Annotated Bibliography

Gayatri Sheth
Methods of Contextualising

1/
Species of Spaces and Other Pieces

"Make an effort to exhaust the subject, even if that seems grotesque, or pointless, or stupid."

The project shares the same principles with Perec's (1974, pp - 46-56) "Species of Spaces" as in this quote : "Make an effort to exhaust the subject, even if that seems grotesque, or pointless, or stupid." The idea of the publication was the theme of joy in overlooked places, often ignored but are rich with quirks and tiny moments filled with joy.

A lot of the everyday life moments feel repetitive, mundane, monotonous and one does not stop to appreciate these moments. Through 150 illustrations that try to represent a moment of joy in some way attempt to exhaust the subject and show how simple acts of everyday life represent joy. The drawings represent a stubborn, obsessive way of looking for moments of joy in the smallest of things, this was achieved through meticulous observation like Perec prompts his readers to think, see, feel.

References:

Perec, G., 1999. Species of Spaces and Other Pieces. London: Penguin. [Originally published 1974] Excerpt pp. 46–56.

2/
Pictures for Rent

"In some designers' work, these images become discursive, reflective of their own status as a form of "popular reality".

The author talks about stock images that help represent visual culture and the choice of these images by a designer then will represent his own view on an idealistic popular reality. As quoted by Miller (1994, pp.68–77) : "In some designers' work, these images become discursive, reflective of their own status as a form of "popular reality".

The project represents people, objects, concepts to represent an idealistic mundane life. It tried to explore my role as a designer and my imagination to represent a certain lifestyle surrounded by certain people and things. Realistic illustrations are often drawn to be flexible, commonly easily understandable just like stock images. The reading also helped me think about illustrations, a new currency in graphic design where sets of illustrations are available like stock. How do these stock images represent an idealistic picture for advertising and branding?

References:

Miller, J.A., 1994. *Pictures for rent.* Eye Magazine, 14, pp.68–77.

3/
The art of Noticing

"a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention,"

In The Art of Noticing, Rob Walker argues for the value of heightened awareness and intentional observation in everyday life—a perspective that deeply informs my approach to illustration. Referencing Herbert Simon's insight that "a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention," Walker explores how distraction often obscures moments of quiet beauty or emotional significance. This aligns directly with my illustrations, which seek to capture fleeting, often unnoticed moments in my surroundings—a glance, a shadow, a small act of joy. Walker's (2019) assertion that "a significant moment deserves a considered prelude" reinforces the value of these visual narratives. Through my work, I aim to prompt viewers to pause and engage more fully with their environments, echoing the book's central message that noticing is a creative and political act.

References:

Walker, R. (2019). *The Art of Noticing*. New York: Knopf.

4/
Mario Miranda

Mario de Miranda's humorous yet deeply observational illustrations of everyday Indian life are a key reference for my project, which attempts to depict small, joyful human moments in London. His work captures the quirks, gestures, and relationships of people in crowded urban spaces with a sense of detail and personality. Like Miranda, I aim to translate lived experiences into expressive visual narratives, allowing character and place to emerge from observation.

His choice of subjects being the local people in local settings like markets, bars, etc also relate to how I found my subjects, in local flower markets, brick lane, tesco shops, etc. Miranda's work, like my project, reinforces the idea that joy can be found in ordinary public life, simply by choosing to see it and his illustrations helped me see how different artists can perceive people in a unique personal way and illustrate them.

References:

Miranda, M., n.d. *About Mario*. [online] Available at: https://mariodemiranda.com/about-mario

Vogue India, 2023. *Street art in Margao.* [image] Available at: https://assets.vogue.in/photos/651834374c7ef8be2495d172/master/w_1600%2Cc_limit/Street%2520art%2520in%2520Margao.jpeg

5/
Sameer Kulavoor - Edifice Complex

Sameer's project "Edifice Complex" holds a similar critical position in the context of my topic and medium. My project aims to capture a present day reality of the people in London. London is home to all kinds of people from various cultures, from polarising economic backgrounds all searching for one common thing; happiness. The social hierarchy is questioned as all of the people are represented under one umbrella. Using the medium of playful simple crayon illustrations and the method of using illustrations as research to represent the topic connects the two projects. I use the method of quick sketches of many people around me as a way to document the present day reality of London, revealing the good, bad and the ugly- like the homeless man outside Tesco with a dog- depicts reality.

