

Practical exercise: The act of stealing

Materials: Notebook, pen, phone, magazines/newspapers, Internet

(The suggested materials listed above are neither exhaustive nor mandatory)

Introduction to exercise: “Method of this work: Literary montage. I have nothing to say. Only to show. I will make off with nothing valuable and allow myself no clever turns of phrase. Only the refuse and waste: which I will not inventory but instead allow to come into their own in the only way possible: I will make use of them.

This work must raise the art of citing without quotation marks to the highest level. Its theory is most intimately linked to that of montage.”

Walter Benjamin.

“We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God), but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture. [...]

To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing.”

Roland Barthes

“No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation, is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists.”

T. S. Eliot

Can a text be read in isolation or do we need to look at how it relates to other texts?
Can an image be seen in isolation or do we need to look at how it relates to other images?
Can a sound be listened in isolation or do we need to look at how it relates to other sounds?

The act of stealing is a group exercise, structured in phases, which will allow students of a pre-intermediate level up to an advanced level to build narratives with elements collected out of multiple sources while reflecting on the examples discussed in class.

Exercise synopsis: In phase I, the students organize themselves into groups of three. The students brainstorm, delegate work and collect elements both indoors and outdoors from the most diverse sources.

In phase II, the students develop and write the narrative with the multiple elements collected.

In phase III, the students prepare a POP and a pitch to present in class.

Duration: 24h

Objectives and briefing: In the act of stealing the students will be guided by a group exercise structured by phases.

The exercise takes place both indoors and outdoors.

The progression, structured by phases, provides the students with strict guidelines (describing a modus operandi) on how to address the exercise in order to achieve effective results.

The student is expected to experience several different constraints and levels of freedom while performing the exercise.

The student is expected to engage actively within the group showing motivation, participation and intention.

In phase I, the students organize themselves in groups of three. The students brainstorm, delegate work and collect elements using diverse stealing methodologies. This can be as eclectic as, excerpts from phone calls personal or anonymous, a sound bit on the street, cut up technique applied to newspapers and others, elements from copyright law protected products, ready-mades, the reformulation of products of Western techno-capitalism, collage, montage, plagiarism previous works and other examples discussed in class. There is no limit or rule.

In phase II, the students should show capacity to develop and to write a narrative with the multiple elements collected. The students should show organization and method in the execution of the exercise.

In phase III, the students should show agency and independence in preparing a pitch and writing a POP.

The students should be able to associate these experiences to former experiences and to share them in class.

The students are expected to share their previous experiences and their experience at the end of the exercise and to compare it with the exercises of the other students. The students to participate, on a critical level, in the class discussion, the higher the level of the student, the higher the level of discussion and reflection will be expected of them in class.

Pitch for open discussion:

(To be presented in class after the exercise. The students are expected to answer according to their level. The students are expected to associate this experience with former experiences. The students can select the most adequate form of pitching both on paper and on the oral presentation.)

Guidelines

1. Pitch on paper

1.1 To each group a POP – pitch on paper is requested.

1.2 Thus, the POP must, necessarily, contain:

a) Project title incl. explanation (2 lines)

b) Storyline (max. 3 lines)

c) Synopsis (max. 25 lines)

d) Dramatic explanation that can articulate together narrative and visual concept.

Please provide description of the visual and artistic universe of the exercise here.
(max. 25 lines)

1.3 POPs must be extremely concise, clear and objective. Information is compressed but dynamically interconnected. There is no use of images and the descriptions should be as visual and sensorial as possible.

2. Pitch

2.1 To each group a 10 min. pitch is requested.

2.2 The pitch consists of an oral group presentation.

2.3 Please follow the guidelines for POP in the oral group presentation.

2.4 Please include a list of sources collected, indicating the elements that were used in the development and in the writing of the narratives, in correlation with the techniques explored.

2.5 Please share your previous experience and your experience at the end of the exercise.