From within it, from outside it and from above it.

The inspiration and creation versus the reception and effectiveness of typographic communication across the cultural landscape of India.

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is primarily on the process of creating display type and the documentation of it, with the Indian masses as the intended audience. The creation of typographic communication when evaluated against its reception within a cultural framework poses crucial questions revolving around efficacy. Another key relationship that invites a probe within this premise is the one between typographic communication and the inspiration for its manifestation. Aping, globalization and exoticism are the recurrent matters in question that surface which are highlighted through narrated, witnessed and found examples.

This paper aims to analyze these intricacies through different approaches and frames (theory of distinction, self, other, vernacular, worm's eye, bird's eye, top-down, bottom-sideways, marginality, centrality, outsider, insider to name a few) by employing different 'ways of seeing'. The intention for us as type designers and visual communicators is to become aware of the unconscious bonds and perceptions of our own culture; to develop a more self-conscious position for practice. With these self-critical and purpose-driven reflections, our audiences surely have a lot to gain.

Keywords

context, reception, efficacy, aping, globalization, exoticism

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Introduction

When typographic communication created for a certain audience is consumed or encountered in a different cultural landscape, what are its effects? The acknowledgement and cognizance of this 'consumption' and 'encounter' leads to questioning of purpose and interrogating the merit of what we produce as visual communicators and type designers.

Culture is "the way the social relations of a group are structured and shaped; but it is also the way those shapes are experienced, understood and interpreted"(Jackson, 1955). John Berger makes clear that images of social difference work not simply by the way they show but also by the kind of seeing that they invite. He uses the expression 'ways of seeing' to refer to the fact that"'we never look just at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves"(Rose, 2001). The ideas put forth in this paper are generic and can be used as measures to assess any paraphernalia that communicates visually. Therefore, they are not exclusive to the domain of type design and type documentation. However the domain of type design and type documentation cannot be excluded from the assessment that these ideas offer in order to fulfill the efficacy bars laid and elaborated upon later in this paper. The role of culture in the reception and creation of designed communication is contextually explained through six examples. These examples are a combination of observations witnessed in person, encounters narrated or instances found in other sources.

Example 1.

GARBED BY GLOBALISATION (WITNESSED)

Fig 1. Garbed by Globalisation, Gujarat, India 2010

The images (Fig 1., Fig 2., Fig 3.)were taken in June of 2010 in Dharampur and Vasda, two small towns in the interiors of Gujarat (a state in the Western part of India). On capturing these images, my instant reaction was a streak of delight as they made for attractive visuals. The natural home for them back then seemed to be in aristocratic, beautifully designed coffee table books. I could not contain my joy for having shot these pictures and I landed up posting them on social media and sending them off to photography competitions where they elicited a lot of appreciation.

It was only after spending much longer with the NGO that I worked with (whilst shooting these images in Gujarat); that several other questions seized my mind. About 2 months later, on reflecting upon the incident and reminiscing about my time in Gujarat, crucial questions centered around the phenomenon of the so-called 'globalisation' that India is presently undergoing cropped up in my mind. A majority of the people in these small towns were illiterate. On reflecting deeper, the appearance of the 'Indianised' Esprit and Dior on their clothes seemed like a perfect misfit as they probably could not even read them as words (due to illiteracy). They were extremely poor and could barely afford two meals a day. Leave alone Esprit and Dior! In hindsight, I am very grateful for these thoughts that dawned in my mind, for otherwise, I would have been accusing myself for making a living with an 'exotic' gaze at the cost of culture, without any form of a give-back. If I had used these images for monetary pursuits to extract commercial returns, it would have been like the act of a man selling snowballs.

Fig 2. Esprit, Gujarat, India 2010

Fig 3. Dior, Gujarat, India 2010

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i) Examining relationships

This reflection left a deep impact on my mind bringing with it several questions in its wake. As much as I love what I do, I began to question its 'usefulness' and purpose. I found myself interrogating the value of what I had decided to pursue for a career (derived from a passion). I would like to clarify the usage of the word 'usefulness' and determine its context and intensity as I perceive it, to fulfill my expectation of its idiolect. The association I make with 'usefulness' for visual communication is, it being effective enough to bring about a change, a reinforcement or a facilitation; subsequently inducing an action as set out with the original intent of having designed a particular piece.

After deconstructing my own thoughts, several categories emerged which seemed appropriate to confirm to, to meet the self-imposed 'usefulness' standards.

a. The assessment of **'receiving'** of communication is vital to be able to evaluate its usefulness.
b. On the receiving end, the **'efficacy'** of the designed piece is of primary importance in order to see if it has proved to be useful.
c. The equation between **'creation'** and **'reception'** thus calls for investigation.
d. While speaking of creation, it would be inappropriate to leave out the correlation between the '**inspiration'** that facilitates creation. Therefore all these relationships **(inspiration-creation, creation - reception, reception - efficacy)** fall in the zone of scrutiny in order to adjudge whether they qualify to meet the usefulness bar.

