

WRITTEN RESPONSE # 1

“From the designer as author to the designer as researcher.”

I would like to begin this response by sharing my experience as I approached the brief Methods of investigation. The first stage of (almost) every design project is investigating. The curious eye that seeks out knowledge and information worth sharing is essential to produce interesting projects. Photography, recording, and mapping are part of a designer's day-to-day practice. However, I had not used these tools as systematic, intentionally, and consciously as I did for this brief. It is evident how, in a way, the boundaries of design and the methods of social sciences intersect.

In developing this investigation, I found myself focusing on the pressing issue of human overproduction and its environmental impact. By collecting these pieces of junk, scraps and remains of human creation that are merged with/melted into the landscape of the shore of the Thames, I questioned: how are we going to be remembered? In a future geological era, what would be the remains of our generation?

Furthermore, I would like to explore the relation between my investigation and the film of Agnès Varda *The Gleaners and I* (2000). There is a specific part where she says, “There is another woman gleaning in the film; it’s me.”. The gleaners she is documenting glean wasted food and Varda gleans images, with a digital camera and a small crew she gleans fragments of stories that compose her project. I was also a gleaner in this investigation, I not only gleaned information, conclusions, and insights, but I also gleaned junk, scraps, and objects that contributed to my investigation, helped me build my critical voice.

In the film, Varda also addresses the issues of food overproduction and food waste, inequality, hunger, and other social issues. Thus, this evidence the critical voice of this film. In the article by Francisco Laranjo “Critical Graphic Design: Critical of What?” he cites the researcher Ramza Mazé where she suggested three methods of critical design “In the third kind of criticality, designers address pressing issues in society. The critique is not targeted at a designer’s own discipline, practice or even at design in general, but at social and political phenomena”. (Laranjo, 2014). Through conscious research, Varda and I were able to develop a critical perspective. However, I wonder if my final product will have at least the minimum of relevance and accountability as her documentary did.

It should be noted that “a design work is not instantly critical just because of the intentions of the designer, or the pressing issue being researched.” (Laranjo, 2014). Therefore, producing a solid critical graphic design

project that has relevance to social, political, or environmental debates involves a different set of methods, iterations, and processes that are exclusive to the design field. Regardless, what I can say is that through my investigation stage I switched from being a *designer as author* to a *designer as researcher*.

Bibliography:

Laranjo, F. (2014) *Critical graphic design: Critical of what?, Modes of Criticism*. Available at: <https://modesofcriticism.org/critical-graphic-design/> (Accessed: October 20, 2022).

The Gleaners and I (2000). France.