THE ORIGIN OF OBJECTS

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ZAKARY SEBASTIAN KINNAIRD

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Introduction

Thesis Statement

This thesis forms a series of texts inquiring into the integration of semiological studies in product design. Semiology is often illustrated in systems; it is these systems that govern the practice of product design in the contemporary studio environment. The designer today can struggle to cope with the arbitrary nature of this system, and frequently does not fully understand the implications of working with semiological systems. By understanding their construction the designer can benefit by actively participating in the system's configuration, this may occur by directly imposing oneself into the system or by carefully observing a defective system in order promptly amend it.

The thesis is configured in four 'books', each book examining the semiological system from a different perspective. Particular attention is given to the origin within the semiological system; this is mirrored differently in each of the four books.

Semiology

Semiology studies a subject as a system of relating parts often called signs. Modern semiology is a development of comparative philology, and studied the relationships between signs within linguistics. The theories themselves originate from a developing series of lectures given by Ferdinand de Saussure at the beginning of the twentieth-century. After his death in 1913 the lectures were consolidated and published under the title *Cours de linguistique générale* (Course in General Linguistics).

However the editors of the *Cours* did not attend the central argument of Saussure's work entitled *General Linguistics*. To further impend their publication Saussure often threw away his lecture notes, or ignored them altogether, leaving few records of the lectures true intentions. The attending students' notebooks are the only accurate accounts of the

lectures themselves. Furthermore the publication does not chronologically follow content delivered by Saussure himself.

Given the relatively sketchy nature of the content delivered in the *Cours* this thesis analyses not only the origin of semiology (the *Cours* itself) but also the contemporary developments of semiology, such as structural anthropology and literary deconstruction. It should be noted that the theories from the *Cours* became generalized and applied, much like a methodology, to many fields within the human sciences. This saw its first tuition into design in 1955 as part of the programme at the Hochschule für Gestaltung (High School for Design, or the ULM School). However the simple translation of semiology into the field of design ignores the possible structural capabilities and many associated implications of configuring these systems.

Systems

Often the system is only observed and reacted against, however I propose as Saussure did that, the system is actively mediated and is a living lucid configuration of signs. In this respect the configuration of signs within system can be actively altered and directed. As such each

book within the thesis identifies a unique configuration that has application in product design and illustrates strategies and difficulties within the systems. Particular attention is given to the origin within the systems, as the origin often determines the meaning of the system itself. For designers this becomes beneficial when designing a product that requires an associated meaning, whether it is identifying with a target market or it is adding visual instructions on how an object might be used, the configuration of the system or systems involved in producing this meaning becomes invaluable.

The focus on the meaning of products becomes increasingly important as the field of design shifts from production to consumption, and from the manufacture of materials to the construction of systems. This inherently incorporates the departments associated with designed products, including distribution, advertising, marketing, and product placement. As the designer's role within this system becomes marginalized into a singular cooperative component, being able to comprehend one's own placement and contribution is vital for employees to recognize their own significance.

Once the system starts to become transparent it is possible to begin to alter the relationships between components. For example, an executive

within a large multinational corporation understands the system in which the corporation is formed, however the system is not always as transparent to the people employed by the company, only a select few at the top of the business are made aware, or have the significant viewpoint to see the system's structural components. This ability to gain a perceptive can also be used within the process of designing products, for example a product may reference a brand or previous design form, the designer then has the choice of how transparent this reference is within the system. The designer can then construct the users perspective in order to fully dictate their understanding of the product.

Of course the system can be manipulated in a negative direction, to subvert the buyer, to train them and feed their consumption. All these examples are discussed more or less within the texts, however it is often their unexpected variations that are the most fruitful.

Books

Although the books stand alone, they also form part of their own semiological system; their true meaning is cumulative. However the

very notion of a cumulative meaning is exactly what this series of books illustrates as being fundamentally unfeasible, as it is rarely possible to construct a perspective that the reader can ideally view the origin, the true meaning or signification of any system. To complicate matters further the ideal situation for the origin is to be deferred toward a new origin, a second system, and so on. On the other hand the final book proposes another method of construction, one that involves a configuration that withstands substitution. Although attempting to construct this system ultimately has to concede to the ideal that the signification of the text is only the presence of the origin, in other words, a fake. This is illustrated in the text itself. The books are arranged as follows:

| Ordinary | White | Multple | | Blur |
| *Looping Systems* | *Framed Systems* | *Multiple Origins* | *False Origin* | *Layered Systems* |
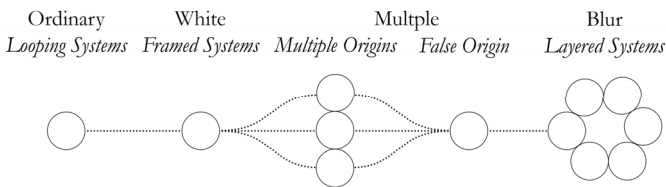
Diagram .1 The Structural Configuration of Books

The diagram itself should become clear throughout the texts, however it should be noted that *White* forms the structural centre of the system to which all other texts refer. As the centre cannot be viewed directly, as outlined above, the text is written outside of the usual expository writing style, the prose takes on a framing mechanic that should guide the readers 'point of view'. Also it is by complete coincidence that book three *Multiple* examines two separate structural configurations simultaneously.

Motivations

There are a number of general guides and practices for designers to follow. These topics often come in the form of a book, either as a series of technical specifications, a list of drawing techniques or a compendium of form making procedures. The problem with these books is that they often fail to comprehend the role the designer faces when coordinating a design project.

The simple structure between consumers and produces is often left answered, and unquestioned. With the advent of accessible personal manufacture, in the form of laser cutters and rapid prototyping

machines the product designer's role perhaps for the first time is under threat. A threat that once recognized as one component in a larger system has only minor significance. And could even be utilized and re-injected into an exiting system that currently takes no notice of the changes occurring.

Confidence

This thesis can offer the veteran designer some verification to their practice and even offer new and unexpected opportunities for design. On the other hand the recent graduates and first time business owners can further take note of the systems that govern the field of design, and have the confidence to alter them.

ORDINARY

Preface

This text outlines how an origin of a semiological system can be constructed and presented through the presence of a backward trace towards its own origin. The trace acts to bind the parts within a system and allow them to operate, namely, to produce. The trace is examined through several systems and contexts within this text, however the objective is to scrutinize the production of an *ordinary* object.

The *ordinary* object is the result of a strategically marked process of physical and semiological construction within a product. It must be constructed in such a way as to present the trace of its own system of references, to trace the present, while actively tracing the woven structure, which traces, or rather, produces.

Understanding the traces within a system allows for a greater comprehension of its ability to *produce*. This production is mapped within this text through physical objects, particularly items of clothing. This is illustrated in an attempt to bridge the gap between physical construction and the presence of the system itself through traces.

Ordinary objects are the placeholders for the familiarity in our everyday lives. The bedroom door handle, the shoes on our feet, the TV remote, the cutlery we use every morning, the ring symbolizing our love for another person, the pen we write with or the watch we use to tell the time; each of these objects assist in constructing our everyday life.

The *ordinary* objects in our lives are commonly the most valued and symbolic indicators of our moral and ethical values of which we wish to maintain, such as success, happiness and companionship.

The choice of which objects are included in our lives is often not intentional or of our own individual preference. These objects are commonly gifted to an individual or chosen for a strictly functional need with little regard for the amount of time we will spend with them on a daily basis. This is traced within this text from clothing to

interiors, to products and ultimately to architectural constructions where the majority objects reside.

The focus of this text is to illustrate the possible *production[1]* of *ordinary[2]* objects; or rather, the craft of manipulating the construction of cultural systems of meaning for the integration into mass-produced objects.

Attempting to design in this way is not unusual. The designers that have attempted this task often have the ambition to create objects that are mythical in nature or that surpass the essence of an existing archetypal form.

The method of practice is logical, but irresistibly simplistic. Successfully attempting this task within contemporary design is significantly more difficult then appraising an archetype. The practice of constructing an *ordinary* object requires an in-depth understanding of the structure that supports the quotidian[3] objects production.

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[1] 'Production' refers to the 'system of production' or the 'structural relationships' that give objects their inherent meaning. They are 'produced' or 'constructed' through a traceable network of relationships.
[2] The use of 'ordinary' in italics indicates an object that has been *produced* through a shared system of meaning.
[3] 'Quotidian object', an object that is encountered daily.

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Essentially the *ordinary* object is linked to the structural system of meaning given to objects; this shared system of relationships can become synthesized into a cultural myth that is then dismantled. The dismantling of the myth reveals the structural relationships present and their retrospective origins. By using this method of 'de-construction'[4] it is possible to re-configure the system of meaning and identify the characteristics of any object in our daily lives. The process of mythmaking is useful as it automatically organizes the characteristics into commonly understood attributes of everyday objects.

Super-Normal	Origin	Multple	Myth	Hyper
Everyday	*Mysterious*	*Stories*	Monotheism	Image
Ordinary	*Unknown*		*False Origin*	*Profusion*
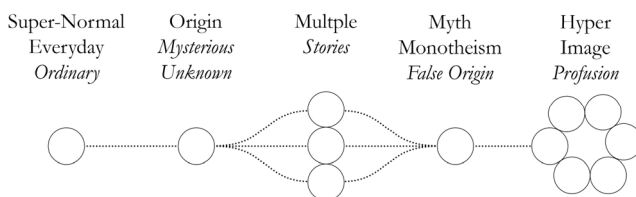
Diagram .2 The Structure of Ordinary Objects

In *Diagram* .2 the development of an origin is mapped from left to right starting with 'origin' and ending at 'hyper'. The super-normal is developed from right to left, from 'origin' backwards to 'Super-Normal'. Essentially the multiple stories of any origin act to identify definitive characteristics of that original idea. These stories then

4 See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*

become combined into a myth or a secondary origin in which the characteristics are re-established. This is the basic structure of an ordinary object.

An archetypal object or origin is not synonymous with an *ordinary* object. The archetype is a *perceived origin* from the vantage point of a myth. In other words the origin has been transformed into a series of characteristics that construct a myth. A 'myth' has more in common with an archetype then an *ordinary* object; the *perception* of what is a 'classic' work of design is only upheld by the mythical nature of the object at hand. When experiencing a 'classic' piece of furniture, it is common to undergo a de-mystification upon experiencing the actual object first hand.

The origin itself is essentially unknowable, or unobtainable, it can be defined through attributes that are socially accepted (the natural construction of a myth), an *ordinary* object uses these attributes; mythmaking is part of an overall more complex model for deriving *ordinary* objects.

Ordinary: The Everyday

The *ordinary* objects construction relies on the repetitive exposure to everyday objects. In this sense the methodologies discussed in this text examine the process of creating seemingly *familiar* objects. 'Familiar', alludes to the complex structural relationship a familiar object can acquire and present daily to its users.

The distinction needs to be made between 'familiar', 'ordinary' and 'everyday'. The 'everyday' object is reference to the objects that are within our daily activities, such as a plate, shirt or door handle, these objects are exposed to their users on a daily basis. The 'ordinary' object is refers to an object that embodies its own system of production, that is, it references the 'everyday' object in order to substantiate a new meaning. The 'ordinary' is the equivalent to the super-normal, with the exception that the 'ordinary' is a specific reference within this text and has a relationship with the origins of semiological systems. The 'familiar' is reference to the repetition of daily exposure to 'everyday' objects; familiarity can be used to identify the *production* of 'ordinary' objects.
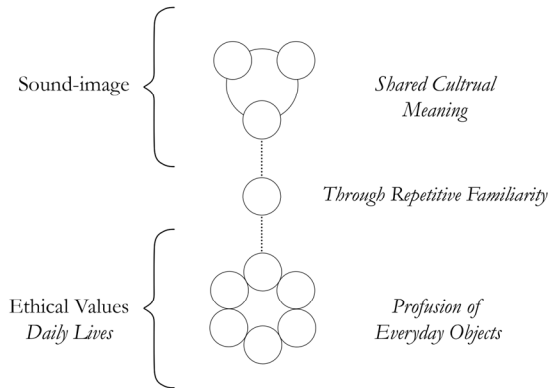
Diagram .3 The Structure of an Ordinary Object

Diagram .3 illustrates the relationship between the abundance of *everyday* objects in our daily lives and their conversion into a shared cultural meaning. The sound-image refers to the mental relationships established between objects and thus forms their meaning to us. For example when a popular item goes out of fashion the amount of links between that object and other objects or values is diminished. The shared experience of that object is narrowed down to its more practical uses. The more familiar an *everyday* object is, the more likely it will acquire more links and thus more meaning.

The *production* of the *ordinary* object begins with the familiarity of *everyday* mundane objects. The object through its repetitive exposure or 'familiarity' forms a shared meaning amongst its immediate culture. The sound-image of an object also includes the idiosyncrasies given to an object by each individual person within a social group.

Put simply, the *ordinary* object embodies its own system of *production*, while the *everyday* object is referenced in an attempt to clarify a new meaning derived from our daily lives.

In industrial design for example, the product would reference the sound-image of the *everyday* object in an attempt to alter the associated meaning within our daily lives. The effect is often the questioning of the values in which we place ourselves within the society we are apart of. This practice is most noticeable when used in the design of luxury products, as the consumer of these products often fiercely protects their moral and ethical values. The use of human skulls as a symbol of mortality despite an owner's wealth is a prime example.

The process of the *production* of *ordinary* objects reveals a continuous cycle of pattern recognition. The *ordinary* object over time will at some stage become known by a new generation as part of their everyday

experience. An *ordinary* object viewed as an *everyday* object. This unique condition derives from a different semantic origin. Instead of exposing the structural origins of an idea, this origin is caught within a short life cycle of meaning. This original is always relatively new, and relies on contemporary objects that are ordinary, familiar and commonplace.

On a practical level the design and manufacture of basic functional products can have a long and important relationship within our lives. Even simple ordinary objects can, if well crafted, alter our value systems by representing the system itself embodied within the object of use.

The Modernist: 1918 to 1939

The modernist presents himself clean-shaven and immaculate. His appearance is perfect, he is self-aware, and he is self-assured. The suit he wears is pristine and perfectly tailored. He is nameless and he is anonymous. He is the modernist.

He lives within the War period from 1918 to 1939. He has a new agenda. The men and woman of this period would become some of the most prolific architects, designers, artists, performers, craftsmen and writers of their time. They had as Le Corbusier put it, "acquired a taste for fresh air and clear daylight."[5]

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[5] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*.

The modernist does not seek to build on truths (origins), but rather to re-establish them altogether. "For a modernist it is intellectually, morally or culturally necessary to manifest one's modernity, to 'challenge' what resists it, and to pour scorn on those who take refuge in the values and habits of a superseded age."[6] The modernist needed a new origin in order to rectify the suspended styles of the past.

The methodology of construction was simple and largely unplanned. By referring back to *Diagram* .3 the profusion of everyday objects (their outdated styles) did not correspond to how the modernist wished to live. Adolf Loos describes his shoes as being covered in ornament 'notches' and 'holes' that the cobbler was not paid for, he suggests if he asked for smooth shoes (without notches or holes) and paid the craftsman extra, he would have 'robbed him of all pleasures'.[7] As if reproducing the familiarity of stylistic preferences would make a craftsman content, it is exactly this familiarity that Loos wishes to avoid.

The everyday object (such as a pair of shoes) embodies a wealth of ornamentation, which the modernists wanted to erase. By doing such the familiarity of the archetype 'shoe' would be more closely mimicked

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[6] Roger Scruton, *Modern Philosophy*, 2.
[7] Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime*, 34-35.

and more faithfully represented. The lack of ornament was a 'sign of intellectual power' that demonstrates the inherent moral attitude and stature given to archetypal forms.[8]

By striping objects of ornamentation, the objective is not to de-value an existing object; in fact quite the opposite is intended, by embodying the archetypal form the object inherits basic primal moral values. The modernist viewed stylistic work as vulgar and unfamiliar. By rectifying everyday objects the modernist could instil a new familiarity in order to *produce* a designed meaning amongst the users of products.

However, historically modernism (the movement and style associated with the inner-war period modernists) was remembered by the general public as a failure, it was rendered 'inhumane' and largely dismissed, despite the fact that this view of modernism, was by no small part, affected by the versions of 'modernism' surrounding the critics of the time in the 1950's 60's and 70's, which no doubt deserved such criticism.[9]

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[8] Ibid, 36.
[9] Wilk and Victoria and Albert Museum., *Modernism* , 21.

The premise that modernists instilled their designs with 'inhumane' beliefs and values is incorrect. The system of *production* was impeccably balanced (refer back to *Diagram .3*) in order to establish a new kind of object. The objects themselves projected their own system of *production* back to the user with their clean lines and bold geometries. What the objects lacked were the traces[10] of the system itself. Without a traceable system of *production* the object cannot establish itself as a new *ordinary* object, and renounces itself, at best, as a viewport to an origin, and at worst, an outdated myth.

When constructing an *ordinary* object the system of *production* employs the use of 'trace' in the familiarly of everyday objects. The present object (an object at hand) always alludes to other similar objects experienced at other times, therefore past objects become 'present' objects. The *ordinary* object presents the trace of the present (the current system of *production*), that is traced (through the system of *production*) and which traces (*produces*).

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[10] The word 'trace' refers the use of tracing in Derrdia's work whereby the trace of an object is present in its absence.

Clothing

When investigating the use of everyday objects in our daily lives it becomes apparent that the clothing embodies a mass of stylistic preference while remaining primarily functional. Even the modernists had a association with fashion design; Otto Wagner, Peter Behrens, Henry van de Velde, Josef Hoffmann, Paul Schultze-Nauburg and Frank Lloyd Wright all had ventures into the design of woman's fashion. Adolf Loos, Peter Behrens and Le Corbusier went as far as to dress their wives; Corbusier's wife Yvonne Gallis was even believed to have been a fashion model.[11]

The architect to this day is known to dress in entirely black attire a colour associated with the framing of origins, along with the colour white; which is commonly used in the designs of modernists.[12] This stark colour pallet appropriately frames the absences present in the construction of the delayed origins. This concept is more formally based through form then through theory. Fortunately the designer instinctively recognise the properties of white and black, however if his

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[11] Princeton University, *Architecture, in Fashion*, 72.
[12] Due to the black and white photography used to document many of the modernist buildings a misconception can arise when an off-white colour containing blue or orange is rendered white through the photograph. See Mark Wigley *White Walls, Designer Dresses* (1995).

attire is entirely white like a doctors coat his presence is presented as anonymous, an absence as presence.

In Kenya Hara's *Designing Design* (2007) Li Edelkoort (chairwoman of the Design Academy Eindhoven) begins by describing Hara's attire "[D]ressed like a priest in dark, apparently simple, yet superbly cut clothes, or on weekends, like a monk, in hooded sweatshirts over soft drawstring pyjama pants."[13] There is an overwhelming feeling that in order for a designer's philosophical concept of design to remain intact one has to dress accordingly, much as a monk might dress in order to concentrate on his belief, a designer needs to fashion his clothing and the clothing of his family and colleagues in order to project his own system of *production* back onto itself.

It is this embodiment of everydayness that begins to project the system back onto itself, the beginnings of a trace. By reflecting moral values in the attire they wear the modernists begin to project their own system of *production* more accurately in their daily lives. The use of daily objects (even clothes) begins a familiarity that substantiates the trace through the repetitive exposure to an objects existence. Fashion has the benefit of familiarity and regular exposure an *ordinary* object requires. Fashion

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[13] Kenya Hara, *Designing Design*.

design itself employs a short life span, a process of *production* that is continuous, the origin in this case is caught in a cycle of *production* that can never fully be traced, and as such 'originality' is commonly achieved.

However fashion design thrives on a concept the modernists detested, style. Although fashion's view of style is perhaps radically liberal compared with architecture's constant distancing from it; an architect will do anything to avoid being accused of using a stylish preference when designing, a fashion designer on the other hand revels in the association as if the new piece of clothing has a wealth of traceable meaning.

The reason style is discussed is because they are often representative of systems of *production* that have become common knowledge. In this way the style or system can then be applied as a method of achieving similar outputs. What is particular about fashion design is that it presents styles more as active systems then outdated methodologies.

Fashion designers realise that it is not the act of tracing, but rather the traces within the *production* of objects, which renders a stylistic approach to design, palatable. That is, the effect of a short life cycle

makes the traces clear to the designer; the act of *producing* clear, and thus *producing* stylistically becomes a simple task to sidestep a complex system of *production*. This is perhaps what the American companies latched onto as a means – or rather a methodology – for creating corporate identities. In short a basic method to imbue meaning into objects and control the shared value of that product in the general public.[14]

To further understand the linguistic origins of fashion design the term *fashion* needs to be identified as differing from the term *clothing*.

Like *architecture* and *building* there is a subtle difference between *fashion* and *clothing*. 'Fashion' from the Latin *facere* (to make or do) also means "the spectrum of appearances acceptable at any one moment in time."[15] 'Clothes' refers to cloth covering the human body, suggesting a broader more functional use then that of fashion. 'Fashion' encases the act of craftsmanship involved in the construction of clothing. As all architecture enviably results in buildings, fashion produces clothing.

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[14] This is called the 'Semantic Turn' derived from a scientific method of analysis derived originally from the work of Saussure, a line of study called semiology.

[15] Princeton University, *Architecture, in Fashion*, 40.

This small point has larger consequences in terms of the meaning given to physical objects. By using a word, which incorporates the act of 'making' or 'doing', we are reflecting upon the process of construction as well as the object at hand.

Unadorned

Clothing from the differing perspective of semiology (the study of signifiers and meaning in objects) reveals the system of *production* clear to view. The unveiling of the system itself – to show its traces – is no clearer than in the unveiling of clothes. By dressing or vice-versa (undressing) the structure constructing the system of *production* is presented unadorned, and through stylistic preference – through trace.

The 'shared culture meaning' of objects can often relate to nature as well as manufactured objects. A common supplement for comparison is the male and female body.

Vitruvius gives one of the earliest written accounts of a comparison between clothing and building when referring to two separate designs of structural columns in *Ten Books on Architecture*, Vitruvius states that

one column was based on "manly beauty" was "naked un-adorned"[16] while the other exerted "delicacy, adornment, and proportions characteristic of woman."[17]

The adorned to the un-adorned, the essential to the multiple, the male to the female, although all typical binary opposes the historical developments in constructed matter – architecture, garment construction, etc – have all well documented 'stylistic' relationships with formal and metaphysical structures (form and meaning). It is perhaps the clothing (the structure) adorning the bodies of male and female that communicate the local cultural values given to each sex.

The tailored suit for men becomes the sign of normality, modernity, equality, and in terms of manipulating the system of *production* the suit can be identified as a signifier of origins, commonness, represented origins, and in some cases *ordinary* objects. However for woman the flamboyant dress resented the opposite end of the spectrum (see back to *Diagram* .2), the mythical, fantastic, fictitious, and the hyperreal.

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[16] Ibid, 41.

[17] Le Corbusier would later describe modern architecture to be that of a nude man. Le Corbusier's model was Diogenes, a Greek Cynic philosopher who through away his cup after seeing a peasant drink water from his hands. Adolf Loos in an essay in 1919 is also known to have cited the same story of the cup and Diogenes. In *Designing Design* (2007) Kenya Hara also uses this analogy of two hands holding water as been a defining point of the origins of design, he puts it alongside a stick, such as in 2001 Space Odyssey. A vessel and a stick.

The structure, which constructs the system of production, is no more clearly dismantled than in the removal of the adornment constructing the 'hyperreal' object. The *production* is presented clearly to view slowly tracing backward towards the origin, toward the formal origin – in this case, the unadorned figure.

