

PERSPETTIVE
SEVITCEPTIVS

SIVIA
MINGUZZI
DIGITAL MEDIA

ABSTRACT

We see what we want to see. We perceive the world around us in our own way and sometimes our perception is far from how others might perceive it. We have got used to rely on our feelings and emotions when we see or judge something and sometimes this leads to the misinterpretation of the things around us, because feelings and emotions can't be objective.

Perspective projection distortion is the inevitable misrepresentation of three-dimensional space when drawn or projected onto a two-dimensional surface. It is impossible to accurately depict 3D reality on a 2D plane. The main focus of my body of work is to apply my research on how the new technologies pushed the boundaries of perspective projection distortion in the digital art world. I use perspective projections in my work not only

as a technique, but also as a philosophy. Being able of looking at the world from a different perspective, being able to challenge stereotypical perspective is a powerful way to fight inequality in our society: income inequality, gender inequality. Diversity can be as simple as a different point of view.

I believe in the power of data, and in my work I always look for inspiration in different terrain: politics, economics, anthropology, psychology are my bread and butter. I believe that any modern artist needs to push the art forward, inventing, defining new paradigms of expression with powerful meanings. It can be done using new technology, or researching new techniques with old media. It is about the experience the artist delivers to the public - whether it is provocative, whether it changes how the viewer thinks, feels and views the world. This is what really matters, and it has nothing to do with the techniques that the artist chooses to use. Just as the development of acrylic paints in the 20th century did not mean that oil paints or even the practice of creating one's own paint from pigments fell out of practice, so it is with technology. Just as some artists paint in oils only or acrylics only, some create their work digitally. Image editing and graphic design software programs are yet another tool to add to the artist's palette. This is why in my work I try to use a wide range of media: from printmaking to digital fabrication, from graphic design and typography to motion graphic and projection.

PERSPECTIVES

ABSTRACT

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ON PERSPECTIVE

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FROM RENAISSANCE TO CONTEMPORARY ART

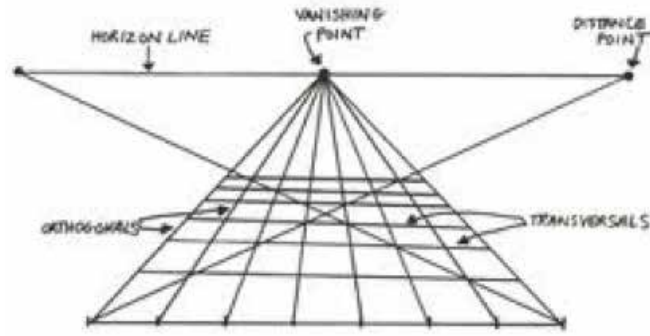
Some of the major themes of the earlier treatises such as regular solids remain significant to this day. Yet, there are significant contrasts between Renaissance methods and modern developments. Renaissance artists paid lip service to equations between perspective and vision, while at the same time linking perspective increasingly with geometry and committing themselves to recording geometrical space of the physical world. Some twentieth century artists have continued this tradition in their explorations of realism, hyperrealism, and surrealism. Others have abandoned this commitment, and focused increasingly on the exploration of visual space, both exterior and interior. Perspective systems are designed to construct pictures that, when viewed, produce in the trained viewer the experience of depicted objects that match perceivable objects. Space perception theorists have written about how our capacities to see are constrained by the perspective system that we use, that is,

by our way of depicting what we see.

In the arts, the methods of depiction are of significant importance as they are the means of expression and description of imaginary worlds. Artists and designers engage in story telling and offer a glimpse into their fantasy worlds through unique, personal, private, and idiosyncratic visual methods.

Pictorial spaces are constructed through geometrical models. Each model is expressed as a geometrical transformation applied to Cartesian shapes of the physical environment. These transformations show how shapes are projected in pictorial space.

The usual projections we are accustomed to see in computer graphic are called standard projections: perspective and orthographic. However, there are many other projections we don't ordinarily see



Filippo Brunelleschi, Linear Perspective. Drawing by Silvia Minguzzi, 2013

called non-linear projections: fisheyes, bulge, panoramas, map projections, etc.

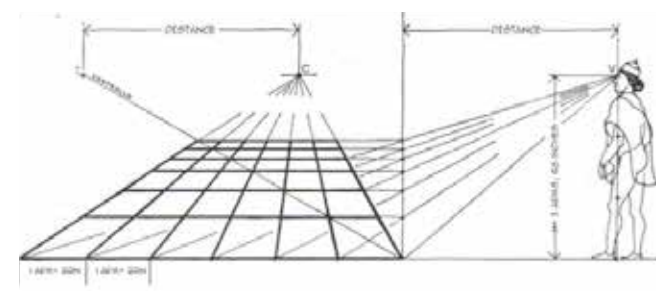
In the Renaissance, painters needed to be able to translate the 3dimensional world around them onto the 2-dimensional surface of a painting, called the picture plane. The solution was linear perspective (Figure 2); the idea that converging lines meet at a single vanishing point and all shapes get smaller in all directions with increasing distance from the eye. The discovery of perspective is attributed to the architect Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446), who suggested a system that explained how objects shrink in size according to their position and distance from the eye.

However, the nature of Brunelleschi's system and date of its discovery remain unclear. In 1435, Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), provided the first theory of what we now call linear perspective in his book, On Painting. The impact of this new system of measurement in paintings was enormous and most artists painting in Europe after 1435 were aware of the principles Alberti outlined in his book.

This has led to setting new goals for art, in terms of exploring perceptual, mental, dream, psychological and even psychopathological states. As a result, whereas Renaissance artists focused attention on linear picture planes, twentieth century artists are exploring many alternative shapes of picture planes. They are also contradicting the traditional transparency-occlusion principles of perspective in their quest for artistic freedom. Hence, while Renaissance artists established a one to one correspondence between object and representation, twentieth century artists strive

to demonstrate the contrary. The rapid development of computer graphics, which allows artists to transform one kind of picture plane into another simply by altering the algorithms for the perspectival grids, has added new vigor to these experiments. So has the continued study of psychological aspects of spatial representation and perception. Optical illusions and visual ambiguities have instilled a new playfulness into these explorations of space, as has the development of virtual reality.

The rise of fractals has made us aware that scale is a factor that needs to be taken into account. Perspective in this sense has yet to be developed, even though linear perspective is now some five hundred and seventy years old. Whether in the old or the new sense, perspective remains one of the most fascinating expressions of links between mathematics and art. It is very clear now how artists have evolved to take advantage of the new technologies available to us in the online era. If we think of technology we suddenly imagine a smart phone or a computer. Throughout history, technology has provided artists with new tools for expression. Today, these two seemingly distinct disciplines, art and technology are interlinked more than ever, with technology being a fundamental force in the development and evolution of art. All over the world, people are engineering our future. The Internet, digital fabrication, nanotech, biotech, self-modification, augmented reality, virtual reality, "the singularity" - you name it, all of this is altering our lives and our view of the world and ourselves. The evolution of computer technology has visibly affected most aspects of our lives; it is perhaps one of the most fascinating mediums to be adapted for a creative purpose.



Leon Battista Alberti's Perspective. Drawing by Silvia Minguzzi, 2013

Is technology changing art? In an interview posted on Curiosity.com on Sept 26th 2011, John Maeda, president of the Rhode Island School of Design answers saying:

I think that computers and the advancedness of computers hasn't changed art very much. It's enabled more to happen. Again, that counts a bit more. Better resolution, longer lengths, more color variety, but all in all it's the same thing. It's what experience can I deliver to you that is provocative, that can change how you think. How can I, the art piece, change your relationship -- not to me, but to something else or to the world? That question has nothing to do with technology at all. I would say that if it wasn't for the computer, my art wouldn't be known because my art is so linked to it. It's how it's defined. I made art with the computer, writing computer programs. I made things that could morph and change and if it wasn't for the Internet maybe a thousand people would know about it. Or like when I walk into MOMA, and that work I made as I sat on the second floor of my flat in Tokyo on a small ironing board with my Macintosh and between my legs I'm typing or whatever. Sat with a fan because it's very hot in Japan, the little piece of code I made is living in a museum now. I find that very odd, interesting, very fortunate, very lucky.

On the other side Bruce Wands, explains that digital technologies have had, and continue to have, a profound effect on contemporary art and culture. Contemporary artists are using the Internet as a new art museum, and adopting digital tools and techniques as part of their creative process.

This is probably one of the most interesting passages of Wands' theory. New technologies are not used by contemporary artists only for the distribution and advertisement of their work, but in the creative process. I stand with him when he underlines that the impact of internet and social media which allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content and provide a structure for people to get organized, exchange and collaborate is just part of the technological effect in art. The computer had enabled artists to create works, new types of work, never before possible: intricate images that could not be created by hand; sculptures formed in 3-dimensional databases rather than in stone or metal; interactive installations that involve

internet participation from around the globe, and virtual worlds within which artificial life forms live and die. The art experience extends now to homes, cybercafés and any public or private space where there is an Internet access or a local area network.