References:

Kulavoor, S., 2023. *Edifice Complex.* [online] Available at: https://sameerkulavoor.com/portfolio/edifice-complex/

6/
Reportage Illustration

The book Reportage Illustration: Visual Journalism by Embury and Minichiello provides a critical foundation for my inquiry into capturing fleeting, joyful human moments in London through drawing. As a newcomer, my perspective is fresh, and the book supports the idea that illustration can function as a journalistic and observational tool. It emphasizes drawing from life, emotional immediacy, and visual storytelling — all central to my project of documenting the joyful moments. This reference validates my approach of using illustration to record lived experiences, positioning my work within a wider context of contemporary reportage and visual ethnography in modern cities.

References:

Embury, G. and Minichiello, M., 2018. *Reportage Illustration: Visual Journalism.* London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts.

7/
Saul Leiter - Early Colour

Saul Leiter chose to photograph moments and people despite being in New York city. Instead of making the vast expanse of the city his muse, his subjects were ordinary, glimpses, tiny moments, reflections, shadows but they have a strong presence. "Seeing is a neglected enterprise," Leiter quotes and it directly relates to how I render my subjects. Instead of rendering the famous skyline or the urban landscape of London, I choose to use them as filler background and make people and their actions the sole hero. The project talks about these people with an ordinary life and prompts one to see and observe. Lieter's subjects are often hidden, in motion, almost about to disappear, he is the unobtrusive viewer who floats over these moments. /the isometric perspective evokes a sense of the viewer floating over these moments.

References:

Leiter, S., 2006. *Early Color*. Göttingen: Steidl.

8/
Joey Han -
Bottle Rocket
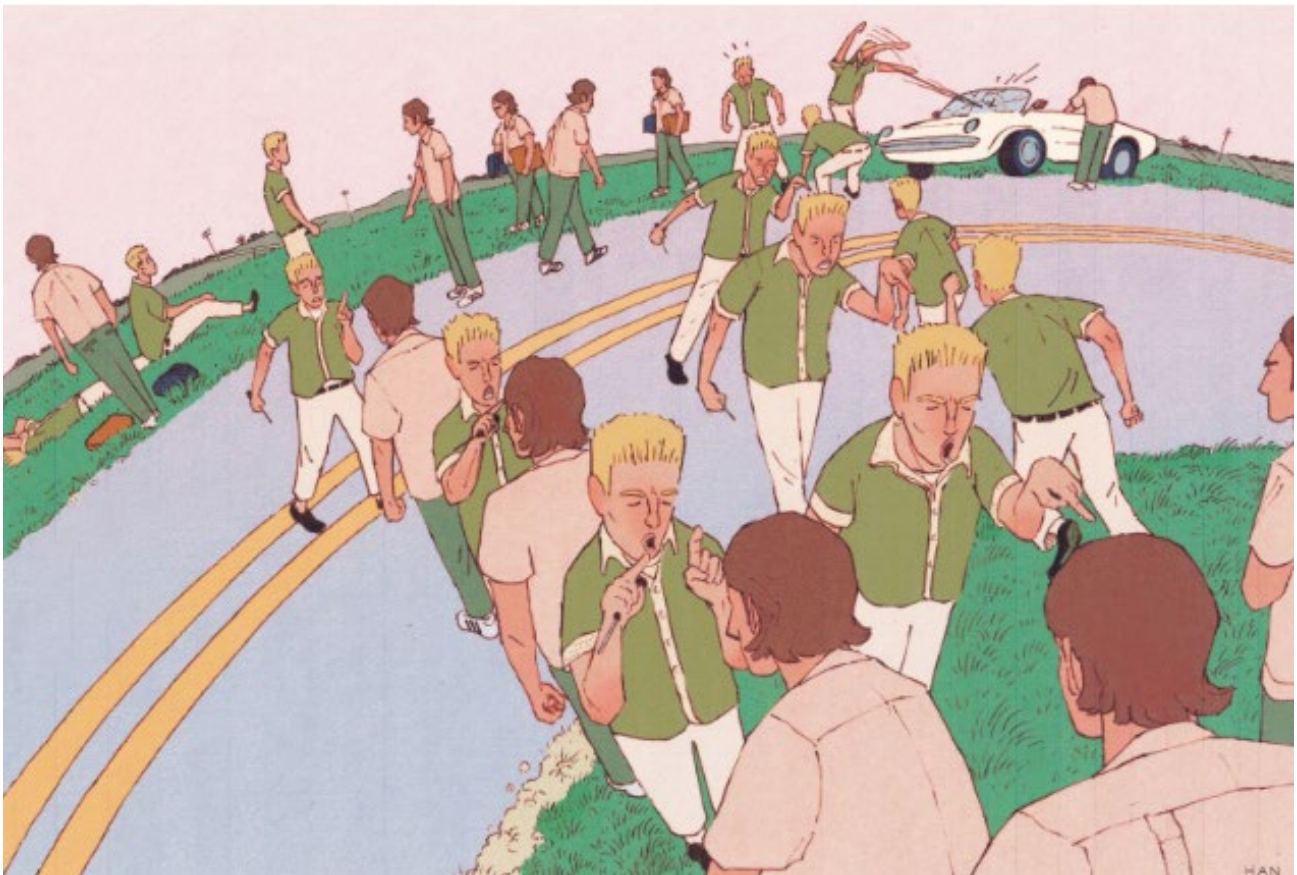
Joy Han uses bending perspectives that allows the viewer to navigate through the illustration in a certain way. I use a similar way of isometric perspective that lets the eye of the viewer travel and absorb the piece bit by bit. What evokes a feeling of being an observer and a participant at the same time? In films and paintings, compositions play a powerful role in making one a part of themselves but also creating a line of separation, it is immersive yet distant. Like Joey Han, I use this power and control the viewer's eye, this asserts a certain power dynamic between the art and the viewer. It forces the viewer to see a particular scene exactly through the lens of the artist. My illustration is a replica of what I saw and drawn in a way I remember it, allowing people to enter my perspective.

