

Histories about design, photography, and art in contemporary visual culture

Histórias sobre design, fotografia e arte na cultura visual contemporânea

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the technical, aesthetic, and historical relationships between design, photography, and the visual arts. It proposes an understanding of these disciplines not as autonomous fields of knowledge, but rather as intrinsically connected expressions, whose mutual influences contribute to a better understanding of visual culture elements. While adopting an approach based on Michel Foucault's work, the discussion also highlights how the dynamics between knowledge, powers, and subjectivation processes permeate image creation and encourage resistance movements — which, according to the author, are driving forces for both innovation and originality. The intersection between these fields, permeated by interdisciplinarity, reveals a complex and dynamic panorama, in which the limits between creative practices are blurred. This, as a result, opens space for new approaches and interpretations that feed the contemporary cultural fabric.

Keywords: Design. Photography. Visual arts. Subjectivation processes. Visual culture.

RESUMO

Este artigo investiga as relações técnicas, estéticas e históricas entre o design, a fotografia e as artes visuais, propondo a compreensão dessas disciplinas não como campos autônomos do conhecimento, e sim expressões intrinsecamente conectadas, cujas influências mútuas contribuem para a compreensão de elementos da cultura visual. Ao adotar uma perspectiva fundamentada no pensamento de Michel Foucault, o texto destaca, também, como a dinâmica entre os saberes, os poderes e os processos de subjetivação permeiam a criação imagética e fomentam movimentos de resistência — que, para o autor, são forças propulsoras para a inovação e para a originalidade. A interseção entre esses campos, permeada pela interdisciplinaridade, revela um panorama complexo e dinâmico, em que os limites entre as práticas criativas se diluem e, com isso, abrem espaço para novas abordagens e interpretações que alimentam o tecido cultural contemporâneo.

Palavras-chave: Design. Fotografia. Artes visuais. Processos de subjetivação. Cultura visual.

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DESIGN, ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY

This study is a result of an exploratory qualitative methodology to understand the processes of subjectivation in the different dimensions of photographic image. Commonly described as a subjective aspect of thought, such an experience involves dynamics that have not been further investigated. Therefore, it is based on the seminars by Michel Foucault about the subject in its forms of subjectivity, as defined in his *technologies of the self*, in the early 1980s, which were later systematized and disseminated by Gilles Deleuze, especially in the publication titled *Foucault*, from 1986.

The motivating discussion of this text was part of an investigation developed in the scope of the laboratory and research group of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), titled Photography: Art, Design & Communication (PHADEC), which has been part of the School of Fine Arts of Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro for 11 years. The space provides several activities about photographic technology and its interfaces with art, design and communication. In this period, for example, more than 230 students have gone through the laboratory, housing about 190 portfolios of photographic essays.

In the encounters between the histories of photography in design and art, for example, the body responsible for creating the photographic images presented below, in their processes of subjectivation, specifically in the formal dimension of knowledge, avoids bringing together a view of the plural and complex fields, derived from different social and economic conditions. It chooses the provocation of the impossible mission defended by Cardoso (2022) in treating design as an essentially hybrid activity and, thus, too complex and multifaceted to fit into any narrow definition. Thus, it perceives its “capacity to build bridges and forge relationships in a world increasingly shattered by the specialization and fragmentation of knowledge” (Cardoso, 2022, p. 173), which highlights its relevance in our time.

Following this line of thought, it is possible to observe in Flusser (2018) that etymologically the words “design”, “art”, and “technique” have always been strongly connected, making it impossible to think of each of them as representing an essentially autonomous activity. The author writes about it:

The Latin equivalent of the Greek term *techné* is *ars*, which actually means ‘maneuver’ (*Dreh*). The diminutive of *ars* is *articulum*—small art—and indicates something that revolves around something else (such as the articulation of the hand). *Ars* therefore means something like ‘articulability’ or ‘agility,’ and *artifex* (‘artist’) means ‘impostor.’ The true artist is a conjurer, which can be seen through the words ‘artifice,’ ‘artificial,’ and even ‘artillery.’ In German, an artist is a *Könnner*, that is, someone who knows something and is capable of doing it, as the word ‘art’ in German, *Kunst*, is a noun derived from the verb ‘can,’ *können*, in the sense of being able to do something; but also the word ‘artificial,’ *gekünstelt*, comes from the same root (Flusser, 2018, p. 160).

The English noun “*design*”, in turn, refers both to the idea of a *plan*, *purpose*, and *intention*, as well as to the *configuration*, *arrangement*, and *structure* (Cardoso, 2000). It originates from the Latin verb “*designo*”, which can mean both

to *designate, indicate, and to mark, trace, represent, or even to order, arrange, regulate* (Faria, 2023). Thus, it is possible to perceive that the term is already ambiguous in its own formation, establishing itself between two meanings: an abstract one, in the realm of *conceiving*, and a concrete one, in the realm of *making* (Cardoso, 2000).

Given the above, Flusser (2018) believes that design ultimately establishes itself as “that place where art and technique walk together, with equal weight, making a new form of culture possible” (Flusser, 2018, p. 161). According to Bomfim (1997), even a possible theory of design would be *unstable*, as it would need to combine knowledge from various scientific fields and, therefore, would not have a fixed field of study, whether disciplinary or interdisciplinary. This is because the relationships between design and art are not only etymological but also historical, aesthetic, and technological.

