Sarah Jackson

Disrupting the designer

Applying a feminist, embodied, hermeneutic framework towards better understanding and disrupting visual design practice

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design.

Department of Art & Design / Faculty of Arts
University of Alberta

Abstract

This Master of Design thesis project takes an experimental approach to exploring hermeneutic phenomenology—a practical philosophy that looks at understanding lived human experience through interpretative back-and-forth dialogue and storytelling—combined with a feminist and embodied research strategy. I am interested in the ethical, social and political ramifications of design and the question of how designers make design decisions, and how these design narratives can be disrupted if the current ramifications of design work are problematic. These questions are personalized in this thesis project, and become personally embodied as I use myself and my own design practice as a case study for this research. I see these questions as also having wider applications across the design profession: how do experiences, bias, prejudices, gender and body affect design ideas, concepts, systems and artifacts? Specifically, my overarching research question asks, *how can I disrupt current narratives of women in design?* Through my thesis project I engage in three types of hermeneutic dialogue: with existing texts; six industry experts, professionals and academics through semi-structured interviews; and through self-dialogue. These dialogues are used to create a series of animated and video-recorded shorts, documenting my exploration of a hermeneutical, embodied, and feminist approach to design research. These videos function as both a documentation of this iterative research and as a multimedia communication tool to show how hermeneutics, embodiment and a feminist framework can be used to inspire dialogue and challenge paradigms. By taking a look at my own experience as a designer, my aim is to question how the application of a hermeneutic, embodied and feminist approach might be applied to disrupt current narratives in design and help evolve visual design practice towards new perspectives.

Key words: design, visual design, hermeneutics, embodiment, feminism, design practice, performance, dialogue

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1 Introduction

The essence of the question *is to open up possibilities and keep them open.*
– Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, page 310

There is a fascinating mystery at the heart of interpretation in the visual design field. Within the "ongoing routines of bodily and mental activities"[1] that lead to decision-making within design, which is referred to in this document as *design practice*, we still do not fully understand how visual designers make the design decisions that form their work, and perhaps more importantly, how these decisions can be disrupted and changed for the better, in our pursuit to continually evolve design practice. This mystery—how decisions are made within visual design practice and how we might disrupt existing interpretations to reveal new understandings—is the focus of my research.

Interpretation is "the act of explaining the meaning of something,"[2] and designers are certainly strategic interpreters, generally employed to communicate the messages of businesses and institutions, with the goal of persuading consumers and audiences to act in a certain way (to purchase a product, to change their behavior, etc.). The philosophy of hermeneutics—which looks at the interpretive process—is what I will be using, not only as the methodological base for my research, but also the ontological base; in other words, it is the fundamental base for how I will be viewing and describing the nature of reality. As opposed to a Cartesian view of reality which sees mind and body as being separate,[3] a hermeneutic approach acknowledges the

[1] Kimbell, Lucy. "Design practices in design thinking." *European Academy of Management* (2009): 10.
[2] "interpretation," Oxford Dictionaries, accessed August 11, 2018, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/interpretation.
[3] Laverty, Susann M. "Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations." *International journal of qualitative methods* 2, no. 3 (2003): 27.

researcher's "biases and assumptions … embedded and essential to interpretive process."[4] Since my research will be taking a hermeneutic approach (which I will be defining and discussing more thoroughly in *Chapter 2*), with a focus on my own design practice, it is worth putting *myself* into context. Therefore, to begin, I will use the following paragraphs to frame how my experiences over the past ten years, in particular my introduction to performance art and feminism, began to affect my design practice, and how these influences have shaped this visual design research project and its objectives.

I was born in the 1980s in rural Alberta, Canada, around the same time that visual design and women's studies were further establishing themselves in academia across the Western world,[5] and performance art was firmly entrenching itself in the art world. Visual design grew out of a professional academic movement in the 1960s, and both women's studies and performance art grew out of social movements in the 1960s. Snapshots from this era include the publication of Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* (United States, 1962); the first live performance of Yoko Ono's now-famous *Cut Piece* (Japan, 1964); and, the founding of the International Design Research Society (United Kingdom, 1966). In the 1980s, after twenty years of activism, one could begin to find visual design, performance art and feminist programming at many academic institutions (if somewhat on the fringes). And if we go twenty years past the mid-80s to Edmonton, Alberta, we would see a green teenager stumble blindly into a visual design program, with some understanding of how to use a pencil, but with very little knowledge of what *design* actually was.

Even now, after 10 years of working in the field, I still find design to be a mystifying practice, and the more I learn, the more mystifying (and powerful)

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[4] Laverty, Susann M. "Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations." *International journal of qualitative methods* 2, no. 3 (2003): 28.

[5] Triggs, Teal. "Graphic design history: Past, present, and future." *Design Issues* 27, no. 1 (2011): 3-6.

it becomes. On the one hand, visual design is a straightforward, practical skill: combining text and image to communicate with an audience. On the other hand, it involves an enigmatic *creative process*, something known as *design thinking* (which is "is not well understood, either by the public or those who claim to practice it"[6]) and contains within its mythology a hierarchy of mysterious gods of design who have the power to label design work as *good* or *bad*. For something which at first glance may seem harmless (how dangerous can a book cover or a web advertisement be?) the public looks at the practice of visual design with a certain amount of suspicion, perhaps most notably within the advertising world where designers are often referred to as magicians, who supposedly "trick" consumers into buying things through a kind of modern visual magic. From a certain perspective, these consumers are perhaps right to be suspicious: Guy Julier, in his book *The culture of design*, introduces design by saying that "[f]ew practices of intellectual and commercial human activity reach into so many areas of everyday private and public life."[7] Designers are called "cultural intermediaries" and "taste-creators," [8] with the ideas that designers communicate, and the very *way* these ideas are communicated, guiding how human society experiences and relates to the world. This places designers in a powerful position, since the worlds we build in turn reflect and proliferate a certain model of reality, which is by no means the only model available.[9] The ethical implications of this sort of visual control over public and consumed items and spaces become immediately apparent.[10] For me, as a young designer, this knowledge started the growth of a small, uncomfortable thought in the back of my mind: if we, as designers, are influencing the tastes

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[6] Kimbell, Lucy. "Rethinking design thinking: Part I." *Design and Culture* 3, no. 3 (2011): 288.
[7] Julier, Guy. *The culture of design*. Sage, 2013: 1.
[8] Ibid, 54.
[9] Davis, Wade. *The wayfinders: Why ancient wisdom matters in the modern world*. House of Anansi, 2009.
[10] As Ehses & Lupton note, design has deep "social, moral, and political dimensions". Lupton, Ellen, ed. *Rhetorical Handbook: An Illustrated Manual for Graphic Designers: Design Papers 5*. Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1996: 6.

of the world, what is influencing *our* tastes? How do designers interpret the world, and what realities do they use as a foundation for their ideas?

As these curious (and ethical) questions were growing in the back of my mind, my experiences in the design profession were also building my awareness of the still-incendiary feminist movement, based on my own personal experiences of male chauvinism—dominance of men—and gender bias in the design profession. Across my career thus far, which includes experiences working for a variety of businesses, advertising agencies, and design studios as a freelancer and finally as a business owner running my own studio, the discomfort of these experiences grew to an aggravating level. I observed that top business executives (CEOs) and creative roles (Creative Directors) were almost always occupied by men. I recall being blatantly told that I was being asked to speak on a panel because they needed a woman to "round out the numbers" (i.e. I was the only woman on a panel of men). I experienced meetings where the client would shake my male colleague's hand, but not offer to shake mine, and new clients who would direct their questions to my male assistant, instead of me. I remember working on a campaign targeted at women in my age bracket and being in a boardroom full of middle-aged men talking over and around me about how to advertise to young women. I recollect building design concepts alongside a male copywriter, then pitching those concepts to a male creative director, before pitching to a male client, and finally sending the files to a male-run production team. I remember winning a new client and then having that client ask me out on a date. These are only the first few examples that come to mind. These experiences revealed to me that the feminist movement was still relevant: to my design practice, the type of work the design profession was producing, and also the effects of this work on its audiences.

Unrelated to my design career, but directly related to my growing feminist activism, I began building a secondary creative outlet as a performance artist, after discovering and joining the local neo-burlesque scene in my city. The

burlesque revival is well documented, along with its potential as a tool for feminist critique along with related areas such as drag kings, FEMEN, and pole dancing culture.[11] Multimodal, neo-burlesque provides a "plural, evasive, and strategic" place of feminist investigation and exploration[12] and offers a bridge to investigate and challenge a gendered status quo. Neo-burlesque fascinated me as a physical, embodied tool that allowed me to make critical, social and feminist commentaries. It also functioned as a much-needed outlet, as I spent my daytimes working under the long shadow of the advertising and creative profession's sexist history.[13]

In my mind, there was a large gap between the type of critical, provocative, feminist work I created within my performance art at night, and the largely uncritical, tame, male-driven commercial work I created within my design practice during the day. Part of the reason for this can be summed up in the oft-repeated statement made by many of my design colleagues, that personal opinions should be kept separate from client work. What I have started to ponder over the past few years is if this separation is possible, and perhaps more importantly, if it is desirable?

Which brings us back to the question presented in the first paragraph of this introduction, of how designers make the decisions that form their work—that is, how they *interpret* the world—and how these decisions can be recognized and then actively changed for the better. The interesting dichotomy is that, although the work of designers is by definition wholly *public* (the "wallpaper" of our urban environments), the reasoning behind the decisions made by designers is more-or-less *private*, hidden from the public eye (and, I will argue later, often hidden from the designers themselves). The vastly interesting questions (which also have interesting ethical, social and political

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[11] See, for example: Noble, 2005; McAlister, 2015; Griffiths, 2016.
[12] Nally, Claire. "Grrrly hurly burly: neo-burlesque and the performance of gender." *Textual Practice* 23, no. 4 (2009): 635.
[13] See for example: Buckley, 1986; Baker, 1994; Gorman, 2001.

ramifications) are *how do designers make design decisions?* and *how can these design narratives be disrupted* (which, in this document, means disruption towards advancement and improvement) if the current ethical, social and political ramifications of design work are problematic? To personalize these questions, how do *my* experiences, biases, prejudices, gender and body affect the design ideas, concepts, systems and artifacts that I put out into the world? How can I change the content of my output? At this point, research into the minds and design practices of designers still leaves much to be explored.[14] This "mystery of interpretation" is broadly what my thesis research is examining. The following section narrows in on my specific objectives and research questions.

1.1 Thesis objectives and research questions

This project takes a feminist, embodied and hermeneutic look at interpretation within my own design practice, asking *how can I disrupt existing narratives about women within design practice?* Through building dialogues that critique and reflect on the *experience of designing* (specifically my experience designing), I ask how we might "re-design" design, with a goal of disrupting existing interpretations about women within design to reveal new understandings.

My research engages in three types of hermeneutic dialogue. This includes an intentional dialogue about existing texts through reading, reflection, and writing; semi-structured interviews with designers and academics who have published work that overlap in the areas of design and hermeneutics, or design and feminism; and finally, a dialogue between my past and present selves through the creation of written, oral, image-based, and performative texts, incorporating my experiences of body and gender, cultural context, bias,

[14] Jahnke calls out this issue in his 2012 *Design Issues* article "Revisiting Design as a Hermeneutic Practice", stating that "we still see a general lack of studies that investigate experienced design practice".

perceptions and interpretations. All of these dialogues informed the creation of a series of video-recorded and animated documentary shorts: the designed artifact of this thesis research project.

These animated and video-recorded shorts provide a case study through which I document the transformation of my understanding, as I look at my design practice through this hermeneutic, embodied and feminist lens. These shorts serve three purposes. First, they provide a means of embodied self-dialogue. Although there are dialogues with other texts and people integrated into the videos (through written quotes and audio conversations), the primary dialogue occurring is one with myself and my own design practice, and the only body shown in the videos is my own. By filming myself on video, I was able to later watch these performances, creating the distance I needed to reflect, critique, and respond. These responses—mainly created as time-lapse videos which recorded the movements of my hand/pen as I engaged in the iterative "designerly" activities of drawing and writing—were overlayed on top of the video footage as layers. The second purpose these videos served was providing a means to share what is normally a hidden, private process, and expose some of the "mystery" of decision-making (my thought processes, starting-point assumptions, biases, history and experiences, etc.) not only to others, but also to myself. Finally, because of the iterative, layered natured of the video shorts, they serve as an effective documentation of my embodied experiences, and of the exploratory research process itself.

My aim is to explore, on a micro scale, how the application of a hermeneutic, embodied and feminist lens shifts the ways I both design and interpret women, and, on a macro scale, how these tools might be applied to challenge designers to reflect on and re-interpret the ways they make decisions on a wide range of topics and projects (perhaps addressing the issues of other disenfranchised groups) within their design practices.

This research (towards disrupting design practice) may be significant in several respects. First, if "the meaning of an idea [cannot] be separated from

the manner [in which it is] expressed,"[15] then this research asks the critical question of how we, as designers, make decisions within our practices and if there are less explored yet effective methods that could be used to foster an evolution towards better (which I define here as more inclusive, equitable) design futures. Secondly, although phenomenology and its various facets have been discussed in relation to design and architecture[16] there is little research that looks at the practical application of hermeneutic dialogue within visual communication design practice, in combination with the type of embodied approach suggested by phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Finally, this research is significant within the design field because of its alignment with feminist methodologies. I discuss in more detail later in the document (*section 2.5*: *A feminist approach to research*) why, from a feminist perspective (in pursuit of equity for women within the field of design), design practice needs to be disrupted. Historically marked by the absence of authoritative female voices[17], visual design research shows a significant lack of women published within its academic journals.[18] It has been noted that "new and different kinds of feminist-informed writing that attend closely to issues of gender, is required to productively disrupt and reconceptualize design scholarship."[19]

Although change (and particularly disruptive change) is by its nature difficult, my hope is that knowledge gleaned from this research can be used in a practical way towards building a more inclusive and equitable design profession—one with far greater diversity—and towards providing designers with new tools to help them transform design practice, revealing new

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[15] Lupton, Ellen, ed. *Rhetorical Handbook: An Illustrated Manual for Graphic Designers: Design Papers 5*. Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1996: 2.

[16] See Coyne & Snodgrass, 2013; Holl, Pallasmaa & Pérez-Gómez, 2006

[17] See Buckley, 1986; Baker, 1994; Gorman, 2001

[18] Clerke, Teena. "Gender and discipline: publication practices in design." *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* 3, no. 1 (2010): 63-78.

[19] Clerke, Teena. "Gender and discipline: publication practices in design." *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* 3, no. 1 (2010): 75.

perspectives, interesting narratives, and a path towards a variety of imaginative, ethical design futures.

Chapter 2 begins with a discussion of my methodology, presenting a brief history of hermeneutic phenomenology (a philosophy of interpretation), specifically looking at how the hermeneutic writing of philosophers Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur have been applied to design practice by design academics, notably Marcus Jahnke, Richard Coyne and Adrian Snodgrass. In this chapter I also address the *physical* nature of perception and interpretation, discussing the philosophical ideas of phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, specifically his concept of embodied knowledge[20], which places an emphasis on "the way the body structures our experience."[21] I conclude *Chapter 2* by touching briefly upon the history of performance art, and how these three—Gadamer and Ricoeur's hermeneutics, Merleau-Ponty's concept of embodiment, and a performative approach—together form a feminist base for this research.

In *Chapter 3* I discuss the specific research methods used for this project. In brief, I apply a hermeneutic, embodied and feminist approach to concurrently engage in three types of dialogue: a literature review (dialogue with texts); six semi-structured expert interviews (dialogue with others); and finally, by questioning, critiquing and reflecting on my own design practice through the creation of written, oral, image-based, and performative "texts" (dialogue between my past and present selves), in the creation of video documentary shorts. These shorts function not only as a communication tool for my thesis, but also as an embodied way of documenting my process of hermeneutic learning and of documenting the iterative design process itself. I conclude *Chapter 3* with a discussion of how this data will be analyzed.

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[20] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phenomenology of perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (Routledge, 2012).

[21] Gallagher, Shaun, and Dan Zahavi. *The phenomenological mind: An introduction to philosophy of mind and cognitive science*. Routledge, 2007: 137.

In *Chapter 4* I identify and discuss four key themes. Finally, in *Chapter 5*, I present a summary of my research, its delimitations, three strategies for both understanding and disrupting visual design practice, and suggestions for future research.

1.2 Key concepts and terms

Design is a notoriously difficult word to pin down. It is used to describe a variety of disciplines (graphic and industrial design, architecture, engineering and fashion to name just a few), and can be used as a verb (*to design*) and a noun (*the design*). Generally, within this document, I use the word "design" as an abbreviation for the more specific but wordy "visual communication design". When I discuss designers, I am referring to the work of visual communication designers, who deal historically with two-dimensional work which combines text and image (on paper, web and video) to communicate a specific message to a target audience. In terms of the specific purpose of design, I prefer American economist and political scientist Herbert Simon's oft-quoted phrase that sees design as "changing existing situations into preferred ones."[22] I would add that design is also grounded in a specific time, place and culture and that "all design has social, moral, and political dimensions ... there is no sphere of pure information."[23]

In this document, ***design practice*** refers to the "theories of practice" where "knowledge is a social accomplishment situated in the ongoing routines of bodily and mental activities"[24] that lead to decision-making within design. In other words, the *practice of designing*: the sum total of the daily work or

[22] Simon, Herbert A. "The sciences of the artificial." *Cambridge, MA* (1969), 130.
[23] Ehses, Hanno, and Ellen Lupton. "Rhetorical handbook." *Design Papers* 5 (1988), 6.
[24] Kimbell, Lucy. "Design practices in design thinking." *European Academy of Management* (2009): 10.

routine of a designer.[25] This is different than a ***design process***, which is a discrete sequence of stages or steps that designers use *within* design practice.

I am interested in conducting research from a ***feminist perspective***, which advocates equity for women by seeking "to overcome biases in research, bringing about social change, displaying human diversity, and acknowledging the position of the researcher."[26] This feminist perspective also shapes the way that "good" design is defined within this document, which is as per Herbert Simon's definition, design which "[changes] existing situations into preferred ones", viewing preferred situations from a feminist outlook as situations which seek "to overcome biases in [design], bringing about social change, displaying human diversity, and acknowledging the position of the [designer]."[27]

Methodology is "a body of practices, procedures and rules used by those who work in a discipline or engage in an inquiry; a set of working methods."[28] The methodologies used for this research are formed from the intersection of modern hermeneutics (as described by Gadamer and Ricoeur) and philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's ideas of embodiment, both through a feminist perspective (these are discussed more thoroughly in *Chapter 2*).

Gadamer and Ricoeur's works fall within a branch of phenomenology (the philosophical study of the structures of experience and consciousness) called ***modern hermeneutics***, which is the practice or art of interpretation, achieved through a cyclical back-and-forth dialogue[29]. Merleau-Ponty's work falls within ***existentialism***, another branch of phenomenology which studies concrete human experience. ***Philosophy*** itself is the "study of the

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[25] Reckwitz, Andreas. "Toward a theory of social practices: A development in culturalist theorizing." *European journal of social theory* 5, no. 2 (2002): 249.
[26] "Feminist method," Wikipedia, accessed July 20, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminist_method.
[27] Ibid.
[28] American Heritage Dictionary (2002) as cited in Conley, Chris. "Where are the design methodologists?" *Visible Language* 38, no. 2 (2004): 198.
[29] Dallmayr, Fred. "Hermeneutics and inter-cultural dialog: linking theory and practice." *Ethics & Global Politics* 2, no. 1 (2009): 27.

fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence."[30] Within philosophy, "***epistemology*** is concerned with 'how we know what we know'";[31] the epistemology of hermeneutics rests on the ground that knowledge is situational and subjective, made "possible through subjective experience and insights."[32] ***Ontology*** is focused on reality and the nature of being: hermeneutical research ontology "perceive[s] individual construct[s] [as being] dependent to different situations", and on "the belief that realities are multiple."[33]

Within this document I define ***text*** broadly, in a similar manner to cultural theorist Stuart Hall's definition of language: "any sound, word, image or object which functions as a sign, and is organized with other signs into a system which is capable of carrying and expressing meaning."[34]

1.3 Delimitations

This project occurs at the intersection of several research areas including hermeneutical design practice, embodiment and performance as tools for design research, and feminist practice and scholarship within design. All of these areas are observed through a design lens, and meant primarily for an audience of designers (although those pursuing other forms of feminist, disruptive or performative research might also find this work interesting and relevant). It is beyond the scope of this project to describe a comprehensive history of any one of the aforementioned research areas individually; rather, the goal is to provide a sufficiently clear overview as a foundation. Therefore, a

[30] "Philosophy," Oxford Dictionaries, accessed August 20, 2018, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/philosophy

[31] Kafle, Narayan Prasad. "Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified." *Bodhi: An interdisciplinary journal*5, no. 1 (2011): 194.

[32] Ibid, 194.

[33] Ibid, 193.

[34] Hall, Stuart, ed. *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Vol. 2. Sage, 1997: 19.

complete and detailed history of feminist research, performance art, hermeneutics or embodiment, are beyond the scope of this work.

Following a hermeneutic methodology, I have allowed the structure and themes of this thesis to emerge and evolve through the process itself. This evolving research approach also mirrors a typical iterative design process, as noted by design researchers Adrian Snodgrass and Richard Coyne:

> even when the designer approaches a particular design task with a sense of its unintelligibility, a single factor in the design situation, perhaps some characteristic of the site or some specific requirement of the client, can illuminate and orient the task, drawing what was without coherence into a preliminary projection of a meaningful whole.[35]

Like the design process, this research project required that I trust the process, allowing the direction to shift as needed, and permitting insights to emerge.

1.4 Summary

This research looks at the fascinating "mystery" at the heart of interpretation, with regard to how decisions are made within visual communication design practice, asking how we might disrupt existing interpretations to reveal new and useful understanding. Occurring at the intersection of hermeneutical design practice, embodiment, performance, and a feminist framework, my interest in this type of exploratory research has grown out of my experiences working in a male-dominated design profession, my experiences as a feminist-activated performance artist, and the critical gap between the two.

The philosophy of hermeneutics—which looks at the interpretive process—forms the methodological and ontological base for my research. This hermeneutic approach by nature foregrounds the *self*, which is why this thesis takes my own design practice as a starting point. The research engages in three

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[35] Snodgrass, Adrian, and Richard Coyne. "Is designing hermeneutical?" *Architectural Theory Review* 2, no. 1 (1996): 82.

types of hermeneutic dialogue, all of which inform the creation of my thesis project artifact. Following both a hermeneutic methodology and mimicking the design process, I have allowed the structure and themes to emerge and evolve organically through the research process.

This research is significant for several reasons. It addresses the way designers make decisions and interpret material, asking how these can be disrupted if the status quo is viewed as problematic. It explores the usefulness of hermeneutic dialogue and embodiment as under-utilized tools in the visual design field. Finally, the design field has little research created by women and approached from a critical, feminist standpoint: this research project aims to address both of these issues.

What influences designers' tastes, *my* tastes? How do I, as a designer, interpret the world, and what realities do I use as a foundation for my decisions and ideas? Specifically, taking a feminist, embodied and hermeneutic approach to my own design practice, *how can I disrupt existing narratives about women within design practice?* Through the following chapters I explore these topics, describe the insights revealed, and detail some strategies for both understanding and disrupting visual design practice.

The specific direction of this thesis was set in motion through the discovery of hermeneutics, and a design related article written on this topic by design researcher Marcus Jahnke. These revelations and stories are where the next chapter (*Chapter 2: Literature Review*) begins.

2 Literature Review

I begin this chapter with a justification for the hermeneutic framework used for this research project. Then, I provide a brief history of hermeneutic phenomenology through a design lens, specifically using Swedish design researcher Marcus Jahnke's 2012 paper "Revisiting design as a hermeneutic practice: An investigation of Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics" as a launching point. I venture outside hermeneutics (but remain under the umbrella of phenomenology) to discuss the *physical* nature of perception and interpretation, in particular phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of embodied knowledge, which I see as critical to understanding the design experience. Then, I briefly discuss the history and definition of performance art, outlining how the artist's body is featured and the role of video and film in this arena. *Chapter Two* concludes with a discussion of how these theoretical foundations—hermeneutic phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty's ideas of embodied knowledge, and performativity—lend themselves to the feminist foundation on which I have built my thesis.

2.1 Why a hermeneutic approach?

In recent years much attention has been focused on the "wicked problems" theory of design, perhaps most famously discussed by design academic and professor Richard Buchanan in his article "Wicked problems in design thinking," published in *Design Issues* in 1992. He notes that "the *wicked-problems* approach suggests that there is a fundamental *indeterminacy* in all but the most trivial design problems," meaning "that there are no definitive conditions or limits to design problems."[37] The wicked problems approach suggests that no design problem has a simple or single solution, since most

[37] Buchanan, Richard. "Wicked problems in design thinking." *Design Issues* 8, no. 2 (1992): 15-16.

design projects are not linear but involve a multitude of overlapping aspects and moving targets. One of the key properties of a wicked problem is that whatever explanation(s) are finally chosen will depend on "the intellectual perspective of the designer as an integral part of the design process."[38] This places a primacy on designers themselves, because "designers are concerned with conceiving and planning a particular that does not yet exist":[39] in other words, by determining how a wicked problem is solved designers are imagining and building new futures. It is this *interpretation* of a wicked problem, through the unique viewpoint of a designer, that I argue makes the *contextualized self* of the designer such an important topic for research within the design field.

But perhaps even the idea of a wicked problem does not go far enough. As Marcus Jahnke notes:

> even the concept of the wicked problem seems insufficient. It neglects the fact that what is deliberated in design is often not so much a problem, but rather *typical human situations where inspiration can be found in almost anything that is intriguing and is potentially meaningful*.[40] (italics mine)

This framing of design as a situation (as opposed to a problem) foregrounds social practices as a more appropriate model for looking at design practice.[41] In particular, it asks us to look at the act of *interpretation* within these human situations. Thus, it can be argued that design research should not only look at the way a designer interprets a wicked problem but also the social practice embedded within the design situation, and how these two—the designer and culture—interact.

We have established that there is a "fundamental indeterminacy" to design problems which foregrounds the designer's unique, contextualized perspective.

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[38] Buchanan, Richard. "Wicked problems in design thinking." *Design Issues* 8, no. 2 (1992): 16.
[39] Ibid, 17.
[40] Jahnke, Marcus. *Meaning in the Making: Introducing a hermeneutic perspective on the contribution of design practice to innovation* (PhD diss., University of Gothenburg, 2013), 98.
[41] Coyne, Richard. "Wicked problems revisited." *Design Studies* 26, no. 1 (2005): 9.

Furthermore, the idea of a problem (even a wicked one) does not seem to accurately represent the inherently complex social, cultural, and interpretive nature of design. The designers and strategists among you may note that both of these insights seem only to speak to the design *process*, rather than the finished product itself. However, if we turn our gaze to the finished design product, the indeterminacy of design situations and the designer's unique interpretation remain just as salient. As design academics Snodgrass and Coyne note:

> But in the realm of design, as in the human sciences, it is precisely the distinctive, the particular, the unique, the unrepeated and the unrepeatable, the idiosyncratic, that is important. Difference, not sameness, is the proper focus of study. It is not what this design situation has in common with all other design situations, or what this sequence of design operations shares with all others that is important, but what marks it out as special, individual, distinctive—as it is in our dealings with people.[42]

Taken together, these three insights (the indeterminate and cultural nature of design situations, the designer's contextualized perspective of the situation, and the desirability of a unique design solution or product) provide a compelling basis to build a design research study to foreground *interpretation*, even though this approach by its nature provides "an indeterminate, contingent, and varied foundation."[43] With this in mind, I have chosen to base this research project on modern hermeneutics: a philosophy, theory and methodology of interpretation. This is what I will be discussing next.

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[42] Snodgrass, Adrian, and Richard Coyne. "Is designing hermeneutical?" *Architectural Theory Review* 2, no. 1 (1996): 92.
[43] Coyne, Richard. "Wicked problems revisited." *Design Studies* 26, no. 1 (2005): 9.

2.2 A brief history of hermeneutics and its application to design

As mentioned in the previous section, the decision to use hermeneutics as a theoretical base for this research project began in part through my discovery of Marcus Jahnke's 2012 *Design Issues* article "Revisiting design as a hermeneutic practice: An investigation of Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics."[44] Jahnke's article builds upon the work of Richard Coyne and Adrian Snodgrass, who are among the first (if not *the* first) to explicitly tie hermeneutics to the practice of design[45]. It is worth noting that Coyne and Snodgrass argue that many of the principles of hermeneutic dialogue are described by American philosopher and professor Donald Schön in his influential 1986 book *The Reflective Practitioner*, which has been applied to a variety of professional practices including design (although Schön does not mention hermeneutics by name).[46] In the following paragraphs, I provide a brief history of hermeneutics, focusing on two key modern hermeneutic philosophers often referenced within design contexts: Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur.

The root of the word *hermeneutic* can be traced back to the Greek messenger *Hermes*, the translator and interpreter of the gods. A designer, it could be argued, is a modern-day Hermes, since a designer is "an interpreter of messages,"[47] communicating and translating between businesses and consumers, governments and citizens, educators and students. Although

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[44] It is also worth noting that I had first discovered and been inspired by the philosophical work of architect and McGill University professor Alberto Pérez-Gómez, for example his 2006 book *Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics*, which perhaps primed my brain to a receptivity and interest in hermeneutics.

[45] From audio-recorded phone interview with Richard Coyne, March 15, 2018.

[46] See for example: Swann, Cal. "Action research and the practice of design." *Design Issues* 18, no. 1 (2002): 49-61.

[47] Buchanan, Richard. "Wicked problems in design thinking." *Design Issues* 8, no. 2 (1992): 11-12.

hermeneutics has a long and varied history, which originally dealt with the translation and interpretation of religious texts, these more ancient forms of hermeneutics are not directly relevant to my research,[48] therefore I will be beginning my discussion with the birth of modern hermeneutics, starting with the work of Edmund Husserl.

The German-born Edmund Husserl was interested in the structures of consciousness and the study of phenomena, and he founded phenomenology as a philosophical movement in the early 1900s. Phenomenology is most simply defined as the "study of phenomena" focusing on "the way things appear to us through experience or in our consciousness"[49] and "questions the way one experiences the world".[50] Husserl's brand of what is now-known as transcendental phenomenology sees it as "possible to suspend personal opinion" through a process known as "bracketing" to "arrive to a single, essential and descriptive presentation of a phenomenon."[51] In an unexpected divergence, Husserl's star pupil Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) rejected the notion of bracketing as impossible, insisting that personal opinions cannot be suspended and that, in fact, "interpretations are all we have."[52] Thus, hermeneutic phenomenology was born.

Modern hermeneutics looks at interpreting or understanding experience through use of the hermeneutic cycle,[53] which can be defined as a "genuine" or "sincere" back-and-forth dialogue with a text or person[54] which resembles "an

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[48] Note, I will not be presenting an exhaustive history of hermeneutics since describing it's long and evolving history are beyond the scope of this thesis, and furthermore many books and articles have been written which already cover its history in detail. See for example Ormiston & Schrift, 1990; Grondin, 1997; Thiselton, 2009.

[49] Kafle, Narayan Prasad. "Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified." *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 5, no. 1 (2011): 182.

[50] Ibid, 183.

[51] Ibid, 186.

[52] Ibid, 187.

[53] Ibid, 187.

[54] Dallmayr, Fred. "Hermeneutics and inter-cultural dialog: linking theory and practice." *Ethics & Global Politics* 2, no. 1 (2009): 27.

open circle fostering a learning process or a steady amelioration and transformation of understanding".[55] As noted in the book *The Hermeneutic Tradition*, "[i]nterpretation does not release or disengage us from the world. To the contrary, it is through interpretation that we engage the world, our surroundings; through the act of interpretation the world becomes what it is, a 'text'".[56] In other words, as opposed to Husserl's idea of "bracketing", hermeneutics sees the interrogator or researcher as being inescapably situated in the world and that, furthermore, this "pre-understanding" is a necessary starting point to begin the act of interpretation.[57]

Heidegger was followed by another notable German philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), whose major work *Truth and Method* (1960) is now considered to be a key reference text for modern hermeneutics. As Gadamer notes in the aforementioned work, "[t]he hermeneutical task becomes of itself a questioning of things"[58] and "implies the primacy of dialogue and the structure of question and answer."[59] Gadamer sees hermeneutics as "work ... based on a polarity of familiarity and strangeness", where we must look at the story that the text tells us, focusing on the "in-between" areas of tension.[60] Understanding (the goal of the hermeneutic cycle) occurs at the "fusion of horizons", between the horizon of the historical "tradition from which we came" and the horizon of the present which "is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having

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[55] Dallmayr, Fred. "Hermeneutics and inter-cultural dialog: linking theory and practice." *Ethics & Global Politics* 2, no. 1 (2009): 28.
[56] Ormiston, Gayle L., and Alan D. Schrift, eds. *The hermeneutic tradition: from Ast to Ricoeur*. Suny Press, 1990, 7.
[57] Dallmayr, Fred. "Hermeneutics and inter-cultural dialog: linking theory and practice." *Ethics & Global Politics* 2, no. 1 (2009): 26.
[58] Gadamer, Hans-Georg, Joel Weinsheimer, and Donald G. Marshall. *EPZ truth and method*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2004, 281.
[59] Ibid, 378.
[60] Ibid, 306.

to test all our prejudices."[61] By prejudice here Gadamer means the "fore-meanings" with which we approach every situation: in other words, our own bias.[62] This is not something which Gadamer views in a negative light, but as previously noted, he sees prejudice (and the recognition of one's own prejudice) as a necessary starting point for interpretation. From a hermeneutic standpoint, "situatedness is in no way an obstacle to manifesting meaning in a new work; in fact, quite the opposite, it is a prerequisite."[63]

Design academics Coyne and Snodgrass draw from the work of Gadamer to argue that design belongs firmly "to the domain of the human and hermeneutical sciences with a base in the processes of understanding and interpretation" and "that design activity proceeds by way of a hermeneutical circle, involving the projection of preunderstandings and a dialogical structure of question and answer."[64] However, design researcher Jahnke both critiques and builds on Snodgrass and Coyne's work, suggesting that Gadamer's focus on "situatedness" and the "interpretation of existing works" leaves a gap that doesn't "explain how *new* meaning might arise" when applying hermeneutics to design practice.[65] To expand the conversation, therefore, Jahnke introduces the critical hermeneutics of French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005).

Jahnke suggests that Ricoeur moves away from a focus on "situatedness" to a "critical distancing", "throwness", and from the "interpretation of existing works" to a "poetic redescription" and "exposure", which "holds the capacity to open up new worlds" and therefore fill the previously mentioned gap left by

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[61] Gadamer, Hans-Georg, Joel Weinsheimer, and Donald G. Marshall. *EPZ truth and method*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2004, 317.
[62] Ibid, 282.
[63] Jahnke, Marcus. *Meaning in the Making: Introducing a hermeneutic perspective on the contribution of design practice to innovation* (PhD diss., University of Gothenburg, 2013), 100.
[64] Snodgrass, Adrian, and Richard Coyne. "Is designing hermeneutical?" *Architectural Theory Review* 2, no. 1 (1996): 65.
[65] Jahnke, Marcus. "Revisiting design as a hermeneutic practice: An investigation of Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics." *Design Issues* 28, no. 2 (2012): 34.

Gadamer.[66] Ricoeur's "critical distancing" is achieved through the creation of a hermeneutic spiral which interlaces the ontological focus of interpretation (describing the nature of reality) with an epistemological view of reflection (a focus on the nature of knowledge*)*.[67] This, as applied to design, offers a "more postmodern understanding of discourse [which] can be seen as a positive, ongoing encounter of diverse interpretations—a 'loving struggle' in which care has to be taken to actually keep tensions and frictions in place because they are fundamental to the process of understanding."[68]

Jahnke also suggests that Ricoeur's insights into the concepts of "throwness", "poetic redescription" and "exposure" are particularly useful for the creation of new work within design practice. Jahnke ties Ricoeur's idea of "throwness" to design stating that design is "something that is 'thrown into the world' as a proposal to be interpreted, and thus it holds the capacity to open up new worlds."[69] He also suggests that Ricoeur's focus on the expansion or growth of self through exposure to a "text" encourages an expansion of the world of the designer, and therefore the possibility of new interpretations.[70] Jahnke notes:

> …to accept the involvement of the self in interpretation means also to acknowledge that the self evolves in these processes – so that a 'richer self may be received,' in Ricoeur's words. In this perspective, designing is as much a process of learning as of generating a design outcome. The designed object can even be seen as a secondary manifestation of this process of learning.[71]

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[66] Jahnke, Marcus. "Revisiting design as a hermeneutic practice: An investigation of Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics." *Design Issues* 28, no. 2 (2012): 34-35.
[67] Ibid, 34.
[68] Ibid, 34.
[69] Ibid, 35.
[70] Ibid, 35.
[71] Jahnke, Marcus. *Meaning in the Making: Introducing a hermeneutic perspective on the contribution of design practice to innovation* (PhD diss., University of Gothenburg, 2013), 100-101.

Jahnke notes how Ricoeur emphasizes the importance of "poetic redescription" within hermeneutics, for example through the use of metaphor. For Ricoeur, "metaphors are at the root of how we understand the world" and can be seen as "an on-going process of open communication and poetic creation of new meaning."[72] Coyne and Snodgrass also suggest that "a study of the metaphors we use is informative as a means of revealing 'hidden entailments,' of exposing that which is taken for granted."[73]

In summary, Jahnke proposes that the historical hermeneutics of Gadamer, combined with the critical hermeneutics of Ricoeur, together provide an even more effective metaphor for designing and urges that their contributions "should not be seen as conflicting" but jointly "make a strong case for understanding design as a practice where new meaning, as well as new ingenious practical solutions, can emerge through a process of interpretation."[74] I would now like to build on this foundation and suggest that understanding design practice also requires an understanding of how the *body* affects design practice and interpretation, by adding the work of French phenomenology philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty to the conversation.

2.3 Embodied knowledge

We know not through our intellect but through our experience.

– Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945)

Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) was a prolific writer with a variety of interests, but I will be looking specifically at his focus on embodiment, in other words "the

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[72] Jahnke, Marcus. *Meaning in the Making: Introducing a hermeneutic perspective on the contribution of design practice to innovation* (PhD diss., University of Gothenburg, 2013, 103.

[73] Coyne, Richard, Adrian Snodgrass, and David Martin. "Metaphors in the design studio." *Journal of Architectural Education* 48, no. 2 (1994): 114.

[74] Jahnke, Marcus. "Revisiting design as a hermeneutic practice: An investigation of Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics." *Design Issues* 28, no. 2 (2012): 40.

role of the lived-body in perception."[75] From Merleau-Ponty's viewpoint, "dialog is not simply a cerebral process or an abstract 'meeting of minds' but rather involves a concrete existential and bodily engagement among participants."[76] Although the idea of the body in design practice was not discussed directly by Schön, Jahnke, Coyne or Snodgrass in the aforementioned works, other academics have explored Merleau-Ponty's ideas in relation to design practice, such as Søren Bolvig Poulsen, Associate Professor in the Department of Communication and Psychology at Aalborg University, Denmark, and Ulla Thøgersen (1976–2016), former Associate Professor in the Department of Learning and Philosophy, Aalborg University, Denmark.

In 2011 Poulsen and Thøgersen published a case study in *CoDesign* which looked at the interactions between design teams as they interpreted video material, to observe Merleau-Ponty's concepts of embodiment within design practice.[77] Poulsen and Thøgersen noted that "[t[hrough the analysis it became clear that the bodily engagement of the designers were central to their way of interacting and working as they understand and solve the problem at hand."[78] For example, they observed that there was an "embodied tacit knowledge" to the situation "which is never verbalized",[79] as well as an integration of objects in the designer's space.[80] Poulsen and Thøgersen contend that "Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perspective resonates with Schön's 'reflection in action'" which "[criticizes] the idea of the human mind working in isolation" and "[points] us to the situated and bodily engagement in the experienced

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[75] Kafle, Narayan Prasad. "Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified." *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 5, no. 1 (2011): 188.
[76] Dallmayr, Fred. "Hermeneutics and inter-cultural dialog: linking theory and practice." *Ethics & Global Politics* 2, no. 1 (2009): 35.
[77] Poulsen, Søren Bolvig, and Ulla Thøgersen. "Embodied design thinking: a phenomenological perspective." *CoDesign* 7, no. 1 (2011): 33.
[78] Ibid, 36.
[79] Ibid, 39.
[80] Ibid, 38.

world."[81] They also point out that "[d]esign interaction and thinking is often approached through the analysis of speech and conversation" with embodiment being taken for granted. This, they argue, points to a gap within the design field for research that "accentuate [how] human cognition and our situated actions are embodied."[82]

Design thinking "occurs 'in-situ' – bound to an actual moment, a specific place, the people present in the room – and naturally, design thinking occurs within a design *thinker*, a specific person with personal and unique experiences."[83] If we see thinking as an act "situated in an embodied engagement in the experienced world," then, "in order to understand human thinking we need to understand ourselves as bodies."[84] Hence, to fully look at the nature of interpretation within design practice, I am arguing that we not only need to apply the critical hermeneutics of Ricoeur (building on the historical hermeneutics of Gadamer), but that we also need to consider Merleau-Ponty's ideas of embodiment: the role of the body in interpretation within design practice.