In an essay by Roland Barthes[18], the semiotic unveiling of hyperreal is traced visually backward in a sobering lesson in objecthood, in his essay *Striptease*.[19]

The scene is constructed around a series of adorning props that act to shroud the reality taking place, "[t]he furs, the fans, the gloves, the feathers, the fishnet stockings, in short the whole spectrum of adornment, constantly makes the living body return to the category of luxurious objects which surround man with a magical décor."[20] The classic 'music hall' props "all aim at establishing the woman *right from the start* as an object in disguise."[21] The falsity of the scene is evidently observed from a constructed viewpoint, the act which is about to take

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[18] The French sociologist who applied structuralist theories to identify signs and symbols in everyday objects and events in France.
[19] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*.
[20] Ibid, 85.
[21] Ibid, 84.

place is then traced toward the origin itself – which in turn present a differing fabricated origin.

Although the unveiling of clothing reveals a crafted origin, the undressing is in fact not genuine, and continues to subvert the system of *production* through misguiding (and protective) signifiers or objects of meaning. The spectacle is suggestive of a *perceived*[22] origin, which is artfully crafted through a tracing through its own system of *production*, simply, it reveals its construction, but in this case the each disclosure reveals another hyper image – an object of desire.

However another similar yet differing scenario presents itself, the amateur striptease where by "beginners undress in front of a few hundred spectators without resorting or resorting very clumsily to magic, which unquestionably restores to the spectacle its erotic power."[23] The armatures leave the disguise behind for the commonness of ordinary clothing and familiar attire.

Without the adornment of furs and feathers the amateurs dress in 'sensible suits' and 'ordinary coats', the origin is presented without any

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[22] Perceived is used in this context as a crafted or constructed vantage point in order to view an object. The object is commonly hidden or complicated within a system of *production*.
[23] Ibid, 86.

false vantage or purview, for the first time an *ordinary* object presents itself through the familiarity of a common object.[24] The trace is self aware of its own production and in an untrained act, undermines it, almost accidentally.

In an unlikely event the spectacle is given grievance and magnitude by not presenting the system itself, but rather to reveal through commonness, through familiarity, all that the system tries to protect – by constructing a system to begin with, by using 'music-hall' props – and subsequently 'restores its erotic power' via *production*.[25] An *ordinary* object demands a trace that *produces* rather then subverts, which affects (produces an effect on) rather then effects (accomplishes an effect).

Conceiving a new absolute origin is perhaps logically improbable, while constructing a system of *production* can clearly make what is absent, temporarily present, that which is not a viewpoint for perceiving, but rather a verb for *producing*.

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[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid, 85-86.

What is 'common' can be presented through the system as an origin itself through familiarity; this revolving origin can therefore constantly appear 'original', presented, or rather *produced* anew. "The end of the striptease is then no longer to drag into the light a hidden depth, but to signify, though the shedding of an incongruous and artificial clothing, nakedness as a *natural* vesture of woman, which amounts in the end to regaining a perfectly chaste state of the flesh."[26]

Men's Fashion in 1898

The 'undressing' of the system of *production* within the unadorned common clothing has similar structural relationships as the modern tailored suit.

The origin is presented in a repetitive loop of common patterns, constructing similar dress attire. The cut pattern for each individual reflects the very system in which produces it. The traced hems (via the pattern) become visible through the construction of the fabric. Instead of the trace dismantling the system backwards, the hems display the

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[26] Ibid, 84-85.

trace visibly to view. The origin itself acts to *produce* through the present visible display of structure and logic of construction. In this sense the myth becomes debunked, while the *ordinary* is supplementing itself, creating a trace, which it self-traces.

The suit, as Adolf Loos explains in his essay in 1898, has become the necessity of the everyday gentleman.[27] Its metaphysical[28] form – all shared meaning associated with it – is defined through the lack of fundamental differences in construction (both metaphysical and real).

The construction of the suit (including its pattern), as well as the metaphysical construction (its production) ideally reflects the production itself. The trace, physically apparent in the hems of clothing, begins to mark the authorship of the product, the craftsman's handiwork, through presenting the system (the origin, the pattern) rather then actively dismantling it. The hems are reserving the meaning of the origin in order to be defined through the system itself. It can be recognized as evidence of the system's presence, and even it's construction (the logic of construction and its structural relationships).

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[27] Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime*, 38.
[28] Metaphysics: after physics. The abstract study of the nature of reality.

In contemporary design such marks of authorship, or evidence, are occasionally used in an attempt to control the very system of *production* by presenting the hems or patterns of clothing directly to the consumer, such as in Martin Margiela's Autumn-Winter collection of 1997-1998 "he designed garments based on the flat pattern pieces that dressmakers store on hangers…so that foundation became underwear, the body became the dress."[29]   In this situation the trace itself is used as a mechanism to reform the system that *produces*.

The myth surrounding the production of the clothes (both physically and metaphysically) becomes demystified in the process of visually seeing the construction (of metaphysically seeing the system of construction).   This dismantling or *brisure*[30] reveals the system of *production* in a state of flux, that is, each origin is constructed and dismantled according to the system itself, effectively *producing* a unique origin from a series of common objects.   This is the basic construction of an *ordinary* object.

An *ordinary* can have the effect of both *producing* and presenting its own *production*. A concept not entirely lost on the modernists. Loos in

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[29] Caroline Edwards, *Fashion at the Edge*, 250.
[30] French, used by Derrida, translated to mean both breaking and joining.

1898 describes being dressed 'correctly' by dressing into a familiarity, "dressed in such a manner as to attract as little attention to oneself as possible."[31] Style was not important according to Loos, to be beautiful, elegant, chic or dashing, the objective was to appear as though nothing about you was out of the ordinary. The problem for Loos was identifying what was ordinary "[a]n article of dress is modern if, when wearing it on a particular occasion in the *best* society at the centre of one's culture"[32]

Loos is closer to defining what Barthes might call a 'mythology', the very system itself is based on the same developments of semiology, the construction of a mythology is not unlike the construction of an *ordinary* object, with the exception of a continual *production* and a reliance of daily use.

One common use present in the construction of *ordinary* objects is the use of standardization in the physical construction of product components. Standardization itself relies on the consolation of the system of *production* into smaller, simpler traces, an effective, but simplified, construction of an origin.

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[31] Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime*, 40.
[32] Ibid.

If used incorrectly, this simplified method of construction could potentially have catastrophic effects, however if used by skilful designers, could have lucrative financial rewards.

Anonymous Design in 1924

The presentation of constructed origins, or rather, the attempted construction of origins, was well versed by the modernist designers of the *Deutscher Werkbund* in Germany. The modernists set out to literally *craft* the *ordinary* through the act of designing; the craft of semantically contorting the *construction* of the very cultural systems of meaning. Crafting the *ordinary* objects cultural *production*.

By presenting the industrialized common objects used in the daily lives of ordinary working people, the *structure* of the quotidian objects *production* is rendered transparent. For the public to understand the *construction* of the *ordinary* object requires the comprehension of the *structure* that supports the quotidian object, a task that evidently takes its form through an exhibition.

Eight years before the Museum of Modern Art exhibition *The International Style* held America in 1932, a travelling exhibition in Germany championed mass-produced anonymous design. The most ordinary, everyday household items were on display to view. The exhibition was titled *'Form ohne Ornament'*, or Form without Ornament.[33]

This exhibition was organised by *Deutscher Werkbund* [the German Work Association] an association that connected manufacturers with design practitioners.[34] The exhibition reflected Hermann Muthesius' views, which criticised the quality of German industrial products; Muthesius had been a leader in establishing the *Werkbund*. The *Deutscher Werkbund* focused on Germany producing the highest quality of mass-produced objects of their time.

It was Hermann Muthesius in 1914 who supported standardization in industry, however Henry van de Velde opposed his opinion citing individual artistic creativity as means of producing quality, much of the *Werkbund* sided with him.[35] In 1924 as industrial manufactured products became respected for their efficient manufacture and emerging

[33] Wilk and Victoria and Albert Museum., *Modernism* , 157.
[34] Designers included Peter Behrens, Josef Hoffmann, Bruno Paul, Richard Riemerschmid and later figures such as Mies van der Rohe.
[35] Ibid.

aesthetic language (the machine aesthetic) the *Werkbund* organised the '*Form ohne Ornament'* in Stuttgart to celebrate simple well-made industrial products. The exhibition, which circulated for several years, served to inspire artists to design for industry and to promote good autonomous design.[36]

The exhibition underscores the capacity of conventional signs to capture the imaginations of everyday people using designed products (perhaps the principle goal of many practicing designers). The essence of a teapot or a cup can be compelling objects given that they are skilfully constructed. 'Construction' implies the clever positioning of references towards the quotidian objects of our surroundings. This incurs a number of complicated propositions, some of which have already been discussed, such as a common object of clothing tracing a revolving origin, or the unadorned object presenting origins without any vantage point or constructed viewpoint, but rather employs familiarity as its foundation.

The positioning of normal objects within the system of *production* is a key concept when constructing an *ordinary* object. Around the same timeframe as the '*Form ohne Ornament'* exhibition modernist architects

[36] Ibid, 158.

began to integrate mass-produced simple furnishings into their
unadorned interiors.

Interiors

The architectural interiors of the late nineteenth-century displayed the
traces of the *production* of objects through the stylistic use of
construction. This effective method renders the traces visibly clear as an
outcome of *production,* rather then rendering the *production* itself to be
visible. Subsequently the method of rendering the logic of
construction, literally and through a system of meaning (through
semantics), was developed rapidly by the modernists.

The interior objects of the early twentieth-century attempted the
construction of new origins, in an attempt to embed the system of
production in order to refer to their new semantics, or put more simply,
to communicate the new meaning that the construction of their
buildings spoke of. With this method the traces of *production* are used
more or less as semiotic signs of origins, whether they are original or
not.

A number of leading architectural interiors of the late nineteenth-century into the early twentieth-century featured product designs conceived with the equivalent formal language as the architectural spaces and detailing in which they were intended for. The works of Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928) and Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) present a stylistic construction within the formal language in which their designs communicate, viewing 'stylistic construction' as an outcome of *production* within a semantic system of communication.

Later developing into the early twentieth-century the works of Otto Wagner (1841-1918), Peter Behrens (1868-1940) and Josef Hoffmann (1870-1956) present simple ordinary forms with exposed construction and a general sense of austerity. Peter Behrens established a mentality towards producing practical objects "through mass production, [in order to] introduce good design into the lives and everyday environments of ordinary people."[37] Although not overt, the use of unadorned objects and spaces influenced the key generation of architects referred to as the modernists, Le Corbusier (1887-1968), Walter Gropius (1883-1969) and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) all worked in Behrens architectural practice early in their careers.

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[37] Penny Sparke, *A Century of Design*, 30.

The now iconic modern furniture designed by Le Corbusier and Charlotte Perriand (1903-1999), the B301, B306 Chais-longue, B.9 and the Grand Confort club chair, developed out of a need to furnish the interiors of Le Corbusier's new 'engineer's aesthetic'[38] in the early 1920's. Originally using the bentwood chairs designed by Thonet[39] to furnish his interiors, it wasn't until 1927 when he saw Charlotte Perriand's furniture at the *Salon d'Automne* that he decided to begin a collaboration to produce his own modernist furniture.[40]

Perriand's semantic language when working with Le Corbusier explored the 'confrontations' between industrial and natural materials, such as chrome metal and cowhide.[41] The references within the materials and construction of the objects illustrated visually, rather then practically, the essential modernist aesthetic. The conflicting materials project conflicting systems of *production*, in a single object the old and new 'origins' are both viewable, although their actual origin is not exactly original or without reference.

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[38] An avant-garde visual language formed to coincided with his theoretical works, mainly *Towards a New Architecture* (1923) in which he instilled radical principles of architectural design.
[39] His interest in simple furniture can be attributed to Adolf Loos, who also used Thonet's bentwood furniture in his own commissions.
[40] Wilk and Victoria and Albert Museum., *Modernism* , 157.
[41] Penny Sparke, *A Century of Design*, 97.

The Grand Confort club chair (1928-29) featuring exterior chrome steel construction with nestled black leather cushions was a "reworked version of a club armchair from the Maples store in London", before 1927 Le Corbusier used leather armchairs from a French branch of Maples.[42]   The B306 chaise-longue was a "reworked version of the Thonet rocking-chair", coincidently Thonet eventually produced the new furniture after being rejected by car manufacture Peugeot, the designs themselves proved difficult to mass-produce.[43]   Subsequently the furniture is now produced by Cassina.

On a basic level the disciplines of interior architecture and industrial design both developed from more of less this method of practice and sense of micro-management.

Later in the 1950s and 1960s the Hochschule für Gestaltung or ULM School of Design, widely respected in design education as a successor of the Bauhaus would introduce to the curriculum the study of these meanings and values through the analysis of semiotics.[44]

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[42] Ibid, 96-97.
[43] Ibid, 97.
[44] The school of Ulm (established 1955) originally set out to apply the Bauhaus curriculum, the artistic courses of the Bauhaus curriculum became overshadowed with the introduction of semantics (design can be a systematic method, operated on pure rational) the school became divided in its approach and closed in 1968.

The confrontation between the stylistic uses of constructing the structure that supports the system of *production* and the literal display of traced systems was complicated further through the academic[45] subversion of categorization displayed in modern exhibitions outlining the developing methods of practice.

The International Style: Architecture Since 1922

The modernist buildings of the early twentieth-century displayed the trace of the system of *production* clearly as itself, unadorned. The origin is clearly circumvented as an original object when the structure is exposed physically while its semiotic development is hidden through the lack of a traceable origin. This apparently new origin, at best, frames a false vantage point in which the system of *production* is conveniently simplified. The stylistic constancies of construction – the repetitive language – indeed its simplification, denote academic modernism to a series of rules and principles.

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[45] The use of the word academic here refers to speculative and theoretical explanations, the noun *academic*.

Any categorical device, including semiotics, can in retrospect academically rationalize the physical constructions of modernism, the assessment by Philip Johnson et al defines the buildings themselves into logical steps to be applied practically.

It was 1932, Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson set up the exhibition titled *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*. Although Hitchcock and Johnson spearheaded the exhibition, it was Alfred Barr who initiated the whole affair. Barr meet Johnson when he was a student at Harvard, asking if Johnson wanted to head the Department of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art, to which Johnson said he didn't know anything about architecture.[46]

The trio, Barr, Hitchcock and Johnson tour Europe by car. Two years later they launched the *International Style* exhibition. Not many people showed up. Nor did anyone care much at all about it; full of white stucco walls, industrial facades and principles to follow the exhibition displayed no histories, references or traces of stylistic development. Rather, it came with a rulebook.

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[46] Forward by Phillip Johnson Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style*.

The aesthetic principles of International Style are as follows:

The first principle: Architecture as Volume. The structure of contemporary architecture is a skeleton support; in traditional masonry building the walls were the supports. "A building is like a boat or an umbrella with strong internal support and a continuous outside covering."[47] A volume replaces the mass of a building, into a set of planar surfaces bounding the volume. Gabled roofs are not necessary, they should be flat. Wall planes should be consistent like a 'stretched textile' and windows should extend to the outer edges of wall planes. In simple terms, surfaces should define volumes. The wall planes are rendered in white stucco, other materials include glass, steel, granite, stone and marble.

The second principle: Concerning Regularity. The regularity of windows and structural columns is the secondary controlling rule of the International Style. Often paced in equal distances, good architecture in the Style promoted regular spacing and order in the placement of elements. Phillip Johnson's 1949 *Glass House* shows accurate incorporation of the first two rules;

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[47] Ibid, 55.

perfect regulatory of standardised parts operating with volume defined by surface. This principle originates from the Greek Style, for further reading see Le Corbusier's *Towards an Architecture*.

The third principle: The Avoidance of Applied Decoration. The avoidance of decorations seems the most obvious principle of the Style, 'less is more' or 'ornament is crime' are synonymous catchphrases for the International Style, however in Hitchcock's definition it is more subtle then obtuse. Hitchcock writes of a disappearing of "the conditions of craftsmanship which once made applied ornament aesthetically valid" and replaces 'ornament' with modern detailing. "The fact that there is so little detail today increases the decorative effect of what there is."[48]

Hitchcock goes on to make one final important statement; there is an inherent difference between *architecture* and *building* he defines as 'aesthetic significance', the architect's ability to make judgements beyond pure economic decisions.

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[48] Ibid, 82.

The *production* of physically constructing can most simply be attributed into stylistic regulations: surface, regularity, and austerity for example, however the construction requires the traces existing within the system of production itself, to self-produce. Without this trace affecting, the made objects *construct* only vantage points in which to view a prematurely false sense of origin. The 'attempted' construction then is sound as long as the actual origin remains unknown; to do this involves a short repetitive system of *production*.

The short life cycle of any style distances itself from its origin by way of repetition. The semiotic characteristics associated with an object become wrapped in a continual cycle of *production*. In a methodical sense the system of *production* is placed through the system tirelessly again and again furthering its connection towards a relative associated meaning.

Product Semantics

Product semantics outlines a development in design that proposes that humans respond to "individual and cultural meanings" rather than

physical tangible attributes of objects like form, function or use.[49] This develop seemingly coheres with the *production* of the *ordinary* object, however there are some distinct variations.

To begin with, semantics is a branch of linguistics that studies the meanings of words and their relationships to each other. To this end Klaus Krippendorff in *The Semantic Turn: A New Foundation for Design*, the ideal handbook for product semantics, begins by tracing the linguistic origins of the word 'design'.

'Design' from the Latin *de signare*, to 'mark out', to give significance, is a concept that seem at odds with the *production* of the *ordinary* object, although 'mark' could be exchanged for 'trace', which itself is in reference to *produce*, in other words 'to produce significance' within a system.

'Trace' in this context is a method for 'marking' immaterial objects, *constructing* them. Further more the same method can be used in order to *produce ordinary* objects, a concept not supported in product semantics.   Krippendorff simplifies the designer's role to that of, "making sense of things" and that "products of design are to be

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[49] Foreword by Bruce Archer, Klaus Krippendorff, *The Semantic Turn*.

understandable to their users."[50] Krippendorff's synthesis derives from his early exposure to semiology and sociology at the school of ULM in the 1961 to 1962, and suggests a paradigm shift towards human-centred design, that "humans do not respond to the physical properties of things – to their form, structure and function – but to their individual and cultural meanings."[51]

Krippendorff's 'semantic turn', is a turn toward considering meaning in products.[52] Previously left up to the avant-garde, Krippendorff writes a corporate black book of principles into an extensive table of contents, a crash manual for designers who need to "validate their claims",[53] subtitles include 'Designing original artefacts, guided by narratives and metaphors, page 245' and 'A new science for design, page. 209', all essentially practical studio knowledge.

But perhaps this understanding is too easy, too simplified. Krippendorff gives a simple step-by-step definite method to 'crafting' meaning but in doing so ignores the complications of the semiology, the complications of communicating through signs, meaning and language.

[50] Introduction, Ibid.
[51] Foreword by Bruce Archer, Ibid.
[52] Krippendorff uses 'product design' to refer to objects produced in the post-industrial world, that is, concerned with *production* and consumption whose primary methodology is market research, rather then mass-production.
[53] Foreword by Bruce Archer, Ibid.

There is a structural difference between a metaphor and linguistic sign; in any case semantics is a branch of linguistics investigating the meanings of words, not 'artefacts' as Krippendorff conveniently names them.

Product semantics is not 'incorrect' as such; rather it masks the complications the study of human communications demands, in doing so it hinders the designers who might benefit from developing more subtle solutions, such as constructing *ordinary* objects through the manipulation of the structural configuration, which upholds the system of *production* that in turn defines familiar objects meaning. This text is only one such problem designers could confront, with expectation that designers may become more confident to 'validate' their own practice.

By simplifying semiology for design practice many more sophisticated and elegant design solutions continue to be held out of sight. If design has reached a paradigm shift from form to communication, then surely it needs not to be simplified for the use of practice and education, for then it risks exhorting its potential, or worse still, becoming a list of principles, just another style.[54]

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[54] It should be clarified that each 'style' in design often begins as a 'movement', which is to say, a development of thought usually from a pervious era. Styles

This simplification of semiology is accurately practiced by the corporate brands and major design companies who employ designers to practice under their mantra in an attempt to consciously and continually subvert the shared cultural meaning of products into familiar false ideals. The construction of these infinite frames leaves only short traces of short production lines, the quick turnaround and obsolescence of products ensures the solidarity of the man made origin, the constant familiarity of the company brand alleviates any sense of gazing through the looking glass, the perception of the general public is infinitely reflected in the high-street ground to ceiling shop windows, the reality of the situation is elaborately hidden through the clever 'crafting' of the system of *production*.

Product Design

When organising the structural components of a system, the goal is to alter the meaning derived by that system, to control meaning. Product design can suffer from meanings that are controlled by economic

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are often generated posthumously for the use of classification, at for example an exhibition.

pressures, meanings that designers may not ethically agree with. The origins represented by such systems are themselves only vantage points in which something can be created out of nothing, a concern when the everyday environment becomes saturated by meaningless objects.

However each object does have a meaning, each object's system contains a strategically composed origin, set in place and looped continuously subverting the falsity of its ideals. Furthermore this creation of revolving origins is a manipulation of the system of semiotic association, a simplification.

Product design as a development of industrial design basically focuses on the user's understanding of what a product means rather than the form or structure of the product communicating to the user its function. A products 'meaning' is often thought of as its 'values', for example a product can communicate wealth, inclusively or individually, however in large developed brands the designer's role is to communicate, with aid of the marketing team, a brand 'value'. This value itself is specific to each company; indeed it is its selling pitch, and can be as non-specific as enjoy life.

Designers in this situation may feel an uncertainty over their designed outputs, often comparing their role to that of a stylist. The problem is the uncertainty if often justifies, given the unknown motivations of the company itself to drive these 'values'. The value is determined largely due to the economy, a concept that does not ultimately align with design semantics.

To further understand the economics of design it is useful to have an understanding of the development from industrial design to product design.

Designer Kenya Hara outlines in *Designing Design* (2007) that the designer emerged when the craftsman was faced with crafting products through machine production. Hara rationalizes decoration on man-made objects as representing the significance of the ruling powers of their time, to be elegantly crafted for thousands of hours by many hands could clearly be traced physically and semantically to those who governed. "The authoritative power of the kings and their countries was closely connected with delicate, elaborate patterns."[55]

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[55] Kenya Hara, *Designing Design*, 415.

The industrial designer, a designer who works with machine production, according to Hara developed within the "raging torrent of machine production", that irreversibly "pained the delicate aesthetic sense of daily life."[56] The dull machine produced objects radically transformed the familiar environment, "[t]his then triggered the emergence of design as a way of thinking and perceiving in society."[57] The fabric of daily activity had been altered by the profusion of unfamiliar objects, which had no logical relationships to any deeper meaning, including sovereignty or democracy. The industrial designer did not materialize from a need to imbue machine-produced objects with meaning, rather to alter the radically new and different systems of meaning constructed by the everyday objects in our daily lives. The product designer however had a different agenda.

The designer was about to be caught up in a new system of *production*, a system that distanced the modernist designers ideals away from physical considerations and toward the systems themselves.

The design problem was the economy, and the designer's role within this new system was marginalized. Suddenly the focus of production

[56] Ibid, 418.
[57] Ibid.

was shifted to consumption, and the designer had less to do with manufacture, and more to do with marketing and sales. A fundamental shift occurred where by the communication of an object assisted in constructing systems of meaning associated with the object. The product designer's role became embroiled in producing that shared cultural meaning, to craft the system to produce the correct meaning.

