locations are carefully tracked and stored by the platform.
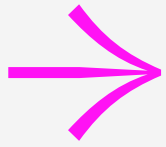
By granting users unlimited access to otherwise inaccessible areas, Google Maps blurs the lines between expertise and amateurism, enabling individuals with minimal experience or knowledge to edit and input data. The flow of misinformation remains a persistent problem.

Collecting data about users' movements, habits and preferences gives Google invaluable information that can be used to target advertising and other forms of data use. This money-pulation of personal data poses risks to people's security and privacy, especially in the context of our capitalist society.

One of the consequences of this data use is identity theft, a recurring theme explored in several iterations of my project. As we navigate this digital environment, it is important to remain vigilant and realise the potential risks posed by the commodification of personal data.

Reference: Google Maps (2024).
Available at: https://www.google.com/maps.

Written Response: Practice.

Ref. 8
Andy Warhol,
"Marilyn Monroe"

Warhol believes that making money, working, and conducting good business are all forms of art. 'Marilyn Monroe' is a painting where Monroe is duplicated many times. With the use of media, people feel more exposed. We are being watched all the time: CCTV, posts on Instagram, news, and more. Fearing judgement, people begin to lose their authenticity, striving not to stand out. We become replicas of one another.

In my project, I demonstrate using the example of 'American Gothic' how painting has ceased to be a form of art; now its purpose is to generate profit. Copies exemplify the superficial nature of the industry. Images are created for money rather than to express personality. The video in my project, 'Who is Veronika,' illustrates how the original is lost among a vast number of copies. Everyone tries to emulate someone they are not. Perhaps even Veronika herself does not know who she is. This has a negative impact on our mental health because, as humans, we have reflexivity; at some point, we ask ourselves, 'Who am I?' and understanding follows. By chasing the media's ideals, we have lost ourselves.

**Reference:** Warhol A. (1967). Marilyn Monroe.
Factory Additions, New York.

The concept of sharing personal thoughts with others was popularised by platforms like Twitter. In my project, I took Marshall McLuhan's main position from 'The Medium is the Massage' and placed it in the context of Twitter. I called these examples 'The Medium is STILL the Massage.'

Phrases like 'Smartphones are extensions of our mind' or 'Notification vibrations massage our attention' demonstrate that even though the tools are different, these ideas still apply in the modern context. The instant feedback in the form of likes and comments can offer fleeting satisfaction, but it also ties our mood to external validation and meeting others' expectations. This can lead us to strive to be someone we are not, seeking approval rather than authenticity, and ultimately culminating in a cancel culture. Disregarding facts, the standard of authenticity now depends on the number of likes and comments. This leads us to mistrust and the realisation that sensationalism overshadows the truth.

Reference: X (formerly Twitter).
Available at: https://x.com/?lang=en.
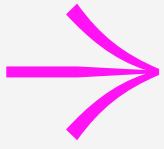
Ref. 10
Looty Project

The Looty project revolves around the idea of "stealing" artefacts from the British Museum and transforming them into digital assets for commercial gain. This concept served as the foundation for my exploration into the evolution of data manipulation within the framework of a capitalist, industrialised society.

By commodifying this data, we run the risk of being exploited and have unintended consequences, where our very information becomes a form of currency in itself. This project underscores how the medium through which data is shared and used can shape and impact our societal landscape, highlighting the complex interplay between commerce, information, and ethical considerations in the digital age.

**Reference:** Looty Nft - The world's first digital repatriation of stolen art. Available at: https://www.looty.art/.
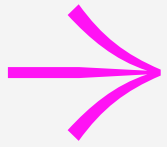
Ref. 11
The Medium
is the Massage

In our modern world, defined by constant digital connectivity, we are immersed in a continual flow of information and news. The era of digitalisation brings both opportunities and challenges for society. It enables globalisation and provides unparalleled access to information, yet it also raises concerns such as privacy issues, misinformation, and job displacement due to automation. McLuhan says: 'All media work us over completely.' Its influence is extensive across personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social dimensions, touching, altering, and shaping every aspect of our lives (pp. 26, McLuhan, 1967). I am exploring the digital invasion of our human spaces through digital software. Even computer language has its own hierarchy that teaches us to follow rules, often through predictive text generated by AI. In this project, I examine how societal norms and constant surveillance can distract our minds, leading to the loss of our authenticity. How might these strict rules influence the evolution of our identities?