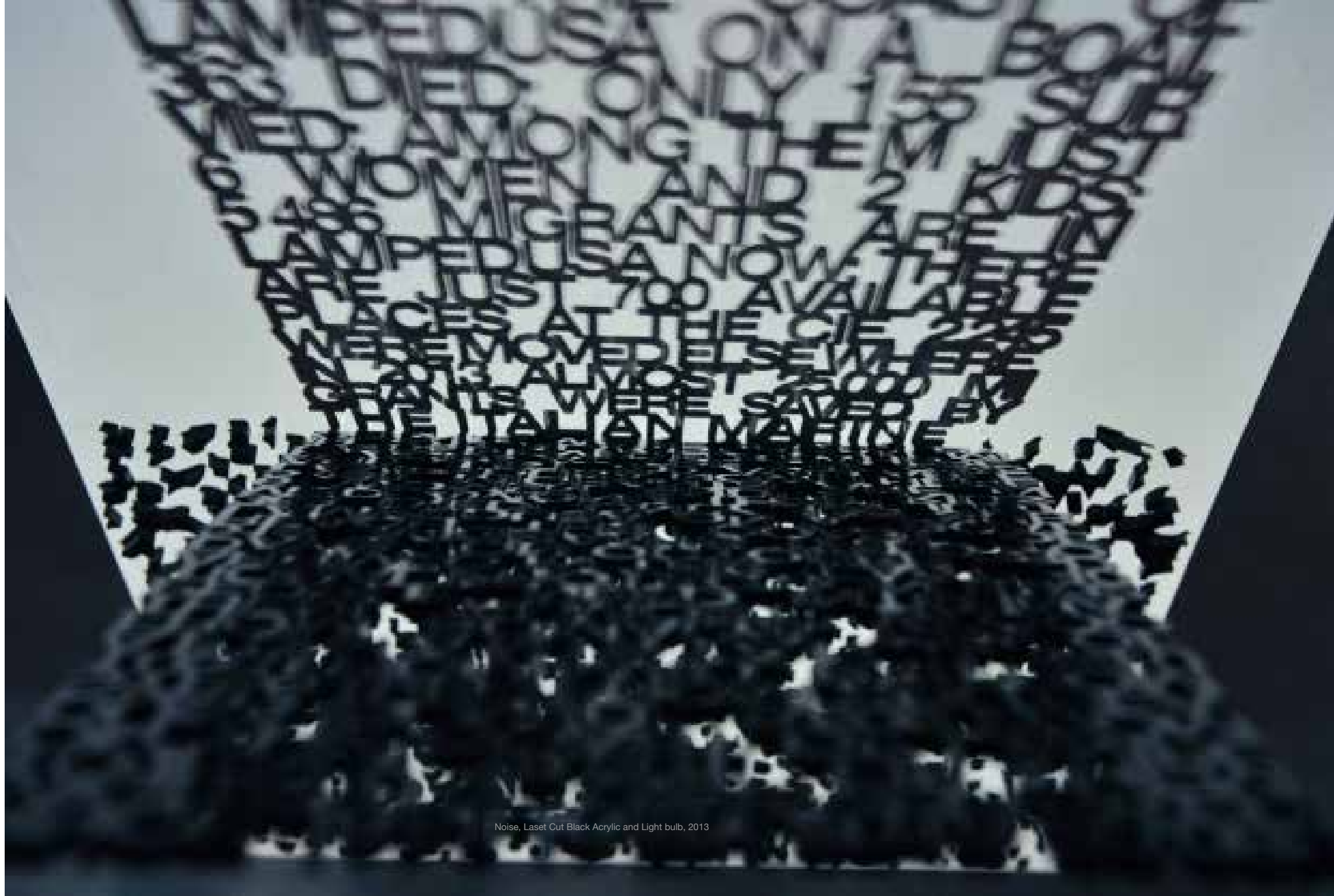
I can see at least 3 important fields where the evolution of new technology impacted art. The first is visual art in general: modern technology has transformed traditional art forms such as painting, sculpting and drawing, allowing artists to utilize digital technologies in the production of their pieces. The second is the digital consumption of art, since technology has also impacted the way that art is consumed. From the visual arts to music, technology has allowed art to become mobile and instantly accessible around the world, providing greater exposure for today's artists and paying homage to artists of the past. And finally the third is art history appreciation: the availability of art in digital form provides greater access for students and lifelong learners to study and experience art from the vast and varying time periods throughout history.

The real turning point of contemporary art is that if throughout history and up until very recently, the public was merely a passive observer, today almost everyone creates. Almost everyone participates. With the Internet and new technologies of fabrication, remixing, editing, manipulating and distributing, it is becoming easier to create things - and share them with the world. What is changing and probably - arguably - for the worse is that it is now easier to create "art", and we see a lot of "bad" art being created and exposed.

What looks clear to me is that in digital art, the notion of the original becomes obsolete. The experience in art becomes the original, especially in the realm of the computer; everything can be processed into something different. This is one of the great differences with traditional art. With the speed of development of new technology today, new tools are continually introduced to artists, which enable them to explore their ideas and imagination in every possible ways that are seemed to be limited before.

10 MY PERSPECTIVE

In my whole body of work I try to challenge the stereotypical perspective not only in the subject matters of my art pieces, but also subverting how a piece of art can be experienced. I either try to demand some kind of action from the viewer in order to “activate” my piece, or I challenge the viewer’s point of view regarding well-known and controversial issues in the sphere of inequality. My goal is to show a possible way to fight inequality in our society, because I strongly believe that the main cause of inequality is a set of strong preconceptions with no scientific data or logical reasoning behind. Accordingly, my perspective is a different one, the one that you don’t expect, a perspective made out of substitutions (men for women and vice versa), a physical perspective (North for South and vice versa), a formal perspective (shadows and projections). Another form of perspective I use in my art is also my personal way to explore the art world: I want to push on the relationship between digital and non-digital art, and in the conversation between old and new technology.



Noise, Laser Cut Black Acrylic and Light bulb, 2013

EQUALITY MAKES THE DIFFERENCE 2

Changing perspective in issues like inequality in our society cannot resume from touching delicate themes like immigration, the environment, income inequality and human rights. In every society, some people have a greater share of valued resources – money, property, education, health and power – than others. Patterns of unequal access to social resources are commonly called social inequality. Social inequality reflects innate differences between individuals, for example their varying abilities and efforts. However, by and large social inequality is not the outcome of innate or natural differences between people, but it is rather produced by the society in which they live.

THE REVOLUTIONARY CONSERVATORY PARTY

The US presidential election of 2012 gave me the opportunity, and the inspiration, to talk about politics and human rights through graphic design. I come from a communication background, and the message in my work has a very important place. I wanted to create a political Party that would contradict its design through its political agenda, using real quotes and real planks from politicians active (and running) during the 2012 US Presidential Campaign; a black or white Party, where everything can be read as the contrary of everything else. That is why I called this fictional party The Revolutionary Conservative Party. The name of my front-runner is Hermann (from

For this first part of my dissertation I will toggle the theme of human rights and politics in our society: the occasion was given to me by the 2012 US Presidential election. I had the chance to being exposed to live news, debates, interviews, comments, shows about the political agenda of the two major parties in the United States and at the same time being able to watch this show from a European lens. I decided to investigate and document the time I was living with two projects. For the first project, I created a fictional party that would put together the madness of the time: a party that would have a very specific defined graphic tendency and would refer to a particular time (Communist Propaganda Posters from the early XX Century), but it would completely negate that iconography in the messages (taken from real debates, and real politicians, active and running, during the presidential election) that were on the opposite spectrum of the political podium. The name of the party was *The Conservative Revolutionary Party*. The second project, what I called *Equality makes a Difference: a visual campaign*, is a party, or more a movement, I would be interested in voting for.

Hermann Wilhelm Göring, a German politician, military leader, and leading member of the Nazist Party) and his last name is Bakunin (from Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin, the Russian revolutionary, philosopher, and theorist of collectivist anarchism). The planks of this party are extremely conservative, but the design resembles the old Soviet Union's or Chinese propaganda poster from the 1940s.

I created a series of postcards (Figure 3) ads and mailers in support of the party's planks that would cover themes like immigration (*They are coming, they are often Darker, they are Foreigners*), environment (*We found an Alternative to Alternative Energy: OIL*), women's rights (*Women: Shut up!*), Education (*Study if you can... afford it*) and right to vote (*do NOT VOTE!*), all printed on an old style vintage paper, shredded on each border. A series of full-page magazine ads enriched the project. Each piece promotes a different aspect of the fictional party platform.

I focused on women's rights, especially on the so called "war on women", with a piece called Arm yourself with a Slouch bag, inspired by We can do it, or Rosie the Riveter, an US wartime propaganda poster produced by J. Howard Miller in 1943 for Westinghouse Electric. In this poster, I quote former US Republican Representative of Missouri, Todd Akin, and his speech on "legitimate" rape, Wisconsin Republican Governor Scott Walker on equal wages for men and women, and finally Rush Limbaugh's definition of Feminazi.

The ad Tax the Needy not the Rich and Greedy, showcases quotes from Republican Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney during one of his speech to the high-dollars campaign donors about the now famous 47% of American defined as freeloaders who pay no taxes, who don't assume responsibility for their lives, and who think government should take care of them.

I finally presented my candidate, Hermann Bakunin. I dedicated this one last Ad (*Our leader*) to the former right wing Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. Quotes include: "*I will defeat Cancer in three years*", "*Poor people are just not accustomed to wealth*", "*I'm the Anointed*" and "*Women, look for a rich man and marry him*".



The Revolutionary Conservative Party Mailer, 2012



Arm yourself...with a slouch bag, 8.5 in x 11 in, Digital Print, 2012

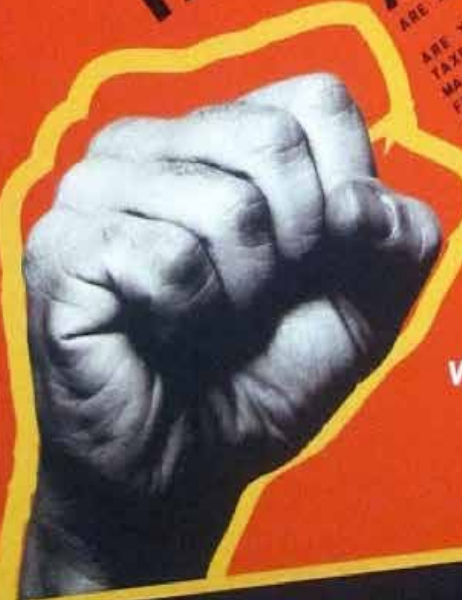


NOW IT'S TIME FOR A CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTION

TAX THE NEEDY
NOT THE RICH
AND GREEDY

ARE YOU RICH AND GREEDY?
ARE YOU TIRED OF PAYING TAXES WHILE THE LAZY MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION FEELS ENTITLED TO HEALTH CARE, FOOD AND HOUSING?
THE POOR BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS RESPONSIBLE TO CARE FOR THEM

I DON'T!



ON NOVEMBER 6
VOTE HERMANN BAKUNIN

REMEMBER
IT'S A FREE COUNTRY

Tax the Needy not the Rich and Greedy, 8.5 in x 11 in, Digital Print, 2012

OUR LEADER
HERMANN BAKUNIN



ARE YOU POOR? IT IS YOUR FAULT!
I WILL DEFEAT CANCER IN 3 YEARS
ABROAD. IT IS NOT THAT DIFFICULT!
YOUNG PEOPLE. LOOK FOR JOBS
POOR PEOPLE ARE JUST NOT ACCUSTOMED TO HEALTH
WOMEN. LOOK FOR A RICH MAN AND MARRY HIM!
I'M THE ANOINTED

HERMANN BAKUNIN IS RICH.
HE IS SUCCESSFUL WITH WOMEN.
HE IS A POWERFUL BUSINESS MAN.
HE IS A LEADER. HE IS ONE OF US
AND HE WILL ALWAYS SAY WHATEVER HE FEELS LIKE!