2.4 Performance as a tool for design research

A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself ... And so she comes to consider the surveyor and the surveyed within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman.

– John Berger, *The Look of Things*[85]

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[81] Poulsen, Søren Bolvig, and Ulla Thøgersen. "Embodied design thinking: a phenomenological perspective." *CoDesign* 7, no. 1 (2011): 32.
[82] Ibid, 43.
[83] Dallmayr, Fred. "Hermeneutics and inter-cultural dialog: linking theory and practice." *Ethics & Global Politics* 2, no. 1 (2009): 33.
[84] Poulsen, Søren Bolvig, and Ulla Thøgersen. "Embodied design thinking: a phenomenological perspective." *CoDesign* 7, no. 1 (2011): 32.
[85] Berger, John. *The Look of Things: Essays*. Viking Books, 1972.

In my pursuit to apply Merleau-Ponty's concept of embodied knowledge, I decided to take an uncommon performative turn with my design research project. Integrating my body into the hermeneutic dialogue—via video-recorded performances (both through video recording my body and also through video recording the movements of my hand and pen as I created illustrations, animations, and handwritten text)—allowed me to create a certain "distance" from the texts that I was producing, so that I could engage in a critical and reflective dialogue with myself. Therefore, I will briefly provide some context and definitions, as well as argue for the usefulness of performance as an embodied, exploratory design research tool.

Performance art can be defined "as a practice in which the body of the artist is central or is the medium itself."[86] In other words, "the artist—or, more precisely, the artist's movements, gestures, and sounds, either alone or in dialogue with an audience—becomes the artwork."[87] Historically, performance artists have often been women who see it as a method through which to "[foreground] the role of the artist as woman and as such .... [operate] as a critique of traditional notions of subject/object within art".[88] Performance became widely accepted as "art" starting in the 1980s, when it began to appear in festivals, galleries, exhibitions and publications.[89] Although it largely started as live installations of the artists in galleries or exhibitions, in recent years "video art has become a more dominant mode and has taken up many of the concerns of performance art, such as issues of identity and particularly the exploration of the relationship between artist and audience."[90]

I see performativity as a powerful tool, under-utilized within design research, and particularly useful for conducting research from a feminist

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[86] Carson, Fiona, and Claire Pajaczkowska. *Feminist visual culture*. Routledge, 2016, 25.
[87] D'Alleva, Anne. *Look!: The Fundamentals of Art History*. Pearson College Division, 2003, 39.
[88] Carson, Fiona, and Claire Pajaczkowska. *Feminist visual culture*. Routledge, 2016, 26.
[89] Ibid, 79.
[90] Ibid, 83.

foundation that is aiming to "to productively disrupt and reconceptualize design scholarship."[91] I have also chosen to use video (as opposed to a live installation, for example) as the performative route for this research both because it offers a path to the critical distancing that could allow for a productive hermeneutic self-dialogue, and also for accessible documentation. As Tami Spry notes, performativity has "the capability of resisting and interrupting sedimented social meanings and normative performances that become oppressive, hegemonic, silencing."[92] My choice to use performativity and my own body within this research also functions to foreground my experiences as a woman and provides a feminist approach for my research. This is what I discuss next.

2.5 A feminist approach to research

I believe that my experiences as a woman, and as a female designer, affect the ways I see design, and the way I interpret material within my design work. This knowledge has led me to take a feminist stance within my design research, both conceptually and methodologically. Because there are varying methods and definitions associated with the term *feminism* it is worth clarifying that my definition of feminist research means "seeking to overcome biases in research, bringing about social change, displaying human diversity, and acknowledging the position of the researcher"[93] specifically as these relate to political, economic, and social equity for women. In this section I take a look at my motivations for taking a feminist approach to my research, the current dearth of feminist research in design, and note a few examples which show a growing interest in feminist approaches.

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[91] Carson, Fiona, and Claire Pajaczkowska. *Feminist visual culture*. Routledge, 2016, 75.
[92] Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Sage, 2011, 504.
[93] "Feminist method," Wikipedia, accessed July 20, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminist_method.

My impetus to look at women within design practice follows similar motivations as those described by Australian researcher Dr. Teena Clerke:

> [b]eginning with the assumption that gender mattered in an emergent scholarly discipline situated in the professional practice landscape of design, I wanted to address the absence of women in design histories and their marginalisation in design discourses.[94]

Clerke argues that there is a need for a radical shift towards "different kinds of feminist-informed writing…to productively disrupt and reconceptualize design scholarship", clarifying that "feminist writing is not a particular genre of writing; rather, it is writing that is informed by particular sets of questions (of gender and power) that must be remade for changing contexts and uncertain times."[95] Like Clerke, I am interested in interrupting and re-examining the gender and power dynamics within design.

Conducting design research from an explicitly feminist stance is significant, in part, because (as mentioned above by Clerke) there exists very little feminist writing within design literature. Historically marked by its absence of authoritative female voices,[96] visual design research shows a significant lack of women published within its academic journals.[97] It has been pointedly noted that "[f]eminist knowledge and scholarship have now had a strong presence in [humanities and social sciences] disciplines for more than 30 years, but their reach into other disciplines, such as science disciplines, and into professional practice fields"—such as design—"has been rather more limited."[98]

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[94] Bower, K., T. Clerke, and A. Lee. "Endangered practices: Writing feminist research." *Writing qualitative research on practice* (2009), 131.
[95] Ibid, 136.
[96] See Buckley, 1986; Baker, 1994; Gorman, 2001
[97] See Clerke, Teena. "Gender and discipline: publication practices in design." *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* 3, no. 1 (2010): 63-78.
[98] Bower, K., T. Clerke, and A. Lee. "Endangered practices: Writing feminist research." *Writing qualitative research on practice* (2009), 128-129.

This lack of feminist research is at odds with the value that this type of research might offer design. Design educator and historian Teal Triggs argues "graphic design has the greatest potential to effect change" towards a goal of feminism in the art and design world, and as a "political act" it is "[i]ntegral to the establishment of a contemporary visual culture."[99] Triggs also insists that:

> … [a] new canon of graphic design history must…provide a framework which recognizes the everyday in terms of objects and women's experiences; and constantly review the relationships and challenged positions of male-dominated culture, notions of female and male representation, and the established categories of culture.[100]

In recent years some of these ideas have started to take hold in the design profession. For example, the not-for-profit Women's Center for Creative Work (WCCW), founded in Los Angeles in 2013, works "to cultivate LA's feminist creative communities and practices,"[101] and in 2017 they published *A Feminist Organization's Handbook* as a toolkit to help other creative communities build their own feminist systems, models and spaces. There are also design studios in Sweden modelling their practices in gender theory, such as Feministiska,[102] which was founded in 2014 as "a cooperative of graphic designers, illustrators, art directors, programmers, project managers, and copywriters based on a set of feminist and intersectional principles that anchors every aspect of the design process."[103] Feministiska employs what are called norm-critical (or norm-

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[99]Carson, Fiona, and Claire Pajaczkowska. *Feminist visual culture*. Routledge, 2016, 164.
[100] Ibid, 164.
[101] "Mission & Core Values,", WCCW, accessed July 20, 2018, https://womenscenterforcreativework.com/mission.
[102] Morley, Madeleine. "Can a Design Process Rooted in Gender Theory Truly Work in Practice?" *AIGA Eye on Design*, June 7, 2018. https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/can-a-design-process-rooted-in-feminist-theory-truly-work-in-practice/
[103] Morley, Madeleine. "Can a Design Process Rooted in Gender Theory Truly Work in Practice?" *AIGA Eye on Design*, June 7, 2018. https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/can-a-design-process-rooted-in-feminist-theory-truly-work-in-practice/

creative) strategies, which can be defined as “a sub-field of critical design where the specific focus is on the relationship between design and social norms."[104] Critical design, as practiced by designers such as Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby,[105] is "a way to make users and designers reflect on their own practices and to ask which norms and values are reproduced in the design.”[106] Clearly, critical design theory (established in the early 2000s), and particularly the more recent arrival of norm-critical (or norm-creative) strategies established in the 2010s, show a rising interest in feminist (and intersectional feminist) practices within design. I suspect that these theories and practices are already changing feminist discourse in the design field.

Although feminist discourse within design functions as a “feminist satellite in a parallel universe to the dominant design discourses”,[107] there are a few design scholars who are engaging in feminist scholarship:

> Contemporary feminist design writers have taken up feminism in the context of design in two ways. Some have called for a re-examination of design from the viewpoint of women (Attfield & Kirkham, 1989; Hagmann, 2005; Lupton & Haycock Makela, 1994; Vlenne, 2001), whereas others have called for a re-examination of feminism in the context of design (Buckley, 1986; Gorman, 2001; Triggs, 2000).[108]

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[104] Jonsson, Fatima, and Sofia Lundmark. “An Interaction Approach for Norm-Critical Design Analysis of Interface Design,” in *CATaC 2014: Culture, Technology, Communication*, edited by Michele Strano (University of Oslo, 2014), 58.
[105] See Dunne, Anthony, and Fiona Raby. *Design noir: The secret life of electronic objects*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2001.
[106] Jonsson, Fatima, and Sofia Lundmark. “An Interaction Approach for Norm-Critical Design Analysis of Interface Design,” in *CATaC 2014: Culture, Technology, Communication*, edited by Michele Strano (University of Oslo, 2014), 56.
[107] Bower, K., T. Clerke, and A. Lee. "Endangered practices: Writing feminist research." *Writing qualitative research on practice* (2009), 133.
[108] Bower, K., T. Clerke, and A. Lee. "Endangered practices: Writing feminist research." *Writing qualitative research on practice* (2009): 133.

My research looks at both types of feminist scholarship cited above: re-considering design from women's viewpoints and questioning what a feminist approach to design might look like. The pursuit of feminist scholarship is critical to building equity for women in the design field. As emphatically stated by gender and design theorist Cheryl Buckley, "[w]ithout recourse to feminist theory to delineate the operation of patriarchy, and to feminist history to map out women's past, it is impossible to understand fully the way women interact with design."[109]

2.6 Summary

Combining a hermeneutic, embodied and performative approach into a feminist research strategy is perhaps not as difficult as first imagined. In the article "Feminism and hermeneutics," Warnke notes that "a hermeneutic feminism recognizes the interpretive status of our understanding of our norms and social practices, and it therefore encourages the open conversation in which we can develop ourselves and our traditions through our differences". Hermeneutic dialogue lends itself naturally to critical, feminist conversation. By prioritizing the stories and narratives of women, Warnke stresses that hermeneutic feminism "recognizes the partial and perspectival character of understanding and, hence, works to eliminate the constraints of repression and exclusion from the domain of interpretive debate."[110]

In addition to this natural fit of feminism into a hermeneutic framework, feminist theorists have also argued that Merleau-Ponty's ideas of embodiment are useful tools "to show how and why the gender, race, and ability of bodies are not innate or fixed features of those bodies" but rather are "dynamic phenomena that have the potential to overturn accepted notions of normalcy,

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[109] Buckley, Cheryl. "Made in patriarchy: Toward a feminist analysis of women and design." *Design Issues* (1986): 14.
[110] Warnke, Georgia. "Feminism and hermeneutics." *Hypatia* 8, no. 1 (1993): 97.

naturalness, and normativity."[111] Phenomenology expert Gail Weiss argues in her article "The normal, the natural, and the normative: A Merleau-Pontian legacy to feminist theory, critical race theory, and disability studies":

> ... taking seriously [Merleau-Ponty's] insistence that our bodies (rather than our consciousnesses) are the means by which we directly engage with the world, encourages us to be attentive to how an individual's or group's gender, race, and bodily abilities differentially affect how their bodies are responded to by other bodies, and in so doing, directly influences the meaning of their (inter)actions within that situation.[112]

Well-known American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler notes the usefulness of both Merleau-Ponty's ideas of embodiment, and performativity, for feminist work. She describes Merleau-Ponty as seeing the body as "a set of possibilities to be continually realized." Separately, Butler also speaks to the power of a performative approach by framing how embodiment can be used as a tool of transformation and change.[113]

I will be weaving the theoretical foundations discussed in this chapter—Gadamer and Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty's ideas of embodiment, and performance—into an integrated feminist approach for my design research. In the next chapter (*Chapter 3*) I discuss *how* I will be interlacing these theoretical foundations: that is, my research methods, materials and procedures.

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[111] Weiss, Gail. "The normal, the natural, and the normative: A Merleau-Pontian legacy to feminist theory, critical race theory, and disability studies." *Continental Philosophy Review* 48, no. 1 (2015): 78.
[112] Ibid, 78.
[113] Butler, Judith. "Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory." *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519-531.

3 Research Methods, Materials & Procedures

As described in detail in *Chapter 2*, the methodological framework that I have chosen for this research project is hermeneutic, embodied and feminist. In brief, this means that I am approaching my design research from a reality that sees knowledge as being interpretive; that acknowledges the physical nature of perception and interpretation; and, which takes a critical feminist standpoint to question the status-quo.

The research methods—"the specific tools used to collect and analyze data for a particular study"[114]—chosen for this research study include personally engaging in and documenting three types of hermeneutic dialogue: between myself and existing literature; between myself and six industry professionals, experts and academics; and between my present and past selves through the filming and animation of written, oral, image-based, and performative texts. All three types of dialogue occurred simultaneously and informed each other: my literature review and expert interviews were used to inform my self-dialogue and guide the narrative I was building within my iterative design artifact (video-recorded and animated documentary shorts), and vice-versa. All of these dialogues centered around the overarching research question *how can I disrupt current narratives of women in design?* The goal of this project was to explore the efficacy of applying various types of hermeneutic dialogue to disrupting and transforming my own design practice over a period of 9 months.

In this chapter, I detail how hermeneutic dialogue was used within this research project, how participants were chosen for the semi-structured

[114] Patterson, Michael E., and Daniel R. Williams. "Collecting and analyzing qualitative data: Hermeneutic principles, methods and case examples." *Advances in Tourism Applications Series, Volume 9. Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing, Inc.* (2002), 37.

interviews, how these interviews were conducted, and finally how my self-dialogue was created and documented via the creation of a film.

3.1 Research design: A hermeneutic approach

This research project engaged various types of hermeneutic dialogue. As noted in *Chapter 2*, "[t]he hermeneutical task becomes of itself a questioning of things"[115] and "implies the primacy of dialogue and the structure of question and answer"[116]. The hermeneutic cycle or circle is the most commonly used metaphor to describe a hermeneutic process. Its starting point is our prejudice, the "fore-meanings" with which we approach every situation: in other words, our own bias[117]. Through a sincere back-and-forth dialogue, understanding (the goal of the hermeneutic cycle) occurs at the "fusion of horizons", between the horizon of the historical "tradition from which we came" and the horizon of the present which "is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices"[118]. The hermeneutic spiral, as described by design researcher Marcus Jahnke, provides the most accurate metaphor for how my research approaches hermeneutic dialogue, since the hermeneutic spiral incorporates not only the elements of the hermeneutic circle but also what philosopher Ricoeur calls "critical distancing", achieved through the interlacing of interpretation (describing the nature of reality) with reflection (a focus on the nature of knowledge)[119]. Jahnke also describes "throwness" (seeing humans, and design, as being thrown into existence, thrown into the world), poetic redescription (such as the use of metaphor) and

[115] Gadamer, Hans-Georg, Joel Weinsheimer, and Donald G. Marshall. *EPZ truth and method*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2004, 281.
[116] Ibid, 378.
[117] Ibid, 282.
[118] Ibid, 317.
[119] Jahnke, Marcus. "Revisiting design as a hermeneutic practice: An investigation of Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics." *Design Issues* 28, no. 2 (2012): 34.

exposure to new texts (defined here broadly as written, verbal or pictorial texts), as particularly useful tools for design practice, encouraging an expansion of the world of the designer (a process of learning) and, therefore, the possibility of new interpretations[120].

In summary, the hermeneutic approach of this research focuses on the use of back-and-forth dialogue to expand the world of the designer, gain understanding, and reveal new interpretations. These dialogues begin with an acknowledgment of bias and prejudice, and use interpretation and reflection (incorporating the idea of "throwness", poetic redescription, and exposure to new texts) to expand the horizon of understanding.

3.2 Semi-structured interviews

I engaged in semi-structured interviews with six professionals and experts from around the world who are working in fields relevant to my research: designers, design researchers, design instructors, and design professors. All interviews followed an open-ended hermeneutic format, with the goal of having meaningful, in-depth conversations with experts who could converse "richly, thoroughly, deeply"[121] on the topics of hermeneutics and embodiment within design, and the history, experiences and treatment of women within design. Because it was important to demonstrate that the participants I interviewed could lend authority and expertise to the discussion, all participants freely agreed to allow their name, position and associated institution (if applicable) to be publicly identified with their interview responses.

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[120] Jahnke, Marcus. "Revisiting design as a hermeneutic practice: An investigation of Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics." *Design Issues* 28, no. 2 (2012): 35.

[121] Patterson, Michael E., and Daniel R. Williams. "Collecting and analyzing qualitative data: Hermeneutic principles, methods and case examples." *Advances in Tourism Applications Series, Volume 9. Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing, Inc.* (2002), 40.

Study Procedures

Each interview followed a hermeneutic format aimed to achieve understanding by describing and interpreting lived experience through a sustained back-and-forth dialogue, emphasizing the ways in which the individual (the self) is inherently situated in and affecting the process. Participants engaged with me in a hermeneutic dialogue focused on the themes of my research thesis, specifically where the former overlapped into their particular area of expertise. Interviews followed a guiding script with five to six lead-in questions, but otherwise the goal was to have an "emergent" conversation that followed an open-ended format. The questions focused around the participants' area(s) of expertise and followed the natural flow of the conversation. Interviews varied in length from 60 minutes to 110 minutes.

When possible, interviews were conducted in-person in a quiet room where interruptions would be minimal (the participant's private office or my studio). Three interviews were conducted in-person: two in Edmonton, and one in Austin, Texas. Because of the disparate locations of the participants, two of the interviews were conducted via *Skype*, and one interview via *Source-Connect Now*. All interviews were conducted one-on-one.

The audio recordings from each interview were uploaded to an encrypted and password-protected online folder where each participant could access the audio from their interview to review and approve. Later, I transcribed the portions of each interview which felt relevant to this research project. Meaningful sections were indexed and marked from each interview and then further analyzed to reveal interrelationships and themes. Audio clips from all interviews were integrated into my design artifact (documentary video shorts).

Procedures for reviewing and responding to interview data included uploading the raw data (audio recording) from each interview into a secure, encrypted digital storage folder within 2 weeks after each interview date and emailing each participant a private link. Participants had the ability to change or withdraw their interview data, via an ongoing back-and-forth dialogue with

me, for the 6 weeks following their receipt of the raw data (i.e. from the day they were emailed the link to their interview audio). Participants were invited to engage in follow-up conversations via email.

Participants

In total, I interviewed six professionals and experts (four women, two men), with varied, but overlapping areas of interest. Below I have listed the interviewees in the order that they were interviewed, with a brief biography outlining their areas of expertise.

Robyn Stuart (Edmonton, Canada)
Partner at Cut + Paste Design Studio

Edmonton-based visual designer and studio owner Robyn Stuart has been a practicing designer for 25 years, and co-running design studio Cut + Paste for almost 10 years. Stuart was an appropriate candidate for this research because of her long history and experience—spanning more than two decades—working as a woman in the design industry in a variety of environments, from in-house designer, to agency art director, to freelancer, to studio owner.

Natasia Martin (Edmonton, Canada)
Graphic and Website Designer (Natasia Designs)

The second interview I conducted was with Edmonton-based visual designer and instructor Natasia Martin. Martin graduated with a Bachelor of Design from the University of Alberta in 2009 and now works full-time as a freelance graphic designer in Edmonton. She is an active board member for the Graphic Designers of Canada (GDC)[122], and a former design

[122] The GDC is "GDC is Canada's national association for design professionals. Supporting and advancing the design profession through advocacy, education, community building, and CGD™ certification." Homepage, GDC, accessed August 11, 2018, https://gdc.design.

instructor at MacEwan University. Martin provides an interesting perspective as a younger female designer, who (with just under 10 years of experience) entered the design industry just a few years behind me and, like myself, has recently straddled the two (often disparate) worlds of the professional design industry and design within academia.

Dr. Marcus Jahnke (Gothenburg, Sweden)
Research Institutes of Sweden,
Groupe Manager RISE City Development

My third interview was with Swedish researcher Dr. Marcus Jahnke. Jahnke completed his PhD in 2013 at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. His research looked at how a hermeneutic perspective can contribute to innovation within design practice. Prior to that, his master's project looked at consumer research and the expression of gender in design objects. Now Dr. Jahnke works at the Research Institutes of Sweden in their RISE Built Environment, which focuses on innovation within sustainable urban development. My discovery of Jahnke's 2012 *Design Issues* article "Revisiting design as a hermeneutic practice: An investigation of Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics"[123] prompted me to look at hermeneutics as a methodology for design research, and I was eager to have a conversation with him on his work.

Dr. Richard Coyne (Edinburgh, Scotland)
Professor of Architectural Computing
Edinburgh College of Art: The University of Edinburgh

My next interview was with Dr. Richard Coyne, who is Professor of Architectural Computing in the Edinburgh College of Art at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Coyne, and his colleague Dr. Adrian Snodgrass,

[123] Jahnke, Marcus. "Revisiting design as a hermeneutic practice: An investigation of Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics." *Design Issues* 28, no. 2 (2012): 30-40.

first came to my attention via Jahnke's 2012 *Design Issues* article. It could be argued that Snodgrass and Coyne are the most prominent writers on hermeneutics within the design field. Coyne has published many articles and several books which address this topic including *Designing Information Technology in the Postmodern Age: From Method to Metaphor* (1995), *Interpretation in Architecture: Design as a Way of Thinking* (Snodgrass & Coyne, 2006), and *Derrida for Architects* (2011).

Dr. Carma Gorman (Austin, Texas)
Associate Professor
School of Design and Creative Technologies
College of Fine Arts: The University of Texas at Austin

My fifth interview was in Austin, Texas with Associate Professor Dr. Carma Gorman, who works in the School of Design and Creative Technologies in the College of Fine Arts at the University of Texas at Austin. I became interested in Dr. Gorman after coming across several of her articles, including "Reshaping and rethinking: Recent feminist scholarship on design and designers" (2001)[124] and "Educating the eye: Body mechanics and streamlining in the United States, 1925–1950" (2006).[125] Dr. Gorman's writing on feminist scholarship within design was as insightful as it was rare, and I found her writing and research, which questioned how design evolves, to be fascinating. She also serves as associate editor of the journal *Design and Culture*.

[124] Gorman, Carma R. "Reshaping and rethinking: Recent feminist scholarship on design and designers." *Design Issues*17, no. 4 (2001): 72-88.
[125] Gorman, Carma R. "Educating the eye: Body mechanics and streamlining in the United States, 1925-1950." *American Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (2006): 839-868.

Dr. Teena Clerke (Sydney, Australia)
Research Assistant and Lecturer
University of Technology Sydney
University of New South Wales Art and Design

The final interview I conducted was with Dr. Teena Clerke, who is a Research Assistant and Instructor at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia. I found Dr. Clerke, like Dr. Gorman, to be a rare academic voice in that she approached her work from an explicitly feminist stance. Her 2012 Doctoral thesis looks at women's participation within visual communication design scholarship[126] and her article "Gender and discipline: publication practices in design"[127] revealed significant gender gaps within two influential design research journals.

3.3 Performative self-dialogue through animated and video shorts

The design artifact created through this thesis is a series of animated and video-recorded documentary shorts. The medium of video was chosen (as described in *section 2.4: Performance as a tool for design research*) for its ability to document my embodiment and performative self-dialogue. Video also provides a necessary distancing for building a critical hermeneutic self-dialogue. These videos both document the exploratory and iterative process of my research, and also function as communication pieces for other designers and researchers to engage with my work.

Each short ranges from 3 to 6 minutes in length; there are 13 shorts or "chapters" in total, for a total of 40 minutes of footage. Together, these shorts document my initial interpretations, and how these interpretations evolved as

[126] Clerke, C. "Women writing design scholarship: reconfiguring academic work in design." PhD diss., University of Technology, Sydney, 2012.
[127] Clerke, Teena. "Gender and discipline: publication practices in design." *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* 3, no. 1 (2010): 63-78.

my “horizon of understanding” grew through the various dialogues I engaged in over the 9-month research period. Each short or chapter introduces a separate element of my research, progressively building a narration of my research experience, as I engaged in a literature review, six semi-structured interviews, and an embodied dialogue with myself. Employing Merleau-Ponty's ideas of embodied knowledge, I used performative methods as a way of connecting my physical body with my cognitive knowledge. This included short performances and poses using (for example) gesture, body language, props, costumes, personas, choreography, improvisation, speaking, dance movement and performative design actions (such as recording myself as I designed and illustrated on the computer).

These performances were then reflected upon, critiqued, and responded to (fed by the various hermeneutic dialogues of my research) through editing, collaging, and by layering audio, imagery and text on top of the original footage, including time-lapse videos recording the movements of my hand as I illustrated and hand-wrote text. Together, these documentary videos showcase a case study of my dialogue and transformation as I explored the research question, *how can I disrupt current narratives of women in design?*

To minimize distracting elements, and for practical spacing and budget constraints, all performances for the videos were recorded in the University of Alberta’s Visual Communication Design photography studio. I strove to maintain a relatively consistent set-up (i.e. similar backdrops and lighting, camera set at the same height and distance, etc.). Altogether I filmed over 60 short segments in the studio. I also created over 100 time-lapse screen recordings of animated illustration and design work, all created by hand, documenting the process as it unfolded on my computer screen. These time-lapse segments were then sped-up to between 200 to 10,000 percent the original speed (in other words, a 30-minute drawing would become a 30-second or 10-second animation). Working in Adobe Premiere Pro (video

editing software) I cut, edited and layered the videos, time-lapse animations, imagery, audio and texts together into a series of video shorts.

There are 13 chapters, or shorts, total. The first four chapters set the stage by introducing my research and providing background information about myself and this project's research methodology and methods. Chapter 1 (*Introduction*) provides an overview of my research project, background information about myself, and outlines the documentary's content. I define hermeneutics in Chapter 2 (*Hermeneutics*) and the primary role of dialogue as a research method in Chapter 3 (*Dialogue*), defending this research approach in Chapter 4 (*A Critique of Numbers).*

Then, Chapters 5 through 10 explore my research question, as I ask how I might disrupt currently existing narratives about women in design. I discuss how designers fit within culture in Chapter 5 (*Being in the World*), and introduce Merleau-Ponty's concept of embodiment in Chapter 6 (*The Body*). Chapter 7 (*Visual Tastes*) looks at visual taste and Chapter 8 explores how visual tastes change or might be changed (*Changing Tastes*). In Chapter 9 (*Feminism*) I take a critical look at women's presence in the design field. Chapter 10 (*Stereotypes*) includes a critical dialogue about *how* women are represented in design work. Chapter 11 (*Findings*) presents the four major themes that emerged from my research. In Chapter 12 (*Conclusion*) I provide a summary of my research and discuss three strategies for understanding and disrupting visual design practice. Finally, in Chapter 13 (*The Future*) I outline some possible areas of future research.

These animated and filmed shorts function as both a documentation of this iterative research and as a multimedia communication tool. Making what is normally hidden visible, this design piece displays an evolving self-portrait of my process applying a hermeneutic, embodied methodology to my own design practice. It is also functions as a communication tool to show how hermeneutics, embodiment and a feminist framework can be used to inspire dialogue and challenge paradigms. These videos were projected as an

installation for my thesis exhibit, as well as uploaded to a website (https://sarahjacksonmdes.com/) as a way to document and archive the material. It is worth noting that, although this project has a necessary end point (my thesis exhibit and defence), in theory this would be an iterative process without a final "solution", since participants in dialogue are continually evolving and changing.

3.4 Hermeneutic methods for analyzing data

Researchers from fields as diverse as health care, agriculture and environment, human resources and education have suggested different ways to conduct and effectively analyze qualitative hermeneutic research[128]. Although there are some who suggest a more structured analysis of the data with systematic steps[129], I found that the data analysis suggested by Laverty[130] and Kafle[131] felt the most in-line with both the ontology of hermeneutics (that is, its view of reality) and this particular research project.

Kafle (2011) emphasizes that most hermeneutic research "avoids method for method's sake and does not have a step-by-step method or analytic requirements" and that "there is no prescription about the unanimous methodological sets of doing a hermeneutic phenomenological research"[132]. Laverty sees the analysis of hermeneutic data as being built-in to the data collection methodology, since the ongoing dialogue of the hermeneutic circle is what brings the researcher to a clearer sense of understanding. The goal of

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[128] Kafle, 2011; Laverty, 2003; Groenwald, 2004; Sharkey, 2001; Guba & Lincoln, 1989 to name just a few.

[129] Groenwald, 2004; Aspers, 2004

[130] Laverty, Susann M. "Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations." *International journal of qualitative methods* 2, no. 3 (2003): 21-35.

[131] Kafle, Narayan Prasad. "Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified." *Bodhi: An interdisciplinary journal*5, no. 1 (2011): 181-200.

[132] Ibid, 194.

hermeneutic research is not to come to one final truth, but rather to explore multiple interpretations, and through the hermeneutic circle (reading, reflective writing and interpretation) come to a place of deeper understanding. As Laverty notes, "[t]he researcher and participant [work] together to bring life to the experience being explored, through the use of imagination, the hermeneutic circle and attention to language and writing"[133].

Unlike a Cartesian dualistic approach (which separates mind from matter and researcher from subject) hermeneutic researchers tend to agree that "the biases and assumptions of the researcher…are embedded and essential to the interpretive process"[134]. As Laverty notes, the "researcher is called, on an ongoing basis, to give considerable thought to their own experience and to explicitly claim the ways in which their position or experience relates to the issues being researched"[135].

Participants too are seen as being embedded co-creators in a hermeneutic research project. For example, the selection criteria for participants as listed by Laverty includes choosing participants based on their personal experience and knowledge of the study's subject matter, their willingness to talk about the former, and that, overall, participants should show a diversity of different perspectives and experiences[136]. Laverty also observes that a successful hermeneutic interview leans on the researcher/interviewer to create "an environment of safety and trust, that needs to be established at the outset and maintained throughout the project". Laverty advises that the interviewer

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[133] Laverty, Susann M. "Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations." *International journal of qualitative methods* 2, no. 3 (2003): 30.
[134] Ibid, 28.
[135] Ibid, 28.
[136] Ibid, 29, citing Polkinghorne, 1989 and van Manen, 1997.

should ask open-ended questions "with follow up discussion led not so much by the researcher, but by the participant"[137].

In terms of analysis, Kafle recommends "a dynamic interplay among six research activities: commitment to an abiding concern, oriented stance toward the question, investigating the experience as it is lived, describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting, and consideration of parts and whole"[138]. Kafle adds that hermeneutic phenomenon is "best understood through stories we tell of that experience"[139].

The data analysis method that I used for this research project followed Laverty's straightforward suggestion that, primarily, successful hermeneutic research should explore multiple interpretations and, through use of the hermeneutic circle (reading, reflective writing and interpretation), come to a place of deeper understanding. For the purpose of this research, the "reading of texts" includes interview conversations, performative self-dialogue, and the actual reading of texts within my literature review. These are the first criteria that I judged my data against.

Secondly, I measured the data against Kafle's recommended research activities[140], which are as follows:

- "commitment to an abiding concern": did my research stay focused on and true to my research question?;
- "oriented stance toward the question": was I transparent and self-aware of my own bias and prejudice within the research?;
- "investigating the experience as it is lived": did I acknowledge the situatedness of my own interpretations within a culture and a body?;

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[137] Laverty, Susann M. "Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations." *International journal of qualitative methods* 2, no. 3 (2003): 29.

[138] Kafle, Narayan Prasad. "Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified." *Bodhi: An interdisciplinary journal*5, no. 1 (2011): 191.

[139] Ibid, 191, citing Langdridge 2007.

[140] Ibid, 191.

- "describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting": did I work to describe the phenomenon of my research question by writing and rewriting the narratives and content of my design artifact video, through editing, layering, re-drawing and re-building continually throughout the process?; and finally,
- "consideration of parts and whole": did I consciously look at the small and specific, as well as the broad, big-picture of my research question?

Finally, I analyzed the data by how successfully they tell the story of my experience, addressing Kafle's note that hermeneutic phenomenon is "best understood through stories we tell of that experience"[141].

3.5 Summary

As described, the hermeneutic, embodied and feminist methodological framework that I have chosen for this research employs three types of hermeneutic dialogue as research methods over a period of 9 months, which occurred simultaneously and informed each other: dialogues between myself and existing literature; dialogues between myself and six industry professionals, experts and academics from around the world via semi-structured interviews; and dialogues between my present and past selves through the process of creating 13 animated and video-recorded documentary shorts, which form the design artifact of this thesis project.

These dialogues begin with an acknowledgment of bias and prejudice, and use interpretation and reflection (incorporating the ideas of "throwness", poetic redescription, and exposure to new texts) to expand the horizon of understanding. Through these various dialogues, interrelationships and themes were revealed and then integrated into the design artifact. This artifact (the video shorts) document my interpretations of the various dialogues in

[141] Kafle, Narayan Prasad. "Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified." *Bodhi: An interdisciplinary journal*5, no. 1 (2011): 191, citing Langdridge, 2007.

which I engaged and also function as a multimedia communication tool combining design, illustration, animation, video, and photography. The hermeneutic data analysis is, in part, built-in to the data collection methodology through use of the hermeneutic circle. I also utilized Kafle's six terms of analysis, which include "commitment to an abiding concern, oriented stance toward the question, investigating the experience as it is lived, describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting, and consideration of parts and whole."[142]

Before concluding this section about hermeneutic data analysis, it is worth mentioning that the goal of this research project is not the discovery of a single truth or final answer to the research question. I do not seek to prove anything with finality or delineate a specific series of steps for other designers to follow. That is beyond the scope of this project, and beyond the scope of what would make sense in a hermeneutic methodology, given the interpretive and situated nature of knowledge.

In *Chapter 4: Findings* I explore the key themes that were revealed through this research and analysis process.

[142] Kafle, Narayan Prasad. "Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified." *Bodhi: An interdisciplinary journal*5, no. 1 (2011): 191.

4 Findings

In this chapter I present the themes identified throughout this project. To reiterate, this project explores the potential of a hermeneutic, embodied methodology as a tool for both understanding the experience of designing and changing design practice. Specifically, I explore the research question, *how can I disrupt current narratives of women in design?* Using my own practice as a case study, I build a self-portrait of my understanding (and transformation) around this question by engaging in a dialogue with hermeneutic, feminist and design literature, interviewing six professionals and experts, and by engaging in a dialogue with myself through the creation of documentary short videos, which employed performative and embodied methods.

Identifying Themes

Four interesting and relevant themes were revealed:

1. the being-in-the-world of the designer, and the impossibility of stepping outside of our experiences;
2. the critical embodiment of the designer;
3. the complex and somewhat unknowable nature of how visual style and preferences develop; and
4. an acknowledgement of a lack of feminist narratives, influencers and writing within design.

In the following section I will discuss each theme individually.

4.1 Being-in-the-world

Theme 1: The being-in-the-world of the designer, and the impossibility of stepping outside of our experiences.

Designers are inescapably situated within culture. What inspires design, as designer Robyn Stuart[143] notes during our interview, are "non-design things": the cultural and visual norms that surround designers. This means that designers are never working in isolation, but are instead influenced by the communities and culture around them. In the following paragraphs I argue that my research shows how designers are influenced by the world in at least two ways: by their clients (or whoever holds the lion's share of power in any specific design interaction), and through their personal lives.

One of the primary ways in which designers are affected by the world is through the influence of their clients, or whoever holds the final decision-making power in a design interaction. In other words, the person paying the designer's invoices or salary often has the power to direct a design's content, form, materials, placement, and target audience. Stuart highlights this point during our conversation, saying that, besides personal experience, "there's what influences you in your day-to-day work which is – money! Money and clients and their points of view, that's what influences you, because it is their story that you're telling in your commercial work". Stuart goes on to state, "I'm a commercial graphic designer. And I'm not going to pretend that I'm calling the shots there. I'm working with my clients' sets of problems, goals, and that kind of thing, and I try not to insert myself into that, because that's not what the job is". Swedish design researcher Dr. Marcus Jahnke[144] makes a similar statement about placing the client at the center of a design project:

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[143] Robyn Stuart, a Canadian designer and design studio owner with more than 25 years experience. In-person audio recorded interview, February 3, 2018. Unless otherwise referenced, all Robyn Stuart's quotes come from this interview.

[144] Dr. Marcus Jahnke, a Swedish design researcher currently working at the Research Institutes of Sweden. Audio recorded phone interview, March 5, 2018. Unless otherwise referenced, all Dr. Marcus Jahnke's quotes come from this interview.

> Of course the solution or whatever is produced must relate to the producer or to the company, it must make sense in relation to what the company produces. I mean, that's really important and maybe that's why people try to avoid the personal quite a lot, because it IS about the company, it IS about the user. There has to be a logic, there has to be meaning.

The client is not the only worldly influence on a designer's work. Jahnke goes on to emphasize the influence of a designer's personal tastes on their design work, insisting that different designers working for the same client—even assuming they were attempting to keep the client's needs front and center—would each come up with a different answer. Jahnke notes that "the difference in what comes up could be because the different designers have different pre-understandings and different backgrounds and different assets to draw from when interpreting what the company needs".

Examples of this can be seen in the methods chosen for this very research project. Certainly, it seems that my own experiences as a performing artist and dancer brought me to be interested in integrating performativity into my thesis work. Similarly, my skill as an illustrator most likely influenced me to consider the use of hand-drawn time-lapse animations. My experiences as both a woman and a designer led me to approach my research from a feminist standpoint. Even the combination of these three things—my experiences as a performer, illustrator and woman—created the unique perspective through which I am conducting my design research and building my thesis artifact (the animated, video-recorded documentary shorts).

A traditional scientific approach may see the strong influence of my personal experience on my research as being problematic. However, a hermeneutic methodology would see these personal "prejudices" as being essential. Jahnke describes the influence of personal experience as being critical: following a hermeneutic outlook, the designer's understanding of the world around them is an asset and a necessary requirement for design projects. As discussed in *section 2.2* of this document, prejudice (or preconception) is a

necessary starting point for interpretation, and from a hermeneutic standpoint, "situatedness is in no way an obstacle to manifesting meaning in a new work; in fact, quite the opposite, it is a prerequisite"[145]. Dr. Richard Coyne[146] reiterates this point during our interview, observing that despite our best intentions, we can never escape our personal opinions or prejudices, that "[w]e are complicit in understanding the world and there's no breaking out of that". He says:

> [T]he best you can do is confront them with another set of prejudices. Not so much for understanding it… but open to its transformation" and that furthermore, this willingness to confront our existing prejudices and transform them "is how bad prejudice is dissipated.

During our conversation, Stuart also acknowledges the influence of "your own personal experience" on client work. She explains that "[y]our own aesthetic style, I definitely think it's something that you build up over time and that you can't *help* but have that come through in your work. And maybe that's why people are coming to you as well, because they see what you do and want that for themselves in some way, shape or form." An example of this is provided by designer Natasia Martin[147], who mentions during our conversation that her personal distaste for discussing polarizing topics, such as politics, also leads her to avoid those types of projects in her freelance design work.

To conclude, my research revealed that the situatedness-in-the-world of the designer can be observed in both the influence of the designer's personal experiences, tastes and prejudices on their work, and the influence of their

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[145] Jahnke, Marcus. Meaning in the Making: Introducing a hermeneutic perspective on the contribution of design practice to innovation (PhD diss., University of Gothenburg, 2013), 100.
[146] Dr. Richard Coyne, Professor of Architectural Computing in the Edinburgh College of Art at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Audio recorded phone interview, March 15, 2018. Unless otherwise referenced, all Dr. Richard Coyne's quotes come from this interview.
[147] Natasia Martin, a Canadian freelance designer with almost 10 years experience, and a former design instructor at MacEwan University. In-person audio recorded interview, March 3, 2018. Unless otherwise referenced, all Natasia Martin's quotes come from this interview.

clients' experiences, tastes and prejudices. Although designers often attempt to set-aside the personal (at least when creating commercial design work), these firsthand experiences are a necessary prerequisite for understanding and engaging with the world. Furthermore, our personal opinions and prejudices are impossible to escape. In other words, designers are inescapably situated within the world, influenced by the culture around them and by their firsthand experiences.

4.2 Critical embodiment

Theme 2: The critical embodiment of the designer.

Designers are not floating brains. We are not only inescapably situated within culture, we are inescapably situated within a physical body. These are the ideas presented by philosopher Merleau-Ponty, as discussed in *Chapter 2* of this document. To briefly reiterate, Merleau-Ponty sees that "dialog is not simply a cerebral process or an abstract 'meeting of minds', but rather involves a concrete existential and bodily engagement among participants"[148].