The 'correct' meaning of the products is what can disillusion the product designer. The economic development in the mid twentieth-century towards consumption, services and wealth altered designers' ability to justify their decisions. Designing in-house within a large product orientated company forces the designer to consider abstract constructed brand values, values that are dependent on economic drivers, such as consumerism. In this situation the designer is briefed by the marketing team as to what these 'values' might be, the marketing team has already developed as system of *production* that targets their consumer. The designer's frustration can spawn from the lack of ideals within the system, or worse disagreeing with the concepts they are selling, in other words, disagreeing with the effect these products will have on consumer's daily lives.

The product designer has another invalidated concern with semantic production. Crafting the meanings of products ideally works when the considerations of the daily exposure to these products is the driving force of their *production*. However when combined with the economics, this exposure is used subversively to familiarize consumers with product brands and marketing messages. In this scenario the brand adopts the meaning of the product, constructing its own 'shared meaning' without any consultation over the need for such a meaning to arise. In this sense society becomes consumer driven into a series of unsubstantiated ethical values, in a series of looped systems.

The system of *production* becomes further convoluted through the short life cycles of consumer products, again establishing their own familiarity these products build upon their own-shared meaning. This basically creates a simplification of the semiotic structure to signify meaning, a modification that allows the creation of false origins in short cycles, resulting in countless frames of reference to marketing messages long forgotten.

Simplification

The simplification of semantics, which itself is an abridged version of semiology allows considerable oversights and misdirection due to its generalized formation. As the systems defining meaning become more generalized into quick flowcharts, the 'craft' of such systems becomes constrained to what parts are left to modify. It is this apparent solid foundation that needs investigation.

The simplification of semiotics when used to design objects has potentially crucial misjudgements. The manipulation of these already abridged systems has considerable ethical responsibilities that are overlooked, an accountability practicing designers take very seriously. By altering the designer's position within the system transfers his role to purely facilitating the current most marketable meaning. This simplification renders the design unaccountable, and further raises the question of who takes accountability of the system that is *producing*?

The problem with such a system is it often lacks a materiality, that is, it may not be written down clearly, or mapped diagrammatically. Even if such a system is planned and mapped out, it is often not made transparent to those who are apart of it, including the product designers. The designer does however feel accountable, and it is up to the designer in question to develop methods of practice that will allow

the system itself to be crafted. An activity that involves learning to manipulate immaterial systems, something that has previously been hard to justify as a valid design output, and which is increasingly been reappointed to other departments within large firms.

While general design practice simplifies the designer's role and his methods away from the structural relationships between objects and people, the young avant-garde designers continue to examine the possibilities of design semantics. Often referred to as conceptual design these designers act alone or in small collectives responding often to everyday activities or situations, and designing interventions between them. Notably the outputs are often as non-physical as the systems that *produce* them.

Although the product designers working under company policies appear to have lost their place within the system of *production* through an over simplification, there is a contemporary methodology that hopes to radically reinterpret the ossifying systems. It is a development of semiology itself, and it acts to unveil the false foundations of this oversimplification. It exposes the structural configurations that construct, and is appropriately named deconstructivism.

Deconstructivism

The advantage of deconstructivism is that it offers some logical and semiological explanations for the deferral of origins through substitution and framing. Deconstructivism acknowledges the absence of a true origin and continues to trace its meaning throughout the system in order to understand its parts in relation to the whole.

Although deconstructivism appears in separate disciplines in the late twentieth-century the most important developments occurred within semiology. Semiology, the study of human communication through signs, became altered in the writings of Jacques Derrida who explores the possibility of text and writing as a communicator rather then speech and spoken words, which is the core principles of structural linguistics developed by Ferdinand de Saussure. Structural linguistics studies language as a system of meaning, and that each objects meanings are defined by its relationship to other objects within the larger system.

Derrida explores this same system of meaning with philosophical texts; that each text draws its meaning from other corresponding texts. Derrida's method of working with the system of meaning, results in a

semiological reading in reverse, a method of tracing the meaning backward through the system in order to reveal the flaws in its construction. Deconstruction identifies the lack of 'craft' within the structural relationships and the larger system itself.

This reverse engineering of the constructed systems of meanings, of the structure itself, offers a practical method for product designers to re-craft the existing structures. Derrida first uses 'deconstruction' in *Of Grammatology* (1967) translating Heidegger's *Destruktion* which in French was a mechanical word "referring to the process of disassembly in order to understand parts in relation to the whole."[58] Although not mechanical, Derrida's investigation is primarily into the meaning of the systems of *production*, with several controversial propositions.

Like Saussure, Derrida employs binary oppositions in order to define meaning. Derrida employs a kind of 'difference' semiology, he calls grammatology – referring to the scientific study of writing systems. Writing systems differ from speech systems, as the author is not present to reassure the reader of what is meant by any word, sentence or concept. As such the system becomes self-productive in which case the origin becomes uncertain.

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[58] William E Deal, *Theory for Religious Studies*, 84.

Although the origin is uncertain in written texts, in grammatology, it does offer some means of verifying looped origins in product design and objects themselves. The strategically repetitive frames of reference delaying and obscuring origins in objects can effectively be traced through their system of *production*. Derrida also calls into question the accountability and control of these systems.

"Derrida is not simply undermining Saussurean structuralism in the name of an infinite and unstable play of meaning; rather he is calling attention to the radical implication of structuralism, namely that *there is nothing outside language* to control, limit, or direct the play of signification."[59] Two implications are then explored; the first is the search for an absolute origin, to find the archetype of the chair for example, often a desire of the industrial designer and the modernist. The second implication is an infinite play without grounding or centre, as previously described the origin becomes lost in cycles of meaning, or frames of reference.

When combined the two conflicting propositions create a new concept "[t]his concept can be called *gram* or *différance*. The play on differences

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[59] Ibid, 85.

supposes, in effect, syntheses and referrals which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that a simpler element be *present* in and of itself, referring only to itself."[60] This double gesture favours the system's interweaving construction over its *production*. "This interweaving results in each "element" – phoneme or grapheme – being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system."[61] 'Trace' being linked with *gram, reserve, incision, spacing, blaknk-sens blanc, sang blanc, sans, blanc, supplement, articulation, brisure* and *différance* amongst other terms.[62]

At this stage without a more complex understanding of the study of writing systems it becomes increasingly difficult to transfer this knowledge over to the discipline of design. However this is exactly what congeals the development of semantics, the simplification of semiotic systems, a branch of linguistics which itself Derrida re-reads in order to understand the system of signification, or simply, to understand the system of meaning. It is from this vantage point in which Derrida has to work, and thus appropriately works backward, taking the system apart to understand its structure, and almost always

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[60] Jacques Derrida and Translated and Annotated by Alan Bass, *Derrida: Positions*, 23.
[61] Ibid, 24.
[62] Jacques Derrida and Translated and Annotated by Alan Bass, *Derrida: Positions*.

exposes its false origins, and the manipulation of the system in order to infinitely repeat them.

This is the essence of *gram, trace* and *différance* to at once realise the origins absence according to difference, while tracing its deferral through the constructed frames of reference. Deconstructivism identifies the systematic defects in semiology and reveals their infinite complexities, it traces the references and substitutions and it traces the system which *produces*.

Deconstructivism, gives a working method to producing systems capable of constructing myths without totalities, archetypes without origins, it goes some way into composing styles through self traced systems of meaning, of constructing frames of reference and false origins. It gives a method of creating self-perpetuating systems of meaning that the *ordinary* objects relies on, and in doing so validates its logic. And there is one design discipline that cannot help but use it. Fashion designers.

Fashion: The Process of Fabrication

Fashion design attempts to use deconstructivism within the physical construction of garments. Style in fashion design can be viewed more readily as a system, while deconstruction actively traces the system's configuration.

The fashion industry has a unique system of *production* that allows itself to de-construct its structural parts. Each part of the system can add, edit and extract areas of the system of which they are involved. Each part within the system understands their relationship to the overall *production*; as a result the system itself becomes transparent, and even marketable. Due to this elaborate system of *production* the system develops a functionality that allows it to become a focus in a designer's practice.

Fashion designers possess in their practice the physical and metaphysical systems in order to construct differing systems of *production*. For instance the fashion designer has no hesitation about presenting the past and the future, what is present and absent simultaneously, there is no shying away from systems that construct styles or complicated reference structures to embed signification. Signification is often exactly what sells fashion, as the garment itself posses within society a strong social meaning. It is because fashion is embroiled within these systems that

allows it to openly subvert them. To deconstruct these systems is for fashion, a way of talking about them, which itself holds meaning. The fashion design it seems is content to expose his or her practice, that is, as long as it is marketable.

Fashion designers appear to be aware of the origins deferral, of its constant act of substitution, and so the consumer is constantly tracing the very fabric of the system, often through editorials written by those who foster the references, further expanding the system. This awareness and transparency of the system actually appears to drive the economic marketability of the products.

The fashion designer is caught up in an incredible marketing and economic mechanism, but does not experience the same simplifying structure as the product designers who also work with the mass-production of objects. Perhaps it is because fashion designer ideals are caught up in the systems themselves, but this is not entirely accurate, considering the number of designers also seeking a totality to garment design. In this rare and illustrative description by fashion designer Martin Margiela the traces articulating the system's structure are clearly described:

"Our work for every collection since our first on what we refer to as our 'Artisanal Production' - the reworking of men's and women's vintage garments, fabrics and accessories. The silhouette that dominated our first ten collections - the 'cigarette' shoulder for which a roll of fabric was placed above the shoulder leaving the wearer's natural shoulder line to define the garment. These were usually worn with long apron skirts in washed man's suiting fabric or men's jeans and suit trousers that were opened and reworked as skirts. The Martin Margiela 'Tabi' boot 6, Spring-Summer 1989 to the present day - based on a Japanese 'Tabi' sock, these have been present in all of our collections and first commercialised in 1995. They were made up in leather, suede and canvas and mounted on a wooden heel of the diameter of the average human heel. Since 1990, vintage jeans and jeans jackets painted by hand. Winter 1991/92 - a sweater made entirely from opened and assembled military socks. The heels of the original socks helped form the shoulders, elbows and bust of the sweater. Autumn-Winter 1994/95 - elements of a doll's wardrobe were enlarged 5.2 times to a human scale. The disproportions and structures of the doll's pieces were maintained in the upscaled reproductions, often rendering oversized knit, collars, buttons

and zips etc. Summer 1996 - a wardrobe for summer of photographed elements of a man's and women's winter wardrobe. The photographs were printed on light fluid summer fabrics. Summer 1997 and Winter 1997/98 - garments evoke the trial and development of prototype garments as worked on with a 'Tailor's Dummy'. A jacket of each of these seasons was in the shape of a 'Tailor's Dummy'. Spring-Summer 2000 to Spring-Summer 2002 - a work on scale. The creation of a fictive Italian size 78. Elements of a man's and woman's wardrobe - dress jackets, suit jackets, bombers, pants and jeans - are proposed in this one size and over the seasons the ways of treating these up-scaled garments varied. Trousers are fit to size by folding them over and stitching them. The final version was for Spring-Summer 2002 when these garments were raw cut to the waistline of the wearer."[63]

This deconstructive method of re-constructing the structure to appease existing structures as new origins themselves demonstrates the flexibility

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[63] Terry Jones and Avril Mair, *Fashion Now* , 317.

of a system when it is fully functional and given a transparency that is shared amongst its producers and consumers.[64]

Now with better understanding of structural systems and how they might assist in constructing an *ordinary* object through referencing common familiar objects from our daily activities, the other proposition of grammatology can be explored further. The search for absolute origins, or what is more likely, the composition of framed ordinary objects.

Framing the Ordinary

Constructing systems often involves the placement of references in relation to each other. However the possibility of framing systems within systems certainly complicates the equation. What Margiela manages to do is rearrange the parts within the system to reveal the system's own structural configuration. This identifying is possible through moving a part of the structure to the central origin, a kind of

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[64] The editorial industry of fashion magazines is an important part of the system; a product the design industry shows little support of, but which is gains grounds with digital self-publishing on the Internet.

excessive focus, and a focus that for Margiela is often into the most mundane ordinary relationships within the system.

The fashion designer Martin Margiela presents himself within the system as a framed origin, however this strategically positioned origin presents itself as an autonomous entity, a logically false frame, a self-constructed sovereignty.

Margiela stitches blank nametags to his collections, he has not himself been photographed or digitally reproduced, he answers all journalism questions by fax, he remains backstage at shows and covers his models faces behind shrouds. The anonymous is placed where there should be certainty, locality, and an archetype in the place of an origin. The system gains functionality, transparency into interweaving origins, a deferral to the familiar.

Instead of becoming mundane Margiela propels the ordinary into receiving extremely high economic value, even the familiar if 'crafted' correctly can result in powerful signification, given that the ordinary object has its own system of meaning, a system that is saturated with potential framed references.

Margiela's more visual reference to origins is in the clothes themselves often presenting constructions 'unfinished', incomplete versions of archetypal forms. Methodically described as 'unfinished couture techniques' Margiela composes a visual uncertainty.[65] An uncertainty which itself delays into continual references and substitutions, the anonymous handicraft of the garment presents a signification similar to anonymous machine production seen in industrial design. Except here the ordinary leaves physical *traces*[66] of *production*, composing a physical interweaving deferral to the unfinished, to what should be familiar. The system is composed as though the unfinished works of construction, the continual deferrals and absences, are the finished product. Margiela rearranges the combining systems meaning into revealing its own semiotic construction.

Fabricating the Origin

Although it is possible to construct a system in a way that defers the system's origin with commonness, it is also possible to refine a system into exploring a singular origin. This process relies on the repetition of

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[65] Caroline Edwards, *Fashion at the Edge.*
[66] 'Trace' is used in this context as a substitute for reverse construction and *différance.*

the process with the aim of an individual's personal origin. Using this method each product should dismantle the system toward its origin, thus each product is the result of a trace toward such an origin.

In the film *Notebook on Cities and Clothes* (1990) Wim Wenders makes a documentary film about Japanese fashion designer Yohji Yamamoto for the Centre of Pompidou in Paris. Wenders traces his own understanding of Yamamoto's fabrication techniques. While at the same time the film cinematically explores the reality of the digital frames of film in which Yamamoto is captured.

Wenders begins by questioning the contemporary original document in photography, the negative. With physical film the original became obsolete, the origin was traced back to the negative and prints were only copies. With digital film there is only copy, the origin is left absent while the copy is 'authentic'. This concept for Wenders goes against his ideals as a craftsman, Wenders comments on his conversations with Yamamoto:

> "We spoke of craftsmanship and of a craftsman's morals, to
> build the true chair, to design the true shirt, to find the essence
> of the thing and the process of fabricating it."[67]

It is clear that the 'essence' is the essential search for an origin. Here
however the origin is made, fabricated from materials, where perhaps
there is no such concept.

Yamamoto's body of work visually forms a continual investigation into
various forms of origins. Predominately all in black each garment
presents an alteration of an archetypal form, however it is not that
straightforward. Yamamoto's 'true' form is unique to his work, a
signature style; he states "I've been working on the same recipe for
fifteen years already", which suggests a differing origin, as though the
cut of fabric is dismantling the system toward an origin, as though each
garment were a product of *trace*.[68]

The need for designers to fabricate the origin can be misguided, the
investigation as in Yamamoto's work shows that it is the system itself
that allows such a repetitive process to occur, a designer can focus on

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[67] Wim Wenders, *Notebook on Cities and Clothes: Wim Wenders, Yoshi Yamamoto.*
[68] Ibid.

fabricating the traces of an origin, in a sense refining a system, a style. It is perhaps by no coincidence then that Yamamoto's label is a hand written signature 'Yohji Yamamoto', Yamamoto's style.

Haute Couture

A designer's 'style', or individual system of *production* has become a physical showcase for fashion designers, known as the showpiece or *haute couture* – a one-off hand made piece that communicates a designer's individually. Presenting their autonomous system helps to clarify its structure to consumers and those involved in the system itself, the press etc. This is not at all similar to Yamamoto's work, it is not a refining of the system, or traces of that system, but rather it is a mass-produced image mapping the structure itself and identifying its most important parts, its intellectual property.

This concept has only recently made its translation into the product design industry with the advent of 'design art'; a term that classifies design pieces sold in as though they were works of art. Often produced as one-off objects or as limited small batch production these objects represent a similar transparency of designers system, of their clear

involvement in the media and marketing of their own practice. The marketing may even involve the designers themselves, such as in Tom Dixon giving away eco products in Trafalgar Square in London and Philippe Starck's BBC2 reality TV series. In this style of presentation the designer is altering the system like Margiela, offsetting its structural components. In this sense the system not only becomes more flexible, but more functional, more productive. An objects meaning can become more flexible. Provided the system is adequately 'crafted'.

The showpiece reveals more then just a clarification of the designer's current system; it also exposes a larger system of *production*, fashion after all works in large continuous cycles. In *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness* (2003) by Caroline Edwards the development of spectres[69] is outlined through Marx, Benjamin, Rabaté, Derrida and co.

Through the 'postmodernist' work of Alexander McQueen, John Galliano, Hussein Chalayan Martin Margiela, Junya Watanabe and Victor and Rolf, Edwards discloses the dilemmas of the showpiece.

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[69] Ghosts, images or myths of modernism.

Three primary themes emerge, all ending in deathliness: Wealth, Spectacle and Haunting.[70]

These themes permeate the systems structural integrity, bowing its meanings towards larger systems of signification. The spectacle is inadvertently linked to those who have wealth, and wealth accordingly linked to mortality and deathliness. Edwards uses the Marxist critique and Walter Benjamin's alienation of the industrial worker to display not only deathliness but also the alienation involved when seeking archetypal forms.

Edwards states "If alienation was a key trope of literary and philosophical modernism, it fuses with Marxist alienation in industrial production to return as the repressed in fashion, the archetypal commodity form, specifically through the refined and estranged figure of the mannequin, dummy and model." Edwards literary and philosophical modernism refers to Jean-Michel Rabaté's *The Ghosts of Modernity* (1996), in which modernism is recast as being ghosts of its past.[71]

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[70] Caroline Edwards, *Fashion at the Edge*.
[71] Ibid, 182.

The origin in this larger system is not the cliché of looping fashion styles of the past, but rather a transparency to what was absent in previous systems. The haunting of the absent origin is *traced* in the austerity of the mannequin, a similar structural model as the amateur undressing, the familiarity is not strategically famed but presented as a reminder, like the sight of a human skull revealing our mortality under the system itself. The mannequin is presenting the absent *traces* while deferring to the ordinary in the smooth unadorned surface of the fashion model.

Plain

The presentation of unadorned products constantly traces to the everyday, a common origin whose signification is defined by the consumer. The origin itself is arranged to be the product and the focus of the system that is *producing*, effectively positioning itself without embellishment.

In the 1950's Japan was opening its first supermarkets. The supermarkets became the primary retailer of the manufacturers products, and the pricing of products became out of the control of the

producer. The result was a dramatic reduction of quality in the products being manufactured.

In 1980 Seiji Tsutsumi, president of *Seiyu Supermarket* organized a meeting with Ikko Tanaka, Kazuko Koike, Masaru Amano and Takashi Sugimoto.[72] Together they designed nine household products and thirty-one food items based on simplicity and austerity. Their goal was to develop a relationship between the manufacturer and the retailer of products; this resulted in the creation of a no-frills brand Muji.

Muji translates to 'normal', 'pure' and 'plain', suggesting a kind of semiotic structure that produces *ordinary* objects. The low retail cost and mass-production of these products manages to connect two industries within the system of production, by doing so the system becomes more transparent and manageable. The designer's role is then to present the origins within the systems.

However the communication between manufacturer and retailer was not the only facets of the system that needed to be included in the design process. The no-frills products of *Seiyu Supermarket* did not sell as well as expected so Ikko Tanaka proposed that Muji outlets should be

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[72] Yangjun Peng and Jiaojiao Chen, *Muji*, 8.

formed in fashion hotspots, and in 1983 the first Muji store was opened in Aoyama, a high street fashion district.

This positioned the Muji brand appropriately, like Margiela there is an offset of structural components, by revealing the structure of meaning honestly to the consumer won over a younger audience for Muji, a consumer concerned with the environmental clutter of 'branded' produced. "By retailing these products, MUJI is trying to give consumers the opportunity to make choices about their lifestyles and living environments."[73]

Today Muji produces a full range products ranging from clothing and food to furniture. With over 7,000 products now in production customers can fill their lives with Muji products from bed linen to stationary, fridges to canned tuna, Muji can become apart of the consumer's daily life. In this respect the low cost and essential honesty of materials and marketing, Muji represents all the contemporary ideals of modernism in product design. However modernism lacked any active trace within their own system, which resulted in false frames of reference, the basic construction of a style.

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[73] Ibid, 94.

Muji on the other hand has no attempt at creating a style; rather the origin is arranged within the system as the focus point and presented clearly and honestly. The absence of 'frills' reveals the active traces mapped in the austerity of plain forms the Muji products endorse. This presentation of absent traces continually defers to the *ordinary* through the 'pure' white plastics of the products.

The Muji products developed from food production, an unlikely source of origin. This text thus far has discussed the design of mass-produced objects, architectural constructions and fashion construction but has not at any stage mentioned the role of cuisine and the design of food for consumption, a discipline increasing in interest. In 1980 Muji's first year of trade 9 household items and 31 food products were designed. The next year in 1981 Muji produced 30 household items 48 food products and 23 items of apparel. By 1999 apparel production was up to 992 products, there were 455 items of food and 2,785 household products.[74]

From the systems involved in food production product designs by Muji seem to adopt the delicately crafted structure needed to *produce ordinary* objects in a way that allows them to penetrate the banality of everyday

[74] Yangjun Peng and Jiaojiao Chen, *Muji.*

activities. The references and traces within the objects actively defer toward a meaning that can only be generated through daily activities. The familiarity is designed into the products, as though each product is a reference to the system of *production* itself. Where there should be a brand, a message or a meaning, Muji puts in place an anonymous author.

The authors include some of most contemporary names in design, Yohji Yamamoto, Enzo Mari, Jasper Morrison, Shigeru Ban and Naoto Fukasawa. Muji have also teamed up with German manufacturer Thonet to produce a new series of furniture designed by Konstantin Grcic and James Irvine. The designers' names do not however enter into the marketing of the products "the names of these designers have been given a low profile, just like the products, without any intentional publicity."[75]

Muji constructs a system of production that successfully *produces* an *ordinary* object. The design challenge is to 'craft' the system of production effectively in order to contain some functionality, an ability to be flexible to containing traces of itself. These traces can delineate the absence of origins themselves, and replace them with systems or

[75] Ibid, 97.

even its own system. Muji shows that the marketing of their products was integral to their success, a strategy that was best captured by its placement in the market. Muji also reveals that a system used for food production and retail can be modified for the sale and distribution of objects, a system that was not functioning when its parts were separated.

Muji's products are not the only example of the construction of *ordinary* objects, in 2006 Jasper Morrison and Naoto Fukasawa opened an exhibition full of contemporary and historical *ordinary* objects, they titled the exhibition *Super Normal.*

Normal

The supernormal object developed as a long-standing design problem within the practices of Jasper Morrison and Naoto Fukasawa.

Jasper Morrison tells the story of finding some rather unspectacular old hand-blown wine glasses at a second-hand store. After using the glasses every day Morrison noticed that these ordinary wine glasses created a mysterious quality other objects did not have. Morrison notes, "I've started to measure my own design against objects like these glasses, and

not to care if the designs become less noticeable. In fact a certain lack of noticeably has become a requirement."[76]

Jasper Morrison notes that supernormal objects work in 'relation to everything else' in our daily lives, as though their *production* is consequential and perhaps not crafted. While Muji demonstrates how this system can be delectably crafted to present parts of the system as objects themselves, a strategically mediated system that ultimately is transparent for the consumer to understand. Semiology is given the role of making such mysterious qualities qualitative and maps them into manageable systems of meaning. The supernormal object from a semiological point of view, although complicated, is certainly plausible.