ON NOVEMBER 6
VOTE HERMANN BAKUNIN

REMEMBER
IT'S A FREE COUNTRY



Our Leader, 8.5 in x 11 in, Digital Print, 2012



The final piece for this visual campaign is a family game *Long Live the Conservative Revolution: A game of pure luck, for all the family.*

My game is based on the Game of the Goose (Gioco dell'Oca) created by Francesco I from the Medici family in 1598. I really tried to design a board game for the whole family, accessible to kids as well, so I decided to base the general rules on a simple dice-based game. The main goal is to go from the start to the cell 45, where you will finally be able to organize your Conservative Revolution and free the Country. To get there you have to go through tricks and helps according to the space you land on.

I want people to learn more about the planks of the Conservative Revolutionary Party while playing with the game. To achieve that goal, I used the artworks from my posters and ads to generate "actions": you land on the Feminazi, *you have been caught advocating for gender equality...Go back to 16. Or the Fact Checker: 3+5=17 Truth is overrated...Go back to 6.*



Too much talk about social inequality generally makes the US uncomfortable. After all, the United States are a nation founded on the premise that “all men are created equal” (what about women?) and most North Americans see themselves as part of a vast middle class. The evident economic differences between rich and poor do not dislodge the popular conviction that the US still provides equal opportunities for all. In a free market economy, open to individual enterprise and ability, some people will inevitably work harder, or get a better education, or invest more fortunately, and as a result, accumulate more resources than others. In principle, these inequalities of outcomes need not threaten equality of opportunity, so long as the children of rich and poor can still start the race of life on equal footing. In fact, of course, an individual’s chances in life have always been shaped by family resources – income, education, social connections, political influence. US promise of equal opportunity has, at best, been approximated by social reality – much more closely at some periods in our history than others.

The fundamental idea behind this project was to imagine a movement that would be advocating for equal opportunities. I started imagining an identity, a logo and a tagline for it playing with the equal/unequal sign created by two E letters and two strong colors like yellow and dark grey. Name, address, and phone number of my fictional front-runner are palindromes, so they can be read both ways. The tagline Equality makes the Difference came up during some discussion with a group I’m part of called Inequality Matters, a Fort Collins based group of concerned individuals committed to providing information and promoting dialogue about economic and political inequalities and their implications locally, nationally and globally. The planks I focused on for this movement are: gender equality, LGBT rights, equal opportunity, and the right to vote. I decided to play with the typography trying to deliver a strong message for each poster



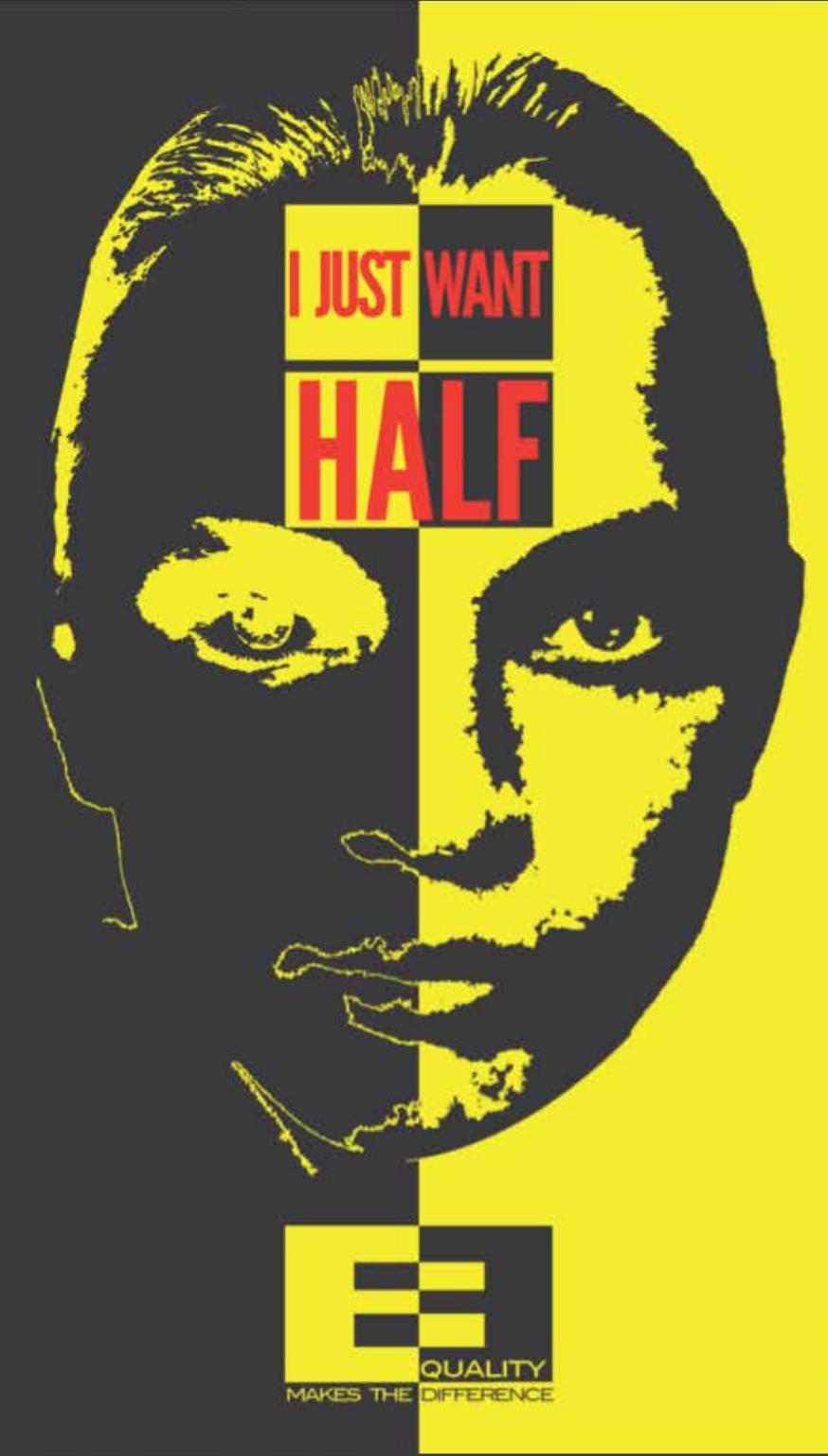
EQUALITY
MAKES
THE DIFFERENCE
A VISUAL CAMPAIGN

tying all together through color and the tagline “*Equality makes the difference*”. The first poster called, *I just want Half* is inspired by Barbara Kruger’s *Your body is a battleground* poster. As a feminist artist and graphic designer I wanted to pay tribute to a strong US feminist poster designer who focused her work on gender equity and feminism. Kruger’s poster was originally designed for promoting a march in Washington DC supporting a pro-choice position and reproductive rights for women in 1989.

I wanted to use a similar typographical effect on my poster, but with a different, simpler message. As women we are just asking to matter as much as men in our society, we are just asking our half. The other posters talk about gay rights and gender equality in an ironic way. The final Poster, Rise to vote siR, selected by AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Arts) as part of their campaign Get out to Vote in 2012, and published permanently on their website.



Barbara Kruger, (Untitled) Your Body is a Battleground, 1989



I Just want half, 11 in x17 in, Digital Poster, 2012



EVERYONE
DESERVES
A SHOT

Everyone Deserves a Shot, Poster 2012.

IF YOU
DON'T LIKE
GAY
MARRIAGE

BLAME IT ON
STRAIGHT
PARENTS

THEY KEEP
HAVING
GAY
CHILDREN



Gay rights, Poster 2012

EACH \$
YOU SPEND
IS A
VOTE
FOR THE WORLD YOU WANT.

RISE TO
VOT TO



AIGA Go Vote Campaign, 2012

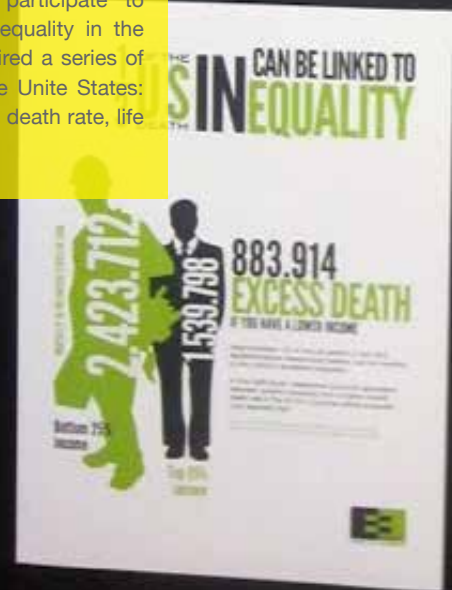
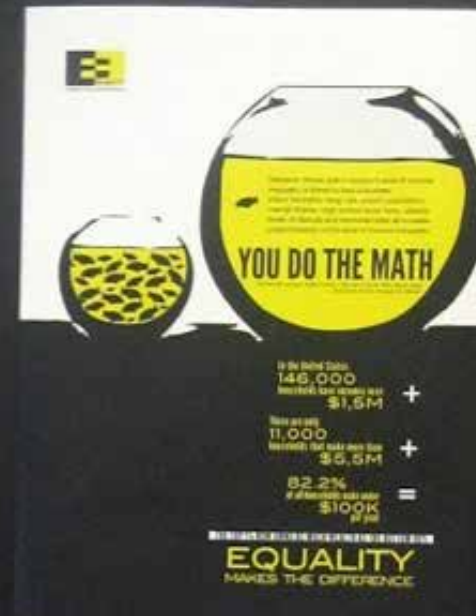
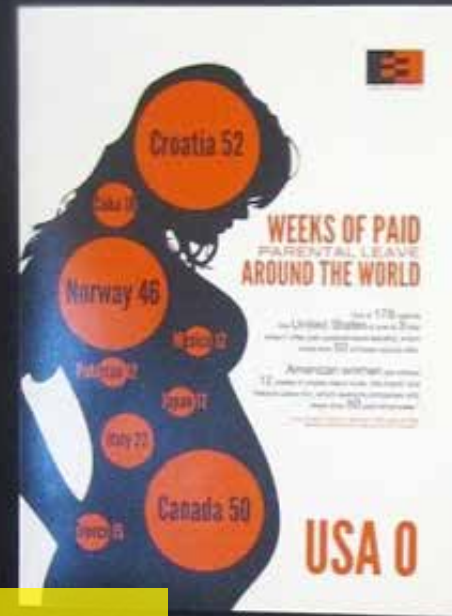
Good design makes choices clear.