The printing processes that today are assigned to the realm of fine arts, such as lithography (stone printing), woodcut (wood engraving), and intaglio (metal engraving), played a central role in the history of visual communication by giving rise to many of the foundations of design as a formal discipline (Meggs; Purvis, 2009). The first printing technique developed by humans was relief printing, the origin of which, although undefined, dates back at least to 2nd century China. (Meggs; Purvis, 2009). Its principle is the same as that of a stamp: a solid surface, usually wood, is carved in the areas that will not be reproduced, creating a relief image. A thin layer of viscous ink is then applied to this matrix, allowing the transfer of the engraved image onto a surface, such as paper or fabric, through pressure. This principle, in addition to enabling the production of the first graphic design pieces, such as banknotes and playing cards (Meggs & Purvis, 2009), also allowed the German engraver Johannes Gutenberg in the 15th century to create the metal movable type printing press, thus originating the age of printing.

Around the same time, intaglio engraving was created using metal plates. Its origin, like that of relief engraving, is uncertain: Vasari credits it to the Florentine goldsmith Maso Finiguerra (Hind, 1963); Hind (1963) and Meggs and Purvis (2009) attribute it to a German artist known only as the “Master of the Playing Cards”. The process of producing a metal engraving is the opposite of that for wood engraving: the design is etched into the plate through grooves that hold the ink. During printing, which is done on a cylinder press, the soft paper penetrates the engraved areas and absorbs the retained ink, thus creating a velvety copy with raised areas in the image.

Metal engraving flourished throughout the 18th century, and its ability to produce fine lines and delicate details made it highly valued for creating labels, business cards, letterheads, headers, and proclamations (Meggs & Purvis, 2009). This process, called intaglio printing, is still widely used in the graphic industry today, whether in an artisanal form (copperplate engraving) or for producing banknotes, stamps, and security documents, or in its industrial version, rotogravure. Created around 1784, rotogravure still dominates the high-volume print market, especially for packaging.

In 1796, the Austro-German actor and playwright Alois Senefelder, seeking an economical printing method for his texts and scores, created lithography (Meggs & Purvis, 2009). Unlike relief and intaglio engravings, the main characteristic of lithography is not incision, but a chemical principle. The image is drawn with a series of greasy materials on a limestone surface that is highly receptive to water. The incompatibility between water and grease creates areas on the matrix surface that either attract or repel the lithographic ink, which, being oily, adheres only to the drawn areas. This ink, applied to the drawn stone using a special roller made of leather or rubber, is then transferred to paper through a flat press. Compared to other printing technologies of the time, these characteristics allowed lithography to establish itself as a process that was easier, faster, and cheaper, which led to its dominance in the 19th-century graphic market. Thus:

For the first time in history, it became possible to print images on a large scale and at a very low cost. The widespread dissemination of engravings and other illustrated prints at affordable prices was considered by some contemporaries to be at least as revolutionary in its social impact, if not more so, than the invention of the printing press itself (Cardoso, 2000, p. 44).

In 1881, French legislation allowed the free posting of advertisements anywhere except on churches, polling stations, or areas reserved for official notices. This led lithography to become central to a prolific industry: that of posters. As a result, many artists of the time found in this medium a new source of income. The works of artists such as Jules Chéret (Figure 1) and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (Figure 2), for example, are often considered some of the forerunners of graphic design, as they influenced an entire generation to create advertising in a more artistic and visually impactful manner (Meggs; Purvis, 2009).

Lithography also provided a significant advancement in the field of type design, which had previously been restricted to the technical domain of type engravers:

Typographers and enthusiasts of good typography and printing were astonished by the fact that the design was created on the artist's drawing board rather than on the metal plate of the printer's press. Lacking tradition and freed from the constraints of typographic printing, designers could invent any typeface that satisfied their imagination and explore an unlimited palette of bright and vibrant colors, which had previously been unavailable for printed communication (Meggs; Purvis, 2009, p. 200-201).

Since then, lithography has evolved into the current process known as *offset lithography*, or simply *offset*. It retains the same principle of repulsion between water and grease but replaces the stone matrix with a thin aluminum plate mounted on a rotating cylinder. This plate, which is no longer drawn but photo-chemically etched from a *photolith*, does not produce a direct impression on the paper. Instead, it transfers the image to another cylinder made of polymer, which then prints the image.



Source: Available at: <https://www.yaneff.com/collections/jules-cheret/products/pastilles-poncelet>. Access on: Apr. 26, 2024.
Figure 1. *Pastilles Poncelet*, 1896. Lithography by Jules Chéret.



Source: available at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/333990>. Access on: Apr. 26, 2024.
Figure 2. *Moulin Rouge: La Goulue*, 1891. Lithography by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

Due to these advancements, artisanal printing processes have become limited to artistic and educational purposes. However, today, as design has reached *institutional maturity* (Cardoso, 2000), the numerous technical and aesthetic possibilities offered by engraving have sparked interest among professionals who seek to add artistic value to their projects. For example, there is a growing demand in Brazil for small print shops specializing in alternative printing processes, such as Lithos (lithography and screen printing), Risotrip (risography), *Tipografia do Zé* (letterpress), among others.