The identification of the supernormal came from a combination of events and phone conversations at the Milano Salone in 2005. Naoto Fukasawa becomes 'a bit offended' as his new Deja-vu stool has been taken to the corner of the exhibit and is being used by visitors to rest on; "[p]eople probably didn't even think they were design pieces. I must admit I was a bit shocked by this, and a little depressed."[77] That evening Fukasawa describes the scene to Jasper Morrison over the

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[76] Jasper Morrison and Naoto Fukasawa, *Super Normal: Sensations of the Ordinary*, 28.
[77] Ibid, 20.

phone; Morrison says, "That's Super Normal! Apparently, he'd gone around the fair together with Takashi Okutani, who inadvertently said something to that effect when he saw my stools. Jasper seized upon the word as exactly the right conceptual handle for the appeal he'd long cherished in thing 'ordinary'."[78]

This text started as an attempt to justify and through design process, verify the designer's position when designing seemingly ordinary objects, an answer for dejected designers. Fukasawa suggests "[w]hen people hear the 'design,' they think 'special'; creating 'special' things is what everyone, designers and users alike, assume design is all about. When in fact, both sides are playing out a mutual fantasy far removed from real life."[79]

The *ordinary* object bases its *production* on everyday occurrences; it alters the system to include reference to the daily use of products and uses this familiarity to present the traces of absence in the physicality of objects. The system of *producing* an *ordinary* object is an admission of the system itself, to trace its own system revealing its structure and presenting this transparently to the parts constructing the system. The

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[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid, 21.

references are traced through the system and often presented as these traces themselves, the haunting of the absent origin is traced through the system in the austerity of the products. And finally construction of the *ordinary* in its plainness defers the traces of *production* through the familiarity of the quotidian object.

The System of Production

The system of *production* described in this text has examined the differing models in which the system can be constructed. The modernist formed a projection of its own system of *production*, but lacked the traces of the system itself, rendering only a vantage point in which to view the origin. Without the active use of tracing the repetition of the same constructed origin begins to define it as a style.

The origin can become lost in the continual cycle of *production* as seen in the design of clothing; this can unwillingly become classed as a style, which tends to make the *production* clearly visible. Clothing has the added benefit of embodying the projected system of *production*, in a daily object. However the removal of these vantage points begins to reveal the *ordinary* object's construction.

The structures constructing the system of *production* are dismantled with the removal of adornment. The undressing of the crafted projection allows a backward trace toward the origin, however the undressing is also misleading. The dexterity of the trained undressing protects and subverts the origin from being truthfully perceived. When the amateur undresses the origin is presented without a vantage point, all that remains is the familiarity of the austere surface of the naked body.

While the backward trace reveals an austere absence, the positioning of these references can of course be 'crafted' into the system. The word design can be traced back to the Latin word *de signare* 'to trace out', to mark the significance, however the identifying significance through the false projections can be an insufferable task.

The origin, which is where the significance should occur, is often hidden in a series of framed references; as long as the references are not accurately traced the origin remains unknown. As is often the case the designer's role becomes marginalized into one part of the system, as the meaning is deferred within the system the designer loses the ability to verify their design decisions. To further exasperate the problem the

system may not be clear to those within the system, including the designer.

When the system is not transparent who is accountable for its *production*? There is a genuine need to open the system back up, to trace its *production* through its references and hopefully unhinge it's meaning. Deconstruction offers a valuable method of doing just that; it also proposes logical practices of identifying the lack of 'craft' in a system. Further still, deconstruction actively re-constructs the structure, the focus primarily being on the trace though the structure's relationships. Although trace is a double gesture of deferral and absence, it realises the origin's absence while tracing its deferral through the frames of reference.

In fashion design the semiological structures of a product are extensively mediated through several industry partners, most importantly the broad media coverage. As such the system can, and is, openly subverted by those within the system, in effect commenting on the system's structure. The system is transparent from producer to consumer, thus it gains a kind of functionality through its own exposure.

The transparency of the system of *production* displays its interweaving origins within the industry, in a sense the system is arranged to reveal its own semiotic construction. This can be tailored and individualized, through continual alterations of an origin, resulting in a particular signature style of an author. This can be seen as a refining of an origin, each product dismantles the system towards its origin; each product then becomes an outcome of trace. This individual origin often presents itself as a one-off showpiece, a physical version of their system.

However this is not always the intention of the designer, often the archetypes and manufacturing tools themselves are what designers ideally strive to refine. This can be observed in the adjustable mannequin of the fashion designer, the mannequin presents the absent traces of archetypal origins while constantly deferring to the *ordinary* in the seamless surface of the fashion model. The origin always seems present while presenting an absence. This is the ideal origin a designer might strive for, the construction of a system is more then a trace, but a functional series of well placed parts.

The system becomes more functional as it exposes its parts, if it is presenting only its traces the system becomes concealed through its eternal search for an origin, by emphasizing the transparency of its

construction a system can become more flexible and present ideals and values without distorting their representation.

The objective of the *ordinary* object is to include the daily exposure of products back into the system of *production*. The placement of parts constructing an *ordinary* object frequently present absences as a structural way of deferring the interweaving origins, gaining personal meaning through constant familiarity and the everyday exposure to the system.

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WHITE

Preface

This text illustrates multiple instances of people searching for a potential origin or starting point. Unlike the investigation into the *Ordinary,* the origin of objects is often left *unknown* (see *Diagram* .4). This absence can serve as a purpose in itself, although the relationship is to some extent more complicated.

The mysterious beginnings of any story often appear inherently false or invented, and perhaps they are. If so such a retroactive manoeuvre could potentially *construct* a position of origin, as will be defined later in a *White Scene* (see *Diagram* .4.).
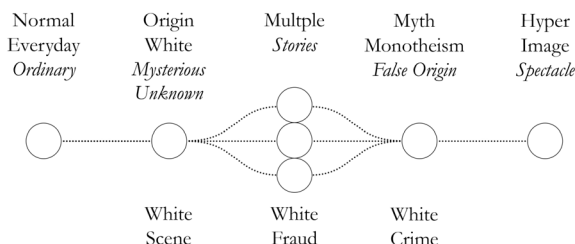
Normal	Origin	Multple	Myth	Hyper
Everyday	White	*Stories*	Monotheism	Image
Ordinary	*Mysterious*		*False Origin*	*Spectacle*
	Unknown			

	White	White	White	
	Scene	Fraud	Crime	

Diagram .4 The Origins of Objects

The word 'white' acquires several different meanings within this text, including: *White Scene*, *White Fraud* and *White Crime* as can be seen in *Diagram .4*. This figurative usage applies to the *construction* of an origin; which essentially is a synthetic system of meaning given to any object in space. By using the term 'White Scene' the attempt to create an original work (or an origin) is seen as a crafted act. Similarly 'White Fraud' is an intentionally crafted fraudulent act.

A series of scenarios are illustrated in order to clarify the relationship between origins and *perceived origins*. The accounts of individual's perception of origins are conveyed vividly in acute detail.

Often the accounts given involve illegal or illicit activity. The nature of any origin relies on the abundance of its presence within the culture it

inhabits. It is more then likely that any origin is already in existence. The accounts given often represent persons who knowingly commit an offence.

One such account of illicit behaviour was presented to the public in 1976 by the architect Bernard Tschumi. The series titled *Advertisements for Architecture* featured miniature posters or manifestos in postcard-sized format in an attempt to *construct* architecture through the hyper-image of consumer culture. One advertisement reads:

> There was ample evidence that a strange man had been present in the room, and the police theory is that the murderer accompanied his victim to her house. None of the other residents of the quiet residential street saw him arrive, or leave after his bloody business was completed.[80]

The re-construction of a criminal activity is presented from the hyperreal viewpoint of the consumer himself, by means of the advertisement. Tschumi has constructed the *presence of nothing*; an ebbing of content which is synonymous with an *origin*.

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[80] Bernard Tschumi, *Bernard Tschumi*, 28.

White: Constructing the Origin

There are two main sections to this text. The analysis first describes how a simple *perceived origin* could be crafted. The second analysis then moves on to a series of more sophisticated scenarios in which other more detailed examples are given, as well as identifying possible methodologies in order to *construct* a *perceived origin*.

The simple scenario of a *perceived origin* consists of an emptying out of content, followed by a *constructed origin*. The allegory of a crime scene is used in order to discuss this particular craft. For instance the 'staged' crime scene – a deliberate modification of an event, is the same designed intention as *constructing* a *perceived origin*. The emptying of content resembles the empty crime scene, often left only as a remnant of the reality that took place.

The following diagram displays the relationship between the allegory of crime scenes and the use of such practices in industrial design.

Sections	Crime Allegory	Industrial Design
White Fraud	Copies	Counterfeit
White Scene	Erasing Evidence	Original Objects, Archetypes
White Crime	Constructing a Scene	Constructing an Image
....	....	....
White Murder	Real Murder	Actual Original
White	Evidence	Imitation
Absence	Banal	Details
The Spectacle	Constructing a System of Meaning	Crafting a System of Meaning
The Witness	A View to a Crime	Evidence of the Original within Originals

Diagram .5 The Origins of Industrial Design

Note the gap after the third section in the diagram; from this point onwards more complex crime scenes are discussed and more sophisticated methods of practice are outlined in terms of design methodology.

The crime metaphor although outwardly unrelated has similar moral and ethical concerns design has to resolve. The metaphor of crime and deathliness is also used by practicing designers is often in response to moral and ethical concerns. Ultimately it is the designer's position within the system of production that causes these moral dilemmas. It should be possible for designers to craft the system of referential meanings when designing on mass.

The designer when constructing physical relationships has the ability to dictate the vantage point in which the object is understood, and therefore its associated meaning.

WHITE FRAUD

COPIES

COUNTERFEIT

Multiple

In 1954 Robert Rauschenberg gathers found objects and combines them as works of art. He describes the new art form as *Combines*. The singular found objects often have multiple instances, references and contexts. This intentionally fraudulent activity can be characterized as *White Fraud*. All repetitive objects and multiple copies are in this sense, deceitful.

The mass-produced object does not escape this analogy; the concept of 'imitation' by ethical standards (that is, an ordinary person viewing one-hundred identical machine fabricated objects) is *perceived* as dishonest and boarding upon falsity. As many people have experienced there is nothing more shameful then wearing the same attire as a visiting friend or colleague and having to stand within the same visible vicinity.

In the productive years leading up to Robert Rauschenberg's famous *Combines* a series of 'blank' paintings were produced. The following gives some context to the term 'white'.

White Dirt – White Fraud

The following is an account of *White Fraud*.

In 1953 Robert Rauschenberg produces two radically opposing works of art *Erased de Kooning Drawing* and *White Paintings*. Self titled.

Two years earlier in October 1951 Rauschenberg writes a letter to Betty Parsons the owner of Betty Parsons Gallery. Self titled. *White Paintings* has reached completion.[81]

The *White Paintings* each consist of several vertical rectangular panels of white paint; they are completely void of any imagery and have no visible framing.   Rauschenberg's *White Paintings* prelude *Erased de Kooning Drawing* as a 'non-work'.

In 1953 the *White Paintings* are exhibited at the Stable Gallery after Betty Parsons failed to give Rauschenberg a show. John Cage gages the artistic achievement, writing:

No subject

No image

No taste

No object

No beauty

No message

No talent

No technique (no why)

---

[81] Walter Hopps, *Robert Rauschenberg* , 230.

> No idea
>
> No intention
>
> No art
>
> No feeling
>
> No black
>
> No white (no and)[82]

Cage goes on to declare that Rauschenberg's white paintings are not in fact empty but rather are open to the change of light and *perception*.[83]

The white paintings are not a finished entity but rather they are attempts of construction. John Cage defines these works as 'processes' rather then discrete 'objects'.[84] They are unfinished. The substance is nothingness.

The 'finished work' the 'nothingness' in *White Paintings* exhibits a temporal disjunction between Greenberg's 'flatness' and what is Rauschenberg's substance.[85] The perceived image to the eye is absent in Rauschenberg's paintings. While they are flat in essence they have no spatial planes in which to convert space. Space, subject and technique

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[82] Branden W. Joseph, "White on White," 112.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid, 111
[85] Ibid, 92

are absent.   In his letter to Betty Parsons Rauschenberg describes the *White Paintings* as:

Nothing

Absence

Silence

Restriction[86]

Rauschenberg attempts to reach the 'finality' of the origin, which he is determined to achieve.[87]   Nevertheless this particular set of works fails to produce a recognisable origin; the works themselves are overly ambiguous.

White Paintings have an extensive relationship to Rauschenberg's artistic practice – including religious themes – that cannot be elaborated on here.   However the 'white' works represent in many ways Rauschenberg's attempt to grapple the concept of what a 'work of art' is.

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[86] Walter Hopps, *Robert Rauschenberg* , 230
[87] Branden W. Joseph, "White on White," 92.

Often when seeking an origin – as Rauschenberg is attempting to do – the very activity embarked on is an attempt into false pretences, the reason that impossible venture is defined as 'white fraud' is that many designers turn to the colour white in order to find this origin. As we shall see, composing the unknown can be hopeless unless one has a method of practice in order to construct those possible instances of *perceived origins.*

WHITE SCENE

ERASING EVIDENCE
ORIGINAL OBJECTS, ARCHITYPES

Construction

The opposing work *Erased de Kooning Drawing* begins to construct an appropriate linage between what is conceived as an original (a completely authentic origin) and a self produced secondary representation of that origin. This is called the construction of a *white scene,* in other words the attempt to construct a *perceived origin.*

Rauschenberg thus makes a series of drawings, after which he solemnly erases each mark. An empty scene remains, each time producing a kind of secondary attempt at a white painting. The works again fail. Rauschenberg realised that this original reference had to come from a source outside of his practice.

Rauschenberg begins to construct his own white scene, and to do so he visits the much accomplished artist Willem de Kooning. The following is an account of what took place.

Crime Scene: De-frauding of de Kooning

A young apprehensive Robert Rauschenberg enters a New York bottle store in 1953. He buys a Jack Daniels, he is aware that de Kooning drinks.

He arrives at the older more accomplished artist's door with a bottle of bourbon (he fully intended to share) and a proposition. What part the alcohol had in the following discussion is left unknown. The various versions of this story combine to create a mysterious tale that continues the myth, thus forming the scenes construction. Before he arrives

Rauschenberg prays de Kooning is not home; that way the lack of a meeting would be ample *evidence* for the construction of the scene.

It would take weeks to erase de Kooning's drawing, the agony would be relief if Rauschenberg had known how uncomfortable de Kooning would make him feel in the coming events. The two engage in some small talk. Upon hearing the proposition – to erase one of his works, de Kooning takes a canvas off his easel and places it in front of the door. The two artists will not be disturbed.

A bottle of Jack Daniels, a proposition and a jarred door. De Kooning reluctantly brings over a portfolio of drawings, uttering under his breath "I know what you're up to".[88] Slowly and evenly de Kooning leafs through the pages, he is not in a hurry, why would he be, he just jarred the door. Who is holding whom at ransom? Finally he pauses.

"No – I want to give you one I'll miss", he shuts the portfolio and brings out a second more valuable set of works. Rauschenberg is happy to have just any drawing, but for de Kooning it had to be loss, an empty

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[88] Mark Stevens, *De Kooning*, 359

void in his collection. The process continues as the tension rises and the portfolio is analysed, "These I would miss".[89]

Taking out a drawing for closer inspection de Kooning begins to comprehend the offence, "No" he says, "I want it to be very hard to erase".[90] And thus a third portfolio emerges, the drawings are densely layered in lead, crayon, charcoal and oil paint, finally a sufficient work is selected which de Kooning can mourn. The deceitful activity constructs the white scene, while simultaneously Rauschenberg commits a crime; the culprit leaves without further explanation.

Later De Kooning gets angry. He discovers Rauschenberg exhibited the drawing untitled: *Erased de Kooning Drawing*. He did not want the public to know, to know what happened, to know the injustice. The visit to the studio was not obtuse (*white*), the agreement was.

De Kooning's work of art is reduced to nothingness, an empty white piece of paper with another artists name credited. Rauschenberg was twenty-eight, he had nothing to lose; his repertoire couldn't be more

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[89] Ibid, 360
[90] Ibid.

monotonous. There was no *evidence* left, no damage, nothing. What crime?

"De Kooning [however] believed the murder should have remained private."[91]

Within this allegory Rauschenberg through his attempt to conceive an origin, only manages to *construct* a scene in which the origin can be *viewed*. His misunderstanding is to assemble the crime scene – its location – rather then construct the crime itself.

The Case of Picasso

A rather more complex example of a scene exists with the reproduction of a sculpture in Chicago by Picasso. There is no inherent crime; however there is a very convoluted scene and plenty of fraudulent activity takes place. The offence transpired as follows:

[91] Ibid.

1968 William Copley conceives an artwork: *SMS Portfolio* (SMS – Sort Message Service).[92]   Copley finances the project.   The *SMS* series Includes: Man Ray, John Cage, Dick Higgins, Marcel Duchamp, Copley himself, amongst others.   The new project disregards the hegemony of the gallery space, its patrons, and the system of fine arts distribution.   Copley planned to mail his *SMS Portfolio*.

Copley produces six portfolios.   Each portfolio contained multiple artworks from various artists, which were replicated and mailed direct. *The Barber's Shop* (1968) by Copley himself, included in portfolio number five, documents a copyright debate between a barbershop and the Chicago city officials over the fraudulent use of a public sculpture by Pablo Picasso.

Copley's work *SMS Portfolio* substitutes the 'unique object' for the 'multiple'.   The term 'multiple' came into use in the 1960's, when "serial conception" as a means of producing artworks was explored by groups such as Fluxus and the Conceptual artists.[93]

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[92] Catharina Manchanda and Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, *Models and Prototypes* p.39.
[93] Ibid, 39.

The Barber Shop consisted of a series of photographs, paper clippings and documentation concerning the copyright infringement of a monumental Picasso sculpture in Chicago. A local Barber Shop had adopted the sculpture for a business logo, and had committed a fraud. However mass-produced brooches, shirt cuffs and key chain made by a separate company existed under restrictions from the Chicago city officials. The debate over the reproduction of Picasso's sculpture was itself the work for Copley.

To complicate the scene further, Copley suggested that the sculpture itself was a production of Picasso's plans, making *The Barber Shop* a copy of a Picasso, of an image, of a shirt cuff, of a Copley, of a facsimile, in a mailed edition of SMS portfolio five.

These successive attempts to leapfrog off Picasso's work only constitute the construction of the scene itself. The creation of an origin is not only misguided but also futile; the idea is to construct a *perceived origin*, in this case the crime itself (along with the culprit) is visible and poorly defined.

A crime requires an origin and an absence of that very same origin.

Retrogressive

Before the construction of a crime is discussed there is one possible methodology which should be briefly outlined which attempts to construct an origin without fraudulent activity, the method of retroactively producing works content.

1912, in synthetic cubism Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque include newspaper clippings into their paintings, instant reference to an origin. It is not considered fraudulent.

1963, fifty-one years later Robert Rauschenberg produces *Retroactive* , the work includes inclusive iconography comprising of a man in space and John F. Kennedy. Rauschenberg is not inheriting his imagery, or the materiality.

1978 Rem Koolhaas publishes *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, the manifesto outlines a progressive understanding of Manhattan's urban development and the social and cultural implications of its rapid adaptation of the human condition. *Delirious New York* occupies a scene within the visual repetition of the grid and the theological interiority of Manhattan.

For Koolhaas the borrowing was not from culture to culture, pop, kitsch, Wham! Blam! Koolhaas was at the time a journalist and an architect. His use was archival to new, old to Wham! The *view* to the origin is clear, even if the origin does not exist. This is a method in which the *perception* of the origin can be obtained.

While Rauschenberg's *Retroactive* does not make a painting through borrowing, he constructs everything that is not within the physicality of an object, such as its history, its cultural and political agendas, its signifiers, in other words its *view* towards an origin.

There is murder, no culprit. Nothing like it. *Retroactive* is a scene of another crime, a collage of situations.

The effective construction of a non-fraudulent scene suggests a method of practice that opens the possibility of staging an empty crime scene, a murder without a murderer – *white murder*.

<u>WHITE CRIME</u>

CONSTRUCTING A SCENE

CONSTRUCTING AN IMAGE

Image

To effectively construct an empty scene the use of cultural images can be integral to its production. As seen in *Diagram .5 White Crime* is the construction of a false origin. This false origin is commonly constructed from the multiple accounts a culture can bring to an original idea (an origin).
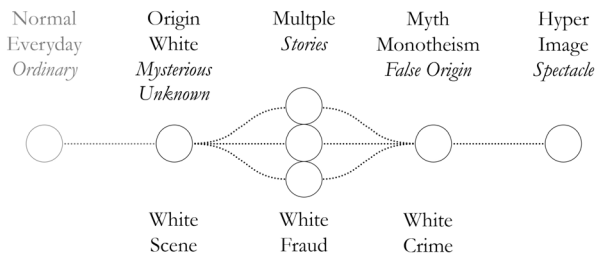

Diagram .6 The Origin and the Image

Therefore one method of construction is to use the hyper imagery of a culture (as they have no physicality, therefore no visibility – a scene

ideally should be *perceived* rather then *viewed*) and project it backward to reveal the origins of its own construction (as outlined in Jacques Derrida's deconstruction).

A rather contradictory and equally valid method would be to use the objects that relate to peoples ordinary activities and reflect them back toward the user as if they were the origin themselves. These objects commonly become defined as kitsch.

Kitsch

A safe scene, a scene of security, you think you know this scene, its safe, it is secure. This scene has no culprit, yet it persists to define itself as such a scene of crime. If times are hard, if surroundings are unfamiliar – kitsch. Kitsch, the style of cultural security. Sam Binkley argues in *Kitsch as a Repetitive System: A Problem for the Theory of Taste Hierarchy* for an "ontological security"[94] a personal security, kitsch the security of commercial culture.

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[94] Sam Binkley, "Kitsch as a repetitive system: a problem for the theory of taste hierarchy," 130.

Binkley outlines an effectual 'security' within the parameters of kitsch; he suggest the thematics of repetition, imitation and emulation have their own distinct aesthetic style.[95]   Thus they must have rules and methods of construction. Ultimately the attempt to construct emulated origins may be to form a personal security as Binkley suggests. Security has been a highly regarded attribute in our modern environment (importantly in order for it to work it must be a non-visible security).

Kitsch outlines two main points, firstly that the lack of physical form in any constructed origin leads to simple representation – this is often defined through everyday objects. The second point is that any object can instill potent attributes on the senses – such as a sense of security. The culprit is absent, although present though a signified relationship.

In the works of contemporary deign duo Fredrikson Stallard, there is a sense that each object they design has an already existing history. Take their early wax candlestick holder *Candle #1* designed in 2002, where the candle and the candlestick holder are cast as one mould in wax, complete with a wick running through the entire object. This object does in fact have a personal history; the original glass candlestick belonged to Patrik Fredrikson's great grandmother.

[95] Abstract Ibid, 131.

The original candlestick was badly damaged so the designer restored the object to its former self before creating the complex mold for casting the intricate form. The value of the original object is translated into the current product, although the materiality has changed, the essence of the object is clearly visible to see. The candles have received a warm response from the public, on one occasion Oscar de la Renta lit one-hundred white candles at a dinner party in New York, while in the same evening Madonna lit one-hundred black candles in Dublin.[96]

To put this example back into context, the original scene is clearly viewable to the user, all the intricacy and detail are still present – the origin is *perceived* rather then emulated.

Another situation could potentially occur. The objective is to *construct* a scene that is only perceived and has no fraudulent activity. A crime effectively must still occur. Before the concept is discussed it may help to identify a red-handed culprit first before suggesting the absence of such a person – the white murderer.