Examining the relationship between creation and the inspiration, the question that comes up is, what is it that inspires creation. If a problem inspires it, everything that is produced is with the aim of solving it. If a lack of something facilitates it, everything is to replenish this void. Therefore, there is a direct use, application and relevance of the solution if and when it is achieved. However, very often (though not always), when the inspiration for a particular piece of work is purely aesthetic, subjective and superficially extracted without considering the context of its existence, it leads to **'exoticised'** outcomes. These are more often than not irrelevant and do not fulfill the usefulness bar. They require an application to be found which on a lot of occasions means creating a need as opposed to fulfilling one.

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ii) Auchitya

The concept of 'universal appropriateness' deserves a mention at this point. The emanation of any form of design is from a need. This is clearly explained within the Indian concept of 'Auchitya', 'an abiding sense of Universal Appropriateness' (the nearest translation of the term). Each object, image, system or micro-environment seems to have been created to perform a specific human function, whether physical or psychological, literal or symbolic (Balram, 1998). There seems to be a purpose-driven rationale whilst designing 'for a need' as opposed to 'creating a need' for having already designed something.

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iii) Culture

In what ways are the needs of Indian people different from people elsewhere? If the people of India are different, is it not natural that they need different solutions and different ways of applying them? After all, designing is for people"(Balram, 1998). Design must have a purpose behind it. The purpose is derived from a context and the response that emanates is for that context. In other words, studying the context and giving it due consideration becomes the key while stating a need

which requires a design solution. Addressing the need with an understanding of the context leads to effective solutions. The problem of culture is taken and a solution is given to it. The solution can be achieved by letting culture actively participate, thus catalysing a give and take relationship. However for the documentation of a lot of visual cultural ephemera, be it sign writing or truck art (seen in the zone of display typography), there seems to be a one-way take relationship without any give back. A lot of our ilk is found busy producing several glossy coffee table books glorifying the 'vernacular'. These books serve as fascinating visual material depicting Indian culture for the rest of the world. However, the concern is the relevance of this within India for an audience to whom these are a part of the everyday. This exotic eye has deliberated a one-way 'take-take' relationship between makers and their inspiration as opposed to a mutually symbiotic 'give-take' bond.

American anthropologist, Herskovits suggests,"It is only by appreciating a culture that is profoundly different from our own, that we can realize the extent to which our own beliefs and activities are culture-bound, rather than natural or universal." Whilst creating typographic communication, in order to ensure efficacy, especially from an intentional perspective, the awareness of context, due consideration to relevance and most importantly understanding the mindset of the Indian masses shaped by deep-rooted belief systems seems to be the key. Most of us derive inspiration from Indian roots which governs our quotidian design practices. However, the utilisation of this inspiration when reflected and translated into work seems to purely meet aesthetic ends leveraging our practices as 'Indian' however not being useful or effective enough to meet the efficacy benchmark set at the beginning of this paper.

Example 2.

CHHAYA (FOUND)

Christopher Pinney, an anthropologist and art historian described an incident that first made him take photography seriously. While he lived in India (in Patrana, Madhya Pradesh), his neighbour, Bherulal requested Pinney to take a photograph of him. Pinney remarked, "He was a quixotic sort of chap, and I wanted to capture something of that quality. So I got him to stand under his mango tree, so that his face was half in shadow. I thought the photograph that resulted was superb, and I had a 12 by 8 print made for Bherulal. But when he saw it, he started shouting, asking why I'd taken a picture with his face in chhaya (chhaya ie shadow - associated with a low caste in the villages in India)"(Gupta, 2008). That was when it struck him that there was something there worth studying: 'a local aesthetic of legibility that was offended by shadow, by contrast'. This reiterates the significance of 'a shared state of mind' which overpowered 'a shared visual style',25 a recurrent characteristic within an Indian context.

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iv) Corpothetics

Moving into the realm of efficacy ,it would be fitting to introduce the mantle of 'corpothetics', meaning corporeal aesthetics, coined by Christopher Pinney in his book 'Photos of Gods: The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India' centered around the efficacy of images and mobilized by stimulation of all the senses, explicitly defining the receiving of images among the Indian audience in the post colonial era. Compiled in the late 90s, this comprehensive treatise discloses compelling examples on ideas of efficacy within India. Pinney reiterates the notion of efficacy within the realm of images by quoting Anthony Forge who states that the relevant question then becomes not how images 'look', but what they can 'do'. (Pinney, 2004) 'Doing' here needs to be aligned with the elucidation of 'usefulness' as set up formerly in this paper.

