VIEWPOINTS
No. 1
— experiencing a fragmented situation —

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Mehrdad Arta
Thoughts on the work

Idea
My initial thoughts were that the project would be an aesthetical representation of my previous concepts, and only demand technical support. But as the subject grew along the way, the interest on taking the project further required theory that supported my ideas. Working with a theme (situation) made it possible to connect both theory and practise.

First Thoughts
Before contextualing a project I have these loose, mixed and bits of thoughts floating in the air. All the thoughts are messy and there is no structure. I continuously strive to make sense of these thoughts and to make them coherent. For me, this stage of a process is when all the thoughts are in motion and fragmented. When two loose thoughts collide, an idea merges. Even though an idea is created I still try to concretize it by constantly search and associate it with other ideas/references, in order to make them available, ideas should be clear as possible so that others can relate to them. That is to visualize something complex in a more concrete way.

For this project I have been working with the notion of fragmentation being in motion. That in some way illustrates my loose thoughts, waiting to be connected and make sense. When the mirrors are correctly angled and hit right with the image the moment becomes coherent, harmony is experienced. I will come back to this later in the text and explain what I mean.
Previous projects

Work Process
The reason to show previous projects is to get an overview of my working process and concepts.

Project No. 1 - Simple
Simple is a documentation of my surrounding during a period of time I spent in London. The aim with the project was to design a ‘personal’ logotype that should reflect my personality in some way. My thoughts were: I change and adapt depending on my surroundings. In this context what I mean is that I change and affect the environment by being present in it, and vice versa, that the environment changes me. I took roughly 200 photos of my surrounding. It could be off anything that caught my attention. I found patterns being repeated, sites being constantly under construction. I was exposed by all kind of shapes and materials, and this was what I wanted to capture for the logo. I knew from the start that the logo should be a three dimensional object, something physical and not only two-dimensional. I designed four logos that should give an overview of my surroundings. The logos are not a reproduction of my surrounding but rather a metaphor that shows the environments different ‘sides’.

Wood - The method was to start simple, like those constructing sites I frequently bump into. Start with wood and from thereon see how I can proceed and further develop the form. At this stage everything was rearrangeable and not fixed, which in a way reflects how a construction site can be.

Metal / Solid - When passing by headquarter of Lloyd’s bank, a industrial looking metal-building, I decided to do something in that ‘style’.

Rubik’s cube - Rubik’s cube allows the form to be open for change and be transformed into new shapes. There is a degree of interaction and a sense of involvement with the form. Though the rubik’s cube allows for interaction it is still limited for transformation.

Perspex glass - Transparent: This form can be viewed from many different angles. When the cube gets exposed by sun light it gives away a shadow. Depending on where the sun comes from the six sides allows the cube to merge into new complex shapes. A ‘life’ of its own, a ‘living-clock’.
Project No. 2 - Forum För Levande Historia

This project allows the spectator to take part and be part of it. It puts the viewer in a position to think through before he/she judge a situation.

“Umberto Eco argued that literary texts are fields of meaning, rather than strings of meaning, that they are understood as open, internally dynamic and psychologically engaged fields. Those works of literature that limit potential understanding to a single, unequivocal line are the least rewarding, while those that are most open, most active between mind and society and line, are the most lively and best.”

...the way stories has a defined form and meaning, and by setting it in motion and deconstructing the structure new results can be encountered, interpreted and retold by the audience in order to give it a new meaning. “This re-telling over time allows for creative (mis-) interpretation, exaggeration and fragmentation - that allows the audience to take ownership of the art.”

By deconstructing two stories and joining them into ‘single-word-system’ where the words can freely be re-arranged creates an ‘open space’ where the viewer can organize the story in different ways depending on the choices that person makes, or it could be a (re)-examination of the self with various solutions. An investigation of multiple points of view within a single project that allows the individual to present ideas in layers of information into new context...

Project No. 3 - Post-it

Post-it is a project which entirely depends on the spectator’s participation. They either read what others have written, or they write for others to read. The project is open for visitors to create the content.

Project No. 4 - Svarta Strumpor

Project No. 4 plays with time. The past, the present and the future. When the future becomes the present and then becomes the past. The project starts by recording the present in order to show it in the future. By showing the recorded material in the future the content of the material becomes a documentation of the past. To be able to involve the spectator one needs to feel the present, it could be through some kind of activity, a dialogue, an act or exchange of ‘things’.