References:

Han, J., 2021. *Bottle Rocket.* [illustration] Available at: https://joeyhan.com/

9/
Seb McLauchlan -
Revivals

"It's 2023. I'm being asked to consider how I'm decolonising the canon of type design, and I'm not sure how to respond."

The essay has a sense of overwhelm, chaos but also some positive life altering events. McLauchlan uses time to capture multiple moments that are of significance, similar to my project where the poem jumps from one scene to the other. McLauchlan writes candidly, "It's 2023. I'm being asked to consider how I'm decolonising the canon of type design, and I'm not sure how to respond." This quote from the essay depicts the raw, true, unfiltered thoughts by the author, similar to my approach when composing the narration behind the video. The poem is raw, unstructured but also not and jumps between characters in a random sequence that somehow makes sense. Essay jumps between real life events as they happened, as mere facts. The fact that they are stitched together as a set makes them more valuable and adds more meaning to these connections. I form similar connections of people, events, economic state, architecture and fashion to each other by stitching the different moments together. All the people and moments captured my memory at different times but they have been presented as though they happen in one instance parallel to each other. There is a sense of what it means to be a human living in this day and age, almost a dystopian feeling evoked by Sebs pragmatic approach to the essay which relates to the mundane ordinary facts of London life in my video.

References:

McLauchlan, S., 2023. *Revivals*. [online] Counter Forms. Available at: https://counter-forms.com/texts/revivals