The most tangible example of this embodiment from my research interviews come from the physical referencing, gestures and non-verbal language that took place during the three in-person interviews (with Robyn Stuart, Natasia Martin, and Dr. Carma Gorman[149]). Two interviewees (Stuart and Gorman) pulled out a piece of paper during their interviews to draw something as a means of clarifying a point. Something as simple as an unexpected sneeze (as occurred in my conversation with Martin) resulted in abrupt laughter, and a change in the mood and tone of the dialogue. This temporary interruption also changed the initial direction of the conversation—

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[148] Dallmayr, Fred. "Hermeneutics and inter-cultural dialog: linking theory and practice." *Ethics & Global Politics* 2, no. 1 (2009): 35.

[149] Dr. Carma Gorman, Associate Professor in the Department of Art and Art History in the College of Fine Arts and the University of Texas at Austin. In-person audio recorded interview, April 30, 2018. Unless otherwise referenced, all Dr. Carma Gorman's quotes come from this interview.

perhaps providing an extra moment for a thought to form, or a slight shift in perspective—causing it to flow along a slightly different route.

As Stuart mentioned in our interview, the designer's body affects our design work by what we expose ourselves to, what chance puts in front of us, and how we're feeling, to name just a few. "I think that the body that I occupy is me in everything I do", Stuart observes. One example of this type of embodiment, which came up in both my interviews with Stuart and Martin, is the physical effect of stress on a designer's work. Martin notes that stress has a serious impact on her ability to be creative and develop ideas, making her "not as efficient" and "not in the right headspace to be creative." Stuart describes how important regular exercise is for managing her design studio:

> running a business, it's a stressful thing. It's kind of like you don't really think about it, but you're putting yourself out there. You're vulnerable, and when you have employees and stuff like that you need to sort of find a way to keep yourself level. And so that's what I'm using [exercise] for.

Dr. Teena Clerke[150] also references her health as influencing her practice, referencing her age and her fight against cancer as critical factors.

Another simple example of embodiment came up during my conversation with Martin when she asked me if I was "a lefty or a righty?" (it turns out we are both left-handed). She went on to explain how difficult she found calligraphy as a left-handed person since "the way a brush works and the way your hand goes, your thicks and thins are different". She also pointed out that the way she physically grips her drawing tool affects how her illustration and design work looks: "my style will never be super gestural because I hold my hand really close, and my pencil really tight".

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[150] Dr. Teena Clerke, Research Assistant and Lecturer at the University of Technology Sydney and University of New South Wales Art and Design. Audio recorded interview, May 14, 2018. Unless otherwise referenced, all Dr. Teena Clerke's quotes come from this interview.

The primacy of embodiment also arose as I engaged my own body in a performative self-dialogue as part of this research project. Even though I am a performing artist in other spaces (as a dancer and burlesque performer), putting my physical body front-and-center within a design context felt strange and uncomfortable. As a designer, although my work is highly visible (as I describe in *Chapter 1*, the "wallpaper of the world"), my body is invisible, not often represented in my work. The designer is generally behind the camera or the computer, creating design pieces in privacy before sending them out for public consumption. Most designers live in relative obscurity except for a select few celebrity icons[151]. If a designer was standing next to a piece of commercial work, that they had designed, almost certainly no one on the street would be able to put the two together or make the connection. With this in mind, placing myself (literally) in front of the camera for a design project made me feel uniquely *exposed*. The experience forced me to associate myself—my body—with my design work.

For example, at one point in the creation of this research project's documentary shorts I wanted to show visually that women historically were thought of as consumables (that could be purchased and owned). Designing *myself* into the piece as a consumable (filming myself holding pieces of fruit in front of my body, and then layering price tags on top in post) gave me an *embodied* sense of this knowledge, a tangible understanding that I am not sure I would have been able to access or experience otherwise. This new, tangible knowledge changed how I interpreted *woman as consumable* and led me to think about how women present themselves physically to appear more desirable, inspiring the video shorts that I recorded next (*"Stand like a man"* vs. *"Stand like a woman*"). This example could also be extrapolated to show how utilizing embodiment can be consequential and influential within visual

[151] For example, the only two designers whose faces I can picture in my mind's eye are New York-based designers Stefan Sagmeister (who has won several Grammy Awards and maintains a list of high profile clients) and Michael Bierut (a partner at the well-known design firm Pentagram).

design practice to gain a deeper understanding on a variety of issues. In this case, foregrounding the designer's body (embodiment) brings the work into the realm of critical design, as discussed in *section 2.5* of this document, and functions as "a way to make users and designers reflect on their own practices and to ask which norms and values are reproduced in the design"[152].

The body historically has rarely been looked at within design research, but this is starting to change. During our conversation, Coyne notes:

> never has there been such an interest in notions of the body and embodiment than thanks to, during, or in parallel to the computer. Because the computer, in a way, is so disembodied and it becomes apparent that we're missing something with that.

As a self-professed technophile, Coyne does not see technology as being "inauthentic" but rather sees it as "a reconfiguration of social interactions", and prompts the question, "how do we [build] interfaces that might actually involve the body?" He illustrates this point by pointing to Merleau-Ponty's iconic examples of the extended body—"a blind person with a walking stick and that's an extension of their body as they tap it around, and the woman who has to duck under a door because of the big feather in her hat"—and that the "extended body" could be applied to "the boundaries of your car", or architecture, or (presumably) the various technologies (such as cell phones and smart watches) which are now often connected to our bodies.

Connecting the body to design practice also speaks to the type of work that designers do, which is cultural and place-specific rather than abstract, vague or formula-based. Coyne suggests that rather than ignoring or discarding our embodiment, we need to cultivate a relationship with the world we are embedded within instead of attempting to approach it at arm's length:

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[152] Jonsson, Fatima, and Sofia Lundmark. "An Interaction Approach for Norm-Critical Design Analysis of Interface Design," in *CATaC 2014: Culture, Technology, Communication*, edited by Michele Strano (University of Oslo, 2014), 56.

> Rather than look at things dispassionately and try and understand them through mathematics and logic and computer code, we understand things by virtue of our being in the world, so we need to take account of our bodies and our embodiment, and encourage engagement in our design work with the world rather than separation.

Jahnke asserts a similar perspective during our interview: "But in design it's rarely about natural science phenomena. It's almost always about things that are about norms, preferences, senses, all the things that are part of culture."

Designers engage with the world in concrete, bodily ways: from the non-verbal language of physical gestures, to the tools we hold in our hands, to our bodily experiences (such as stress, the endorphins of exercise, and connecting our physical experiences to the concepts we are looking at within our design practices). As Coyne points out, "the body is permeating all these environments, and [the body] has a fluid boundary depending on circumstance".

4.3 The unknowable nature of visual style

Theme 3: The complex and somewhat unknowable nature of how visual style and preferences develop.

Designers are said, as author Guy Julier notes, to be "taste-creators", with taste being defined here as an "individual preference" or a "manner or aesthetic quality indicative" of a "critical judgment, discernment, or appreciation"[153]. Despite Guy Julier's claim that designers are "taste-creators", what I will be arguing in this section is that my research seems to show that designers are not proficient at articulating or understanding why they make aesthetic and stylistic choices within their work, and that furthermore, completely unpacking the ways that designers' tastes develop may not be possible. However, these

[153] "Taste (noun)", Merriam-Webster, accessed July 17, 2018, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/taste.

conversations also suggest that there is still value in asking how aesthetic tastes (and therefore styles) might be changed.

As Jahnke points out during our interview, at the beginning of his PhD research work, he found it difficult to express to the companies participating in his study exactly *what* designers are doing when they design: "I was looking for ways to articulate what that was, what [the designers] were doing, but I lacked the vocabulary, the concepts, the words, to talk about it. I could tell stories about what was going on, but I couldn't say, what *is* that? What *are* they doing?".

Part of what designers are doing when they design is a process of decision-making about what to include and how the content should look: curation and aesthetics. Particularly when it comes to designers' tastes, it becomes difficult to state exactly how they form, although clearly designers approach their work with individual preferences and from a certain critical appreciation. Stuart points out matter-of-factly that "we all have tastes" and that you as a designer are "bringing in your own values, your own aesthetic, and your own experience" to your design work. Stuart emphasizes that style is "something that you build up over time and that you can't *help* but have that come through in your work."

But how exactly do designers build up their tastes? During my conversation with Martin she points to one possible answer, which is that tastes may form in part because of what designers surround themselves with. She describes how, as a designer, "you're just constantly surrounding yourself with things that you like, or styles that you like, or things that you're drawn to." Jahnke also describes a similar process, saying that designers "often collect things and surround themselves with things that matter to them."

However, the idea that designers' tastes grow out of what they surround themselves with provides only a mid-level answer. How did they come to like or appreciate those styles in the first place? Martin suggests that, to some extent, taste might grow out of the designer's personality. She says, "my

illustration style is usually really playful and happy…I think it's just because [of] who I am as a person … and I think my [design] style kind of reflects that."

In addition, both Stuart and Martin list their design education as influencing factors on their aesthetic preferences. For example, Martin notes that "I feel like I learned all of [the design principles] in school", and Stuart lists her art teacher in junior high as perhaps being responsible for first piquing her interest in minimalist design ("back to my art teacher in junior high, I feel like that would have been the start of it").

Notwithstanding the influence of the inspiration items that designers collect, their personalities or education, the formative factors of design work are often expressed in vague or mysterious terms. The designers I spoke with mention that an idea can come "when you're not thinking about it" (Stuart), when you go off on your own "to be in a space where it's just me" (Martin) and that design could be influenced by "the person we accidentally bump into on the corner" (Stuart). Stuart admits that she has no idea where ideas come from and "that's the beauty of it, that somehow, inside of our brain, these weird, random thought patterns kind of find a way to connect at the right spot, and then - come up with an idea." She reflects on her own experience, grappling with the randomness of creation:

> I used to kind of think of myself as a very logical, linear, sort of thought process kind of person. But as I've grown, and come to understand myself a little bit more, I think that I've figured out that that is not the case. Like, I try and think in a linear fashion, but I realize that that's not really what's happening…And you like to think that you've been thinking about it and that's why it happened, but I think it's just these random synapses firing, and that's what makes us creative.

As noted in *Theme 1*, Stuart and Jahnke both see accidental "non-design things" as being at least partly responsible for the fact that even designers with similar backgrounds—or working at the same company, for the same client, on the same project—will build different design solutions. Stuart says "we can't

really say why those things do affect us, but we know that they do, because we all come up with a different answer. Like if we all had the same problem…every single one of us would come up with something different." Jahnke uses hermeneutic language to describe these differences, stating that "different designers have different pre-understandings, and different backgrounds, and different assets to draw from when interpreting what the company needs", emphasizing that the designer might be surprised that "the personal preferences [and] pre-understandings do matter quite a lot."

To add even more complexity to how designers' personal experiences affect their work, designers' tastes can also change over time. Martin reflects on this question, agreeing: "I think my tastes have changed…yeah, I guess it kind of has changed a little". My own experience confirms this, and it becomes particularly obvious when I compare my current projects with my old design work. I find my old work looks "dated". Verbally, I might say that my tastes have "matured" or become more refined, from my use of typography to my use of visual space. However, as Dr. Carma Gorman points out, saying that tastes change over time does not explain *why* tastes change:

> What I don't love is the idea that *tastes change*. Like to me, the idea that, 'well, styles changed because tastes changed'. That is not even an answer, that's like pushing the answer down. Taste isn't any better an explanation. Tastes changed? Well, *why* did they change, like what exactly made them change?

A completely different side to this aesthetic style question is suggested during my interview with Gorman. She points out that, in many ways, designers are cogs in much larger machines, and that taste is heavily influenced by policy makers and manufacturers in ways not often considered. Gorman notes, for example, that it's technically easier to stamp sheet metal or mold plastic with rounded corners than straight corners, and these "technical and material constraints…explain part of the forms." However, it is not just the practical constraints, but the *legal* constraints on design that Gorman is most

interested in. She began to see workers' compensation and liability laws as a real driving force for the aesthetic shift that occurs between the 19th century and early to mid-20th century. She notes that liability laws are why machines, particularly consumer products, begin to have "skins" (outer designed coverings), the basic idea being that "when you cover a lot of that stuff over you're minimizing the chance that someone is going to get a finger stuck in there." Gorman suggests that this also explains why manufacturers were motivated to care about and spend money on designing the objects they were selling:

> I think the reasons that designers give for why they [make a design decision], like 'oh, it looks nice'. I don't think that has anything to do with why manufacturers actually spent the money to do it, I don't think [manufacturers] cared, in many cases. I think they ultimately did realize, oh it does look nicer, that's great, but I don't think that's their initial motivation for why they were doing it. I think it does have to do with liability, primarily.

Gorman's current research looks at how intellectual property laws have shaped American industrial design over the last 100 years.[154] During our conversation she observes that "the role of laws and regulations and standards in what we think of as 'taste', I just think it's been completely overlooked", noting that existing literature in design has not systematically included how legal constraints help form aesthetic choices. "I was looking at things from the consumer side, now I'm more interested in looking at the manufacturer's side", says Gorman. Provocatively, she also suggests that "designers are almost irrelevant" when it comes to building the aesthetic tastes of the market today, since much of what gets produced comes down to technical constraints combined with "the manufacturers and their legal teams [filtering] what actually gets produced". In summary, Gorman says:

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[154] Gorman, Carma. "The Role of Trademark Law in the History of US Visual Identity Design, c. 1860–1960." *Journal of Design History* 30, no. 4 (2017): 371-388.

> Ultimately what I'm arguing is that in many ways it's actually lawmakers and attorneys and people that you wouldn't think of as 'designers' who are in fact pulling these kinds of levers that we think of as 'taste' and 'style'. It's like the Wizard of Oz behind the curtain who is doing stuff, that you would never even think to look behind that curtain for answers to some of this stuff.

Even within this research project, I can acknowledge that the look and style of the design artifact (documentary shorts) I created was greatly affected by the limitations of the design programs (Adobe Premiere Pro, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, etc.) that I was working in—their tools, interfaces and constraints. The design was also guided by licensing and liability. For example, I chose typefaces for which I had legal access (licensing), and I could only access my working files in certain scenarios since Adobe (a software company) limits my account to run its software on a maximum of two devices.

My interview with Gorman also veered into a brief conversation about how designers' aesthetic choices might be influenced by the existing reward systems of the commercial design industry. As Gorman and I agreed, "[i]t's the arty, rule-breaking people that somehow get celebrated in design culture, typically." I would concur based on my 10 years in the design profession—working for various different creative studios and advertising agencies—that it's the off-the-wall creative ideas that bring in design awards and earn designers coveted high-paying art director and creative director positions, as opposed to a demonstration of practicality, for example.

Clearly, the development of tastes and styles is an incredibly complicated thing to try and untangle. In fact, Coyne notes that, from a hermeneutic standpoint, we can *never* completely unpack or understand our prejudices; in a design context, this could be translated to mean that we can never completely unpack how our experiences affect our tastes and, therefore, what we create as designers. Even talking about designers' *personal* or *individual* tastes can be misleading because, as Coyne points out, the definition of self "pretty quickly

would dissipate from *self* to background, upbringing, parents, schooling, community to which one is a part of, or feels a part of." Coyne also warns that a focus on "the essential me" is too "genius, self, individual-centered, whereas the hermeneutical project or understanding recognizes that any interpretive act is within a community by virtue of what's around you." This brings us back to the conclusion of *Theme 1*, the being-in-the-world of the designer, and the impossibility of stepping outside of our experiences.

Given the many complex, overlapping influences of visual style, and the impossibility of unpacking aesthetic tastes and styles, it is perhaps not surprising that designers do not often take the time to understand how their design tastes and preferences develop. Stuart notes that "you're just living and you're just doing, and you don't really think about how those things sort of connect." An example that illustrates this point is the difficulty that creative directors and art directors can have when communicating to junior designers working under them *why* they want something changed or designed a certain way. Martin recalls at her first design job:

> It was always really hard, because I remember I would lay [a design] out and then the creative director would say, 'make this smaller' and I'm like, 'well, why? What's your reasoning for wanting it smaller?' and [they] would always just say, 'I don't like it like that'. And it was always hard for me because, well, I can list you a rationale as to why I want *this* like *this*, but if you can't tell me why [I should change the design] other than you just don't like it… that was always hard.

Martin and I also discussed our own difficulty in explaining why we make design decisions when talking to clients or other designers. I noted that designers often end up using words such as *good* ("it's a good composition"), *balance* ("it's visually balanced"), and, in conversations with other designers, we debate design ideas using rationales such as *it makes sense* or *it looks weird*. All of these design rationales (*good, balance, makes sense, looks weird*) do not get to the heart of *why* a designed item has a certain aesthetic look

or style: they are inherently vague terms with many possible meanings and interpretations.

Based on what has been discussed thus far, the evidence seems to show that the way tastes and styles develop is extremely complex and, as Coyne points out, somewhat unknowable because of this complexity. However, even if we can never completely untangle how our tastes develop, my research suggests that there *is* value in contemplating how designers might consciously work at *changing* their aesthetic tastes and styles. This value exists within the process of learning and transformation. For example, Coyne defines a hermeneutic perspective as "always having your pre-conceptions challenged, and you're going to be transformed in that process. So, we're constantly being changed as we learn and encounter things in the world." Coyne goes on to point out that the hermeneutic philosopher Gadamer sees a hermeneutic approach as a process of edification and education, of "building up" towards self-understanding. And although "[y]ou can never actually come to terms and unpack your prejudices" you can be "open to its transformation" and that, furthermore, "[t]his is how 'bad' prejudice is dissipated."

To conclude, my research revealed several insights on the topic of taste within design practice. First, even though designers may be seen as "taste-creators", many designers find it difficult to articulate why they make certain aesthetic choices. Furthermore, tastes develop in extremely complex ways which are perhaps not possible to fully unpack. Finally, even though the origins of taste cannot be fully unpacked, there is still value in asking how tastes and styles might be changed, so that designers can better understand and transform their practices (through this process of questioning and education), and work towards recognizing and dissipating undesirable prejudice.

4.4 A lack of feminist narratives

Theme 4: Acknowledging a lack of feminist narratives, influencers and writing within design.

Inarguably, the design profession was founded by men. What I will be discussing in this section is how my research revealed that the design profession was not only founded by men, but founded on the way that men experience and see the world, often leaving women's perspectives and experiences at the fringes. I have divided this theme into two subsections: the first looks at how women's bodies are used and portrayed *within* design work; the second subsection looks at women's roles as designers and educators within the design profession.

Women's Bodies in Design

Why are women's bodies portrayed the ways they are in design, and do female and male consumers both prefer the female form? One of my first topics of conversation with Dr. Gorman was her article "Educating the eye: Body mechanics and streamlining in the United States, 1925-1950"[155], in which she discusses how (male) architects and designers streamlined car bodies, objects and buildings to mirror the human form. This human form was almost always the form of a woman, as Gorman reflects on in our conversation: "the male body isn't as often discussed by designers, at least in the 20th century U.S., as an inspiration for forms of products, it is much more often the female body". As an example, she points to famous Franco–American industrial designer Raymond Loewy (an influential designer from the 1930s–1970s), who, in a written piece giving advice on product design, uses movie star Betty Grable's skin as a metaphor: "no doubt her kidneys are adorable, but I like her better

[155] Gorman, Carma. "The Role of Trademark Law in the History of US Visual Identity Design, c. 1860–1960." *Journal of Design History* 30, no. 4 (2017): 371-388.

with skin than without"[156]. One example from this era is the streamlined, curved lines of the *20th Century Limited* New York passenger train (1938), designed by American industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss[157]. Even products designed for female consumers in this era (e.g. home appliances such as irons, toasters, and blenders) still mirrored the female form. This made me curious: do both female and male consumers prefer the shape of the female form?

Gorman notes that, in fact, in Ancient Greece "the form of the male body is the standard of beauty" and that "the woman's body is understood to be irregular and incommensurate". Furthermore, she says that this idea of the male body as the standard continued on through the Medieval Period (5th–15th century), the Renaissance (for example, Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man) and the "idea that the male is the standard doesn't go away exactly, even in the 20th century" (for example, Gorman notes the French modern architect Le Corbusier's Modulor Man measurements, which were used as a standard for pleasing proportions).

However, although "the rational, geometric male body" seems to represent a sort of mathematical perfection, Gorman suggests that in modern culture "if you want to sell something maybe it would look more like the female body." She describes the female body as being presented as "desirable" and the "seductive one that you want to somehow possess." Gorman's phrasing of women as *something that you want to possess* prompted me to mention how in the past women were literally seen as objects that could be owned by men. Gorman agrees, pointing to coverture laws. Coverture laws removed a woman's status as a legal person upon marriage, which meant that women could not own property, earn money or have bank accounts. These laws applied to England and its territories (including the United States and Canada) for

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[156] Pommer, Richard. "Loewy and the Industrial Skin Game." *Art in America* 64, no. 2 (1976): 46-47.
[157] "*20th Century Limited,*" Wikipedia, accessed July 17, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/20th_Century_Limited.

centuries[158] and persisted until the 1870 Married Women's Property Bill, which gave married women certain rights over personal earnings and property[159] (although it should be noted that married women in England did not gain the same earning and property rights as single women until more than 20 years later, through the Married Women's Property Act of 1893)[160]. Of course, this did not mean that women (married or single) were viewed as full persons with equal human rights. It was not until 1929, for example, that women gained recognition as full persons under Canadian law[161], and all women in England did not have the right to vote until The Representation of the People Act of 1928.[162] It was only 50 years ago, in the 1960s, that all women in Canada (including First Nations women) gained the right to vote.[163] These vestigial traces of a male entitlement to the female form seem to influence the content of design advertisements and the shapes of products, and these histories present a possible argument for why, in part, women are still portrayed as "consumables" within modern visual culture.

This historical entitlement might explain why men would prefer to purchase products built to mimic the female form. However, why would female consumers prefer to buy products that mirror a woman's shape? Gorman notes that "women are accustomed to, they understand, just as men do, the male gaze as normative", citing art critic, novelist, painter and poet John Berger's

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[158] Stretton, Tim, and Krista J. Kesselring, eds. *Married Women and the Law: Coverture in England and the Common Law World*. McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2013, 5.
[159] Ibid, 219.
[160] "Married Women's Property Act 1893," UK Legislation, accessed July 17, 2018, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/56-57/63.
[161] "Women and the Law", Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed July 17, 2018, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/women-and-the-law/.
[162] "1928 Equal Franchise Act", Parliament UK, accessed July 17, 2018, https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/case-study-the-right-to-vote/the-right-to-vote/birmingham-and-the-equal-franchise/1928-equal-franchise-act/
[163] "Women and the Law", Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed July 17, 2018, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/women-and-the-law/.

famous critical essay *Ways of Seeing* (1972)[164]—which explores "women's own consciousness of always being looked at" —and British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey's writing on the male gaze (in which she defines the male gaze as "[t]he image of woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man"[165]). Gorman says, "I think women are accustomed to and internalize the idea that women's bodies are beautiful and desirable. I don't think that strikes women as unusual. They're accustomed to seeing women [themselves] in that way."

Women's internalization of the male gaze provides one explanation for why both women and men seem to prefer to consume objects built to reflect the shape of the female body, at least since the streamlining styles of the 1930s emerged with designers such as Raymond Loewy and Henry Dreyfuss. Of course, another common-sense possibility is that women would *not* have preferred objects which mirrored the female form, however they were not in positions of decision-making power at that time in the design profession, and therefore the *only* objects they could buy were ones for which the aesthetics were dictated by men.

In the present day, one would assume that the balance of power has changed, and that now one could find women working at all levels of the profession, possibly changing the design landscape. Or is this the case? This brings us to the second section of this fourth theme, where I look at women's roles as designers and educators within the design industry.

Women Influencers in Design?

In this section I present the case that my research shows a lack of female designers at the forefront of design practice and design education. Although

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[164] Berger, John. *The Look of Things: Essays*. Viking Books, 1972.

[165] Mulvey, Laura. "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema." In *Visual and other pleasures*, pp. 14-26. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1989.

I could not find any research numbers for the Canadian design profession specifically,[166] the Design Council's 2018 report on the state of design in the UK, *The Design Economy 2018*, shows that "78% of the UK's design workforce is male…despite women making up 63% of all students studying creative arts and design courses at university."[167] A 2014 study (looking at the percentage of female Creative Directors in the Communication Arts 2013 Advertising Annual) showed that women only make up 11% of creative directors in the design profession.[168] The research I gathered through my interviews supports this data, in particular the personal experiences of designer Stuart (who is based in Canada) and Clerke (who is based in Australia). Stuart, who has been a practicing designer for over 25 years, notes that her "bosses were always men" and that "thinking about it, it was always the men who were in power … they always owned the companies." Her high school design instructors were also "all men". When I asked about the proportion of male to female instructors when she was in college, Stuart hesitated, thinking about it: "they weren't all men at [my college], though I can't actually think about any female instructors that I had either, come to think of it… there must have been some."

In my interview with Clerke, she recalled being a design student in Australia (in the 1990s), where, even though she recollected about 50% of the students being women, she only had one female instructor. Clerke also details that this female instructor was a "significant, exceptional kind of person", suggesting that it took exceptional talent and effort for a woman to secure a position as an instructor. When Clerke started teaching design at UTS

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[166] At this time, it does not seem that the Canadian design industry has a governing body (similar to the UK Design Council) that regularly and thoroughly collects statistics on the numbers of female design students and the number of women working in the Canadian design industry, and their specific roles.

[167] "The Design Economy 2018", Design Council, accessed July 18, 2018, https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/report/design-economy-2018.

[168] "Female CDs on the Rise: A 2014 study of women serving as advertising Creative Directors,", The 3% Movement, accessed July 18, 2018, https://www.3percentmovement.com/sites/default/files/resources/3percent-ResearchResults_FINAL.pdf.

(University of Technology Sydney) she noted that approximately "50% of the lecturers were women and 50% of the lecturers were men" but the main, full-time positions were held by men, whereas 80% of the part-time instructors were women, which "already says something about the division of labour, meaning that women are brought in last-minute" to be what Clerke calls "just-in-time knowledge workers".

One of the reasons I had been interested to interview Clerke was because of a research study she published in 2010 which looked at gender distribution in two high-standing international scholarly design journals across a span of 30 years. Her study showed an overwhelming gender gap in the distribution of publication, with 75–82% of the articles authored by men and furthermore, that men made up 87% of the editorial boards and committees for both journals.[169] Although it was out of the scope of this research project to gather the distribution of male to female authors published in these two journals in the past 8 years since Clerke's article, it is interesting to note that the current editorial teams for both journals still show a male majority, although an improvement from Clerke's 2010 numbers: for the first journal, 6 out of 9 editors are men (67% male), and 15 out of 21 members of the editorial board are men (71% male).[170] In the second journal, 4 out 6 of the editors are men (67% male), and 14 out of 20 of the editorial board are men (70% male).[171]

As Clerke points out during our conversation, the question "isn't about whether women are good enough to meet the standard," the question is, "where do these standards come from [and] who developed them?" For me, the most pertinent insight to come out of this conversation with Clerke was her reminder that ideas within academia are reproduced through the archive.

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[169] Clerke, Teena. "Gender and discipline: publication practices in design." *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* 3, no. 1 (2010): 63-78.
[170] "Design Issues Editorial Info," The MIT Press, accessed July 9, 2018, https://www.mitpressjournals.org/journals/desi/editorial
[171] "Design Studies - Editorial Board," Elsevier, accessed July 18, 2018, https://www.journals.elsevier.com/design-studies/editorial-board

Referencing Foucault, Clerke defines the archive as being "the people, the ideas, and the publications that continue to get reproduced." Therefore, if we are asking "where do these design standards come from?" we need to look at the archive, the previously published authors in the design field. Clerke notes that "their work gets reproduced, and their ideas get reproduced. And even if you're challenging them, you're still participating in their reproduction. So these are the ideas and the authors that stay within the archive."

In the design field, as in many academic fields, women are notably missing from the archive. "Women's voices weren't being recorded, I scoured publications, I scoured histories," Clerke remembers. She notes that the impetus for starting her PhD "was that when I started teaching in the mid-90s, I noticed that there were more women students, but all the resources that we were using, all of the theories, the books, the designers, all of the people that we were talking about, that we were as women engaged in reproducing, were all male authors." Poignantly, Clerke asks: "design has been in the university long enough, women have been working in design and now in the university long enough, what are they doing? *Surely* there is some kind of impact".

Not only are there are clear gender discrepancies within the design field, and a lack of women in the archive, there is also (perhaps not surprisingly, based on the previous two observations) very little being written specifically about *gender issues* or *feminism* within design. When I asked Clerke about feminist writing in design, she laughed and asked rhetorically, "What feminist writing in design?" When I asked Jahnke (whose master's project, in fact, looked at how gender is expressed in design objects) about research on gender in the design field, he notes a similar dearth, observing that it is paradoxical that "design specifically [has] such [an] influence on the products' shapes, colours and so on, from a gender point of view" yet the design research literature reveals only a handful of articles on gender, "maybe there are 6 or 7 articles out there, something like that", Jahnke estimates. Jahnke sees the scarcity of research on these topics as unfortunate, observing that it would be a

"rich way" to explore design practice and also practical, given that "[with] gender issues it's easy to find situations where different interpretations matter and have consequences."

This brings to mind both Martin's comments that she found it "always so hard designing for women without being stereotypical," and also my own frustrations within my design practice at the seeming lack of resources and examples of design for women that did not revert to the status-quo (for example, using pink for girls). Even the issue of designing for women or designing for men could be seen as problematic—why do design products need to be split into gendered categories at all? Perhaps more appropriate design strategies exist which do not depend on the use of gender at all.

The most perplexing detail is that this lack of women in design—in the design archive, in research looking at gender and feminist issues within design, as well as the lack of women writing, teaching, and working in design—exists despite the fact that women make up the majority of design students. One possible reason, Clerke suggests, is fear. "I think that's what it is, I think it's fear. Very much fear. Fear of loss of reputation, fear of career progression, fear of being labelled and not being able to dodge it, fear of being ostracized. That's worse [than harassment] in lots of ways, not being included." Power imbalances also create double-standards across the design industry that result in "one set of rules for some people in positions of power, and a different set that everyone else has to follow," as Gorman noted during our interview.

Another reason suggested by Clerke is that there is a focus on *equality* when it should be a focus on *equity* for women, because "[t]here's no such thing as equality when you're working with an uneven system." "Gender practices are structural," says Clerke. They are ingrained into the very foundation of the design industry system, and even women participate in these gender practices, as Clerke previously mentioned, motivated by fear and a desire to survive in the industry: "women participate in [gendered practices] because if they don't then they don't get work" says Clerke. She sees *equity* as

a better goal for the design industry to strive towards because equity involves "compensating for social disadvantage and enabling people to achieve the same level."

I will mention a final reason for women's continued absence in the design archive , hinted at by Stuart during our interview. Stuart notes that, not only were many of her first jobs secured through a male colleague, but that she is happy to be working in the background. Stuart shares that "I don't want to be the one in the spotlight;" she wants to do design "but not have to be the one who stood in front of everybody and talked about it." Gorman also briefly discusses the idea that female designers do not seem to find (or perhaps seek) fame, bringing up artist and visual designer Susan Kare, whose work Gorman notes is "influential" (Kare developed the original interfaces, icons and typefaces for Apple in the 1980s, and worked for Microsoft, IBM, Pinterest and Facebook[172]) yet Kare is "not a household name" (at least, not in most households). Women's current absence from design publications and histories is not due to the fact that female designers are not creating influential work within the design field: they most certainly are[173]. However, perhaps their voices are less-often recorded because they are not interested in fame (which could be due to the way women are socialized or conditioned). The other side to this equation is that fewer people may be interested in taking the time to seek female designers out, to reproduce their histories and solidify their presence in the archive.

To summarize, it is clear that historically there have been far fewer women in positions of power both at academic institutions and in the commercial design industry, and that these discrepancies remain today. Male-specific design narratives and histories are continually reproduced in the archive,

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[172] "Susan Kare," Wikipedia, accessed July 18, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susan_Kare.

[173] "The most influential female designers of the last century," Design Week, accessed July 18, 2018, https://www.designweek.co.uk/issues/5-11-february-2018/the-most-influential-female-designers-of-the-last-century/.

creating a self-perpetuating feedback cycle, where the people and ideas already published continue to be quoted and reproduced, making it more difficult for women to find their way in. There may be various reasons for this, including fear, a focus on equality (which levels the playing field) instead of *equity* (which focuses on compensating for structural social disadvantage), and a combination of women designers actively staying out of the limelight and/or not being actively pursued and persistently documented in the archive.

4.5 Summary

Engaging in these various hermeneutic, embodied and feminist dialogues revealed four key themes and insights. One of the key transformations from *Theme 1 (The being-in-the-world of the designer)* was this idea of the impossibility of stepping outside of our experiences, and that moreover, these firsthand experiences are assets, not flaws. Furthermore, as revealed in *Theme 2* (*The critical embodiment of the designer*), all experiences are encountered through a physical body, meaning that designers' bodies permeate everything they create, in often surprising ways. *Theme 3* (*The complex and somewhat unknowable nature of how visual style and preferences develop*) acknowledges that aesthetic choices are being constantly built and changed through extremely complex and often unconscious ways, through the environment and other unpredictable means (such as policy laws).
However, rather than discarding the conversation, this research suggests that asking how aesthetic styles might be changed can contribute to dissipating undesirable prejudice, and that designers can transform their practices through edifying and educational hermeneutic dialogues. The fourth theme (*Theme 4: Acknowledging a lack of feminist narratives, influencers and writing within design*) emphasizes the male-driven narratives from which the design field grew, and how these discrepancies continue to contribute to the imbalance of power in the profession today. The repetition of these narratives (through the archive) makes it difficult for women to find their way in, but also suggests

several possible paths towards improving this situation in the future, such as finding ways to overcome fear, the pursuit of equity as opposed to equality, and working to actively integrate women into the design archive.

Broadly, based on my own experience through this project, I am convinced that the tools used to reveal these narratives—hermeneutic dialogue, embodiment and a feminist framework—could be applied to challenge designers to reflect on and re-interpret the ways they make decisions on a wide range of topics and projects within their design practices, particularly towards addressing problematic issues and other disenfranchised groups.

In the final chapter of this thesis, I provide a summary of research procedures and findings before presenting three strategies for both understanding and disrupting visual design practice, concluding by offering suggestions for future research in these areas.

5 Concluding Discussion

Applying a hermeneutic dialogue and embodied phenomenology, through this feminist research approach, both expanded and transformed my own design practice. More broadly, I am convinced that these tools might be applied to challenge designers to reflect on and re-interpret the ways they make decisions on a wide range of topics and projects within their design practices.

In this final chapter, I provide a brief summary of my research procedures and findings, reflect on my experience through the project, and then delve into three practical strategies to help designers challenge the status-quo and reframe the way women are viewed and "designed" within visual communication design. Finally, I conclude with suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary of procedures

This research project looked at how I might disrupt the way women are viewed and designed within visual communication design by applying a hermeneutic, embodied and feminist framework. This approach, which sees the researcher as inescapably situated within and affecting the situation—as opposed to a dispassionate, quantitative approach—seemed most appropriate to a design context, which is focused on issues related to culture, which are not easily quantified.

The specific research methods chosen for this research study included semi-structured interviews and an exploratory, iterative self-portrait of my design practice created through written, oral, image-based, and performative texts. I engaged in and documented three types of dialogue over the course of 9 months: dialogues between myself and existing literature; dialogues between myself and six industry professionals, experts, and academics via semi-structured interviews; and dialogues between my present and past selves

through the creation of performative and embodied texts. My literature review and expert interviews were used to inform my self-dialogue and guide the narrative I was building within my iterative self-portrait (documented through the creation of video documentary shorts). All of these dialogues centered around my overarching research question, *how can I disrupt current narratives of women in design?*

5.2 Summary of findings

Four interesting and relevant themes and findings arose from this research:

1. The being-in-the-world of the designer, and the impossibility of stepping outside of our experiences;
2. The critical embodiment of the designer;
3. The complex and somewhat unknowable nature of how visual style and preferences develop;
4. An acknowledgement of a lack of feminist narratives, influencers and writing within design;

The first theme that emerged throughout this research project is the situatedness-in-the-world of the designer, which can be observed in both the influence of the designer's personal experiences, tastes and prejudices on their work, and the influence of their clients' experiences, tastes and prejudices. Although designers often attempt to set-aside the personal (at least when creating commercial design work), these firsthand experiences are a necessary prerequisite for understanding and engaging with the world, and furthermore, designers cannot escape their personal opinions and prejudices. Designers are inescapably situated within the world, influenced by the culture around them, and influenced by their firsthand experiences.

Building on the first theme, the research not only showed that designers are inescapably situated within culture, they are inescapably situated within a

physical body. Designers engage with the world in an embodied way, including the non-verbal language of physical gestures, the tools designers hold in their hands, and their bodily experiences.

Thirdly, even though designers may be seen as “taste-creators”, many designers find it difficult to articulate why they make certain aesthetic choices. Furthermore, aesthetic tastes develop in extremely complex ways which are perhaps not possible to fully unpack. Even though the origins of taste cannot be fully unpacked, there is still critical value in asking how aesthetic styles might be changed, so that designers can transform their practices through edification and education, and work towards dissipating undesirable prejudice.

The fourth finding that emerged was that there still exists a lack of feminist narratives, influencers and writing within visual design. This is demonstrated through the ways women’s bodies are still viewed and portrayed within visual design, which is often through a male gaze that aesthetically prioritizes the shape of the female body as a tool to sell consumables. Furthermore, this subjectification to a male standard follows women into the design industry itself, with the research pointing to a feedback cycle which continues to leave women out of the design archive, and far fewer women at the top levels of academic design programs or at the top levels of the design industry. There are various possible explanations for this imbalance, including that women might be operating from a place of fear, that the design industry has focused on *equality* (which levels the playing field) instead of *equity* (which focuses on compensating for structural social disadvantage), that women designers might actively seek to stay out of the limelight, or that too little effort is dedicated to adding women to the archive.

5.3 Reflections

Performative revelations: the role of embodiment through the use of video in exploratory and critical design practice

Entering into the performative and embodied aspects of this project, I had anticipated that focusing the research on my own design practice would feel somewhat uncomfortable, if only for the vulnerable nature of being in front of the camera rather than art directing somewhere behind it. I was, however, surprised by just how uncomfortable it was to physically feature my body within this work. It forced me to confront in an indelible way my history (the formative elements of it that I am aware of, at least): there was no hiding behind the work, or a client, as a defence for what I had created or the conclusions that I reached.

Making myself—and my own transformation—the focus of this project forced me to confront my biases and belief systems. For this reason alone, I found this project incredibly valuable. It served as a reminder that designers do not only have a duty to understand their clients, but a duty to understand themselves, if they are to engage in a hermeneutic two-way dialogue with the situation. Designers do not start any project with a blank slate – they bring with them their own experiences and pre-understandings. Furthermore, these pre-understandings form the necessary starting point for building a dialogue. As Dr. Marcus Jahnke noted during our interview, “your own experience and knowledge is an asset”, not a hindrance, to creating meaningful design work.

5.4 Strategies for both understanding and disrupting visual design practice

Although the purpose of my research is exploratory and not solution-oriented, this project (including the literature review, interviews, and performative self-dialogue that I engaged in) revealed several insights and practical strategies. I will discuss three of these strategies below and how they might be applied to

better understand designers' aesthetic tastes, challenge the status-quo, and ultimately critique the way women are viewed and "designed" within visual communication design. The three strategies include:

1. Questioning gendered language;
2. Making a habit of self-reflection; and
3. Reframing the role of design.

Strategy 1: Questioning gendered language

Clerke submits that one simple way to bring feminist practices into design practice is to pay more attention to the way we use language. She states that "words are a very big part of the gendering process" and that "language is the root of gendering, and language is visual". Currently, language defaults to the masculine: "You never hear men being talked about as 'male designers', you only ever hear women being talked about as 'female designers' and 'women designers'", Clerke points out. By making women the exception (i.e. assuming that a designer is male unless it is preceded by a gender qualifier), these words place women on the fringes of the design field. Paying attention to how we use language in our industry may help draw attention to and ultimately change the landscape. For example, someone's use of a gendered qualifier (such as "female designer") could be responded to with a question of why that qualifier is needed. Simply drawing attention to gendered language could illuminate a larger problematic situation (for example, a conference package explicitly stating that speakers includes "female designers" might be indicative of tokenism: that is, highlighting that they have women speakers to draw scrutiny away from the fact that the majority of speakers are men).

Since language is not only auditory but visual, we need to scrutinize the gendering that occurs in both verbal language and visual language, through the design environments that designers learn and work within, and the work that designers create. Questioning gendering in verbal language might include, for example, looking at the words used in meetings with clients, classrooms,

during design industry speaker panels, and on stages at design conferences. Questioning visual language might include examining both the words used in professional practice (client design projects), educational institutions (design textbooks), and professional development (design conference programs), as well as the imagery used in all of these scenarios. For example, does imagery depicting a designer default to an image of a man? When women are depicted, are they created for a sexualized or dehumanizing or exploitative male gaze?

