

## Designing for Perception: Exploring the Interplay Between Object Presence and Viewer Subjectivity in Graphic Communication

The relationship between human perception and object is revealed by a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of mind, body, and environment. This perspective aligns with the complex interplay between our mental states and the physical world.

### Interdependence and Reciprocity

As philosopher Jean Paul Sartre said "To be is to be seen" which means that we exist, in no small part, because we are seen, because the gaze of others beholds us, which makes me think how else can we see other subjects differently and how it impacts what we perceive based on our physical / mental/ emotional/financial or spiritual position . Would I see a chair differently if I'm happy as compared to when I'm tired?

I have been interested in interdependence and the relationships between the subject and the object. Who decides what is the subject and what is the object. How our mind and body perceives other subjects (things that can be seen or touched) as its own and starts forming connections and commonality between the two.

I wanted to explore methods of visualising anxiety through objects as an approach to explore how the body, when paired with objects, becomes a conduit for non-verbal expression. This concept aims to bridge the gap between the subjective experience of anxiety and its objective representation, making it more tangible and relatable to those who may not experience it themselves.

This phenomenon of communicating through the body, with objects acting as extensions or metaphors for our emotional and mental states, creates a dynamic interplay between the physical and the conceptual. It invites a narrative that words alone may not convey, making room for multiple interpretations that appeal to viewers' visual and sensory experiences. By exploring overlapping, distortion, fragmentation and abstraction, I aim to create image alphabets to bridge the tangible with the intangible, shaping emotional impressions that resonate deeply on a physical and psychological level.

### The Gaze and Perception

The author James Elkins says that the objects has a certain presence.. which made me wonder; does our interaction with the object alter its presence? Will that difference be noticed by people. To what extend does it have an impact on others as compared to us?

Does the physicality of the subject is its essence or is it the function that is the essence? Would I connect more with a chair if in anxious because it offers comfort. Or would I connect more with the chair because it's green? Would I connect with a wooden chair more because it is made from the natural element from the earth as compared to a plastic chair which is synthetically produced ? Would I connect more to a broken chair because that is a physical implication of anxiety.

In contrast, James Elkins in "The Object Stares Back" proposes a more active role for objects themselves. He suggests that objects possess a certain presence that influences how we perceive them. He proposes that each object has "a certain force, a certain way of resisting or accepting our look and returning that look back to us."

This made me question about the whole subjectivity of the structural thinking of objects and how can I use them to communicate emotional distress.

### Synthesis and Implications

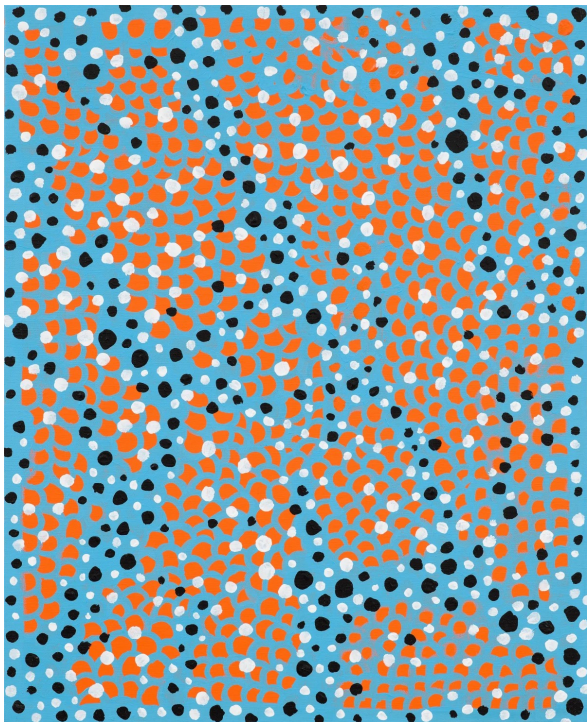
I think you see objects and things to how they look to you but you connect to the phenomenon of what they're made of and how there is a link that is invisible to the naked eye.. the ultra microscopic version of a star shows a refraction of light that also looks like waves or a coastline. The author describes this by saying that "images show us things we never see". Which made me think is that the reason why we connect with these objects? Because of their essence it does attract us but our knowledge allows us to see things beyond their physical appearance?

I believe that seeing and observing is a reciprocal process with your mind. Your gaze will go to the objects that attracts you .. it might not be the same with the person next to you.. you see what you're looking for. Whereas the author agrees that it's a reciprocal process with the object because of its certain presence to with I agree but It makes me question about the gaze of the

object and the echo of that gaze.. whether the object is trying to talk to us or are we attracted towards it enough to notice it more? Aren't we making that decision for ourself?

Yayoi Kusuma's work "Everyday I pray for love" is a series of paintings that explore her creative process, the role of language in her art, and her desire to create art outside of herself. Her work responds to Elkin's thoughts where he says that "it is difficult to break through the wall of usual seeing an begin to discover how many other things there are to see"...inspired my thoughts and action of seeing things that you don't see which means that you only see the hidden when you're ready to see .. the more you look the more you find.

The hidden subject can communicate more meaning of its existence. Whilst analysis her painting I thought about how distance matters with the form and function.. the further you go away the more there is a transformation of the meaning of the subject and it communicates differently whilst being the same.



The interplay between human perception and objects is a complex and multi layered phenomenon. Our perspective emphasises the subjective nature of perception, highlighting how our mental and emotional states influence our interpretation of objects. This view suggests that the mind actively shapes our understanding of the world around us, including how we perceive and interact with objects. It suggests that our understanding of the world is shaped by a dynamic interplay between our internal states, the physical properties of objects, and the broader context in which perception occurs.

### Friction Between Perspectives

What is the Agency? My perspective places agency primarily with the perceiver, while Elkins suggests objects have their own form of agency.

He emphasises the object's presence as a key factor, whereas I focus on the perceiver's mental state as the primary influence which can be influenced by the presence but actively takes decision.

Both our perspectives acknowledge hidden aspects of perception, but approach them differently. I propose that "you only see the hidden when you're ready to see," while Elkins suggests that objects themselves conceal and reveal meanings.

This friction between perspectives opens up new avenues for exploring human-object interactions:

Can we develop methods to perceive objects more subjectively, or is all perception inherently objective?

How can reimagining objects as active participants in our experiences—rather than passive, external entities—alter our perception of comfort, vulnerability, and resilience in both ourselves and our surroundings?

#### Reference list

Elkins, J. (1996). *The object stares back: on the nature of seeing*. New York, Simon & Schuster.

Kusuma, Y. (2020), *Every Day I Pray for Love*. Exhibited London : Victoria Miro's canal-side garden (viewed 23 October, 2024). Painting: Acrylic paint on canvas.