AIGA is the only trade association and design society in the world with more than 22,000 AIGA members in 68 countries and 200 student groups worldwide, serving with designers and creatives who believe in the power of design for the public good.



AIGA is a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization. For more information, visit aiga.org or call 1-800-398-2643.

Being an active member of the group *Inequality Matters* gave me access to contemporary research and academic papers, and gave me the opportunity to participate to public speaking events and screenings on inequality in the Colorado area. All the material I collected inspired a series of infographics about four inequality issues in the United States: income inequality, parental leave, inequality and death rate, life expectancy and health



US Parental Leave, Infographic, 2012
 US Income Inequality, infographic, 2012
 US Death Rate, infographic, 2012
 US Life Expectancy, infographic 2012.

Probably my strongest piece is *Parental Leave*, which was selected as part of the Curfman Gallery Student Exhibition at Colorado State University in 2012 and used by the Human Development and Family Studies Department of CSU in some of their courses.

Despite big changes over recent decades, workplace gender inequalities endure in the United States and other industrialized nations around the world. According to sociologists at the University of Washington, these inequalities are created by facets of national social policy that either ease or concentrate the demands of care giving within households and shape expectations in the workplace.

My argument is that gender inequality in the workplace is in a large part due to bearing and rearing children. There are successful women everywhere but exactly how women manage the dual load of work and home varies a lot. The biggest differences come when women and men have children and when those children are young. Some countries support mother who take care of children, by providing child care. What the United States has are private solutions to childcare. People who have more resources can maximize their employment and pay for childcare. The majority of nations are more generous, and the US is way behind in providing early childhood education, childcare and paid maternity leave.

My piece is presenting data from Linda and Thomas P. Vartanian's paper on the importance of public policy in the workplace to guarantee equality between men and women. This analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth quantifies the role that public policies play in enabling new parents to take parental leave when a child arrives. It shows that women who live in Countries that have some kind of paid parental leave program are twice as likely to take paid leave following the birth of a child as women in places without these policies, and their leave periods are an average of 22 days longer. Out of 178 nations the United States is one of 3 that don't offer paid parental leave benefits, which more than 50 of these nations offer. US women are offered 12 weeks of unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act, which exempts companies with fewer than 50 paid employees.

Income inequality describes the extent to which income is distributed unevenly among residents of an area. High levels of inequality indicate that a small number of people receive most of the total income, and that most people receive only a small share of the total. Income inequality, as measured either by the Gini index or the share of top income earners, has increased steadily in the United States since the 1980's.

Life expectancy and Inequality investigate the relation between income inequality and life expectancy in the United States. One of the most basic indicators of wellbeing is life expectancy. Analysts have long recognized the powerful association between personal income and expected life spans. According to Naoki Kondo's Publication about 884,000 deaths per year in the United States result from the high level of income inequality. In other words, if the U.S. had Denmark's inequality levels, there would be nearly 884,000 fewer deaths per year.

Life expectancy and GDP spending for health care is portrayed in the third infographic, which uses data from the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (2011). It shows how the US spends US\$2 trillion per year on health care, nearly half of all the health dollars spent in the world. Still, US people live shorter, often sicker lives than almost every industrialized nation. The USA is the only major industrial country that does not guarantee health coverage to all residents and citizens.



What completes my visual campaign is a *kinetic typography short movie*, where I animated the content from my ads and poster on Equality, using a combination of After Effects to create the animations on a 3D space, and Final Cut to edit the final project with music. Here are some shots of the whole visual campaign I exhibited in the *Visual Arts Building Mini Gallery* in 2013.

Equality Makes the Difference, Solo Show, Mini Gallery, Visual Arts Building, CSU, 2013



The second body of work of my dissertation focuses on a very important theme for me: migration. In particular, I want to raise awareness on the issue of North Africans migrations to Europe.

A big part of my data and images come from the Italian independent documentary label **Zalab**, whose mission is to tell of lives largely ignored by mainstream media, marked by today's conflicts, with the desire to make these stories accessible to everybody. I was inspired by a documentary called **Closed Sea** (2012), and I was able to use some original footage and imagery that **Zalab** made available copyleft for my projects. Since March 2011, after the outbreak of the Libyan War, many African migrants and refugees escaped from their country. While a part of this flow has found shelter in refugee camps at the border with Tunisia, other migrants managed to reach Italian coasts by boat. Many of them had been previously pushed back by Italy as a result of an agreement signed by Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi and Lybian ruler Qaddafi in 2008. Since the signature of this treatise, all migrants intercepted at sea by the Italian navy were forcibly returned to Libya, where they were exposed to all sort of abuses by local police.

I am an Italian migrant to the USA. However I recognize that my migration experience is a privileged one, I want to raise awareness on the huge and dramatic immigration wave happening from North Africa to Europe, the one I experiences from the other side, and make my personal statement: nobody chose where to be born, hence nobody should be considered or treated as an illegal anywhere.

All this body of work became a big exhibition under the name **"Another Perspective"** showed at the Hatton Gallery at Colorado State University in 2013, as winner of the juried competition among all the CSU Graduate Students in Art. For this project, I started investigating not only graphic design, but also, video, projections, digital printing, trying a fusion between methods and enjoying the difference in the creative process. From a communication standpoint, I wanted to be able to speak with different voices in order to reach a larger group of people with my message: it is important where you stand. People, users, general public have preferences when approaching art, someone like to read, someone like to watch, listen, or touch. This is why I presented a variety of work realized with different media or combination of media.

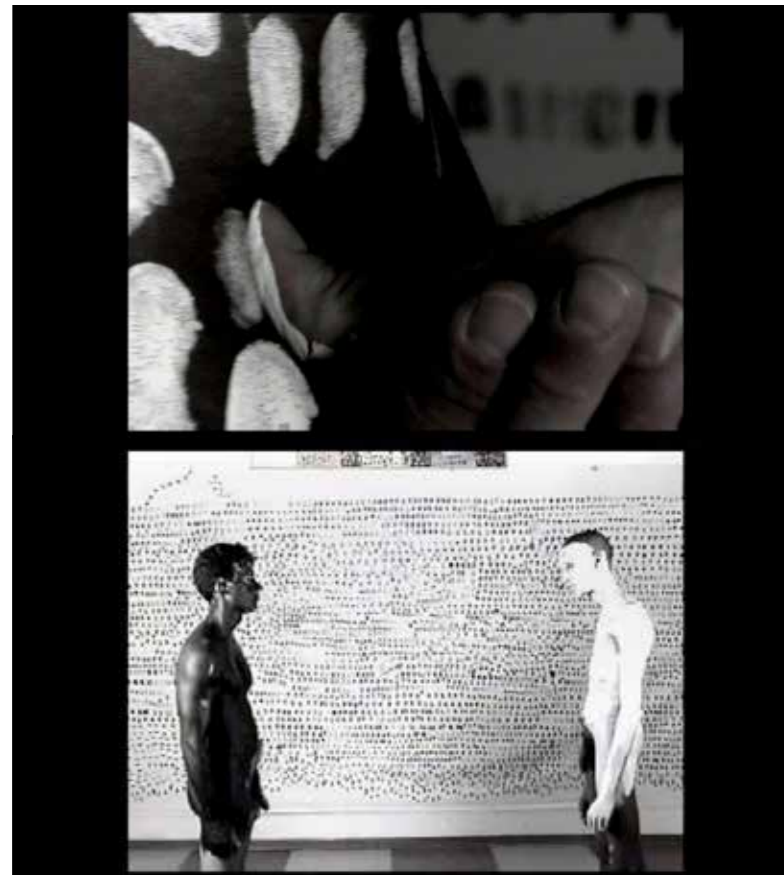
ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE ON IMMIGRATION 3



Another inspiration for my work with immigration is the work of artist and film-maker **Andres Arce Maldonado**. His short movie *Impronte a Regola d'arte (Perfect Fingerprints)*, was created in response to an immigration law passed by the Italian Government in 2002. Andres Arce Maldonado wants to question the social and political institutions, using a semiotic narrative structure, and fits perfectly in the binary opposition elements theorized by Saussure. The binary opposition is a common dramatic technique used to bring 2 ideas together and using the difference to suggest possibility or conflict. Black and white in this case.

In its minimalistic setting the short movie *Impronte a regola d'arte* covers a fight between powerful forces of good against evil, the multiculturalism of our society, the painful transformation and metamorphosis necessary when you leave your own Country to start a new life somewhere else, the difficulties of being accepted and accept a diverse culture.

Andres Arce Maldonado, *Impronte a Regola D'Arte (perfect fingerprints)*, still, 2002



30

The immigration phenomenon in Italy for a long time was almost restricted to people from North Africa so that the distinction in color skin is the easiest and still most evident to make: black vs. white. The most common colors have a standard social precept in which specific colors might stand for a general mood or idea.

These meanings do not often transcend the boundary of the society that has constructed the meaning. One of the most powerful ideas of *Perfect Fingerprints* is to play on the signification of the color black and the color white. The issue of immigration is deconstructed in terms of a simple dichotomy good/bad. The color black is the signifier and the culturally constructed meaning linked to the color black (negativity, death) is the signified. In opposition we have the color white (signifier) and its signified: positivity, pureness, life. In all my body of work that became the show *Another Perspective I* play as well with the color black and white, with the dichotomy between what is considered pure and what is considered bad and dirty.

What I appreciated of Maldonado's work is the twist that he often includes in his work. In this case the two main characters slowly merge into one another. Not an easy change though, they go through a difficult metamorphosis that is impregnated with pain. Black becomes white, white becomes black and the transformation is portrayed as a frequent event in our society by the repetitions of screens and monitor in the background of the scene. Maldonado's message is that in our multicultural society there is no way to stop or contain diversity and mixture in culture and race.