Strategy 2: Making a habit of self-reflection

Another suggestion gathered from this research is to approach each unique design project from a place of hermeneutic self-reflection. Design is not simply a commercial or creative activity, but, as mentioned in *Chapter One*, "[f]ew practices of intellectual and commercial human activity reach into so many areas of everyday private and public life" as design does[174]. Not only does "all design [have] social, moral, and political dimensions" but "there is no sphere of pure information"[175]. The individual designer involved affects the design work being created, and and as suggested in *Chapter Two* (as well as by several of the interviews discussed in *Chapter Four*) "the intellectual perspective of the designer [is] an integral part of the design process"[176]. If designers function in a place of power—guiding how human society experiences and relates to the world— then instilling a practice of self-reflection within design practice might encourage designers to be more thoughtful in how they wield their cultural influence and the wide-reaching effects of their decisions, particularly if the status quo is problematically sexist.

Part of engaging in a hermeneutic practice of self-reflection involves being open to having our preconceptions and ideas challenged. A hermeneutic

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[174] Julier, Guy. *The culture of design*. Sage, 2013: 1.
[175] Ehses, Hanno, and Ellen Lupton. "Rhetorical handbook." *Design Papers* 5 (1988), 6.
[176] Buchanan, Richard. "Wicked problems in design thinking." *Design Issues* 8, no. 2 (1992): 16.

process asks that we become uncomfortable, and is "based on a polarity of familiarity and strangeness", focusing on the "in-between" areas of tension[177]. Also, self-reflection does not imply that we are engaged in a soliloquy, but rather in a dialogue with the *situation*. The hermeneutic cycle aims to fuse the "tradition from which we came" and the present which "is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices"[178]. As previously discussed in *sections 2.2* and *4.3*, prejudice is built on a person's previous experiences in the world and is a necessary starting point for interpretation[179]. By engaging in these critical dialogues, designers can learn to interpret situations in new ways, transform themselves, and transform their perspectives.

If hermeneutics "implies the primacy of dialogue and the structure of question and answer,"[180] what are some specific questions that designers might ask to engage in a hermeneutic self-reflection and purposefully provoke a critical transformation? The following examples have been pulled from this project's research, and hopefully provide a starting point for designers to build their own series of questions towards the creation of a useful self-reflective process when engaging in design work:

- What does visual culture and design currently reproduce in this area? *For example, what are the stereotypes and tropes?*
- How can we draw attention to what visual culture and design are reproducing? *If the stereotypes, common imagery and visual language are problematic? Can the design become more interesting, more successful, by taking a critical stance to the status-quo?*

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[177] Gadamer, Hans-Georg, Joel Weinsheimer, and Donald G. Marshall. *EPZ truth and method*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2004, 306.
[178] Gadamer, Hans-Georg, Joel Weinsheimer, and Donald G. Marshall. *EPZ truth and method*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2004, 317.
[179] Jahnke, Marcus. *Meaning in the Making: Introducing a hermeneutic perspective on the contribution of design practice to innovation* (PhD diss., University of Gothenburg, 2013), 100.
[180] Gadamer, Hans-Georg, Joel Weinsheimer, and Donald G. Marshall. *EPZ truth and method*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2004, 378.

- How can we look more widely for inspiration? *Who or what do we normally turn to for inspiration? Who or what is missing from this picture?*
- Where can we find the alien, the weird and off-the-wall ideas in this area? *What kind of designers and design work currently live on the fringes, and why? What kind of design work is NOT winning awards, or is considered "bad" design? Why?*
- How can we look at the problem sideways? *For example, how would this situation look from a child's perspective? A dog? Someone from the far future?*
- How can we deconstruct where this idea came from? *For example, literally look up the roots of a word, or read-up on the history of the idea that your design work is based on or drawing from. Break it down to its basic components then build it up again.*
- How else can we rethink this? *Ask how the situation would be looked at in a different culture. Bring in other, unusual or uncommon voices and ask them how they would rethink the situation.*

It should be noted that, although calling attention to issues by encouraging self-reflection within the design industry may see some positive results, Dr. Carma Gorman cautioned during our interview that getting buy-in and leverage on actions like this would be difficult, suggesting (as discussed in *section 4.3*) that liability law is a bigger pull on the overall system because it "change[s] what's available on the market and as advertisers have to somehow now sell those new forms, you know they're going to … somehow frame it and proclaim it as a new and better improvement on their product". This raises interesting questions about how different countries (with differing guidelines and laws) might affect the work of designers in their respective countries, and also how laws might be employed to help build beneficial changes within the

industry (for example, developing rules to govern gender equity representation on boards or top-level executive positions).

Strategy 3: Reframing the role of design

The previously suggested strategy (*Making a habit of self-reflection*) asks designers to reframe each individual design project that they encounter. In addition to this project-by-project approach, designers may also find a benefit in stepping back and asking questions about the design field as a whole. Not only do the parameters of individual design projects need to be questioned and reframed, design practice *itself* needs to be reframed. In an evolving world where communities and culture are ever-changing, designers need to be continually asking, *how do we reframe what it means to be a designer?*

In the context of this research project, one of the reframes we might ask of design is where women fit into a practice that has been historically dominated by men. Professor Teal Triggs, for example, calls on us to "provide a framework which recognizes the everyday in terms of objects and women's experiences; and constantly review the relationships and challenged positions of male-dominated culture, notions of female and male representation, and the established categories of culture.[181] A question that might arise from a reflection on Trigg's call-to-action could be, *how do we reframe what it means to be a feminist in a design context?*

These three strategies—questioning gendered language, making a habit of self-reflection, and reframing the role of design—offer some starting points, revealed through this research project, for how we might better understand designers' aesthetic tastes, challenge the status-quo, and ultimately critique the way women are viewed and "designed" within visual communication design. I will conclude this section with a caveat. The stipulation for all these possibilities is that, since the context is continually changing, so are the

[181] Carson, Fiona, and Claire Pajaczkowska. *Feminist visual culture*. Routledge, 2016: 164.

responses. Importantly, a hermeneutic perspective for this research reminds us that experience is contextual, and therefore all solutions are contextual and relative, rather than absolute and final.

5.5 Future Research

As previously mentioned, there currently exists very little research which looks at gender within design, the critical importance of embodiment within design, or how a hermeneutic framework might be used to challenge, critique and transform problematic preconceptions within the design industry and design practice. This thesis project only provides an exploratory starting point for applying hermeneutic, embodied and feminist methodologies to design. I would suggest that there are many areas of future research which could look at practically applying these methodologies within design practice and educational design programs to tackle a wide range of problematic prejudices and questions. Future research in this area might also consider a longer, sustained use of hermeneutic methods in design practice, and across a variety of projects and teams.

One future application could include building a professional development course or seminar that would offer education and training in applying hermeneutic methods (such as the hermeneutic circle, critical dialogue and reflection) for engaging in effective communication with clients, as well as tools for engaging in a dialogue with the projects and design situations themselves (such as embodiment and some of the performative methods explored in this research project). For example, this could be offered through a partnership with a local chapter of the Graphic Designers of Canada (GDC), in a weekend course or as a session at a design conference, such as the RGD's yearly *DesignThinkers* conference. There could also be the possibility of collaborations with already-existing feminist design collectives such as the not-for-profit Women's Center for Creative Work (WCCW), or a design studio

modelling their practices in gender theory, such as Sweden's Feministiska (both briefly discussed in *section 2.5* of this document).

The purpose of this research project is not the discovery of a single truth or final answer to my research question. I do not seek to prove anything with finality or delineate a specific series of steps for other designers to follow. That is beyond the scope of this project, and beyond the scope of what a hermeneutic methodology would see as being possible, given the interpretive and situated nature of knowledge. This research project is meant to be an in-depth hermeneutic exploration of my own design practice, looking at a specific, critical question. Optimally, this project will open a path for more investigations into the application of hermeneutic, embodied and feminist methodologies within the design field. My hope is that engaging in a dialogue with our own interpretations might allow for the emergence of new, disruptive, imaginative work in the visual design field. Although completely overhauling existing interpretations of women with the design industry may not be possible, improvement within the design field *is* possible. While discussing the mechanisms of a problematic overarching socio-economic system, Dr. Gorman ends our interview with a positive outlook, and I will use her words to do the same for this thesis: "I feel like within even what may not be a perfect system, one can still make things more equitable, more just, more fair".

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APPENDICES

Appendix A.
Ethics application

Description:

The following 22-page document shows the University of Alberta Ethics application for this research, prepared and submitted using the Research Ethics & Management Online (REMO) system. This REMO application was approved by the Research Ethics Board on December 4, 2017.

File name:

AppendixA_REMOEthics.pdf *(22 pages)*

1.1 Study Identification

*All questions marked by a red asterisk * are required fields. However, because the mandatory fields have been kept to a minimum, answering only the required fields may not be sufficient for the REB to review your application.*

Please answer all relevant questions that will reasonably help to describe your study or proposed research.

1.0 * **Short Study Title** *(restricted to 250 characters)*:
An evolving self-portrait of the designer designing

2.0 * **Complete Study Title** *(can be exactly the same as short title)*:

An evolving self-portrait of the designer designing: Applying a hermeneutic phenomenology framework towards better understanding the experience of designing

3.0 * **Select the appropriate Research Ethics Board (***Detailed descriptions are available at http://www.reo.ualberta.ca/Human-Research-Ethics/Research-Ethics-Boards.aspx***):**
REB 1

4.0 * **Is the proposed research:**
Unfunded

5.01 * **Name of local Principal Investigator:**
Sarah Jackson

6.0 * **Type of research/study:**
Graduate Student

7.0 **Investigator's Supervisor (required for applications from undergraduate students, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and medical residents to REBs 1 & 2. HREB does not accept applications from student PIs):**

Aidan Rowe

8.01 **Study Coordinators or Research Assistants:** People listed here can edit this application and will receive all email notifications for the study:
If your searched name does not come up when you type it in the box, the user does not have the Study Coordinator role in REMO. Click the following link for instructions on how to Request an Additional Role.

Name	Employer
There are no items to display	

9.01 **Co-Investigators:** People listed here can edit this application and will receive email notifications *(Co-investigators who do not wish to receive email, should be added to the study email list team below instead of here).*
If your searched name does not come up when you type it in the box, the user does not have the Principal Investigator role in REMO. Click the following link for instructions on how to Request an Additional Role.

Name	Employer	IMS Relationships.Relationship.Name	Employer.ID
There are no items to display			

10.01 **Study Team:** *(co-investigators, supervising team, and other study team members) - People listed here cannot view or edit this application and do not receive email notifications.*

Last Name	First Name	Organization	Role/Area of Responsibility	Phone	Email

There are no items to display

1.5 Conflict of Interest

1.0 * **Are any of the investigators or their immediate family receiving any personal remuneration (including investigator payments and recruitment incentives but excluding trainee remuneration or graduate student stipends) from the funding of this study that is not accounted for in the study budget?**

○ Yes ◉ **No**

2.0 * **Do any of investigators or their immediate family have any proprietary interests in the product under study or the outcome of the research including patents, trademarks, copyrights, and licensing agreements?**

○ Yes ◉ **No**

3.0 * **Is there any compensation for this study that is affected by the study outcome?**

○ Yes ◉ **No**

4.0 * **Do any of the investigators or their immediate family have equity interest in the sponsoring company? (This does not include Mutual Funds)**

○ Yes ◉ **No**

5.0 * **Do any of the investigators or their immediate family receive payments of other sorts, from this sponsor (i.e. grants, compensation in the form of equipment or supplies, retainers for ongoing consultation and honoraria)?**

○ Yes ◉ **No**

6.0 * **Are any of the investigators or their immediate family, members of the sponsor's Board of Directors, Scientific Advisory Panel or comparable body?**

○ Yes ◉ **No**

7.0 * **Do you have any other relationship, financial or non-financial, that, if not disclosed, could be construed as a conflict of interest?**

○ Yes ◉ **No**

Please explain if the answer to any of the above questions is Yes:

Important

If you answered YES to any of the questions above, you may be asked for more information.

1.6 Research Locations and Other Approvals

1.0 * **List the locations of the proposed research, including recruitment activities. Provide name of institution, facility or organization, town, or province as applicable**
On Campus (University of Alberta); Principle Investigator's personal studio and home; Internet (VoIP) to record remote interviews (Skype or Source-Connect Now); various post-secondary institutions and offices for expert interviews.

2.0 * **Indicate if the study will use or access facilities, programmes, resources, staff, students, specimens, patients or their records, at any of the sites affiliated with the following** *(select all that apply):*
Not applicable

List all health care research sites/locations:

3.0 **Multi-Institution Review**

* **3.1 Has this study already received approval from another REB?**
○ **Yes** ◉ **No**

4.0 **If this application is closely linked to research previously approved by one of the University of Alberta REBs or has already received ethics approval from an external ethics review board***(s)*, **provide the study number, REB name or other identifying information. Attach any external REB application and approval letter in the Documentation Section – Other Documents.**

2.1 Study Objectives and Design

1.0

Provide planned start and end date of human participant research.

Start Date
12/1/2017

End Date:
12/1/2018

2.0 * **Provide a lay summary of your proposed research which would be understandable to general public**

This thesis project applies hermeneutic phenomenology—a practical philosophy that looks at understanding lived human experience through interpretative back-and-forth dialogue and storytelling——to look at the *experience of designing*. The goal of this research project is to explore how applying a hermeneutic framework changes designers' understanding of their own lived experiences—as well as the lived experiences of their teams and clients— optimally fostering an evolution towards new perspectives and more imaginative, ethical design futures.

For this project I will engage in three types of dialogue: first, dialogue between myself and existing texts (a literature review). Secondly, dialogue through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with experts in the fields of visual communication design, hermeneutics, performativity and feminist studies. Finally, I will also engage in a hermeneutic dialogue with my past and present selves through the creation of written, oral, image-based, and performative "texts". Looking at myself as designer—including my experience of body, gender, cultural context, individual bias and perceptions—I will question, critique and reflect on my own design practice. Discussions for all three types of dialogue will centre around the following overarching themes:

1. The designer's "life world" *(What is the story of my experience as a graphic designer?)*
2. The personal nature of decision making *(How do I make decisions within my design practice?)*
3. The embodied nature of decision making *(How does being a female designer affect the way I make decisions in my design practice?)*

Practically, this research will hopefully serve as a base for building a design course or seminar for practicing designers that demonstrates how hermeneutic dialogue can be applied to create a framework within their individual design practices that encourages reflection and growth towards new perspectives that would not otherwise be uncovered, resulting in a greater variety of delightful and ethical design work.

3.0 * **Provide a full description of your research proposal outlining the following:**

- **Purpose**
- **Hypothesis**
- **Justification**
- **Objectives**
- **Research Method/Procedures**
- **Plan for Data Analysis**

Purpose

This thesis project applies hermeneutic phenomenology to look at the *experience of designing* and ask how we might "re-design" design practice. I am interested in looking at how hermeneutic diaologue might reveal new perspectives within design practice that would not otherwise be uncovered, resulting in a greater variety of delightful and ethical design futures.

Hypothesis

My hypothesis is that applying a hermeneutic framework to design practice will change designers' understanding of their own lived experiences—as well as their understanding of the lived experiences of their teams and clients— optimally revealing new perspectives and fostering an evolution towards more imaginative, ethical design futures.

Significance (Justification)

Although hermeneutics and phenomenology have been discussed in relation to design and architecture (Coyne & Snodgrass, 1996; Jahnke, 2012; Pérez-Gómez, 2008), there is little research that looks at the practical application of hermeneutics within visual communication design practice, or in terms of its potential for using self-dialogue to foster learning, growth and change within design practice. This research is also significant within the design field because of its alignment with feminist methodologies: historically marked by its absence of authoritative female voices (Buckley, 1986; Baker, 1994; Gorman, 2001), visual design

research shows a significant lack of women published within its academic journals (Clerke, 2010). It has been noted that there is a need for a radical shift towards “different kinds of feminist-informed writing ... to productively disrupt and reconceptualize design scholarship” (Clerke, 2010).

Objectives

- Overall, the goal is to engage in three types of hermeneutic dialogue: first, dialogue between myself and existing texts (a literature review); secondly, dialogue through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with experts; thirdly, dialogue with my past and present selves through the sustained creation of written, oral, image-based, and performative "texts".
- Document (via audio recording and transcription) 6-8 semi-structured interviews with experts. Follow-up conversations will also be audio recorded and transcribed, as part of the hermeneutic circle of dialogue, reflection and critique that is being studied in this research project.
- Document (via text, audio, the creation of visuals and video) how the aforementioned dialogues (between myself and existing texts, myself and experts, and by dialoguing with myself through this process) evolve, shift and change my understanding of my own design practice.
- Take the multimedia documentation that I create and use it to build a short documentary video that showcases my evolution through the hermeneutic process. This documentary video may also incorporate portions of the audio recorded during interviews and/or quotes from the interviews. This short film will be a designed artefact, a multimedia communication tool that combines design, illustration, animation, film, and photography. Making what is normally hidden visible, this "evolving self-portrait of the designer designing" will showcase the changes a hermeneutic, embodied methodology can have on the design process.

Research Methods/Procedures

- Hermeneutic methodology is "focused on [the] subjective experience of individuals and groups ... to unveil the world as experienced by the subject through their life world stories" (Kafle, 186).
- Hermeneutic dialogue is aimed at achieving understanding by describing and interpreting lived experience through sustained critical dialogue, emphasizing the ways in which the individual (the self) is inherently situated in and affecting the process. For example, Jahnke suggests Ricoeur’s “hermeneutic spiral” as a “foundation for understanding designing” (31), which involves a back-and-forth dialogue that underscores the importance of ongoing reflection and critique (35).
- The literature review will look at existing research on the application of hermeneutic phenomenology, particularly within design (graphic design, architecture) and related fields (pedagogy, consumer research, etc.), performance/performativity, and hermeneutic phenomenology's alignment with feminist methodologies.
- Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 6–8 experts in relevant fields such as visual communication design, hermeneutic phenomenology, performativity/embodiment, and gender studies. All interviews will follow an open-ended format, following a hermeneutic format. Interviews will be recorded and relevant portions transcribed. Follow-up conversations will also be audio recorded and transcribed, as part of the hermeneutic circle of dialogue, reflection and critique that is being studied in this research project.
- Documentation of a sustained dialogue between my "past" and "present" selves. Focusing primarily on Merleau-Ponty's idea of

"embodied knowledge", I will connect my physical body with my cognitive knowledge by employing performative methods such as gesture, body language, props, costumes, personas, choreography, improvisation, speaking, dance movement, etc.. Each piece of self-dialogue will be documented via video, photo, audio, writing and then reflected upon, critiqued, and responded to (also via video, photo, audio, writing).
- Portions of these recordings, sounds and images (including interview audio recordings and/or quotes from the expert interviews) will be combined into a short documentary video that will document my evolution. This short film will be the design artefact used in my thesis exhibit.
- It is worth noting that, although this project will have an end point, in theory the hermeneutic process is iterative with no final “solution”, since participants in dialogue are continually evolving and changing.

Data Analysis

- Data analysis is built into the hermeneutic process through the hermeneutic circle. As described by Laverty, hermeneutic phenomenology involves "[t]he researcher and participant [working] together to bring life to the experience being explored, through the use of imagination, the hermeneutic circle and attention to language and writing" (30).
- Data will be analyzed and interpreted following the hermeneutic data analysis steps outlined by Patterson and Williams in Collecting and Analyzing Qualitative Data: Hermeneutic Principles, Methods, and Case Examples (2002). This includes recording and transcribing interviews, individually indexing and marking meaningful sections, and then further analyzing the data to reveal interrelationships and themes (Patterson & Williams, 45-49).

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4.0 **Describe procedures, treatment, or activities that are above or in addition to standard practices in this study area** *(eg. extra medical or health-related procedures, curriculum enhancements, extra follow-up, etc)*:
N/A

5.0 **If the proposed research is above minimal risk and is not funded via a competitive peer review grant or industry-sponsored clinical trial, the REB will require evidence of scientific review. Provide information about the review process and its results if appropriate.**
N/A

6.0 **For clinical trials, describe any sub-studies associated with this Protocol.**
N/A

2.2 Research Methods and Procedures

Some research methods prompt specific ethical issues. The methods listed below have additional questions associated with them in this application. If your research does not involve any of the methods listed below, ensure that your proposed research is adequately described in Section 2.1: Study Objectives and Design or attach documents in the Documentation Section if necessary.

1.0

* **This study will involve the following** *(select all that apply)*
Interviews and/or Focus Groups
Materials created by participants (eg. artwork, writing samples, photo, voice, etc.)

NOTE 1: Select this ONLY if your application SOLELY involves a review of paper charts/electronic health records/administrative health data to answer the research question. If you are enrolling people into a study and need to collect data from their health records in addition to other interventions, then you SHOULD NOT select this box.

NOTE 2: Select this option if this research ONLY involves analysis of blood/tissue/specimens originally collected for another purpose but now being used to answer your research question. If you are enrolling people into the study to prospectively collect specimens to analyze you SHOULD NOT select this box.

2.5 Interview and/or Focus Groups

1.0 **Will you conduct interviews, focus groups, or both? Provide detail.**
EXPERT INTERVIEWS: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted one-on-one between myself (the primary investigator) and 6-8 experts in relevant fields such as visual communication design, hermeneutic phenomenology, performativity/embodiment, and gender studies. All interviews will follow an open-ended hermeneutic format that involves back-and-forth dialogue, reflection, and critique.

PERFORMATIVE SELF-DIALOGUE: I will also be engaging in an

embodied, performative self-dialogue. This will involve the documentation of a dialogue I have with myself via the reflection and critique of texts that I create through this research project ("texts" in this case including written, oral, image-based, and performative texts).

2.0 How will participation take place (e.g. in-person, via phone, email, Skype)?
EXPERT INTERVIEWS: Interview location will depend on the location of the expert being interviewed. Optimally, interviews will take place in-person on University of Alberta campus, at my personal studio/home, and/or at various other post-secondary institutions and offices, depending on where the interviewee is located. If an in-person interview cannot be arranged, internet (VoIP) will be used to record remote interviews (Skype, Source-Connect Now, etc.).

PERFORMATIVE SELF-DIALOGUE: My self-dialogue will take place on University of Alberta campus, and at my personal studio/home.

3.0 How will the data be collected (e.g. audio recording, video recording, field notes)?
EXPERT INTERVIEWS: Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed.

PERFORMATIVE SELF-DIALOGUE: I will be employing performative methods such as gesture, body language, props, costumes, personas, choreography, improvisation, speaking, dance movement, etc.. Each piece of self-dialogue will be documented via video, photos and other visuals (such as illustration), audio, and writing (journaling).

2.6 Material Created by Participants

1.0 Provide a summary of the materials created by participants that will be included in this research project:
The main materials created for this project (the performances, visuals, text and audio) will be personally created by myself, the Principal Investigator. Portions of the audio recorded during the expert interviews may be incorporated into the final design artifact—the documentary video.

It is worth noting that the experts interviewed will be contributing their knowledge/insights, and therefore influencing the performative self-dialogue which will form the bulk of the design artifact (the documentary video) created for this research project.

2.0 Who will have access to this data?
Each expert interviewee will have access to the raw data from their particular interview within 2 weeks after their interview date. Each participant will have the ability to edit or change the data they contributed and continue the conversation with me (following the ongoing back-and-forth required in a hermeneutic dialogue) for the 8 weeks following their interview.

3.0 When publicly reporting data or disseminating results of your study (eg. presentation, reports, articles, books, curriculum material, performances, etc) that include the materials created by participants, what steps will you take to protect those who may be represented or identified - both participants and non-participants?
All interviewees will be chosen based on their position as industry professionals and experts in the areas that I am researching, and therefore participation will be limited to those willing to have their names and positions publically identified and associated with the data provided during the interviews recorded for this study. Portions of the data from

these interviews (both text and audio) will be made public in my thesis paper, design artifact (video documentary), academic and public presentations (including podcasts), reports, articles, and similar.

Since the bulk of my research will be reporting on data collected on my own design practice, the release of my own identity and position as the researcher is implied.

4.0 **What opportunities are provided to participants to choose to be identified as the author/creator of the materials created in situations where it makes sense to do so?**
Each expert interviewee will have access to the raw data from their particular interview within 2 weeks after their interview date. Each participant will have the ability to edit or change the data they contributed and continue the conversation with me (following the ongoing back-and-forth required in a hermeneutic dialogue) for the 8 weeks following their interview. Portions of the audio recorded during the expert interviews may be incorporated into the final design artifact documentary video. Any audio used will be attributed to the interviewee associated with it.

It is worth noting that the experts interviewed will be contributing their knowledge/insights, and therefore influencing the performative self-dialogue which will form the bulk of the design artifact (the documentary video) created for this research project.

5.0 **If necessary, what arrangements will you make to return original materials to participants?**
Since the bulk of my research will involve materials created by myself on my own design practice, the material created through the project will be my own. Each expert interviewee will have access to the raw data from their particular interview within 2 weeks after their interview date. Each participant will have the ability to edit or change the data they contributed and continue the conversation with me (following the ongoing back-and-forth required in a hermeneutic dialogue) for the 8 weeks following their interview.

6.0 **Will you be using audio/video recording equipment and/or other capture of sound or images for the study?**
(•) **Yes** ( ) No

If YES, provide details:
EXPERT INTERVIEWS: Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. Interview location will depend on the location of the expert being interviewed. Optimally, interviews will take place in-person on University of Alberta campus, at the Principal Investigator's personal studio/home, and/or at various other post-secondary institutions and offices, depending on where the interviewee is located. If an in-person interview cannot be arranged, internet (VoIP) will be used to record remote interviews (Skype, Source-Connect Now, etc.).

PERFORMATIVE SELF-DIALOGUE: I will be employing performative methods such as gesture, body language, props, costumes, personas, choreography, improvisation, speaking, dance movement, etc.. Each piece of self-dialogue will be documented via video, photos and other visuals (such as illustration), audio recordings, and writing (journaling).

3.1 Risk Assessment

1.0 * **Provide your assessment of the risks that may be associated with**

this research:
Minimal Risk - research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation is no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research (TCPS2)

2.0 * **Select all that might apply:**

Description of Possible Physical Risks and Discomforts

No	Participants might feel physical fatigue, e.g. sleep deprivation
No	Participants might feel physical stress, e.g. cardiovascular stress tests
No	Participants might sustain injury, infection, and intervention side-effects or complications
No	The physical risks will be greater than those encountered by the participants in everyday life

Possible Psychological, Emotional, Social and Other Risks and Discomforts

No	Participants might feel psychologically or emotionally stressed, demeaned, embarrassed, worried, anxious, scared or distressed, e.g. description of painful or traumatic events
No	Participants might feel psychological or mental fatigue, e.g intense concentration required
Possibly	Participants might experience cultural or social risk, e.g. loss of privacy or status or damage to reputation
No	Participants might be exposed to economic or legal risk, for instance non-anonymized workplace surveys
No	The risks will be greater than those encountered by the participants in everyday life

3.0 * **Provide details of all the risks and discomforts associated with the research for which you indicated YES or POSSIBLY above.**
Participants may face some social or cultural risk given that their names and professional positions will be attached to their interview, and interview audio and responses may be made public.

4.0 * **Describe how you will manage and minimize risks and discomforts, as well as mitigate harm:**
Each participant will have access to the raw data from their particular interview within 2 weeks after their interview date. Participants will have 8 weeks after their interview to review, edit, and/or withdraw their interview contributions before they are incorporated into my thesis work.

5.0 **Is there a possibility that your research procedures will lead to unexpected findings, adverse reactions, or similar results that may require follow-up** *(i.e. individuals disclose that they are upset or distressed during an interview/questionnaire, unanticipated findings on MRI, etc.)***?**
○ Yes ◉ **No**

6.0 **If you are using any tests in this study diagnostically, indicate the member(s) of the study team who will administer the measures/instruments:**

Test Name	Test Administrator	Organization	Administrator's Qualification
There are no items to display			

7.0 **If any research related procedures/tests could be interpreted diagnostically, will these be reported back to the participants and if so, how and by whom?**
N/A

3.2 Benefits Analysis

1.0 * **Describe any potential benefits of the proposed research to the participants. If there are no benefits, state this explicitly:**
The proposed research offers no direct benefit to participants. The experts and industry professionals involved in the semi-structured interviews will be participating in a conversation in their areas of interest, of which the main benefit will be to myself as the researcher.

2.0 * **Describe the scientific and/or scholarly benefits of the proposed research:**
Although hermeneutics and phenomenology have been discussed in relation to design and architecture (Coyne & Snodgrass, 1996; Jahnke, 2012; Pérez-Gómez, 2008), there is little research that looks at the practical application of hermeneutics within visual communication design practice, or in terms of its potential for using self-dialogue to foster learning, growth and change within design practice. My hypothesis is that applying a hermeneutic framework to design practice will change designers' understanding of their own lived experiences—as well as their understanding of the lived experiences of their teams and clients—optimally revealing new perspectives and fostering an evolution towards more imaginative, ethical design futures.

This research is also significant within the design field because of its alignment with feminist methodologies: historically marked by its absence of authoritative female voices (Buckley, 1986; Baker, 1994; Gorman, 2001), visual design research shows a significant lack of women published within its academic journals (Clerke, 2010). It has been noted that there is a need for a radical shift towards “different kinds of feminist-informed writing ... to productively disrupt and reconceptualize design scholarship” (Clerke, 2010).

3.0 **If this research involves risk to participants explain how the benefits outweigh the risks.**
The participants involved in this research are experts and industry professionals. Interview questions will focus on their particular areas of expertise. Having agreed to participate in the research project, and given their careers of choice, it is assumed that they will be willing and comfortable to engage in a dialogue that centres around their areas of expertise. Risk is minimal, and the benefits of participation in this research project outweigh the risks.

I will also be engaged in this research, as both participant and researcher. The benefits outweigh the risks for my own participation in my thesis research.

4.1 Participant Information

1.0 * **Will you be recruiting human participants** *(i.e. enrolling people into the study, sending people online surveys to complete)***?**
(●) **Yes** ( ) No

1.1 Will participants be recruited or their data be collected from Alberta Health Services or Covenant Health or data custodian as defined in the Alberta Health Information Act?

○ Yes ◉ **No**

4.2 Additional Participant Information

1.0 **Describe the participants that will be included in this study. Outline ALL participants** *(i.e. if you are enrolling healthy controls as well):*

EXPERT INTERVIEWS: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted one-on-one between myself (primary investigator) and 6-8 experts in relevant fields such as visual communication design, hermeneutic phenomenology, performativity/embodiment, and gender studies. All interviews will follow an open-ended hermeneutic format that involves back-and-forth dialogue, reflection and critique. I will attempt to interview one to two experts from each of the aformentioned fields, and will also strive to interview a balance of female and male interviewees.

PERFORMATIVE SELF-DIALOGUE: I will also be a participant in this research project, engaging in an embodied, performative self-dialogue. This will involve the documentation of a dialogue I have with myself via the reflection and critique of texts that I create through this research project ("texts" in this case including written, oral, image-based, and performative texts).

2.0 * **Describe and justify the inclusion criteria for participants** *(e.g. age range, health status, gender, etc.):*

My research looks at design practice using a hermeneutic methodology that is "focused on [the] subjective experience of individuals and groups ... to unveil the world as experienced by the subject through their life world stories" (Kafle, 186). Because hermeneutics emphasizes the ways in which the individual (the self) is inherently situated in and affecting the process, making myself the main research subject (case study) for this research project is authentic to a hermeneutic paradigm which "encourages a strong focus on individual cases and specific occurrences of a phenomenon" (Patterson & Williams, 25).

Experts for the semi-structured interviews will be chosen through recommendations from my academic and professional circles, and their prominence in the articles and books that I read through my literature review. Criteria for their inclusion will depend on their positions as experts or industry leaders with expert knowledge in the areas that I'm researching (visual communication design, hermeneutic phenomenology, performativity/embodiment, and/or gender studies), their availability to be interviewed during the research period of my project, their ability to engage in verbal conversation in the English language, and their willingness to engage in hermeneutic (back-and-forth) dialogue with myself for this research project.

Because this project focuses in large part on the embodied experiences of individuals—which includes the experience of gender and body—I will strive to interview a balance of female and male interviewees, to achieve a diversity of perspectives.

3.0 **Describe and justify the exclusion criteria for participants:**

I am conducting interviews with experts that will be able to contribute insights and expertise in the areas of visual communication design,

hermeneutic phenomenology, performativity/embodiment, and/or gender studies. Participants outside my sphere of knowledge and/or not known as experts or industry leaders in the areas that I'm researching (not known or recommended through my academic and professional circles, or not prominent in the articles and books that I read through my literature review) will inherently be excluded from participation.

Only participants who agree to have their name and professional position publically associated with their interview responses will be included in the study. Because my goal is to interview experts whose answers lend authority and expertise to the discussion, their full name and professional position would need to be associated with their interview to convincingly demonstrate their position as an expert in their field of work.

Participants will also be excluded from participation if they are not available to be interviewed during the research period of my project, if they are not willing or interested in engaging in a dialogue with myself on these topics, and (based on my own language fluency limitations) if they are not able to engage in verbal conversation in the English language.

4.0 Participants

4.1 How many participants do you hope to recruit *(including controls, if applicable?)*
8
4.2 Of these, how many are controls, if applicable?
N/A
4.3 If this is a multi-site study, how many participants do you anticipate will be enrolled in the entire study?
8

5.0 Justification for sample size:
Because hermeneutic dialogue involves an in-depth interview style that includes recording and transcribing interviews, individually indexing and marking meaningful sections, and then further analyzing the data to reveal interrelationships and themes (Patterson & Williams, 45-49), 6-8 interviews allows for sufficient expert feedback while still being feasible within the scope of this thesis project.

4.4 Recruitment of Participants (non-Health)

1.0 Recruitment

1.1 How will you identify potential participants? Outline all of the means you will use to identify who may be eligible to be in the study *(i.e. response to advertising such as flyers, posters, ads in newspapers, websites, email, list serves, community organization referrals, etc.)*
Experts for the semi-structured interviews will be chosen through recommendations from my academic and professional circles, and their prominence in the articles and books that I read through my literature review. Criteria for their inclusion will depend on their positions as experts or industry leaders with expert knowledge in the areas that I'm researching (visual communication design, hermeneutic phenomenology, performativity/embodiment, and/or gender studies), their availability to be interviewed during the research period of my project, their ability to engage in verbal conversation in the English language, and their willingness to engage in hermeneutic (back-and-forth) dialogue with myself for this research project.

1.2 Once you have identified a list of potentially eligible participants, indicate how the potential participants' names will be passed on to the researchers AND how will the potential participants be approached about the research.
Since I will be conducting the interviews with all participants, I will personally contact all the experts on my list of potentially eligible participants (via email, and a possible follow-up over the phone) to communicate the nature of this research project, an interview guide that outlines the questions the initial interview will be structured around, the timeline of the research project, and to determine their interest and availability.

2.0 Pre-Existing Relationships

2.1 Will potential participants be recruited through pre-existing relationships with researchers *(e.g. Will an instructor recruit students from his classes, or a physician recruit patients from her practice? Other examples may be employees, acquaintances, own children or family members, etc.)*?
(●) **Yes** ( ) No

2.2 If YES, identify the relationship between the researchers and participants that could compromise the freedom to decline *(e.g. clinician/patient, professor/student)*
Experts for the semi-structured interviews will be chosen through recommendations from my academic and professional circles, and their prominence in the articles and books that I read through my literature review. Although it is possible that I will have a previous acquaintance with some of the experts approached, my position as a graduate student does not place me in a hierarchical relationship that would place an undue pressure on experts towards accepting or declining to participate.

2.3 How will you ensure that there is no undue pressure on the potential participants to agree to the study?
To ensure that there is no undue pressure on the potential participants, my initial request email for participation will clearly state that participation is voluntary and to encourage only those who are enthusiastically interested and available within the research timeframe to respond, with the disclaimer that it is understood that their schedules are busy and understood that they reasonably may not have the time or desire to participate.

3.0 Will your study involve any of the following? *(select all that apply)*
Reimbursement for any expenses incurred by the participants, e.g. parking costs, child care, lost wages, etc

4.5 Informed Consent Determination

1.0 Describe who will provide informed consent for this study *(i.e. the participant, parent of child participant, substitute decision maker, no one will give consent – requesting a waiver)*
The participant being interviewed (expert interviewee) will provide informed consent.

1.1 Waiver of Consent Requested
If you are asking for a waiver of participant consent, please justify the waiver or alteration and explain how the study meets all of the criteria for the waiver. Refer to Article 3.7 of TCPS2 and provide justification for requesting a Waiver of Consent for ALL criteria (a-e)
N/A

1.2 Waiver of Consent in Individual Medical Emergency
If you are asking for a waiver or alteration of participant consent in individual medical emergencies, please justify the waiver or alteration and explain how the study meets ALL of the criteria outlined in Article 3.8 of TCPS2 (a-f).
N/A

2.0 How will consent be obtained/documented? Select all that apply
Signed consent form

If you are not using a signed consent form, explain how the study information will be provided to the participant and how consent will be obtained/documented. Provide details for EACH of the options selected above:

3.0 Will every participant have the capacity to give fully informed consent on his/her own behalf?
(●) **Yes** ( ) No

3.1 Explain why participants lack capacity to give informed consent *(e.g. age, mental or physical condition, etc.).*
N/A

3.2 Will participants who lack capacity to give full informed consent be asked to give assent?
( ) Yes ( ) No

Provide details. IF applicable, attach a copy of assent form(s) in the Documentation section.
N/A

3.3 In cases where participants (re)gain capacity to give informed consent during the study, how will they be asked to provide consent on their own behalf?
N/A

4.0 What assistance will be provided to participants or those consenting on their behalf, who may require additional assistance? *(e.g. non-English speakers, visually impaired, etc.)*
N/A

5.0 * If at any time a PARTICIPANT wishes to withdraw from the study or from certain parts of the study, describe when and how this can be done.
Participants may withdraw from the study at any point by notifying myself (the Primary Investigator) by email, phone or in-person. The participants in this study (expert interviewees) will have access to the raw data from their particular interview (and the ability to edit or change the data they contributed and continue the conversation with me, following the ongoing back-and-forth required in a hermeneutic dialogue) for the 8 weeks following their interview. Portions of the audio recorded during the expert interviews may be incorporated into the final design artefact documentary video, dependant on the individual approvals if each interviewee. Any audio used will be attributed to the interviewee associated with it.

6.0 Describe the circumstances and limitations of DATA withdrawal from the study, including the last point at which participant DATA can be withdrawn *(i.e. 2 weeks after transcription of interview notes)*
Participants will have access to the raw data from their particular interview (and the ability to edit or change the data they contributed and continue

the conversation with me, following the ongoing back-and-forth required in a hermeneutic dialogue) for the 8 weeks following their interview.

7.0 Will this study involve any group(s) where non-participants are present? For example, classroom research might involve groups which include participants and non-participants.

○ Yes ◉ **No**

4.6 Expense Reimbursements and Incentives

1.0 Expense Reimbursements:

1.1 Describe in detail the expenses for which participants will be reimbursed, the value of the reimbursements per item as well as the total maximum reimbursement and the reimbursement process *(e.g. participants will receive a cash reimbursement for parking at the rate of $12.00 per visit for up to three visits for a total value of $36.00)*
Participants will receive a cash reimbursement for any costs associated getting to and from their interviews (parking, cab fees, child care, etc.) for up to two visits for a total value of $50.00 CAD per participant.

To receive a reimbursement, you will need to show a receipt or other proof of payment (parking ticket, bus pass, child care payment, etc.) to the Principal Investigator, at which point they will be paid in cash, for up to a total value of $50.00 CAD. Receipts (and any personal information that might be on them) will be kept by the participant. The Principal Investigator will document (via Excel spreadsheet) the date of the interview, name of the participant, and the exact amount they were reimbursed.

1.2 IF you will be collecting personal information to reimburse or pay participants, describe the information to be collected and how privacy will be maintained.
Participants will be given cash reimbursements at the time of the interview. Receipts (and any personal information that might be on them) will be kept by the participant. The Principal Investigator will document (via Excel spreadsheet) the date of the interview, name of the participant, and the exact amount they were reimbursed.

2.0 Incentives:

2.1 Will participants receive any incentives for participating in this research *(i.e. gift card, cash payment, prize draw)***? If yes, provide details of the value, including the likelihood (odds) of winning for prize draws and lotteries.**
http://www.reo.ualberta.ca/en/Human-Research-Ethics/Incentives.aspx
Participants will be reimbursed for travel costs and child care, but will otherwise not receive any incentives for participating in this research.

2.2 What is the maximum value of the incentives offered to an individual throughout the research?
No incentives will be offered: participants will receive a cash reimbursement for any costs associated getting to and from their interviews up a total value of $50.00 CAD per participant.

