

## **POSITIONS THROUGH CONTEXTUALISING**

### **01 Annotated bibliography**

#### **Le rite matinal 1977 by Sorel Cohen**

In *Le rite matinal*, Cohen documented the movement of making her bed using long exposure photography with the aim of transforming everyday movement into a visible, animated dance. This project relates to ‘ritual and performance’ and shows me the design process by which movement is constructed into performance. Ordinary activities also carry memories and emotions. It reminded me that everyone has some fixed, daily repetitive movements in the ‘breakfast ritual’, so if I conceive these movements as performances, does it mean that I am creating a new visual identity system as well? The mundane ‘scrolling’ and ‘grasping’ performances of gestures between waking up and entering the workplace could not be background movements in this sense.

#### **Alan Davie Fairy Tree No. 5 (1971)**

Davie's use of intuitive mark-making and symbolic language to imply a personal mythology or spiritual system is evident in this red abstract painting. He turns the canvas into a ceremonial area where the various patterns and symbols stand for an improvised, emotional, and intuitive expression as opposed to a rational one. I am encouraged by this work to use gestures or objects that I am accustomed to seeing as having symbolic

meaning, and I am able to arrange them more freely without having to glance at them. The goal is to give the audience more latitude in interpreting the breakfast behaviour by being less rational and more experimental.

### **Rebels of the Dance 2002 by Fikret Atay**

This short film depicts two boys performing a traditional Turkish dance in a stairwell. The scene is rushed, but rhythmic. The boys dance for the camera, achieving a balance of personal expression and cultural resistance. Short films like this, however, imply that 'rituals' can be both popular and social, as well as private, intimate, and improvised. This differs from some of the most well-known celebratory and processional dances. This one is set in a small and intimate setting, and it is more of a daily 'ritual' that expresses one's sense of self. So, in my family, breakfast is one of the more personal occasions. I think the study of this private and personalised time period is also a way of cherishing my self and family time.

### **Russia's vodka ritual by BBC**

This article provided me with a new perspective: 'rituals' can be learnt, imitated, borrowed, and used to 'participate in' or 'become' a specific cultural climate or identity, even if you do not fully possess that identity. According to the article, a little-known ritual in Russian drinking culture is

to smell black bread after drinking a glass of vodka rather than eat it. Also, the vodka should be cold, the glass small, and have a salty flavour. If you want to feel like a Russian who drinks, celebrates, and unites, try this ritual. It reminds me of a performance code, in which the ritual becomes an identity script to be learnt and imitated. Whether it's boiling eggs and cleaning up dirty laundry like my mother, or waiting at the table for breakfast like my grandparents. These behaviours are not just a family memory, but can also symbolise an exploration into another role, another generation.

### **‘Designer as Author (1996)’ by Michael Rock**

Rock's research criticises the blurred lines between designer and role, claiming that if design only "references theory without incorporating it into form, the result is merely fragmented pieces." This is something I am constantly thinking about. In my 'Breakfast Rituals' project, I used Dali's recipe format to map the breakfast rituals of three generations of my family, resulting in a record and reconstruction of tradition. So, instead of simply describing the entire breakfast process, how do I actively and deliberately construct it? Rock inspired me to consider gestural symbols or age-ordered timelines as a form of 'discourse'. Performing identity performances in various typographies.

### **Cookbook of the Pandemic Year 2020.8.20 - 2021.3.17**

The project captures a series of outbreak recipes, transforming everyday cooking practices into a collective archive of crisis and anxiety in intimacy. Keywords: archive and record. It transforms recipes into cultural emotion carriers, capturing not only ingredients but also a distorted sense of time and movement. It's poetic. Its resemblance to Dali's 'cookbook' gave me a new perspective: the incorporation of poetry and emotion into ritual, rather than being authoritative like a traditional cookbook. It's all filled with personal emotion, which I interpret as a deconstruction of family rituals. Combining handwritten notes with illustrations. If I continue to investigate this in a 'private' manner, could I eventually develop a 'confrontational archive'? For example, can ritual gestures reveal some unspoken kinship or intergenerational relationships?

### **Everyday (video) by Noah Kalina**

Kalina's video is an ephemeral video work in which the artist takes photographs of faces every day, culminating in a six-minute video composed of countless frames. The work consists of expressionless faces, strict frontal compositions, and an accumulation of frames. Translating self-documentation into a constructed reflection on time and identity. For my breakfast ritual, this defines the repetitive gesture as a marking of time rather than a daily action. Such repetitive, mechanical ritual movements

also reflect the daily cycle of breakfast practices. And as 'Everyday' also shows the author's changing hairstyles and facial ageing over time, can I exist an 'anchor point' in my project to which subtle changes can be made to represent generational change.

## **02 Extended critical analyses**

### **Semiotics of the Kitchen 1975 by Martha Rosler**

Martha Rosler's performance piece represents radical feminism, critiquing the gendered nature of domestic labour through an exaggeratedly subversive teaching of cooking. Rosler mechanically alphabetises ('A' to 'Z') manipulates each item, representing an oppressed female role in the household. The performance contrasts the seemingly calm pedagogical demonstration with the violence behind it. The whole performance designs the kitchen as a scene of defiant, subversive 'ritual'. The most important aspect of the performance is the creation of deliberate formal contradictions. Rosler employs a strict descriptive framework (A-Z) to mock the television education of the time, which was very 'monolithic' and boring, like a cage. The narrative medium is a single-camera video that does not aim for complex effects. What struck me was Rosler's use of a knife to stab 'Z' in the air at the end of the video, a powerful visual language that expresses rebellion against the family order.

