

Statement & line of enquiry

Through the recategorization and rearrangement of subcultural symbols sourced from archival fashion photographs, this project seeks to open up alternative spaces as potential expansions of “public space”. It explores how the visual narratives within these spaces within the “gaps” of meaning can challenge the idea of “public space” while offering new ways to articulate subcultural identity.

I attempt a symbolic reclamation of the “streets” across several dimensions:

Visual space. I overlay image of subcultural symbols onto that of urban public space.

Narrative space. I construct a fictional reclamation of a real urban space.

Physical space. The expanded book pages as an occupation of the physical environment—a portable spatial extension.

Semantic space. The “blank spaces” among images form a discursive space where new meanings generate.

Rather than a mourning of a lost space, this symbolic reclamation searches for an alternative discursive space—a collective context, or a metaphorical “street” that exists beyond physical territories and made possible an “imagined public”. To me, this is also a celebration of subcultural resistance and a restoration of my sense of nostalgia for a lost time and space in the photographs. Ultimately, it leads to an ongoing enquiry: beyond shared time and space, where else might we exist together?

Bibliography

2 references drawn from the course reading list that situate your project in a broader discourse or conceptual domain

Foucault, Michel. The Order of Things, Taylor & Francis Group, 2001. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uai/detail.action?docID=240649>.

pp. xx

..... the Chinese encyclopedia quoted by Borges, and the taxonomy it proposes, lead to a kind of thought without space, to words and categories that lack all life and place, but are rooted in a ceremonial space, overburdened with complex figures, with tangled paths, strange places, secret passages, and unexpected communications.

pp. xxi

Order is, at one and the same time, that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language: and it is only in the blank spaces of this grid that order manifests itself in depth as though already there, waiting in silence for the moment of its expression.

pp. xix

I use that word ‘table’ in two superimposed senses: ...the table where, for an instant, perhaps forever, the umbrella encounters the sewing-machine; and also a table, a tabula, that enables thought to operate upon the entities of our world, to put them in

order, to divide them into classes, to group them according to names that designate their similarities and their differences – the table upon which, since the beginning of time, language has intersected space.

Initially, I aimed to translate subcultural identity expressed through fashion through categorizing, juxtaposing, and rearranging. However, I began to question my gestures—what do they really mean, and what kind of value do they produce? Faucult shows how acts of “bringing things together” can actually disrupt the continuity of conventional order and reveal what he calls “ceremonial spaces”—gaps of meaning where new possibilities can emerge. This gave me a new way of understanding my design process. While my remixing and juxtaposing compress images together in a visual sense, they simultaneously open up “blank spaces” on a semantic level. At the same time, I was struck by Faucult’s metaphor of the “table”—both as a physical surface where things are placed, and as a “tabula”, the conceptual order that determines how things are ordered, and can be made visible through their arrangement on the physical “table”. In this sense, could there be a semantic space that shapes how we will exist within physical space? I see some parallel between such a space and the sites where subcultural expression often takes place—spaces of resistance that reconfigure meanings within conventional systems of order. My curiosity led me to search for these in-between spaces; I no longer linger on my idea of “translation” but instead shift my focus toward “opening” symbolic spaces and exploring what kinds of relationships and meanings can emerge within them.

Invisible Cities, Italo Calvino, Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Company [1972] 1974, pp. 5–35

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“They dreamed of pursuing her.....After the dream they set out in search of that city; they never found it, but they found one another; they decided to build a city lie the one in the dream. In laying out the street, each followed the course of his pursuit; at the spot where they had lost the fugitive’s trail, they arranged spaces and walls differently from the dream, so she would be unable to escape again.”

With words and sentences, Calvino paves ways and weaves roads, building up cities and constructing an imaginary continent in the book. People in the book are also building cities—and the book become a layered universe of multiple times, worlds, and spaces. I feel in the same mood as these people. I have been reflecting about the lost time and space captured in FRUiTS—the streets that allowed this vibrant scene to happen, and everything in the photograph situated in a space exists only in the past. Therefore, when looking at the photos, a deep sense of nostalgia turns that physical space into a symbolic ideal space which I hope to trace. Can I trace that space, in a book? Can a book, be a container of that space, a similar space, or a parallel space exists "elsewhere"?

1 reference that is specifically related to your project in its topic (theme or subject matter)

Hebdige, D. (1979) Subculture the meaning of style Dick Hebdige. New York: Methuen.

p.31

They restored ‘deported Africa’, that ‘drifting continent’ to a privileged place within the black mythology. And the very existence of that mythology was enough to inspire an immense dread in the hearts of some white slave owners.

p.32

It (Africa) becomes a massive Out of Bounds on the other side of slavery. But beyond this continent of negatives there lay a place where all the utopian and anti-European values available to the dispossessed black could begin to congregate.

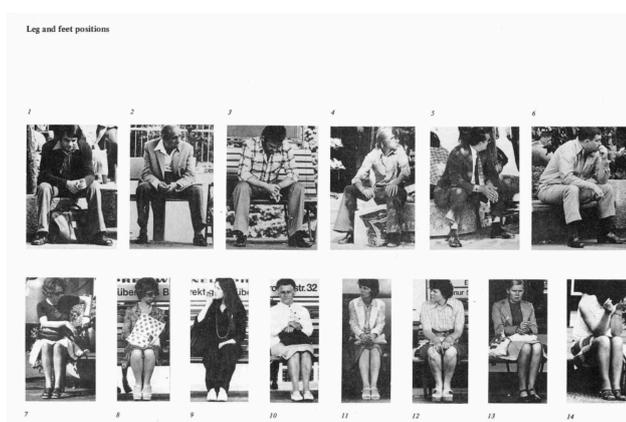
P.34

The profound subversion of the white man's Religion which places God in Ethiopia and the black 'sufferer' in Babylon has proved singularly appealing to working-class youth in both the ghettos of Kingston and the West Indian communities of Great Britain.....By a perverse and willful transformation, he turns poverty and exile into 'signs of grandeur', tokens of his own esteem, tickets which will take him home to Africa and Zion when Babylon is over.