2.3 IF incentives are offered to participants, they should not be so large or attractive as to constitute coercion. Justify the value of the incentives you are offering relative to your study population.
N/A

5.1 Data Collection

1.0 * **Will the researcher or study team be able to identify any of the participants at any stage of the study?**
(●) **Yes** ( ) No

2.0 **Primary/raw data collected will be** *(check all that apply)***:**
Directly identifying information - the information identifies a specific individual through direct identifiers (e.g. name, social insurance number, personal health number, etc.)
Made Public and cited (including cases where participants have elected to be identified and/or allowed use of images, photos, etc.)

3.0 **If this study involves secondary use of data, list all original sources:**
N/A

4.0 **In research where total anonymity and confidentiality is sought but cannot be guaranteed** *(eg. where participants talk in a group)* **how will confidentiality be achieved?**
N/A

5.2 Data Identifiers

1.0 * **Personal Identifiers:** will you be collecting - at any time during the study, including recruitment - any of the following *(check all that apply)***:**
Surname and First Name
Initials
Telephone Number
Email Address
Other

If OTHER, please describe:
Professional position, institution or place of employment

2.0 **Will you be collecting - at any time of the study, including recruitment of participants - any of the following** *(check all that apply)***:**
There are no items to display

3.0 * **If you are collecting any of the above, provide a comprehensive rationale to explain why it is necessary to collect this information:**
Because I will be interviewing experts, their full name and professional position will need to be associated with their interview, to give their answers authority and to convincingly show their position as an expert in their field of work. Email addresses and phone numbers will need to be collected to contact potential participants and to arrange and/or conduct interviews.

Participants who do not feel comfortable having their interview data

attached to their name and professional position (i.e. who wish to remain anonymous) will not be able to participate in this study.

4.0 **If identifying information will be removed at some point, when and how will this be done?**
N/A

5.0 * **Specify what identifiable information will be RETAINED once data collection is complete, and explain why retention is necessary. Include the retention of master lists that link participant identifiers with de-identified data:**
Participants' full names (Surname and First Name) and their professional position, institution and/or place of employment will be retained with their interview to lend their interview responses authority and to convincingly show their position as an expert in their field of work. Email addresses and phone numbers will also be retained to follow-up with participants post-interview.

6.0 **If applicable, describe your plans to link the data in this study with data associated with other studies (e.g within a data repository) or with data belonging to another organization:**
N/A

5.3 Data Confidentiality and Privacy

1.0 * **How will confidentiality of the data be maintained? Describe how the identity of participants will be protected both during and after research.**
Audio will be recorded on a digital audio recorder and immediately transferred (as well as any other confidential digital files collected from participants) to an encrypted external hard drive, which will be locked (along with hard copies) in a filing cabinet in my office at the university. Audio files will be deleted from the audio recorder immediately after transferring the files to the hard drive. Data from interviews recorded over the phone (via Skype, Source-Connect Now, etc.) will also be immediately saved to an encrypted external hard drive and then deleted from my desktop or recording device.

Audio files will also be uploaded into a secure (encrypted) Google Drive folder within 2 weeks of the interview date, and a private link will be emailed to the participant, so that they have the ability to edit, change or withdraw data that you have contributed, via an ongoing back-and-forth dialogue with me, for the 6 weeks following their receipt of the raw data (i.e. from the day that I email them the link to the Google Drive folder containing their audio). After 6 weeks the audio files in the Google Drive folder will be deleted. Follow-up conversations will also be audio recorded, and will follow the same procedures noted above.

As specified in the Information Letter and Consent Form that will be sent to all participants, interviewees receive a copy of the digital audio from their interview within 2 weeks after the interview date and they will have 8 weeks after the date of the interview to withdraw any or all of their interview data. If any participants request to have data withdrawn, I will erase all the specified digital data from the hard drive, and shred all hard copies using a paper shredder.

I will retain digital audio files on an encrypted hard drive and hard copies in a locked filing cabinet at my place of residence following the completion of my studies in the university for a minimum of 5 years. After 5 years following the completion of my study, I will erase participants personal contact information from the hard drive, and shred all hard copies

containing their personal contact information using a paper shredder. Audio interview data and transcribed portions of interviews will be retained indefinitely for reuse and for future studies, public presentations including podcasts, reports, articles, and similar.

Because participants are being chosen based on their ability to speak as experts in their fields—and because of their positions as recognizable persons in the community—participants' identities (name, position, and institution) will be publically identified/associated with their interview responses at all points of this research project. Only participants who agree to have their names publically associated with their interview responses will be included in the study.

2.0 **How will the principal investigator ensure that all study personnel are aware of their responsibilities concerning participants' privacy and the confidentiality of their information?**
N/A (there are no study personnel associated with this research project besides the principal investigator, and only participants who agree to have their names publically associated with their interview responses will be included in the study)

3.0

External Data Access

* **3.1 Will identifiable data be transferred or made available to persons or agencies outside the research team?**
(●) **Yes** ( ) No

3.2 If YES, describe in detail what identifiable information will be released, to whom, why they need access, and under what conditions? What safeguards will be used to protect the identity of subjects and the privacy of their data.
Experts interviewed for this study will have their full names, their professional position, institution and/or place of employment with portions of their interviews and interview audio published publically within (but not limited to): my thesis paper, video documentary, articles, public presentations, etc. Only participants who agree to have their names publically associated with their interview responses will be included in the study.

3.3 Provide details if identifiable data will be leaving the institution, province, or country *(eg. member of research team is located in another institution or country, etc.)*
Experts interviewed for this study will have their full names, their professional position, institution and/or place of employment associated with their interview responses, which will be published as part of this research project, video documentary, articles, public presentations, etc.

5.4 Data Storage, Retention, and Disposal

1.0 * **Describe how research data will be stored, e.g. digital files, hard copies, audio recordings, other. Specify the physical location and how it will be secured to protect confidentiality and privacy.** *(For example, study documents must be kept in a locked filing cabinet and computer files are encrypted, etc. Write N/A if not applicable to your research)*
Audio will be recorded on a digital audio recorder and immediately transferred (as well as any other confidential digital files collected from participants) to an encrypted external hard drive, which will be locked (along with hard copies) in a filing cabinet in my office at the university. Audio files will be deleted from the audio recorder immediately after

transferring the files to the hard drive. Data from interviews recorded over the phone (via Skype, Source-Connect Now, etc.) will also be immediately saved to an encrypted external hard drive and then deleted from my desktop or recording device.

Audio files will also be uploaded into a secure (encrypted) Google Drive folder within 2 weeks of the interview date, and a private link will be emailed to the participant, so that they have the ability to edit, change or withdraw data that you have contributed, via an ongoing back-and-forth dialogue with me, for the 6 weeks following their receipt of the raw data (i.e. from the day that I email them the link to the Google Drive folder containing their audio). After 6 weeks the audio files in the Google Drive folder will be deleted. Follow-up conversations will also be audio recorded, and will follow the same procedures noted above.

Portions of audio data recorded during interviews may be used as audio files or as written quotes in the short documentary film that I am creating through this project, which will become the design artifact used in my thesis exhibit. This video also functions as a significant portion of my thesis, which will be publically (and perpetually) available online and archived into the University of Alberta's institutional repository (ERA).

Because participants are being chosen based on their ability to speak as experts in their fields—and because of their positions as recognizable persons in the community—participants' identities (name, position, and institution) will be publically identified/associated with their interview responses at all points of this research project. Only participants who agree to have their names publically associated with their interview responses will be included in the study.

2.0 * **University policy requires that you keep your data for a minimum of 5 years following completion of the study but there is no limit on data retention. Specify any plans for future use of the data. If the data will become part of a data repository or if this study involves the creation of a research database or registry for future research use, please provide details.** *(Write N/A if not applicable to your research)*

Portions of audio data recorded during interviews may be used as audio files or as written quotes in the short documentary film that I am creating through this project, which will become the design artefact used in my thesis exhibit. This video also functions as a significant portion of my thesis, which will be publically (and perpetually) available online and archived into the University of Alberta's institutional repository (ERA).

Participant interview data (both transcribed data and audio) will possibly also be used for (but not limited to) future research projects, articles, books, academic and public presentations including podcasts, reports, articles, and similar.

3.0

If you plan to destroy your data, describe when and how this will be done? Indicate your plans for the destruction of the identifiers at the earliest opportunity consistent with the conduct of the research and/or clinical needs:

As specified in the Information Letter and Consent Form that will be sent to all participants, interviewees receive a copy of the digital audio from their interview within 2 weeks of the interview date and they will have 8 weeks after the date of their interview to withdraw any or all of their interview data. If any participants request to have data withdrawn, I will erase all the specified digital data from the Google Drive folder and the external hard drive, and shred all hard copies using a paper shredder. Audio files will be deleted from the audio recorder immediately after transferring the files to the hard drive. Data from interviews recorded over the phone (via Skype, Source-Connect Now, etc.) will also be immediately

saved to an encrypted external hard drive and then deleted from my desktop or recording device.

I will retain digital audio files on an encrypted hard drive and hard copies in a locked filing cabinet at my place of residence following the completion of my studies in the university for a minimum of 5 years. After 5 years following the completion of my study, I will erase participants personal contact information from the hard drive, and shred all hard copies containing their personal contact information using a paper shredder. Audio interview data and transcribed portions of interviews will be retained indefinitely as part of my thesis, and also for reuse in future studies, public presentations including podcasts, reports, articles, and similar.

Documentation

Add documents in this section according to the headers. Use Item 11.0 "Other Documents" for any material not specifically mentioned below.

Sample templates are available in the REMO Home Page in the **Forms and Templates**, or by clicking HERE.

1.0 Recruitment Materials:

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

2.0 Letter of Initial Contact:

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
Letter of Initial Contact | History	0.03	11/29/2017 6:03 PM	

3.0

Informed Consent / Information Document(s):

3.1 What is the reading level of the Informed Consent Form(s):
Grade 8 or 9 reading level

3.2 Informed Consent Form(s)/Information Document(s):

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
Information Letter and Consent Form | History	0.05	11/29/2017 6:33 PM	

4.0 Assent Forms:

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

5.0 Questionnaires, Cover Letters, Surveys, Tests, Interview Scripts, etc.:

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
Interview Script/Guide | History	0.04	11/29/2017 6:33 PM	

6.0 Protocol/Research Proposal:

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

7.0 Investigator Brochures/Product Monographs:

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

8.0 Health Canada No Objection Letter *(NOL)*:

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

9.0 Confidentiality Agreement:

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

10.0 Conflict of Interest:

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

11.0 Other Documents:

For example, Study Budget, Course Outline, or other documents not mentioned above

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

Final Page

You have completed your ethics application! Click "Continue" to go to your study workspace.

This action will NOT SUBMIT the application for review.

Only the Study Investigator can submit an application to the REB by selecting the "SUBMIT STUDY" button in My Activities for this Study ID:Pro00077083.

Appendix B.
Interview data

Description:

The following documents contain the Initial Contact Letter form, Information Letter and Consent Form, Interview Script, signed consent forms from the six interview participants, and the transcribed portions from each interviews.

File names:

AppendixB_InitialContactLetter.pdf *(1 page)*
AppendixB_InformationLetterandConsentForm.pdf *(3 pages)*
AppendixB_InterviewScript.pdf *(3 pages)*
AppendixB_SignedConsentForm_Clerke.pdf *(3 pages)*
AppendixB_SignedConsentForm_Gorman.pdf *(1 page)*
AppendixB_SignedConsentForm_Jahnke.pdf *(3 pages)*
AppendixB_SignedConsentForm_Stuart.pdf *(3 pages)*
AppendixB_SignedConsentForm_Martin.pdf *(3 pages)*
AppendixB_SignedConsentForm_Coyne.pdf *(1 page)*
AppendixB_TranscribedInterviews.pdf *(67 pages)*

INITIAL CONTACT LETTER

(Date)

Dear (Participant Name),

I am a Master of Design graduate student, under the supervision of Aidan Rowe, at the University of Alberta. Part of my thesis project involves engaging in 6 to 8 semi-structured interviews with experts and industry professionals in the areas of visual communication design, hermeneutic phenomenology, performativity/embodiment, and/or gender studies. I would like to talk to you about being one of the expert interviews for my thesis research project.

Your participation would involve engaging with me in an initial dialogue focused on the overlap between your particular area of expertise and my research project. There would possibly be a follow-up conversation after the initial interview, and all interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. The goal is to have an "emergent" conversation that follows an open-ended format. Portions of the audio data recorded during your interview may be used as audio files or as written quotes in the short documentary video that I will also be creating as part of my thesis. Because my goal is to interview experts whose answers lend authority and expertise to the discussion, if you agree to be interviewed for this project your full name and professional position would need to be associated with your interview to convincingly demonstrate your position as an expert in your field of work.

The purpose of my Master of Design thesis project is to use hermeneutic phenomenology—a practical philosophy that looks at understanding lived human experience through interpretative back-and-forth dialogue and storytelling—to look at the *experience of designing*. The goal of this research is to explore how applying a hermeneutic framework changes designers' understanding of their own lived experiences—as well as the lived experiences of their teams and clients— optimally fostering an evolution towards new perspectives and more imaginative, ethical design futures.

Please let me know if you are interested, and I will email you the Information Letter and Consent Form, as well as arrange a phone conversation where I can answer any questions you might have and discuss specific details.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,
Sarah Jackson,

MDes Candidate
Fine Arts Building
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2C9
Phone: 780-907-3027
E-mail: smjackso@ualberta.ca

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

Study Title:
An evolving self-portrait of the designer designing: Applying a hermeneutic phenomenology framework towards better understanding the experience of designing

Research Investigator:
Sarah Jackson
MDes Candidate
3-98 Fine Arts Building
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2C9
Phone: 780-907-3027
E-mail: smjackso@ualberta.ca

Supervisor:
Aidan Rowe
Associate Professor, Design Studies
3-77A Fine Arts Building
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2C9
Phone: (780) 492-8591
E-mail: aidan.rowe@ualberta.ca

Background

- You are being invited to participate in a semi-structured interview for this research project because of your position as an expert or industry professional in the areas of visual communication design, hermeneutic phenomenology, performativity/embodiment, and/or gender studies.
- Your contact information was provided to me through my academic or professional circle of colleagues, or via articles and/or books that you have written in the areas of visual communication design, hermeneutic phenomenology, performativity/embodiment, and/or gender studies.
- The results of this study will be used in my thesis (in a video and thesis paper).
- I may also use portions of the data from this interview (both transcribed data and audio) in future academic and public presentations including podcasts, reports, articles, and similar.

Purpose

- This Master of Design (MDes) thesis project applies hermeneutic phenomenology—a practical philosophy that looks at understanding lived human experience through interpretative back-and-forth dialogue and storytelling—to look at the *experience of designing*. The goal of this research is to explore how applying a hermeneutic framework changes designers' understanding of their own lived experiences—as well as the lived experiences of their teams and clients— optimally fostering an evolution towards new perspectives and more imaginative, ethical design futures.

Study Procedures

- For my MDes thesis I will be conducting 6 to 8 semi-structured interviews with experts and industry professionals in the areas of visual communication design, hermeneutic phenomenology, performativity/embodiment, and/or gender studies.
- Each interview will follow a hermeneutic format that aims at achieving understanding by describing and interpreting lived experience through a sustained back-and-forth dialogue, emphasizing the ways in which the individual (the self) is inherently situated in and affecting the process.
- As an expert interviewee, you would be expected to engage with me in a hermeneutic dialogue focused on the themes of my research thesis, specifically in the overlap between your particular area of expertise and my research project. Our interview will follow a guide and lead-in questions, but otherwise the goal is to have an “emergent” conversation that follows an open-ended format.
- Each interviewee will be expected to engage in one interview of approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

- Your interview will optimally be conducted in-person in a quiet room where interruptions will be minimal (a private office or studio). When an in-person interview is not feasible then the interview will take place over the phone via internet (VoIP) such as Skype, Source-Connect Now, etc.
- Audio from each interview will be recorded and relevant portions of the audio will be transcribed.
- Type(s) of data to be collected:
    - 6 to 8 expert one-one interviews (60 to 90 minutes in length) that follow a hermeneutic format of back-and-forth dialogue, reflection and critique that emphasizes the ways in which the individual (the self) is inherently situated in and affecting the process.
    - Your name, position and institution will be publically identified/associated with your interview responses.
    - Interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder and then relevant portions of the interview will be transcribed. I will index and mark meaningful sections from each interview and then further analyze the data to reveal interrelationships and themes.
    - All audio data from your interview will be retained and possibly reused for future studies.
- Procedures for reviewing and responding to your interview data:
    - I will upload the raw data (audio recording) from your interview into a secure, encrypted Google Drive folder within 2 weeks after your interview date, and email you a private link. You will have the ability to edit, change or withdraw data that you have contributed via an ongoing back-and-forth dialogue with me, for the 6 weeks following your receipt of the raw data (i.e. from the day that I email you the link to your interview audio).
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- Portions of audio data recorded during your interview may be used as audio files or as written quotes in the short documentary film that I am creating through this project.
- This short film will be the design artifact used in my thesis exhibit. It also functions as a significant portion of my thesis, which will be publically (and perpetually) available online and archived into the University of Alberta's institutional repository (ERA).
- The research portion of this project will run from December 2017 to no later than September 2018.

Benefits

- Your participation in the proposed research offers you no direct benefit.
- My hope is that applying a hermeneutic framework to design practice will change designers' understanding of their own lived experiences—as well as their understanding of the lived experiences of their teams and clients— optimally revealing new perspectives and fostering an evolution towards more imaginative, ethical design futures.
- There are no costs associated with participation in this research project. You will receive a cash reimbursement for any costs associated getting to and from your interview for up to two visits for a total value of $50.00 CAD. To receive a reimbursement, you will need to show a receipt or other proof of payment (parking ticket, bus pass, child care payment, etc.), at which point you will be paid in cash for the costs marked on your receipt, for up to a total value of $50.00 CAD.

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- You will receive a copy of your audio recording and relevant portions of the transcribed interview.
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_____ _____

Participant's Name (printed) and Signature Date

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Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

_____ _____

Interview Date Final Day to Withdraw Data (8 weeks after interview date)

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Thesis Purpose

- This Master of Design (MDes) thesis project applies hermeneutic phenomenology—a practical philosophy that looks at understanding lived human experience through interpretative back-and-forth dialogue and storytelling—to look at the *experience of designing*. The goal of this research is to explore how applying a hermeneutic framework changes designers' understanding of their own lived experiences—as well as the lived experiences of their teams and clients— optimally fostering an evolution towards new perspectives and more imaginative, ethical design futures.

Interview Procedures

- Interview experts and industry professionals in the areas of visual communication design, hermeneutic phenomenology, performativity/embodiment, and/or gender studies.
- Each interview will follow a hermeneutic format that aims at achieving understanding by describing and interpreting lived experience through a sustained back-and-forth dialogue, emphasizing the ways in which the individual (the self) is inherently situated in and affecting the process.
- The dialogue will focus on the overlap between the interviewee's particular area of expertise and my research project.
- Our interview will follow a guide and lead-in questions, but otherwise the goal is to have an "emergent" conversation that follows an open-ended format.
- Interviews will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes.
- IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS: In-person interviews will be conducted in a quiet room where interruptions will be minimal (a private office or studio).
- PHONE INTERVIEWS: When an in-person interview is not feasible the interview will place over the phone via internet (VoIP) such as Skype, Source-Connect Now, etc.

Themes

Discussions will center around the following overarching themes:

- The designer's "life world" *(What is the story of my experience as a graphic designer?)*
- The personal nature of decision making *(How do I make decisions within my design practice?)*
- The embodied nature of decision making *(How does being a female designer affect the way I make decisions in my design practice?)*

Lead-in Questions for everyone:

Questions should start broad and become increasingly focused.

- Can you state your name, work title, and how long you've been working in your field?
- What brought you to your field? Why do you continue to work in it?
- How would you describe your cultural milieu? What are the elements that make up the culture that surrounds you? (pop culture, language, sociopolitical beliefs, religious beliefs, etc.)
- Do you think that living where you live (and having these cultural experiences) affect the way you design? In what ways? Or, how do you think it would differ if you lived somewhere else, surrounded by a different culture? If possible, provide a specific example or story.
- What role does *dialogue* play in your practice?

- What role does *reflection* play in your practice?
- In my thesis research, I'm interested in looking at the way our personal, embodied selves affect our work. Do you see your design decisions as being largely based on logic, or based on personal, subjective impressions?
- If you were to make your practice more logical, what would this look like? If you were to make it more subjective and personal, what would this look like?
- Have your perceptions and interpretations of your work environment shifted through the course of your career? If yes, provide an example or story.
- Does your physical body and/or gender affect the way you make decisions? In what ways? (provide an example). Do you think your career or design would be different if you were in a different body, or a different gender?
- *Final interview question:* is there anything else you'd like to share?

Lead-in Questions for Designers:

- What is it that makes someone a designer, in your opinion?
- At what moment did you "become" a designer, in your own mind?
- If you were in an empty room and asked to design something, what necessary things would you need? Like a "Designer's List of Must-Haves".
- How would you describe the daily work of designing ("design practice") to a non-designer? What specific activities does it involve?
- If you were to describe your design practice, from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to sleep, what would this narrative look like (your daily routines, habits)?

Post-Interview Procedures

Discuss next steps with participants:

- I will upload the raw data (audio recording) from your interview into a secure, encrypted Google Drive folder within 2 weeks of the interview date. You will have the ability to edit, change or withdraw data that you have contributed, via an ongoing back-and-forth dialogue with me, for the 6 weeks following your receipt of the raw data (i.e. from the day that I email the link to the Google Drive folder containing your interview audio).
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- Portions of audio data recorded during your interview(s) may also be used as audio files or as written quotes in this short documentary film.

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- The research portion of this MDes project will run from December 2017 to no later than September 2018.
- Do you have any questions or concerns?

Reminder about opting out

- You can ask to have any data collected during your interview(s) withdrawn from the data base and not included in the study by notifying me by email (smjackso@ualberta.ca) within 8 weeks from the interview date. In the event of opting out, the digital data from that interview will be permanently deleted from the digital voice recorder and any other digital storage location, and paper records will be shredded and recycled. Records will be kept stating what data has been erased/destroyed, when, and how.

Participant Reimbursement for Costs

- You will receive a cash reimbursement for any costs associated getting to and from interviews (parking, cab fees, child care, etc.) for up to two visits for a total value of $50.00 CAD.
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INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

Study Title:
An evolving self-portrait of the designer designing: Applying a hermeneutic phenomenology framework towards better understanding the experience of designing

Research Investigator:
Sarah Jackson
MDes Candidate
3-98 Fine Arts Building
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2C9
Phone: 780-907-3027
E-mail: smjackso@ualberta.ca

Supervisor:
Aidan Rowe
Associate Professor, Design Studies
3-77A Fine Arts Building
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- This Master of Design (MDes) thesis project applies hermeneutic phenomenology—a practical philosophy that looks at understanding lived human experience through interpretative back-and-forth dialogue and storytelling—to look at the *experience of designing*. The goal of this research is to explore how applying a hermeneutic framework changes designers' understanding of their own lived experiences—as well as the lived experiences of their teams and clients— optimally fostering an evolution towards new perspectives and more imaginative, ethical design futures.

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_____Teena Clerke_____ _____ ___24 July 2018_____

Participant's Name (printed) and Signature — Date

_____ _____

Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent — Date

_____ _____

Interview Date — Final Day to Withdraw Data (8 weeks after interview date)

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CARMA GORMAN — June 11, 2018

Participant's Name (printed) and Signature — Date

July 18, 2018

Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent — Date

April 30, 2018 — June 25, 2018

Interview Date — Final Day to Withdraw Data (8 weeks after interview date)

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

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MARCUS JAHNKE	18-02-01
Participant's Name (printed) and Signature	Date
	July 18, 2018
Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date
March 5, 2018	April 30, 2018
Interview Date	Final Day to Withdraw Data (8 weeks after interview date)

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

Study Title:
An evolving self-portrait of the designer designing: Applying a hermeneutic phenomenology framework towards better understanding the experience of designing

Research Investigator:
Sarah Jackson
MDes Candidate
3-98 Fine Arts Building
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2C9
Phone: 780-907-3027
E-mail: smjackso@ualberta.ca

Supervisor:
Aidan Rowe
Associate Professor, Design Studies
3-77A Fine Arts Building
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2C9
Phone: (780) 492-8591
E-mail: aidan.rowe@ualberta.ca

Background

- You are being invited to participate in a semi-structured interview for this research project because of your position as an expert or industry professional in the areas of visual communication design, hermeneutic phenomenology, performativity/embodiment, and/or gender studies.
- Your contact information was provided to me through my academic or professional circle of colleagues, or via articles and/or books that you have written in the areas of visual communication design, hermeneutic phenomenology, performativity/embodiment, and/or gender studies.
- The results of this study will be used in my thesis (in a video and thesis paper).
- I may also use portions of the data from this interview (both transcribed data and audio) in future academic and public presentations including podcasts, reports, articles, and similar.

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- This Master of Design (MDes) thesis project applies hermeneutic phenomenology—a practical philosophy that looks at understanding lived human experience through interpretative back-and-forth dialogue and storytelling—to look at the *experience of designing*. The goal of this research is to explore how applying a hermeneutic framework changes designers' understanding of their own lived experiences—as well as the lived experiences of their teams and clients— optimally fostering an evolution towards new perspectives and more imaginative, ethical design futures.

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- Your participation in the proposed research offers you no direct benefit.
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Robyn Stuart R.S~t	Febraury 3, 2018
Participant's Name (printed) and Signature	Date
	July 18, 2018
Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date
Febraury 3, 2018	March 31, 2018
Interview Date	Final Day to Withdraw Data (8 weeks after interview date)

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MDes Candidate
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Phone: 780-907-3027
E-mail: smjackso@ualberta.ca

Supervisor:
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Associate Professor, Design Studies
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_____	_____
Participant's Name (printed) and Signature	Date
_____	July 18, 2018 _____
Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date

March 3, 2018 _____	April 28, 2018 _____
Interview Date	Final Day to Withdraw Data (8 weeks after interview date)

COYNE Richard <Richard.Coyne@ed.ac.uk> Mar 23

to me

Hi Sarah,

The file you sent does't seem to allow any kind of annotation. But this email should suffice in place of a signature. I say some critical things about the University of Cambridge approach to hermeneutics. By all means transcribe that for your own research use, but don't quote or replay that part of the audio in your public or online creative work. I also take it for granted that none of the audio will be used for any kind of parodic presentation or similar sound artwork, e.g. that involves rearrangement or repetition of words or phrases. Good luck with your project.

- Richard

Richard Coyne
Reflections on technology, media and culture blog http://richardcoyne.com
Professor of Architectural Computing
Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (ESALA)
Edinburgh College of Art
The University of Edinburgh
(room 3.55) 20 Chambers Street EH1 1JZ Scotland
Tel: +44 131 650 2332; Fax: +44 131 651 4335; Mobile: 07968 728447
http://www.eca.ed.ac.uk/architecture-landscape-architecture/richard-coyne

<InformationLetterandConsentForm-RichardCoyne-2018.pdf>

Appendix B:
Transcribed Interview Data by Interviewee

Dr. Carma Gorman
Associate Professor,
Department of Art and Art History,
College of Fine Arts,
University of Texas at Austin

Date of interview: April 30, 2018
Location: Gorman's office at the University of Texas at Austin
Interview length: 68 minutes

Interview conducted by Sarah Jackson
Portions of interview transcribed on June 5, 2018 by Sarah Jackson

Overall Notes

- Did her PhD in Material Culture at Berkeley
- Thesis work was design-oriented, unusual for that time: more of a "design historian" in an art history program
- From rural South Dakota (farmer-families, practical people)
- 20th Century USA on material culture
- Interested in "everyday things that have an impact on everybody"
- Interested in "interpreting stuff" and "what values and priorities informed the way that thing is" (6:40)
- Currently looking at law, "legal code that determines" how people act, which grew out of her interest in streamlining and how many different theories there are around it (12:00-14:00)
- Current book covers 1890 to the present that tells the story of American design, from the perspective of law, legal parameters, rules of play and how that shapes what companies do.

Gorman 4:45 "It seems more important to work on the everyday things and to understand what is happening with these everyday things around you and how they shape your behaviours, where they came from, how they were made and who made them and with what kind of materials."

Sarah 7:20 Well, what is good design? Who decided that, and at what point did that start, and would it have been different if different people had been in charge when they were deciding what 'good' design was?

Gorman 11:10 "It's not cool to have one set of rules for some people in positions of power, and a different set that everyone else has to follow."

Gorman 14:31 "What I don't love is the idea that tastes change (pounds table). Like to me, the idea that, 'well, styles changed because tastes changed'. That is not even an answer, that's like pushing the answer down. Taste isn't any better an explanation than just saying, you know - tastes changed? Well, why did they change, like what exactly made them change? So I was looking at formal education, posture [streamlining] and all those things as a means of saying, here is a concrete thing that we could point to and say, here's how a taste might change."

Gorman 15:32 "So advice literature doesn't necessarily hold that much sway over people. So I'm like, well what does hold sway over people? What could change that could actually change people's tastes or really change styles? What sorts of things would make people really have to change what they're doing or what they think?"

Gorman 16:42 "How do I even begin figuring out what kind of laws might have changed around that time that might have encouraged people to kind of suddenly start adopting a really different aesthetic, especially for machine re-design, because that's where you see it the most."

Gorman 17:07 "My answer now would be, yeah it does have to do with products' liability, it has to do with workman's comp laws to some extent in the teams, but I think especially for consumer products it has a lot to do with changes in products' liability laws."

Gorman 17:59 "That's how machines throughout the 19th century looked, everything was sort of visible, without a skin on it. So I was trying to figure out what is it about the skins, why is everybody sort of cladding these things in these skins all in the same moments in the '30s but especially the '40s."

Gorman 20:31 "This aesthetic shift, especially towards really covering things over and thinking more about interfaces, and - do you have to stick your hand

in to turn a machine on and off, or are the controls somewhere more gathered together in a less dangerous - like there are some serious, major differences in the way that interfaces look between the 19th and then the early and mid 20th century. Those definitely have to do with worker's comp and also with product liability laws. So the idea is that, when you cover a lot of that stuff over you're minimizing the chance that someone is going to get a finger stuck in there, or that a kid is going to - you know how fans, early-20th century fans, like a table fan, I'm going to draw [grabs a pen and paper, draws it out]. An early 20th-century fan, if you imagine it having [draws] blades, right, and then it will have a wire guard but it might only have [a few pieces of wire]. Okay, there's your wire guard [draws] and there's the fan - you can, like, stick your finger in there, and these are back in the days of metal blades, brass or bronze: they are sharp and you absolutely could slice a carrot by [putting it up to the blade]. So people did lose fingers and dogs stuck their noses in, and kids - it was bad. Today, if you buy a fan, wires are no more than, like, a centimetre apart, and [the fan blades] are plastic. But that is not how these things were [in the past] and it's partly because there was no incentive. Like, it didn't matter, it was like caveat emptors: you were dumb enough to stick your finger in there? What were you thinking? That is *your* problem, not our problem."

Gorman 24:31 "Unlike most of Europe, [the United States] doesn't grant copyrights for three-dimensional, functional stuff. That is a national peculiarity and makes our intellectual property laws really different from most of Europe."

Gorman 25:05 "That is the perpetual debate, within intellectual property law policy circles, is: does granting people intellectual property protections incentivize design, or does it stifle design by locking down…"

Sarah 25:25 As a graphic designer, you know, the idea that 'nothing is new under the sun' - everything is borrowed or learnt, or you're always building with other things, things that other people have invented. So, personally, it drives me crazy a little bit [the idea of intellectual property]. But as an illustrator I also understand. I don't want someone stealing my illustration and putting on a product and then selling it.

Gorman 26:00 "My own sense, if I were writing policy, I think copyright duration is way too long, I think it is stifling for sure now, stifling rather than an incentive."

Gorman 27:05 "I mean, Disney is well-known for policing its copyrights and trademarks really vigorously, as is Apple, for example, they have, I don't know, armies of attorneys who are very diligent about pursuing patent infringements, design patent trademark, all of it."

Gorman 27:41 "The burden of policing infringements - I hear and I assume everywhere but definitely in the U.S. - the burden of policing intellectual property falls on *you*. So if you know you're not going to have the money to, like, sue Apple or whatever (laughs). Yeah, it's another one of those instances where if you have a lot of money and power you are likely to be able to just bully your way through a lot of things that aren't quite kosher."

Gorman 30:10 "I think designers, historically, have known virtually nothing about the laws that govern their own professional practice, 3D designers, 2D is a little different, I think graphic designers it's copyright, it's trademark, it's not as hard."

Sarah 30:35 It's still complicated, though. Like intellectual property… there's still definitely an education curve.

Gorman 30:34 "There sure is. And I don't know about Canada, but in the U.S. I do not know any programs that are doing an actually good job of teaching design students any of that."

Sarah 35:35 Why do the skins look the way they do?

Gorman 35:40 "Some of that can be explained, as Jeff Meikle did years ago, it has to do with, what forms can you stamp sheet metal in? Or what forms is it easy to do injection moulding - rounded corners are easier than sharp edges in both cases, I mean there are technical reasons why if you're going to stamp metal or mould plastic … where rounded corners do, in fact, make those forms possible. They can be stronger if they have certain kinds of bends, you know, ridges and things stamped into them, it helps. Technical and material constraints, especially with early plastic moulding, they've gotten better at that over time, for sure. So I think that would explain part of the forms, but the legal part of it explains why skins - if we're calling them skins - why cladding, why guards and protective things, why hide the guts of the machine in the first place, and I think the reasons that designers give for why they do that, like 'oh, it looks nice' - I don't think that has anything to do with why manufacturers

actually spent the money to do it, I don't think they cared, in many cases. I think they ultimately did realize like, oh yeah, it does look nicer, that's great, but I don't think that's their initial motivation for why they were doing it. I think it does have to do with liability, primarily."

Sarah 37:41 So if people can't see it, then they're less likely to tinker with it and electrocute themselves, or…

Gorman 37:47 "And less likely, again, if the moving parts are hidden somehow or the electrical wires and circuits are hidden, it's less likely you're going to shock yourself or get some piece of you caught in moving machinery. That's a really crucial part of it."

Sarah 38:28 I'm interested in how people can consciously change tastes. In particular, I'm thinking about how the design industry was formed by men. In [Gorman's previous articles] you talk about the designers' designing beautiful objects, for female consumers even, or these male architects and car designers who are designing these streamlined car bodies and streamlined objects that mirror the female form. And it made me curious about: well, if there had been female designers then would things look different. And I'm also curious, it seems like there are beautiful objects for female consumers, but it's based off the female form - well, do both female and male consumers prefer the 'curves' of a female form? Or is that, again, a taste that is somehow been put in place because the [baseline] of design is based off male tastes, and then we as all designers, both male and female, are taught that these are the principles of good design in all of our institutions across the world, and then we therefore perpetuate this.

Gorman 40:15 "In Greek art, if you think way back, the form of the male body is the standard of beauty, the woman's body is understood to be irregular and incommensurate. There are those measurements, I don't know, distance between nipples and navel and all these kinds of geometric ideals in Greek art that actually still exist in the medieval world too, and Leonardo's Vitruvian Man, and all those kinds of ideas that man is the measure of all things, and that male body is the standard, and the Corbusier with his modular man, and all that idea that the male is the standard doesn't go away exactly, even in the 20th century. Yet, in terms of seductive things - I think the idea is that the male body is the 'rational' body, the female body is this desirable, if you want to sell something maybe it would look more like the female body because you're

appealing to somebody's, you know, emotional or sexual or whatever, but that that's the seductive one that you want to somehow possess, I guess, as opposed to the rational, geometric male body which is not the thing - I don't know, I'm just thinking this through on the fly. Because the male body isn't as often discussed by designers, at least in the 20th century U.S., as like an inspiration for forms of products, it is much more often the female body that they're like - 'it's like Betty Grable's skin, no doubt her kidneys are adorable, but I like her better with skin than without', you know that's Raymond Lowry saying something like that."

Sarah 42:27 It's like, you're buying products and women for a longtime were literally objects that were owned by men, and I wonder if that's part of it, women as a consumable.

Gorman 42:43 "Yeah, I think that's where I'm heading with it, is that - yeah, they were prostitutes, right, I mean that is a, you can buy a woman, at least for awhile, you can sort of buy her time, but yes. Also, coverture, 19th century and early 20th century laws, that basically mean that women don't own property or don't have money or don't have bank accounts, that's all their dad or their husband or their brother or whatever."

Gorman 43:20 "You asked why would women want things to look like [the female form], I think yeah, women are accustomed to, they understand, just as men do, they maybe understand the male gaze as normative, that's John Berger, he talks about this whole thing of women's own consciousness of always being looked at, and Laura Mulvay talking about the male gaze too… I think women are accustomed and internalize the idea that women's bodies are beautiful and desirable and all of that. I don't think that strikes women as unusual. They're accustomed to seeing women in that way."

Gorman 44:30 "To answer the question of how do you change taste, I guess one way is you expose some of those things that are happening, like why those things are the way they are. Like, call attention to, why is it that people would use the forms of the female body to make products appealing to female consumers, how does that make sense, why would that make sense, and trying to unpack that would be one way, I suppose, but most people aren't going to read stuff like that. So I think, if you really want to figure out how to change tastes, I think that's what regulation does. It maybe doesn't even change tastes, but it does change what's available on the market and as advertisers have to

somehow now sell those new forms, you know they're going to argue that they're improved, that they're better, they're not going to say 'the law made us do this crappy thing and now our product's crappier, they're going to somehow frame it and proclaim it as a new and better improvement on their product. So that's how you change tastes, is you sell these things that maybe are a result of choices you didn't even make, but you somehow try to claim that they're better."

Sarah 45:58 One of the things I found so interesting about it was that it was just a few people, this one woman wrote this book that then got used as a manual. Like this idea - obviously, you want to feel like as one person that you can change something, but I'm always fascinated when I hear things like that, where it's just a few people, a few doctors, a few people who had an idea, and it became standard in the schools and then these children are raised with that, and then you see it appearing in the design [work].

Gorman 46:30 "I mean, I'm not 100% sure that I'm convinced by my own argument. I think it's a compelling argument, but whether that's really what went down … any of those [other arguments, Jeffrey Meikle, Christina -, Ellen Lupton] all of those could be factors in that, in why streamlining looks the way it does. I do feel like the role of laws and regulations and standards in what we think of as 'taste', I just think it's been completely overlooked. These kinds of legal constraints, no one's ever really talked about it in any systematic way as a thing that shapes what we tend to explain away as 'taste'. I'm beginning to think taste [laughs], like I don't want to ever talk about it again. I went from being super fascinated by it and how would people change tastes or how would they develop certain tastes or value certain forms, and that was what the formal education [argument] was, but I've begun to think - so I was looking at things from the consumer side, now I'm more interested in looking at the manufacturer's side, again I feel like designers are almost… irrelevant… I don't even think they even get what the constraints are, and I think there are reasons why it has been useful, to both the design professions and maybe manufacturers, to not have designers be aware of a lot of those constraints and to just let them do whatever their crazy thing is and then have the manufacturers and their legal teams filter what actually gets produced, like do a kind of risk assessment and decide."

Sarah 48:30 Designers are definitely cogs in huge machines when you're looking at mass produced [objects].

Gorman 48:35 "Ultimately what I'm arguing is that in many ways it's actually lawmakers and attorneys and people that you wouldn't think of as 'designers' who are in fact pulling these kinds of levers that we think of as 'taste' and 'style'. It's like the Wizard of Oz behind the curtain who is doing stuff, that you would never even think to look behind that curtain for answers to some of this stuff."

Sarah 49:30 I was curious what you thought of a kind of 'then' and 'now' in terms of self-monitoring then versus the selfie and instagram culture of now. I feel like self monitoring and looking at yourself as if you were someone else, you know?, have become so constant. People are filming themselves doing their everyday life and posting it online and viewing it, right, always looking at yourself as the 'other'.

Gorman 50:11 "Yes, it's exactly what John Berger says about women, always being conscious of how they look to men, from other people. Yeah, I agree, that [self-monitoring] has become even more intensified."

Gorman 53:43 "I'm basically, I'm old enough, I'm like almost 50, and I'm established in my career, I do not have to have a website, I do not have to have Instagram, I do not have to have Twitter, I don't have to have any of that, I can continue on my trajectory, doing what I want, without having to constantly be selling myself. And I really - I mean, I have a LinkedIn page [laughs] that's as good as it gets. I have a web page at [University of Texas] that's just, like, here's my name and what I do. And that's it. I don't need - I'm married, I'm not on, wait - Tinder? Is that it? Or Bumble …. I've exempt myself from all of that."

Gorman 55:20 "I guess the surveillance culture, self-monitoring, I just feel like it's intensifying and intensifying and intensifying, we are already living in the dystopia of the science fiction novel. It's just because the way it has happened, there's enough benefit to giving up your privacy… you get enough benefit in exchange."

Gorman 56:51 "You're making a trade. I mean, the benefits don't primarily accrue to you, primarily your data is valuable to people [companies] for various purposes."

