

“Everyday Aesthetics, Rethinking the Photo Album”
Exegesis by Matthew Justice

Abstract

This exegesis focuses on the creation of an exhibition that addresses the subject of ‘everyday aesthetics’ (Saito, 2001) through practice based design research. Concerning itself with beauty in the mundane aspects of our daily lives, practicing aesthetics in the everyday can reconnect us to our spiritual, emotional selves. Before social networks, the photo album represented identity on an intimately personal and community level, inspiring interpersonal, interactive reflection and storytelling. Today, our photographic collections exist inside our smart phones. The face to face, meaningful narratives struggle to exist. Adopting participatory methods and action research, this project proposes to reinstate the physical photo album as a unique medium with which the community can once again connect and share together. The aim is that the discourse resulting from sharing the physical photo will extend and enrich the appreciation and pleasure of the experience, re-establishing the photograph as an aesthetic object in everyday life.

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* The word client was used here to play on the idea of designer – client relationships, once this structure became less of a ‘portable design studio’, the ‘client’ became a ‘participant’

1 Research Proposal**1.1 Design Proposal (June 2018)**

This research suggests that the concept and form of the photo album has become estranged from daily life. Originally, the photo album held family narratives, a humble device that sparked storytelling and reflection. This physical, tactile form has become obsolete through digitization, often losing the meaningful dialogue that accompanied it. Ironically, our often extensive photographic collections now exist in our smart-phones, imminently accessible but rarely reflected upon. Nostalgia is associated with the photo album, adding to the potential aesthetic nature of storytelling. Designer and client can collaborate in a way that reinstates the object and its meaning into the participants’ life. In the past, the photo album may have been a common object in the house, often providing opportunities for shared storytelling by family and friends. By re-familiarising the client with this object, the dialogue will become ‘framed’^{1*} and meaning will become synthesised, its aesthetic importance enhanced.

The project outcome is speculated as a ‘kiosk’. It is portable and could occur anywhere with a power outlet, but for the purpose of research, an environment like a Sunday Market is proposed. A marquee could be set up to house a printer, a binder, a computer and a desk. Assistant’s will be sympathetic and sensitive to the potentially private nature of clients’ personal collections, working collaboratively to select a series of images from the collection in their phone. This will be reminiscent of

1. Saito, Yuriko, “Aesthetics of the Everyday”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/>

sharing a personal photo album, a transaction that has potential to be deeply meaningful. Upon selecting the series of images, they will be uploaded to a computer, design decisions will be made together as to the curation of the images, a personal narrative will be collectively established. The images in their desired order will be printed on a tactile stock, covered, bound and presented to the client.

The exhibition outcomes are likely to be different depending on where they’re hosted: a kiosk in the CBD would potentially gather content more from tourists than the local Sunday market crowd in Camberwell; these settings would then be considerably different to an iteration of the exhibition in a gallery space. An exhibition ‘catalog’ could document each iteration of the exhibition, keeping the same ‘album’ format, each client could offer an image to the exhibition, allowing permanent documentation of the temporal exhibition.

* “Although in our daily life we experience and appreciate (or depreciate) a certain atmosphere or ambiance quite frequently, it has not received adequate attention in the aesthetics discourse primarily because of the lack of clearly defined and delineated ‘object’ of the experience. Without a clear ‘frame’ around the object of experience, critics suggest, inter-subjective discussion of its aesthetics is not possible.”

1.2 Design Research

This research will be conducted with an ethnographic methodology reflective of Tim Plowman's research into critical design practice,² performing action research³ "for, through and into"⁴ design. This first section of this paper will progress the research 'into' design: reading, compiling data, literature and developing a hypothesis. Next, 'through' design is represented by action research conducted in the field: talking to strangers about their photographs, in addition to the developmental work that contributes to the final project/outcome. Lastly, the outcome of this project will be research 'for' design, whereby the final product speaks for itself, the dialogue established in the design process will be embedded in the designed object.

Barthes describes the photograph as "a temporal... shared hallucination... a mad image, chafed by reality"⁵— photography frames and sharpens an experience in a way that is relatable, it is the perfect medium for this project. "Everyone with a mobile phone is a photographer now"⁶, smart-phone

2. Plowman, Tim. 2003. *Ethnography and Critical Design Practice*. In *Design Research: Methods and Perspectives*, ed. Brenda Laurel, 30–38. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
3. Swann, Cal 2002. *Action Research and the Practice of Design*. *Design Issues*, vol 18, no 2:
4. Frayling, Christopher. 1993. *Research in Art and Design*. Royal College of Art Research Papers, no. 1. London: Royal
5. Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*, 2000, Vintage, (p115)
6. Dissect 2, *The Mistake in Photography*, Daniel Palmer, *Dissect Journal*, 2015, (p18)

cameras and their consequent photographic collections of photographs are, for many, immediately accessible 24 hours a day. The magic of photography and the photograph itself has become mundane, normalised and saturated, but it can be rediscovered. The normalization of the photograph is paired with the fading memory of the photo album.

It is accepted that the aesthetic appreciation of everyday life requires 'defamiliarisation of the familiar' "...because we are most of the time preoccupied by the task at hand in our daily life...Once we experience (these tasks) with a different attitude and perceptual gear, we can unearth latent aesthetic values in the most ordinary and routine".⁷

Illich's conviviality and 'convivial tools' have become central to this ongoing research, as well as my daily vocabulary. Illich calls for a 'retooling' of society, not only with objects, but with systems that could reconnect people with meaningful work, to create "an autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment". 'Photo Album' could be seen as one of these tools: "Convivial tools are those which give each person who uses them the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision."⁸ He defines two 'ranges': those that "extend human capability and those that contract, eliminate, replace human functions."⁹

Relational aesthetics and relational art is a movement that harnesses the possibilities of everyday aesthetic practice and conviviality. "Relational Aesthetics...takes place within inter-human relationships...by building alternative social models;

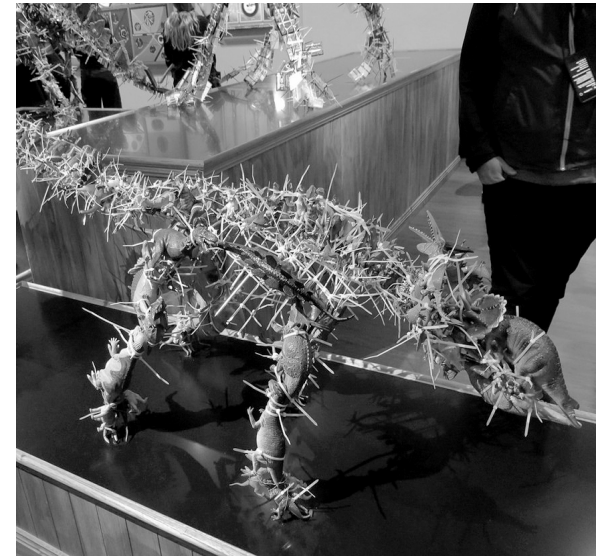
7. Saito, 2015
8. Illich, Ibid
9. Ibid, (p29)

producing concrete interactions; collaborating with other people or even examining social exchanges in a critical way.”¹⁰ Rirkrit Tiravanija’s relational art, in particular, *Untitled (Free/Still)*, 1992–2011* plays on the too often ‘normalized’ western view of food and cooking. Performing the act of cooking and eating in a gallery context, frames it for discussion, which is nurtured through eating the meal together. Tiravanija understands the aesthetic value to be found in seemingly mundane tasks.