The series of posters *Limpa, Linda, Muda* (Figures 3A and 3B) and *O Futuro? Adeus Pertences* (Figure 3C), created by the renowned designer Rico Lins and printed at Gráfica Fidalga, which specializes in paste-up posters, highlight how this search for artisanal materiality adds a certain “aura” of “authenticity” and “uniqueness” (Benjamin, 1985) that is often lost amid industrial mass production.



Source: available at: <https://www.ricolins.com/portfolio/limpa-linda-muda>. Access on: Apr. 26, 2024. Figure 3. Paste-up posters of the séries *Limpa, Linda, Muda* and *O Futuro? Adeus Pertences* series, 2017. Design by Rico Lins. Printed by Gráfica Fidalga.

Photography, in turn, was born in a symbiotic relationship with design, the fine arts, and other developments of visual culture in modernity. Its invention in 1826 was the result of the search by, among others, French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, for the creation of engraving matrices that did not rely on his limited drawing skills. Not by chance, the process was named *heliogravure*, which means “*engraving by the sun*” (Meggs & Purvis, 2009). At this point, although credit is often given to Niépce, historian Geoffrey Batchen (1997) published a list of 24 people claiming the title of inventor of photographic technology from the year 1839. These claimants were not only from France or England but also from other countries such as Germany, Norway, Spain, the United States, and Brazil.

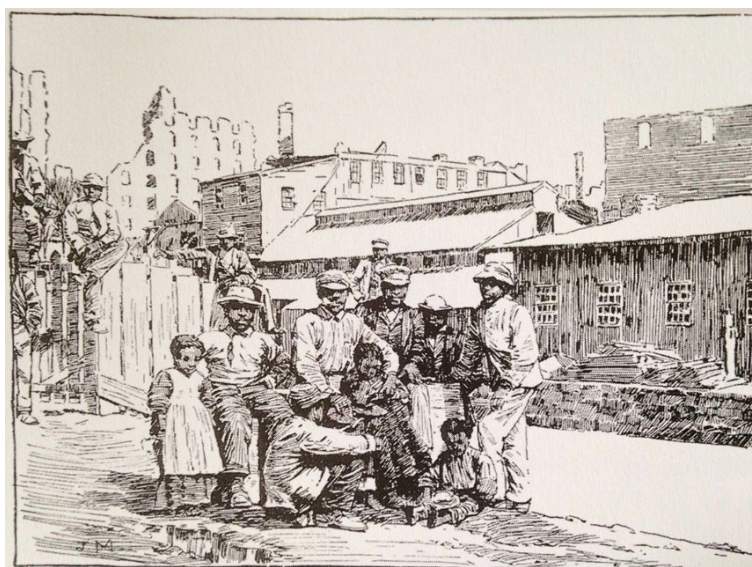
After the advent of photography, the first photomechanical prints date back to the early 1870s, but the process was not widely used until the 1880s (Cardoso,

2000). Until then, photography was extensively used as a support for the development of illustrations made through wood engraving. An example is the photograph *Group of freedmen, including children, gathered by a canal in Richmond, Virginia* by Mathew Brady (Figure 4), which was transformed into a wood engraving by John MacDonald (Figura 5):



Source: available at: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-405e-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>. Access on: Apr. 26, 2024.

Figure 4. *Group of freedmen, including children, gathered by a canal in Richmond, Virginia, 1865.* Photography by Mathew Brady.



Source: available at: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-405e-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>. Access on: Apr. 26, 2024.

Figure 5. *Freedmen on the Canal Bank at Richmond, c. 1876-1881.* Woodcut by John MacDonald.

Arriving in Richmond, Virginia, shortly after the evacuation and the fire that destroyed most of the commercial district on April 2, 1865, when Union forces defeated the Confederate strongholds in the city, Brady turned his camera toward a group of former slaves who had suddenly found themselves free. A moment in time was preserved; a historical document that would help people understand their history was captured with the timeless immediacy of photography. As there were no means to reproduce this image at the time, *Scribner's* magazine turned to an illustrator to reinvent the image in the language of wood engraving so that it could be reproduced (Meggs; Purvis, 2009, p. 190-191).

This intrinsic connection between photography, design, and the fine arts can also be seen in daguerreotypes and *carte de visite* (small photographic portraits of 6 × 10 cm used in the 19th century as calling cards). Although initially treated as archaic design pieces, they are now appreciated as works of art. The pharmaceutical labels produced in São Paulo by the Franco-Brazilian artist Hercule Florence (Figure 6), in addition to enjoying similar prestige, are also considered the oldest photographic records in the Americas (Wanderley, 2015).



Source: available at: <https://ihf19.org.br/pt-br/hercule-florence/inventos/fotografia>. Access on: Apr. 26, 2024.

Figure 6. Photography of nine pharmacy labels, c. 1833. Contact print on photosensitive paper by Hercule Florence.

