

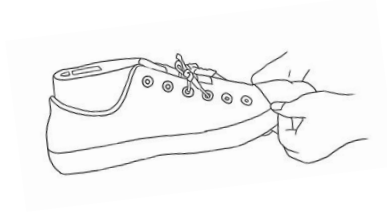
‘To be in someone's shoes’ is a project exploring how we maintain our determination to consume in a capitalist society where our daily consumption behaviour seems to be manipulated by an invisible force and power. The aim is to provide an opportunity concerning how we could keep our satisfaction with necessary and sufficient consumption.

Graphic design has long been used as a communication tool to accelerate mass consumption. Its function is to attractively appeal to customers' emotions so that more products are purchased. Therefore, I decided to use graphic design in the opposite way from this context, yet to ask questions about why people do not stop consuming while the world is on fire. Additionally, I engage with this project to fulfil my contradictory feelings about myself as a graphic designer working to contribute to the side of a salesperson and as a personal perspective that does not want to consume products more than necessary.

The audience for this project will include many people in a capitalist society. Especially people who keep up with trends and are unintentionally controlled by advertisements and media are the core readers. This project will give these people a chance to reconsider whether the values that have been instilled in them up until now are true.

Using publication as a medium, which is also one of our everyday objects, can provide readers with wisdom by experiencing more than just showing information. In this project, publication is a tool to reflect this society. I captured the structure repeatedly through iterative experiments. As a result, I realised that mass consumption has made people invisible the real value of objects, as people are surrounded by too many substitutes in the city. Then, based on the idea of Object-Oriented Ontology, I maximise the inherent value of objects and highlight the current situation in which people can live comfortably by getting lots of benefits from them to illustrate the whole process of making shoes.

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This project recaptures the value of objects from a perspective completely different from the marketing context by combining the theory of Object-Oriented Ontology with a mass-consumption society. Therefore, I explored the context of consumption by depicting the structure of a capitalist society, researching some artworks that succeeded in revealing the different values of objects, and iterated to make publications to examine my position.

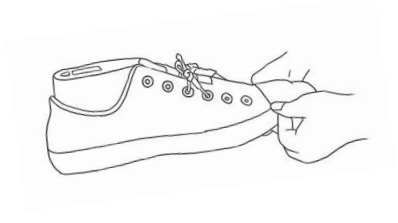
The studio works are only expressed in the context of consuming and Object-Oriented Ontology, but I also researched the role of graphic designers in capitalist society. It is because I started this project from my struggle with working as a graphic designer in a capitalist society. Regardless of the intrinsic value of a product or service, designers are required to visualise communications that add value to the object. Even if the designer thought the product was valueless, they still needed to fulfil their role. I believe the graphic designer can work in wider context and criticality in a framework of a capitalist society.

Consuming

The book that most contributed to my understanding of my own position in terms of people's consuming behaviour was 'The world is on fire but we're still buying shoes' by Alec Leach. The author used to work as a fashion editor for a long time. He always questions the circulation of fashion trends, which are too rapid, while representing them every year. He loves fashion. However, he feels that the current fashion industry expresses everything excessively. For example, he mentioned that many of the fashion brands started using the term 'sustainable' for selling. Many company creates their original 'eco' bags more than necessary. However, there are very few which truly consider the environmental issue because eco bags have finally become 'eco' after using a few hundred times. He repeatedly warns us that many features and words are used to sell products. His thoughts on how we can maintain the correct distance from fashion under such circumstances are depicted.

The reason I chose shoes as an object in the final production contains homage to the title of this book. The idea introduced in the book, how to maintain the level of satisfaction that declines after purchase, was strongly reflected in the experiments conducted in Projection 1. In Projection 2, rather than using the author's arguments as a means of communication, the book is used to gather information to provide a more realistic picture of the fashion scene.

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Object-Oriented Ontology

I started researching Object-Oriented Ontology after realising that my position is more connected to the relationship between humans and objects than humans and sellers when I experimented with making three types of publications. Graham Harman's theory describes objects can exist outside of the relationships expected by humans by dissolving their value as overmining and undermining.

Research has revealed that by using the keyword of giving objects autonomy in a story, it may be possible to suggest a different way of seeing objects to people.

Additionally, I have researched some artwork based on a similar context. The following two works have had the greatest influence on me.

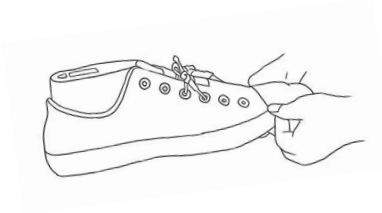
The painting series, 'The Red Shoes' by Susan Askew, depicts the life of a ballerina with her ballet shoes. One day, she was fascinated by ballet shoes at the store and bought them. Once she started to wear the shoes, she could not take off the shoes until she died. On top of that, she could not stop dancing as well. This story leaves a strong impression by exaggerating the phenomenon of a person being attached to an object too much and having their lives ultimately swayed.

The other reference is 'Materialism' by studio draft. The group of works consists of disassembling the original object undermining and arranging all of its constituent elements on a cube. Although the 'purpose for which it should be used' that existed when each material was combined to form a single object has been completely lost, these works have the exact same constituent elements as the original object. It gives people an opportunity to rethink how we perceive objects.

Graphic Design in Capitalist Society

Bringing together the above two elements is the role of graphic design in capitalist society. In today's society, graphic design is primarily used as a tool to expand consumption. For example, if you can design an effective brand logo, the price of a product of the same value will increase many times. Furthermore, if you can design advertisements with excellent visual effects, it is possible to make people passing by on the street aware of your services or products without them even knowing it. However, I started this project because I had doubts about the current situation. The power of worship that graphic design imparts to objects is not used to accelerate consumption but rather to properly convey and communicate the inherent value of objects, creating an opportunity for people to cherish each object more. I investigated this question to find out how graphic communication in capitalist society is updated.

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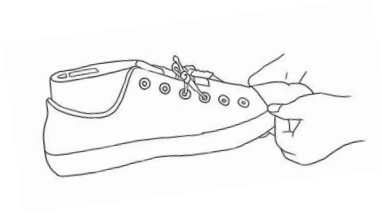


The importance of this question to graphic design lies in the changing mass consumption society and the role of graphic designers who should be involved in it. To that end, this project established a method that uses graphic design to redefine the value of objects for purposes other than consumption using the theory of Object-Oriented Ontology. Using publication as a medium allows us to show objects that are more valuable not for pushing to purchase but for being learned by readers.

To go further with this project, I would like to design the things that are still not revealed to consumers in a capitalist society. For instance, the book, 'The World Is On Fire But We're Still Buying Shoes' by Alec Leach, mentions the fact that only the last few steps of manufacturing are done in Italy just to add the made in Italy tag. Most of the shoe-making processes are done in different countries with cheap labour costs, but this fact is not mentioned anywhere.

In this way, there are still many facts that are hidden for consumption. Therefore, in my future practices, I will continue to explore the current state of manufacturing and the value of objects from a broader perspective by expressing them through graphic design.

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