I am interested in using the concept of corpothetics as a self imposed criterion to examine the practices of designing communication, typography being a part. The usefulness of this insight is explored in an Indian context.

Example 3.

FOLDED HANDS (WITNESSED)

On a flight from Mumbai to Goa, I noticed my grandmother (who sat next to me) flipping through the in-flight magazine. Within a couple of minutes, the leafing came to a halt. I saw the magazine placed on the open table in front of her. She had gotten her hands together and had begun to pray. I was bewildered by this sudden change within the spur of a moment from the act of reading a magazine to praying. I looked closer only to realize the spread of the in-flight magazine that lay open on her table had an article on the shrine of a God along with a photograph of the idol.

Example 4.

PRANAM (NARRATED)

This is a small anecdote that prof Vinay Sayanekar shared with me a few months ago which I'd like to mention as it fits within the province of corpothetics. He was on a flight and before it took off, the phone of the gentleman next to him rang. The opening word in his response to the phone call was 'Pranam'. (a respectful greeting made by putting one's palms together) As he uttered the word his hand immediately went to his heart and his head almost like an involuntary impulse went down in a bowing position. Despite the fact that the person on the other side would definitely not have been able to see his gesture or body language, these manifested instantly as they were conditioned and innate cultural responses for him.

The responses of what design or images or type 'does' or ' what they elicit', in other words the resultant behaviour in response to a particular piece of design (be it typographic or photographic) is the way it is because of an understanding or perception that the viewer, onlooker, receiver possesses. This is highly dependent on cultural upbringing or inherent, innate ideas in the receivers mind. It is from these Indian roots that the common belief systems of the masses have been shaped. When these insights are considered and used as inspiration, it will guide the practitioners to provide meaningful solutions which are relevant and intelligible to the masses. Here, the word 'context' comes into play and is of prime importance.

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v) Context emanating from culture

The Vishnudharmottara, an ancient treatise on Indian painting and image-making, talks of the significance of context in any form of visual language in an abstract manner, "He who paints waves, flames, smoke and streamers fluttering in the air, according to the movement of the wind, should be considered a great painter."

Example 5.

DIARY SCRAP AT THE KUMBH MELA (WITNESSED)

I was at the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad last year about this time working on a project. As part of the field work for it, a lot of time was spent interviewing and having conversations with people at the Mela. One amongst these interview conversations prominently highlights the idea of enculturation and therefore finds a place in this paper. This is explicated further. One of the camps at the mela housed a Mauni baba (in silence for 30 years now) along with his devotees. We had the

opportunity to converse with him which elicited monosyllabic responses drawn onto the sand on which we all sat. A whole bunch of his disciples sat around him and one amongst them interpreted Mauni baba's written signs for us. This saffron-clad saint who voluntarily and kindly chose to be our interpreter was himself respected as a saint who in turn looked upto Mauni baba as his Guru. Soon after interviewing Mauni Baba we interviewed him separately. After this conversation, the saffron - clad saint showed us around their premises. While doing so, we happened to chance upon a man with a turban who stood up as we passed by and bowed his head graciously looking in the direction of the saffron-clad saint. There seemed to be quite an obvious hierarchy in the people constituting the camp. (Fig. 4) The saffron-clad saint looking upto Mauni baba as his Guru and this man with the turban looking up to the saffron-clad saint as with great respect which resulted in his immediate salute on spotting him.

Since we had some time, we decided to speak to the man with the turban to get to know more about his trajectory and connection with the camp and the mela.

Mauni Baba Sant Narayan Puri Ji Sukhdarshan Singh Ji

Fig 4. Kumbh mela, Allahabad, India 2013.

After a brief conversation with him, I asked him his name. As he responded, I immediately scribbled it on the back of a paper, I had with me then. His name was Sukhdarshan Singh Ji. For the purpose of documentation of the project, it was important for us to have the names and background information of all the people we spoke to. Therefore I asked Sukhdarshan Singh Ji the name of the saffron-clad saint whom he had bowed down to and who we had previously spoken to. Sukhdarshan Singh Ji responded and as I put pen to paper to jot down (Fig 5.) his name below, I was taken by surprise when I heard a sudden, loud 'Array'! Sukhdarshan Ji looked at me disapprovingly and questioned how I could write Sant Narayan Puri Ji' s (as the saffron-clad saint was called) name below his. He assumed that I should have known that it is only respectful and appropriate to write a devotees name below the saints and not above.