The Museum of Everything is a collection of 2000 works by many artists who don’t usually associate themselves with artists. Its founder, James Brett sees it as a project that attempts to democratise art. In an interview with Art–Guide he says “art, as a concept, was...created by us, and it existed a long time before the word...There is no Freudian interpretation allowed in The Museum of Everything. There is no symbolism...”¹¹ The Museum of Everything is above all, accessible; people can empathise with an artist who isn’t rich, famous or does it for money, these people create art purely because they want to. Art can be viewed as a celebration of consciousness, it represents freedom. It can teach people about themselves and others, but it’s true power is lost when people feel alienated by it or don’t understand it.

10. ‘Touch’ – Relational Art from the 1990’s to Now, Exhibition Catalogue 2002

11. ‘James Brett and The Museum of Everything’, written by Steve Dow, art–guide INTERVIEW 19 June 2017



Dinosaur made from dinosaurs by Julia Krause Harder at the Museum of Everything. Image by Flickr user jellibat



*Rirkrit Tiravanija | **Untitled (Free/Still)** – Still from YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xRx2s3FpSg>
College of Art*

1.3 Literature Review

The 18th century tradition of aesthetics concerned itself with much more than just art: natural objects and phenomena, built structures, utilitarian objects, and human actions, as well as what is today regarded as the fine arts formed the basis for aesthetic reflection. The 19th and 20th century has seen aesthetics become synonymous with art.^{12, 13, 14} Dewey believes “the growth of capitalism has... influence[d] the development of the museum... creating... a chasm between ordinary and [a]esthetic experience”.¹⁵ Ivan Illich illustrates an expanded disconnection, one where western society has become largely removed from its spiritual self due to “present institutional purposes, which hallow industrial productivity at the expense of convivial effectiveness, [which] are a major factor in the amorphousness and meaninglessness that plague contemporary society.”¹⁶ A restoration of aesthetic sensibility could be a valuable tool to restore meaningful connections with

12. Saito, 2015
13. Frederick Potgieter, “On Intersubjectivity in Art and Everyday aesthetics”, *de arte* Volume 51 | Number 2 | 2016 pp. 3–15
14. Thomas Leddy, “Everyday Surface Aesthetic Qualities: “Neat,” “Messy,” “Clean,” “Dirty” The *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 53, No. 3 (Summer, 1995), pp. 259–268 Published by: Wiley on behalf of The American Society for Aesthetics
Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/stable/431351>
15. John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, Perigee Books, 2005 (p10)
16. Illich, 1973, (p20)

our environment. Illich solemnly outlines that “society (could) be destroyed when the further growth of mass production...extinguishes the free use of the natural abilities of societies members”.¹⁷

Everyday aesthetics is a reaction to the West’s disconnection from its aesthetic life. Some cultures may not need a ‘return’ to everyday aesthetics, as their daily life already contains meaningful and celebrated aesthetic aspects.¹⁸ For example, traditional Japanese culture employs ancient aesthetic ideals of wabi sabi, mono no aware, and ma. Closer to home, Australian Indigenous song-line practice uses forms in the landscape as ‘cues’ to communicate important knowledge and values through rituals of song, dance and painting– creating and adding to a ‘cultural memory’.¹⁹ A list of things that could be foundational for aesthetic experience would be impossible to create, but one can begin with subjects that “transcend individual and cultural differences... such as eating, dressing, grooming, shelter, and basic utilitarian objects, such as clothing, furniture, and eating implements.”²⁰ The concept of the everyday for Saito, and I agree, can literally constitute “experiences...generally regarded as ordinary, commonplace, and routine,” including “a

17. Illich, *ibid*, (p11)
18. Saito, 2015
19. “Songlines: the Indigenous memory code” Friday 8 July 2016 5:10PM by Lynne Malcolm and Olivia Willis
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/allinthemind/songlines-indigenous-memory-code/7581788>
20. Saito, *ibid*



Yuriko Saito’s washing line; still from YouTube – “Everyday Aesthetics and World-Making by Yuriko Saito, Rhode Island School of Design”

gator basking in a mound of dried dung.”²¹

Potgieter believes aesthetic experience is too often “private, subjective and non–discursive”²² and is critical of many of the thinkers in everyday aesthetic discourse, Saito included. Sympathetic to art, he is “concerned that this (privatised view) stands to arrest what can be described as a dynamic, creative, reciprocal interplay between the everyday aesthetic life–world and the Art world”.²³ This view is consistent with ‘Photo Album’, aiming to promote, project and share photographs and their stories. Respectively: “Humans tend to nurture and extend aesthetic experience, bring them to fuller consciousness, transform, promote, share and enrich them through many inter-subjective cultural practices, traditions and other institutional arenas.”²⁴ ‘Awe–inspiring’ moments like sunsets, lightning storms, a spectacular goal in a football match and wine tasting are moments of beauty that are communicable and are often shared in social networks. These moments, if given the space they deserve, can create beauty–directed dialogue, but can also break down barriers and enable connection between strangers, friends, family, and spark self reflection. Potgieter reiterates that “when others share our sentiments, we value these exceptional, extraordinary moments, actions and experiences even more...our meaningful everyday aesthetic life is not private, but intersubjective

21. Saito, 2001

22. Potgieter, 2016 (p14)

23. Potgieter, Ibid

24. Ibid

and communicable.”²⁵ This project is a vehicle to provide the ‘space’ that aesthetic dialogue needs to reach its full, intersubjective potential.