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[96] Marcus Fairs, *Twenty-First Century Design*, 227

The Culprit

"To really appreciate architecture, you may even need to commit a murder."[97]

In Beatriz Colomina's *Introduction: On Architecture, Production and Reproduction* an original culprit is identified. A brief story is told regarding the Greek mythological story of Theseus and the Minotaur. According to the myth Ariadne falls in love with Theseus and gives him a ball and thread in order to navigate the labyrinth and overcome the Minotaur.

Colomina suggests that Ariadne's ball and thread as being a 'conceptual device' for architectural reproduction; Ariadne "interpreted it; and this is architecture in the modern sense of the word."[98] Colomina labels Theseus the first 'architect', the first re-production of a building – the Daedalus's Cretan labyrinth.

The original (origin) is for the first time *perceived* from a new vantage point; the irony of the story is the potential murder of Theseus himself by the threat of the Minotaur. Without indulging in the allegory

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[97] Bernard Tschumi, *Bernard Tschumi*, 29
[98] *Architectureproduction*, 7.

further, it should be noted that the 'conceptual device' is a relevant tool for *constructing perceived origins*.

Photography, Colomina argues, is the 'device' for the critical exposition of architectural reproduction in Mass Media. The photographic device (as a delineation of Ariadne's 'ball and thread') creates a scene, which is consequently "throwing a reality into crisis."[99] In other words the perception of what is real and what is false (or rather what is an origin and what is a fake origin) is unknowable, the effect is forever differed.[100]

The architectural scene, which is thus produced, obscures the relationship between real architecture and the image of architecture. Architectural magazine editor Pierre-Alain Croset of *Casabella* aspires to use this very construction as a method of production. He argues that a magazine "should evoke this dimension using as a critical tool narration", which Croset advocates the use of narration to "salvage 'real' architecture from the ravages of consumption."[101]

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[99] Ibid.
[100] See Derrida's definition of Différance.
[101] Ibid, 20.

Croset's attitude is that narrative should "above all stimulate the reader's desire to produce architecture."[102]   However Bernard Tschumi also addressed the same symptom of architectural reproduction in an attempt to intentionally use the consumerism as a valid method of production in his *Advertisements for Architecture* (1976-1977).

Tschumi presents these and other manifestos as advertisement (without original or inherent authorship), *triggering* a sensory reaction from the consumer society.

Consumption – an attribute consumer society feeds on, is partly based on the use of the hyper image. This hyper imagery efficiently creates an empty scene from a false origin. What is unique about Tschumi's *Advertisements for Architecture* is the successful representation of a *perceived scene* projected back into the system in which it feeds, in order to reveal its own construction. Tschumi after all is a deconstructivist.

As with the mythological story of Theseus, the Minotaur and Ariadne the scene itself often has more then one character involved. In the next account one of the main characters accuses another of fraudulence fearing his own *perceived* falsity in the eyes of his colleagues.

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[102] Ibid, 22.

At the Scene of a White Crime

Jackson Pollock yells at Hans Namuth in the presence of twelve or so guests. Pollock is drunk; he has just completed *Number 29*. Namuth has just finished shooting the final outdoor scene with Pollock, the film struggles to capture the essence of the painting and Pollock thinks he might be acting. They enter the house, they are chilled to the bone.[103] It is late in October.

"Don't be a fool" says Hans, as Pollock reached for the bourbon, (he hasn't touch alcohol for two years, and Dr. Heller is dead, white scenes shrouded by alcohol, Pollock's alcoholism is back and he never got help again, Heller was dead); he poured himself two stiff drinks. He was drunk by the time dinner was ready.

"I'm not a phony" he kept saying to Namuth. "You're a phoney", "[h]is sense of his own fraudulence never left him after that. He would say that there were three great painters in the twentieth-century,

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[103] B. H Friedman, *Jackson Pollock*, 164.

Matisse, Picasso, and himself. And tears would course down his face."[104]

Pollock is losing it. Was it the cold, the bourbon, or his frustration, and the black and whites weren't taking off, it was always uphill for Pollock. Pollocks wife Lee Krasner recalls a comment by a dealer after the black-and-white show "Good show, Jackson, but could you do it in colour?...The arrogance, the blindness was killing."[105]

Dinner is served. Pollock and Hans are at one end of the table. Loud voices are heard. An argument breaks out. Pollock upends the table along with the guest's meals. Lee escorts the guests into the living room, puts the coffee on. Pollock's losing it in the middle of a white scene. Who's the culprit? Who's to blame "I'm not a phoney", "You're a phoney."

Pollock had constructed a non-murder, white murder. The question of emptiness in Pollock's 1951 black-and-white's is asked and Lee replies "After the '50 show, what do you do next?"[106] Pollock in his own aggression (the scene is empty after all) suggests he is the murderer (the

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[104] Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 302.
[105] B. H Friedman, "An Interview with Lee Krasner Pollock."
[106] Ibid.

culprit), declaring "I'm a fucking phoney."[107] Pollock breaks down, but he is by no means the culprit, only the accused, ironically if seems like he is the victim. He is neither.

Pollock's is pissed with Picasso; Hans is just witness to the scene of the crime.

Pollock painted his black-and-white painting after the film was finished. His attempts to construct a new origin leading him to believe in his own fraudulence.   After the black-and-white series the following exhibition needed to be a retrospective "since, as everyone now knew, Pollock could no longer paint. A year and a half later he was dead."[108]

A Perceived Origin

The construction of a white scene is successful. The scene is artfully crafted into a believed event. The culprit is appropriately absent, and the victim remains unseen, *unknown*, *mysterious*.

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[107] Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 281.
[108] Ibid, 302

In each of the examples given thus far the attempt at creating an origin has to some effect succeeded. The result is a new form, technique, practice or method of working.

Although the construction is effectively complete, there remains to be a designed *perception* in which to *view* such an origin. Thus far only potential origins have been constructed. This usually results in a personal understanding of a new origin, which although valid creates a dependency on a specific knowledge outside of any common cultural understanding.

The following illustrates a series of more advanced situations where the allegory is taken to the extreme in order to reveal the witnessing of a *constructed perceived origin*. The metaphor of 'white' and 'a murder scene' from here onwards is presented as *actual* – real physical manifestations of such events. The allegory requires such an explanation as to fully grasp the concept away from *constructed* representations of events towards physically crafted and manufactured (and therefore viewable) scenes.

WHITE MURDER

REAL MURDER
ACTUAL ORIGINALS

Plausibility

In 2001 Fukasawa Elisa "a beautiful and impeccably dressed actress lies dead, caught in the glare of camera lights on an abandoned film set in a kitsch Japanese theme park under Mount Fuij."[109] Framed under the intense white photographic light the photographer Izima Kaoru artfully constructs a fake scene of a perfect murder. The victim lies face up, eyes open sprawled in an abandoned scene, and there is no culprit, seen or known.

Dressed in the spectacle of John Galliano, the fake representation of a murder scene is presented from the point of view of the hyper image. The reality is negotiable; it is constructed to be viewed. Perhaps this is the perfect *perceived origin* discussed in this text, however the scene itself is forged, unreal and in many ways, unbelievable.

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[109] Caroline Edwards, *Fashion at the Edge*, 132

Although believability is conceivably the most difficult obstacle to overcome when constructing *perceived origins* (believability in religion or mythology is negotiable) it is not impossible.

The creation of actual original industrial designed objects does seem plausible. One method is to artificially induce an origin such as in the works of the modernists. The concept is relatively simple; forget all that has happened up to this point in history and investigate the conventions of any discipline as though nothing has gone beforehand.

Believing yourself to be at the origin certainly solves the issue of representation – as it would be theoretically impossible. Of course unless you have the ability as a designer to construct an appropriate origin (an original design) then you may create a meaningless object. Because with no association comes no meaning.

This could explain why the designer's we do remember from modernism are so highly regarded in their respective fields.

The following event identifies an original, or someone whom is viewed as producing original works.

Originality

Pollock asks Lee in front of a particularly good work '"Is this a painting?" Not is this a good painting, or a bad one, but *a painting*!"[110] Pollock could see the potential origin but struggled to construct it, renouncing with his now common vigour, "Everyone's shit but de Kooning and me."[111]

Lee Krasner recalls: "I remember one time hearing something fall and then Jackson yelling, "God damn it" – or maybe something stronger – "that guy missed nothing!" I went to see what had happened. Jackson was sitting staring; and on the floor, where he had thrown it, was a book of Picasso's work."[112]

Pollock can clearly see Picasso's originality, it is what he wants desperately to identify. In 1949 Picasso is filmed by Paul Haesaerts in *Visite à Picasso*, two years later Hans Namuth films Jackson Pollock, both films depict the artists signing their names on glass. Krauss in *The Optical Unconscious* (1993) is convinced this not coincidence.

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[110] "An Interview with Lee Krasner Pollock."
[111] Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*.
[112] "An Interview with Lee Krasner Pollock."

Pollock's drip paintings have no actual representation or counterpart in real life; he eventually titles each work by a number to avoid any association. Perhaps the harshest critic of Pollock's work can ask the simple question 'What does it mean?' and in so doing has identified the lack of substantial correlation to everyday reality.

The works of Jackson Pollock construct a detestable origin, halfway between a *perceived origin* and a potential origin. Picasso on the other hand succeeds where Pollock fails; his imagery is potently littered original concepts and cultural representations.

Pablo Picasso is often considered a genius; if any person can reach a God like status it is surly the persons who can endlessly present *perceived origins* as though you had never witnessed them before.

Picasso paints *Guernica* (1937), a contemporary shocking representation of a German bombing raid. The imagery full of agony and remorse, points to Picasso as being not the murderer but the creator, the designer of the scene. The designer is essentially the murderer, or as the philosopher Jean Baudrillard would put it, 'the murderer of reality' as

the rapid construction of objects in effect creates questionable perverse origins.[113]

WHITE

EVIDENCE
IMITATION

Originals

February 2003. Colin Powell addresses a press conference following his presentation to the Security Council. The American delegation to the United Nations, Powell is addressing the likelihood of armed intervention in Iraq.

Behind Powell is a tapestry. A tapestry reproduction of Picasso's *Guernica*. It was deemed 'inappropriate', 'distracting'. *Guernica* was

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[113] Jean Baudrillard and Turner, *The Perfect Crime*

Picasso's answer to a modern history lesson, in a modernist style.[114] For thirty years Picasso would linger in its wake; the vivid representation as insurmountable.

In February 2003 it was hidden from site, obscured from view and quickly forgotten.

The bombing of Falluja in central Iraq has since been compared to the German bombing of Guernica.[115] Little wonder it was covered up for the press conference, covered by a drape. If there was ever a time when this gross representation was needed, it was then. Good meets evil. A killing white light.

Francisco Goya the Spanish painter illustrates a similar scene with his *The Third of May 1808* (1814). Goya paints a horrific war scene. The painting is comprised of executioners with arms ready, and captives waiting, while pervious victims bodies lay in waiting. One captive stands in defiance, in salvation; he wears a bright white shirt. His shirt is lit fiercely from an opposing white lantern owned by the attackers. Bodies' bloodstained beneath him while he stands in his white shirt.

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[114] Oppler, *Picasso's Guernica*
[115] "Whitechapel Gallery reopens with Picasso and anthrax."

White meets white. Goya transforms the light from good, into a killing evil.

Picasso makes a similar arrangement. *Guernica* sets a similar scene of white light. White again meets white; an electric bulb (the Germans) centre stage meets the white candle of the victims, helpless, bloody and dead. In the optical centre of the image is a gash. An empty slice filled in earlier sketches by a Pegasus springing forth from this horror. Picasso leaves it out.[116]

The white light within the imagery takes on the representation of the culprit and the victim. White itself is often a sign in design that there is an intention to reach an origin. An archetypal form. Here white is present in the scene to identify the culprits presence or rather the perceived psychological presence of such a crime. White it seems is a sure sign of the murder leaving his statement "this is an origin" whether it is or not.

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[116] Oppler, *Picasso's Guernica*

White in Design

The contemporary Japanese designer Tokujin Yoshioka constructs an endless array of white objects. Each object takes on a new form, material or manufacturing process, which through the use of white suddenly appear to be new, clean and in effect original.

In 2004 Dutch designer Marcel Wonders created a new kind of antique chair named *New Antiques*. The idea of a new antique is implausible; however the products are quickly covered in a sheet of white paint and present themselves as *perceived origins*. Black is also used as an alternative in this case and essentially has the same effect.

The design duo Fredrikson Stallard also used white and black to the same effect with *Candle #1*. The historical candlestick cast in white wax instantly carries the representation of the past like a black and white newsprint image from many years earlier.

Maarten Baas a graduate of the Design Academy in Eindhoven presents a striking image of black in his *Smoke* series in 2002. Iconic furniture from the history of industrial design are caught on fire with a blowtorch and presented anew as original designs.

Evidence

The war scene of *Guernica* begins when Picasso observes a black and white newspaper representation of the bombing of Guernica in 1937.[117] Later the horse depicted in *Guernica* is painted with short lines all over its body, these lines are suspected to be newsprint.

> Murder in the Street differs from Murder in the Cathedral in the same way as love in the street differs from the Street of Love. Radically.[118]

The analogy of Picasso's *Guernica* and the white designed objects is that they contain the murders intention; that is to say, the *evidence* of an imitated origin.

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[117] Ibid.
[118] Bernard Tschumi, *Bernard Tschumi*

<u>ABSENCE</u>

BANAL

DETAILS

Optical Empty

There is another characteristic of any designed object which imitates an origin. A lack of content. An empty scene.

The banal shades of white and black carve out a form, which has little adornment. The detail is rendered in a stucco white wash that leaves the attempt at creation clear to see.

Rosalind Krauss describes the diffusion of detail within the re-production of the photograph in the essay *Photography's Discursive Spaces* (1985).

Two versions of the same scene exist in Timothy O'Sullivan's *Tufa Domes, Pyramid Lake (Nevada)* 1868. The photograph contains a landscape occupied by large rock formation protruding from a body of water. Kruss describes the detail illustrated in the original version, "[a]

fanatical descriptive clarity has bestowed on the bodies of these rocks a hallucinatory wealth of detail, so that each crevice, each granular trace of the original volcanic heat finds its record."[119]   The scene although empty of content is layered in a 'hallucinatory wealth of detail.

A second version of the same scene is analysis. Produced for the 1878 publication of *Systematic Geology*. Krauss describes the re-production in her usual demeanour "[b]y comparison, the lithograph is an object of insistent visual banality."[120]   The imitation through its re-production produces the characteristics of a *perceived origin*, banality. Optically the scene is void of the detail of the original; this is another sign of *evidence* of constructing origins.

However a new unexpected nature of the construction of an origin is then revelled.

Krauss continues, "Everything mysterious in the photograph has been explained with supplemental, chatty detail." The lithography re-renders the image sharp and clear where the original image may have been out of focus. The second version adds a crafted detail, which was never

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[119] Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces," 131.
[120] "Photography's Discursive Spaces."

present in the original image; with the intention to increase the legibility to the eye and thus the viewer. It would seem that the crafted view to the origin – the *perceived origin* – is re-produced in an intentional way in order to control the perception of the origin itself.

In an unlikely method the empty scenes can be rendered in an acute detail. The implication of this, beyond the method of correcting origins, is that an origin can become signified itself and therefore contain other origins. The concept of a double occupied scene is theatrically possible. In this scene the *evidence* of the construction of the *perceived origin* can become a new scene within itself.

To greatly simplify the discussion, any designed object which contains the colour white or an absence of detail signifies the presence of an origin. If that presence is manipulated to form its own significance then it is another instance of origin.

The following is a conversation about the construction of a double occupied scene.

<u>THE SPECTACLE</u>

CONSTRUCTING A SYSTEM OF MEANING
CRAFTING A SYSTEM OF MEANING

Occupied Scenes: A View to a Crime

In 2007 Yoshiyuki Kohei talks to Araki Nobuyoshi in photography magazine *Aperture*.

Yoshiyuki Kohei: I turned out the lights in the space, and gave each visitor a flashlight. That way I was reconstructing the original settings. I also blew the photographs up to life-size.

Araki Nobuyoshi: You recreated the original settings.

YK: Yes

[Pause]

AN: Cowards don't go around spying on people and photographing them having sex. What was your motivation?

YK: It had never occurred to me to take that kind of photograph. I knew about peeping, though, and then one day I stumbled onto a scene – an incredible scene. That was when I was still an amateur. At the time, there weren't many skyscrapers in front of Chuo Park in Shinjuku. There was a model apartment in one of them. I was walking behind it with a friend (we had just finished a shoot), when we saw something amazing!

AN: "Something." I like your choice of words.

YK: Yes! I was shocked. They were actually screwing.

AN: They were?

YK: Yes. And when I saw them, I knew this was something I had to photograph.

[Pause]

YK: I think I'm completely ordinary, but maybe there's a little lecher in everyone.

AN: I guess it's a matter of degree.   I am fascinated by this topic…I like the way the legs are open in this shot

[Pause]

AN: Really?   SO you stand at the park entrance watching. Then you see a couple walking fast, so you know you'll get some shots?

YK: That's definitely what I look for.[121]

"In 1971, while strolling across Tokyo to take night shots of skyscrapers, Japanese photographer Yoshiyuki Kohei was surprised to stumble upon a couple having sex on the veranda of a model home."[122] Kohei's photography of couples having sex in public parks mysteriously

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[121] Ibid, 79.
[122] Ibid, 72

disappears shortly after his 1979 exhibition at the Komai Gallery. Apparently destroyed.

From 1971 to 1979 Kohei visited public parks in Tokyo at night. Before taking the photographs Kohei went to the parks for about six months in order to be considered as one of the voyeurs. Kodak's infrared flash captures the scene in black and white.

The scenes constructed on black and white film captures several bright white onlookers viewing unsuspected subjects in empty parks at night. A new possibility arises, a scene with two origins. The viewed and the viewer present two separate significations. The persons whom are viewed become the signifier for the viewer, the viewer then becomes signified by the camera's lens and thus a double occupied scene is constructed. The *evidence* (of black or white, detail or lack of detail) becomes the new sign in which the next perception can take place.

The result is a removed system of meaning and developed perspective. What is fraudulent becomes negotiable upon the multiple readings

inherently possible in such a construction.[123] Consequently the value of such a scene is amplified through their multiplication.

AN: So photographing them isn't illegal?

YK: No, as long as you don't say anything. If you keep quiet, take your photography and run, its okay.

AN: Really? It sounds almost criminal. You know, you could blackmail people with these photographs.

YK: That's true.[124]

Deserted Scenes

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[123] This concept is further defined through the work of Roland Barthes, in which the second perspective is used a method of producing myths.
[124] Ibid, 79

The *evidence* of acute detailing is captured in large format photography of Eugène Atget. Similarly empty scenes are *constructed* thousands of times over in an extensively defined origin.

Eugène Atget photographically documented Old Paris for more then twenty years. After his death remained over 10,000 large plate negatives. Little is known about Atget besides the dates of his birth and death, a collection of failed job attempts and his equipment; an 18 x 24 cm plate camera.[125]

Shot over two decades from roughly 1897 to his death in August 1927, Atget's photographs documented the deserted streets of Paris. Walter Benjamin in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935) acknowledges Atget's Old Paris was shot like the scene of a crime; deserted and empty, aside from an occasional occupant blurred from behind an entrance doorway.

The unsettling empty scenes present two forms of *evidence*. The first is the amount of detail captured due to the size of the negatives used in the documentation. The second detail is rendered out of focus through the long exposure times, blurring any occupants beyond recognition. In

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[125] France and Bibliotheque nationale (France), *Atget Paris*

this instance the photographic negative takes on a false; or rather, distorted version of *origin*.

The *perception* itself is distorted through the instance of time, and the origin takes on a second signification. It is theoretically possible to present a scene multiplied to infinity, that is, that the signification could possibly hold infinite meanings and crafted layers of *evidence* in waiting. For the designer the question is at what level must he operate and if so what his role within the system of production.

The role of the designer within the system of objects he helps to create becomes more transparent due to the vantage point in which he views an object. The fundamental understanding constructing *perceived origins* is a complex metaphor for understanding how to act outside a system in which one is already apart of.

Constructing the Sound-Image

When constructing an archetypal form it is useful to understand the intricacies of such a craft. This text has demonstrated attempts to

construct origins that have predominantly failed or become lost in the process of creation.

The common reason for confusion is the attempt to create an origin rather then a *perceived origin*. Such a perception has definite characteristics. The use of black or white colour for instance often signifies a view to an origin rather then actually presenting it visible. The concept of *perception* is figuratively used because an origin has little universal understanding, that is, each individual person over time constructs his or her own system of meaning for any origin or original concept. The individual adaptation of everyday objects occurs in this way. This can be referred to as the 'sound-image'; a way of referencing the system of relationships between the meanings of objects.

The designer in this case is constructing the 'structure' or structural relationship between each individual objects meaning. When designing in this way it can be useful to use common embedded knowledge within a local culture. Designers will often also choose to distort political or naturalistic relationships between objects as well, as these often have a large body of established relationships.

In a basic way the method of constructing the *perceived origin* is the same as constructing a sound-image. The principle is that such a system can be altered; and subsequently are altered by practicing designers. Industrial designers are the only persons that can be reasonably held responsible for the distortion created when producing large mounts of identical objects.

The second half of this text illustrated a number of advanced situations, which have moved beyond simple means of construction in order to demonstrate the possibility for design opportunities. Furthermore the advanced scenarios present other methods and formal qualities to help demystify the *construction* further.

One final scenario has yet to be discussed, the concept of witnessing the *construction* of a secondary *perceived origin*. The idea was introduced in the photographic work of Yoshiyuki Kohei whereby the viewed and viewer become two combining significations. Creating objects this way would essentially create combined objects; a methodology used since post-modernism to infer additional meaning onto objects – literally combining whole objects to merge their meanings.

By using such Adhocism the designer either completes the interior architect's job for them (creating the relationships between objects and spatial constructions) or becomes uninterested in designing origins (original designers). An example of an appropriately designed double *perceived origin* is Naoto Fukasawa's CD PLAYER (1999) produced by Muji. The CD player resembles a wall mounted kitchen fan, complete with an on/off cable. A CD is loaded into the centre of the object lying parallel to the wall, and is turned on via a hanging power cable. The CD then spins, as you would expect an extraction fan might spin except in this case you are treated with the sound of music. The object successfully contains the expectations of the original objects without defining them in any definite detail; the product is rendered all white and has not buttons, lights or any unnecessary adornment.

The unexpected connection between the combined origins is the build up of speed within the rotation of the CD and a ventilation fan, as Naoto Fukasawa explains:

> When switched on, the CD slowly began to turn, and once its rotations had stabilized, sound poured forth…[w]hen you pull the cord of a ventilation fan, the blades start to turn, and after

a short time, when their rotations have stabilized, the sound of the wind also becomes constant.[126]

When the two *perceived origins* combine there is an amplified enjoyment from the use of the product as its reminds and enriches our current understanding of what a CD player is. Naoto successful distorts our relational system of meaning (our sound-image) given to ordinary common objects. The result is a highly crafted set of *perceived origins* in which Naoto seems at ease with his role within such a system.

The final scene to be depicted describes the witness at the scene of the crime. The witness is at once the signifier of the situation and positions the *construction* of a *perceived origin*. Only this time the crime scene is real.

THE WITNESS

A VIEW TO A CRIME

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[126] *Naoto Fukasawa*, 21

EVIDENCE OF THE ORIGINAL WITHIN ORIGINALS

A Constructed Perception

3 February 1942, Arthur Fellig also known as Weegee (as in ouija board), arrives at the scene of the crime. *Victim of Auto Accident.* The victim lies dead on his back, face up, shrouded by a white sheet. Weegee immediately places the dismantled steering wheel in the victims' hand and shoots the edited crime scene.