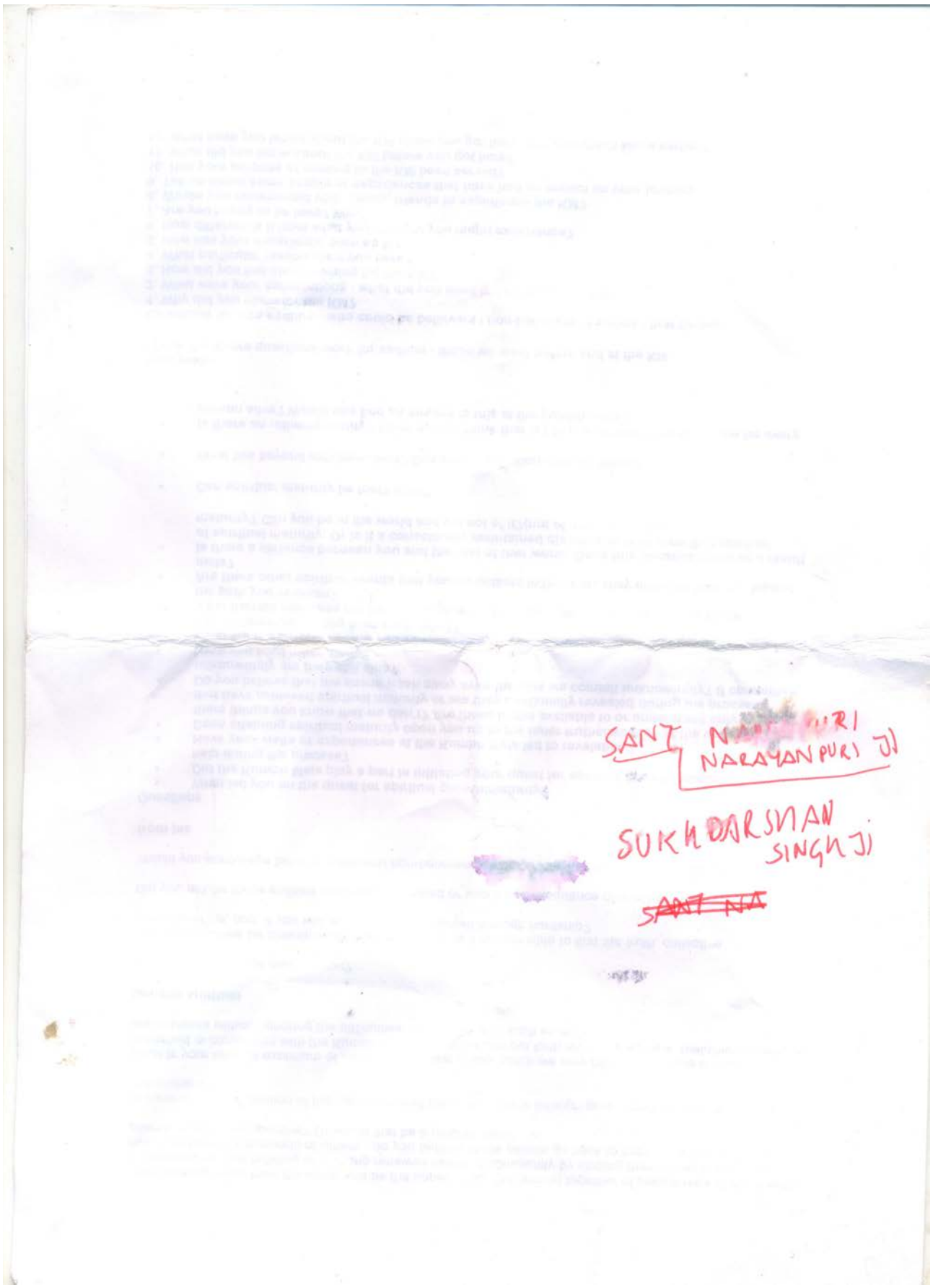

Fig 5. Diary scrap, Kumbh Mela, Allahabad, India 2013

Example 6.

USE ME (NARATTED)

At another instance, my mother spotted a beggar woman outside a temple praying in front of an empty penguin-shaped dustbin bearing the letters 'use me'. Only to her greater astonishment, soon after praying, the old beggar woman garlanded the bin. Gods in Indian mythology are associated with different animals which serve as symbolic vehicles of the Gods. She mistook the penguin to stand for God's vehicle. Being illiterate, she couldn't read the words 'use me', hence the repercussions.

It is beneficial to note that in the Indian milieu, the Western form of separation between 'religion' and 'culture' has not occurred. Melville J. Herskovits reminds us, 'Judgements are based on experience, and experience is interpreted by each individual in terms of his own enculturation'.