Gorman 57:39 "I think I'm old enough, and have read enough science fiction, to really resent and be terrified of the idea of people thinking they know me. I don't like it."

Sarah 58:43 How does that surveillance culture affect the way we design, this always everyone looking at themselves, and if so many decisions are made at that corporate level, what kind of control do designers, as 'middle-people', have in affecting those tastes or decisions?

Gorman 59:46 "[Elizabeth Guffey, Purchase College] was like, really what we also need to make sure people are learning is that they learn civil rights laws, like having to do with accessibility, and also privacy, and that, oh my god, we need to somehow imbue them with notions of ethics that will allow them to make an argument against some of these... basically there need to be more people who have a sense of, I hate to say something so clear as 'right and wrong', but ethical/not ethical, who are willing to make an argument at a table where decisions are being made. For greater privacy, for not...

Sarah 1:00:34 Thinking of the consumers before the corporations?

Gorman 1:00:38 "Yeah, right. And just thinking about consequences, generally, of some of these choices.

Gorman 1:00:51 "I think ultimately that is the thing that drives me the craziest, is again that notion of, wait, so why don't those rules apply to *you*, what is that means you don't have to ... why is it you are somehow not operating under the same rules that the rest of us have agreed we're operating under?"

Gorman 1:01:34 "I don't have the suggestion for what's better than capitalism. I do not necessarily think a state-regulated economy is preferable, it seems like in fact it may not be. So I don't have a suggestion - if I'm going to complain about capitalism I don't know what to say to replace it with. I feel like, okay let's work with it, it's here. ... So I feel like even if that overarching socio-economic system stayed in place, I feel like within even what may not be a perfect system, one can still make things more equitable, more just, more fair.

Sarah 1:02:38 I'm wondering how much, as the "middle people", how much designers can actually control, like what influence...

Gorman 1:02:51 "It's unclear"

Sarah 1:02:52 It's good to think, oh, well, what if I [as a designer] have very little control over how or what things get created?

Gorman 1:03:03 "Most of us do have control. Like, we can complain - and then be marginalized for being too much of a complainer - or sometimes we can work our way into positions where we *can* influence things. But I would say this is the problem to me with design education, is that we aren't actually preparing design students to know the right things, to be sitting at the tables where those decisions are made."

Sarah: Like policy decisions or laws…

Gorman 1:03:37 "Or just business. I mean, again, I think there is something about knowing the rules of capitalism, or the rules of U.S. law. If you don't know anything about those rules then none of your decisions, your decisions are - stupid."

Sarah: Like that saying, you need to know the rules to break them.

Gorman 1:03:57 "Or you need to know the rules so you know what's feasible to propose at a meeting and not just something that's like, whack, not realistic. So that's the part where I think we could be doing better with design education… I mean, but it's not just design education, it's partly business education, it's all of the educations and figuring out ways to make sure that people are somewhat cognizant."

Sarah1:04:34 The reward systems in design, they reward creativity, off-the-wall ideas. They don't reward practicality. Practicality is not a trait that is sought-after in terms of hiring designers, so designers don't cultivate that because it's not going to get them the awesome job as creative director or whatever.

Gorman 1:05:16 "It's the arty, rule-breaking people that somehow get celebrated in design culture, typically. Not always…

Sarah: But typically. It's the Stephan Sagmeister's of the world…

Gorman 1:05:28 "It's the Sagmeister's. Yeah, exactly."

Sarah 1:07:48 Reading lists of names and dates is… so boring.

Gorman 1:07:52 "Nope. I agree, and I'm a design historian. I'm not really into that, that's not, I mean you can look that stuff up, and there are plenty of textbooks that will teach you that, but I feel like the more interesting things about design history are whether you can *use* it."

Marcus Jahnke, PhD
Research Institutes of Sweden
Division Built Environment
Gruppchef RISE Stadsutveckling
Group Manager RISE City Development

Date of interview: March 5, 2018
Location: audio-recorded phone interview
Interview length: 90 minutes

Interview conducted by Sarah Jackson
Portions of interview transcribed on May 15, 2018 by Sarah Jackson

Notes

- *University in Gothenburg, Sweden*
- *PhD research thesis between 2007-2013*
- *Looked at how design can contribute to innovation, with "Business and Design Lab" and "Swedish Industrial Design Foundation"*
- *Found 5 companies with no or little previous experience with design, and matched one designer with one company, and bring them on a journey or through a design process for something that the company identified as a barrier to innovation.*

Jahnke 9:31 "And I had sort of found my creative process, but I didn't feel at all creative in this research project, so that was a bit frustrating."

Jahnke 14:19 "I became more interested in gender issues, issues around equality issues related to design, and less about the environment, so I started to focus on that … how design sometimes contributes to inequality and what can design do to take a critical stance"

Jahnke 15:25 "And maybe that's also why I was rather vague when talking to the companies, because I had difficulties articulating what it was that design was supposed to do."

Jahnke 15:46 "Somewhere after that first year when I was frustrated that I was not creative, I started to look at what the designers were doing in the companies. It was interesting because, the designers were not really doing, in one way, what we thought they were going to do. Maybe we thought that they

were going to, you know, have some creativity sessions, some idea-generation sessions, and you know, be very 'creative' in that way, what you see often, in that time … I don't really know why I thought it would be like that … What I saw was that, they did not engage the companies in creativity sessions or anything like that. Rather, they started to ask questions about what the companies were doing, why they were doing that, about their customers, who they were, maybe contrasted what the company was doing with some other company … they started to ask a lot of questions. And in some cases, quite critical questions."

Jahnke 19:23 "I was looking for ways to articulate what that was, what they [the designers] were doing, but I lacked the vocabulary, the concepts, the words, to talk about it. I could tell stories about what was going on, but I couldn't say, *what is that? What are they doing?*"

Jahnke 19:45 "So, after maybe two years, having even more so stories and even better understanding of what was going on, I stumbled upon hermeneutics and philosophy of meaning-making."

Jahnke 20:19 "Suddenly it seemed that hermeneutics could help me articulate and understand what was going on, in a way that was very much more nuanced, with better words and better concepts."

Jahnke 20:19 "Because, gender issues it's a … it's easy to find situations where different interpretations matter and have consequences and so on. Maybe that's a rich way to start to understand design practice.

Jahnke 29:00 "It is interesting, because… with design specifically having such influence on the products (shapes, colours, so on) from a gender point of view, it is a bit paradoxical. Maybe there are 6 or 7 articles out there, something like that."

Sarah 34:18 Why do you think there is a lack of research looking at hermeneutics [in design]?

Jahnke 34:22 "Yeah, because I think maybe we can state that as a fact, that there is very little… There was a large interest in trying to understand design in the 80s—with Schon and some others, Nigel Cross. maybe … and also Kia Dorst and some others—but since then, the last 10 years—5, 7 years, perhaps—there's

been some focus on design thinking in design management, and more about the application of design in new concepts, a little bit what my thesis was supposed to be about. And it seems in most articles they seem to be content with referring to Schon and maybe Nigel Cross and some others, to say things about design as a practice of framing and reframing, and things like that, but they never go much deeper than that. Either everything has already been said by those other authors, or maybe hermeneutics is too far away academically from design studies, it could be that. They are, just like with innovation that was so separated from design studies, maybe it's that in academia the fields are so separate from each other. And maybe there have been other interests like critical design issues, sustainability and other things that have been on the minds of design studies."

Sarah 36:51 I'm curious how you would personally define hermeneutics, as you think it relates to design work?

Jahnke 38:26 "Maybe I don't say so much that it is a philosophy, maybe I say a little bit more that it's a theory of how people understand things, what goes on when a person tries to understand something. And then maybe I say something that understanding something new is very typical of being a human being, but more activatived or more active when we are young, when we are children most everything is new to us. I would say maybe that to understand something is a process and a challenge and learning is a lot about that. Learning is understanding in a specific context. So… the theory of how people understand new things, or things, something like that."

Jahnke 40:41 "You rarely have the chance in a talk or presentation to dig as deep into what hermeneutics is… because it IS a bit complicated to start to talk about horizon of understanding, pre-understanding and these things."

Sarah 42:30 Sometimes … if I talk about hermeneutics too simply, like oh it's about dialogue, back-and-forth conversation, then people challenge me on that and say what's new about that? Obviously, [in] design practice we have dialogue, we have clients, we talk to each other, this is not new or relevant.

Sarah 43:36 The prevalent metaphor of problem solving for design practice and how it's lacking. It's one of those things, where I talk about that in my practice. As a graphic designer talking to clients I'll say, oh the PROBLEM that we're solving here. I'll use this idea of problem solving, but … something

feels lacking in it, and doesn't sit well with me. It's not right, it's not the best metaphor, and partly just because of the negative framing, talking about a design situation as a negative, as a problem.

Jahnke 44:25 "I was very intrigued by the metaphor of problem solving. And also because that idea that when the problem is solved it sort of goes away. Especially now these days I work with issues related to city planning, social issues related to city planning and so on, so in that context everything is so complex there is no problem that can really solved, it's always an ongoing process, engaging with difficult issues or challenging issues. But to talk of it as 'problem solving' is - this goes back to the insight of the 60s of the 'wicked problem', but even that is problematic as a concept.

Jahnke 45:31 "I wish more people would challenge that metaphor of problem solving. It's so ingrained."

Jahnke 46:06 "In my grad work I used the Google function to look through the literature through the past 100 years to see what was the most prevalent. And I did that during the thesis on problem solving, and it started coming to written language in the 1920s. But then I did it again the other day, and looked at problem solving again, and the word 'problem-solving' is leavening out. But another word, challenge, is starting to rise. And I feel I recognize it around me, that people start talking more about challenges than problems"

58:30 The reason that I decided to go back to school for my Master's is, I just felt like I never had the opportunity or the time to think deeply about things. So I felt like I was creating stuff, but I just didn't feel like anyone spent enough time thinking deeply about the underlying issues of the things that we create, and it bothered me.

Jahnke 1:04:47 "Everyone says that they try to understand something through the eye, the need of the user."
Jahnke 1:05:06 "If you are open to someone else, there is a space - of course this is following hermeneutics, but - there is a space where you can understand better the other, for example the clients, and I think designers try to open up that space as far as possible. Most designers: some are totally focused on their own expression and all that, especially in fashion maybe, but I think designers are typically often really keen to understand what the need is."

Jahnke 1:06:04 "I think that the experience of the designer is that he or she is very focused on understanding the user. And maybe that is why they say, like they do, that they really try to be objective, because they're really trying to be objective."

Jahnke 1:06:27 "But at the same time, sort of following hermeneutics again, the key to being able to understand the client is that you can draw from your own experiences and your own understanding. You can never be blank. So your own experience, and knowledge and so on, is an asset. It's something you can use."

Jahnke 1:07:00 "But we live in a tradition where downstream, in the natural sciences where you are not supposed to influence an experiment of someone else because that's negative, and it is in science, but society shares that understanding of the subjective as something negative, and rarely sees it as an asset."

Sarah 1:07:41 This idea that the subjective does not have as much value as the objective.

Jahnke 1:08:50 "But in design it's rarely about natural science phenomena. It's almost always about things that are about norms, preferences, senses, all the things that are part of culture, in a way. And to interpret anything relating to culture you need to have culture as a kind of tool, because it's more or less the only tool that you have."

Jahnke 1:10:35 "The strange thing is perhaps that, with the same company, the same people in the group but with different designers, I think that they would have done rather different things."

Jahnke 1:11:09 "It's also part of this 'problem-solving' idea that we have, that there is only one solution, that the outcome should be the best solution. But maybe there are a number of different solutions or outcomes that are equally good, and they could be rather different."

Jahnke 1:11:30 "Of course the solution or whatever is produced must relate to the producer or to the company, it must make sense in relation to what the company produces. I mean, that's really important and maybe that's why people try to avoid the personal quite a lot, because it IS about the company, it

IS about the user. There has to be a logic, there has to be meaning. But still it could be different things… and the difference in what comes up could be because the different designers have different pre-understandings, and different backgrounds, and different assets to draw from when interpreting what the company needs."

Jahnke 1:17:34 "The personal preferences, pre-understandings do matter quite a lot. And maybe the designer would be surprised. … It would be interesting to do that kind of study"

Sarah 1:18:40 How to develop your own awareness of the process and what you know of yourself, and I was curious what you have done, or that you've seen other designers or people do, as a way to develop their own self-awareness through a design process, for example. Like tools, or questions or processes that they can use to be more aware of their own pre-understandings.

Jahnke 1:19:28 "The things that comes to mind is that I have seen interviews with experienced designers where they talk about their design practice … it seems that experienced designers often have some kind of diary where they write things, often active in collecting material, reflecting on things they find, could be used articles or a product or a piece of art or whatever, maybe something in nature. Often they are [having] a living reflection going on about the world around them, and they often collect things and surround themselves with things that matter to them. Seems like some kind of *bildung* manifested there. (pause) Maybe in a particular design project, maybe I would pin up what I like, or some of kind of inspiration images, or something that comes to mind, depending on what kind of design it is."

Jahnke 1:19:28 "I haven't seen any, but I'm sure there are, active ways of sort of articulating something like, 'okay, here I am at the [design] project, right now I feel like my reactions are based on these, drawn on, reflecting on, early in the project I felt like it was like *this* and now I have a different understanding'. Some kind of active reflection on things like that. But I think, mostly, designers with a short project just works, and maybe the reflection is more part of an overall practice learning. I'm not sure."

Sarah 1:22:35 I feel like this sort of active reflection of the designer on their own bias or prejudice or pre-understandings is important, but very difficult

to bring in on a project-by-project basis. And so my sense is that it's something that a designer would have to do more in their overall practice, just as an overall, underlying thing, where they're touching base or reflecting on this awareness of themselves. But I haven't experienced, I haven't seen, or maybe I just haven't asked enough designers, but I haven't seen this or seen it talked about very often.

Jahnke 1:23:30 "We are doing work now, me and some colleagues, we call it 'norm-critical design' or 'norm-creative design'. These are projects where it really does matter quite a lot what your prejudices or pre-understanding is, because it has to do with gender discrimination or some different types of discrimination. We have looked in design literature and design methods to find methods that somehow activate a reflection on your own pre-understanding, but we haven't found anything really."

Jahnke 1:24:21 "What we have found is methods in gender equality work in organizations, for example. There, there are methods for becoming aware of your prejudice. Like there is the 'Privilege Walk'. For example, if you work with a group of people you line them up beside each other and call out different questions … and the question could be, 'I find it easy to negotiate the public transportation system'. And if you feel you have a problem, you take a step forward. So that's an active method for becoming aware of your privileges and prejudice. But in design I haven't seen anything, and it's strange"

Sarah 1:26:05 I'm so glad you mentioned this, because I never even thought to look at industries that specifically provide consultation services around gender equality or diversity at work, people who come into workplaces to train staff or management or HR to deal with these issues, I never even thought to look at those practices, and what those people bring in."

Jahnke 1:27:06 "This is a rich field for inventing new types of methods for design."

1:27:22 I was trying to think of tools that could come out of my research that would be worthwhile or valid or interesting for designers in the field. I was considering something around how you could get designers to ask themselves these questions and think about priviledge or gender or diversity just by themselves in their own practice."

Jahnke 1:27:49 "If you do that, maybe articulate it or describe it in a way so that prejudice isn't necessarily negative, but more in a neutral way: tools that somehow make you aware both the negative luggage, maybe prejudice that may risk blinding you to some aspects of the user's need, but also your positive luggage or assets in terms of experiences, so maybe similar situations or knowledge about something that is related to what you're working, from your private life or your family, you see what I mean."

Sarah 1:28:41 Yes! I'm so glad you brought that up, because that is something I found really compelling in the hermeneutic literature, this idea of viewing prejudice not as a negative thing, but as necessary for learning. Everyone comes with this prejudice and it has a positive connotation also.

Jahnke 1:29:06 "When you have learned things through life, you learn how to recognize similarities, about history, all those things are the only means you have to understand new situations, even though in that new situation there is also something new to learn, but without those assets you wouldn't understand anything in the new situation, it would just be impossible to understand. Because any situation is so complex, it's made up of so many different aspects."

Dr. Richard Coyne
Professor of Architectural Computing
Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (ESALA)
Edinburgh College of Art
The University of Edinburgh

Date of interview: March 15, 2018
Location: audio-recorded phone interview
Interview length: 93 minutes

Interview conducted by Sarah Jackson
Portions of interview transcribed on May 28, 2018 by Sarah Jackson

Notes

- Research: looked at computing and computing design
- In the early 1990s moved into hermeneutic understanding, still looking at computing
- Currently looking at the place of nature through the digital age
- Digital media constancy and hermeneutic philosophy
- Architect by training, practiced as an architect for 5 years
- Did a degree in landscape architecture
- Taught architecture and architecture theory, where hermeneutics comes to play
- Snodgrass is still in Sydney, Australia, moved in the 1990s to Edinburgh
- University of Edinburgh: teaches architecture history and theory. Mainly design and digital media master's degree supervisor
- Started PhD in Sydney in 1981, involved in computer-aided design. Fascinated with computers, got involved in AI research. PhD: "Logic Models of Design" and book "Knowledge Based Design Systems"
- 1989: started working as an academic at Sydney University
- Snodgrass was finishing his PhD at the same time: he was more on the "humanist" side of design, Coyne was on the "techy" side. Snodgrass was a mentor and introduced Coyne to hermeneutics
- 1992: sabbatical to Cambridge University (England) and was exposed to some hermeneutical scholars in the architecture department: Dalibor Vesseley (published a book, talks about hermeneutics, Gadamer, phenomenology and Heidegger)
- Paul Kidder book: "Gadamer for Architects" (series of books called *Thinkers for Architects*)

- Main source on phenomenology and architecture would be Gaston Bachelard, “The Poetics of Space”
- 2006: “Interpretation in Architecture: Design as a Way of Thinking” by Snodgrass and Coyne
- Sherry Turkle (MIT) writing about identity
- “Merleau-Ponty for architects”

Coyne 7:37 “Trying to understand Heidegger it’s like trying to crack a code. It’s intellectually stimulating and rewarding in the same way that I find it stimulating and rewarding to wrestle with a technical computer problem.”

Coyne 11:38 “Whereas of course I approached Heidegger not only through Adrian (Snodgrass), we’re both reading the same stuff and Adrian would recommend texts to me, but mainly through American pragmatic philosophers who were expounding in the 80s and 90s on Heidegger and making it, I think, quite easy and straightforward, as with Gadamer. Even Richard Rorty, the American philosopher, he talked about Heidegger, but I think Hubert Dreyfus was probably one of the best. He wrote a nice book called “Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being in Time”, and it’s almost like a handbook for Heidegger and he goes right through *Being in Time* in quite a clear way.”

Coyne 13:00 “So in Britain for a long while when people would talk about hermeneutics in architecture it would be all about the Cambridge Dalibor Vesseley set and phenomenology. So that, in a way, constrained the discourse to some extent, I think.”

Coyne 14:34 “Phenomenology is a philosophy that’s in a way counter to positivism, or a rationalist view of the world, or an objectivist view, which is sort of scientism, the world is all very physical and out-there and we can understand it fully by interpreting it, but it’s predicated on a separation between the subject, me, doing this interpreting, and the object-world out there. The subject/object dichotomy. So that’s a kind of objectivist view of the world. Phenomenology, at least through Heidegger and his interpreters, has tried to break that down. We are complicit in understanding of the world and there’s no breaking out of that. And we are committed to language and that determines our understanding of the world. But there are many dimensions to this.”

Coyne 15:41 "And I guess the other aspect of phenomenology is from a design point of view. Rather than look at things dispassionately and try and understand them through mathematics and logic and computer code, we understand things by virtue of our being in the world, so we need to take account of our bodies and our embodiment, and encourage engagement in our design work with the world rather than separation."

Coyne 16:41 "As for hermeneutics, well that's a subset if you like [of phenomenology]"

Coyne 17:50 "**There are more or less four modes of hermeneutics**, or ways of thinking about hermeneutics. The term hermeneutics doesn't belong exclusively to phenomenology. There is, for want of a word, a *conservative* view of hermeneutics. So hermeneutics is the art of interpretation. So a *conservative* hermeneut, or somebody interpreting a text or a building or anything, would feel that there is some original meaning that you have to get back to, and that that meaning persists throughout all sorts of different interpretations: there is an essence, an essential meaning … so that's a conservative position, which is antithetical to what Gadamer would say."

Coyne 19:07 "The second view is more **critical**. A more neo-Marxist sort of position on interpretation. You're trying to interpret [the text or thing], but at the same time you're actually probing something about the morals and manners of [that era], and the hegemony, and exploitation of women, working class, power structures and so on. So the critical hermeneutical line would be where you're always probing beneath the surface to find this sort of corrupt core of exploitation and domination. And that's kind of a neo-Marxist position. While again, Gadamer doesn't really subscribe to that, but there are authors who do, and have written in that way and have actually criticized Gadamer from that position, because they feel Gadamer's too soft and doesn't really politically engage, and everything is sort of all about agreement between people, it's all just too gentle."

Coyne 20:15 "The third position is normally called Gadamer's position."
Coyne 20:35 "The **moderate position**, the Gadamerian position and the Heideggarian position, is where we understand a text because we come to it with expectations always, and we already have a pre-understanding even if it's ill-formed and so we interpret the text from that position. And we can never get back to some kind of independent, unprejudiced, unbiased approach to a text.

They're talking about texts but it could apply to a work of art or a building or a play or anything. So that's the moderate position."

Coyne 20:20 "I'll move to the fourth position and that is a **radical hermeneutics**, and that is more or less Jacques Derrida's position on hermeneutics."
Coyne 21:18 "The radical position that Derrida puts forward is basically my interpretation in terms of hermeneutics, is the world takes us by surprise, we can never fully anticipate - again, the idea of anticipation of a text is too, sort of soft and gentle. The important understandings emerge by virtue of catching us up from behind, rather than in front of us."
Coyne 21:56 "It implies an approach to teaching that you surprise people and you come up with unusual projects for students. This often happens in the design studio: you take familiar things and render them unfamiliar."

Coyne 23:15 "In terms of my own position, I guess I would always come back to the primacy of what I think is a very simple model. That we're redolent with expectation and by virtue of being in the world - it sounds like a conceit but it's not really - you have to be open to a challenge, to always having your pre-conceptions challenged, and you're going to be transformed in that process. So we're constantly being changed as we learn and encounter things in the world."

Coyne 23:15 "When I did the *Derrida for Architects* book I was looking at structuralism, which is a radical hermeneutical position. Structuralism is a view of the world based on the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) and since then anthropologists, loads of people have developed theories based on this language idea that he created. Which is that you have the sign, made up of the signifier and the signified … anyways, Derrida picks up on that. And certainly in architecture structuralism has been a big theme. So I would apply the hermeneutical insight to critiquing structuralism."

Coyne 25:18 "More recently, the book that's coming out in a few days time is about nature. It's called *Network Nature: The Place of Nature in the Digital Age*. So none of those terms are hermeneutical, but the thread underneath it all is semiotics, which is another set of philosophical ideas to do with meaning, and I'm critiquing that. And the next book I'm doing, working on now, is more or less having a go at semiotics from a hermeneutical perspective. The constancy is not only digital throughout but also hermeneutics throughout since the 90s. It's a case of applying hermeneutics to all these other areas."

Coyne 26:06 "I mean you could say, okay I've got it sorted now, I'm a hermeneut and I understand that and that's my position, nothing more to be said. Well, not at all. Because what about the assaults from all these other ideas, and the trends and fashions in philosophy and what-have-you, so there's no end to a hermeneutical critique, or defending hermeneutics against critique from these different quarters. So it's application of hermeneutics I think would be one way of summarizing what I've done [since my first writings]."

Coyne 28:27 "There's always push-back in academic domains."

Coyne 29:10 "I guess the main push-back has been in relation to Heidegger, because he was a nasty piece of work. He was aligned with Hitler during the war and what-have you. That was in the early days, in the 90s, people would warn me… and that was not just his personality but his philosophy of the earth."

Coyne 31:30 "Other push-back was mainly in the older days, when I was younger as well, which meant that I had less confidence so people would sort of harangue you or tell you things that you didn't have an answer to. Now I always have an answer of some sort. But in the earlier days you'd be told, well this hermeneutic stuff is just common sense, isn't it. So what are you doing - of course we interpret, this is the nature of design. But we have to move beyond that now, and look at how to instrumentalize some of these notions and see what difference it makes."

Sarah: … people would say that hermeneutics is too soft or subjective

Coyne 33:40 "The idea of hermeneutics is yes, it's normal, ordinary, what we're doing here is constructing an explanation that's highly plausible of the way understanding arises. So that's one thing, it's normal. I wouldn't ever set-up a particular project or program and say we're going to do this 'hermeneutically'."

Coyne 34:32 "Data has to be interpreted. That's the thing. We get figures and dimensions and statistics and all sorts of stuff, but I think a hermeneutical attitude, or an attitude that calls on hermeneutical notions, is that we think of that data in its context, in its situation, we recognize the power—often totally undeserved—that's put into number, and also this becomes part of our field of

expectations, from a hermeneutical point of view, and we need to be highly suspicious and contextualize. Now a lot of the push-back might come also from, if you explain that to somebody who's generating data, about buildings and environmental conditions and whatever, they may well say, yeah, but we do that, we always contextualize, we're not fooled by these numbers. But they perhaps don't articulate that, nor do they have a theory for that contextualizing happens, because the theory all resides in the numbers and the algorithms and the processes and the methods."

Coyne 40:00 "Another thing that I am is an instrumental realist, apparently. And that is somebody who realizes that say in science, hard mainstream science, you're never encountering the real thing, it's always mediated by instruments. And somebody who writes in this vein is Don Ihde and he wrote a book called "Instrumental Realism" and he invokes Heidegger and phenomenology and hermeneutics in his understanding of science, so it's a recognition that always we're dealing with these technologies, tools and instruments and mediating our understanding of the world.

"In Edinburgh, [there are discussions around] this thing about the Higg's Boson particle, this small particle that's been detected as a fundamental particle within the atomic structure. And the hard-line realists would say, yeah we're really discovering this particle, we've proved that it exists and isn't that great. But a more hermeneutical orientation, an instrumental realist would say, okay, so we've got this Boson particle accelerator in Switzerland which has spun electrons around a 6km circuit, and then you get a scatter diagram of some sort of impact, and then statistical analyses are done on that and yeah, there's a blip in the stats which is the Higg's Boson particle, I mean it's incredibly mediated by statistical technique, by multiple iterations of observation and repeating the experiment many times. To say that we've sort of 'got' the particle: what we've got is a correlation between a mathematical model (Higg's, this scientist who is at Edinburgh, invented, and good luck to him, he's got a Nobel prize for it) and this statistical data that's come out of this incredibly expensive experiment."

Coyne 42:18 "So I think that's a hermeneutical understanding, is where you appreciate and recognize that we're dealing with instruments all the time."

Coyne 42:40 "The data is always derived from instruments, it's not derived from the actual, natural thing. It's derived from instruments, interfacing with the world around us, of which we're a part ."

Sarah: 42:56 Do you think it's important to collect that data, as well as a hermeneutical understanding, to combine the two?

Coyne 43:00 "Well it's very important in politics. Just think of global warming and human-made climate change argument, and what's going on in the United States with the dissolution of the environmental protection agency, the United States withdrawing from the climate accord or whatever. I mean all those horrors, and the complete contempt for expertise, really has brought this to a head, I think. People are saying, yeah, look we have the evidence so let's not be disrespectful, I mean I say, of this data. Of course, interpreted, understood, bearing in mind that there are probabilities attached, it's all probabilistic, but yeah let's do it. That's really important in arguments at the moment. I guess we could be in a different scenario where we would be quite ignorant, I suppose, of climate change and the threats that we face if we didn't have the scientific methodologies, although you could say that by looking at rivers and streams from a phenomenological perspective without all that advanced tech we could be saying, surely that when we pump all that smoke into the air or pour the garbage into the sea that it's going to have an effect."

Coyne 46:51 "Making things, creating things, is also one of the legs of a triangulation study in a way, and that's very common, certainly in an architecture school, yeah the process of making and designing, what you learn from that, but also putting your design in imagination form or actually building it and putting it out there into a community setting or context, reveals something about the environment that you wouldn't get from looking dispassionately at data, So in the case of a construction site or a building site where you're about to put a building, if you're operating in a more objectivist mode you could say what we need to do is get all the data about this site, geography, the lay of the land, where the water table is, how much rainfall there is, all that data and then we'll come up with a design. This is an old 1960s model, I think, of the way design should proceed. But I think more from a hermeneutical and phenomenological perspective you could actually start and say, no, let's put something on that site and that will reveal things about the site. So build a hut, and it's only when you build the hut that you realize the difficulties of the site and the fact that it's very slope-y or whatever, and new

things are revealed. As long as you haven't had to invest too much money into that project, things are revealed about the site that are very worthwhile. We see design as an intervention and that in turn reveals stuff."

Coyne 48:40 "Rapid prototyping bleeds into this nicely… you can make a mock-up out of balsa wood, try it out, iterate through different levels of sophistication, different cost levels as you go. But of course this process can happen with pencil and paper or on a computer screen without actually any physicality, and that is also part of a hermeneutical approach, when you iterate and you're projecting something into the design, you could be sketching or whatever, and it speaks back to you."

Sarah: 50:00 Was Schon aware of hermeneutics, do you think?

Coyne 50:06 "He was aware of John Dewey. He did his PhD on John Dewey, the famous theorist and philosopher. And John Dewey was of the pragmatic school in American philosophy and the reconstruction of hermeneutics some of these philosophers that I've mentioned comes from Pragmatism as a movement, and there is a convergence. And Donald Schon is there in the Pragmatic school and that accords nicely, without the vocabulary, with hermeneutics."

Sarah: 53:00 Do you see having a dialogue with yourself, or an object, or a text, as being significantly different than having a dialogue with an actual person?

Coyne 53:33 "One of the big metaphors of hermeneutics is that we're having a dialogue, and Donald Schon said this about design as well, so you're having a dialogue with the situation, and in the situation, so you're discussing with the text and it's talking back to you. So there is this to-and-fro which is one of the common metaphors. And then the other dimension of this is edification, so Gadamer has a nice line on the idea of edification … and it means 'building up', and it's a wonderful architectural notion: to edify, edifice, we build edifices, they're buildings but also intellectual structures. Gadamer says that understanding a text, and as we develop understanding, it's also automatically, whether we recognize it or not, self-understanding. So we are building up ourselves, we are edifying ourselves. To edify, to educate… bildung is the German word, I think, to build/build up, and we're constantly doing that as we learn."

Coyne 57:21 "We don't use words like *subjective* (laughs). So, part of the hermeneutical discourse is ingredient X, this is the magic bit, the secret, and that is the whole project, I think I sort of began with it, was to dissolve the language of subjectivity versus objectivity. So that doesn't mean we now drift to, so we've dispensed or dispatched objectivity, let's not now embrace some notion of subjectivity, because that's been in the discourse for years, and it's still with us, it's Hollywood, and it's everything, pop culture is redolent with it, pop psychology and self-help and so on. It's just worth noting the hermeneutical project is kind of *not* that."

Sarah: 58:15 Is it a problem with the word [subjectivity]?

Coyne 58:31 "Part of the linguistic tactic, from an academic point of view … certainly in an intellectual academic context where we're writing things down, I would typically counsel against using words, to simply avoid using the word and see where it takes you. So, in place of *subjectivity*, if ones says 'contingent', which is more precise, and 'it all depends', or 'it depends on circumstance', 'contextual', similar sort of thing, 'it's based on community values', or 'it's relational'. As a discipline, it's just sort of interesting to score out every use of the word 'subjective' and find a more precise term. What does anybody mean when they use the word subjective?"

Sarah: 1:01:20 There's this idea that the hermeneutical experience of designing is this interaction of social, economic, structural, physical, environmental factors and that we all automatically go through that in the hermeneutic process, but when I think about the way I design, I don't think I actually get challenged on a lot of my presuppositions. I feel like I don't even understand where I come from on that, and I see that as being problematic for changing the way I design, or evolving as I design.

Coyne 1:02:24 "'Where am I coming from in this', which of course pretty quickly would dissipate from self to background, upbringing, parents, schooling, community to which one is a part of or feels a part of, identity, there's a whole lot of issues which you'd feel maybe bound to talk about. I guess the more romantic orientation of that kind of discourse, self discussion, may be 'what is the real me', what is the essential me thinking here, which I would sort of reject as too vague and not specific enough. Because it's very genius, self, individual centred, whereas the hermeneutical project or understanding

recognizes that any interpretive act is within a community by virtue of what's around you and so on.

Coyne 1:04:00 "It's a common enough tactic, but exposing one's self to the other, or otherness or the alien, is a tactic … Depends on the context. If you were designing as an individual, looking at the problem sideways … thinking outside the box as we often say, out-and-out exposure to something that is alien and foreign in that context. In the case of architecture … go to an actual or THE actual street. Different methods: They could go with different or unusual instruments … look on Google earth … talk to a homeless person who sits on the street habitually … even just contemplating it."

Coyne 1:06:45 "Look at literature that's off-the-wall… look for the margins, deliberately"

Coyne 1:07:30 "You can never actually come to terms and unpack your prejudices. The best you can do is confront them with another set of prejudices. Gadamer uses the notion of horizons … As you move the horizon changes … Talking to somebody else gives you another horizon … a constantly evolving, changing horizon … but there is no point when you actually discover … or understand all your prejudices. You never get to that position, nor do you want to."

Coyne 1:09:50 "Not so much to understanding [prejudice], getting to grips with it, but open to its transformation. This is how 'bad' prejudice is dissipated."

Sarah: How do you know if you're fusing horizons?

Coyne 1:11:55 "How do you know if you're truly being open? Well, you never can. … It really just comes out in practical dealings."

Coyne 1:13:38"I think complete knowledge is a chimera anyway, we're not going to get it about anything, particularly to do with ourselves, communities, personalities, and relationships. So never let's get hung-up on being completely aware of a circumstance. That doesn't exist."

Coyne 1:22:29 "It's since the Industrial Revolution that there's been this valorization of using your hands and making things. And I think something

similar has happened in the case of computer-aided design. There's a reconfiguration of skill sets and so on, but never has there been such an interest in notions of the body and embodiment than thanks to, during, or in parallel to the computer. Because the computer, in a way, is so disembodied and it becomes apparent that we're missing something with that."

Coyne 1:23:05 "The body: then how do we have interfaces that might actually involve the body?"

Coyne 1:23:11 "And also getting back to nature, supposedly, that's also elevated as a cause, as an issue because people are always sort of glued to these things [motions to computer screen] all the time."

Coyne 1:25:19"I don't say it's wonderful—I mean, it is kind of wonderful, because I'm a bit of a technophile—but more importantly, it's a reconfiguration of social interactions, not something that's beyond the pale because it's 'unauthentic' or 'we're not really talking to each other, we're just blurting out statements on Facebook'."

Coyne 1:26:07 "[Merleau-Ponty] is probably the most read phenomenologist in architecture."

Coyne 1:26:27 "This whole notion of the body, the iconic examples [Merleau-Ponty] uses, of a blind person with a walking stick and that's an extension of their body as they tap it around, and the woman who has to duck under a door because of the big feather in her hat or whatever. The idea of the extended body into the world around us, which can also be the boundaries of your car, I think [Merleau-Ponty] mentions cars. And then of course you can say, well yeah, what about our architecture and our space that we're in. So the body is permeating all these environments, and it has a fluid boundary depending on circumstance."

Coyne 1:27:55"What is nature? Another big question, and there are so many definitions."

Coyne 1:30:28 "Nature is in fact a synonym or a euphemism for goodness, and virtue, and positivity, and everything. But of course, it doesn't take much investigation of environmental-type sciences and so on - my god, it's vicious! Parasites living inside worms that then hatch and break out, it's an awful

world, and we're part of it, we're part of that horror. So - 'nature, roar and tooth and claw'. The idea of good and bad doesn't really do us service, it does a disservice to our understanding of whatever we think of as the 'natural'. And it's quite disrespectful, in a way."

Coyne 1:31:37 "The other argument [in my new book] is more from the tech side, is that somehow we've tamed nature by virtue of all the data we get from it. So there is a belief in 'Big Data' … that now we've got all that we understand nature. And, in fact, the extreme position is that the data is sufficient and we can actually dispense with nature. Or maybe there is no nature and we're all just part of a digital simulation, and it's all data. There's this sort of wackiness that can emerge from that position … but it depends on this position that we've 'captured' reality, or 'captured' the real or 'captured' nature with all these masses of data."

Natasia Martin
Bachelor of Design, University of Alberta
Freelance graphic designer, web designer and illustrator
(https://natasiadesigns.com/)
Design instructor, MacEwan University
Board Member, Graphic Designers of Canada (GDC).

Date of interview: March 3, 2018
Location: in-person interview in Sarah Jackson's home work space
Interview length: 97 minutes

Interview conducted by Sarah Jackson
Portions of interview transcribed on May 15, 2018 by Sarah Jackson

Notes

- Based in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
- Freelance graphic designer for one year
- First design job 7-8 years ago
- Print and web design, illustrations, branding/logo design too "I haven't really specialized yet, I don't think I want to"
- Started in education, switched to design program at the University of Alberta (BDes), in school for 5 years

Martin 2:54-3:48"All throughout high school, every time we did any of those career things, my top results were always like, graphic designer, illustrator, artist, and I just kept being like, no I don't want to do that, I'm not going to do that. I just kept ignoring all of the signs. Every time I did any career thing it would always say graphic designer, and I was just like no… I'm not going to make it as, or do anything, so… and then, yeah, once I took that one design class … and then yeah … I was like, this is so much fun, I want to do this."

Martin 7:25-10:40 "I really value supporting local, and supporting smaller businesses. For example, I go to the farmer's market, I shop at [local] stores around me, I don't really like going to big gross stores because there's no personal connection. In terms of more design-related, I really value being connected to people, like … that Slack thing that I created … Slack is sort of like an online chat room that has different channels … so basically I set that up and started inviting a lot of my friends and colleagues that are also [freelance designers] … majority in Edmonton."

Sarah: French family… so were you in french immersion?

Martin 15:06 "I only learned English in grade 2 or 3."

Sarah: So you spoke French at home?

Martin 15:17 "Yeah"

Martin 15:30-15:51 "In high school it was really hard because [in my town] they didn't have, like everything was in English after that point? So like, going from learning math and science and everything in French and then, for high school, having to learn what certain things are in English was a little tricky."

Martin 16:15-16:58 "Because I grew up in a French community, they didn't actually have a French teacher for art, so all of the French kids, we weren't allowed to take art all throughout junior high or elementary school, so I actually didn't take art classes until high school … so when I finally got to take art classes I was like wow, this is so cool! … In high school too I was super into fashion design, like I got a bunch of awards and stuff because I used to make my own clothes."

Martin 19:35 "I think because family is so important to me, a lot of my freelance clients are more people who are, like, small businesses or family businesses or people who run their own thing."

Martin 20:16 "My illustration style is usually really playful and happy, and even when I design, things are just happier, I don't like designing doom and gloom things, so if people have projects that are serious and sad, I don't like doing it. And I think it's just because [of[who I am as a person … and I think my [design] style kind of reflects that as well." ***(aesthetic style)***

Martin 21:32 "I don't really like to convey any kind of political or strong opinions in any way. I just want to be neutral, to make everyone happy."

Martin 22:23 "I don't know, I don't think [growing up somewhere else] would change [who I am]. I think, deep down, I still would have become who I am today, in a way. Like I know it would be slightly different, but I think in terms

of what I like, and what I dislike, and my style or styles that I don't like, I feel like that would have still evolved into… me. However it gets there."

Sarah: Would you say that your design work generally has a style?

Martin 23:02 "No … Like if I'm just doing an illustration for me I think it has a style. But that's the thing I struggle with, is finding a style that's me. Like, somebody like [names other illustrator], when you see her, it's like, that's something that [she] did. I don't think that happens for me, because I feel like I can do every kind of style … there's definitely some I can't … I don't have a set style. Maybe it's because I don't have enough time to do the same thing or the same style over and over."

Sarah: And do you wish you had a style?

Martin 23:59 "Uh … I don't know, maybe? But, I think I would get bored (laughs). I think I would get really sick of doing the same thing. I think I have a style for web or something, because I know it's efficient, what works, what doesn't work. But for illustration, if it's more hand-drawn, if it's more vector-based, I think it's pretty open. I, like, have this fear that if I had a style I would lose out on clients."

Martin 26:05 (laughs) "You look like you're going to sneeze"

Sarah: I was going to sneeze (laughs) - my eyes are watering!

Martin 27:30 "I feel like the majority of what I've learned for web is through doing, because in school it was like, 'have fun, make a cool site!'. But that was before the U of A had a more robust web program or courses."

Sarah: Where do you think your design principles come from?

Martin 28:09 "I feel like I learned all of that in school. And then, I think just through working at agencies and then having a director kind of help you out, because they would have learned their things from, I don't know: industry, practice, and also through school."