In my project, I explain using a selected phrase from McLuhan's 1967 work how meaning can be distorted depending on the context in which it is placed (p. 26, McLuhan, 1967). In 1967, the progression of mechanisation was just beginning, whereas today it dominates our lives. The concept involves inserting modernised text with the main McLuhan's ideas into Twitter post, a platform intended to promote open sharing of thoughts within society. 'Smartphones are extensions of our mind', even though the tools are different, the meaning stays the same over the time. But compared to 1967 the difference now is that the truth depends on the amount of likes and comments now, where people often seek validation. It provides a fleeting satisfaction akin to a drug. When individuals fail to receive this validation or meet others' expectations, they risk being "cancelled" by the system for not adhering to certain criteria. This can lead people to strive to become someone they are not, prioritising approval over authenticity. As a result, people feel more exposed. Fearing judgement, people begin to lose their authenticity, trying not to stand out. We become replicas of one another. Throughout the entire video essay, voices change to highlight the problem of authenticity, which is diminishing.
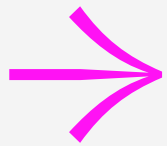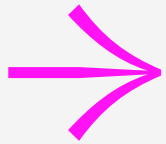
→ Ref. 11
The Medium
is the Massage

The rapid and widespread dissemination of information on Twitter can facilitate the swift spread of misinformation and rumours, leading to confusion and a decline in trust in shared content (Social Dilemma, 2020). This example illustrates McLuhan's concept that 'All media are extensions of some human faculty — psychic or physical,' demonstrating the psychological impact of this phenomenon. It highlights the mutual exchange and coexistence of both the inner and outer realms of human personality. This underscores the significant responsibility we bear because 'design designs back on you,' (Fry, 2006), meaning that everything we create has consequences for ourselves.

Throughout my research, I employed methods such as contextualising, paraphrasing, categorising, and improvising. This exploration prompted me to question, How can we protect ourselves from this destruction? Children serve as our prime examples of authenticity. As we grow up, society tells us who we should be. We need to reconnect with our inner child and let go of prejudices. The image collection 'The Existential Crisis at Six Years Old' explores children's concerns, like the simple question, 'What is the pear?' — a question that adults often overlook because they assume they already know the answer. This collection shows the flexibility and authenticity of a child's mind, urging us to embrace a similar openness and curiosity in our own lives.

This iterative process prompted deep inquiry and reflection on societal behaviour influenced by the media, highlighting its destructive aspects as losing ourselves. The aim of this project was to critically examine the impact of digitalisation on society, particularly focusing on the challenges it presents to our personal, social, and ethical dimensions. Drawing inspiration from McLuhan's insights on media's profound influence, I analysed how exposition, fakery and validation-seeking behaviours manifest in our digital interactions, leading to phenomena like cancel culture in our authenticity. The role of GCD is to manifest the beauty of being yourself and the danger of losing that in a sea of fakes. GCD can help create an environment free from judgement and fake idols.
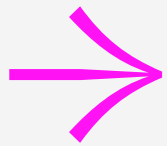
Ref. 11
The Medium
is the Massage

This acceptance of ourselves is key to our mental well-being. How? That's what I'm aiming to explore next.

Authenticity is continually undermined in the media. It's dissolving. And we can't afford to lose it. Can we?

Reference: McLuhan, M. (1964). The Medium is the Massage. Corte Madera Gingko Press.

For a more in-depth analysis, I drew insights from Ruben Pater's book, 'The Politics of Design,' which explores various aspects of the intersection between design, politics, and societal impact. "The Politics of Design" serves as a guide into the world of design, where designers and consumers participate in a dynamic coexistence. The key arguments explored in the book include the importance of critical design thinking, design as a political act, the visual representation of power through propaganda, activism, and authority, as well as the ethical responsibilities of designers. In my view, creators (designers) wield significant power and must use it responsibly, avoiding prejudice and commercial motives while embracing empathy and intelligence towards all. The media plays a crucial role in this relationship, serving as a tool to convey ideas within this vertical hierarchy. In this project, my goal is to use visual language to shift this vertical dynamic to a horizontal one by raising awareness of how we can achieve equality through understanding the manipulation of power dynamics. By empowering individuals to recognise and challenge manipulation tactics, in order to foster a more inclusive design landscape. As stated in the documentary 'The Social Dilemma' (2020), 'If we are not paying for the product, then we are the product.'

Ruben points out that removing people from photographs has occurred beyond totalitarian regimes. What makes these cases poignant is that those erased had personal relationships with the leaders who ordered their deletion from history. In my view, this illustrates the alarming ease with which pictures and data can be manipulated to present false narratives as reality. What is it done for?

In the documentary "The Social Dilemma" (2020), it's shown that big companies often make more money from spreading false information. There are teams of people who study user psychology and devise tactics to capture their attention using mistrust and gossip. This creates a troubling situation where sensationalism overshadows the truth. How can unquestioningly accepting politically convenient norms potentially harm our inner peace and authenticity?
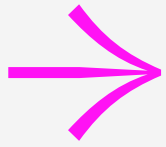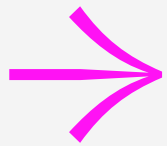
Only two percent of women worldwide describe themselves as beautiful (Ruben, p.114). This statistic reflects the profound impact of societal pressures on women's self-perception and highlights the urgency of addressing these harmful norms in media and advertising. My early project delves into the pervasive stereotypes surrounding body image and women's representation in advertising. It highlights how women's faces can be digitally altered and retouched to conform to societal norms of youthful beauty, slimness, and flawless skin. This societal pressure creates unrealistic ideals of beauty, leading to diminished self-esteem and negatively impacting overall well-being. This raises profound questions about how we can believe and trust in a world where fakery and manipulation are foundational.