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vi) Ways of seeing

This milieu discerns the genesis of my voice which I would like to now draw specifically to address the above issues by employing different 'ways of seeing', the insights of which reveal different contextual viewpoints which can be borne in mind and incorporated while creating typographic communication. An awareness of these different 'ways of seeing' would also prove to be meaningful in receiving communication contextually. These would ultimately help to meet the bars of 'usefulness'.

There are many other arbitrary aspects of culture that can seem completely natural and self-evident to those brought up within it. Sometimes it pays to step outside your local set of assumptions and look at things from the outsider's viewpoint. The motivation and bedrock of this study lies in the sensitivity and awareness it aspires to evoke through different perspectives and frames of reference. Several approaches pertinent to an Indian context, keeping the efficacy criterion as the province of functioning are analysed below.

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a. THEORY OF DISTINCTION

Mark Tully talks of a New Colonialism (in his book,' No Full Stops in India') which lingers up to the present day in the country. "We concentrated our efforts on creating that small elite and left the rest of India to itself. That elite took over the reins from us and we continue to exercise our cultural hegemony over them"(Tully, 1991). A lot of Indian design practices, restricted to the limited glitterati are indisputably casualties of this phenomenon. A lot of designers seem to operate from and cater to the elite few (the audience possessing either economic capital or culture capital or both) and seem nonchalant about the needs of the Indian masses according "form over function, manner over matter"(Wacquant, 2006) and positioning the profession in an aristocratic pigeonhole. More importantly their taste defines itself by negating the taste of necessity of the working classes. They have positioned the profession on a pedestal which the masses cannot afford. Professor S. Balram talks of 'Cultural victimisation', which according to him, results when "the aesthetic ideas of one culture are transplanted to another with a total disregard for its own." "The design needs of 'development' and affluence are different. The Indian designer cannot afford to be fanciful" (Balram, 1998).

At this point, it is worth quoting Pierre Bourdieu's theory of distinction. Talking of tastes,

classes and classifications, Bourdieu states that “taste is a procured tendency to ‘differentiate’ and ‘appreciate’”(Bourdieu, 1984). Leibniz’s, the German philosopher and mathematician comments that “it ensures recognition (in the ordinary sense) of the object without implying knowledge of distinctive features which define it. This has its ultimate source in the opposition between the ‘elite’ of the dominant and the ‘mass’ of the dominated, a contingent, disorganised multiplicity” Bourdieu, 1984). Individuals and groups invest particular meaning in systems of classification, defining their whole social being, “their own idea of themselves, the primordial, tacit contract whereby they define ‘us’ as opposed to ‘them’, ‘other people’, and which is the basis of the exclusions (‘not for the likes of us’) and inclusions they perform among the characteristics produced by the common classificatory system.” (Bourdieu, 1984).

I would like to expand on the current Indian design setting by locating graphic designers and the masses of the country within Bourdieu’s classification.Bourdieu reveals that this space of social positions is organised by two crosscutting principles of differentiation, economic capital and cultural capital. The first vertical division pits agents holding large volumes of either capital - the dominant class, against those deprived of both - the dominated class (Wacquant, 2006). More often than not, Indian designers hail from this category. The second horizontal opposition arises among the dominant , between those who possess much economic capital but few cultural assets (business owners and managers, who form the dominant fraction of the dominant class); and those whose capital is pre eminently cultural (intellectuals and artists who anchor the dominated fraction of the dominant class) (Wacquant, 2006). Indian designers tend to serve both these classes of people. However, most of the Indian population (masses) do not feature in either of these. They are neither affluent nor educated and lack economic and cultural capital. Their requirements and struggles are those of necessities and survival.

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b. SELF, OTHER, VERNACULAR

The proposal then is to derive from the people and cater to the masses. If Indian designers were entrusted to be the ‘self ’, they seem to consider the ‘vernacular’ of India as the ‘other’. Calendar art, sign writing, cliched bollywood posters from the past are alluded to through a ‘nostalgic’ glint. “Nostalgia, a key ingredient in raising the market value of a vernacular style, is not a return to history but a repackaging of history. It treats the past not as the roots of the present, but as a distanced Other”(Lupton, Miller, 1996). Both the above spoken approaches dawdling since the pre-independent Indian era still pervade in modern India with its intensity magnified rather than muted.

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c. WORM’S EYE, BIRD’S EYE, TOP-DOWN, BOTTOM-SIDEWAYS

Several picture books documenting firecracker art, calendar art, sign writing, matchbox art and other indigenous derivations are extensively promulgated in the market. Designers outside of the country are drawn to these elements in India and are seen to author books of these sorts. Visual communicators and typographers within India are aping Western designers and advocating their ‘outsider outlook’ producing several of these glossy coffee table books. These have become rampant and repetitive without really being useful to an Indian audience. (as this visual ephemera is a part of the everyday for an Indian audience)

This ‘patronising’ phenomenon is prevalent in America and other parts of the world too. However, for the developed West, it is not as much of a problem as they can ‘afford’ to devote design talent towards the more aesthetic ends, not having to face problems of illiteracy and survival unlike the Indian audience.