Not sharing our aesthetic experiences can have broader social and environmental implications. The western attraction to the ‘lawn’ is a negative consequence of everyday aesthetics. A well groomed, green lawn can have serious environmental ramifications. The use of excessive water, chemical fertilizers and herbicides can be detrimental to the environment it occupies, and destroys future habitats.²⁶ As we move through the anthropocene, aesthetic judgement can have much broader ethical implications. Designers need to be offering their unique skills in communicating aesthetic dialogue, mindful of the influence their work can have on the environment as a whole. This research has found solace in Illich’s conviviality – if we utilise the practice of everyday aesthetics, with the social outlook of conviviality then we have a great framework for a socially positive everyday aesthetics discourse.

“Exhibition design has shifted from space making to holistic experience making”²⁷, ‘visitor–centred’ museums have moved away from simply being

25. Ibid, (p10)

26. Saito, 2001

27. Roppola, 2012, (p38)

rooms to hold precious objects, bringing the museum experience closer to 'ordinary people'. To design museum experiences that accommodate everybody is no easy task; Roppola explains that people need "interpretive hooks... [and] scaffolding" that will allow them to relate to minimalist or abstract art, but this also applies to any kind of object. The collections of photographs in our phones are museums in themselves – this project aims to design an experience, to create a framework for participants to reflectively see the artefact's of their lives.

The digitization of personal photographic collections creates a paradigm where photographs don't *need* to be printed, so they aren't. Previously, photographs were enlarged and printed from their film negatives, their final form was a physical artefact. The digital photograph as "the visual means of registering the family"²⁸ has eliminated the "archival technique"²⁹ of the album, thus eliminating an outlet

31. (Figure No: 01) Silva, A. I. (1996). The family photo album: The image of ourselves (Order No.

29. Silva 1996, (p11)

family narrative and storytelling. We are alienated as the visitors of our own museum archives. A UK 'Times' article in 2013 highlights that 34 percent of British people don't have the time or know-how to download their digital photos, 23 percent of photos taken in the UK end up in a traditional album, with 13 percent of 18–24 year old's never having used a traditional photo album.³⁰ These numbers show the photo album is soon to be obsolete, lost from our cultural memory. As dark as this all is, it provides a perfect point of arrival for 'Photo Album'. Design practice can be used to re-introduce people to their meaningful aesthetic selves.

30. Burgess, K. (2013, Jun 17). Death of the family album as snappers switch to facebook. The Times Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/docview/1367928635?accountid=12528>

Figure No 1: preconditions for the existence of the album

- the family: the subject represented
- the photo: the visual means of registering the family
- the album: archival technique
- the album's narrative condition
- the telling of stories

1.4 Conclusion (Part 1)

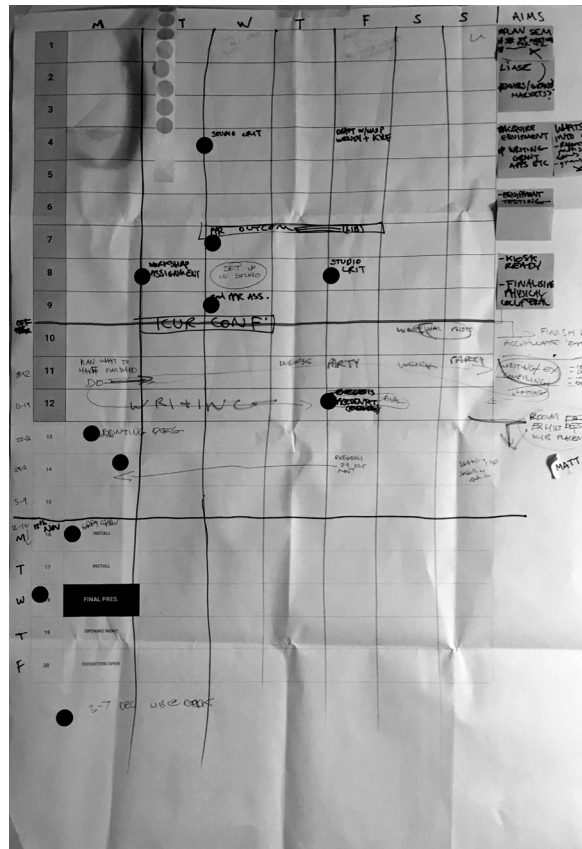
“Photo Album” aims to be an accessible exhibition that promotes meaningful dialogue and constructive personal reflection. Conviviality is the true aim of this project, a positive iteration of this project will be the completion of a successful process – from client interaction, to archive, to print and binding. This project will exemplify the often disregarded, or ‘unknown’ practice of a designer, by centering the client into the process the designer will witness and nurture the clients search for value and meaning in a potential design, with the result being purely for the client, like a gift.

This project has social implications – putting into practice the values of conviviality, relational art and everyday aesthetics as a protest against a society that has been plagued with exclusivity for too long. It’s more important now than ever to encourage everyday society to access and enjoy the value and benefits of the creative world. As big–business and the ultra–rich continue to exploit the earth’s resources, its timely that thinkers and creative’s share ideas with those around them.

It would be remiss not to address the personal potential this project offers. Successfully moulding art and design together in a socially important way solidifies what I want my creative practice to embody. These projects could manifest into projects in my CV that I can present for grant applications, exhibitions or more socially conscious design work.

2 Studio Research (July 2018)

2.1 Outline of Studio Research Programme



Semester calendar on my bedroom wall

Wk. Project (Works)

Mar.	8	<i>Free Consultation</i>
	13	<i>Exhibition Catalogue</i>
	7	<i>A-B workshop</i>
		<i>Repair Café</i>
	8	<i>Syllabus Workshop</i>
		<i>Any Dreams Poster</i>
	9	<i>ICUR Conference</i>
	10	<i>Photo Project</i>
	14	<i>Exegesis Due</i>
Nov.		<i>Unfinished Business</i>
		<i>MADA Now Exhibition</i>
		<i>Library at the Dock</i>
		<i>Exhibition</i>

2.2 Key Works

'Free Consultation'

My practice based research began with Free Consultation: a two week long exhibition that cross pollinated my research with that of Maddie Symons, who is exploring repair and throw away culture. With the aim of promoting participation from the public, prospective 'clients' were asked to book a 'consultation' to discuss an object they owned and believed to be broken. The exhibition occupied our collaborative studio space and was designed to replicate a repair shop. Consultations were structured as 'object therapy' with the aim not to repair the physical object, but to build a conversation around the objects value before and after it was broken. The relationship between subject and object was strengthened through discussion and often new appreciation for the object resulted.

Through Free Consultation, conversation became the vehicle for exchanging dialogue. Sharing the significance of the research project with the client, both parties could relate to one another. Additionally, the visual language of the 'store-front' acted as an interesting container, firstly because it was inside a university, and secondly, as it plays with preconceived expectations of transaction and exchange. Too often we think of a transaction in the context of monetary exchange, this research explores the personal value in objects and information, and how this kind of literacy can enrich one's lived experience, as well as the environment and society overall.