However, while the historical divergence between photography and art has now been overcome (Gombrich, 1999), a deeper reflection on its relationship with design still seems imperative. This is because, “just as typography, photography has always lived a technical, historical, and aesthetic marriage with graphic design. However, unlike typography, photography is rarely seen as one of the main resources in design” (Lupton & Miller, 2011, p. 121). The work of contemporary photographers like David Hiscock (Figure 7), for example, which circulates in both art galleries and advertising pieces, highlights the complexity of the previously described landscape. Naturally, this does not imply that every good designer is also a good photographer



Source: available at: https://www.1stdibs.com/furniture/wall-decorations/photography/david-hiscock-photographic-male-nude-composition-original-signed-work-1980s/id-f_28865132. Access on: Apr. 26, 2024.

Figure 7. *Photographic Male Nude Composition*, c. 1980. Photography by David Hiscock.

or visual artist (and vice versa), but it demonstrates that these professionals have always shared the same issues and creative processes.

This holistic view of design was widely advocated and practiced by László Moholy-Nagy (1947), a Bauhaus professor who introduced the idea that *design* is not a profession but an attitude. Alongside his teaching, he equally devoted himself to experimental films, theater pieces, photography (Figure 8), typography, painting, and sculpture, which supported his idea that there is no hierarchy among the arts. For Moholy-Nagy (1947), the internal and external characteristics of a plate, a chair, a table, a machine, a painting, or a sculpture should not be separated:

There is design in organization of emotional experiences, in family life, in labor relations, in city planning, in working together as civilized human beings. Ultimately all problems of design merge into one great problem: 'design for life'. In a healthy society this design for life will encourage every profession and vocation to play its part since the degree of relatedness in all their work gives to any civilization its quality. This implies that it is desirable that everyone should solve his special task with the wide scope of a true "designer" with the new urge to integrated relationships. It further implies that there is no hierarchy of the arts, painting photography, music, poetry, sculpture, architecture, nor of any other fields such as industrial design. They are equally valid departures toward the fusion of function and content in "design" (Moholy-Nagy, 1947, p. 42).

Based on the ontological thoughts of Moholy-Nagy (1947), Lupton and Miller (2011), Bomfim (2017), Flusser (2018), and Cardoso (2022), as well as the



Source: available at: <https://moholy-nagy.org/art-database-detail/172>. Access on: Apr. 26, 2024.
Figure 8. *Photogram*, 1926. Photogram by László Moholy-Nagy.

etymological, technical, and historical trajectory that interconnects art, design, and photography—all previously presented—the processes of subjectivation of the author of the following photographic images address the impossibility of separating these disciplines into distinct fields of knowledge. Just as design is a visual art (*ars, techné*), photography not only is a part of design but can also be treated as design. It is in the viewfinder, in the way it frames the subject, that the photographer first encounters *design* in its most essential aspects: form, lighting, color, repetition, rhythm, contrast, depth, scale, movement, flow, emphasis, emotion, among others (Webb, 2014). Moreover, the emotional response that these choices imply is crucial for the success of a project, as a well-used photographic image evokes feelings that allow the audience to grasp the intended message more deeply. Conversely, when misused, it can even contradict the message (Ambrose & Harris, 2009).

Based on the subjectivation processes of the authors in this article, it is not merely a matter of considering fields but of highlighting that the term “design” has, in contemporary times, reached a meaning that transcends labor activity and functional aesthetics. Therefore, as Peixoto (2018) argues, it is important for contemporary design to articulate ideas from other fields of knowledge so that it can do more than just aestheticize and functionalize the world; it can act revolutionarily within it. For more:

The strict conditioning of form to function removes from the user the aesthetic experience of the object, the possibility of empathy, and, therefore, inhibits their ability to generate meaning.
[...]

The endless repetition of thought models that are slow to free themselves from modernist functionalism, leading to widespread lack of creativity, is precisely due to a lack of poetry.

[...]

Trivial objects and graphic pieces can surprise by transcending their mere utility, revealing new meanings. In this sense, we can qualify a design object as poetic whenever its use surpasses its predictable functionality.

[...]

The distinction in design projects that assume an imprecise function, potentially unfolding into various undefined functions, including becoming a contemplative object for aesthetic enjoyment, lies in the simultaneous display of its potential to be and not to be a functional object (Peixoto, 2018, p. 152).

It is important to clarify here that, in addressing and advocating for this *expanded* view (Krauss, 2008) of design, the subjectivation processes of the authors of this article do not aim to propose an epistemological discussion of the fields. Instead, they present an understanding shared by authors more aligned with the conceptual approach of the photographic essays that comprise this exploratory study. This approach seeks to strengthen the creation processes of these essays in their technical, aesthetic, and poetic appeals, as well as to contribute with one more among many possible views regarding the ethos of design.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VISUAL CULTURE: KNOWLEDGE, POWER AND SUBJECTIVATION

According to Martins (2012), this type of artistic-imagery hybridization is a powerful way to describe *visual culture*: an emerging field of investigation that crosses disciplines and methods to explore not only the aesthetic value of images, but also their impact on culture. The focus shifts from traditional artistic categories and academic disciplines to exploring the relationships between art and life, reflecting our diversity and complexity. Freedman (2006), in turn, synthesizes visual culture as “everything that humans form and feel through vision or visualization, and that shapes the way we live our lives” (Freedman, 2006, p. 11).