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umberto_Eco
2 Frieze Magazine. Issue 98. April 2006 p.33
3 Friday Lectures Report Paper. Mehrdad Arta. 2008-08
(1) Simple / Documentation

(2) Construction

(3) Lloyds bank building

(4) Door and window

(5) Shadow shapes
Forum för levande historia

(6)

(7)

Post-it

(8)

Svarta Strumpor
Research and Inspiration

The main inspiration for the project is the Swan Lake by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. The essentials that are used are the elements from the ballet show Swan Lake. I have been supported with the material by the Royal Swedish Opera. The research and process for the project can be viewed on the mind-map (see enclosed map).

Names that have inspired: Norman Potter, Nicolas Bourriaud, Steve Reich, Mikael Lundberg, Marchel Duchamp, Pablo Picasso, Eadweard Muybridge and others.

Viewpoints No. 1

The form has alongside been shaped by the attempts when trying to decide what the content should be. Since the starting point was neither clear nor defined before knowing exactly what to do, so the text might be incoherent and difficult to picture. I started with an idea, but was not sure how to illustrate it in the most communicative way. Like Mikael Lundberg, “he does not start from a fixed material, but from the subject or theme that catches his attention, then constantly seeking new ways to give form to or show this through processes or materials that suits the project’s intention.” *The aim of my project is to bring previous concepts and mixture of thoughts forward. Hopefully in a way that the reader can see the connections.

The main inspirations are two painting from the period of cubism and futurism. Portrait of Ambroise Vollard (1910) and Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2 (1912), by Pablo Picasso and Marcel Duchamp. The shattered mirror looking shapes in Picasso’s painting and with Duchamp’s painting the mechanistic motion and the elements of fragmentation caught my attention. Aesthetically they are in some ways connected to my previous concepts. The idea of things being seen from more than one point of view.

**Attempt No. 1**
To do my version of Picasso’s *Portrait of Ambroise Vollard*. I made some sketches, and a modell to run some tests on. The reason I decided not to take the idea further was because I felt that it just was a representation of Picasso’s painting and not a investigation on further developing the concept of cubism and futurism. Instead of replicating the painting, it felt much more fruitful to work with the concept and see how far it could be pushed. For example how would experience, feeling or sound fit into the cubism/futurism way of thinking?

**Attempt No. 2**
Marcel Duchamp’s painting *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2*. I decided that the terms mechanistic motion and the elements of fragmentation should be the main inspiration for my piece.

**The Intention**
I went to the Royal Swedish Ballet to see a friend perform in *Swan Lake*. When I entered I heard the orchestra rehearse, and I noticed that the conductor could separate every instrument by giving each musician a comment. It surprised me, because for me as a ‘normal’ listener finds it really hard to discern each and every instrument. The focus will be directed depending on where the eyes are focued. Compared to the ears which can take in all the sound at the same time. The eyes can focus at one point at a time, and it is possible to distinguish sound if you see the movement of what is producing that sound. On a show when so many things are happening at the same time, it is difficult to notice the details because there are so many things going on simultaneously. This is what I wanted to capture.

It is difficult to work with themes such as opera, ballet and theatre for an art project. These themes have strong and preconceived ideas. They are loaded with poetry, so overwhelming and romanticized that it will drown the project’s substance. So therefore I will try to ‘filtrate’ the romanticized, poetical and stylistical face of ballet. The intention is to show the process and the technical aspect of ballet, as the cubism and futurism way of thinking, and to bring forward the ‘invisible’ elements that are not that obvious when you see a ballet performance. How is the show structured? How does the music and choreography interact with one and other? How does the dancer memorize all the dance movements? What is the process behind the show?
**Attempt No. 3**

Combine the ideas of *Attempt No. 1* and *Attempt No. 2*, fragmentation and motion.

A squared box, dimensions $60 \times 60 \times 80$ cm. Inside the box there will be mirrors, images and audio. On the front side there will be a small hole with a viewfinder, where the spectators can look inside. The sound will be played through a pair of headphones. The sound will be from the recordings of the orchestra tuning their instruments and a talking voice of a dancer (whom took part in *Swan Lake*). The voice will inform the spectator with an insight point of view on how it is to be part of a show. The images inside the box will be of her in different dance movements and the conductor's sheet music and images of different instruments. All, which are directly connected to *Swan Lake*. There will be a lightbox under the main box to light up the content, since the box is closed there will be no natural light.