In Hebdige's discussion on how reggae music appropriates African voices and Rastafarian elements in the postcolonial West Indies, I'm particularly drawn to how he interpretes such act of dislocation as a "geographical action"—by adopting cultural signs into distant contexts, subcultural members open an imagined pathway to a "distant continent". To me, this act symbolically subverts the established geographical logic; it is as if traveling across regions, and as if extending a map by attaching new pieces. Such "map-spreading" like bricolage, for Hebdige, is central to subcultural member's articulation of identities, through which, they establish their own cultural geography and continuously expand upon it. I experimented such a method as a visual strategy. I stretched the space by assembled images, displaced objects into their "improper" contexts—handing keychains on a power pole, dressing traffic cones with bows and scarf.....and altogether, these scenes form a vistorious, even somewhat sacred ending, reframing their mainstream portrayals as "other" into affirmation and celebration. With this, I wanted to explore how the disturbance of meaning brought about by the juxtaposition of symbols can lead us to "other spaces", as well as how these visual glitches can create "noise" in the rhythm of reading, becoming similar statements of resistance.

1 reference that is specifically related to your project in its medium or method

Lyra-Wex, M., Wyn Evans, C. and Morris, R. (2013) Let's take back our space. Southend on Sea: Focal Point Gallery.



How do we know how much space we own? And what does space even mean? Is it a "thing", an "object", or a form of existence? "Space" is vast and fluid. Vastness often

means imperceptible, but when a photograph become its container, space is suddenly measurable in a vivid way. The frame and boundary of an image give more perceptible dimensions to a space: scale, proportion, orientation... which, when an image is cropped, become even more concrete. The tension between positive space and negative space, blank spaces between two images, the alignments, become a metaphor of dominance and absence, visible and invisible. The scale of an image is the scale of its power; the spaces within images become realms where different dynamics resists against each other. When being juxtaposed, they become a statement that questions the power relationships in space. Expanded on this, can images also be a means to redistribute the ownership/form/meaning of space? There might be a portal to a "symbolic space" in them.

1 reference that demonstrates a critical position in context of your specific topic, medium, or method

Eichhorn, Kate. *Adjusted Margin: Xerography, Art, and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century*, MIT Press, 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ual/detail.action?docID=4694116>.



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FIGURE 3.1 The cover of the first issue of *Spacing* magazine—a publication that grew out of a collective effort to fight against the City of Toronto's increasingly aggressive attack on grassroots forms of communication, including postering. Image reproduced with permission from *Spacing* magazine.

p.104

Xerography “enabled us to imagine the possibility of being active participants in urban scenes and subcultures, even if we were not actually there. In essence, as much as xerography help to create and in some cases solidify urban scenes and subcultures, it also played a role in their deterritorialization, laying the groundwork for the types of networked communities we would come to take for granted by the early twenty-first century.”

p.106

Over time, zines radically changed the conditions under which people could

participate in scenes and subcultures and arguably changed understanding of what defined scenes and subcultures along the way.....subcultures might be defined by a fixed location no longer held.

The concepts of “public” and “public space” introduced by Eichhorn offer a new lens through which I view those fashion photographs. It led me to see not only the fashion but also the street itself as a medium. Subcultural fashion functions much like a form of mobile postering—occupying the streets with “alternative images” and messages, with the streets as a shared forum for communication. The space in the background of the photo suddenly became full of meaning to me, and I began to look beyond the details of the outfit and considering how their identities intertwine with the space. At the beginning of the essay, Eichhorn questioned the public’s reliance on medium, while as she demonstrated in the later discussion, not only can the public exist beyond a single medium and construct a new, decentralized shared communication space, but also the networked community can be expanded by such a new space. This symbolic reclamation and reoccupation of public space redirects and becomes a new method in my experiment.

1 wild card reference (identify another type of relationship, or re-use any of the above prompts)

Suter, B. (2021a) Parallel encyclopedia #1. Arnhem: Roma Publications.



Parallel encyclopedia, the first page & the last page

This encyclopedia is composed entirely of images sourced from diverse archives. It encompasses a historical trajectory that spans from the birth of human beings, through their exploration of the world, the evolution of technology and culture, to the formation of societies and publics. The original images, each a “slice of time”, exist independently and in parallel with one another. However, in this new sequencing, they are linked through their “shared spaces” in-between: visual or semantic resemblances, such as a common shape, or a thematic or symbolic link. These subtle points of connection allow a logical “sliding” to occur between images, enabling a progression of narrative and transforming these isolated moments into a continuous, fluid process, where one can see a development from zero to one. This visual grammar inspired me to look for those “shared spaces” through which I can link the images in a more logical sense and potentially construct a storyline. In this new method, where symbols of identities are situated within scenes that implied narratives, I found unexpectedly that when being appear more vivid compared to my method in week one. Additionally, the reuse of archives reactivates them as well as the time and spaces they contain, which in a sense,

also reclaimed the lost time and space.