In the Allegory of the Cave Plato describes a group of prisoners who have been imprisoned in a dark cave since birth, facing a wall where shadows of objects are projected by a fire behind them. The prisoners perceive these shadows as reality because they have never seen anything else (Plato, 380 BCE). Like prisoners in a cave, we often blindly accept images presented on screens without questioning their authenticity. I explore the manipulation of images using generative AI through the lens of Grant Wood's painting "American Gothic." To contextualise this exploration, I employ juxtaposition by placing the manipulated painting in various settings such as advertisements, musical posters, fashion and cooking magazine covers, and as elements of a brand campaign. The effect of this experiment is the image's adaptability and legitimacy. Without knowing its authenticity, people would never think that it is a piece of fine art rather than a part of a commercial campaign.

Through this experimentation, I came to realise how easily viewer behaviour can be manipulated to foster a new, convenient way of thinking that benefits those in positions of power. The project aims to raise awareness of how manipulative media tactics can foster inequality and harm societal well-being. By empowering people to recognise and question these tactics, the goal is to create a more critical design environment to transform the vertical hierarchy into horizontal with equal

Ref. 12
The Politics
of Design

rights between designers and consumers. In this project, the use of a software interface is essential for highlighting the manipulation of images while refraining from questioning their authenticity. This approach draws parallels to historical and philosophical insights, such as those explored in Ruben P.'s "The Politics of Design" and Plato's Allegory of the Cave. The innovation lies in applying these concepts to contemporary issues within the modern medium.

Reference: Ruben P. (2016). The Politics of Design: A (Not So) Global Manual for Visual Communication. BIS Publishers.
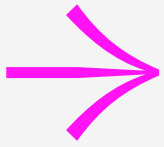
Video Essay, Transcript

Intro

Unknown voice 1

These days, our design world is all about digitalisation, big companies, and nonstop consumption. This stuff has a huge impact on how we behave. Globalisation has its advantages, but things like data manipulation can be pretty risky. How exactly? Let's dive in and find out.

Step 1. Direction.

Topic: data manipulation, authenticity.

Methods: contextualising, iterating, and performing.

Media: publishing and digital media.

Step 2. Publication.

Unknown voice 2

To show each of our authentic voices, I decided to focus on the mouth. I experimented a lot to visually represent both silence and noise. The tricky part was making a still image look like it's making sound. So, I used digital effects and phonetic transcription.

To narrow things down, I honed in on experiments where we turned pictures into sound waves. And guess what? We figured out how to add some noise to those still images.

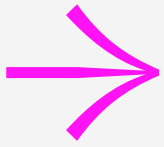**Step 3. Collection of references.**

'All media work us over completely. [...] They leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered.' Ref. 3.1 Marshall McLuhan, 'Medium is the Massage'.

Unknown voice 3

This quote made me take a 'pervasive' look at my project. We're snooping, almost intruding into a super personal space. This process reflects the threat of invading a person's space without their permission. The thinning of the stroke around the picture represents the loss of personal boundaries.

Google Maps. Ref. 3.2

Unknown voice 4

It's like the digital 3D world has zero privacy, letting anyone dive in without limits. Google Maps blurs the lines between experts and amateurs, so even folks with minimal experience can tweak and add stuff.

John Cage's Graphic scores. Ref. 3.3

[Hi, I am Veronika].

How can we distinguish the truth from the lies?

Unknown voice 5

I used a consistent phrase spoken by six individuals and me. Voices are distinguished by volume, syllable length, intonation, and clarity. Speech recognition helped identify each person's voice. But who is the real Veronika?

Unknown voice 6

After I found these references, I landed in these three positions.

People feel more exposed. Fearing judgment, people begin to lose their authenticity. We become replicas of one another.

Unknown voice 7

Copies represent how superficial the industry is. Images are created to make money, not to explain personality.

'Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art.' Ref. 3.4 Andy Warhol.

Unknown voice 8

I took "American Gothic" and threw it into all sorts of situations. Suddenly, it becomes flexible and legit. Without knowing its origin, you'd think it's just another ad, not a piece of high art.
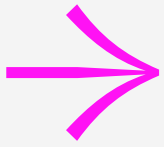
Unknown voice 9

What is the standard of authenticity?

Twitter. Ref. 3.5

Unknown voice 10

Ignoring the facts, standard of authenticity depends on the amount of likes and comments now.

Sensationalism overshadows the truth. How can we protect ourselves from this destroyment? Children serve as our prime examples of authenticity. As we grow up, society tells us who we should be. We need to reconnect with our inner child and let go of prejudices.

Unknown voice 11

The image collection "The Existential Crisis at Six Years Old" explores children's concerns, like the simple question, "What is the pear? — a question that adults often overlook because they assume they already know the answer.This collection shows the flexibility and authenticity of a child's mind, urging us to embrace a similar openness and curiosity in our own lives.

Unknown voice 12

So, the role of GCD is to manifest the beauty of being yourself and the danger of losing that in a sea of fakes.

Unknown voice 13

Authenticity is continually undermined in the media. It's dissolving. And we can't afford to lose it. Can we?