Martin 28:33 "My first design job it was always really hard, because I remember it would be like, I would lay something out [a design layout] and

then the creative director would be like, 'make this smaller' and I'm like, 'well, why? What's your reasoning for wanting it smaller?' and [they] would always just be like, 'I don't like it like that'. And it was always hard for me because I'm like, well, I can list you a rationale as to why I want *this* like *this*, but if you can't tell me why other than you just don't like it, that was always hard. So I think, sometimes, I did learn a lot from how to do things from my creative director at the time, from my first design job, but it was also, like, conflicting things, because I was like, why am I not allowed to put *this* here, or this *there*?"

Sarah: 29:34 I've had similar experiences in design, where it's a mentorship, but it's like hard for the mentor to vocalize why you're making the change. So it feels kind of blind… like you're not always sure what the rules are.

Sarah: What role does dialogue play [in your design practice]?

Martin 30:31 "A huge role. That's kind of why I quit my job and started my own business because I was getting really sick of not actually speaking with the clients. Because the agency I was at before … the client would talk to the account person, who would then talk to the creative director, and the art director, and then they would come down and talk to you and say, okay the client wants a logo that embodies happiness or something. And you'd be like, okay, I'm going to make a bunch of happy logos. And then you show it to the creative director and they're like, 'wow, that does not match their personality'. And I'm like, well, how do I know, I've never even met this person or spoken with them. So yeah, that was kind of the driving factor for me to quit my job and start my own thing, was that I was getting really sick of not being able to have a conversation with the clients that I was working for. Just because it's so hard to actually understand what they're saying, or have follow up questions, or even ask the right questions just because a lot of times accounts people aren't necessarily from a design background so they don't know what questions to ask. So, with that in mind, that's kind of what pushed me to do my own thing. And then, there are some days [now] when I don't even open a design program and I've just been on calls all day, or responding to emails, which is crazy to think. Like, this week I had that, and I was like, I didn't even design anything today, and I'm supposed to be a designer!"

Sarah: 32:34 How much of your design practice do you think you spend in dialogue, as opposed to designing or other things, like bookkeeping or …?

Martin 32:44 “If I wanted to be mathematical, whenever I do my projects I always estimate 15% [for client conversation], but I know it’s more than that … but then there’s always that initial conversation which is usually a lot longer, about like, let me hear about your project. So I want to say about 40% of my time is talking with the client, so either through email or phone.

Martin 34:17 “Any time I get an inquiry, I’m gonna call [the client] and have a conversation with them, find out about their business, find out about their life, get a vibe for what kind of person they are, and then maybe then I can offer them something unique to what they need.”

Martin 35:08 “If I just take like the 10 minutes and hear from somebody then I can get a vibe for what they’re looking for, and how they are going to react when I tell them how much things cost (both of us laugh). So I think that’s been helping, is actually having those conversations over the phone rather than just by email. And then, I find… email is hard. Because I feel like it’s really hard to tell people’s tone.”

Sarah: 36:29 When you’re actually designing … what role does dialogue play, when you’re actually getting into the designing part of the process?

Martin 36:41 “I think at first I try getting a really good sense of what they need, or their personality, their style, that kinda stuff. And then once it gets into the design part, then usually I like to, like, kind of go off on my own, get things done, make concepts. And then when I present [the concepts] I always want to do that in-person, but in the event I can’t, I still want to do it, like, we have a call and I send it to them at the same time and we walk through it together. And then, just hearing their feedback is always good, right off the bat, because I can get a sense of how they feel about it.”

Sarah: 38:03 So when you’re thinking that something is ‘ugly’, which I also do all the time in my head … the idea that something is ugly … what do you think makes something ‘ugly’ for you in design?

Martin 38:27 “That’s hard … [Brutalism] messes with me, because it looks bad because it’s literally breaking all the design rules, like, not in a good way - but then people are like, ‘that’s a cool movement’ but you’re like, ‘but you can’t even read that’. Or, yeah… I guess I don’t really use the word ‘ugly’ that much,

it's more like if something is poorly executed or conveying the proper style, or not properly communicating a message to a specific audience."

Sarah: 39:30 What are the design principles that you consider to be the most important in your practice … what makes something 'well-executed'?

Martin 39:50 "I think something that's 'effective' [design] is when, well first of all, it has to be legible, it has to communicate a message to a specific audience in a clear and concise way, or, that message at least has to make sense for that audience too. So, not advertising to old people with 'No diggity!"

Sarah: So the language and then the literal text on the page.

Martin 40:25 "And I think the [visual] style too has to match the tone of what is being said"

Sarah: Are there design principles that are really specific to your daily practice?

Martin 40:45 "You're lucky because you're teaching design principles right now … it's a bit rusty for me."

Sarah: (Laughs) I think for me also, having to sit down and think about what it is that I use, I find it hard. Which is another reason why I'm interested in this conversation.

Martin 41:02 "I guess good composition … it's balanced visually. The sense of the content on the page. Or when you look it, it doesn't look weird (laughs)"

Sarah: This idea of it not looking 'weird', how do you think people learn that? How do you think you learned that?

Martin 41:43 "Oh that gets so deep! Um… so there's kind of two things. I almost feel like, in a way, people who are designers—that's where this is like a whole can of worms, this question— because in a way I feel like people who are designers are people who have had that ingrained in them from birth. Like I think it's just this weird sixth sense, or something, that you can just always have a knack for that kind of stuff."

Sarah: 43:04 And so do you think it's something … like a sixth sense you're born with?

Martin 43:10 "In a way… like that's where it gets into the whole, are people born with creativity. Because I think the study now is that everyone *is* born with creativity, but it's whether or not you choose to -

Sarah: Like develop it or something, like any other muscle -

Martin 43:27 "Yeah. And I think that's part of it, like, being born with creativity"

Sarah: 43:34 So for example, when you came to your first design class in university, do you think you came already with a 'designer sensibility'?

Martin 43:43 "I think so. It definitely improved, but when I look back at my very first projects and I'm not, like, as embarrassed, if that makes sense. Not that my projects were perfect, but if I look back at my first year projects I'm like, dang, these are pretty good … It surprises me … That was already kind of there … and I think in order for you to go into design that needs to be there in some way, otherwise you wouldn't be very good at it."

Sarah: 46:04 Do you think your idea of what 'good' design is has changed since the beginning of your practice, so over the past 8 years?

Martin 46:33 "I think my tastes have changed … yeah, I guess it kinda has changed a little."

Sarah: Why do you think?

Martin 46:49 "I've 'matured'" (laughs)

Sarah: If you were to describe how you reflect, what does reflection specfically involve?

Martin 52:03 "If I'm reflecting on [a design] I think I need to be in a space where it's just me, like I can't have somebody else walking by that's like ha-ha, so just being a safe space in a way, and then being able to have the work in front of you and just think about it, look at the different parts of it, the different

details, and maybe say what's working, what isn't working, why was this done like this, is this working because it was done like that, and just asking questions to pick it apart in a way, or just get a better understanding of the meaning behind it."

Sarah: 56:12 Oh, that's interesting, actually … I feel like self-critique is a natural part of every designer's practice, but it's not something we really talk about that much, but I also do that. It's like, trying to find ways to somehow remove yourself and be able to separate yourself from the work so that you can critique it, and I also do that. If I'm looking at something on screen, I will print it so that I can kind of look at it through different eyes, or see it in a slightly different way.

Martin 56:40 "Yeah, I'm constantly printing things out."

Martin 57:51 "Or sometimes I just need to wait until the next day and look at it, or something. Just so that …. you can step away, do something else, think about something else, and then jump back in."

Martin 58:53 "I usually try not to push my style or my preferences too hard on people. An example, I recently did a website that was really not my style - super grid-breaking, and like really simple - and it was so hard for me to design. And I could have just been like, no we're going to design in a different direction, just because it was easier and more comfortable, but instead I was like, I'm going to try doing it this way … I like knowing that whatever it is I'm going with makes sense or works, but also feels right. I'm much better at that now, knowing when something feels right."

Sarah: 1:00:16 How do you know if something makes sense?

Martin 1:00:21 "If it's just really… not really clever, but maybe it's just the meaning works really well for what their style is or what they're going for."

Sarah: 1:00:51 What parts of your design decisions do you think are based on logic?

Martin 1:00:59 "More like the meaning of things. Like if it's a logo, making sure the logo design fits with their target audience, their messaging, their voice. Whereas if it's an illustration … I want to make sure the style I'm executing the

illustration in fits with the same thing, the audience … matches the tone … the messages. For web too I want to make sure it makes sense in terms of the meaning behind the solutions that I come up with.

Sarah: To me it almost sounds like an emotional honesty or an emotional match.

Sarah: 1:03:31 "I was thinking about my own practice, and how I make decisions, and a lot of it is the same things as you were saying: well, it 'feels' right, it visually 'works'. There are terms that I use that are kind of vague, and to zone in on what I actually mean is difficult.

Sarah: 1:04:59 "It's almost like designers have more practice consciously trying to put themselves into someone else's shoes."

Martin 1:06:04 "My projects do have a ton of research. Before I even start sketching all I do is research. Sometimes there's an initial thing that pops in my head that I put down, but for the most part it's just research."

Sarah: Exposing yourself to the … environmental scan.

Sarah: 1:07:33 As a female designer, I've been thinking about how, like, how does being in this body affect my experience in design practice, in all aspects of it, or does it? Like, if I was a male designer, would I design differently, would I have different experiences, would I think different design was interesting or good?

Martin 1:08:34 "The body thing I think does [affect my design practice]. Like, for example, are you a lefty or a righty?

Sarah: I'm a lefty! Are you a lefty?

Martin 1:08:34 "I'm sure you noticed this, but as a lefty, there's a ton of research about, for example, hand-lettering or calligraphy. Lefties will never be able to do calligraphy as well as right-handed people…"

Sarah: I never even thought of being left-handed as like a specific, but totally!

Martin 1:10:05 "But that's just the way letterforms are made. Like, a normal calligraphic word is written like that, but the way a brush works and the way your hand goes, like your thicks and thins are different [if you're left-handed]. So that's something that's frustrating as a lefty, because I just want to be able to do that."

Martin 1:11:41 "The way that my physical body is … changes your style. Like my style will never be super gestural because I'm like, I hold my hand really close, and my pencil really tight."

Martin 1:12:21 "In terms of gender, I think that would totally change my style. Even at my last job, the owner of the business was a man and then all of the clients were 'manly' clients … just not very feminine clients. And it was always so hard … it's just not fun to design. And then it makes it feel so uncomfortable when you're making it because you're like, this is not my jam."

Martin 1:13:37 "I think it's affected by your interests, which goes more into the mental than the physical."

Martin 1:14:18 "You're just constantly surrounding yourself with things that you like, or styles that you like, or things that you're drawn to"

Sarah: It made me think about exposure and how important that is. So when you're interested in things you expose yourself to those cultures, those visual cues, those communities themselves. And so you're understand of that community or that style or that product is just so much deeper. You have a wealth of understanding coming to the project.

Martin 1:17:05 "It was so hard designing something to be targeted towards females without using generic, assumed colours that women would like or be drawn to, or colours that marketers have told us that we have to use because that's girly or something."

Martin 1:17:27 "It was just always so hard designing for women without being stereotypical and being able to target women without doing that."

Sarah: 1:19:28 *What would be words you'd use to describe a 'manly' design or a 'feminine'?*

Martin 1:19:35 "I feel like manly is just really like square and like … feminine is like softer, nicer colours … golds and yeah, just that generic what we've been told should be … manly design is … not very welcoming, colder maybe"

Martin 1:20:52 "Instead of the gender thing, for me I haven't really noticed the gender thing, but it's more my age that's hard. Because people think that I'm really young or don't know what I'm doing."

Martin 1:21:34 "When I went into the bathroom I thought of my hair, too, just because I have crazy hair … right now it's a pink-ish, peach-ish bright colour, but before it was blue. I don't know, it's something that affects [people's perception of me] probably negatively … but at the same time, I want the perception to change, in a way, because I'm fun and I like colour, and I want that to be pretty obvious."

Sarah: 1:22:43 The idea of the state of your body affecting work. It's something I think about but something I never talk about, in terms of, for example sitting. I reach a limit where I just can't sit any longer in front of my desk, or my hand hurts from holding a pencil or being at my keyboard, and then that's the limit, I can't design past that moment.

Martin 1:23:19 "But I was so stressed out at that job, all the time, that when it came down to making decisions and just going with what felt right, I couldn't, because I'm stressed out, I'm panicking, I don't know, I don't know what to trust, I don't know what to think … for me, stress really impacts my work. Because if I'm stressed out I can't come up with ideas. Like, I'm not as efficient, but more so I'm not in the right headspace to be creative."

Sarah: 1:25:23 I couldn't just schedule 4 to 8 hours of creative concept work in a row.

Martin 1:25:34 "Mm-mm. I could probably do 2 to 3 hours, but I need to be ready for it."

1:25:47 "I cannot come up with ideas in the afternoon. Past two o'clock, maybe even like one o'clock. [My optimal time is] 8am … by myself, for the most part it's quiet."

Sarah: 1:28:04 What is it that makes someone a designer, in your opinion?

Martin 1:28:13 “I feel like they need to have some kind of education, relating to design … You need to know the rules before you can break them … I think you need an education in terms of knowing what makes design work, so that you can know what makes it not work.”

Martin 1:29:08 “I think they need to also be working in the trade, or like be practicing design regularly.”

Sarah: 1:30:08 At what moment did you become a designer, in your own mind?

Martin 1:30:18 “I always consider my first job, when I was a designer … but that’s more on paper.”

Martin 1:32:09 “But I still think it impacts everything, like, even if I don’t want it to, it still does. Like, the way that we plan our meals for the week, it’s probably still weirdly enough designed in some way.”

Martin 1:32:39 “So… ew, yeah, design’s like everywhere if you think about it that way, more in terms of the creative process”

Sarah: 1:33:08 I feel like I’m always collecting things in the back of my mind that might become fodder for design later.

Martin 1:34:38 “This is completely different than design, it really helped to do something that was not at all related, that got me out of my desk into a different space, not thinking about design so that I could still … it was like a refresh, so that when I did go back to my desk, it was like ah! It was like a clean slate.”

Robyn Stuart
Design Studies, MacEwan University
Designer and Co-Owner of Cut & Paste Creative Studio
(http://www.cutpaste.ca/)

Date of interview: Feb 3, 2018
Location: in-person interview in Stuart's office at Cut & Paste
Interview length: 90 minutes

Interview conducted by Sarah Jackson
Portions of interview transcribed on May 7, 2018 by Sarah Jackson

Notes

- Graduated in 1991 (1988-91)
- Design program in high school (?)
- No computers: using rubylith, Typesetting, Pick paper and pick one colour
- Applied for Alberta College of Art: got in but couldn't afford it or move away from home
- Applied at Grant MacEwan for "Graphic Design": but got into a program called "Environmental Graphic Design" (displays, tiny bit of industrial design, 3D and 2D, etc.)
- Graduated from Macewan in 1993 (2 year program)
- Used computers for the first time in college: "Mac Paint" (combo of Illustrator and Photoshop "for elementary kids"); One computer with Quark XPress on it (where students had to take turns); They used "paste-up", rubilith, PMTs (draw things in black and white and shoot them with this PMT camera, and then start to compile them, cut them out, wax them and paste them down), letrocet (rub down letters one by one)
- Multitec: first job at electrical company (part-time while taking fine art at MacEwan) (1-2 years)
- Backstreet: first job at a real graphic design firm (5-6 years): "Jeff had gone to work there and called me to say they were hiring and that I should apply"; First computer I designer on: little mac with 9" screen and little floppy disks, no colour
- McRobbie: 5-6 years
- On her own: 5 years
- Cut + Paste formed in 2009.

Stuart 12:35 "At that time, graphic design would have been considered …. More of a trade, more blue collar than white collar"

Stuart 14.39 "Jeff and I went to school together, and our whole 'Cut and Paste' name harkens back to that time … that's where we come from."

Stuart 23:13 Demo where we are showing each other things on paper

Stuart 24:46 "It's crazy to see the technology change. But really, if you think about it, you're still designing. That whole process is the same it's just your tools are different and it just changes the way that you do things, the speed at which you do things."

Sarah "Was it way slower before, then?"

Stuart "Way slower. Like if you sent out changes, you had to print it all out, you had to put it in a envelope, you had to call the courier, the courier had to come get it. So you know, if I was doing changes in the morning, if it was a hot rush you might get them that day. If not, the courier was going to deliver them the next day… Things that were taking a day to turn around would take 10 minutes now."

Stuart 29:36 "To be quite honest, I just basically followed Jeff around. Because he would go and get a job, and then call me up and say, 'I want you to come and work here with me, and I'd be like, okay."

Sarah "So why did you not look for jobs?"

Sarah "So what motivated [Jeff] to leave [Backstreet]?"

Stuart 30:41 "There was a point when we were doing a job … and [Jeff] got some artwork from a company called McRobbie and he thought *this card is so cool, I want to work for this guy*. He ended up talking to him about something, and they got to talking, and was like I'm going to apply over there and he got a job there."

Stuart 31:44 "Quite frankly, at the time, we were getting asked to work a lot of overtime and not getting paid for it, and things were a little… stressful. And I

raised a stink about a few things and I got fired. So, that's how I ended up working at [other studio]. I called Jeff and was like, I just got fired. He was like, oh my god, we just hired somebody but I'm going to talk to [my boss]. And basically … he hired me."

Stuart 32:46 "I probably would have stayed there … we were doing really good work, I like my job, the people I worked with, the things we were working on. Jeff, he kind of always had an itch to go off and do it for himself. And so finally, he had decided this is it, and gave [his boss] his notice … [Our boss] thought I was going to leave too, so he yanked me into his office and begged me not to go. I had no intention of going anyway, but yeah, I basically said I'd stay but you gotta make it worth my while. Best raise I ever got."

Stuart 34:35 "[My boss] left for 6 months and it gave me the opportunity to sort of be the boss, and it made me realize that I kind of really like … I don't know, art directing and that side of things, the human resources whatever - the not-designing part of design."

"Eventually [my boss] came back and I think he saw that the company was running well and sort of stayed out of it, and sort of pursue the things he wanted to pursue … but I think eventually he sort of saw me as a threat to his company. Like, kind of, everyone around here sees her as the boss and not me now, and we sort of started butting heads a bit and it was time to go."

Stuart 38:38 "I guess if you work somewhere and people are used to dealing with you, they want to keep dealing with you. So people just started calling me, people I worked with at [my old job], and I was like uuh, this is weird. And they were like, I want to work with you, and I would say, ok, I didn't sign a non-compete or anything like that, so I guess we're good to go … and I sort of never looked back. I just started getting work, so I just did it,
and then it became more work and more work, and I never needed to get another job."

Stuart 39:32 "Eventually, you know, I was just doing my own thing, and Jeff was doing his own thing. Things started happening, like, we would just go for lunch all the time, talk about work all the time, talk about how it was really hard to take vacation because you were the only person there and clients would feel like, you know, you were never coming back to them, or you would *feel* like they felt that … so we kind of thought maybe we should just make a company

together …. It made more sense more so than any of the other partnerships that were proposed to me before. And, I don't know, we just knew each other so well."

Sarah 41:49 *How does your lived experience affect the way you make decisions or the type of decisions you make in you [design] practice?*

Stuart "This one's hard for me because I can't really - you know, you're just *living* and you're
just *doing*, and you don't really think about how those things sort of connect."

Sarah 42:31 *How do you think your experience of culture … language … sociopolitical beliefs/ideologies affect your design practice?*

Stuart 42:47 "I'd love to say that, you know, my design is influenced by culture and politics, etc., etc., but the only design that I do that is influenced in that way would be my own personal projects. Like in our business practice, the fact is you're doing work for commercial clients, so unless you're saying no to a project based on, you know, you not believing in what they do, kind of thing, I wouldn't say you really have that opportunity."

Sarah 43:42 *Have you ever said no to a client, or argued with a client, or dropped a client?*

Stuart "Based on us just not seeing eye-to-eye, not seeing a fit."

Sarah What would that mean, not seeing a fit or not seeing eye-to-eye?

Stuart "To put it really super bluntly?"

Sarah Yeah

Stuart 44:21 "That our aesthetic didn't align, or something like that… You know, when you're exploring design, and you're rationalizing why you're do things in your head … we all sort of have our own perspectives on things, right, so if somebody just has in their head that they want something, and you're like, *that makes no sense*, like you're called… just to make a totally general example, you're called the "Square Corporation of America" and you want your logo to be a circle, I just can't rationalize making a circle for you, when … the direction is

so obvious to me, but then *you* see it from a totally different perspective, and just sort of not being able to reconcile that. Because, you can talk it out as much as you want, but when somebody has something in their mind, and *especially* when that person that has that thing in their mind is the one who has the money in their pocket as well, they really just want you to make what they want, even though it makes no sense."

Sarah So why would you refuse to make the circle? … generally I think you could deliver [it]. What is the thing in you that's saying, no, I don't want to make your stupid circle, or…

Stuart 46:09 "It would usually be not so much about the circle but more so about the conversations that you'd had with that person, and where that's going and how you just start to feel that there's, like … you're just butting heads, and you just can't seem to get *synced* with them. And that's when you just have to say, you know I think maybe, you might want to find somebody else to do this."

Stuart 47:09 It's like you can't be friends with everybody, no matter how nice you are." (laughs)

Sarah So it's not so much about the design, you're saying, it's the relationship, like you just didn't like the relationship, or - ?

Stuart 47:22 "Didn't like where [the relationship] went. Because it starts off as … two strangers wanting to come together and create something. But that whole business of creating something means that there's a lot of dialogue back-and-forth, and it's in that process that you sort of start to figure out that your… I don't know if you want to say 'values', are misaligned … but eventually that's what happens, and the more that you try and go back-and-forth, the more that you realize how misaligned you are, and it sort of starts to become, like, irreconcilable."

Sarah 48:08 *So would you say … at a certain point it's about your happiness?*

Stuart 48:18 "It's about being happy to get out! It's like a break-up."

Stuart 48:53 "It IS like a break-up. And I don't know, is that because we care so much about design? I don't know. I'd love to say that it is. But - I can't really say. You know, it's kind of like you just start going down a road, and you start to feel a sense of discomfort and it just becomes bigger and bigger and bigger until you've just got to get it out."

Sarah 49:47 *How do you think your outside life affects your design life? And this could be anything, designing as a Canadian … or even like, extracurricular interests, personal design tastes …*

Stuart 50:11 "Oh yeah, I think it definitely does. I mean, we all have tastes, and that's sort of like where we're all going… I like to think of myself as a bit of a minimalist, so you're probably not going to get a design from me that's like … a collage, let's say. And especially in my personal work, like work that I do outside of here [her design studio], it's generally *super* minimal. Because that's where - like say you're doing something for a friend or … some organization that I actually *want* to do work for - and then you kind of are bringing in your own values and your own aesthetic, and your own experience."

Sarah 51:06 *And this would fall into your 'personal work'?*

Stuart 51:12 "To say what influences you… you know, there are the two sides to that. So there's that personal stuff where your own personal experience *can* influence you, and then there's what influences you in your day-to-day work which is - money! (laughs) Money and clients and *their* points of view, that's what influences you, right, because it is *their* story that you're telling in your commercial work. Now, and other people might be different, there are people who do design projects that are self-initiated, right. But that is not my practice, My practice is: I'm a commercial graphic designer. And I'm not going to pretend that I'm calling the shots there. I'm working with my clients' sets of problems, goals, and that kind of thing, and I try *not* to insert myself into that, because that's not what the job is? But then, yeah, there's the personal stuff, which you're only taking what you want to do, so it's already a special thing for you."

Stuart 53:54 "Your own aesthetic style, I definitely think, it's something that you build up over time and that you can't *help* but have that come through in your work. And maybe that's why people are coming to you as well, because

they see what you do and want that for themselves in some way, shape or form."

Sarah 54:39 *Do you remember at what point you were like, yes, minimalist design makes sense to me, or like when you started implementing that, or noticing it, or seeing it as "good" design value?*

Stuart 55:00 "I feel like back to my art teacher in junior high, I feel like that would have been the start of it, you know because - he was German? I don't know. Who knows … hindsight being something that we can completely skew too, right, and make it what we want it to be be, I think of that as, you know … like, Helvetica. Helvetica Bold is what we used to put the numbers on the doors that we did."

Sarah 55:44 *So he specifically talked about white space or minimalist design … or the Bauhaus movement?*

Stuart "I think we must have talked about that stuff. In a way that sort of sunk-in to my, you know, 13-year-old mind. So I don't think maybe we were, like, using that same terminology, but … you build on that, right, like you're taking those little pieces and then … you get your magazine subscription for the first time and you're like, oh yeah, well I really like small *spaces*, and I really like *white*…"

Sarah 56:24 *What was the first magazine subscription you got?*

Stuart 55:00 "The first one I got was *Sassy* magazine, which doesn't exist anymore … It wasn't a design magazine … it was like a teenage girl magazine but kind of the 'outsider' magazine … Things that were in would have been like, 'how to make a skirt out of vintage ties that you buy at the thrift store' … they had this section called 'One to Watch' where they would do a profile on some actor or actress and it was like, people that were not in the mainstream and it made you feel, like, cool and alternative."

Stuart 57:31 "The first design subscription that I would have had probably would have been *Dwell* magazine. And it's only recently that I cancelled that … It's not even a graphic design magazine. To think of about design-type magazines that I've bought over the years, they're usually interior or architecture magazines."

Sarah 58:07 *So why did you cancel your membership to* Dwell*?*

Stuart 58:14 "You know, they got a new Editor-in-Chief, the magazine got really skinny, they started cutting stories down to like… I just didn't like where it was going, and I found myself not reading it cover-to-cover anymore? So, I switched to a digital subscription and then, I just found I wasn't enjoying it. So I just let it go. Because I used to get that, and I had probably three shelves across my bookshelves and every single one of them in a row."

Sarah :22 How does your experience of body and/or gender affect your work, or your day-to-day, or does it?

Stuart 59:34 "Could you be a little more specific?"

Sarah 59:46 Basically I'm just interested in how our body unconsciously effects the work that we do … it could be anything … like I was thinking about Jeff going to get those jobs, and why would you not go get those jobs, do you feel gender has played a role in client relationships or your work at all?

Stuart 1:00:16 "That is an interesting question because I always have felt happy to be the Number Two person."

Sarah 1:00:27 What does that mean, the "Number Two" person?

Stuart 1:00:30 "Everywhere that I was I was so happy to sort of not be 'the boss'. Maybe to do the work, but not have to be the one who stood in front of everybody and talked about it?"

Sarah 1:00:50 So what about [that job] when you were the boss .. and you really liked it?

Stuart 1:00: "It was like … I don't mind these sort of one-on-one, like: I know you, right, and I feel comfortable with you, and this is why I don't mind talking to you. Like, I feel like we're just - you know, talking. This is just a conversation. Now if I was up in front of a classroom full of people having to say stuff like this, then I start to get really… nervous. And i's not like I don't want to do it: I wanna do the work, and I wanna be involved, and I wanna … all

that stuff … but I don't want to be the one in the spotlight, the one with the pressure on me. And where does that come from? I don't know. …

Stuart 1:02:08 I wanted to work hard, I just didn't want people knowing about it. I used to just *hate* when my mom would be like, *this is my daughter Robyn and she just won her math competition, or whatever, and she's so smar*t …

Stuart 1:03:02 "Even in Jeff and I's practice, I'm so happy for him to be the one that works on logos and stuff like that. If something is super creative or whatever, I'm happy for him to be the one who is the Lead on it. And maybe I'm like, what if you thought about this and did this, but kind of in the background?"

Sarah 1:03:30 *And where do you think that comes from?*

Stuart 1:03:32 "I don't - that's a really good question. It's gotta be something about my personality and the way I grew up."

Sarah 1:04:17 *So thinking about gender in your practice … when you first started doing design in the 1990s, what would be the proportion of female to male designers?*

Stuart 1:04:39 "My bosses were always men. There were definitely women working there too, and I wouldn't say that it ever seemed off-balance in the way that some other industries can be. But, you know, thinking about it, it was always the men who were in power … they always owned the companies, yup."

Sarah 1:05:13 *So your two instructors growing up it was two male teachers who were the design…*

Stuart 1:05:20 "Yeah, thinking, yea, it was all of them, they were all men."

Sarah 1:05:22 *And at [your college]?*

Stuart 1:05:27 "Uh, no they weren't all men at [the college], though I can't actually think about any female instructors that I had either, come to think of it… there must have been some."

Sarah 1:05:38 *Was that the era of [man's name] at the front?*

Stuart 1:05:39 “Yup, [two men] taught our Design Fundamentals”

Sarah 1:05:51 *And what about your classes when you were in school for design?*

Stuart 1:05:56 “Probably … two-thirds male, one-third female. Now, thinking about after school, you know - there weren’t very many of us who actually went on to do graphic design.”

Sarah 1:06:13 *Why do you think that is?*

Stuart 1:06:15 “I don’t know. You know, it’s funny, because especially at [my college] I can always remember them touting these stats like, “*95% of our grads get jobs”*, but it’s like, 95% of your grads get jobs in what? Like, at Starbucks? Because I don’t think there were 95% of us getting jobs in graphic design. Not a chance.”

Sarah 1:06:44 *Were there quite a few design shops in Edmonton?*

Stuart 1:06:15 “Well, not that I knew of.”

Sarah 1:06:50 *Even today … I feel like the main shops I could list on two hands, maybe three hands.*

Stuart 1:06:59 “Yeah, you know, it’s funny, because I feel like today there’s more places but nowadays there’s so many people out there doing it on their own, and do you call that? Some people are freelancing … to include all of those people … I feel like there were really no ‘freelancers’ back in the day. It was like you either just worked for somebody…

Sarah 1:08:29 *Maybe it was the limit of, like you were saying, having a computer and the internet….*

Stuart 1:08:37 “Yeah, I know about so much more now because we have the internet and social media. So maybe I just didn’t know about [the freelancers] back then, either. Like back then, to think about people who were on their own, it was usually illustrators. Those were the ‘freelancers’. Those were the people we hired for one-off things.”

Stuart 1:09:19 “I can’t really see any reason in our field why there should be more men than women, or vice-versa. Like it really makes no difference. Or it shouldn’t make a difference. I don’t really know … I mean, we have two men, two women here, just coincidentally. Really there’s no reason … if I think about who’s the most creative in the office, it’s one of the guys and one of the girls.”

Sarah 1:10:42 *Do you feel like the body that you occupy influences how you interact with clients ever?*

Stuart 1:10:49 “Well it must. I think that the body that I occupy is me in everything I do. And how that sort of comes out in the different things that I do… I don’t know. Like you know, to compare graphic design to, say, triathlon training, kind of a weird, you know, hard to say - same body, and I feel like the same sort of things *must* apply when I’m doing both of those things, but … hard to sort of do an apples-to-apples comparison there. It’s just about my personality, I guess.”

Sarah 1:12:00 *I’m interested in things we don’t think about that might influence our work that might, in terms of the body… even you’re tired, you’re angry…*

Stuart 1:12:17 “Well I do notice, to speak to those two specific things, like, before I was doing triathlon training and stuff like that, like before I started to sort of ‘take charge’ of my body…”

Sarah 1:12:37 *So what were you doing before triathlon training?*

Stuart 1:12:40 “I always did sports as a kid, like played baseball, until I was like, say 30, and it was just somehow losing its interest, like I wasn’t with the same group of people and stuff like that. And oddly, this was right around when I was starting my own company, and a friend of mine referred a job to me that he didn’t want to do, or couldn’t do or something, and it happened to be for Lululemon, and it was for when Lululemon was starting up a running group, so I was like … so if I’m going to do this, maybe I should do the clinic. So I joined the running group. Now, strangely, the guy who was running the running group was a triathlete. And would talk about, like when we running all the time, would talk about triathlons. And I remember our accountant [at my old job] was a triathlete, and so I was still talking to her, she was kind of doing

my taxes, and she talked to me about triathlons. She ran a triathlon and was like, you should come and do this. And I found like, before that, I don't know if everyone is on antidepressants, but you know, I was on antidepressants, like everyone I knew was. And then I was like, I don't want to be on these anymore and people have told me that doing exercise is good, so that's what I started doing. And I mean, to say that I've never looked back is kind of a weird thing, but it's the truth. I've just become more about, like, very structured and very determined to, sort of, be healthy, so that I can continue to do the things that I want to do, whether that's like just graphic design and just getting up in the morning to do graphic design and to be able to perform the tasks of life."

Sarah 1:15:30 *So how do you feel that starting the triathlon stuff changed your graphic design practice?*

Stuart 1:15:36 "Well, it gave me more energy. Gave me more energy, made me feel like, you know when you have more energy it makes you somehow forget that you have no idea what you're doing (laughs). You just feel -like I don't know what those chemicals are, like I know adrenaline, and endorphins, and all those things - just to have those on your side, allowing you to get through things. I really find exercise to be an antidepressant. So it sort of like, gets you through your day. And when you are trying to run a business…

Sarah 1:16:26 *Momentum! That's the word I was thinking of. It seems like it provided some momentum.*

Stuart 1:16:30 "Yeah, yeah, yeah. Like it just sort of… you know, rather than being like 'uuuuhh', and just sort of sitting down and thinking about things, you're kind of a little bit pumped up, and 'I'm just going to try this' or 'I'm going to just going to do this' or whatever. I mean, running a business, it's a stressful thing. It's kind of like you don't really think about it, but you're putting yourself out there. You're vulnerable, and when you have employees, and stuff like that, you need to sort of find a way to keep yourself level. And so that's what I'm using [exercise] for."

Sarah 1:17:22 *What do you do when you're stuck in, like a design problem?*

Stuart 1:17:30 "What I like to do, when I have a design problem, a prefer to know about it. Like, say … I'm not even going to be starting a logo until Monday but I want to know about it before that. I feel like, I just put it in my

head, and then tell myself it doesn't matter, I'm not going to start on it til later. And then somehow, in your head, things are happening and you don't even realize it, and then you're somehow mentally prepared when you go to start, you know? If you just like, slapped me down with a job I'd probably get like, I'd have a panick attack (laughs). And so, it's like, if I'm going to work on job A, then I want you to tell me about job B, so I can roll it around in my head while job A is going on."

Stuart 1:18:53 "I don't know if it's just being a creative person. Because I used to kind of think of myself as a very logical, linear, sort of thought-process kind of person. But as I've grown, and come to understand myself a little bit more, I think that I've figured out that that is *not* the case. Like, I try and think in a linear fashion, but I realize that that's not really what's happening. And really, I don't know if you find that - and this is the reason why I like to learn about something before hand - because I feel like when you're not thinking about it, like you know you maybe go for a run, and that's when something happens, and it finds it's way to the right place, and boom. You just, you come up with the idea, over *there*. And you like to think that you've been thinking about it and that's why it happened but I think it's just these random synapses firing, and that's what makes us creative."

Sarah 1:20:05 *And where do you think those ideas come from?*

Stuart 1:20:06 "I have no idea. And I think that's the beauty of it. Is that, somehow, inside of our brain, these weird, random thought patterns kind of find a way to connect at the right spot, and then - come up with an idea."

Sarah 1:20:26 *And do you think, someone else, given the same problem, would come up with the same idea as you?*

Stuart 1:20:35 "No. No."

Sarah 1:20:37 *And why not?*

Stuart 1:20:40 "Because we all, and I think that's what speaks to your 'life' [experience] thing, it's like we can't really say why those things do affect us. But we know that they do, because we all come up with a different answer. Like if we all had the same problem … every single one of us would come up with something different. Unless we started looking at what each other was doing,

because then we'd be influenced by each other. But otherwise, we're influenced by.. You know, the person we accidentally bump into on the corner, and the rush that we got from that run we took, and how good that McDonald's hamburger was or whatever the case may be. Those are the things that influence us. Non-design things."

Sarah 1:21:43 *I mean, that's like the thing with design. Where do ideas come from!*

Stuart 1:21:48 "Exactly! I wish I knew."

Sarah 1:21:54 *And how logical and… personal are they in the end.*

Stuart 1:22:13 "I'd like to know what the answer is, if there is an answer. Because I find that fascinating. Because how is it, you know, that we all sort of do the same thing but come up with a different …"

Sarah 1:22:28 *Okay, so two thoughts on that. One, how do you communicate that to clients, if they ask where the idea came from (how much does the explanation you give clients follow what actually brought that idea into fruition). And then the other question is, how do you teach that process to a new designer?*

Stuart 1:22:50 "Yeah, creativity… like how do you teach that? You know, I just was talking to a class and they were asking about the business of design and stuff like that, asking how do I make myself known, and it's funny because we had to tell them, half of it isn't about design. I'm just going to assume that when you come here you're probably going to have a stunning portfolio. Like that's just a *given*, or else you're not going to get hired. But beyond that, I also have to totally get along with, you have to have come here at the right time, you know, there's so many factors involved, and I mean the design process itself is also like that. Like, this is what I mean by, it's just not linear. And if you think about life… nothing really, we like to think of it as linear, but really it's a series of random things bumping into each other."

Sarah 1:24:10 *When you're saying you have to bring a stunning portfolio here, do you and Jeff agree always on what makes a stunning portfolio?*

Stuart 1:24:18 "No."

Sarah 1:24:29 *This is interesting! Because you've worked together for so long!*

Stuart 1:24:25 "It's funny too, because if somebody calls here, asks for Jeff but Jeff's not here, and I end up talking to them about a project, and I'm explaining it to a designer instead of him explaining it to a designer, definitely the outcome is also different because my biases are going into that brief instead of his biases."

Sarah 1:24:52 *So when someone brings a portfolio in, what kinds of things would you two disagree on?*

Stuart 1:25:02 "Probably the minimalism. I'm probably way more about typography and he's way more about the illustration, and the balance of those two things … like we have different aesthetics for sure."

Sarah 1:26:02 I'm trying to think of what - what would be the difference? Like, do you have an example of a [portfolio] that you really disagreed on it?

Stuart 1:26:13 "You know, I can't think of anything specifically…. Except, we just worked on a project … and I named the show, and then Jeff was working on the design. And he's doing some stuff and I was just looking at it and I was like, uh, that is exactly *not* what I had in mind" (Laughs)

Sarah 1:27:52 And what about it .. ?

Stuart 1:27:54 "I can't even remember what he was doing now … but in my mind [the name] looks exactly like one thing … and [another employee] ended up designing it … and [Jeff] was like I had no idea that that's what you're thinking of. And I was like, what else could it be?" (laughs)

Dr. Teena Clerke
Research Assistant and Instructor,
University of Technology Sydney, Australia

Date of interview: May 14, 2018
Location: audio-recorded phone interview via Skype
Interview length: 113 minutes

Interview conducted by Sarah Jackson
Portions of interview transcribed on June 6, 2018 by Sarah Jackson

Notes

- Andrew Shelton (2004): "he shifts the terminology you would use for positivist research: like validity, reliability, generalizability. He moves that into a qualitative arena so that you can use terms like transferability and credibility versus those scientific terms. Because what you're doing is not going to be reproducible or generalizable."
- Graphic designer/communication designer, print-based and illustration, since 1987.
- Right after high school when to college for visual arts but stopped studying design because of a sexual assault.
- Travelled around the world.
- Started working in a belt making factory, became assistant to the designer then worked with designers in the clothing production industry.
- Went back to school when she was 28 to study design at a technical college. Became a designer when she was 30.
- Worked in-house at a hotel for a few years and then worked for a community arts organization for a few years. Then had her own practice for 6 years. Did a guest lecture at the University of Western Sydney
- Then became an external assessor for a panel, then asked her to teach a class. A half-time position came up and she got the job.
- Met her husband when she was 40, and had two children.
- Design moved from a "professional" program (College of Advanced Education) to an academic program in the Universities ("became scholarly") in the late 1980s
- In the mid-90s art director for a community arts organization
- PhD was about women designers in the academic sphere and what they call themselves, how they see themselves. Finished PhD in 2012.

- Since then, has been doing research contracts and teaching in adult education (design, communication, global studies

Sarah 0:00 Basically I'm using these interviews to inform the work that I'm doing for my Master's thesis. And what I'm doing is I'm looking at my OWN design practice and I'm critiquing and questioning myself. So I'm using these interviews to help inform that process.

Clerke 0:27 "Almost auto-ethnography …. In 'design-led research' or 'design-based practice' or 'practice-based', whatever you want to call it, because everybody's got different words for this, you know, it's pretty much a free-for-all at the moment, so you can do whatever you like! [laughs]. As long as you can demonstrate that it's credible and legitimate"

Clerke 13:10 "The image of an academic is somebody dressed in a tweed jacket with leather patches, some old crusty bloke with a bow tie. So all the women I spoke to, and I think there were 20 in the end, all said, 'no, I don't think of myself as an academic'. It might be different now, that was 10 years ago."

Clerke 15:19 "In my research, it demonstrated that women had to be sort of quite tactical, and inventive, in order to do the kind of work that they wanted to do, that wasn't just doing all that housework stuff that universities require people to do when they've got large cohorts of students, particularly in first year, and students that might be struggling with transition from school to higher education."

Clerke 16:57 "As designers, we talk about practice as 'design practice'."

Clerke 17:34 "In 2006, about 12 years ago, when this 'practice' turn came into people's consciousness"

Clerke 18:05 "I had this sudden, oh my god, practice is more than what we [designers] think of as 'practice-led' research, which tends to work in the creative fields."