Whilst the subject matter of Rosler's segment of the performance

(feminism) is not the same as my 'Breakfast Ritual', the visual language and formal power she uses resonated with me greatly. The piece sees gesture as a visual language, and her violent demonstration of the 'alphabet' of kitchen items reminded me of contemporary gestures that are often mechanically repeated during breakfast rituals, such as holding a knife and fork in the hand, lifting and lowering a glass of water and swiping a mobile phone. These gestures would also be sequential; could I compulsorily typeset them? Expanding from kitchen symbols to 'breakfast ritual' symbols, this approach turns a single narrative of behaviour into a revealing flow chart. I parodied Rosler's kitchen utensils, shaping tools such as mobile phones and mugs into specific behavioural symbols. In fact, Rosler's performance echoes the formal empowerment of Michael Rock's 'Designer as Author'; where Rock critiques the theory of passive quotation, Rosler transforms the ordinary everyday into a radical manifesto by directly tampering with the formal processes of labour in the kitchen. manifesto. I've also been thinking about my project in terms of whether or not I want to elevate the mundane, everyday ritual act to a critique of contemporary practices or generational differences. But I believe this is deeper, and the practice I'm currently engaged in is simply 'cultural observation' or something similar. By presenting 'my mother's dirty clothes basket' and 'my grandparents' medicine bottles' separately, I hope to emphasise their symbolic significance. By presenting three generations of

my family's breakfast rituals in different locations for the audience to view and compare, I am negotiating identity and power, and Rosler's work has greatly aided me in exploring and symbolising the relationships and emotions implied by the ritual. If I consider Rosler's performance as a ritual, it must be radical, whereas my ritual is more soothing. So in terms of overall colour choices, I used bright, slightly retro tones. There was also consideration of the word 'family' involved. All in all, Rosler's work has been a great help to me in terms of design language and narrative form, and it has encouraged me to be bold in incorporating ideology into symbolic language to promote an understanding of 'ritual'.

### **Les Diners de Gala by Salvador Dalí**

Dalí's book is actually a surrealist cookery cookbook, magnificently reimagining food as a vehicle for fetish, desire and dramatic excess. He imagines dining as a psychosexual ritual that extends to a critique of decadence, eroticism and class. The book uses food as a weapon in a similar way to Rosler's performance above. In terms of content, Dalí's design demonstrates a dismantling of norms. The book contains a large number of Baroque paintings as well as collages consisting of food and photographic images, with strong, absurd visual clashes contrasting with traditional recipes. The entire book has a luxurious feel to it, whether it's the gold lace or the heavy book dust jacket.

For starters, Dali considers the recipes to be a form of surrealist poetry, in addition to the book's schematic illustrations of dish presentation. It expands the design's communicative boundaries. The overall impression is highly subjective, with a strong personal touch. This viewpoint enabled me to continue my investigation into ritual and culture. Second, Dali's dishes feature his own mouldable image of himself, which is directly relevant to my focus on the topic of 'identity'. My mother's 'efficient' 'rich' breakfasts, which I documented, and the breakfasts I procrastinated on myself both performed different identities by performing food rituals, but the former exemplified the life of a retired housewife, whereas the latter exposed the passivity of the digital age. Dali's exaggerated recipes made me think about how I could emphasise this contrast; were there symbols I could use to suggest differences in identity in times like these? To convey generational differences in rituals and identities, I could transform some ordinary objects into 'Dalí-esque' symbols to reflect the differences in rituals and identities between generations, but such abstract forms are not conducive to making my audience empathise with them, so I still think that the objects will still be in their ordinary, mundane forms alone, and won't do some surreal techniques such as 'anthropomorphism' and 'metamorphosis'. Interestingly, Dali resists disciplining class identity by distorting cooking rules. Is the procrastination and anxiety I described in my project about my



breakfast ritual simply a passive resistance to an efficient society? Going a little deeper, it could also be interpreted as resistance to identity anxiety. That is the new angle. Dalí's recipe book suggests an implicit sense of discipline. My mother's habit of listening to the news on her mobile phone while eating, which I documented in my breakfast ritual, is an unspoken norm. So, based on the provocative language (surrealist prose) with which he describes the steps of the recipe, I've included some similar annotations on my 'cookbook' to supplement that step and add some interest. Some ritual steps convey a symbolic or defiant spirit. In conclusion, it is possible to incorporate 'subversive associations' into the deconstruction of the everyday, as well as the use of gestural symbolism and cross-generational flat-posted 'plating' of objects to emphasise the constructed nature of identity. It is important to note, however, that what I am doing at this point contains a strong 'private record'; how can the meaning behind it be elevated to public value, as with Dalí's recipes? Dalí taught me that identity is not inherited but 'cooked' by the daily rituals of different times, places and lives.

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