To understand the scope of the emotional appeal of images in articulating subjectivities through expressions such as *drama, feelings, affections, life, complexity*, etc., Michel Foucault’s thought provides a powerful tool, as it advocates for a broader understanding of the connections between *power, knowledge, and subjectivation*. The way we relate to our own bodies, to others, and to society and its institutions is fundamental to constructing a more authentic life, both personally and socially. Therefore, by treating the body as part of the image creation processes, we also form ethical values that shape our conduct toward ourselves and the world.

The dynamics between the subject and their subjectivity were the central theme of the third and final phase of Foucault’s thought. In a critical approach to traditional philosophical currents, which preached an autonomous and immutable nature of the human being, Foucault proposes that the individual is, in fact, constituted through *processes of subjectivation* (Foucault, 2006) — relations of knowledge and power that constantly shape and transform the individual, thereby making

them a subjective subject. In other words: we are all constructed by the historical and social experiences we undergo.

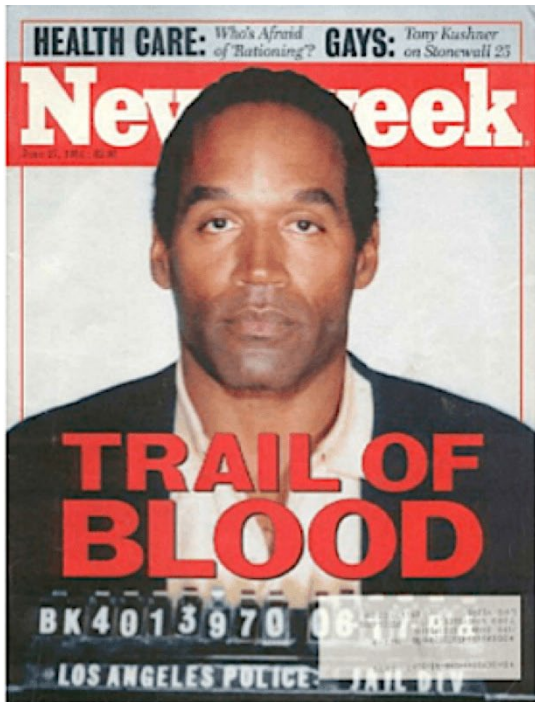
These relations of power and knowledge to which our bodies are constantly subjected influence our behavior, and subjectivation determines our ethical stance toward them (Silva, 2018). Therefore, if everything produced by the individual is a materialization of their own subjectivity (influenced by the context in which they are embedded), no perspective on social production is stable, as the subject and object, the viewer and the model, continually reverse their roles (Foucault, 1999). This is an argument that becomes indispensable in design to aid in deconstructing the idea of autonomy and *neutrality* in the creation processes.

Body, knowledge, and power are intrinsically interconnected: power not only governs bodies but also produces knowledge about them, just as knowledge also produces the power to govern them. This complex network of influences is reflected in all spheres of life, including the way we perceive the world, culture, and especially, images. Design can then be seen as a mirror, reflecting the interconnection between power, knowledge, and human experience. To highlight how this dynamic of subjectivation processes specifically acts in design, the exploratory research that leads to this article takes the liberty of using photography not only as an expressive medium but as a paradigm of design as a whole. This choice itself is evidence of the subjectivation processes of the author of the images that will be presented later.

As an important tool, photography exerts significant influence on society. This becomes evident when considering that the photographer, possessing the knowledge of how to transform a given subject into an image, can deliberately manipulate the way that subject is assimilated. An example of this is the discrepancy between the images of O. J. Simpson (actor and former American football player accused of murdering his ex-wife) published on the covers of *Newsweek* (Figure 9A) and *Time* (Figure 9B). The different treatments given to the same image not only reflected the editorial views of each publication but also influenced the public perception of the case. This is, for example, how knowledge creates power.

On the other hand, institutions, governments, or influential groups, such as the media, advertising, and fashion, can also use photography to manipulate public perception, but through power. In political or authoritarian contexts, this power can be used to control the dissemination of certain images considered subversive, which can affect the perception of important events and issues. Advertising and fashion have the power to use photography to create and reinforce stereotypes, beauty ideals, and consumer desires. This, in turn, influences how people see themselves and the world around them.

German photographer Erwin Blumenfeld, for example, achieved worldwide notoriety with his images for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* magazines between the 1950s and 1960s. Blumenfeld redefined the concept of female beauty in fashion photography, ignoring the obvious and readily recognizable in search of a deeper, nobler, more mysterious, and protected side within the person (Figure 10). Paying attention to the personal and commercial aspect of his production,



A



B

Source: available at: <https://www.artdoc.photo/articles/truth-in-photography-perception-myth-and-reality-in-the-postmodern-world>. Access on: Apr. 26, 2024.

Figure 9. Covers of *Newsweek* and *Time* about the O. J. Simpson case, 1994.



Source: available at: <https://www.artnet.com/artists/erwin-blumenfeld/nude-in-broken-mirror-new-york-d3LpWGO9L3CXabCTFXQzrA2>. Access on: Apr. 26, 2024.