The scene is re-produced in high contrast, "[t]he high-contrast lighting produced by Weegee's synchronized flashgun was more then just a stylistic preference…[b]y composing a picture consisting of deep heavy blacks and glaring vivid whites, Weegee knew his photographs were guaranteed to survive the printing process."[127] The scene was ready for mass production.

Weegee waits kneeling before the covered body for the compositional origin – a car moving at high speed. The relationship starts to make

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[127] *Weegee.*

sense. The victim is unseen, hidden under a white sheet the grotesque detail is visually edited out.

9 October 1941, clustered children gather around the victim's body jostling for position "[s]ome are troubled, some are elated to be privy to so dangerous a reality", *Their First Murder.*[128]

The onlookers lay witness to the victim himself; as though for the first time the origin is revealed, the unknown suddenly made visible to see clearly and in full garish detail.

A rare insight of clarity is presented; the onlookers are the signifiers and simultaneously the perceivers of the *origin*.

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[128] Ibid.

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MULTIPLE

Preface

This text examines the structural configurations of second-order semiological systems in order to specify the configuration necessary to conceal an absolute origin. This is illustrated through the analysis of various semiological systems outlined in the work of Saussure, Barthes, Strauss and Derrida. Acquiring knowledge of second-order semiological systems allows practicing designers the ability to adopt and modify existing systems of production; this text also considers the extra workload encountered when working with the configuration of systems.

What is an absolute origin and how can it be concealed? The absolute origin forms the centre of any semiological system; it can also be referred to as the absolute meaning of any concept, a kind of ultimate

meaning to which all other meaning refers.   Such a concept is scientifically unlikely, and so it is often the question of philosophy, the search for a singular truth.   A concealed origin describes a particular configuration of signs that conceal the origins presence.   Such semiological systems exist as an attempt to scientifically study the development of concepts whereby the origin is deferred through a complex layering of systems, for example in the study of linguistics (Saussure), mythology (Barthes), anthropology (Strauss) or philosophy (Derrida).

What is a semiological system?   Saussure coins the word *semiology* from the Greek *sēmeîon* 'sign'; semiology studies the life of signs in society and therefore is part of psychology.[129]   A sign is a double entity of concept and meaning, a sign unlike a symbol is arbitrary; it has no logical relationship with the concept it derives from.   Semiology studies the configuration of the sign and the laws that govern them.[130] Semiological systems are chains of signs linked together horizontally, as time passes and the signs alter in signification, the chain is remapped vertically.   This text explores how this vertical mapping of the system

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[129] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics / Ferdinand De Saussure*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 16
[130] Ibid.

can be reconfigured in an attempt to conceal the centre of each chain, the origin.

Multiple: Stories and Translations

This text analyses the construction of four separate systems into these fields; linguistics, mythology, anthropology and philosophy. Each study originates from Saussure's modernization of philology in his academic lectures at the University of Geneva entitled *Cours de linguistique générale* (Course in General Linguistics). Semiology had a wide reaching effect on the human sciences, and in the development of human-centred design and semantics originally introduced to the field in 1955 as part of the curriculum at the Hochschule für Gestaltung (High School for Design, or the ULM school).

There is always the issue of the adaptation of semiology into other fields; semiology is primarily part of general psychology. In an attempt to give the most accurate account of semiology the original texts have been researched and referenced. The other issue is the translation of each text, in particular the complex French to English translation of Derrida. To arrive at the clearest idea of each text, multiple editions

have been researched and quoted, particularly Saussure's *cours* as the origin of semiology it's reading was critical. The odd quote comes directly from Emile Constantin's course notes taken in 1910-1911 from the lectures of Saussure himself.

Systems

The study of language has passed through three stages of scientific explanation. First 'grammar' was studied "[i]ts only aim was to give rules for distinguishing between correct and incorrect forms" and lacked scope and scientific rigor.[131] The second school of thought named 'philological' or 'classical philology' examined the written text. Philologists compared texts from different periods of time and defining the language of the author, or for more scientific purposes of deciphering archaic languages. The third stage deals with the structures

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[131] Ibid, 1.

of relating parts, titled 'comparative philology' when one language was compared to another.

Comparative philology begins to draw a binary opposition of difference to deduce the origins in language. However the comparative philologists "never asked themselves the meaning of their comparisons or the significance of the relations that they discovered."[132] The origin was ignored or already implied, there was no need to identify any system or origin within a system.

Ferdinand de Saussure in the *Cours de linguistique générale* (Course in General Linguistics) criticizes comparative philologists for neglecting the fact that a language is 'living'.[133] Saussure modernises linguistics to that of 'phonology' the study of the evolution of spoken sounds *phoneme*. Saussure separates language from speaking, "[l]anguage is not a function of the speaker; it is a product that is passively assimilated by the individual…[s]peaking, on the contrary, is an individual act. It is wilful and intellectual."[134]

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[132] Ibid, 3-4
[133] Ibid, 1-2
[134] Ibid, 14

> Whereas speech is heterogeneous, language is defined as homogeneous. It is a system of signs in which the only essential thing is the union of meanings and sound-images, and in which both parts of the sign are psychological.[135]

Here Saussure inscribes a new scientific methodology, a wholly psychological endeavour. The construction of systems of meaning open up the possibility to organize structural relationships between corresponding signs.

> A *science that studies the life of signs within society* is conceivable; it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it *semiology* (from Greek *sēmeîon* 'sign'). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them…To determine the exact place of semiology is the task of the psychologist.[136]

Semiology emerges in order to scientifically study language as a system of signs, a study that is liked but altogether separate from the study of spoken words 'phonology'. Further Saussure states that language and

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[135] Ibid, 15
[136] Ibid, 16

writing are two separate systems of signs, "the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first. The linguistic object is not both the written and the spoken forms of words; the spoken forms alone constitute the object."[137] Further still Saussure names two systems of writing, an ideographic system whereby each word represents a single sign, and the 'phonetic' system, where each sounds reproduces the sounds that make up a word.[138] The phonetic system becomes more complex in its structure given those words within the ideographic system substitute absolutely.[139]

The basic micro construction of a system within semiology consists of three parts, the object, the reference to the object and the meaning associated with the object. A basic misconception is that language is a 'naming process only' that each word corresponds to the object it names. "But this rather naïve approach can bring us near the truth by showing us that the linguistic unit is a double entity, one formed by the associating of two terms."[140] The *concept* and the *sound-image*, "the

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[137] Ibid, 23-24.

[138] Ibid, 25-26

[139] An example of a phonetic system of writing is the Greek alphabet, this can be considered a 'phonetic alphabet' were the letters correspond to their spoken usage. An example of an ideographic system of writing is Chinese "in Chinese the mental substitution of the written word for the spoken word does not have the annoying consequences that it has in a phonetic system, for the substitution is absolute." Saussure 26.

[140] Ibid, 65

latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound" this has no correspondence with speaking 'phonemes'.[141] The linguistic sign is an entirely 'psychological entity' that can be represented in *Diagram .7*.
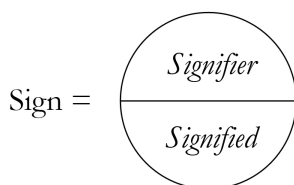
$$\text{Sign} = \frac{Signifier}{Signified}$$

Diagram .7 The Linguistic Sign

The sign is the combination of the concept and sound-image, which Saussure specifies as the *signified* and *signifier*. At this stage there is a basic understanding of how a system is structured, the system itself is made up of simultaneous presences of other signs, this larger relationship is based on difference.

> The important thing in the word is not the sound alone but the phonic differences that make it possible to distinguish this word from all others, for differences carry signification…a segment of language can never in the final analysis be based on

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[141] Ibid, 66

anything except its noncoincidence with the rest. *Arbitrary*
and *differential* are two correlative qualities.[142]

Every sign gains it's meaning from its placement within a larger system
of other signs due to its similarity and difference. The sign is then
mapped out horizontally in its infinite relationship to other signs, while
vertically the development of time adds new layers of relationships in a
linear chain. The sign too is arbitrary in nature due to its relationship
to time and changeability "[i]t is because the linguistic sign is arbitrary
that it knows no other law then that of tradition, and because it is
founded upon tradition that it can be arbitrary."[143] However this
conviction is not absolute as Saussure also comments, "[s]eminology
will have to decide whether it should deal with arbitrary or other signs;
its domain will be mainly that of systems of arbitrary signs, with
languages as the prime example."[144] Signs are only a means of studying
language and as such the their own micro construction relies on the
ability to change through time, to remain arbitrary, as those signs too
rely on counterpart signs, a relationship that can also change.

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[142] Ibid, 118

[143] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (London: Duckworth, 1983), 74

[144] Ferdinand Saussure and Eisuke Komatsu, *Troisième cours de linguistique générale (1910-1911) : d'après les cahiers d'Emile Constantin = Saussure's third course of lectures on general linguistics (1910-1911) : from the notebooks of Emile Constantin*, 1st ed. (Oxford, New York: Pergamon Press, 1993), 76a.

The larger semiological system serves only as a model and needs to be applied to a specific field of study, such as language, anthropology or sociology. Roland Barthes a French literary critic and cultural theorist uses the systems laid out by Saussure to study the construction of cultural myth in France. Barthes uses the structuralist configuration of parts within a system in order to theorize the rearrangement of the larger system of signification: "[M]yth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it, it *is a second-order semiological system*."[145] The vertical linear chain of time Barthes supposes occurs simultaneously in the production of myths. It is no coincidence that this technique of working is named 'structuralism', an attempt at arranging structures.

Barthes clearly organizes the semiological system to investigate a complex system of objects and their current significance, his innovation lies in his ability to construct two systems on top of each other, claiming that a sign could become a new signifier in a second adjacent system.

> We must here recall that the material of mythical speech (the language itself, photography, painting, posters, rituals, objects,

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[145] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 1993), 114

etc.), however different at the start, are reduced to a pure signifying function as soon as they are caught by myth. Myth sees them only the same raw material…myth wants to see in them only a sum of signs, a global sign, the final term of a first semiological chain.[146]

It is this final term that will become the first term in the larger semiological system. Barthes outlines a logical method of constructing semiological systems in order to rationalize how objects might transfer back into the structure of a system and in turn effect their production. Saussure himself questions if a sign may itself be a signifier. "Speaking of *vocal images* <(cf. acoustic image)> is likewise a usage to be wary of. We must decide whether we wish to call the whole a *sign* <(combination of concept with image)> or whether the acoustic image itself can be called a *sign* <(the more material half)>. <This is a question I admit I cannot decide.>"[147]

Barthes translates the semiological system successfully in order to study a separate field of study, presenting a new structure that takes advantage of the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign. This example shows how a

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[146] Ibid.
[147] Ferdinand Saussure and Komatsu, *Troisième cours de linguistique générale (1910-1911)* , 75a

practitioner from another field can use the semiological system as a means of understanding the structural relationships within complex systems. However the example of Barthes construction of 'myths' was chosen for an ulterior motive, the organization of the parts within the system act to hide the centre of the system, in an attempt to construct a false origin in the centre of a system. Not only does Barthes illustrate how to construct a system, he also conceals the origin within the frame of another larger system. The origin is not only a perceived false origin; it is perceived by another system that aids to conceal the origin.

Constructions

This text assesses the possibility of structuring a system that is without truth. Such a falsity exists as an arbitrary sign of modern Saussurian semiology. The phonocentric nature of the linguistic sign alienates the structural relationships between systems that *produce* and systems that subvert.

> The linguistic sign is then a two-sided psychological entity…[t]he two elements are intimately united, and each recalls the other. Whether we try to find the meaning of the

Latin word *arbor* or the word that Latin used to designate the concept "tree," it is clear that only the associations sanctioned by that language appear to us to conform to reality, and we disregard wherever others might be imaged.[148]

The construction of the system is based on the relational parts binary oppositions in an ebbing historical diachronic method. The linguistic sign maps the primary basic relationship of psychological signification, in its own binary opposition between *concept* and *sound-image*, *signified [signifié]* and *signifier [significant]*.[149] The two essential elements construct a scientific explanation for signification, the composition of meaning.

The simple construction of signification from *concept* and *sound-image* form a whole a *sign [signe]* "[a]s regards *sign*, if I am satisfied with it, this is simply because I do not know of any word to replace it, the ordinary language suggesting no other."[150] The linguistic sign's micro structure has no logical relationship "[t]he bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary...I can simply say: *the linguistic sign is arbitrary.*"[151]

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[148] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics / Ferdinand De Saussure*, 66-67.
[149] Ibid, 67
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.

Thus it can be said that entirely arbitrary signs realized better then any others the ideal of the semiological process; this is why language, the most complex and most widespread of the systems of expression, is also the most characteristic one of them all; in this sense linguistics can become the *general pattern for all semiology*, even though language is only a particular system.[152]

The description of an arbitrary sign, and the admission in Saussure's *Cours* of the word sign being retained as there is "nothing else to replace it, everyday language suggesting no other" suggests a origin within the structural logic of Saussure's *Cours* to itself be absent.[153]   "The word *arbitrary* also calls for comment. The term should not imply that the choice of signifier is left entirely to the speaker…I mean it is unmotivated, i.e. arbitrary in that it actually has no natural connection with the signified."[154]   As in language the connection between the phonological nature of the signified differs from French to English, there is no relationship that is natural, as Saussure already marvels at

[152] Jacques Derrida and Translated and Annotated by Alan Bass, *Derrida: Positions* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 20.
[153] Ibid, 18.
[154] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics / Ferdinand De Saussure*, 68-69

how language is the "master-pattern" of all semiology, the ideal and most "complex" system of expression.[155] There is no logical connection between the French word for dog and the English equivalent, the relationship is arbitrary, yet the signified object remains the same.

Saussure's semiological study of the sign differs from his predecessors "[i]t has marked, against the tradition, that the signified is inseparable from the signifier" in this instance the signifier (also known as the *concept, sound-image, pattern-image, sound-pattern, sound-system*) loses its structural interlinking, and acts as a solitary item "Saussure's 'sound-pattern' is above all the natural representation of the word form as an abstract linguistic item, independently of any actualisation in speech."[156]

> It must be added that language is tangible, that is to say, translatable into fixed images such as visual image, which would not be possible for acts of speech, for example. The utterance of a word involves all sorts of movements in the air, the muscles, etc. <which it would be extremely difficult to

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[155] Ibid, 86

[156] Editors note,Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 66.

identity. But in the language there is only the acoustic image, and that can be translated into a fixed image.>[157]

The acoustic-image organizes the counterparts within the system, the concept and sign itself. "It is a system of signs based on acoustic images."[158] The acoustic-image orientates the structure of the concept and sign through differentiation, albeit by an arbitrary relationship.

The construction of the system permits the existence of an origin, an origin that develops closely with the sound-image, otherwise known as the signifier. With the knowledge of Barthes amalgamation of the linear chain of signs, and Saussure's own admission that a signifier may be called a sign, the rearrangement or removal of parts of the system is plausible.

[W]e can not do without the concept of the sign, for we cannot give up this metaphysical complicity without also giving up the critique we are directing against this complicity, or without the risk of erasing difference in the self-identity of a

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[157] Ferdinand Saussure and Komatsu, *Troisième cours de linguistique générale (1910-1911)* , 71a
[158] Ibid.

signified reducing its signifier into itself or, amounting to the same thing"[159]

Derrida investigates the organization of the system while also considering its counterpart relationships, except here Derrida is dealing with the problems of written philosophy. Derrida's investigation, like Saussure's investigation into structural linguistics is unimportant as far as the their topics of discussion are concerned, what is important is their 'crafting' of the structure, and crucially the construction of structural relationships. Derrida's analysis places the structural origin into the guise of a continually transforming centre, themed from Heidegger's phenomenology, the study of appearances.

> [S]tructure – or the structurality of structure…has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a centre or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin. The function of this centre was not only to orient, balance, and organized the structure…but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the *play* of the structure.[160]

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[159] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Routledge, 2001), 281.
[160] Ibid, 278.

Firstly Derrida calls into question the structure, proposing a radical shift in the appearance of the structure, that the structure itself can cause a 'play', a series of appearances, and an absolute origin would limit such system of its multiplicity. Derrida borrows from Heidegger's Being, the concept of freeing language from any 'fixed origin' "[b]ut *in a certain way*, he also sets up 'Being' as what Derrida calls the "transcendental signified." …In a sense, the sense of the final reference, Being is indeed the final signified to which all signifiers refer."[161] The transcendental signified proposes a centre of which all chains of signs and signifiers (if they are interchangeable) are directed. The construction of a system that frames the perception or appearance of an origin into a single entity seems metaphysically plausible "the entire history of the concept of structure…must be thought of as a series of substitutions of centre for centre, as a linked chain of determinations of the centre."[162] The centre is constructed in a chain of repeating centres "repetitions, substitutions, transformations, and permutations" in order to fabricate a structurally refined origin, a system with a singular signifier, a false structural origin.

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[161] Translator's Preface,Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (JHU Press, 1998).
[162] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and difference*, 279.

The argument is not this simple however; the presence of the origin has two possible structural configurations that are simultaneously intertwined, firstly a singular repeating origin as outlined above, and secondly a multiple interpretive reading of an origin, often conceived as mistranslations of origins themselves.

In *Diagram* .8 this text accounts for the third and forth components of structuring origins, these two segments can be said to deal with the re-telling of stories from unknown origins, a kind of translation, or substitution of an origins 'transcendental signified' or absolute origin. Both origins then are inherently false, and semiologically speaking, looping systems of meaning that actively subvert the presence of the origin.

Normal	Origin	Multple	Myth	Hyper
Everyday	*Mysterious*	*Stories*	Monotheism	Image
Ordinary	*Unknown*		*False Origin*	*Profusion*
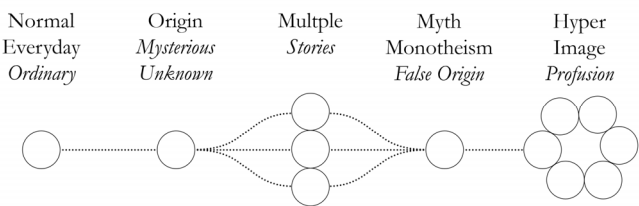
Diagram .8 Structural Origins

The process of craftsmanship is rooted in the human sciences; speech, linguistics, sociology etc. The complex mapping of such systems is best studied in these areas as stated earlier, "linguistics can become the *general pattern for all semiology*, even though language is only a particular system."[163] There is nothing to say that something can not be learned from these structural relationships, given that product design has entered the stage of becoming a part of this complex system, entangled within marketing groups, production costs and increasing media coverage. The ability to understand the systems structure allows the designer the ability to, in this case, frame the appearance of an origin. An ability that will be progressively more desirable as the systems that produce goods become increasingly transformed from the systems that existed before them.

To translate this into designers terminology, as designers become less concerned with the manufacture and production of goods, and more concerned with the distribution and consumption of products the designer's role can become relocated within the system to a position where the very structure of the system and its development become integral to a companies future.

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[163] Jacques Derrida and Translated and Annotated by Alan Bass, *Derrida: Positions*, 20.

Take for example the position of British designer Tom Dixon; he is now the Artistic Director of both Habitat and Artek while maintaining his own studio practice. Dixon's position now involves transforming these well-known companies into the future without losing their presence in the market.

The objective is to substitute the existing system with a new system without disturbing its fundamental construction. The system needs to be reconfigured to allow a new origin to emerge through substitution in an attempt to re-establish the existing system. To craft such a delicate system, knowledge of how to weave the connections between the two systems needs to be examined.

Sewing the Pattern

In 1967 Derrida published three books, *L' écriture et la différence* (*Writing and Difference*), *La voix et le phénoméne* (*Speech and Phenomena*) and *De la grammatologie* (*Of Grammatology*). Derrida illustrates the structural counterparts of the micro construction of the sign in the structure of the books themselves. The works themselves

appear together by no coincidence, the chronology is brought to light in an interview with Henri Ronse published in *Lettres françaises* titled *Implications*, this interview as collated into a small volume entitled *Positions* (1972).[164] Ronse begins by asked Derrida how the reader is to begin reading the series of books, "[i]n response to Ronse's question about how to read these three books published on the heels of the others Derrida first says that *De la grammatologie* can be considered a bipartite work in the middle of which one could insert *L' écriture et la difference*."[165] Then Derrida goes on to say "[i]nversely, one could insert *Of Grammatology into the middle of Writing and Difference*"[166]

Derrida does not so much as hide the origin as search for what has already been hidden, *Of Grammatology* presents a 'grammatological opening' for *Writing and Difference* "whose theoretical matrix is elaborated in the first half of *De la grammatologie* – which, to restate, systematizes the ideas about the sign, writing and metaphysics which are scattered throughout *L' écriture et la difference* – can be defined as the "deconstruction" of philosophy by examining in the most faithful, rigorous way the "structured genealogy" of all philosophy's concepts;

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[164] Translator's Introduction, Jacques Derrida, *Writing and difference*.
[165] Translator's Introduction Ibid.
[166] Jacques Derrida and Translated and Annotated by Alan Bass, *Derrida: Positions*, 4.

and to do so in order to determine what issues the history of philosophy has hidden, forbidden, or repressed."[167]

Derrida's examination of philosophy extends from Heidegger's *presence* "the reference to the Heideggerean deconstruction of presence is constant throughout Derrida's works…The *gramma*tological…opening consists in the examination of the treatment of *writing* by philosophy…the notion of presence functions in philosophy and of what this notion serves to repress. Derrida arrives at this position through a close scrutiny of the philosophical genealogy of linguistics, especially the philosophical treatment of the sign."[168] To further complicate the structural positioning of the origin, Derrida mentions that *Speech and Phenomena* the third book in the series should precede the *Writing and Difference* and *Of Grammatology* as it "is posed, at a point which appears juridically decisive", questioning the voice of phonetic writing of the entire history of the West, as it is represented in metaphysics in the most modern critical form: Husserl's transcendental phenomenology.[169] "What is 'meaning,' what are its historical relationships to what is purportedly identified under the rubric "voice" as a value of presence, presence of the object" Derrida is more than

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[167] Translators Introduction, Jacques Derrida, *Writing and difference.*
[168] Translator's Introduction, Ibid.
[169] Jacques Derrida and Translated and Annotated by Alan Bass, *Derrida: Positions*, 4

familiar with Husserl given Derrida's first publication was his own translation of Husserl's *The Origin of Geometry.*

Derrida "says that the introduction to *The Origin of Geometry* is the counterpart of *La voix et le phénoméne*, for the "problematic" of writing was already in place [in the former], as such, and bound to the irreducible structure of [the verb] 'différer' [to differ and to defer…] in its relationship to consciousness, presence, science, history and the history of science, the disappearance or deferral of the origin, etc."[170] Here the structure according to Derrida is laid out prior to the system's own construction, which is deemed necessary in order to mark out a system of (de)construction, that is, a system which contains parts that are present or absent, as blank spaces, in order to identify false relationships. Derrida adds this note appended to the bibliography of *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass:

> By means of the dates of these texts, we would like to indicate [*marquer:* to mark] that in order to bind them together [*relier:* to put between covers the pages forming a work, originally by sewing], in rereading them [*relire: relier* and *relire* are anagrams], we cannot maintain an equal distance from each of

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[170] Translator's Introduction, Jacques Derrida, *Writing and difference.*

them. What remains here the *displacement of a question* certainly forms a *system*. With some interpretive *sewing* [*couture*] we could have sketched this system afterward…We have only permitted isolated points [*le pointillé:* originally a means of engraving by points] of the system to appear, deploying or abandoning in it those blank spaces…without which no text is proposed as such. If *text* [*texte*] means *cloth* [*tissu:* the word *texte* is derived from the Latin *textus*, meaning cloth (*tissu*), and from *texere*, to weave (*tisser*); in English we have *text* and *textile*…], all these essays have obstinately defined sewing [*couture*] as *basting* [*fauflure:* the *faux*, "false," in *fau-filure*, or "false stringing," is actually an alteration of the earlier form of the word, farfiler or *fouriler*, form the Latin *fors*, meaning outside. Thus basting is sewing on the outside, which does not bind the textile tightly.] (December 1966.)"[171]

Derrida presents a complex interwoven structure with the appearance of some parts while other parts remain hidden. The linkages are falsely paced together so that from outside the system's meaning or origin is loosely defined. Further still the writing of Derrida loses some of its relationships through translation from French to English "Derrida

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[171] Translator's Introduction, Ibid.

always writes with close attention to the resonances and punning humour of etymology" as can been seen in the above translators notes.[172]

This use of words with multiple meanings may seem of topic, however this very act assists in deluding the true meaning from any written text, it too subverts the origin. This complicated prose is no doubt attributed to the reading of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In 1956 to 1957 Derrida spent a year at Harvard in the Widener Library reading Joyce, "[s]ince then, Joyce has represented for me the most gigantic attempt to gather in a single work…the presumed totality, not only of one culture but of a number of cultures, a number of languages, literatures and religions."[173] Joyce through *Ulysses* and its counterpart *Finnegan's Wake* attempts to construct a singular origin, a kind of transcendental signified, a centre in which all signifiers from all chains through time link. In this sense all signifiers exist at the same time, and in the same space, a concept Barthes tried to systematize. However Derrida has another explanation for this phenomenon, the French term *différence*.