PERSPECTIVES

ROME — Having floated for at least two days in the choppy Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe, a rickety trawler overstuffing with African migrants fleeing war and poverty was nearing a Sicilian island, not even a quarter-mile away. But it was still dark and no one had yet spotted them. So to signal their position, someone set a match to a blanket. Nearly 500 people are estimated to have been on board — including children — and the blaze created a panic that capsized the boat. So close to reaching land, the migrants were now tossed into the sea. Many could not swim. Now it is night and 150 people were saved... 111 people were reported dead, more than 200 are still missing...

Perspectives, Digital Poster installation, 2013



The piece **Perspectives** is a 10ft by 46 inches poster on migrant routes. Immigration from North Africa is constantly continuing to Europe, while the professionals young Europeans are flying somewhere else. The same phenomenon, emigration from one's Country, affects two completely different Worlds that, even when they touch each other, don't connect. We are accustomed to see a three dimensional world on a two dimensional map using the Mercator projection: in Perspectives I used the Peters projection, where areas are shown in correct proportion at the expense of distorted shape. I reflected the poster left to right, to show the subjectivity of the point of view and how a new perspective can make us see things in a different way.

The creative challenge was to design a poster that was clear and at the same time would challenge what we are accustomed to see. My goal was to change the point of view on something as iconic as a geographic map to raise awareness on how conventions are not allowing us to really see. Moreover, I wanted the viewer to look at the piece and think that the issue of immigration deserves more than one single point of view to be looked at.

Creating an interactive poster was another aspect I was very interested in, so that the viewer could actually touch and walk around the installation moving objects that will change the piece itself. The installation, in facts includes a series of black laser cut birds on the walls and others hanging from the ceiling. Viewers can walk in front of the piece and interact with it, moving not only the objects (birds), but creating interesting shadows projections on the wall and the poster becoming part of the piece, immigrants flying the ocean to reach a new promised land. The piece is illuminated electrically, and the shadows of the cut out hanging birds are projected on the white wall around the poster, giving the illusion of leaving the poster itself.



Perspectives, Digital Poster installation, 2013

PERSPECTIVE TYPOGRAPHY IT MATTERS WHERE YOU STAND

Shadow Typography, Noise, Lampedusa and Perspective Typography represent the power of data in understanding issues like immigration. Each piece plays with typography and numbers to explain the phenomenon of African immigration to Europe in the last 5 years. All the data are available in the pieces themselves, but the viewer is required to be active in looking for them. They are all interactive pieces and the position of the viewer as well as the use of simple, analogical tools, like a light bulb or glasses, is necessary to activate the piece as well.

In *Shadow Typography*, I hacked the concept of a regular infographic poster using projection of light and shadows. Instead of constructing my visual representation of data just using digital graphics, I engraved those data into transparent acrylic strips using Illustrator, Rhino, and a CNC milling machine. I designed angle brackets and printed them 3D in order to hang my content on a vertical surface and give each strip the possibility to rotate and not be just perpendicular to that surface. I designed a regular typographic poster, but instead of using only digital software, I introduced a more crafty analogical elements like a light bulb. I'm projecting light through the Plexiglas, so that the message can be projected on a wall in a form of shadows.

With this project I started my investigation on light and geometrical shapes applied to my research on perspective projections and how they changed in the century in ART. How new technologies are involved in this process and if new technologies are changing the way contemporary artists use perspective projection in their work. I researched how projected messages have been realized by different artists and with what meaning.



NOTA BENE Visual, In Order to Control.

designed a mind-boggling audiovisual installation using an intricately executed video-mapping technique that uses the latest technology to create an artistically intriguing environment for spectators to engage in. The piece is called "*In Order to Control*".

I wanted to recreate the same feeling, but relying on more analogical tools than digital projections. Readability has been part of my struggle: do I want the data to be very easy to read, or do I want the viewer to work and look for the messages and maybe not able to have all the information? I found this last idea far more interesting. I wanted those data and messages to be readable enough, but part of the nature of perspective projection is that the projection changes according to the viewer position in the space. So in this case I thought that my work will not be defined just by the understanding of the viewer or just what the viewer sees, but would rather exist in its own right, and have its own relation to the three-dimensional space in which it is created. I started designing my data playing with typography, realizing that I'm free to design something pleasant without being too concerned about readability. But in the end, even without having a readability concern, I actually created a product that is easy to read.

My last challenge was to design a hanging system that would work, and could maybe add some dimensions to my piece. I designed 4 angle brackets with Rhino and printed them 3D. At first, I wanted just some regular brackets, but adding this possible angle to my Plexiglas will add more interesting effect to the projection. Installation plays a big role in this project, and the idea that this piece plays with space, light, projections, and it is realized using digital software, 3D software and crafty material is part of its charm.

I came across very interesting projects like *Jenny Holzer's Projections* on display at Mass MoCA in North Adams, where the projections transform the enormous, seemingly empty gallery into an engaging and provocative meeting place flooded with words, bodies, and light. But I got especially intrigued by the Istanbul-based multidisciplinary creative studio *NOTA BENE Visual*, which has



Jenny Holzer, Projections, 2009.

SHADOW TYPOGRAPHY

Shadow Typography, CNC Milling Machine on Acrylic, 2013

NOISE



Noise, laser cut on Black Acrylic, 2013.

The piece *Noise* represents the action we have to do as individuals in order to understand the core on issues like immigration. It is necessary to remove material, noise, from the information we get from the media in order to get to the fundamental data. With this piece I kept exploring the power of type, this time introducing another media, a laser cutter.

Represented in the black typography are official data from the International Organization for Migration about immigration of African and Middle Eastern people to Italy in 2013. I laser cut my typography on the black acrylic but kept all the shapes that were not my typography. Those shapes represent the noise we need to remove. I want the viewer to be aware of the action necessary to be an educated consumer of information. Too often we rely on second hand info about important issues and we shape our judgments of them. Too often what we see is only a shadow of the data we need to fully understand a complex matter, this is why I reintroduced a light bulb that can be activated by the public. The shadows of my typography represent the multiple interpretations that we hear on TV, Internet, Radio and media in general and according to which we create our own idea about immigration.

In *Noise* as well as in *Shadow Typography* I applied theories by Korean artist *Kumi Yamashita*. In her work she wants to question all our expectation, so she starts challenging the predictable relationship between solids and their shadows.

She invites us to reassess the unpredictable relationship between what we expect to see and our actual perception. Much of Kumi Yamashita's artwork is constructed with everyday things such as alphabets and numbers (Figure 28), building blocks, thread, nails, credit card rubbings and light installations. Any number of objects could produce the same retinal projection, just as the same shadow could be produced by many different sculptures. What's really interesting about vision is that the shortcuts and heuristics our visual system relies on to make this inference get it right so often.



Kumi Yamashita, Shadows, 2009

LAMPEDUSA

The piece *Lampedusa* walks on the same line of Noise, but here the viewer is asked to look behind the data and realize the core of an issue like immigration, the human kind condition. This Typographical Poster is another perspective on data. The inspiration was once again the horrible migration tragedy close to the coasts of the little Italian island of Lampedusa, occurred on October 3rd, 2013. I wanted to dedicate a piece to that strong bulwark of peace that is Lampedusa.

I overlapped 3 messages on my poster: the chronicle of the even happened on October 3rd, the names of the survived migrants (only 155 over 518) and the more recent statistics about the numbers of migrants arrived to Lampedusa in the last year. Each message is on a separate layer, and each layer has a different color: yellow, magenta, and red. Hidden is my personal take: beneath the data there are people and people are never to be called illegal. I challenge the viewer in acting: one needs red lens glasses to reveal the message it and be able to read it.



Lampedusa, Optical Poster, 2013

PERSPECTIVE TYPOGRAPHY

This last piece I called *Perspective Typography* and it is my last chapter in terms of investigation of typography, projections, analogical and digital fusion focused on the African immigration.

Perspective Typography is all about the power of the viewer in order to understand the issue of immigration. Data are engraved on three layers transparent acrylic; partial information is provided in each layer, but the only way you can experience and fully understand them is standing in a specific spot. What am I looking at? It is a face of an Eritrean child made out of 3 sheets of transparent Plexiglas with engraved the European Convention on Human Rights statement against cases of push back

from Italy to Libya. The Court has condemned Italy for violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. If you stand in a specific place you get to see the whole picture; if you don't, you'll probably miss some "information". Once again, the importance is where you stand physically in order to be able to read the message and see behind the data.

I played with the use of perspective that artist *Felice Varini* introduces in his artwork. I wanted to investigate what happens outside the vantage point of view. Swiss artist Felice Varini has been creating illusions of flat graphics superimposed on 3 dimensional spaces since 1979 using the same eye-deceiving technique called anamorphosis. The complete shapes can only be seen when viewed

Perspective Typography, Lasercut on Acrylic, 2014.



at certain angles, otherwise the viewer will only see some random broken pieces. For Varini it's all about your point of view. Varini takes this idea to its extremely literal conclusion. From the perfect perspective his painted geometric shapes seem to float in front of your eyes.

However, in reality Varini works hard to make only appear this way. In reality his pieces are huge, cover entire structures (at times multiple buildings), and carefully prepared to be seen from a precise viewpoint. His large optical illusions underscore the subjective nature of art – it's all about your point of view. The vantage point is carefully chosen: it is generally situated at his eye level and located preferably along a well-traveled route, for instance an opening between one room and another, or a clearing, or a landing. He then projects the form devised for the particular space onto its surfaces from the vantage point, then traces and paints.

40 In a sense this piece gets layers and layers of meanings: on one side, it gives you the opportunity to see a very specific message if you stand in the right place, but on the other side the artwork is not defined by the understanding of the viewer or what the viewer sees. Rather, each artwork exists in its own right, and has its own relation to the 3-dimensional space in which it was created.