Figure 10. *Nude in broken mirror*, 1944. Photography by Erwin Blumenfeld.

the photographer investigated the beauty of models, mannequins, busts, sculptures, mirrors, and veils. Faces and bodies were stretched, squeezed, multiplied, fragmented, and softened. In the lab, he experimented with the effect of reticulated negatives, a texture achieved by freezing the film while it was still wet. However, he was always very careful not to let technical manipulation steal the attention from the subject. His intention was to free the object from its physical and spatial limitations, replacing the feeling of distance with subjective, unstable, and imprecise separation (Silva, 2017, p. 60).

Another very relevant case in this regard was the controversy surrounding Victoria's Secret's *The Perfect Body* campaign, which sparked an intense debate about the beauty standards promoted by fashion and advertising. The campaign, launched in 2014, was widely criticized for presenting slim models as the only ideal of a perfect body (Figure 11). The controversy highlighted the power these groups have to influence self-esteem and perceptions of beauty, normalizing often unattainable standards. This case underscored the need for a change in the discourse and representation of beauty in the fashion and advertising industries, leading several brands, including Victoria's Secret itself, to promote a more realistic and inclusive representation of beauty (Fonseca, 2014).



Source: available at: <https://exame.com/marketing/victoria-s-secret-celebra-corpo-perfeito-e-irrita-mulheres>. Access on: Apr. 26, 2024.

Figure 11. Photography for Victoria's Secret *The Perfect Body* campaign.

The space also offers dynamics of life and work that impact the relationships of power, knowledge, and subjectivity. The place of people's lives, as well as the mode of occupation and circulation through territories, guides a discussion by Michel Foucault (2013) when he defines *heterotopia* as a place that opposes and neutralizes all others. Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, cyberspace (the virtual environment

created by the internet) became a kind of *digital heterotopia* in which various forms of resistance to isolation, such as birthday parties, meetings, musical rehearsals, and theater plays, could develop, even if virtually.

Similarly, in the face of the need to stay alive, photography, an inherently in-person activity, also expanded its presence in the virtual environment: online photography, produced from capturing video call sessions, is yet another example of how a power — the imposition of social isolation — created spaces of resistance for the development of knowledge in the realm of image creation. For Foucault (1998, p. 241):

Resistance necessarily occurs where there is power, because it is inseparable from power relations; thus, resistance both constitutes power relations and, at times, is the result of these relations. As power relations are everywhere, resistance is the possibility of creating spaces for struggle and of enabling possibilities for transformation everywhere.

Online photography, even after the period of isolation, retains a significant advantage: it allows photographers to create projects with people from all over the world, which is a considerable benefit not only in the field of photography itself but also in design. In 2023, for example, the Ukrainian photographer based in New York, Dina Litovsky, conducted a remote photo shoot of the activist Olena Shevchenko (Figure 12), who lives in Ukraine. Using only an app, the photographer, who regards this process as “one of the futures of photography” (Ewing, 2023), was

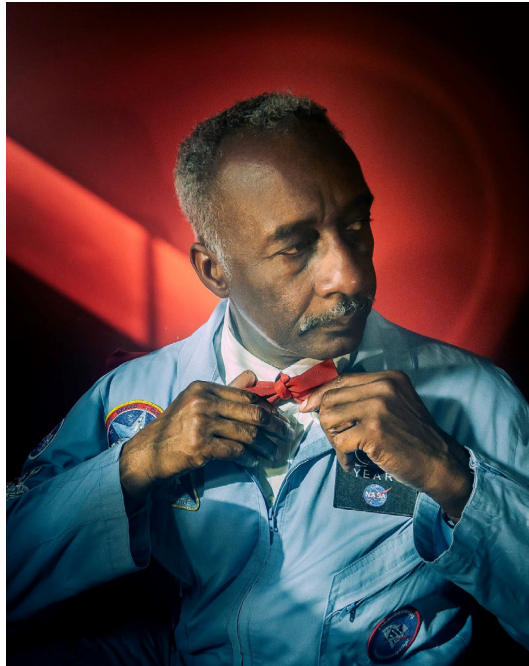


Source: available at: <https://time.com/6257849/olena-shevchenko-2>. Access on: Apr. 26, 2024.

Figure 12. Portrait of Olena Shevchenko, 2023. Online photography by Dina Litovsky.

able to connect to Olena's phone and produce images that were featured in a special edition of *Time Magazine*.

Litovsky also contributed to the *New York Times Magazine*, in the article "*Their Final Wish? A Burial in Space*" (Figure 13), where she remotely photographed seven people from various parts of the world who had signed up to include a vial with their future remains in a rocket to be launched into space:



Source: available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/11/insider/remote-photo-shoot.html>. Access on: Apr. 26, 2024.

Figure 13. Portrait of Lemuel Patterson, 2023. Online photography by Dina Litovsky.