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[172] Translator's Introduction, Ibid.
[173] Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, Perspectives in continental philosophy (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 25.

Différence serves as a micro system for the concept of deconstruction. "[T]he word [*difference*] combines in neither the active nor the passive voice the coincidence of meaning in the verb *différer:* to differ (in space) and to defer (to put off in time, to postpone presence)."[174] Therefore the opposite system presents itself, Derrida does not attempt to construct a single complete signified, but rather attempts to de-centralize systems which *appear* total.

> Throughout *Writing and Difference* Derrida links the concept of *différence* to his play on the words *totalitarianism* and *solicitation* He sees structuralism as a form of philosophical totalitarianism, i.e., as an attempt to account for the totality of a phenomenon by reduction of it to a formula that governs it *totally*. Derrida submits the violent, totalitarian structural project to the counterviolence of *solicitation*, which derives from the Latin *sollicitare*, meaning to shake the totality (for *sollus,* "all," and *ciere*, "to move, to shake"). Every totality, he shows, can be *totally shaken,* that is, can be shown to be founded on that which it excludes, that which would be in *excess* for a reductive analysis of any kind.[175]

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[174] Translator's Introduction, Jacques Derrida, *Writing and difference*
[175] Translator's Introduction, Ibid.

At this stage the construction forming the system becomes troublesome, not because of its implicit complexity but rather because Derrida asks us to think against the logical configurations in which we are accustomed to, he invites us to think through deconstruction. "[O]nce a system has been "shaken" by following its totalising logic to its final consequences, one finds an excess which cannot be construed within the rules of logic, for the excess can only be conceived as *neither* this *nor* that, or both at the same time – a departure from all rules of logic."[176]

With this final statement it becomes increasingly clear that constructing a system with deferring parts reverses a systems construction from becoming static. This could be used as a means of 'shaking' a system that is embedded in any industry, indeed it reveals its excess, or in design terms, its unexplored potential or hidden niche markets. Of course this could be applied in other areas, such as the process of design itself, or the redesign of existing systems. However there is another potential system that contains more elusive qualities, the construction of a falsely 'stringed' together series of stories defining an origin, otherwise known as a myth.

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[176] Translator's Introduction, Ibid

Myth Making

The myths themselves are generated through compiling the stories and meanings of objects onto each other, as Roland Barthes has outlined in his 'second-order semiological system' claiming that a sign could become in the second larger system a new signifier as seen in *Diagram* .9. The myth as Barthes states, "wants to see in them only a sum of signs, a global sign" the centre of the system. A myth inherently prefers that all signifiers and all meaning be linked to only a single signified, a transcendental signified.

Derrida's deconstruction opposes such a construction; "a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification indefinitely."[177]

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[177] Ibid, 280

Language {
1. Signifier   2. Signified

3. Sign   I SIGNIFIER   II SIGNIFIED

MYTH {

III SIGN
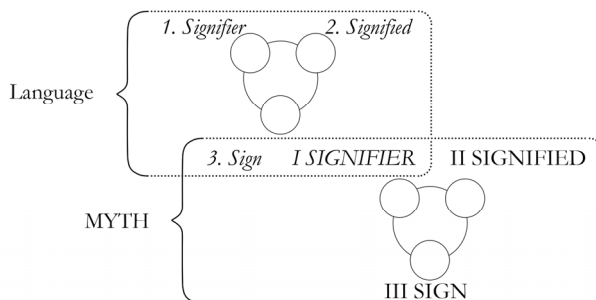
Diagram .9 Roland Barthes Myth

However the construction of an absolute centre is incredibly desirable, even if the construction itself relies on subversion and substitution. In Barthes myth the sign itself is hidden within the second system of myth, thus the origin becomes deferred to another and another, as Derrida appends "[o]ne cannot determine the centre and exhaust totalization because the sign which replaces the centre, which supplements it, taking the centre's place in its absence – this sign is added, occurs as a surplus, as a *supplement*."[178]   Derrida is in fact commenting on the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss who also implemented structural linguistics into his analysis.

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[178] Ibid, 289

Strauss applies the scientific and strategic nature of structural linguistics to the study of anthropology. The parts within the system then become the relationships between people and are then layered against the larger relationships in the society. The construction of myths is based on the configuration of these sociological systems.

In the construction of myths the centre or origin is singular and total, yet its totality refers to an origin that is never truly present "[t]here is no unity or absolute source of the myth. The focus or the source of the myth is always shadows and virtualities, which are elusive, unactualizable, and nonexistent in the first place. Everything begins with structure, configuration, or relationship."[179]

In Strauss's book *Structural Anthropology* (1967) he explores the possibility of structural linguistics usage in anthropology illustrating its likeness to linguistics, stating "[l]ike phonemes, kinship terms are elements of meaning; like phonemes, they acquire meaning only if they are integrated into systems. "Kinship systems," like "phonemic systems," are built by the mind on the level of unconscious thought."[180] Strauss also suggests that structural linguistics – a metaphysical study –

[179] Ibid, 286.
[180] Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (Garden City, N. Y: Doubleday, 1967), 32

can modernize social sciences "[s]tructural linguistics will certainly play the same renovating role with respect to the social sciences that nuclear physics, for example, has played for the physical sciences."[181]

Strauss rather than strategically constructing systems or manipulating existing systems, attempts to passively observe them, as is the occupation of the anthropologist. In chapter nine of *Structural Anthropology* entitled *The Sorcerer and His Magic* Strauss gives an account from the autobiography of Quesaild a Kwakiutl Indian from the Vancouver region of Canada, originally obtained by Franz Boas published in *The Religion of the Kwakiutl* (1930).[182] The autobiography of Quesaild retells his journey into the world of shamanistic healing and the construction of false relationships between the sorcerer and group in which he is apart of.

This account displays the effectiveness of a social system within a group that upholds the false 'fabric' of the system. The shaman is actively trained to subvert the system and defer its origin, the careful craft and articulation of the system is constructed in a way that protects the false origin from becoming known. The stakes for the shaman are high, if he

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[181] Ibid, 31
[182] Ibid, 169

does not maintain the system's substitutions it will dramatically affect his ability to heal his people, he may even be stripped of his power.

Quesaild believed that sorcery was an elaborate trick, and began to associate with the shamans in an attempt to learn their craft. Eventually one of the shamans offered Quesaild to become a member of their group and Quesaild started his apprenticeship to become a shaman. He soon discovers that his feelings were justified, upon his first lesson all his suspicions are confirmed in a mixture of training techniques involving "pantomime, prestidigitation, and empirical knowledge, including the art of simulating fainting and nervous fits, the learning of sacred songs, the technique for inducing vomiting" all of which from Quesaild's perspective appeared to be trickery.

> Above all, he learned the *ars magna* of one the shamanistic schools of the Northwest Coast: The shaman hides a little tuft of down in the corner of his mouth, and he throws it up, covered with blood, at the proper moment – after having bitten his tongue or make his gums bleed – and solemnly presents it to his patient and the onlookers as a pathological

foreign body extracted as a result of his sucking and manipulations.[183]

This exclusive healing technique proved to be quite successful, and upon 'healing' his first case he became known as a 'great shaman'. "He interpreted his success in psychological terms – it was successful "because he [the sick person] believed strongly in his dream about me."[184] Later while visiting a neighbouring Koskimo tribe Quesaild notices the local shamans use a differing technique to his own, "the Koskimo shamans merely spit a little saliva into their hands, and dare to claim that this is "the sickness."[185] In this moment Quesaild realises that there is a technique which is "more false, more mystifying, and more dishonest then his own."[186]

The differing techniques present two differing systems, the second technique is not more 'false' as such, but rather more loosely structured and lacks the craft needed to hide its dishonesty, ultimately Quesaild's technique yielded better results.

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[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid, 170
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.

As Saussure stated earlier semiology is to be determined by the psychologist, and it is by these grounds that Strauss critiques the story of Quesaild. Strauss describes the acts of healing as psychotherapy, and begins by defining the system in which the sorcerer is a part of; he calls this the 'shamanistic complex'.

> [F]irst, that of the shaman himself, who, if his calling is a true one (and even if it is not, simply by virtue of his practicing it), undergoes specific states of a psychosomatic nature; second, that of the sick person, who may or may not experience an improvement of his condition; and, finally, that of the public, who also participate in the cure, experiencing an enthusiasm and an intellectual and emotional satisfaction which produce collective support, which in turn inaugurates a new cycle.[187]

Therefore the system is comprised of three parts, the shaman and his ability to uphold the system's false construction (but psychologically valid construction), the group and their belief in the shaman and the conviction of his system (even if it is not his construction), and finally the sick person, "[t]he least important aspect of the system, except for the fact that a patient successfully treated by a shaman is in an especially

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[187] Ibid, 173

good position to become a shaman in his own right, as we see today in the case of psychoanalysis."[188]

If in this case there has become a kind of structure that allows the existence of a total origin, a false relation of lateral parts, the origin from the outside of the system remains false, or to be precise without an origin. To construct a system with a false absolute origin, the primary goal is to avoid the finality of a true origin; it must supplement itself into a new or repetitive system. The structure from within the system (for the shaman, group and patient) always appears in its full presence. "[T]he entire history of the concept of structure, before the rupture of which we are speaking, must be thought of as a series of substitutions of centre for centre, as a linked chain of determinations of the centre."[189]

From the perspective outside of the system, a point of view that is 'impenetrable' for those within the system, which is why anthropology is particularly helpful in this area, the system remains total often through its own mysticism. These systems can encompass large groups of people, such as religion, belief systems, corporate identities, and larger social, cultural and political systems. Each of these systems has a

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[188] Ibid, 174
[189] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and difference*, 278

'sorcerer' who often engages in upholding the psychological states of those in the group. The sorcerer mediates the substitution of the origin, however the system itself, its structural totality is governed by that which is outside of it.

> [I]t has always been thought that the centre, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which while governing the structure, escapes structurality…The centre is at the centre of the totality, and yet, since the centre does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality *has its centre elsewhere*…And again on the basis of what we call the centre (and which, because it can be either inside or outside, can also indifferently be called the origin or end, *archē* or *talons*), repetitions, substitutions, transformations, and permutations"[190]

The construction of a false origin; either singular or multiple, relies heavily on the perception of the signified, how it appears to those within the system, how it appears to the system; the signifier of the signifier as Derrida defines it "[the] "[s]ignifier of the signifier" describes on the contrary the movement of language: in its origin, to be sure, but

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[190] Ibid, 279

one can already suspect that an origin whose structure can be expressed as "signifier of the signifier" conceals and erases itself in its own production."[191] It becomes necessary to layer a sign's signifier onto the origin, in an unintentional attempt to subvert it. The sorcerer's role is both to represent this subversion and actively uphold it, positioning himself within the system as the linkage to the origin he subverts.

This positioning is gained through the observation of the system and the precise placement within its structure; an activity the designer may long for but fails to recognize its significance (fails in comprehending the system from the exterior) or the amount of work needed in upholding such a position.

It should be possible to observe a complex system or systems and place oneself within its construction. This creates a self-referencing system as the designer may alter the positioning of his or her own reference while they themselves reference. This would ideally increases the consumption and desirability of the system, however it is more likely that a designer would rather adopt an existing system or mark out weak links within a poorly functioning system.

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[191] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 7.

From the designer's perspective the craft is in observing these systems, identifying stacked systems that often have loosely referenced outdated concepts (signifieds). Then integration can occur much like the shaman becomes part of his own system, however like the shaman the designer may find the their acts forms of 'trickery' when viewed from outside the systems limits.

It should also be possible to attach a larger system onto an existing system, in order to establish a new false origin. Much like a grand marketing scheme this larger system would need to position its own origin as the signifier of the system it supersedes. The new second system would then need to be maintained through constant public exposure, but while doing so avoid communicating the system transparently. Like the shaman the more convincing the craftsmanship the likely the system is to succeed.

This critique of Saussure, Barthes, Strauss and Derrida himself illustrates the ability to structure 'incomplete' systems that lack any final origin; also it touches upon the construction of total systems, a concept that is perhaps unreachable yet by some nature, desirable. As the system's centre shifts, and the existing relationships retraced and

deferred, the new 'signifier of the signifier' acts to "conceal and erase[s] itself in its own production".[192]

Concealment

The vertical re-organization of the systems through time has two configurations. Firstly each secondary system can come from a single origin, such as the retelling of former stories. In this case the origin has been multiplied into a series of coexisting origins. In comparative mythology these systems would be compared in order to identify a commonality between them and thus uncover their absolute origin. Alternatively the system may present itself already as an absolute origin. In this case the system layered over the previous systems, the task then is to trace the systems to the eventual origin. In both cases the origin is already concealed in it's own configuration, it must be carefully observed and deciphered to reveal its latent pattern.

This task of carefully observing is often the job of an executive manager within a business with the intention of strategically judging how to

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[192] Ibid.

modernize an existing brand, product, company, franchise or even relationships between the employees and the business. The system can appear convoluted and unclear. But once the system is laid out clear to see, the references mapped and systems brainstormed, what then?

The system could be communicated back toward the system, made transparent to customers, employees and executives, however this is also a more subversive plan of action, to re-conceal the origin, to protect its foundations, to protect it from theft, imitation and appropriation.

On the other hand by re-concealing the origin within a new system, or by supplementing components within a system, a new layer is added, and a myth is constructed. It is then up to the creator to uphold the myth, to maintain its illusion, to keep those who occupy the system under its spell. The creator is at this stage fully embedded in the configuration of the system, at this point it is vital to keep a perspective open from the outside of the system as not to invest oneself in the illusion of the false origin.

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BLUR

Preface

This text focuses on the configuration of the signifier within the semiological system; particularly the vertical layering of signifiers divorced of signifieds. This is analyzed in the work of French philosopher Jean Baudrillard and Italian product designer Ettore Sottsass. Studying the important role the signifier has on consumers' senses is a valuable tool that all product designers could learn from.

The reader should keep in mind that the signifier can at times be exchanged for the sign. This is particularly important when comprehending the vertical displacement of systems of signs, as the signs are counterpart to the signifier. Once the signified is removed the sign becomes even more closely intertwined within the sign. The

signifier gains it's meaning from its environment and its horizontal relationship to other signs within the larger system. Through the process of time these relationships amend and revise themselves, causing a new horizontal layer of signs to be fabricated.

What happens to this vertical mapping when the signified (the physical object) is removed from the system? Can a designer work in such a manner, and if so what could he possible construct? These questions will be answered in the following text, however there is one other theme that enters into this discussion, the presence of time. The verticality of the system relies on the constant presence of an object through time, but what, as is suggested, if there is no object, no signified? How then will the system configure itself?

Blur: Layering the Signifier

The concept of constructing a signifier has several implications for the designer. Technically any design that does not make it to mass-production remains as an isolated signifier, a plan or marking out of a particular relationship. On the other hand if it does become mass-produced how does its singular signifier effect the environment it is now

apart of, taking into consideration that there now may be thousands of singular signifiers communicating the same assault on the sense.

The signifier also has a more poetic application mirrored in the graduate designers who specialize in conceptual designs. Their products often rely entirely on the construction of the signifier as is demonstrated in the work of Sottsass. The hurdle in this form of design is to make a profitable return on an object based on something as immaterial as the signifier.

The text is split into two distinct parts; one focusing on Baudrillard's theories, while the other part discusses the journey of Sottsass as he attempts to construct his own signifier. The focus is primarily on the construction of the signifier and not its exchange value; such a study would require a more in-depth analysis of the value system outlined by Karl Marx. This additional research would be useful given the motivations of the consumer, however the text confines its investigation to the construction and manipulation of the signifier.

The construction of signifiers without signifieds or any physical personification is primarily observed in the virtual media and advertising messages prevalent in contemporary society. This context is

significant given the actuality of the signifier; the isolated signifier is by all accounts, fake.

As Baudrillard illustrates the layered signifier masks the *absence* of basic reality, reality being the origin within any semiological system. The fake object is then perceived as real, and continues its own subversion. The question needs to be asked if the designer wishes to participate in the construction of systems at this level at all? Is it ethically appropriate? Perhaps the advantage of removing the origin presents too much of an overwhelming temptation for the product designer to ignore. As shall be discussed, the advantage is the ability of the origin to withstand substitutions, transformations and permutations.

PART ONE

Hyperreality

In 1981 the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) coins the term *hyperreality*.[193]

The construction or physical production of invisible objects (psychological objects, also referred to as sound-images or signifiers) begins with the questioning of reality itself; what the hands of a

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[193] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1.

craftsman make and what objects are *produced*[194] through their associated psychological meaning rather then through machine production.

In 1916 Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* is posthumously published from the notes taken from his lectures from 1891 to 1913 when Saussure passed away. Saussure outlined how systems and structural relations could be used to study linguistics through semiology.[195] Semiology studied the configuration of the sign; a double entity of concept and meaning (or object and sound-image).[196] The large configuration of signs can be called the system, or sometimes the system of meaning.[197]

The development of structuralism[198] and later poststructuralism occurred through the liberal exercising of Saussure's theories, and

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[194] 'Production' refers to the 'system of production' or the 'structural relationships' that give objects their inherent meaning. They are 'produced' or 'constructed' through a traceable network of relationships; this study of relationships can be referred to as semiology, as coined by Ferdinand de Saussure in the *Course in General Linguistics*.

[195] A term he coined from the Greek *sēmeîon* 'sign.'

[196] Ferdinand de Saussure et al., *Course in general linguistics*, 16

[197] As oppose to a 'system of concepts' because a sound-image was never fully defined by Saussure as being differentiated from a sign, the two terms are in a sense interchangeable.

[198] A method of study that investigates specific fields as being complex structures of interrelating parts. A scientific *method*, which reasons that an objects meaning comes from its relationship to the larger structure.

eventually found an application (amongst others) within product design, proposing a scientific reasoning for validating the meaning in consumer products.

The French product designer Philippe Starck has himself put some semiotic meaning into objects. For example his *image*[199] far proceeds his actuality in real life, and thus his public identity holds esteem over his design practice and often even the objects of his production.[200] Starck was one of first designers to reach celebrity status; he even sports his own reality TV series on BBC2, in which the winner will be hired for six months in Starck's design studio.[201]

In *The System of Objects* (1968) Jean Baudrillard reinterprets Marxism's critique on *production* though the consumer societies drive for *consumption*. Baudrillard theorizes a system of signifieds; the counterpart of the sound-image, and gives an account of their presence in contemporary societies.[202]

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[199] Referring to his marketed personality. Image also refers to 'sound-image' or the signifier/sign.
[200] This has also become more noticeable in the studio practices of Dutch designer Marcel Wonders and British designer Tom Dixon.
[201] "BBC | BBC Two Programmes - Design for Life."
[202] Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 1.

The title of the book *The System of Objects* gives the best clue as to what Baudrillard was speculating. The text combines Karl Marx's theory of social value and production (including the workers in factories literally producing goods) with Ferdinand de Saussure's structural method of analysis of meaning generated through systems. The basic analogy is that Baudrillard places the differing component parts of the production of goods in the Saussure's system to reanalyse Marx's views on the value the production worker has within his society, the key point is that Baudrillard recognizes the consumption of goods drives (through the system) creation of objects (signifieds) rather then the production.

Baudrillard is convinced that the meaning of objects when purchased, or even their ambient presence affects our *pathological thought*; our mental construction of the world.[203]

It is from this stance that Baudrillard's famous *hyperreality* is staged. But first a recap of the development of metal images is needed to fully grasp Baudrillard's theory. Saussure outlined a *potential language* – a language that has no objecthood or representation in reality. A kind of word that can only exist in our mental images. He calls it the *sound-image*, or rather the sound-image is the mental version or recollection of

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[203] Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society* , 25.

a physical object.[204]   The sound-image comes from the idea of an *acoustic-image* which is often referred to as the *pattern-image*: this is because *pattern* has no reference to sound, and has more relationship to the idea of complex systems; patterns.[205]

A structural anthropologist of the mid 20th century, Claude Levi-Strauss, uses Saussure's structural method to develop an observation of the *pattern-image* or invisible objects that are used by indigenous shamans (refer to *Diagram*.10).   The objects themselves exist to the people of the tribe as *pathological objects* that can only become 'real' if three criteria are fulfilled:

a)   That the administrator of the unknown (the shaman) has enough belief in his own power.

b)   That the patient or recipient believes in the power of the administrator.

c)   That the group or social community witness and reaffirm the objects existence.

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[204] Ferdinand de Saussure et al., *Course in general linguistics*, xv Translators Introduction.
[205] Ibid. Translators Introduction.

They believe collectively that the sound-image exists, or shares a similar version of sound-image.[206]   Strauss was certain that the group was the most important component in forming the belief of *potential objects*.
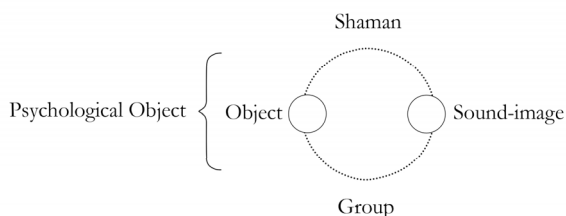
Diagram .10 Claude Levi-Strauss' Psychological Object

Diagram .10 shows the relationship between the sound-image and an object – the object can be a physical object such as a talisman or even part of an animal or bodily substance (such as blood). The object can also represent a spoken word – such as a collective chant or any word signified (the object in which someone refers to by speaking a word). The shaman and the group actively bridge the gap between what is real and imaginary, together through a collective willing a sound-image can seem to manifest itself; I have referred to this as a *psychological object*.

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[206] Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 176.

Any physical object according Saussure's theory of systems is constructed from three components (see *Diagram* .11), the object (or signified or concept or spoken word), a sound-image (or signifier or pattern-image or mental word) and the meaning of the object in binary[207] relation to other objects (other signs).[208]
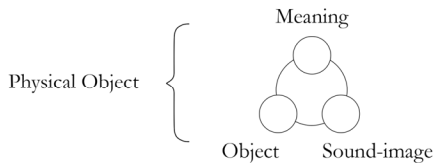
Diagram .11 Ferdinand de Saussure's Construction of Physical Objects

Structural analysis through systems beings to become untangled through the introduction of deconstructivist theory in the late-20th century, which is not so much a development of structuralism but a contemporary reaction against it.   Jacques Derrida explores the possibility that writing and text may be of more or of equal importance as speech.