Flyer for 'Free Consultation' – the Winged Victory of Samothrace occupies the back of the flyer, as a symbol of the beauty in broken objects.



FREE CONSULTATION
**DO YOU HOLD ON TO
BROKEN POSSESSIONS?**

Free Consultation are offering no fee, no commission consultations for a limited time. We specialize in object therapy – priding ourselves in our ability to identify and repair people's relationships with their objects.

If you own something that is 'broken', then proceed to make a booking via email or take a chance and drop in between our contact hours.

Free Consultation is the first iteration of research based explorations between two Communication Design Honours students:

- **Maddie Symons** is researching the decline of everyday repair practices and the increasing need to rethink throwaway culture.
- **Matthew Justice** is exploring themes of everyday aesthetics and conviviality, experimenting possible ways to access and promote experiences with objects.
- Both are connected by the impact objects can have on individuals and society as a whole.

Could the negativity around materialism be rethought? Perhaps we should nurture and celebrate the relationships we have with objects like we do with people...

Let's chat.

Enquiries:
freeconsultation336@hotmail.com

We're Open:

- 11:00am-2:00pm
- 23.04-03.05
- WEEKDAYS

We Repair:

- HOME APPLIANCES
- ELECTRONICS
- CLOTHING
- WATCHES
- JEWELLERY
- SENSE OF LOSS
- SHOES
- RELATIONSHIPS
- HEARTS & SOULS



The 'Free Consultation' storefront largely mimicked one particular massage parlor in Preston. Can you tell which one we designed?

smell of rain on
hot asphalt

walking through
quiet city at night

sound of jazz

Syllabus Project: 'Experience Library'

'Experience Library' is a workshop designed for students that explores the importance of the 'communication' side of communication design – the premise being that the idea can be the most effective part of a design, and very little needs to be done to establish an evocative communication. An idea, or in this case, an experience, can be communicated and felt by an audience purely by reading the words being communicated. Through individual and collaborative brainstorm techniques the workshop shows that the ideas are better and the experiences are more palpable when we share them – illustrating the beauty of collaboration and relating back to Potgieter: "when others share our sentiments, we value these exceptional, extraordinary moments, actions and experiences even more..."³¹

- The first activity of the workshop is an individual brainstorming session, with the prompt of 'everyday aesthetics' – very limited background information is given on the topic, and the task is quite difficult.
- The next task is the same brainstorming activity again but with the addition of a 'mini lecture' on my research into everyday aesthetics, through Yuriko Saito, with examples of some of my favourite potential daily aesthetic experiences such as the aroma of onion and garlic cooking together and the first breath of air when you open the window in the morning, this gets the ball rolling, and prepares the group for the final brainstorming exercise.
- A 'Google Doc brainstorm' is a collaborative idea generation activity where the leader of the workshop acts as a scribe,

Activity 1:

- the pink/orange clouds outside my window
- the red colour of my tea
- ~~the~~ the dark blue hue after the sunset (in my room)
- clean ~~the~~ floor I mopped it. (shiny floor)
- my room (minimal.)
- blooming trees in spring
- my pancakes and fruit ...
- my personal cup.
-

Activity 2:

- making dumplings with my grandparents
- visiting a japanese shrine
- walking through the city at night with friends / quiet
- ~~the~~ hanging out in my backyard ~~is~~ when it
- hanging out in my room when it's clean.
- smell of baking a cake in the oven.

31. Potgieter, p28, 2016

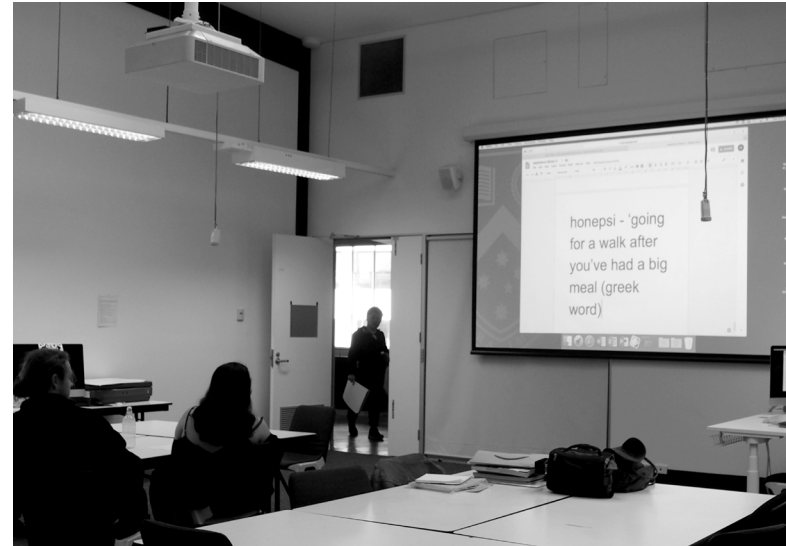
as participants shout out their favourite ideas, as well as any new ones that are sparked through others' ideas, this is usually quite fun, as people are sharing simple pleasures that aren't often shared with others. Participants connect with one another through their shared pleasures, and learning about new ones they could have in the future. An example of one was 'honepsi', which nobody knew of (apart from the person who yelled it out), a Greek word for 'going for a long walk after a big meal', this was met with deep enthusiasm from everybody, myself included.

Once the ideas are somewhat exhausted, the Google Doc is printed, resulting in a stack of a4 office paper, 30pt Arial in black, describing meaningful daily pleasures – the participants are handed a small stack and asked to pin them up on the wall. Once this is achieved, they are asked if they made any 'curatorial decision making', and if they were to curate the exhibition would they make any changes? Great discussion can evolve from this, as the experiences are paired with one another. The participants are asked to collaboratively curate the exhibition as 'a day in the life of an athlete' from beginning to end of the day. The discussion continues, once the task is complete, as a final activity, the participants are asked to move through the exhibition as if they were viewing it for the first time. It's emphasised that this curatorial thinking could be brought into their design processes as well as daily life, and what's the difference between communication design and