Clerke 18:45 "One of my observations is that when people in creative fields talk about what they do, and also when they talk about research in those fields, they tend to think they're the only ones that do practice. And I think hmm…

that needs to be exploded a little bit. Or at least interrogated, you know, what do you mean when you say practice."

Clerke 19:19 "Why don't you look at design and say what does it mean to 'practice design' as opposed to what does it mean to 'practice', assuming that design is the focus or the basis of what you do."

Clerke 37:23 "When I was studying design, about 50% of the students were women where I was, but there was only one woman teacher, and she turns out to be significant, exceptional kind of person. And then when I went to teach in design, all of the lecturers were women and something like 85%-90% of the students were women, like it's quite unusual to find lots of men doing undergraduate design degrees in my experience."

Clerke 38:31 "At UTS [University of Technology Sydney] at the time, 50% of the lecturers were women and 50% of the lecturers were men, but of course the main positions were held by men. Something that someone drew my attention to was the part-timers … 80% of them were women. So that already says something about the division of labour, meaning that women are brought in on a last-minute, I call it "just-in-time" knowledge workers, you know, if you're thinking of it as a production line, women are brought in a the last minute, they don't have any say in what courses are developed, etc., etc., etc."

Clerke 42:54 "Foucault talks about how things exist as discourse, nothing aside from discourse. Discourse is based on language. And in terms of scholarship—he defines discourses as sayings and doings, pretty much—so discourses need to be reproduced and that everybody participates in their reproduction."

Clerke 43:51 "So [Foucault] also talked about things like academic or scholarship, also, are based on this idea of reproduction, and this core idea of the archive. The archive being the people, and the ideas, and the publications that continue to get reproduced, this is within the archive. So, if you look at any kind of scholarship work, they always refer to previously published authors? Which means that their work gets reproduced, and their ideas get reproduced. And even if you're challenging them, you're still participating in their reproduction. So these are the ideas and the authors that stay within the archive. So the people who don't traditionally get written about, such as women"

Clerke 44:46 "Raewyn Connell talks about it as 'Southern theory', it's a post-colonial idea that most ideas, or more philosophy and theory comes out of the North American and Northern Europe metropole. They're on the periphery. So she calls for people in the Southern parts of the world, what she calls Southern Theory, to start writing and to say 'this is what it's like for us."

Clerke 45:21 "Women's voices weren't being recorded, I scoured publications, I scoured histories … so what struck me, what started the PhD, was that when I started teaching in the mid-90s I noticed that there were more women, I noticed there were more women students, but all the resources that we were using, all of the theories, the books, the designers, all of the people that we were talking about, that we were, as women, engaged in reproducing, were all male authors. So that's got me thinking, oh my god, the discipline - design has been in the university long enough, women have been working in design (and now in the university) long enough. What are they doing? Surely there is some kind of impact. So that was the genesis of my compelling rationale for the PhD."

Clerke 47:18 "If you look at *Design Issues*, and still today, there are four editors, and it doesn't go through a peer review process. *Design Issues* isn't a peer-reviewed journal, it's the top journal in design but it's not peer-reviewed and so it's an editorial board that decides what gets published and what doesn't. In their history, up until 2010, I think they'd only had, like, three women editors and they were all guest editors."

Clerke 47:49 "And it isn't about whether women are good enough to meet the standard. It's like, where do these standards come from, who's developed them?"

Clerke 49:38 "You never hear men being talked about as 'male designers', you only ever hear women being talked about as 'female designers' and 'women designers'."

Clerke 50:15 "If you're interested in women then you become a 'feminist', and 'feminist' means, you know, harry legs, dungarees, male-hating, bitter people."

Clerke 52:52 "Feminist writing in design, pardon? [laughs]. What feminist writing in design?"

Clerke 1:10:04 "Someone said to me, well be careful what you say, but you know there are 3,000 people who read that [design] list around the world and it's going to mark you in some way, like you're going to be known as, 'The Feminist', or something. So there's this fear of sticking your head out. In Australia, we call it the 'Tall Poppy Syndrome': so if you stick your head up, as a tall poppy, it'll get cut off."

Clerke 1:12:40 "Funding for the humanities has disappeared practically in Australia over the last 30 (?) years, and Women's Studies were the first to go, I'm not quite sure why."

Clerke 1:13:49 "Every time women make moves, or feminists make moves, to challenge deep-held beliefs that come from, you know, masculine theories, they come from male-authored theories, then there's some kind of counter-move to say, in fact, 'oh, we've moved on since then."

Clerke 1:14:29 "Terry Threadgold said this … feminism will always need re-doing. Meaning that we have to re-write feminism all the time, because whenever feminists make gains then there's always going to be a backlash that pushes everything back."

Clerke 1:15:37"That's why I kind of think it's one move against the other, and so there's always going to be a need to continually rethink feminism in the context of whatever's going on at the time."

Clerke 1:16:23 "[Design] self-sabotages in lots of ways. There's this idea that you get some ideas that designers can claim as its own. For example, design thinking … people have done 'design thinking' for many, many years they just don't call it that."

Clerke 1:17:40 "What's important is that designers aren't the only ones thinking creatively. Scientists think creatively. But why is creativity grabbed by design, and art, and 'we're special because we're creative', you know?"

Clerke 1:17:58 "So I think it's still part of this idea of being a new discipline and trying to grab terms, grab occupations, grab roles, grab characteristics or even attributes (like creativity) and claim them as being 'design only', and I think that's to design's detriment."

Clerke 1:18:17"And they're still linked to sort of gendered ideas, so the creative practitioner is always going to be linked to that idea of the lone male tortured artist, you know, the genius, the hero. That *hero* discourse is still very much part of creativity and innovation. And if you look at innovation, *innovation* is one of the big words in design, 'creativity and innovation', and it's always linked to technology, and who occupies technology? Yes, women are moving into technology and technological areas, but innovation is still seen as some kind of solo enterprise. Like you go to bed at night and you have this amazing dream and you wake up and it's morning and you've got the solution. Somehow there's this romantic idea that *that's* what 'creativity and innovation' means, and it's still linked to this romantic idea of the male artistic genius."

Sarah 1:19:26 So what do you think is a productive way to disrupt these current narratives?

Clerke 1:19:35 "Just to keep noticing. I think women have to continue to pay attention to unfairnesses, and have to keep pointing it out, and have to say it out loud."

Clerke 1:20:02 "It's like this shared understanding amongst a whole bunch of people, like millions of people, and yet as soon as you say anything then - so I guess [we] need a bit more courage."

Sarah No one wants to risk their livelihood.

Clerke 1:20:19 "I'm nearly 60 and I don't have a full-time job and am unlikely to get one, and I've got cancer, like what the f**k, I'm going to say it." [laughs]

Clerke 1:20:30 "I think that's the thing, you know, if you stick your head out before you've got to a position of safety, and let's face it, women don't have places where they can be safe because, you know, the [the only three women on Australian bank AMP's eight-member board] executives on the board of AMP resigned, you know what I mean? Even if you get to the top … there's no safe place for women, even at the top because they can always be pushed aside as a result of being women."

Sarah 1:21:27 Especially designers, we create the visual culture that we're surrounded by, and I feel like designers are very aware of the cultural milieu that they're in.

Clerke 1:22:22 "I think that's what it is, I think it's fear. Very much fear. Fear of loss of reputation, fear of career progression, fear of being labelled and not being able to dodge it, fear of … being ostracized, that's worse [than harassment] in lots of ways, not being included. Oh, excluding, that's the other term I had, so we're excluded, often, on the basis of a feminist stance or something they might have said, or something like that."

Clerke 1:22:59 "But I don't think it's all negative

Clerke 1:23:39 "It's almost like there's this alternative, like a parallel universe, this kind of satellite conversation that's going on, that isn't incorporated into the mainstream, that women participate in, and some men."

Sarah How do you think sexism shows up in the way we design, not even just who's designing?

Clerke 1:25:51"It doesn't matter who's designing. It's visual culture, the way, representation, how are things represented, how are words… words are very part of the gendering process. Language, it defaults to the masculine."

Clerke 1:26:47 "It's very complex, but I think language is the root of gendering, and language is visual. And so, if you work in visual language, which is what designers do, and currently working with what it acceptable and what is expected."

Sarah 1:27:21 As a designer, as a person I consider myself to be a feminist but I've been asking myself, how does that affect my work? Does it?

Clerke 1:29:00 "There's no such thing as equality when you're working with an uneven system. It doesn't exist. And people talk about gender equality all the time and it's not equality, it's about *equity*. Like, it will never be equal and it shouldn't be equal."

Clerke 1:29:22 "I saw this very famous drawing about the difference between equality and equity. And equality, you've got three people standing on the same

podium, but the indigenous person - I think it was about race - but the indigenous person is still shorter and can't reach something. Whereas equity is about, the person that's short, give them a higher podium."

Clerke 1:29:47 "Equity is about compensating for social disadvantage, and enabling people to achieve the same level. So that's not equality. Equality tends to be this idea that we aim for, if we've got the same numbers of women on the board, then the whole system's going to change! [laughs] No, it didn't! … Gender practices are structural. They're discursive, they are reproduced continually, women participate in them because if they don't then they don't get work. So I think 'equality' is a problem, that word, because it sets up expectations that aren't going to help anyway."

Clerke 1:30:48 "You know, push-back can be done really subtly."

Clerke 1:31:19"Drawing attention to what visual culture reproduces. And social norms. And if you look at the discourses and saying, well, who's the person that's doing child-rearing, parenting or whatever."

Clerke 1:32:22 "There's ideas that need to be challenged continually."

Clerke 1:33:04 "Keeping on noticing. Keeping on paying attention. Keeping on students about it, you know, keeping on rethinking what it means to be a designer from a woman's perspective. Or from a feminist's perspective, actually, not even a women's perspective. Because as soon as we start saying 'from a women's perspective' then it devolves back into that biology."

Clerke 1:33:40 "Where does the idea of 'good design' come from? Go back to the Bauhaus and the men who developed it."

Clerke 1:34:02 "See, I don't think that's the question. It's not, 'what if women did it' or 'what if feminists did it' and how it would change [design], it's like let's go and deconstruct (this is what Carma Gorman talks about), let's deconstruct, let's pull out where the ideas come from, and expose the ideas as emerging from masculine ideas of 'good', or masculine ideas of design, and then we say, well how else can we rethink this? As opposed to, 'let's do it from a women's perspective' or 'let's do it from a feminist perspective', or 'let's do it from a race perspective', or 'let's do it from a disability perspective'. And I think that's the other reason why people don't have feminist conversations so much

anymore because of intersectionality. I've read lots of things where people lump women in with other minorities … on what planet are women a minority?"

Clerke 1:35:23 "Not that design has to be rethought from a women's perspective or a feminist perspective, but it has to be rethought. And it has to be rethought collectively, and it has to be rethought by a whole range of people who have a stake in design. And not just the people who design, but the people who use design, the people who have to work with designers."

Clerke 1:35:53 "What do we want the future to look like?"

Clerke 1:35:59 "I think a lot of the time there's a focus on redressing the past, and that's where this sort of 'adding women to' comes from? Oh, we'll make up for the fact by adding to them now, but we won't actually change the premise under which we accept people. So I think there has to be this focus forward: what do we want the future to look like in design? Whose voices do we want to be contributing to this preferred future, and how do we facilitate it?"

Clerke 1:37:40 "Just having this conversation is going to make me attune a little more to what I do and what I think about."

Clerke 1:44:02 "I don't want to give you advice, but if you refer to yourself as a *woman* designer rather than a *female* designer, it moves it away from the biology … it might be best to call it 'feminist', to be honest."

Clerke 1:45:08 "What you call yourself is important."

Clerke 1:45:59 "One the one hand you have to be clear about you, as a woman doing it and doing it from a certain perspective, but on the other hand, do you have to qualify the word [designer] by putting 'woman' in front of it? I don't quite know how to deal with that, I'm not sure that I've got an answer for you, it's just a question: *what are you going to call yourself*. And it's important. Not so much for me or you, but it's important for the conversation."

Clerke 1:47:04 "A reflective video on practice"

Appendix C.
Film documentation

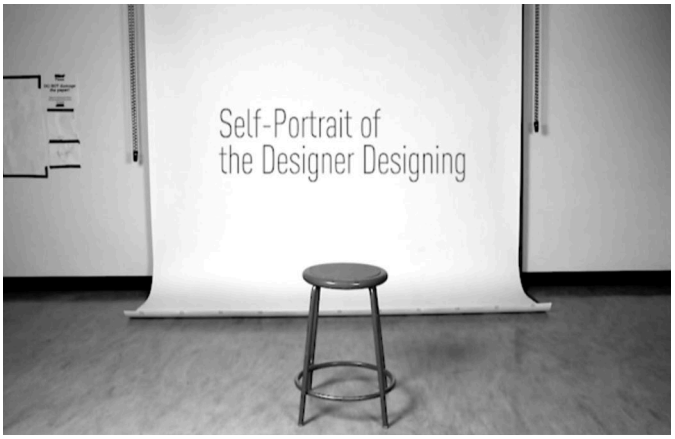
Creator:
Sarah Jackson

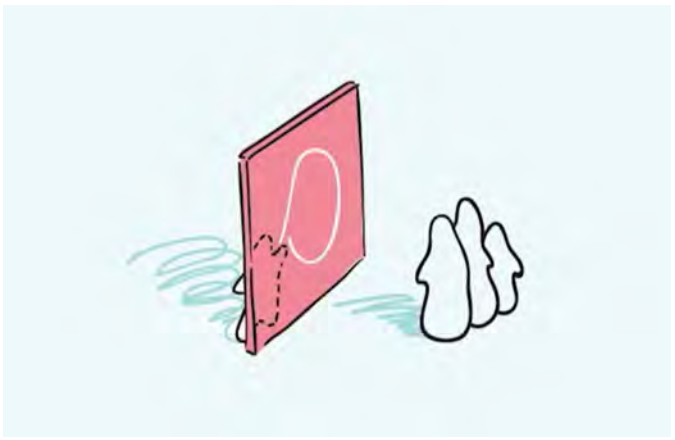
Description:
These animated and video-recorded documentary shorts are complementary to this paper and forms the design artifact portion of this thesis project. Together these 13 chapters, or shorts, create a 40-minute documentary of applying a hermeneutic, embodied and feminist research framework to my own practice as I engaged in various dialogues over the 9-month research period. These shorts utilize embodiment and performativity as tools to engage with the various dialogues of my research (the semi-structured interviews, literature review, and my own self-dialogue) as I looked at the research question, *how can I disrupt current narratives of women in design?*

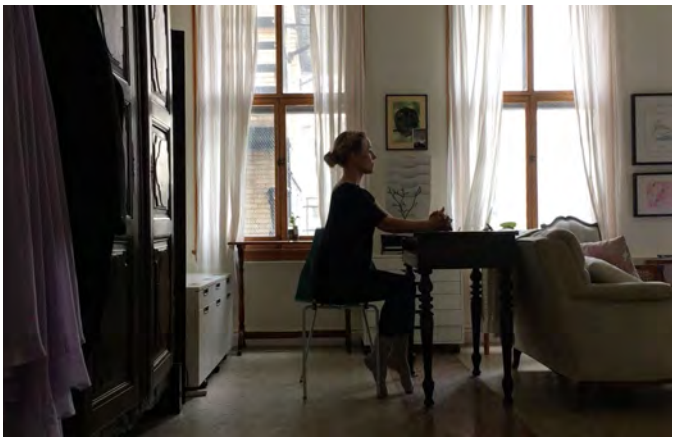
The following screen captures document my initial explorations and the iterative process of creation, as well as the 13 chapters of the final documentary series. The 13 shorts can be viewed at https://sarahjacksonmdes.com/.

File names:
AppendixC_FilmDocumentation.pdf *(15 pages)*

INITIAL EXPLORATIONS: TEST VIDEOS, LOCATIONS & ANIMATIONS



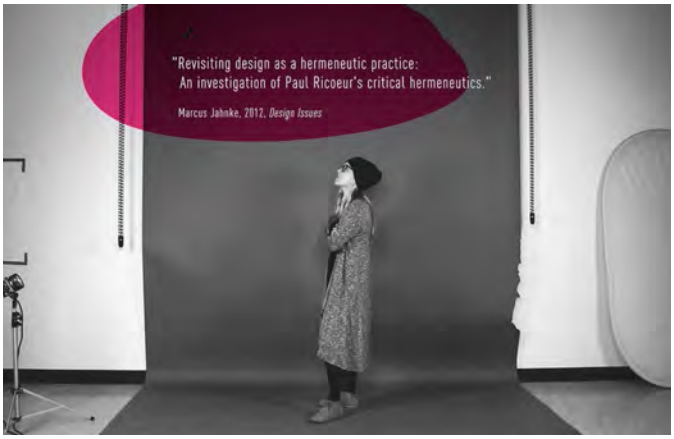


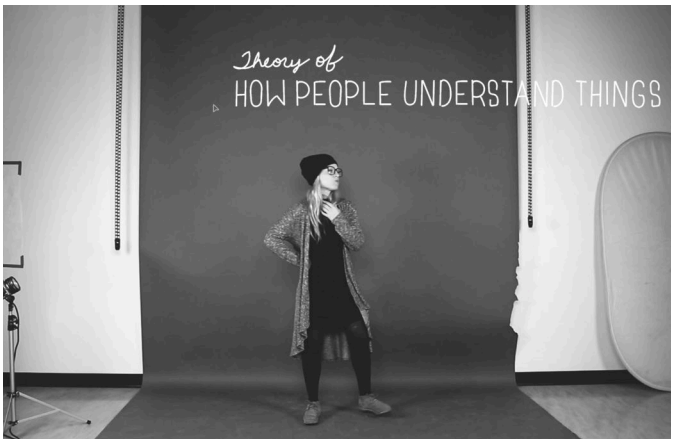


ITERATIVE FILM-MAKING PROCESS

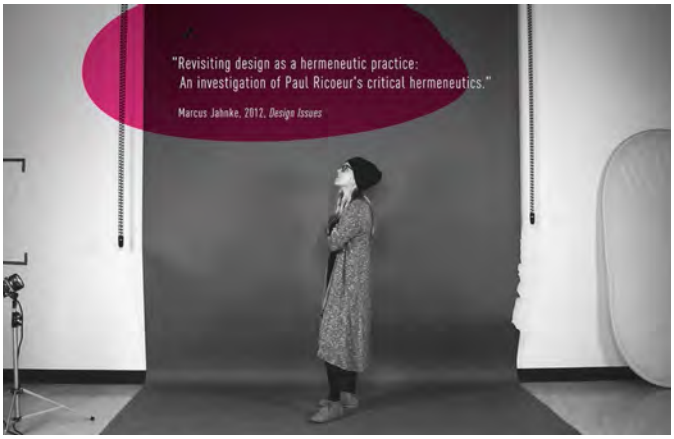
CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

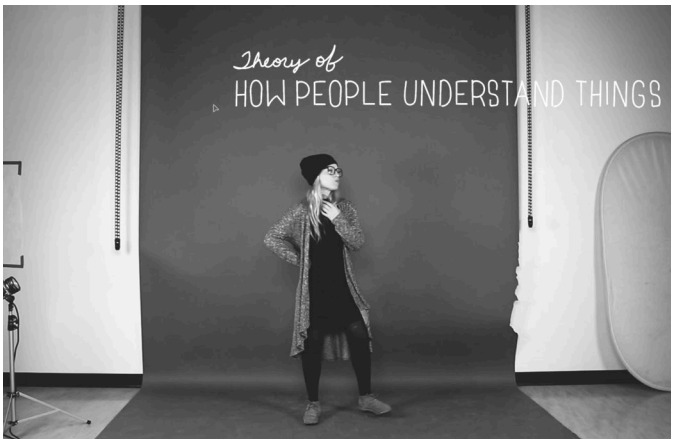
CHAPTER 2 : HERMENEUTICS



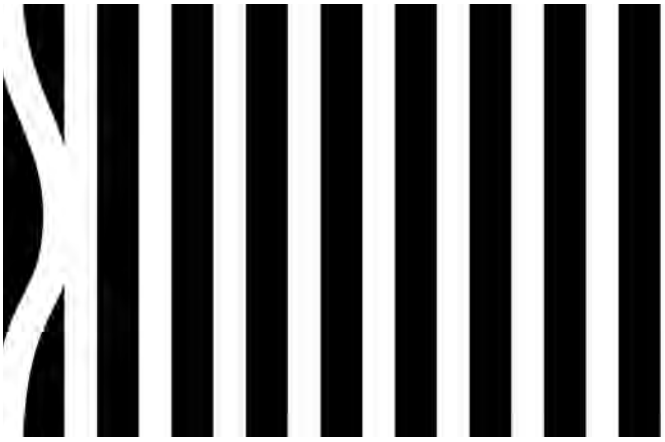


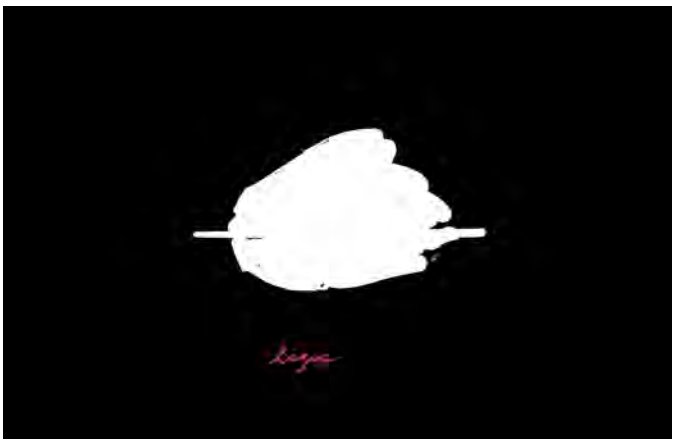
CHAPTER 3 : DIALOGUE



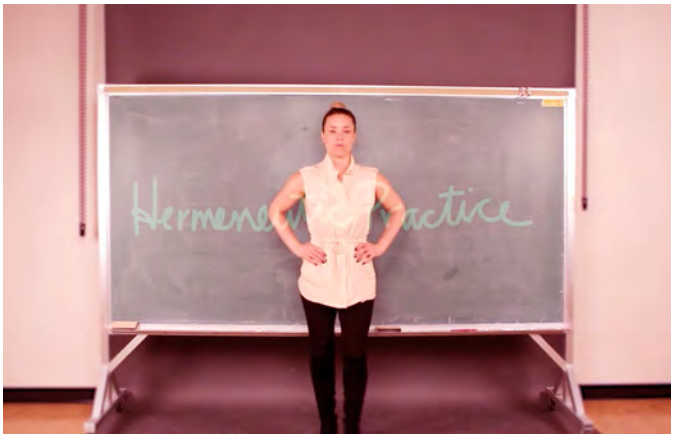


CHAPTER 4 : A CRITIQUE OF NUMBERS

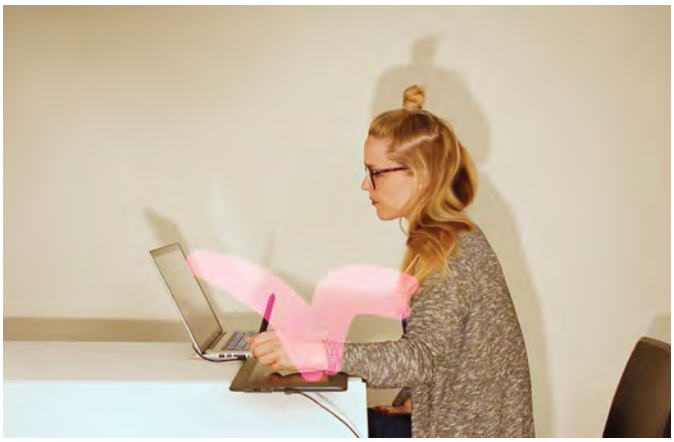


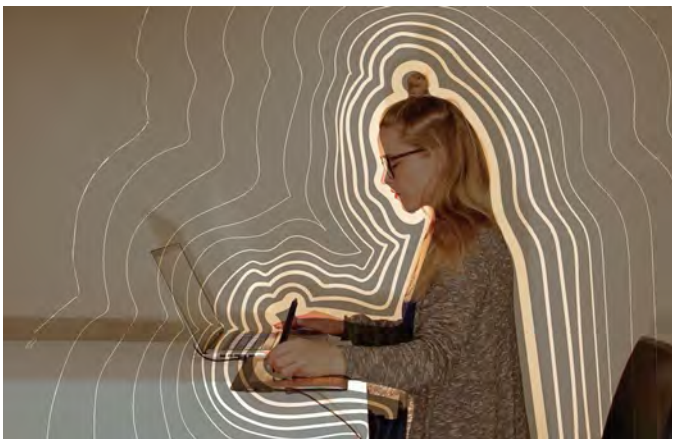


CHAPTER 5 : BEING IN THE WORLD



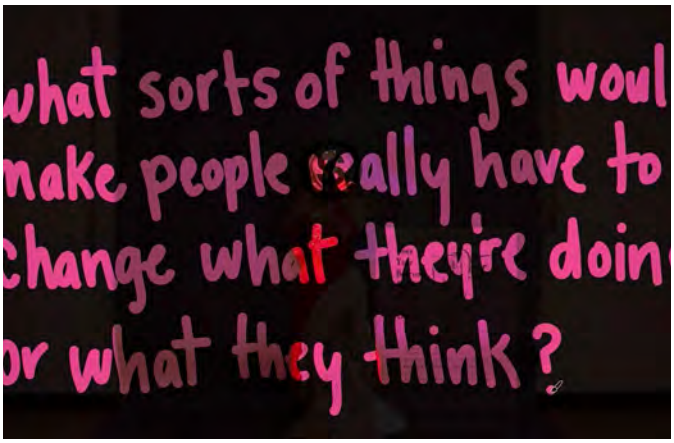
CHAPTER 6 : THE BODY

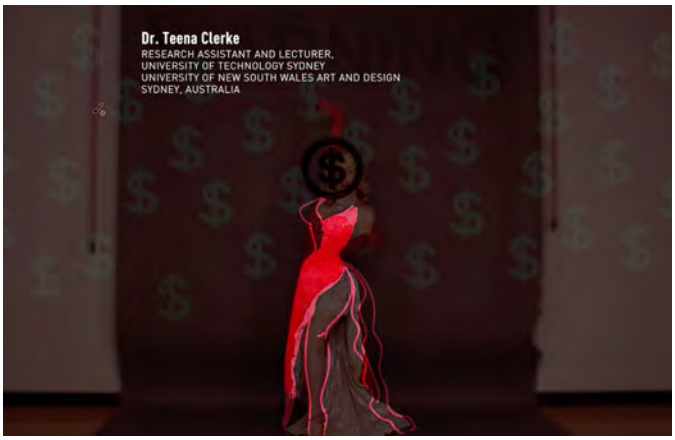


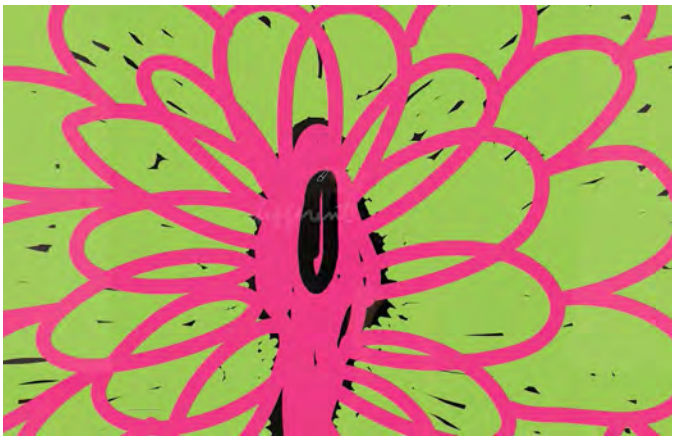


CHAPTER 7 : VISUAL TASTES

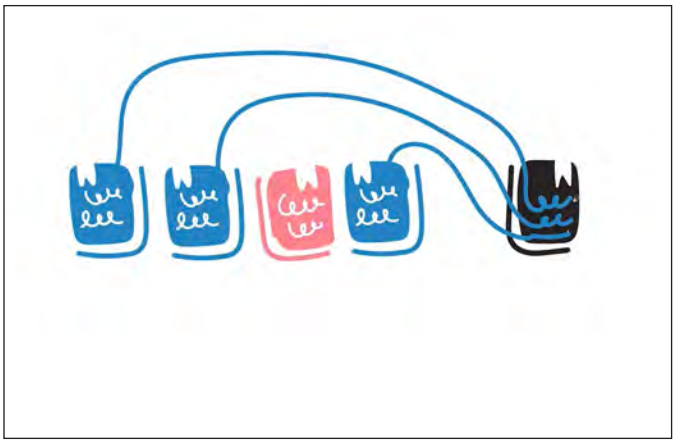
CHAPTER 8 : CHANGING TASTES

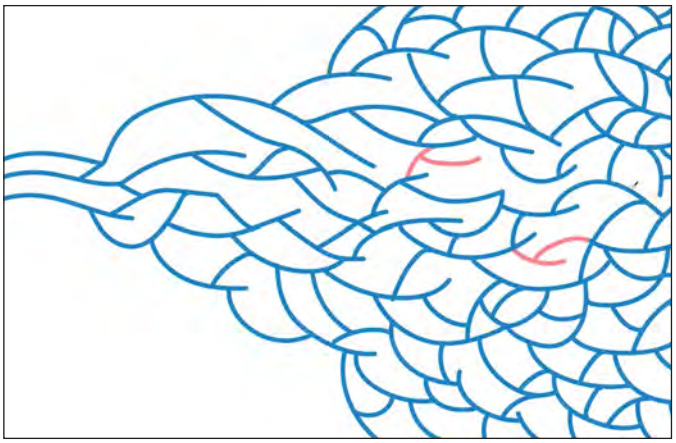


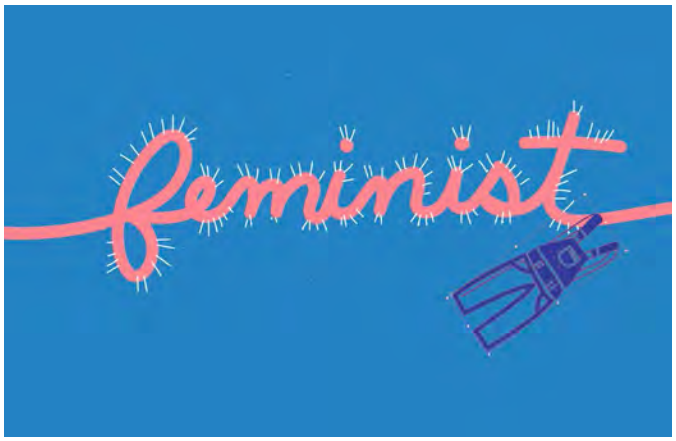


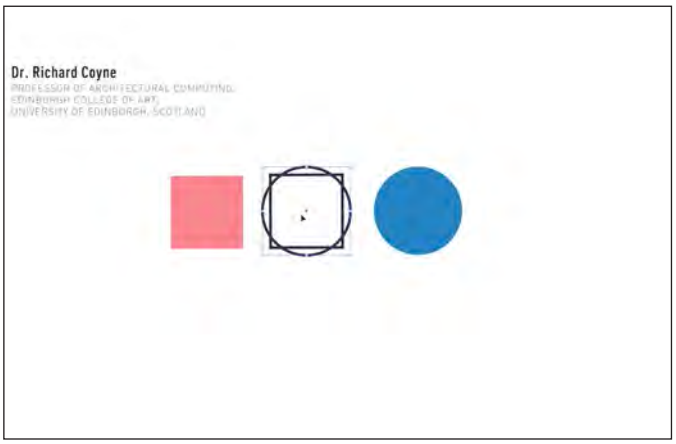


CHAPTER 9 : FEMINISM



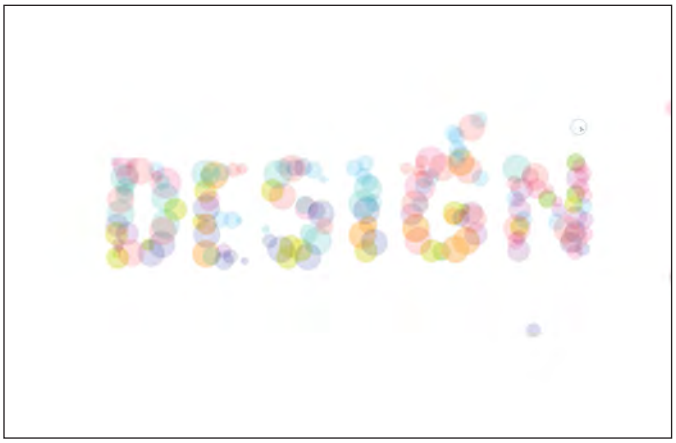


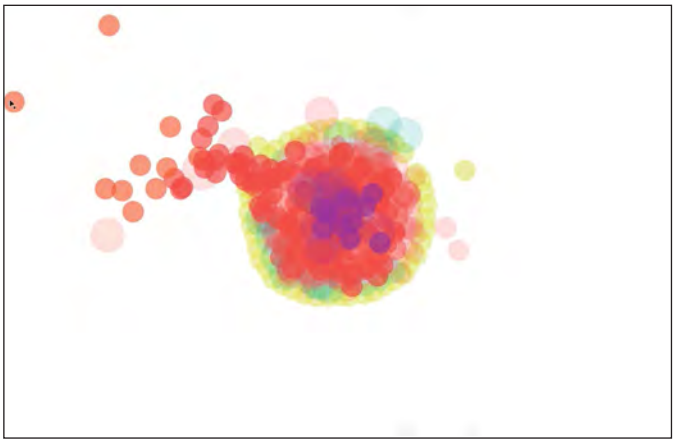




CHAPTER 10 : STEREOTYPES

CHAPTER 11 : FINDINGS





CHAPTER 12 : CONCLUSION

Practical Strategies

Strategy 1:
Questioning Gendered Language

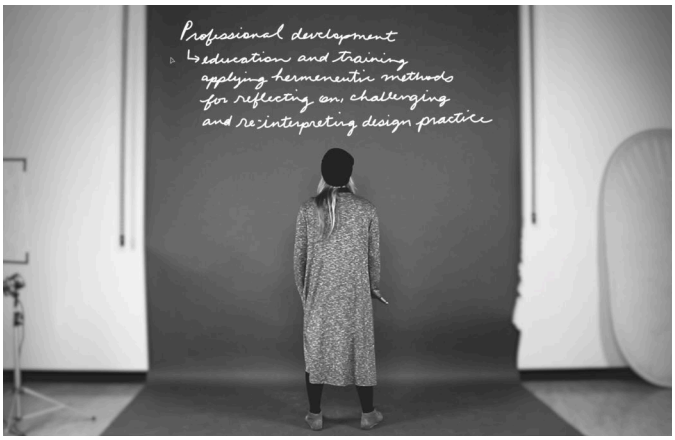
Strategy 2:
Making a habit of self-reflection

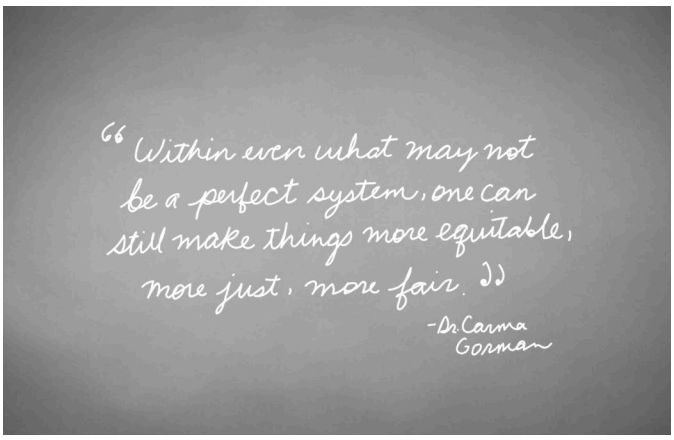
"Hermeneutic work is based on a polarity of familiarity and strangeness... The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between."
-Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, pg 306

Questions to engage in hermeneutic self-reflection:
What does design currently reproduce in this area?
How can I draw attention to what's being reproduced?
How can I look more widely for inspiration?
Where can I find the alien, the weird and off-the-wall?
How can I look at the problem sideways?
How can I deconstruct where this idea came from?
How else can I rethink this?

Strategy 3:
Reframing the role of design.

CHAPTER 13 : THE FUTURE





Appendix D.
Exhibition documentation

Description:
The following images document the thesis exhibition, which was displayed in the University of Alberta FAB Gallery from August 28, 2018 to September 22, 2018 (1-1 Fine Arts Building, 89 Avenue & 112 Street, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2C9).

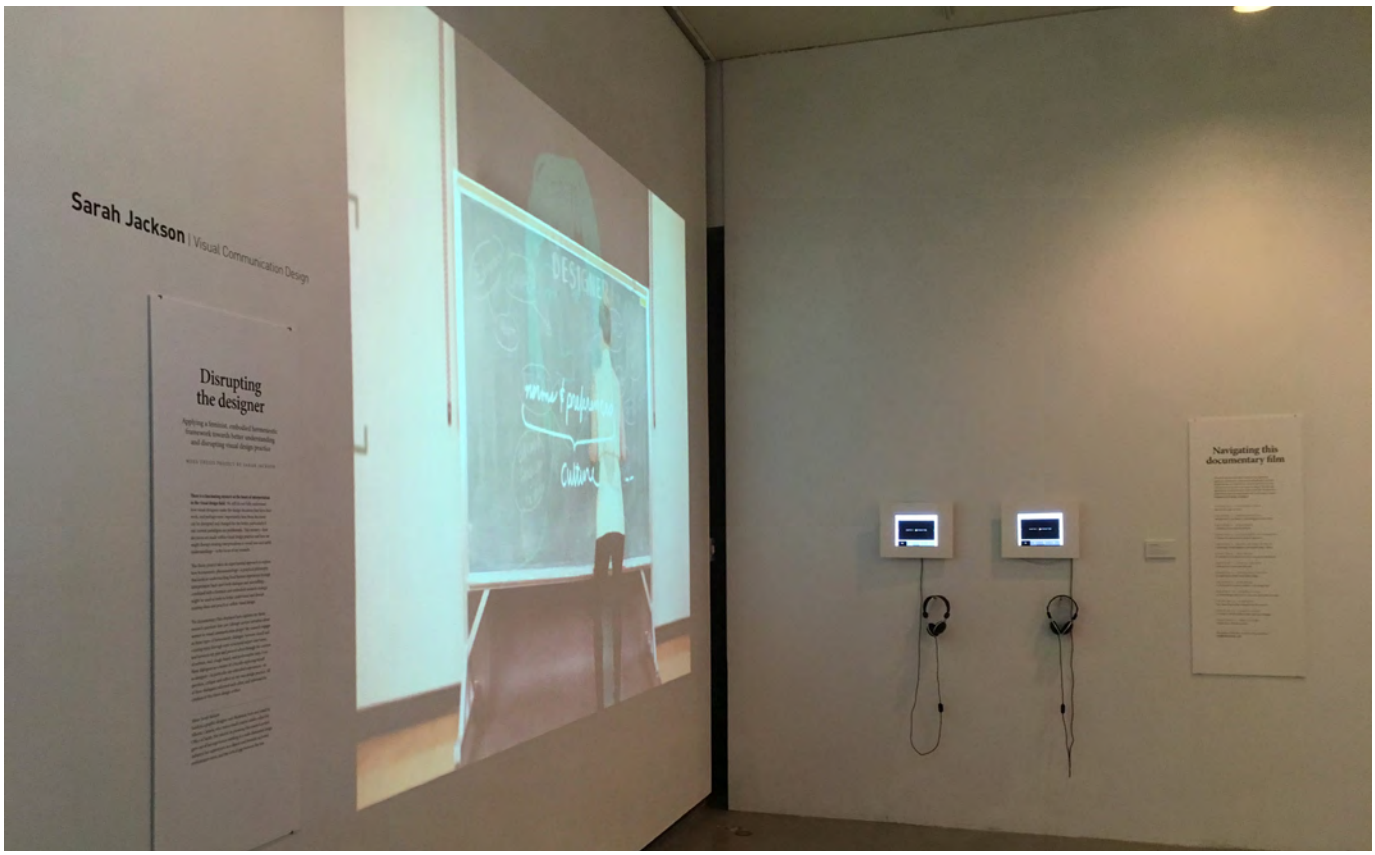
File name:
AppendixD_ExhibitionDocumentation.pdf *(3 pages)*

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA FAB GALLERY | AUGUST 28, 2018 – SEPTEMBER 22, 2018

MDES THESIS GRAD SHOW EXHIBITION "DESIGNFORTE"

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA FAB GALLERY | AUGUST 28, 2018 – SEPTEMBER 22, 2018

MDES THESIS GRAD SHOW EXHIBITION "DESIGNFORTE"



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA FAB GALLERY | AUGUST 28, 2018 – SEPTEMBER 22, 2018

MDES THESIS GRAD SHOW EXHIBITION "DESIGNFORTE"