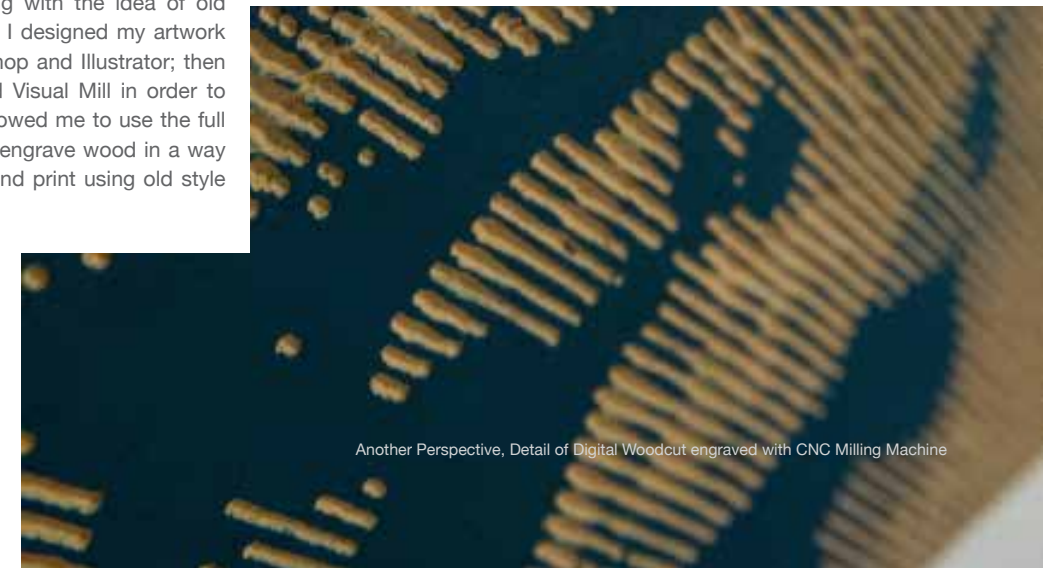


ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

Another media I introduced in this exhibition was printmaking. I investigated printmaking in its old, traditional woodcut process as well as a more digital approach thanks to digital fabrication and 3D software.

This series of digital and traditional woodcuts describe the struggles of immigrants in the Mediterranean Sea, narrated as a storyboard, playing with the idea of old and new technology working together. I designed my artwork on my computer using Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator; then I imported the artwork into Rhino and Visual Mill in order to further manipulate the images. This allowed me to use the full potential of a CNC Milling Machine to engrave wood in a way that would not be possible manually and print using old style printmaking techniques.

I worked on 2 images representing the journey of immigrants in the Mediterranean Sea trying to reach European coasts, and turned them into grayscale; then, I converted them in bitmap using lines. I think this is a valid technique to get details and give the effect of old style computer images from the 80's and 90's, even though the final product will be realized using a printmaking wood press. Then, I imported the Illustrator file into Rhino and Visual Mill, and engraved the wood board.



Another Perspective, Detail of Digital Woodcut engraved with CNC Milling Machine

My aim is to focus the attention on the relationship between the object and its representation. Differently from the Renaissance Period where, after **Brunelleschi and Leon Battista Alberti's** perspective studies, the artists wanted to represent reality through perspective, I would like to negate that. I want to investigate the non-correspondence between reality and representation of reality. We see a woman in water, is she peaceful? Is she relaxing in a pool? Maybe. She is in fact struggling for her life. The Series of woodcuts, Another Perspective like in a storyboard, show the same woman drowning in that same water. And at the same time the perspective of each woodcut changes so much so that we don't even recognize the face of the woman anymore

The position of the viewer in the space of this exhibition changes the shape and the perception of each piece. Standing very close to the first woodcut doesn't allow the viewer to notice and read the image properly. Since I decided to depict the images using anamorphic projection, in experiencing the second, the third and fourth woodcuts, the position of the viewer is functional, but not necessary to a view of the piece from the correct perspective.

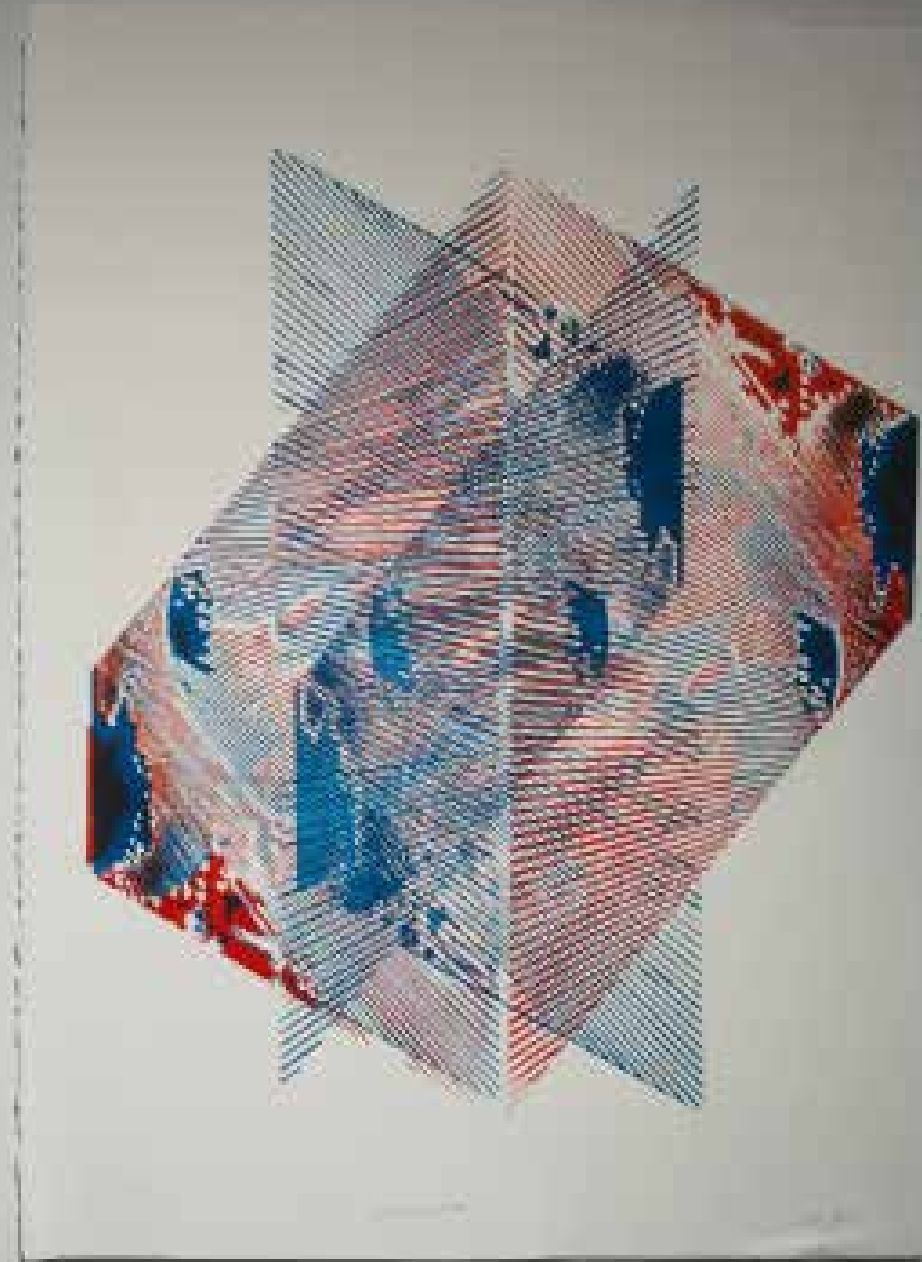
My inspiration was of course **Holbein's skull in The French Ambassadors**. This visually incorrect disruption is one location of



the anamorphic potential, and as such its correct point-of-view is hidden elsewhere. Once found, this elsewhere reveals its pictorial intentionality. That is, once the beholder correctly locates the second axial point-of-view, the un-interpretable stain emerges into visibility. What was hidden within unclear distortion now appears in clarity—the stain appears as a skull. This second position puts the viewer approximately seven feet to the left of the painting's frame, and virtually parallel with the wall. Now, looking slightly down to the “intransigent” mark, it appears to lift off the surface into pictorial legibility.

The importance of using an anamorphosis perspective is not only because it is as an alternative to the way we experience works, but as a metaphor for accepting information from unfamiliar places and unexpected sources. The eccentric observer is one who acknowledges the limitations of a static, homolographic world-view and embraces instead a dynamic unfolding process encompassing a field of light and texture shot through with expressions of personality and specificity.

Using the same technique, I created a connected piece engraving a 20x20 inches of transparent acrylic with the same image and applied the technique I used already in Shadow Typography: I added a clear light bulb. Once again the viewer needs to be active to see the projected shadow on the wall and he/she is the real creator of this new image projected on the surface.



Another Perspective, Digital woodcut Print and Acrylic engraved with CNC Milling Machine



THE TRIP

The Trip is a short documentary on African Immigration to Europe. In particular I narrated the story of the journey of African immigrants: from their country they walk the desert to reach the coast (of Libya), then pay an incredible amount of money (around \$1600) to secure a place on one of those very unsafe boats, and hope to reach the Italian coasts alive.

As I mentioned before, I was able to use original footage provided by *Zalab Documentaries*, and I combined them with extracts from the live show *Desert Crossing*: a cross-cultural performance which is a collaboration between UK based *State of Emergency* and South African choreographer *Gregory Maqoma of Vuyani Dance Theatre*. The choreography resonates with ancient traditions, belief systems and mythologies emanating from mosques, churches and ancient caves from the origins of mankind to Timbuktu, and beyond the Jurassic Coast is edited with original footage of immigrant on boats crossing the ocean and arriving to the Italian coasts.

Using a music video clip style I narrate the story of a journey of an African Woman with no words, only images and photos, leaving the viewer to decide about the future of my main character. Is she safe now?

The Trip, Still, Video Documentari on Immigration, 2013.

IMAGINING IDENTITY EQUALITY 4

In the introduction to *Women across Culture* (2005), psychologist **Shawn Megan Burn** explains how one of the four key themes in her psychology work is the multicultural, intersectional, contextualized approach. In particular, she stresses the importance of recognizing the similarities and differences among women all over the world. A similar idea is expressed in postmodernism in art (by which I mean any of a number of trends or movements in the arts and literature developing in the 1970s in reaction to or rejection of the dogma, principles, or practices of established modernism). In absence of a unique strong art style or theory, the “Artworld” borrowed theories from psychology, sociology, semiotic, in order to better explain the multiplicity of contemporary art pieces.

Essentialism is one of the theories used especially to explain and study works of art that defined Feminism. According to essentialism, Race, Sex, Gender, and Sexuality are figured as ‘rational’, ‘objective’ and ‘apolitical’. Social construction theory, on the other hand, argues against essentialized views of identity in favor of historical and cultural approaches and methods. The difference between these two theories is that essentialism believes qualities such as sexuality and gender are mainly caused by biological factors; while social construction theory shows that society has more influence on these qualities than biology.