The idea was to create a collection of portraits of these space-bound subjects. [...] But Ms. Litovsky was headed to Japan in October and wouldn't be able to travel around the world to shoot the subjects in their homes in places like Reunion Island, in the Indian Ocean, and Topeka, Kansas. "I said 'I'd love to, but I can't do it,'" Ms. Litovsky recalled in an interview. But after sleeping on the idea, she emailed Ms. Ryan a question: What if we do it remotely?" (Ewing, 2023, our translation)

The works of Dina Litovsky presented earlier notably illustrate Michel Foucault's thinking about how powers create knowledge. By exploring the potentials of online photography, the photographer transcends geographical boundaries and, in doing so, highlights the importance of resistance movements in the face of powers that constrain the processes of image creation. Resisting — exploring new techniques, styles, materials, themes, and approaches — is a way to stimulate innovation and originality; it encourages the creation of works that surprise, provoke, challenge thinking, and expand the boundaries of what is considered conventional.

This understanding broadens the practical experience in the virtual photo essay titled *Metamatéria: Anima*, based on the heterotopias discussed by Michel

Foucault in the 1960s. The images that comprise this project, produced by Rafael Frota under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Jofre Silva, were created during the year 2023 as part of the master's research *Design and Photography in the Mediation of the Body as Aesthetic Experience*, ongoing in the Graduate Program in Design at the School of Fine Arts, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ).

Metamatéria: Anima addresses the movements of resistance of the body and space through the technical, aesthetic, poetic, and conceptual possibilities of online photography, as well as its capacity to function as a counter-space of resistance to the powers exercised over us. Drawing from Foucault's (2011) thinking, the processes of subjectivation and asceticism offer opportunities to outline an 'aesthetic of existence' towards the design and project of a "different life, different world".

The images were created using the process of screen *re-photography* (Figure 14) from a photo shoot conducted via video call app and were worked on to seek their possible aesthetic identity within the limitations of the medium, such as low resolution, moiré, chromatic aberrations, and high granulation. The results presented below (Figures 15 and 16), as well as other works that are part of the project, can be viewed on the laboratory's website: <https://phadec.eba.ufrj.br/project-view/metamateria-anima/>.

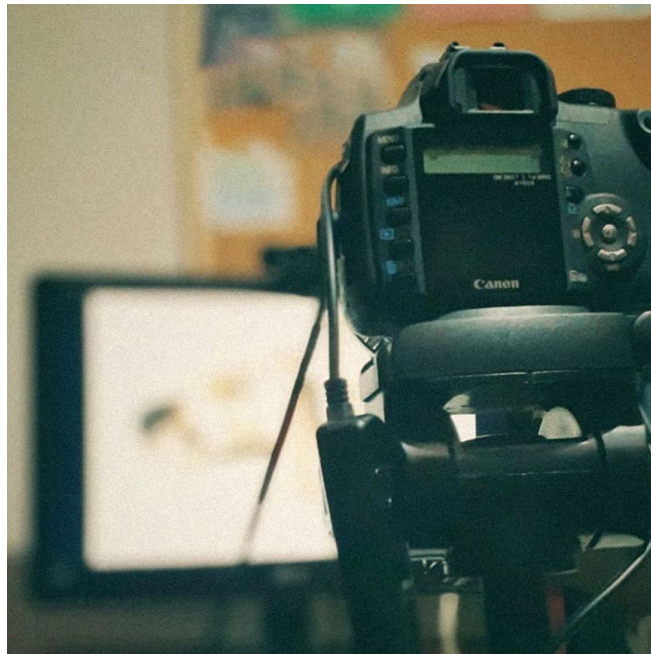


Figure 14. Capture of video call session with digital camera (rephotography).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This discussion addressed how design, photography, and the visual arts are ontologically inseparable disciplines—an approach that contrasts with traditional ideas of autonomy and neutrality in design processes. Thus, this text presented how these three disciplines not only influence each other, but are also shaped by the