Designers engaged in their own transformations of low into high during the 1980's. "Many appropriations of the so-called 'vernacular' worked from the top down, viewing ordinary commercial artifacts as external sources to be studied with detached admiration. Yet the question of low and high can also be viewed from the bottom up from the worm's eye view of everyday life rather than the bird's eye view of the critic. While the birds look down at the world from above, the worms look up at the world from below" (Lupton, Miller, 1996). To give an example, the Swadeshi movement propagated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920 as a part of India's struggle for Independence, sparked a fresh visual idiom that based itself on economic as well as human values. It transformed the Indian environment with products and graphic forms such as the pandal (a temporary or permanent structure built for a celebration, event or function) as well as the homespun, hand woven cloth known as khadi (woven on a charkha - spinning wheel) and the low level seating, - bethak. (Balram, 1998). These rhetorical devices and innovations have their origin in Indian mythology and popular culture. Their semiotic values identified with the poor and illiterate masses of the time. They not only stood as symbols for independence but also served as objects of functional value that could be afforded by all. "Gandhi's style of communication was not 'top-down' - people at the top telling people at the bottom what to do; but it was 'bottom-sideways'- people at the bottom telling each other what to do" (Balram, 1998). For a matter of fact, he succeeded in an extraordinary 'bottom-up' communication - where he propelled movements which involved the masses and the sheer number forced authorities at the top to make decisions and function in accordance. The efficacy of this mode of communication undoubtedly reverberated in the day to day lives of the people at the time.

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d. MARGINALITY, CENTRALITY (OUTSIDER, INSIDER)

Marginality has most commonly been configured in a binary model in which it is the "other" of centrality. "With power as its premise, (rather than location), being on the edge of centers of political or economic power thus becomes defined as powerlessness"(Fry, 1995). Design practices in India can be seen to have a solid substructure influenced by the intellectual culture of Eurocentric rationality with its history of domination, ordering all knowledge through the frame of its own cognito. "At best, such an ethnocentrality has created hierarchy of knowledges in which the thought of the 'other' culture is subordinate and constituted within the identified classificatory systems of Western rationality. At worst, ethnocentrism has led to ethnocide - the total destruction of the culture of the 'other'" (Fry, 1995).

Operating within this realm, I find that designers in India have started to view the visual culture of India through an outsider's lens 'exoticising' India and Indian culture perhaps in the way an 'americancentric' or 'eurocentric gaze' (Maharaj, 1994) would. In consequence, despite innately belonging to the margins (from a eurocentric perspective) and rejecting eurocentric, ethnocentric and logocentric accounts, most of them have started to wear the lenses and garbs of the non-Indian designer and have begun to treat Indian culture as a commodity to be exoticised (drawing from it superficially and disregarding its essence). In other words, continuing to speak as an echo of, or in the tones permitted by, the dominant voice. "Is it that international identity in our times can be measured by the transitory capacity of alien receivers to evaluate the artistic object beyond the comparison of perspectives?"(Santamarina, 1994) The overarching outcomes of this being, a generation of design and design strategies incepted by Indian designers that are inappropriate for Indian masses and contorting towards the demands and endorsements of the Western countries. The solutions seem to be apt for raising standards of living of the already developed countries disregarding the Indian audiences' battle for survival.

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e. THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL DOMAIN

The Oxford dictionary defines Cultural and Social Anthropology as the comparative study of

human societies and cultures and their development. Reception and efficacy go hand in hand and social and cultural anthropology becomes the essential groundwork. “Since ‘meaning is in the mind of the beholder’, whoever wants to render something understandable must either communicate with or educate that beholder’s mind or make use of myths already existing, beliefs already held, or meanings already familiar to the mind of that beholder” (Balram, 1998). One of the best ways to communicate with or design for such people is “to learn from and adapt their own mythology, their own meaning system, their own semantics as expressed through the artifacts they experience and handle daily” (Balram, 1998). This guarantees an immediacy of understanding and natural involvement.