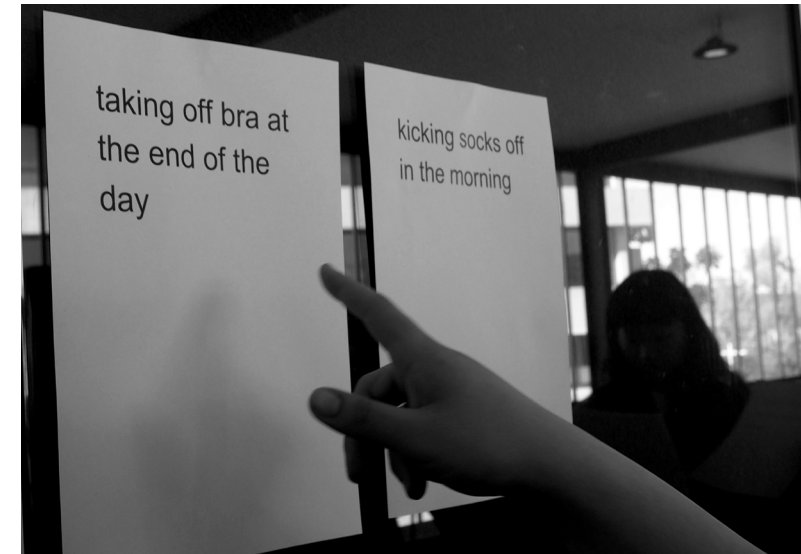
The Experience library builds with each iteration of the workshop. A benefit of designing workshops is that once created, you can put it into action whenever you like, it's re-creatable, always different and it can be put into action anytime, it's re-creatable and in this case it builds over time also.

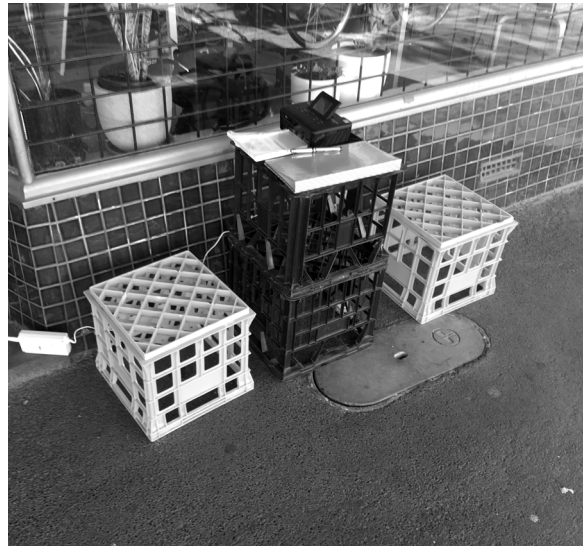
'Photo Album'

'Google Doc Brainstorm'



'Exhibiting 'Experience Library''





*'Photo Album' structure
outside studio.*

'Photo Album'

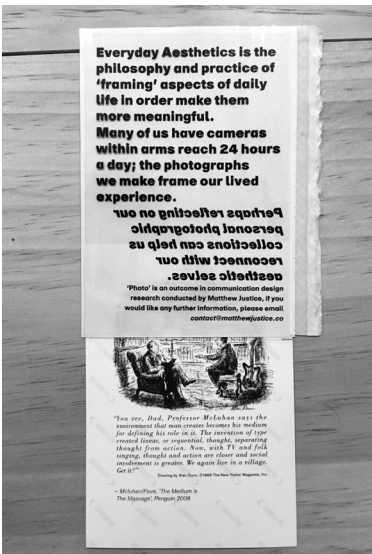
This is where all of this research has been moving toward. This was an ethno-graphic exploration in 'social photography', embedded in the simple fact that if most of us have cameras on our phones then we are likely to be practicing photography in some way. For 2 hours, over 3 days outside my studio, I spoke to strangers about the images they have inside their phones, and of one image in particular they would like to print. The participant would send the chosen image to my phone, then using a small photo printer I would print the photograph for them. A transaction would take place, the participant kept their printed photograph and I kept the audio recording of them describing their photograph. I developed an archive of transcriptions that describe photographic moments in peoples lives, expanding the idea of what a photograph can be. The experience of the consultation was designed as much as possible, not only did I want the experience of the 'Photo' interaction to be a positive one, but I wanted people to take something away with them that embodied the experience, even if they didn't have a photograph to share.

This project has continued to evolve, in theory all of the projects I talk about in this research document are evolutions and tributaries toward this project. The transcriptions of the interviews have been loaded into a programmable LED sign*, which tells the stories of the images and the people who created them, sharing the conversation that was had around the photograph, reminiscent of how it used to be when we shared photo albums with one another.



Perhaps reflecting on our personal photographic collections can help us reconnect with our aesthetic selves.

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Everyday Aesthetics is the philosophy and practice of 'framing' aspects of daily life in order make them more meaningful.

Many of us have cameras within arms reach 24 hours a day; the photographs we make frame our lived experience.

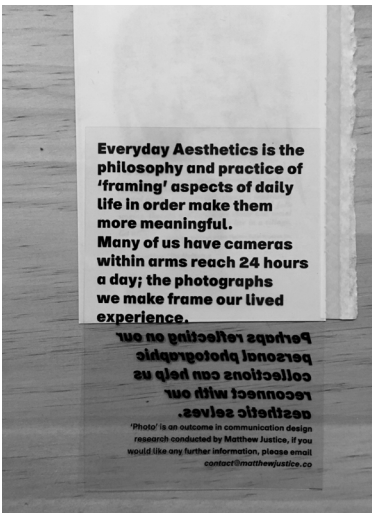
Perhaps reflecting on our personal photographic collections can help us reconnect with our aesthetic selves.

'Photo' is an outcome in communication design research conducted by Matthew Justice. If you would like any further information, please email contact@matthewjustice.co



"You see, Dad, Professor McLuhan says the environment that man creates becomes his medium for defining his role in it. The invention of type created linear, or sequential, thought, separating thought from action. Now, with TV and folk singing, thought and action are closer and social involvement is greater. We again live in a village. Get it?"