One example that comes to mind, in order to better explain this concept, is the body of work of **Catherine Opie**, which tides in together with the distinction in definition between gender and sex discussed by Crawford in the second chapter of “Transformations” .

Catherine Opie is an American photographer interested in challenging and deconstructing the idea that all women share a set of biological characteristics that define them as part of a single group. In her work, she presents portraits of people with stereotypical female and male features. I chose a couple of photos from the exhibition “*Being and Having*” (1991): the thirteen color photographs that make up the series are variations on a single composition: exaggerated masculine facial hair and other macho props. Opie’s subjects are shot against a brilliant yellow background while they stare directly into the camera. Each closely cropped image is presented in a wooden frame bearing the

pseudonym etched in cursive script: *Jake, Chicken, Con, Ingin, Papa Bear*, and so on. Deliberately playing with the signs of gender, Opie’s photographs interrogate the notion of gender identification as stable, unified, or even natural.

It is like Opie is showing the theory by Judith Butler in her book “*Gender Trouble*” (1990), where she challenges the notion of identity as a static category into which an individual places his or her self. Life experiences, and the different identifications one holds through life, cannot be captured by binary gender identity system. Gender is defined as a performative accomplishment brought about through the stylized repetition of acts. Thus, gender is created by the performance of gendered acts. These readings and art historical references are at the basis of my last chapter: challenging the gender and race stereotypes and defining a new identity. It is still a matter of point of view and perspectives. How do we define the identity of people and attribute to them a series of characteristic that don’t have anything to do with the reality of that person. What is that we see that is not show by the image of that human being, is that a shadow of what she/he really is? It’s a singular perspective that becomes problematic when we use it to analyze multiple dimensions problems.

Catherine Opie, *Jake*, by Beng and Having.



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FACES FOR AN IDENTITY SEARCH

48

We meet the world with our face. We are face to face with the surroundings. We are recognized first of all by our face. It is also in the face all our senses are situated. The face-to-face between parent and infant are of crucial importance for the development of the child's later interactions and ability to build up relations and maintain interaction. However, we also learn how to manipulate our face, to put on literally or metaphorically a mask. The avatars appearance will tell a lot about our wishes and fears, dreams and desires, hopes and anxieties.

The investigation on faces started with a series of 3D posters called **One Face No Race** where I wanted to explore diversity in connection with people faces and what those faces represent. Diversity is just a point of view, a distortion of reality that we are accustomed to see. In this 3D Poster series the faces of each kid from a different ethnicity are made out of faces from people from a different part of the world (or not?).

I travelled around Europe, North America, South America, Asia collecting photos of people, from Brazil to Vietnam, from New York to Rome and Berlin, Paris and Belize City. This project wants to challenge the stereotypes behind racial physical features: if you look Asian, you must be Asian. In our multicultural contemporary society we cannot mistake a specific physical characteristic and apply a strong set of features that define that person.

ONE FACE

ONE FACE NO RACE





A DIFFERENT
PERSPECTIVE:
IMAGINING
BODY
EQUALITY

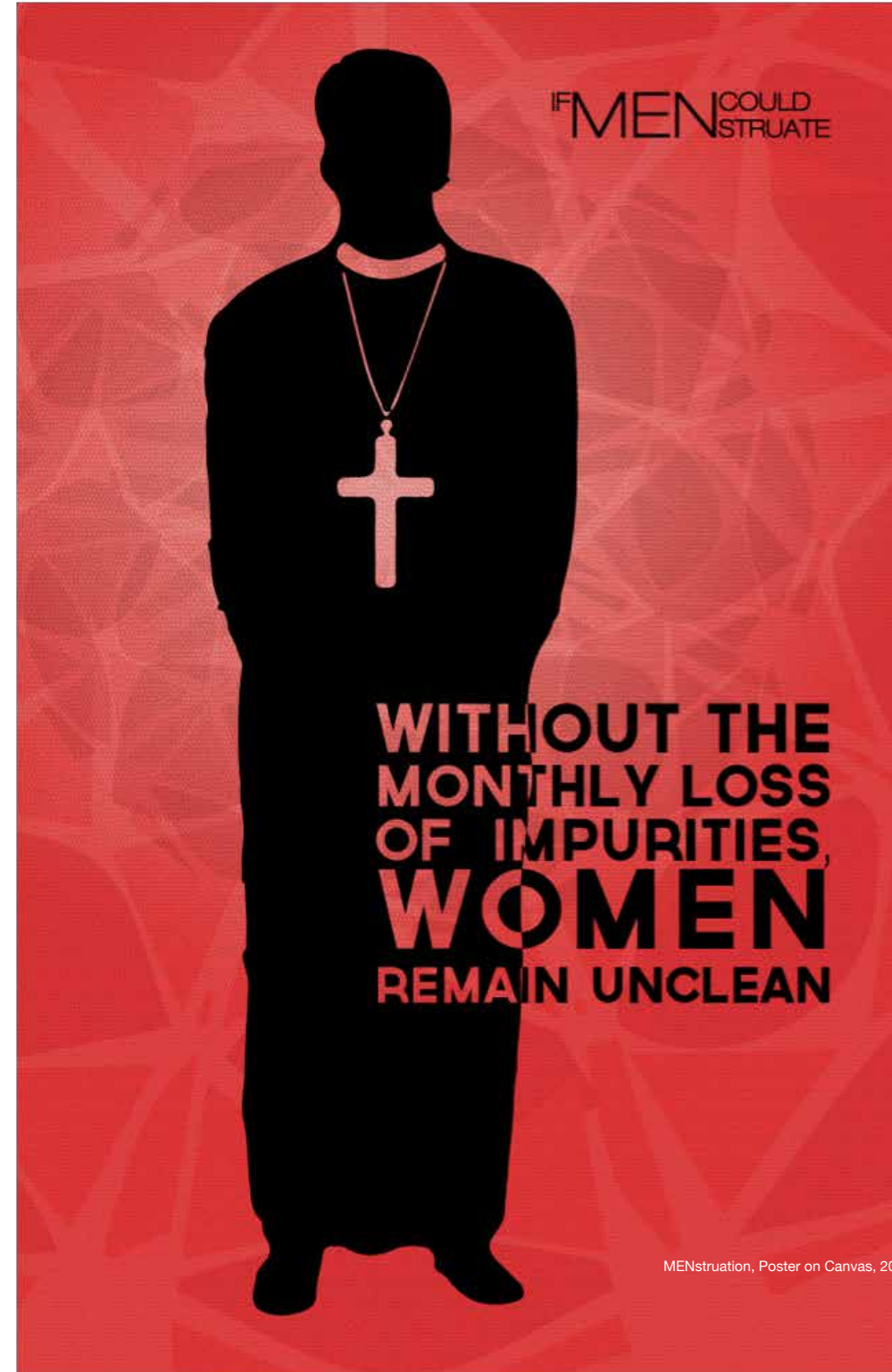
Too often, a woman's identity and value is reduced to her body. Women are seen as valuable because their bodies can provide sex, bear children, cook, clean, and other labor. And in order to maintain their value, women's bodies must look and function in a certain way, fitting into very specific standards of beauty and ability. But for every person who values a woman only for her body, there are countless women challenging those norms. Women are imagining a world where they have autonomy over what they do with their bodies, and redefining what bodies can look like. The article "*Making Sexism Visible: Birdcages, Martians and Pregnant Men*", by *Sherryl Kleinman, Martha Copp, and Kent Sandstrom* caught my attention especially in the chapter "Men in Women's Body", where it unveils the belief that women's inequality is ultimately built into her body. Substituting the word men with the word women (like substituting race for gender) will make people realize better the double standard applied to women.

I drew inspiration from this concept, and I tried to illustrate the change of perspective that Gloria Steinem presented in her article "*If Men Could Menstruate*". She uniquely introduced a true and accurate stance on gender distinction based on the fact that any and almost every thing has been used to promote male superiority and female inferiority. Steinem showed women their relative voicelessness, and in this way, suggested that there is work to be done yet in the feminist movement on account of the fact that oppressive, patriarchal logic continued to sanction gender inequality. Her text has longevity, it tackles foundational attitudes about gender and is consciousness-raising, even though these attitudes have been written-off and undermined to a degree, they have not been obliterated. I created a series of 4 posters that directly quote *Gloria Steinem's* article, and reflect 4 characters representing 4 strong voices in our society often attributed to man: a priest, an Army soldier, a politician, a body builder.

My other perspective in this case is by substitution: men for women. I want to use Steinem's inspiration to explore what would be the representation of menstruation if the actor of this biological event were a man instead of a woman. Would all the parameters we are accustomed to see in different society still stand?

There has always been a double standard between men and women, preventing women from acting a certain way because it goes against social norms. While menstruation and child bearing have been constructed as signs that women are weak, I believe that it is plausible that if men had our body, they would attribute to it power such as the ability to bring life into the world.

For many women, equality is when your body can be a tool, a canvas, or a sanctuary in the struggle for women's human rights. We do not choose the body we are born into, but women around the world use their creativity to thrive with the bodies they've been given. Famous Indian writer and political activist *Arundhati Roy* put it best when she said that "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day I can hear her breathing."



MENSTRUATION

IF MEN COULD
STRUATE

I'M A THREE-PAD
MAN!

IF MEN COULD
STRUATE

YOU HAVE
TO GIVE
BLOOD
TO TAKE
BLOOD

IF MEN COULD
STRUATE

CAN
WOMEN
BE AGGRESSIVE
WITHOUT
THE STEADFAST
CYCLE
GOVERNED
BY THE PLANET
MARS?



PERSONAL
IDENTITY
AND COLLECTIVE
MEMORIES



SHARED (RE)COLLECTIONS

This project originates from a personal interest in working with identity in contemporary art. I work with personal identity as an object and have therefore been searching for a way to define the kind of art I'm producing. Through this search I have come across the definition of identity mainly related to minority groups, but the definition used in this project should rather be understood as described by **Richard Meyer** in "Critical terms for art history", quoting **Philip Gleason**:

Identity came into use as a popular social science term only in the 1950's at which time it was assigned not to particular racial, cultural, or sexual differences but to the self as an existential category (Gleason 1983, 910). Rather than suggesting a stable sense of selfhood, however, the term was often used to designate a problem as "search for identity" stemming from the individual's alienation in the face of an increasingly anonymous society."