C.L. Evans - Corporate Memphis on Are.na
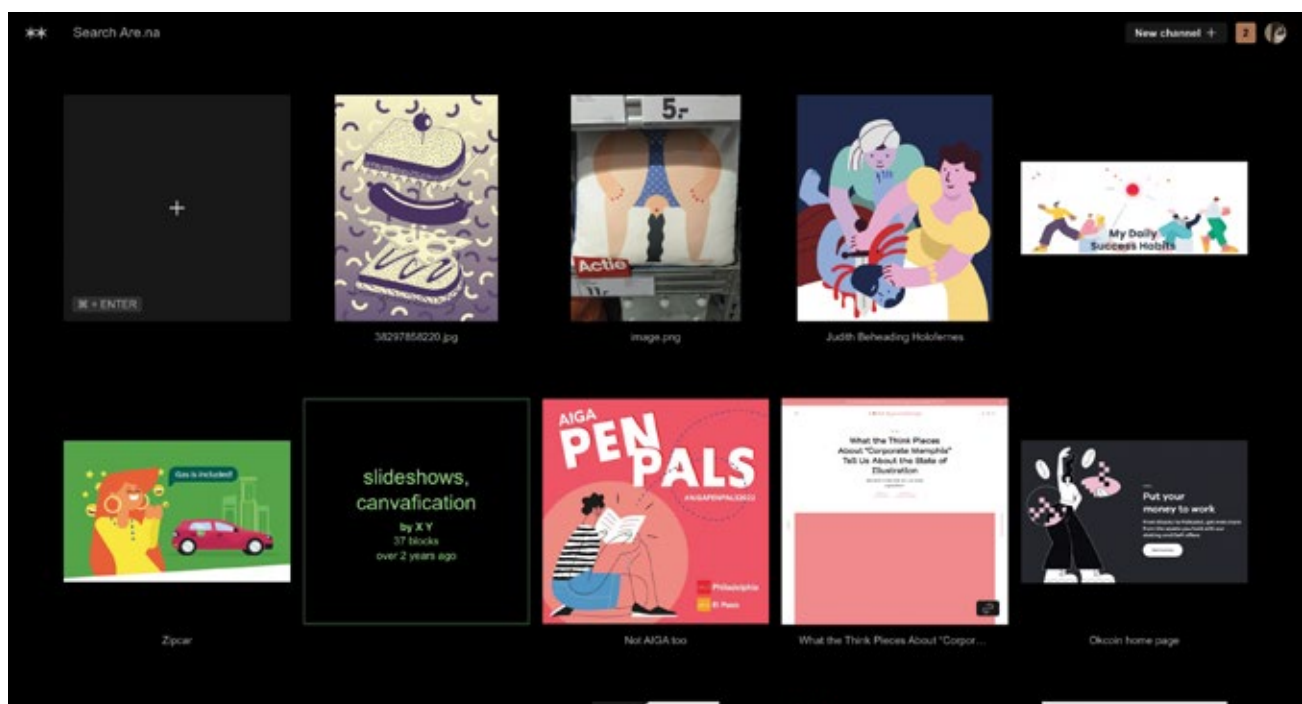
The Corporate Memphis style of human illustrations has over flooded the internet. Evans' collection of the illustrations from various touch points and more importantly from different tech companies is a true reflection of the aggressively optimistic portrayal of human life. What this style lacks is everything that humans actually are. Through my illustrations I aim to portray people and reality as it is. It is not optimistic nor dystopian in any way. It evokes a sense of realism in a unique way. The study of these bendy figures that Evans captured and collected helped challenge and deepen my inquiry about my subjects and the carefully chosen style to illustrate them. Even tools like Humaans to quickly modify humans to meet your need to represent a certain colour, fashion choices, ethnicity are a reflection on how homogenised and generic modern humans are represented. This project was an aim to break way from this and capture moments and people who cannot be replicated, modified or used in a multipurpose way.

References:

Evans, C.L. (n.d.) *Corporate Memphis.* Available at: https://www.are.na/claire-l-evans/corporate-memphis

Stanley, P. (n.d.) *Humaaans: Mix-&-Match Illustration Library.* Available at: https://www.humaaans.com/

11/
Subway Hands

Each hand captured by LaFollette becomes a portrait of a person without showing the person entirely, making the subject both present and absent. The curation, repetition, and framing of each post suggest an almost obsessive attention to detail, similar to Perec's (1999) notion of exhausting a subject to uncover hidden richness.Subway Hands isolates and elevates a single, overlooked gesture into something symbolic and human. It pushes me to think more critically about framing and subject matter: what gets seen, and what gets ignored? The project reinforced the power of observation and the portrayal of it by the observer.

References:

Ryan, H.L.F. (n.d.) *Subway Hands*. Available at: https://www.instagram.com/subwayhands/

11/
White Lotus - Plains of Yonder

The introductory sequence encapsulates themes of desire, lust, deception and societal critique through subtle hints and easter eggs. The sequence gradually unfolds and the viewer discovers the deeper meaning behind the frescos. Modern day society and themes of economic disparity, luxury and nuanced racism are some of the key ideas illustrated through metaphoric characters, often animals. There is a clear distinction between outward appearances and hidden realities.

The frescoes, while beautiful and ornate, often depict scenes that hint at underlying tensions and secrets, reflecting the show's commentary on societal facades.

The in depth research of the visual language of the italian frescos led the team to choose a certain colour palette, architecture, and natural and manmade landscape that informs directly to these themes. The paintings initially look as if they are timeless, painted centuries ago and assert a certain fairytale story value from the older times. Hence, the style directly makes the viewers assume existence and draw connections between old paintings depicting modern day society. The animation is simple yet used as a tool for storytelling by certain crops, zooms and pans. It controls the viewer's eye and informs the unfolding nature of the story. The iconic title track by Tapia de Veer also plays an important part in evoking certain feelings of unsettling anxiety among viewers.

I thought that the study of human compositions in paintings and subverting old styles of paintings to create modern day art is a new approach to illustrations. Using high art to comment on high society, by also honoring the culture of the destination it is set in. With the rise in popularity of quick 2D motion graphics to create animated illustrations, the sequence takes a fresh approach by breaking the monotone of flat vector illustrations providing illustrators with a new direction. I employed methods like parodying, translating, copying, remaking or critically iterating on the reference. The method of using a static illustration to create a dynamic animation also provided an iterative experimentation with traditional use of illustrations. Through this process, I was prompted with questions like : What is an ideal society? Do paintings and illustrations do justice to reality and

portray humans as it?