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f. INDIGENOUS DERIVATIONS

Indigenousness is a rich source of inspiration for designers, however it translates into useful communication only when used in an appropriate context with a relevant receiving audience. An example of purely aesthetic use (futile on the scale of usefulness) of Indian cultural symbols can be seen in the utilisation of some products such as khadi (with the advent of cheaper durable and easier to maintain synthetic cloth, khadi ,an Indian homespun cotton cloth, became costly). The rich elite continue to wear khadi today which is a mark of socio-economic status. With this change in context, the very product that was once a symbol of equality is now a symbol of its opposite, a means to differentiate the rich from the poor and largely illiterate masses. The change in meaning of the Gandhi cap from a unifying symbol of members of the liberation movement to the symbol of corrupt politicians is prominently visible in the country. Miniature models of charkhas (spinning wheels which were used by the masses in the Gandhian Swadeshi Movement) are seen in drawing rooms as showpieces. Thus the semantic value of a charkha has changed from an active working symbol to a passive decorative element of other products (Balram, 1998). With the fear of exoticising the ‘picturesque-exotic-magical-dramatic’ Santamarina, 1994) culture of India, the indigenous route must be used with heightened consciousness and sensitivity towards its receivers.’.

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vii. Frames of Reference

The premise of this paper can be summed up in a rather abstract but universal manner through an installation done in 2011 called ‘Frames of Reference’. When a very small frame is used to view the circumference of a massive circle, the curve of the circle almost feels like a straight line. As the frame is made bigger the curve becomes more evident and it is only on zooming out completely that one realises that what was initially perceived as a line is only a very small part of a circle. (Fig. 6) The circle appeared to be a line because we had not acknowledged our frame of reference and assumed it to be the only frame and the whole frame. Everyone including ourselves perceives the world through frames, however, very often we forget to acknowledge the existence of these frames.

This was translated into a performative installation in space. (Fig. 7) A continuously moving line in the form of a projection confronts the viewer on entering the space. The line is a projection whose source is from behind the screen on which it is projected. Navigating through the installation space, the viewer finds that the source of the line is from a camera that is posited on a circular motor filming a circle. The zoom frame through the viewfinder is adjusted such that only a line appears despite the fact that the camera is filming a circle. In consequence, the viewer is almost deceived that the projection is that of a line. The lack of awareness of the ‘frame’ induces this wrong notion. (Fig. 8)

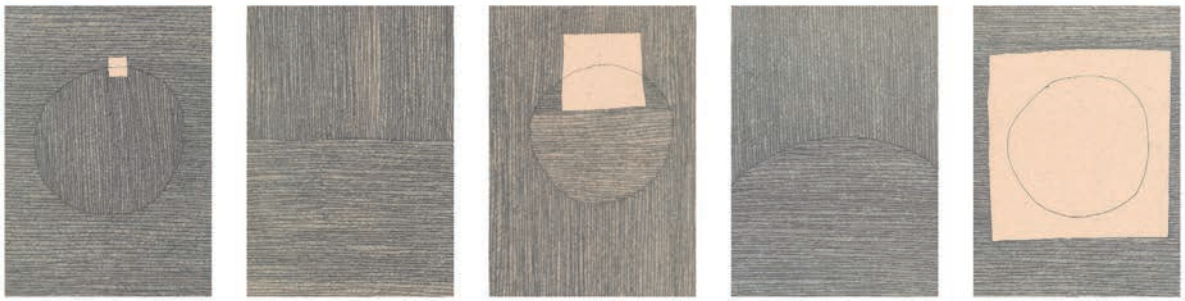

Fig 6. Frames of reference, Print, London, 2011

Fig 7. Frames of reference, Her House Gallery, London, 2011.