— McLuhan/Fiore, 'The Medium is the Message', Penguin 2008

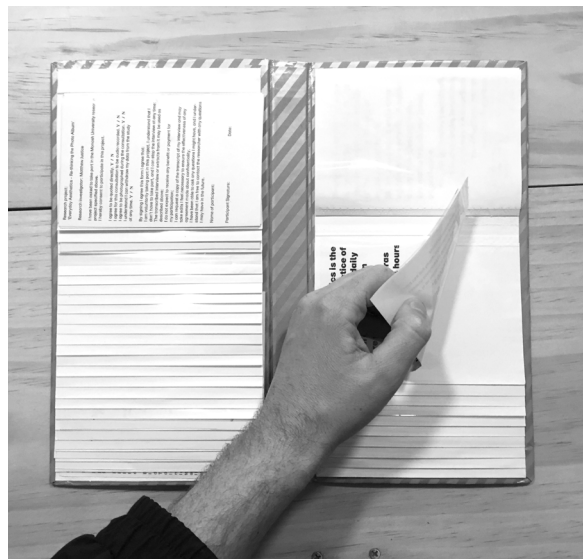


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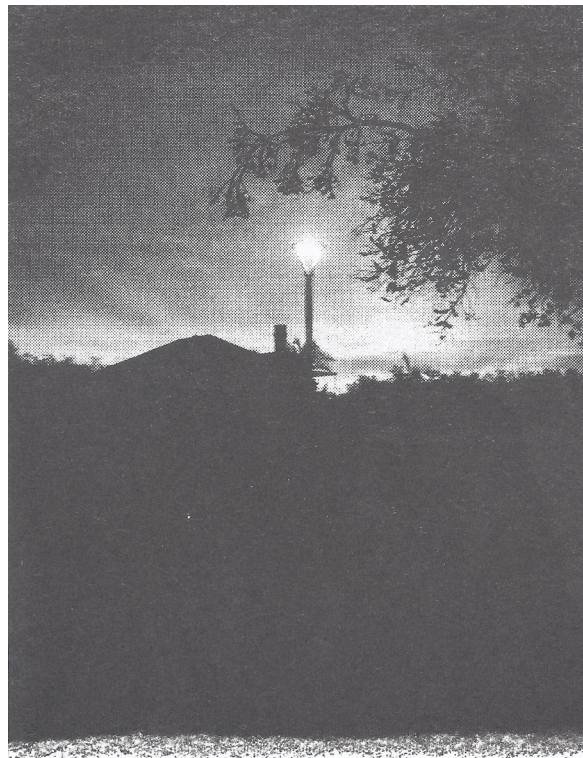
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I made risographed 'postcards' for participants who didn't have photographs to share. I didn't use them.

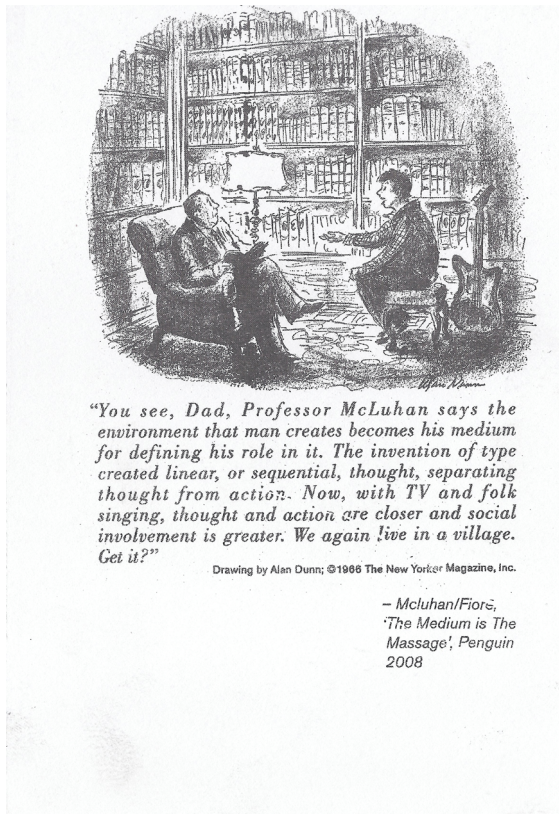


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Drawing by Alan Dunn; ©1966 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

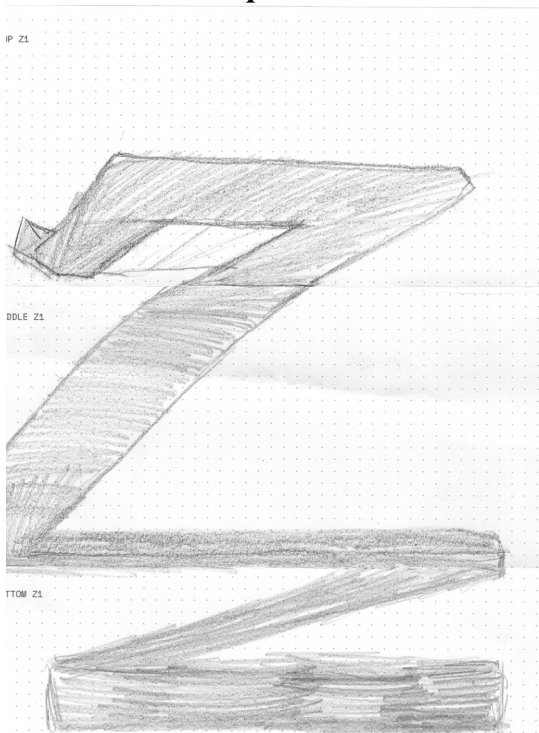
— McLuhan/Fiore, 'The Medium is The Message', Penguin 2008



'Packages' were designed to hold participants' photographs. Made from sleeves from an old photo album I found in an op shop, I inserted an acetate slip in 4x6 format that playfully illustrated my research – then the participants photograph would fit on the reverse side. On the back of the photo paper was a comic from Fiore and McLuhan's 'Medium is the Message'.

* Cadavre exquis (exquisite corpse) is a collaborative drawing approach first used by surrealist artists to create bizarre and intuitive drawings. Cadavre exquis is similar to an old parlour game consequences – in which players write in turn on a sheet of paper, fold to conceal what they have written, and pass it on to the next player – but adapted so that parts of the body are drawn instead. It was invented in 1925 in Paris by the surrealists Yves Tanguy, Jacques Prévert, André Breton and Marcel Duchamp.

A strange but beautiful ‘Z’ from the A–B workshop.



2.3 *Minor Works*
‘Exhibition Catalog Design’

The tradition of ‘cataloging’ an exhibition before it has happened was critiqued in this project. The publications given, or bought at museums and events often prescribes an objective interaction with the works – ignoring the visitor as an integral part of the show^{32,33}. I speculated a catalog design that documented and reacted to the individual experiences of the museum visitors. Users would be prompted to reflectively write or draw on the catalog, responding to prompts about the artists intentions and what they mean to the viewer and broader society. Digitisation and sharing of personal reflections could be collated as a means of documenting the exhibition and how it has been experienced. Methods could be employed to nurture potential aesthetic experiences for visitors at a museum (in any of its broad contexts).

‘Combobulator:’

Lucy Russell, Maddie Symons and I were connected through our studio philosophies: finding meaningful connections with our tools and objects to ultimately find the most fulfilling way to work. Lucy’s research toward re-thinking studio spaces allowed the three of us to critically evaluate our studio methods, whilst collaborating on projects relevant to our research. We worked on many projects together; some never eventuated such as the speculative ‘Repair Manual for a Convivial Designer’s Tool’ and the ‘Risograph Error Guide’. Two monumental, completed and measurable projects have been the A—B Workshop and Design Advice.