Since the 1950's it seems that this search for identity along with an increasing self-reflexivity has only grown. It seems as if the self has become a field of interest in international art practices, in my surroundings and in the society as a whole. Still, I often meet the perception that working with personal identity as an artist is a therapeutic project rather than a field for artistic investigation and production. I cannot deny that some sort of learning process

is involved, but what I found interesting was the dimension of investigating personal identity with the purpose of communicating possible models for how to deal with reality in this "increasingly anonymous society".

As an artist I can create and suggest these models in a visual, action oriented and experience based way. This allows me to explore the contemporary in other ways than scientists, journalists or other communicators of new knowledge. I use my senses and investigate the contemporary almost like an anthropologist, and I have the opportunity to experiment with what I experience using my own body and own personal identity in the process.

I find that this approach is coherent with the approach of "our times" and therefore I find it interesting to investigate whether this perception is rooted in something common in my surrounding reality or at least a tendency within parts of my reality. If it is something common there must be other artists working with personal identity in the same ways. This is how I started looking for collaborations with other artists who would share the same interest in such identity research and investigation.

Personal Identity is an ambiguous word to say the least. Two are the fundamental problems I found in defining the concept of Personal Identity: how is it possible to identify a person (myself and others) as

an individual human being? How is it possible to distinguish between two individual persons? In these respect memory seems to be an interesting starting point for my exploration.

Shared (re)collections is the first result of this investigation: a collaborative piece between a Sculptor and a Digital Designer, **Anthony Guntren** and myself. The piece combines digital media and hand forged sculptural forms to explore ideas of the personal, political and popular culture memories shared between two artists, female and male, growing up a half a world apart. The experiment was not only about combining two different media like sculpture and digital media, but also about investigating the possibility of documenting a shared collective set of memories where it didn't matter our difference in sex, nationality and life style. We wanted to create an art piece that would be alive, thinking, and pulsing: an organic sculpture in terms of shape, but with the same implant of a multi-screens media room where showcasing our own memories.

Both Anthony and I started collecting a series of memories from 3 main topics: pop culture, world events and our personal sphere. One of the most interesting aspects of this collaboration was to investigate how our creative process works in a completely different way: not only because we are different artists, but also especially because our media demands some specific approaches, that we discovered being very stereotypical and sometimes a limitation. Once again, even in my creative process I find that changing the perspective would not only improve my final work, but also add interest and meaning to the all body of work.

I worked on video mapping and projections, and as a Digital Media Designer I was envisioning some kind of surface I could project on, while Anthony presented me with this hollow circles organism. What we really appreciate was to be challenged by each other: I had to interact with those shallow shapes - how am I going to project on them? He had to compromise his sculpture that is functional for its shadows more than its materiality. We came up with the idea of placing the sculpture either on the floor or on the wall and play with the shadows of those circles on either surface. I edited 12 videos and mapped the sculpture's circles with a combination of software apps; finally projected them inside the shadows created by the sculpture itself.

The Sculpture looks alive and pulsing, our memories are projected at the same time, and overlap to the point that the final question remains: if our memories are so similar, are we than that different? Is memory communal or relational? Thinking about the work of **Carrie Mae Weems**, and her **Kitchen Table Series** I realize that is a piece that defines my identity as shaped by many variables: gender, status, relationship with other people, social history, but at the same time blurred those stereotypical stories about females, Europeans, immigrant people presenting the similarities with a male, US memories. Our reenactment strategy capitalizes on the immersive power of the form but also deconstruct its assumptions and problems. Our work is a reflection of reenactment to upset the balance, disrupt the clichéd assemblage of details typical of a contemporary historicism.

60 IDENTITY & SELFIE

Looking at yourself in a mirror or depicting yourself in a self-portrait, a **selfie**, is a form of reflection in which you distinguish yourself from other people and seek recognition of what is unique about yourself.

Cell phone cameras have democratized self-portraiture. Selfies are pictures you take of yourself tagged with #selfie or just with #me. They are showing up all across social networks like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. As the numbers and frequency of selfies increase, the phenomenon has garnered attention. In our globally connected 24/7 world, anything that gets attention gets talked about. Some view these self-created self-portraits as proof of cultural—or at least generational—narcissism and moral decline.

Since November 19, 2013 when **Oxford Dictionaries** announced selfie as “the international Word of the Year” this hybrid phenomenon of vernacular photography and social media has created quite a bit of media hype. A selfie, according to Oxford

Dictionaries, is “a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smart phone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website.”

Humans have long demonstrated an interest in self-exploration. From early Greeks to present day, people have used self-study and self-observation to explore identity and sense of self. Trying to figure out who we are and what we’re about is a distinctly human pursuit for almost everyone. It’s not a big leap to go from a pursuit of self-exploration to the desire for self-portrait. As far back as Ancient Egypt, people of wealth and power have commissioned self-portraits, although less for self-exploration than glorification. Nevertheless, a number of technological breakthroughs throughout history have continued to lower the barriers to the creation and display of self-portraits.

Selfies are the new digital mirror. We take mirrors for granted, but their invention in the 15th century let artists paint themselves. Some artists, like Albrecht Durer, did with gusto. The camera in the 1860s launched

a new era of selfies, but the technology demanded skill and expense. As the camera evolved, more and increasingly creative versions of self-portraiture appeared. Digital cameras freed portraiture from the cost and time lag of film. Then mobile phones became cameras, too. By 2012, 86% of the population of the US had a cell phone, lagging behind a host of countries like the UK, Italy, Spain and China .

Selfies facilitate self and identity exploration. One of the most effective ways to know yourself is to see yourself as others see you. Selfies offer the opportunities to show facets of yourself, such as the arty side, the silly side, or the glamorous side. By offering different aspects through images, we are sharing more of ourselves, becoming more authentic and transparent—things that digital connectivity encourages. Selfies have been called “a symptom of social media-driven narcissism,” a “way to control others’ images of us,” a “new way not only of representing ourselves to others, but of communicating with one another through images,” the masturbation of self-image and

a virtual mini-me, what in ancient biology might have been called a “homunculus” – a tiny pre-formed person that would grow into the big self.

In **Mirror Mirrors**, I collaborated once again with Sculptor **Anthony Guntren** to realize a piece that would celebrate diversity and play around the research of identity through the study of the Selfies. We wanted to investigate and play around the representation of ourselves that we create through selfies, showing that we cannot control the way others see our image. Being able to modify people’s age, sex or ethnicity and completely change the identity of a particular selfies is a interesting way to let people understand that differences are just a point of view. Again perspectives in diversities come back in my creative process.

Through the past months I’ve been collecting selfies from a web-based project I created (www.silviaminguzzi.com/mirromirror). I asked people to take a selfie, upload it on my website and answer a few question about their appearance. I had

the opportunity to collaborate with **Bernie Tiddeman**, professor of Computer Science at the **University of St Andrews, UK**. He developed Face of the Future, an EPSRC funded public engagement project aimed at exploring the latest advances in facial computer vision and graphics, and what they mean for society. The project has developed a number of standalone interactive exhibits, online demos and a lecture presentation aimed at engaging the public with the technology and the social implications of the technology. I’ve been using such software to change the identities of photos I got from people from all over the world.

My piece includes several mirrors/frames (reclaimed-found objects by Anthony Guntren): The first image in all the frames is the original selfie, but I gradually morph that portrait into something different in all the other frames, reimagining a new identity all of them: maybe changing their sex, or age, or ethnicity, or physical appearance. I’m interested in the reaction of people looking at those images; I would like to create a place for reflection on the meaning of personal

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representation using self-portrait. In many ways ethnicity, gender, age is about difference and how those differences are codified through language, categories, boxes, segmentation, and even the implicit sorting that goes on in our heads in terms of the way we label others and even ourselves. Appearance and identity are most certainly linked when it comes to racial categories, but there is another important ingredient in that stew: experience. There is no room for that on those official census forms, but when a person picks up a writing instrument to choose which box they check, experience most certainly helps guide their hand. But what happens when I apply those boxes to the not expected category?

I asked people to fill out a small form before uploading their selfie, so one frame will be dedicated to a Kinetic Typography Animation of their own words about their appearance. My words connected to the selfie were "*Another shade of white.*"

62 A final, interesting aspect of my research was about creating a sort of selfie's archive of people from different places and from diverse background, and again push the attention on the few differences that really divide us. As in Shared (re)collections, there are more things that make us similar than take us apart, it is a matter of point of view.



CONCLUSION

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Writing this dissertation has given me the opportunity to reflect about my overall experience as a graduate student at Colorado State University. During my MFA, I was fortunate enough to collaborate with different Artists, being exposed to a wide variety of classes and media (from Printmaking to Digital Fabrication, Graphic Design, from Video to Typography, and Fabrics), receiving critiques and feedback from visiting artists working on different media or similar media. All this experience really enriched my research, and helped me thinking outside of my own box. Not only I feel very inspired about continuing my search of equality through my art; I also believe that what I have been working on had already some impact in the small community I live in.

I did analyze how methods of visualization in digital art have evolved and researched on three important fields where the evolution of new technology impacted art: visual art in general, digital consumption of art and art history appreciation.

I experimented about techniques mixing media together; I illustrated academics papers through Graphic Design, Video, and Digital Fabrication. I played around analogical and digital media fusing them in a unique piece, trying to find an answer to the question: is technology changing art? I believe that any modern artist needs to remember about pushing the art forward, inventing, defining new paradigms of expression with powerful meanings. It can be done using new technology, or researching new techniques with old media. It is about the experience the artist delivers to the public - whether it is provocative, whether it changes how the viewer thinks, feels and views the world. This is what really counts, and it has nothing to do with the techniques that the artist chooses to use.

Imagining Another Perspective represents my personal interest in matters of human rights applied to a formal investigation on perspectives, not only as a technique, but also as a philosophical attitude.

Social inequality is the result of innate differences between individuals. Yet, those differences are mostly produced by the society in which we live: they are a construct. The importance of using different perspectives in a physical and also mental way is a possible solution to break stereotypical patterns about race, sex, gender, and class. I strongly believe that Art is a vehicle of knowledge; Art can help communicating difficult messages with the power of visual representation. Furthermore, as a communication artist, I try to give my message a position that is relevant to the times we live in. I want people to know what I stand for, and I think that the combination of different media will give me the opportunity of reaching a wider public. People experience information and Art in very different ways; giving them the opportunity to see a wide range of media is to me a valid way to raise awareness on issues I believe fundamentals for a better society.

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