This iterative process prompted a deep investigation on how to depict humans and life for what I see it to be, as is. Without any trend influenced style, or a false narrative to achieve a particular outcome. It is a reflection on social behaviors and how it is deeply influenced by the city and the streets. There are many cultural quirks that develop in a city in time with its people, these quirks are unique to the place and turn fairly invisible to the people living in it. The aim of this project was to highlight these very hidden layered observations, which are more obvious to an outsider coming in a new city. As described by Perec in his book Species of Spaces, the more you observe the more you will find. Using methods employed by Plains of Yonder for this unique way of storytelling, I analysed how behaviors, trends, fashions, diversity manifest in the streets around and how a new city has a deep influence of mystery, wonder and awe when looked at by a stranger. I aim to explore how illustration can be a tool for research and can help find new possibilities in storytelling and commercial design. Brands, TV shows, social media content that uses illustrations has turned mundane, homogenised and defaulted. It often lacks depth, tacility and texture and a narrative. I aim to explore ways of GCD to explore that.

References:

Plains of Yonder (n.d.) *The White Lotus Season 2 – Main Title Sequence.* Available at:
https://plainsofyonder.com/work/thewhitelotusseaon2

Tapia de Veer, C. (2022) *Renaissance (Main Title Theme)* [from "The White Lotus: Season 2"]. WaterTower Music. Available at:
https://open.spotify.com/track/2wXFOd5lYZH3Hiuw1oAYGt

12/
Michael Rock :
The Problem of
Provenance

"Graphic design is mediated: it works because it is attached to the surrounding culture."

Rock talks about questions of ownership, authorship, originality, and authenticity in design. He refers to the idea of a designer acting as a passive and positions design to be referential, borrowed, remixed and repurposed forms that all serve as inspiration. This brief promoted us to create something using a core reference. The essay reinforced the notion of how a piece of design evolves through discussion, with specific people, certain references and influences. Rocks looks at a designer as a curator of visual language, rearranging existing things in newer perspectives to produce new ways or interpretations that may be unique to the designer.

This project was an iterative experiment that began iteratively, then transitions and further went into an independent experimentation with form and medium, alongside multiple references. I captured fragments of life in London that are themselves referential and are a reflection of societal realities with added nuance. Rocks' essay helped me treat the chosen reference of Plains of Yonder, not with a fear of being unoriginal but how to use that as a part of the inspiration. My illustrations intentionally collect, and reframe real-life observed experiences and individuals in everyday life, whether it's a man playing chess at Brick Lane, pigeons on roofs, or a woman carrying flowers at a local market. These people and moments do not "belong" to me, nor are they invented; they are curated and re-interpreted through my stylistic lens. This argument provides me with a sense of liberation from a design landscape obsessed with the idea of unique creation and innovation. I did not invent new people or a new form of drawing or animation but rather the iterative method allowed me to observe intently and illustrate deliberately.

This idea has reshaped how I look at myself as a designer and illustrator. I do not aim to create these moments out of fiction or create fake-joy as depicted in many corporate memphis images. Many of my stylistic choices of using an isometric angle, experimenting with choices of architecture, people, the colour of the lines and the thickness are not mere aesthetic choices - but borrowed from many traditional art forms, game art, dense compositions like Angelo's Last Judgement, children's books, etc. These choices also carry their own provenance and suggest

playfulness, overwhelm, immediacy and rush.

Rock refers to a young designer who creates pictograms of 'things students do.' He also quotes the designer who said he has no idea what he was doing. This particular iterative experiment is similar to the 100 iterations of joy and then further 50 iterations of people sketches done in the previous weeks that directly informed the subjects and tied them together in this video. The sketches can be articulated as "things people in London do."

In shaping my future projects Rocks essay and the use of italian frescos by Plains of Yonder prompts me to reframe my perspective on visual history, may it be commercial design or art. I would use it to embrace inspiration and influence of references in a more contingent way as a light footed designer. I understand the field of GCD and the produced work of visuals and knowledge are not an isolated creation but a contribution to the evolving field. Every little line I draw that eventually takes the form of a human on a bicycle, with a dog or in the park adds another layer to the vast history of connections that I draw from.

References :

Rock, M., 2012. *The Problem of Provenance*. [online] 2x4. Available at: https://2x4.org/ideas/2012/the-problem-of-provenance