The present being experienced in my work is that the ‘piece’ is not fixed, it will constantly move and change, and therefore the viewer gets his/her own version of the experience. The image and sound will always be different (depending on how the mirrors are angled in relation to the image and sound) and therefore the experience will likely be different every time.
**Method**

The method includes separating and showing examples what the ‘invisible’ parts are and their roles. That they are the elements that structures and holds the show together. In order to get close as possible to the real situation, the main elements needs to be taken into account, selected and arranged in an appropriated way so that it can illustrate the various perspectives happening simultaneously in that situation.

Elements included in the piece (all related to *Swan Lake*)

- The conductor’s sheet music.
- The musicians sheet music.
- The choreographer’s movement notation.
- The dancer’s thoughts.

Listening to the whole orchestra tuning their instruments at the same time is a uplifting experience. It sounds both right and wrong at the same time. Sounds like the music is fragmented, since some notes at times hit right with other instruments and that is to me moments of harmony. This orchestra’s process of ‘clinking’ music gives a impression that it will departure and break off any moment, and this creates an ongoing alertness. As the music notes hit right at times, the mirrors in the box illustrates the same thinking. Depending on how the mirrors are angled they will occasionally be synced both with the image and sound.

All the material that is gathered are from the show *Swan Lake*: the sheet music, the movement notation, the audio and the dancer whom have performed. My aim have been to fragmentize *Swan Lake* into separated elements and put it back together, in order illustrate the moment of various elements going on simultaneously, hopefully in a way that the viewer will experience my intentions.
Movement No. 5

Viewfinder
“Designers in some fields will have seen an object developing into a system, system into process, and process into information, in a way that disconcertingly suggests that their world is dissolving away around them. In making finite decisions they will be aware of a new dimension of reference in their thinking.”

— Norman Potter
Inspiration & presentation

Text, Presentation & Exhibition

I see the project as three units. The written text, the presentation and the final outcome. The link between the starting point and the end point is the mind-map, which I used for the presentation (that shows how I associate and connect different ideas). The mind-map is a visualization of my thoughts during the work process (see enclosed paper).

The Examination

The project’s research and process in itself is a unit separated from the final object. The mind-map showing an overview of the process can later on generate new ideas, depending on what ‘route’ is taken. Since the presentation should be pedagogical, I thought the most effective way was to show the process and open up to let the listeners associate for themselves. The risk can then be that the project is lacking depth and can be misleading from the actual intention of the project. I think that supporting the project with research and references that are directly connected can isolate the subject from new ideas to be innovated. The challenge can be to let far-fetched thoughts generate new and unexpected outcomes. Like reading a book, it’s up to the reader to ‘paint’ the spaces that are not underlined by the author. A good way to communicate complex thoughts are to illustrate the process, that to a degree can be abstract.

To have had Kerstin Grunditz as opponent made the presentation more clear, she asked questions that directed me and the listeners to common ground. She filled the interval that was needed to make my thoughts more communicative. She mentioned concrete examples on how the thoughts could be related into another context (see page 17, Hoppsa Universum).

Some Problems Along The Way

Finding out a way to hang the mirrors was tricky, as well as cutting out the mirrors in relation to the size of the box, and finding a viewfinder fitting in proportion to the size of the box was a bit of a journey. The audio was complicated to edit, it had to be in balance with the concept and be in harmony with the rest of the content.

Since all the components had to be collected beforehand caused me in a position that I had to adjust bit by bit every component so they would correspond to each other. Working this way and not having put all the components together after a longer time gives an impression that the project is far from being finish. During my examination I gave the impression that I was a long long way from being finished, and that concerned my professors. I used most of the time collecting material for the final outcome (like mirror, glas, fan, viewfinder, paint, lamps etc.), and most time-consuming was putting all the mirror-pieces in right position in the box, which was extremely fussy. ...running around, meeting people, collecting things from various sources. The most satisfying stage in the process was to join all the components for the final outcome.
Exhibition

I wanted to display the work as 'open' and let the viewer experience the work visually without any description. During first week when I didn’t have any text description of the work, two visitors came up to me and said: “it’s like real theater, where you can see the different parts in ensemble correlated with each other”. That, when the work can be so easily interpreted proves to me that the form and execution of the project to a degree is on the same level as the concept.

"If a design is so wellwrought that overtones of meaning are present, so that the work can be experienced (optionally) at many different levels simultaneously, then it is a condition of organic design that the further harmonics must not clutter or deform a simple level of acceptability.”