32. Designing for the Museum Visitor Experience, Tiina Roppola, 2012, 3 Routledge
33. Creating the Visitor-Centered Museum, Peter Samis, Mimi Michaelson, 2017, Routledge

‘A—B Workshop’

This workshop focussed on evaluating how students work when restricted to manual processes and whether this can lead to heightened creativity and satisfaction in their work. We created a framework for second year communication design students to draw a typeface through the exquisite corpse technique* using varied constraints in medium and time. The highly original glyphs were then exhibited and discussed.

‘Design Advice’

This was an experiment in ‘designer placement’* at the Melbourne Repair Cafe* that Maddie has been working closely with through her research. Maddie, Lucy and I set up a table amongst the ‘fixers’, consulting with the cafe community regarding design ideas or problems they may have.

‘Any Dreams?’

A freelance job for a pyjama company gave me the idea for a poster that could trigger dream reflections – an attractive poster that holds its space on the wall but also has a valuable purpose. It served to communicate the company’s aim to emphasise the importance of reflection at bed time and the potential it has for health and well-being.

‘ICUR Conference’

The International Conference for Undergraduate Research was not something I’d have predicted participating in this year. I submitted an early abstract for this paper at the end of semester one, subsequently I was invited to speak at the conference. The conference was broadcasted to other participating universities overseas – my presentation in particular went to Malaysia, it was humbling to be asked engaging questions from people who speak English as a second language. Most impressive

*Still from audio-visual composition
proposed for Unfinished Business*



LED Sign describing a photograph



- * Repair café's originated in the Netherlands, there are now 1000+ all over the world. On the first Sunday of each month 'fixers' offer their skills to members of the community to help repair broken objects that would otherwise be sent to landfill. <http://www.melbournerepaircafé.org/>
- * 'Designer Placement' is reactive The Artist Placement Group in the 60's. The APG 'placed' artists in industrial companies and government departments. There were mixed results from the APG, but I think designers could prosper in these positions.

*'Any Dreams' poster in a
friends bedroom.*



though, was the buffet lunch the conference put on: there were smoked salmon baguettes and arancini balls, as well as cakes, muffins and cheese platters.

Ongoing: 'Library at The Dock: Designer Placement'

Another experiment in designer placement, Maddie, Lucy and I will be collaborating with the library community and learning how the library works – to share ideas and make meaningful work together toward an exhibition celebrating the future of libraries. This will be happening with the Library at the Dock through November, to be documented and exhibited in December.

Ongoing: 'Unfinished Business' & 'MADA Now Grad Show'

These exhibitions will be reactionary to one another, with more or less the same things being exhibited. Alongside the LED sign from 'Photo Album' will be an audio-visual work that reflects the field recordings and videos I have taken during the year that's passed. The audio and video will be on separate devices, both launched in a loop and on shuffle, creating a randomized audio-visual 'score', offering viewers a unique experience and hopefully a sense of active discovery

2.4 Reflective Analysis

'Photo Album' was outlined as my 'final project', which can suggest that it should be a crescendo, ending with a big bang. The cliché that 'it isn't the destination, but the journey' is very relevant to my research and to have the final project to be some kind of arrival would be in conflict with the projects purpose. I've learned from this year that the projects in between can, and should be, as fulfilling as the end goal. 'Photo Album' has been tested and adapted since I began this year and was proposed as a far more ambitious physical project than what was required. The end result was achieved in a modest way, the proposed kiosk with a marquee, binders, computer and assistants became four milk crates and a personal photo printer. Working with minimal equipment, and not relying on anyone else is much more my style. This project is an example of how design thinking can simplify a concept to its essence, yet still deliver a meaningful result. This is a philosophy my practice has come to embody this year.

The process and outcome of 'Photo Album' was only made possible because of the research I completed. This gave me the confidence to express my ideas with authenticity and commitment. Not only was I trying to encourage strangers to share their photographs with me, but I was also dealing with my own anxieties of approaching unfamiliar people in the street. Once the kit was ready, I had no choice but to go into the street. As someone who vehemently hates being approached in the street by people who want money or subscriptions etc., It was important to me to subvert the imposing nature of being approached by strangers in the street. Building confidence in my knowledge base and practice was unforeseen at the beginning this year. A lot of my previous design work has been following trends and rules but not always understanding why things are done. I still don't know

why a lot of things are done in design, but in my practice I have been able to build a vocabulary to create rules for myself.

The theme of 'consultation' manifested deeply in the 'Photo Album' project, its interesting how such early research can become so integral further down the track, perhaps I saw the value in conversation from Free Consultation, and how fulfilling it can be to record these conversations. Somewhat ironically, the store-front came back into play through 'Photo Album', but this time I was outside the glass of the store-front, approaching the public, rather than them approaching me.

The 'Expansions in Design' elective I took in semester one saw multiple projects unfulfilled, with little time remaining to finish the exhibition catalog or put it into practice. Despite this, much effort was dedicated to reading about how technology affects the contemporary museum. Ideas in experience design and 'interpretation'³⁴ helped shape the studio research.

The research into a new method of exhibition documentation has been put into practice for 'Unfinished Business', this time the emphasis is less on the visitors creating their own catalog's, and more about the visitors contributing to the exhibition as a whole, with a designer curating the information. After all, for someone to attend your exhibition and see your work is a generous thing to do, and those exhibiting shouldn't demand too much of the visitor. A central 'hub' has been imagined for 'Unfinished Business', where the designer sitting in on the exhibition documents the happenings and goings ons over the duration of the day into pages of a book. At the end of the exhibition an unbound 'master' is compiled, copies can be then bound into a book.*

Freeman Tilden's Six Principles of Interpretive Communication³

Freeman Tilden (1883–1980), a pioneering figure in the US National Parks Service, formulated the following guidelines for thinking about—and developing—interpretation. They are just as applicable to history and art museums as they are to nature and wildlife.

1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
2. Information, as such, is not Interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based on information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
3. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical, or architectural. Any art is to some degree teachable.
4. The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole person rather than any phase.
6. Interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

34. Samis, Michaelson, 2017

Working with Maddie and Lucy under 'Combobulator' began as a speculative studio practice that explored what the 'convivial' designers studio could look like if we didn't need to rely on the 'personal computer' as it exists today. The idea was that we would use this philosophy to design a book that documented our experiments. This was very ambitious, and was too challenging to juggle with everything else we were doing. Interestingly, this 'stripping back' of the designers studio was where my project was before I found the personal photo printer. Lucy and I were equally invested in this speculative machine, but our projects moved on, past the restrictions of technologies we didn't have. Combobulator then became a manifesto of sorts, undertaking the same philosophy as the initial project, but applying them to our collaborative practice.