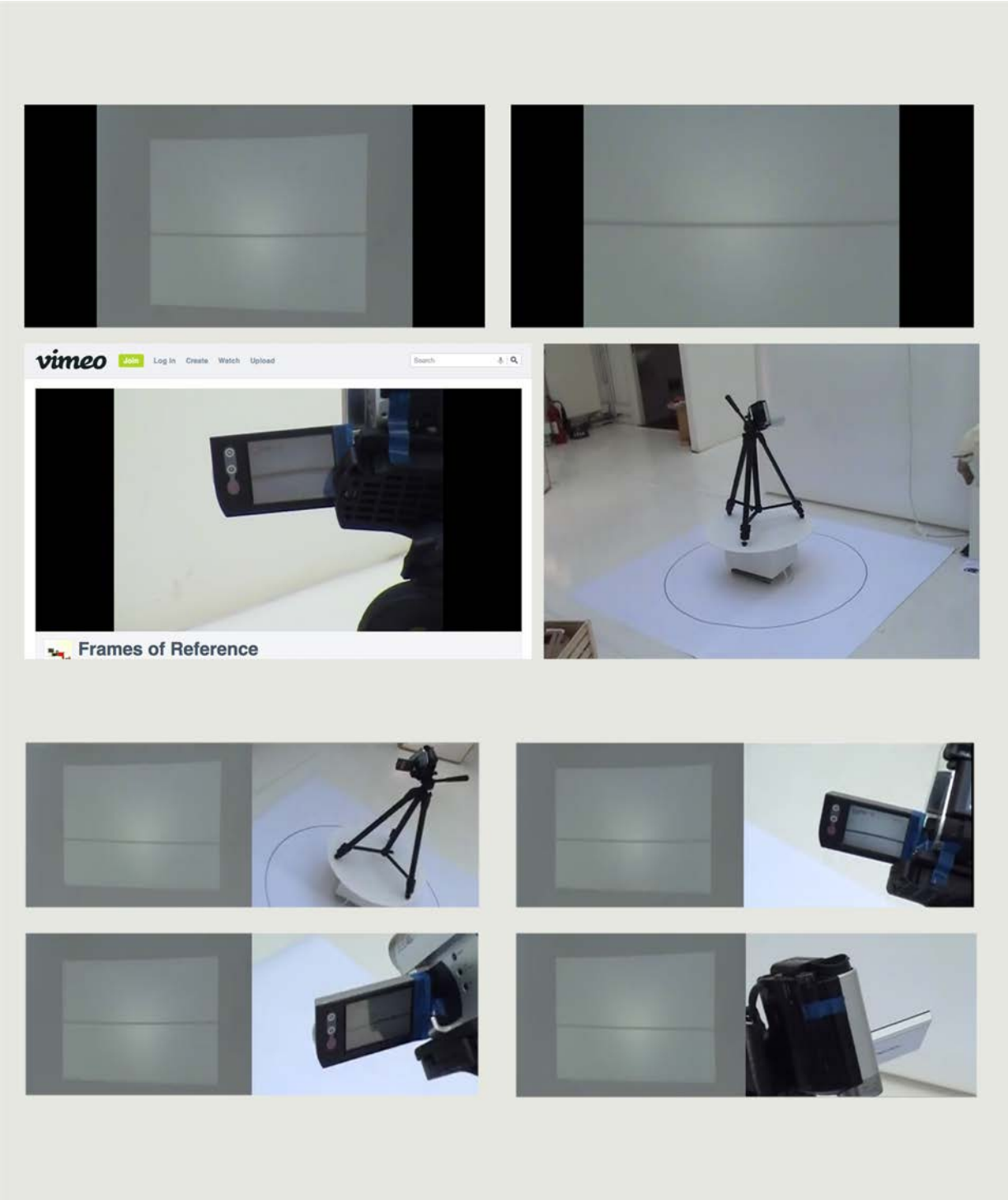

Fig. 8 Frames of Reference (film of installation) http://vimeo.com/45582922

The intention is to make these invisible frames visible.With culture as the context which has been the focus of this paper, the take-aways from this performative installation can be summarised as below:

- Accept that we are seeing and perceiving the world through frames; we are bound by unconscious bonds of our own culture.

- Discern the frames we are seeing through, become conscious of our own cultural frameworks and all that they connote.

- Acknowledge the existence of other frames. Other cultures exist with their own conditioning.

Conclusion

The agenda, the rhetoric and the concerns expressed in this paper are clearly from a standpoint of 'efficacy' and 'usefulness' of designed communication for an Indian audience (mass as opposed to class). I would like my reader to know that I am cognizant of the frame that I am looking through and am mindful of the fact that there could be several other angles and approaches of looking at the same piece of work. What might seem a pertinent specimen to critique through this centered stance of 'usefulness' may prove to be an excellent piece of design when purely viewed from an aesthetic point of view and may elicit a different appreciation and connotation. All the examples stated in this paper have required a distant, almost exotic gaze to identify them. The consciousness of this exotic gaze is the first step to be able to operate from 'within' a context and not view it as the distanced 'other'. Michael Wolff, co-founder of Wolff Olins speaks of context in a different manner suggesting,"Designers must put themselves in the shoes of people they design for, and not forget to remove their own." Thus, the very first images spoken of in this paper with the appearance of the 'Indianised' Esprit and Dior spotted on clothes of small girls in small towns were initially utilised and seen in a manner that would render my practice as ineffective from a 'usefulness', 'give-take' standpoint. However when the same images were 'seen' in a different light with the context of where they appeared, it sparked off an entire thought process that forms the basis of this paper. In a chapter titled, "Low and High, Design in Everyday Life", from the book 'Design Writing Research', Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller (established designers, writers and co - founders of the studio, Design Writing Research and co-chairs of the Graphic Design Department at the Maryland Institute, College of Art in Baltimore based in the States) state, "Designers could find a place to speak from within culture, and not position themselves outside and above it'" (Lupton, Miller, 1996).

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