Walking around in Höglagret where the light is set the same on every project, it can then be refreshing to be taken away from that space into another. The visitors can easily remember the project when they are taken into another ‘sphere’. It is also easy to miss the the box since it is black and a camouflaged with the black background. I think a lot of people would easily walk through without noticing the box, if it wasn’t for the big photos that caught the visitors to come closer. The spot lights that has been used in Höglagret suits the photos perfectly, it gives it a touch of a ‘theatrical-atmosphere’, which enchances the photos mood. Someone told me that the photos and the content in the box are of the sam kind but the rhythm and feeling is different. I guess they meant that the pieces are in good contrast to each other, that a still images can be experienced differently if it is put into a new space (like motion, sound and light).

As mentioned earlier, the intention has been to show the process and not the stylistical aspect of ballet. The dancer wears a training outfit and not a costume. The audio, where you can hear the dancer talk about how the preparation is handled before she gets on the stage, and gives the visitors an insights of what is going on in a balett show. The music, of the orchestra tuning their instruments, gives an impression of randomness. When looking into the box for a longer time it is then when an optical illusion occurs, seeing that the piece has its own life, and that it’s not mechanically controlled.

Components for The Box

Audio
Glass - To strengthen the ‘glass-feeling’.
The orchestra - Fragmented music.
The dancer’s voice - Giving the spectator an insight of the situation.

The audio is edited so it works with the concept of ‘fragmentation’. Sometimes the mirrors show an abstract image and sometimes a more clear image. The sound works in the same way, it jumps from being complex to being clear, depending on which part is heard, and what the dancer is saying. There are parts in the audio which are abstract, she describes the dance movements word by word, which is a bit absurd for non-dancer to picture these movements. Some of the images in the box are of these movements (in case if the sound hits right with the image).

Color of The Box
Blank black. To give it an instrument ‘feeling’ to it, like a glossy black piano.

Viewfinder (optic)
The viewfinder gives an impression that the box is bigger than it actually is. It scales down the view, and it looks like the sight reaches further away than the actual size.

Light
Two Fluorescent lamps for the lightbox.

Photo-Filter-Paper
Warm-colored Photo filter (1/2) to neutralize the cold (blue) color coming from the fluorescent lamps.

Fan
Two processor/computer fans (12 cm) to make the hanging mirrors move.

CD-Player & Headphones
For the audio.
The Result

As whole, my project is an investigation on the early cubism and the futurism concepts. Instead of breaking up objects and depicting it from a multitude of viewpoints, I have focused on investigating the notion of how a situation or an experience would fit into their way of thinking.

The first proposal was to produce four photographs and four short movies. But during the process the project’s direction changed slightly, instead of four movies I created the ‘mirror-box’. Since my approach towards the project was quite open I ended up with something more interesting and rewarding (although it took longer time). I’m very satisfied with my result, except that I don’t know what to do with the mirror-box.

Knowledge Gained

I have gained the knowledge communicating my ideas in a more easy way. Within the complexity of my project I found a level of common ground so the listener could ‘see’ what I meant, and therefor I could get a constructive feedback. The longer I was ‘investigating’ in the subject the easier it got to get my thoughts and intentions through. What is good to know before you start, is that you can’t rush things to much. The concept and thoughts should be clear, and it is important to know and to find out what should be done, before considering how to do it, and avoid wasting time and effort.

Contemporary Work of It’s Kind

Radovan Scasascia a.k.a. Secondo (Audio Designer) | AM/PM

"Departing from existing popular songs of various origins, Secondo cuts his source material carefully into minute fragments in order to compose entirely new pieces of music – some how maintaining the atmosphere of the original, but shifting away from it structurally and rhythmically."*

AM/PM is an album inspired by the combination of popular music and conceptual composing. He samples notes and sounds from exciting pieces of music, once the sound is cut out from it’s original context then they are reconfigured into new pieces of music still maintaining the atmosphere of the original, but the structure and rhythm is changed. It sounds something like cinematic soundtrack and forensic audio study.

Anna Källblad (Choreographer) | Hoppsa Universum

Anna Källblad has created a choreographed interactive dance- and music installation space, where the body movement becomes like a ‘musical-instrument’. When visitors enter the space and bump into the movement-sensors (that are placed around in the room), the movements gets registered, and then generates an audio piece that can be heard. The visitors can hear their own and others movement, like an collective work, same as an orchestra where everyone is a ‘musician, dancer and a conductor’ at the same time, with infinite of possibilities. "The room becomes like a performance, where light, sound and room are ‘building-blocks’ for one’s own creation.”*

* http://www.bbc.co.uk/bristol/content/articles/2006/01/03/underscore_feature.shtml
Readings & other sources

- Frieze Magazine. Issue 98. April 2006 p.33
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