The A-B workshop was the first project 'Combobulator' was able to complete together, sharing and testing our studio philosophy with 2nd year students. It engaged the students, with feedback and discussion positive. The glyphs we co-designed and exhibited were creative and surprisingly interesting to the students.

'Designer placement' was first tested through another 'Combobulator' project: 'Design Advice' at the Melbourne Repair Cafe, which then gave me the idea for 'Library at the Dock' exhibition. At the repair cafe, one 'client' in particular, Jeff, had made a product, a soil tester, that had superior functionality to others in the market – his problem was how to get the product into the world, to make it desirable in its designed form. I couldn't tell him how to make the product successful, but I did refer him to the books I'd been reading about aesthetics and some design principles like the 'Form Follows Function' principle coined by Louis Sullivan that everyone learns in first year

university. For Jeff, the function was the easy part, but he didn't know how to communicate the design. This illustrated the role communication design could play for people, if designers were more accessible.

The works to be exhibited in Unfinished Business are reflective in a sentimental way and are a perfect way to complete this formal research. The LED sign signals a new outlet for my photography practice, as well as expanding the idea of what a photograph or 'Photo Album' can be (not to mention the mundane 'kebab shop' vernacular). The photographs presented through the LED Sign provide greater value to an audience in the written sign form than if the actual artefact or the transcription was exhibited, as the linear movement of the words in the sign successfully 'tell' the story of the image. Creating circumstances where face to face storytelling experiences are able to be captured and shared with a larger audience.

Finally, the audio visual composition work reflects a realisation that everyday aesthetics has been prominent in my photography practice for a long time now. This research has provided me with the vocabulary to describe my work and why I make it.

- * "It is the pervading law of all things organic and inorganic, of all things physical and metaphysical, of all things human and all things superhuman, of all true manifestations of the head, of the heart, of the soul, that the life is recognizable in its expression, that form ever follows function. This is the law."

– Louis Sullivan

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Form_follows_function

- * Inspired by the publishing technique used by Adam Cruikshank, Lizzie Boon, Will Kollmorgen, Emma Nixon, Rachel Pakula, Lucy Russell for the exhibition and book "A Parallel Publishing Workshop (1)" <https://busprojects.org.au/program/a-parallel-publishing-workshop-1>

2.5 *Conclusion*

I have reached a point in my practice this year where I am comfortable communicating my philosophies and how I believe art and design can respond to and improve social issues, with the research to support it.

Further research here is less about unanswered questions, and more about further refinement and alternative ways of approaching and expressing my ideas. I would like to practice more 'social photography' and exhibit/curate other peoples photographs, or 'artefacts' I originally thought of exhibiting, but on a larger scale. I recognise and appreciate the skills I have developed through designing and participating in workshops, there is potential to work with the community, skill sharing and the likely future of teaching in the future. I want a full-time job in a design studio - I'm always critical of commercial design but I've never really tried it.

My research this year has led me to stop using social networks as anything other than tools, and through studying the work of Illich I have gained a deeper understanding of what a tool is. I realised that uploading my work to Instagram was my way of avoiding finishing and exhibiting the work I make.

My plan from this point is to develop typography design skills and gain an expertise in coding. I've learned that a multitude of skills can be developed at the library, including coding. Its satisfying to feel accomplished in my field, that I might have something unique to offer.

3 *End Matter*

3.1 *Acknowledgements*

I am proud of my peers' projects and I am thankful for teachers who have been generous and willing to share their knowledge. Further, I am thankful to all the friends and family who have read this paper and given feedback, if you've read this far its probably because of their editing skills. And in that case, I'm thankful to you, for spending some time to listen to me.

3.2 *Further Reading/Related Links*

There have been many sources that have shaped this research, usually in ways the author may not have intended, the subsequent authors all made me feel like i was on the right track, despite not including their work in this paper.

- *We Saw It Before You – Hillvale (2015)*
A photo book published by a developing house in Brunswick, consisting of images that have come through their lab. A kind of social photography by photographers.
- *Martin Parr*
I think Marty Parr started the contemporary 'documentation' style of photography that reflects everyday aesthetic practice.
<https://www.martinparr.com/>
- *American Suburb X*
Essays on contemporary art/photography
<http://www.americansuburbx.com/>
- *Patrick Pound*
Collects photographs in various themes and exhibits them.

- *Daniel Eatock*
Finds poetry in the everyday, often using his audience to collect artefact's from the world, like cars with different coloured panels
<http://eatock.com/>
- *Hans Ulrich Obrist 'Do It: The Compendium'*
This project/massive book really helped with designing workshops. The book consists of hundreds of 'instructional artworks', that only need to be written to be experienced.
- *Most Dangerous Writing App*
This app is great at kicking you in the butt to start writing. It will delete everything you've written if you hesitate too long, urging you to write in a stream of consciousness.
<https://www.themostdangerouswritingapp.com/>
- *NTS Radio– Explore– ambient/new age*
An online radio station that is live on 2 stations 24/7, but also archives its shows and sorts them by genre, the ambient/new age tag is great for getting into the essay zone.
<https://www.nts.live/explore>
- *Steve Rhall LED Works*
An artist from Melbourne who also uses LED signs to tell stories
<https://stevenrhall.com/>
- *'Sensations' is a workshop from 'Taking a Line for a Walk' (2016) by Nina Paim, Emilia Bergmark, Corinne Gisel. 'Sensations' has a similar precedent to 'Experience Library,*

getting students to think about language as communication and experience.

<http://spectorbooks.com/taking-a-line-for-a-walk>

- *'Object Therapy' is a research project undertaken by Hotel Hotel in Canberra. Maddie and I hadn't heard about it until we came up with the concept of our own object therapy, what a trip!*
<https://www.hotel-hotel.com.au/objecttherapy/>
- *Ruby Tandoh, Eat Up!, 2018*
A beautiful book about the beauty in eating, cooking and food
- *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
For any philosophical questions you have about anything, there is a topic for it and someone has written about it in an easy to understand manner
- *A Monk's Guide to a Clean House and Mind, Shoukei Matsumoto, Penguin Random House, 2018*
Written by a Japanese Monk, Shoukei takes the reader around the temple and talks about what cleaning means to monks.

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- *Ivan Illich, "Tools For Conviviality", 1973, Fontana, (p18)*
- *'Touch' – Relational Art from the 1990's to Now, Exhibition Catalogue 2002*
- *'James Brett and The Museum of Everything', written by Steve Dow, art-guide INTERVIEW 19 June 2017*
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