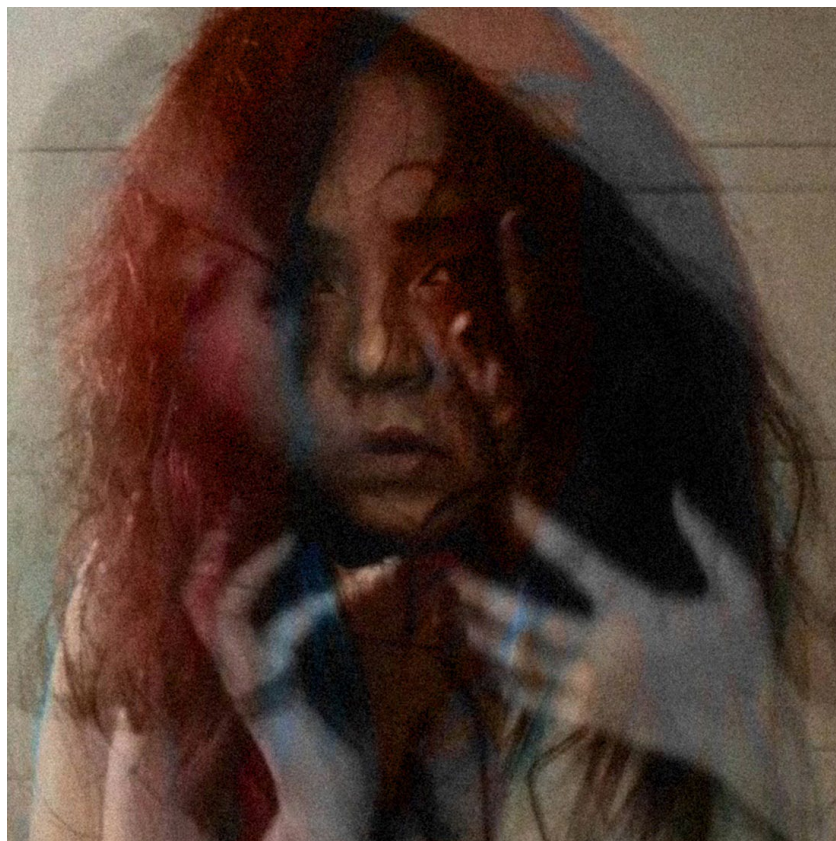


Figure 15. Study for the *Metamatéria: Anima* project.

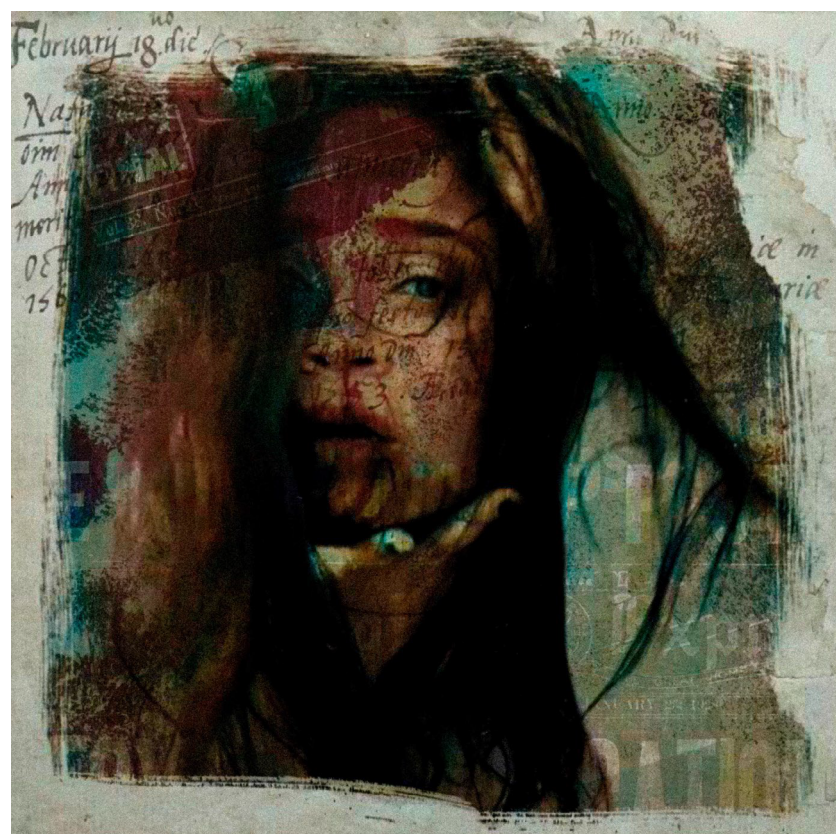


Figure 16. Study for the *Metamatéria: Anima* project.

discourses, practices, and values of their time. This debate remains highly relevant as it challenges established concepts and allows for a deeper exploration of the image as a vehicle for understanding the world and reality.

With this purpose, the aim was to highlight that design can be considered an intrinsically hybrid activity intertwined with the visual arts. This connection traces back not only to its etymology but also to the history of art, which shows how printmaking processes—most notably lithography, woodcut, and etching—were the precursors to contemporary graphic industry. Printmaking, in fact, is increasingly attracting the interest of designers; this reflects a growing appreciation for the artisanal and artistic expression as differentiators in a project, further bringing together the fields of design and art.

Although it already emerged in symbiosis with design and the visual arts, photographic technology has not always been recognized as an intrinsic part of these two fields of knowledge. However, contemporary practice reveals an increasing intersection between them, illustrated in the text by the works of photographers such as David Hiscock and Erwin Blumenfeld, whose works circulate between art galleries and advertising pieces. Furthermore, drawing from Michel Foucault's thought, the text addresses the role of photography in the construction of subjectivities and its influence on public perception.

Finally, online photography, a mode conducted over the internet that rose to prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrates how resistance and innovation are inseparable from the relationships between knowledge and power outlined by Foucault. Therefore, by challenging conventional limits and stimulating creativity, this new photographic practice represents not only a response to the restrictions imposed by power but also an opportunity to expand the horizons of image creation.

Given the considerations gathered here, the greater intention is to provoke a broader and deeper reflection on design, encouraging the reader to understand it in a holistic manner. From this perspective, it becomes possible to promote a dialogue about the role of the image in contemporary visual culture, which enriches educational formation and encourages the pursuit of impactful and culturally relevant transformative solutions. Ultimately, understanding design as a dynamic and interconnected whole can catalyze a more conscious and critical appreciation of the visual expressions that shape everyday professional practices. Undoubtedly, it even becomes possible to envision a path toward a type of existence leading to a different life, a different world, even when it seems impossible and somewhat utopian.

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