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[207] Binary relation meaning that a 'chair' is a chair because it is not a table. Remember that structuralism is a *scientific* method. Science is essentially based on the idea of proving that something is not false, rather then it is the case, science is upheld through binary opposites.

[208] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics / Ferdinand De Saussure*, 67

Spoken words relate directly to the idea of a *sound-image*; a mental recollection of a word or physical object, however if written words are taken into account they form a more arbitrary meaning. A written word can have many meanings. The problem is that the reader cannot quarry written words; the authors' intent is lost in the medium and the true meaning of the author is often left unknown. Text becomes easily misinterpreted, creating multiple meanings from a single source.

Derrida uses the word *différance* to describe the multiple meaning that text can obtain from its reader. Différance meaning to both 'differ' the meaning and 'defer' the meaning of the text, (because you can never be sure which of the multiple meanings is truly meant) and thus the true meaning becomes unattainable. As can be translated in the word itself deconstruction counters structuralism by interpreting objects as *losing their construction*.[209]

Derrida acts to destabilize the meaning of a text (or the structure holding meanings in place) by reverse engineering the work back to the authors' perspective. From here the multiple paths the text could be viewed from resembles a complex tree diagram. By re-structuring the

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[209] William E Deal, *Theory for Religious Studies*, 84.

relationships between the multiple perspectives a new reading can be found. New or existing meanings can be analysed. The structure has not changed but expanded; the 'pattern' within *pattern-image* is revealed perhaps for the first time in its entirety.

Jacques Derrida does not reveal any hyperrealities, if anything his job is to pour cold water over our heads; so that we might see things clearly again, even if our new vision is potentially unobtainable or infinitely complex. For this reason I have placed deconstruction at the opposite end of the spectrum of hyper-real, in the realm of super-normal (see *Diagram* .13).

The term deconstruction was first used in Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1967) is his translation of the French word *Destruktion* used by Heidegger.[210] At the time the word deconstruction in French referred to "the process of disassembly in order to understand parts in relation to the whole", in which Derrida used with a preference to the written word.[211] The sound-image seen from the point of view of deconstruction, has the ability to distort their counterpart objects.

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[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid.

The sound-image as Saussure describes it, is the "psychological imprint of sound, the impression that it makes on our senses"[212] and while Derrida's thoughts are not without rational contemplation, as the definition of sound-image is clarified "The psychological character of our sound-images becomes apparent when we observe our own speech. Without moving our lips or tongue, we can talk to ourselves or recite mentally a selection of verse."[213] The relationship between sound-image and written words is never quite described by Saussure himself. As a result the construction of psychological objects and their relationship to potential meanings (which themselves have their own production) remains unanswerable. Theoretical.

Production

The double reference to the signifier (the hyperreal) becomes identifiable through the mythmaking of another French mind, Roland Barthes. The poststructuralist uses Saussure's structural analysis to define a series of modern myths in his collated work *Mythologies* (1957).

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[212] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics / Ferdinand De Saussure*, 66.
[213] Ibid.

Barthes is stepping in the right direction for the construction of Baudrillard's hyperreality.

Barthes refers to the concept of *myth* a sound-image being used again as a new and more abstracted reference (see *Diagram* .12). By taking a sign or meaning of an object and using it as a new sound-image (3.Sign – a special type of sound-image which is physical: a promotional poster or advertisement with a photograph selling a perfume[214]) you get a new sign or meaning, a kind of culturally contrived meaning.
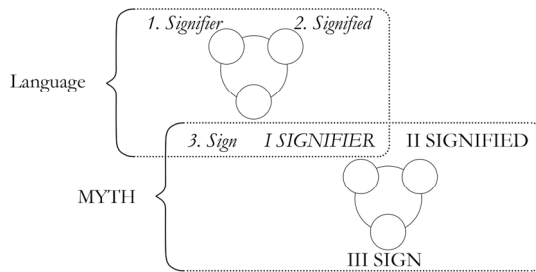
Diagram .12 Roland Barthes Myth Making: The Double use of Signs

A new signifier is created (I SIGNIFIER) an object, which becomes in a theoretical sense a new sound-image; Barthes effortlessly substitutes the two states of being. The sound-image subverts the origin of meaning

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[214] Perhaps the first identification of a hyperreality.

and adds another layer of production. The added stage of *production* relies on the *consumption* of the first sound-image as a part of cultural system.

The quotidian objects of cultural heritage as Barthes effortlessly describes in *Mythologies* are the targets for the re-production of language[215], the designed myths of the modern world are only added layers of meaning within systems too complex and irrefutable for in-depth translation. Statistically there are too many parts.

Re-production

If we look back at Claude Levi-Strauss's concept that the group or social community is the most important component to believing a psychological object exists, then the idea of a cultural myth's production lies heavily on the cultural re-production of the original sound-image.

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[215] Language is referred to here as a word to combine the edifice of any object; the physical form (a chair for sitting), the written word (the word 'chair' which differs in different languages), the spoken word (to say 'chair' in English) and the sound-image of the object (the psychological recollection of the object).

In *The System of Objects* (1968) Baudrillard draws on a similar analysis as Roland Barthes, which leads him to his new book *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (1970). Baudrillard moves the focus of *production* to the act of *consumption*. He states in general relation to Barthes use of signs, "[c]onsumption is not a material practice…[rather] consumption is *the virtual totality of all objects and messages ready-constituted as a more or less coherent discourse*" and continues in relation to ordinary objects "[t]raditional symbolic objects (tools, furniture, the house itself) were the mediators of a real relationship or a directly experienced situation…[thus] [t]hey are *not arbitrary.*"[216]

Consumption moves to centralize the virtual or rather psychological objects from a stance of new to the evasiveness of the everyday. The everyday, being the ordinary stark whitewashed objects which we share our daily activates with. The hairdryer, the washing machine, the basin. Baudrillard concludes in *The System of Objects* "In their ideality sign-objects are all equivalent and may multiply infinitely; indeed, they *must multiply* in order at every moment to make up for a reality that is absent. Consumption is irrepressible…because it is founded upon a *lack*" which perhaps supports the concept that the hyperreal object (any kind of psychological object) originates from an empting out of

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[216] Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, 200.

content.[217] An origin or an empty image. An object striped of solidity

and form. An object with an extreme sense of normalcy.

Baudrillard's use of myth adopted from Barthes's mythmaking quickly

identifies the problem of an over stimulus of objects (the origin is

multiplied to infinity) to what he begins to describe as a *profusion*.[218]
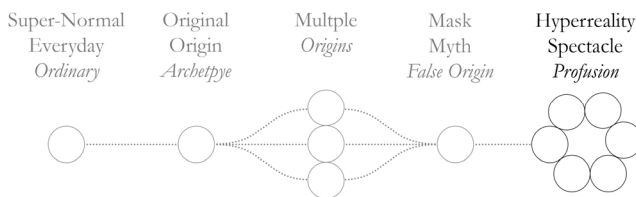
Super-Normal	Original	Multple	Mask	Hyperreality
Everyday	Origin	*Origins*	Myth	Spectacle
Ordinary	*Archetpye*		*False Origin*	*Profusion*

Diagram .13 The Structural Origins of Objects: Profusion

Baudrillard's 'profusion' makes the multiplication of objects by which

human relationships are altered. "The humans of the age of affluence

are surrounded not so much by other human beings, as they were in all

previous ages, but by objects."[219]   The constructed environment we

occupy in our daily lives becomes saturated. Simple math reveals that as

we are reaching saturation, consumption of objects enviably affects our

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[217] Ibid, 205.
[218] Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society* , 25-26.
[219] Ibid, 1

senses. It seems there are infinite possibilities for the multiplication of meanings.

The saturated environment produces a kind of super mass normality, a new sense of what could be seen as normal. The more multiple instances of origins created, the more profound the distortion of what normal is. This too is mimicked in the profusion of hyper objects; for example the profusion of hyperreal imagery seen in glossy fashion magazines subverts the view of what is normal and what is exceptional, which is perhaps a more dangerous version of re-production.

If Derrida's deconstruction, identifies objects in a hyperreal form (without any delusion or copy, an object with multiple meanings), then Baudrillard's profusion of mass-produced objects produces many instances of reality, or hyperreal objects. The brilliance is not the profusion of spectacular or fantastical objects that might cause a hyperreality to exist, it is in the profusion of everyday mass-produced objects, explicitly, for everyday reality to produce a hyperreality.

The delusion here is that the spectrum of objects (see *Diagram* .13) subverts both ways, the profusion of hyper-objects creates new meaning

for what is 'normal', while inversely the re-production of original objects is the fabric in which hyperreality is constructed.

Even the most normal of things in abundance might produce a psychological hyperreal state of mind.

Baudrillard seems to take the signified (physical object) out of the system of analysis and compares a signifier with another signifier. A sound-image layered upon sound-image. This concept is discussed in his later book *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) in which the structural system of analysis is expanded and far greater defined.

Roland Barthes and Jean Baudrillard both offer a theoretical method for the production of psychological objects. Baudrillard seems to answer the problem of replication of images, which he further defines as a *simulation*. He even goes as far as naming the sound-image itself. This is further discussed later in the text, but first some of the more subtle relationships between producing a sound-image and understanding what kind of *reality* the object is then presented from.

Spectres

Firstly the spectres of death. The metaphor of death is not inappropriate to mention at this time at all. Jean-Michel Rabaté's *The Ghosts of Modernity* (1996) outlines how the new may just be a return of the repressed past.[220] The sound-image may in a sense already be produced. It gives a simple example of an impossible reality – if a fashion shoot is styled to appear like the dead are living, the very imagery is known to be not *real*, yet the object of desire within the imagery remains 'tangible' even if it is only in our minds psychological construction of it.

This theory sounds awfully similar to Saussure's conception of sound-image being the mental remembrance of an object. Rabaté's point – of a repressed past – although different, uses the metaphor of haunting which in turn could point to a potential method of production, an aesthetic often used in the fashion industry to create a potential myth[221] of an iconic design.

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[220] Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Ghosts of Modernity*
[221] At this stage the word 'myth' is exchangeable with 'sign', 'belief' or any other word to describe the meaning of an object which only exists as a sound-image.

It should be noted that Baudrillard's early work could create a suitable methodology for the production of psychological objects. Industrial designer Karim Rashid notes how Baudrillard's investigation into consumer culture has influenced his work that it does not however suggest his work is a good representation of that method.[222] In *The System of Objects* and *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* Baudrillard develops his theory towards hyperreality. *Selected Writings* (2001) contains snippets from many of his writings and is translated into a contemporary language that industrial designers can easily comprehend.

However before Baudrillard's hyperreal simulation can be discussed two concepts need to be understood in relation to objects; a) how a sound-image can be made physical, and b) how the image has no relation to reality.

To render a sound-image physical the spectrum plays an important role (see *Diagram* 13.). If at one end supernormal objects exist (objects which become more archetypal then archetypal forms themselves, a product of normalcy) and at the other end hyperreal objects exist

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[222] Terence Conran and Max Fraser, *Designers on Design / Terence Conran and Max Fraser.*, 208.

(sound-images layered on sound-images to infinity) according to structural analysis a binary opposite is formed, and thus meaning is drawn and held in place due to the opposing object – normal and hyper. The physicality of hyper objects is located within the sameness of the everyday object. Both objects rely on the sound-image or memory of an object (memory of the system of objects) to extend its presence, and therefore its value.

Baudrillard describes the seduction of owning the sound-image. Only the sound-image here is manifested through advertising and thus made physical, although commonly in a two-dimensional medium. In the *System of Objects* Baudrillard states "If we consume the product as product, we consume its meaning through advertising."[223] Baudrillard then goes on to describe a modern city without signs or advertising, he then adds a single sign to the empty city. The new sign although a signifier has no signified, no object, yet it develops through social discussion as having meaning (it *is* meaning) or rather the 'object' is produced through its use to society.

Collectively the society establish the signified 'object' themselves, in essence advertising *is* mass society; the 'group' transforms the signifier,

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[223] Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 13.

this time backwards, into something of importance. "In the United States 90 per cent of the population experience no other desire then to possess what others possess."[224] Through the ambiguity of the advertising (or sound-image) "*it provokes us to compete*; yet, through this imaginary competition, *it already invokes a profound monotony*, a uniformula (*Postulation uniforme*)" the normality of *being* mass.[225] Modern people strive toward the normalcy confounded through consumption. An influential and often vindictive *manufacturer*.

In the *System of Objects* this 'serial conditioning' is outlined further: "We can imagine that each individual feels a unique while resembling everyone else: all we need is a schema of collective and mythological projection – a model."[226] This situates the sound-image within the extremes of the spectrum perhaps even a circular spectrum in which the supernormal linked up to the hyperreal, would best describe Baudrillard's theories. His texts certainly describe the fantastical psychological experiences in order for production to take place, if only he continued to be interested in the profusion of objects, which perhaps also belongs with the supernormal object; for their normality is based upon a proliferation of objects and other objects sound-images.

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[224] Ibid, 14.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid, 15.

However the binary opposition does differ. Supernormal objects are based on a profusion of *real* objects – even if the 'super' comes from our accumulation of sensual experiences with the sound-images of such objects – hyperreal objects on the other hand rely entirely on sound-images, or in Baudrillard's words a 'mythological projection' a sound-image layered upon a sound-image. To clarify, the mythological projection is created because the sensory experiences are caused in relation to an existing sound-image; think of the sensorial experiences produced when you see a familiar brand, any experience related to an advertisement you see is not related to any real object, but a image of an object, at best a mythological projection.

The method of producing the sound-image and understanding its projection into a real form is supported by the structural system of analysis and Baudrillard's further rearrangement of that system.

Such a rearrangement often occurs when new medium appears which does not comfortably sit within the established system. While Barthes used advertisements to reassess the semiotic structure (that signs could become signifiers, mythological projections), Baudrillard used economic value (or exchange value) to readdress the very nature of structuralism in

his book *For the Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972). By involving the economy; in addition to the society and creators of object (industrial designers) Baudrillard can investigate the *consumption* of psychological objects.

With the inclusion of *economy*[227] to the structural system of analysis Baudrillard introduces a new word that will immediately be placed on the far right side of spectrum, that of *seduction* (refer to *Diagram* .14). The political economy is driven by desire; by the desire to consume. The consumption of new media is the context in which Baudrillard bravely rationalizes the hyperreal.

Simulation

The seduction of the sound-image Baudrillard strongly argues is intoxicating for our senses. It is at this stage that Baudrillard's theories turn away from the everyday or normal objects, and his use of structural analysis becomes less clear. Baudrillard begins to be criticized for his radical theories (increasingly 'pessimistic') and the relationship to

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[227] By which is meant the 'political economy': the structural relationships between production and consumption.

objects becomes disestablished.[228]   But as outlined in the spectrum of
normal to hyper, the profusion of the hyperreal, the desire of
consumption and the accumulation of sound-images without
objecthood, demands investigation. Even if the results work against the
very concept of *making* and *producing*. The foundations of industrial
and most certainly product design warrant such a critique.[229]

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[228] Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 6-7 Editors Introduction.

[229] I make a distinction between Product Design and Industrial Design; the
difference is the focus on *consumption* of product designers (that is the user)
and *production* of the industrial designer (that of the act of making, or more so
the act of manufacturing) while product designers tend to deal with marketing
(the sound-image & economy of a product) on almost equal grounds as the
production of the product itself. Take the Industrial Designer Jasper Morrison
as an example: he strives to create ordinary beautiful objects, so he situates
himself with the super-normal (indeed he was first person to hear such a term)
and he points out that the marketing of products is the most annoying part of
the design and manufacture process (Terence Conran and Max Fraser,
Designers on Design / Terence Conran and Max Fraser.) This shows the
reluctance of super-normal objects to rely on sound-images, which in turn rely
on fantasy (or to be precise: other sound-images); rather objects which are
super-normal rely on the sound-image of normality, a kind of *profusion* of
everyday experience, a humble comforting feeling is the effect the super-
normal's sound-image brings to our daily lives. The antithesis of this (product
design) is to feed a desire to own, one that is sadly (as Baudrillard describes)
based on economic wealth; surely such a guilty feeling is not sustainable. The
ultimate effect of hyperreal sound-images is the corruption of the minds needs,
the illness becomes an addiction, a dependency and the therapy the removal of
content; the problem is the *profusion* of such media, and the accessibility given
to hyperreal media, TV and the Internet are common place and relatively free
sources of consumption.   No wonder the modern day *craftsman* is so
frustrated; since when did *production* become so expensive and *consumption*
so worthless so empty?

In *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) Baudrillard begins by retelling a tale[230] by Jorge Luis Borges in which a map is drawn in incredible detail of a territory that it covers the original exactly; a 1:1 scale map. Baudrillard describes the copy as follows "Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal."[231]

In *Selected Writings* Mark Poster adds a lengthy note to Baudrillard's text, he appends the following regarding reproduction, death and unease "[c]ounterfeit and reproduction imply always an anguish, a disquieting foreignness: the uneasiness before the photograph, considered like a witch's trick – and more generally before any technical apparatus, the uneasiness before the mirror-image. There is already sorcery at work in the mirror. But how much more so when this image can be detached from the mirror and be transported, stocked,

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[230] The tale is a short story titled "On Exactitude in Science"; the tale describes the creation and deterioration of a 1:1 scale map. A similar story is told by a fictional character Mein Herr in *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893) by Lewis Carroll in which a map is conceived of one mile that would be equal to one mile, the map was never 'spead out' but Mein Herr adds that the country itself was then used as its own map. Carroll also wrote of many other instances which would be explored in Baudrillard's writing, including the mirror in *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871).
[231] Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 169.

reproduced at will."[232] It is not the sinister nature of the apparition that causes uneasiness; it is the loss of bodily substance. The reproducible nature of simulations only heightens their abstraction and increases their profusion.

Baudrillard identifies the history of simulation and in tern the history of 'production' in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976):

   I. First Order – The *counterfeit* is the dominant scheme of the "classical" epoch, from the Renaissance to the industrial revolution.

  II. Second Order – *Production* is the dominant scheme of the industrial era.

 III. Third Order – *Simulation* is the dominant scheme of the present phase of history, governed by the code.[233]

Baudrillard not only identifies the historical origins of the sound-image, he renames it the *simulacra* (simulacrum – plural). The history of the sound-image is conveniently mapped chronologically from left to right in *Diagram* 14. *The Structural Origins of Objects: Simulacra.*

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[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid, 138.

The first order of simulation describes the copy of an original or *counterfeit*, an artificial copy of an object. The second order of simulation is the *profusion* of signs due the industrial revolution. The reproduction of singular meanings (sound-images) begins to replace the original (of which there is none). The third and final order of simulation appends the second order; it is the full effect and removal of an origin. A simulacrum. The simulacrum finally precedes the original, and becomes reality itself, a hyperreality.

| Super-Normal Everyday *Ordinary* | Original Origin *Archetpye* | Multple *Origins* | Mask Myth *False Origin* | Hyperreality Spectacle *Profusion* |

| First Order *Counterfeit* | Second Order *Mass-Production* | Third Order *Simulacra* |
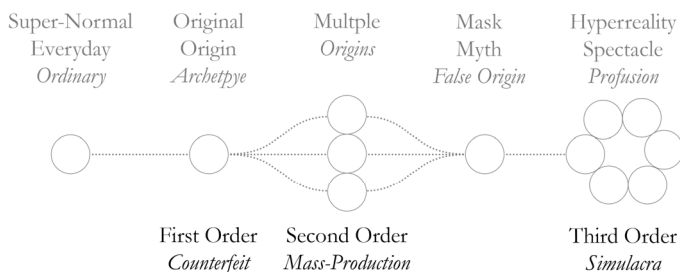
Diagram .14 The Structural Origins of Objects: Simulacra

Baudrillard also outlines the successive phases in the production of the image (sound-image) in order to reach simulacrum:

1. It is the reflection of a basic reality.

2. It masks and perverts a basic reality.

3. It masks the *absence* of a basic reality.

4. It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.[234]

Baudrillard describes the absence of reality when a sound-image reaches a replication beyond the grasps of origins. The sound-image thus becomes its own 'reality' without any possible objecthood or thingness (see *Diagram* 15.). Baudrillard's method of producing a hyperreal object is neither abstract nor unattainable.

Simulation
rather then reality

Simulacrum
sound-image
(with no relation to reality)
real/imaginary
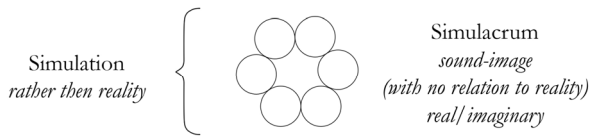
Diagram .15 Jean Baudrillard's Simulation and Simulacrum

Both the hyperreal and supernormal objects are instances of simulacra, however the supernormal object has another attribute or step in its

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[234] Ibid, 173.

process of manufacture – it is constructed through the removal of content, an *absence*.

The essential *disappearance* of content is not inherently connected to form or function. In an odd and somewhat uncanny way, the absence itself is what binds the presence of this type of object in reality. As Mark Poster describes "[s]imulations are different from fictions or lies in that the former not only present an absence as a presence, the imaginary as the real. They also undermine any contrast to the real, absorbing the real within itself."[235] And thus becoming real or hyperreal.

A supernormal object mediates the hyper-real object, and indeed is based on similar notions of absence and indifference. Silvana Annicchiarico on the first page of *Super Normal: Sensations of the Ordinary* (2006) simply puts it "[t]he Super Normal object can be defined by something that is not present" and continues, "at the very instant it is perceived, catalogued, and exhibited as such, Super Normal transcends itself.."[236] The supernormal 'presents an absence as presence'

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[235] Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 6.
[236] Jasper Morrison and Naoto Fukasawa, *Super Normal: Sensations of the Ordinary*, 5.

or as Baudrillard states "[w]e consume the product through the product itself."[237]

Baudrillard extends his theory to eventually self evaluate. In *Simulacra and Simulations* God is used as an example of a simulacra (an image without origin) Baudrillard explores the notion of 'unmasking' Gods image "knowing also that it is dangerous to unmask images, since they dissimulate the fact that there is nothing behind them" the image is not based on any reality, therefore by looking behind the shroud reveals nothing.[238] It is this nothingness that sustains the simulacrum; however it also acts to continually mask the object.

A 'mask' or myth is the 'fake' copy of a copied story, of an origin that is usually 'unobtainable'. The mask in the case of the simulacrum (God) is irrefutably unobtainable; there is no origin whatsoever, and no relation to reality. This 'mask' conceivably – even more so then religion – becomes reality because of its 'extraordinary ambivalence' between what is real and what is imaginary.[239]

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[237] Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, 181
[238] Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 172
[239] Jasper Morrison and Naoto Fukasawa, *Super Normal: Sensations of the Ordinary*, 5.

Essentially both the hyper-real and supernormal objects are based on the relationship of the sound-image of objects, the pictures that come into our minds when we hear the word "chair" define the supernormal as much as they define the hyper-real. The absence of physicality of the hyper-real mirrors the disappearance of the supernormal. Both of which have become in contemporary society, desirable.

However one concept has yet to be discussed, its presence constantly threatens the foundations of the discipline of mass production and is the envy of designers and consumers alike. Originals.

The method of producing of the sound-image is historically linked according to Baudrillard to the counterfeit object or re-productions, while simultaneously relying on the uncertainty of possible meanings (Derrida's deconstruction). The *absence* needed for production is called into question by the nature of the original object. The discipline of industrial design itself is called into question.

Reality

"What is real, and what is fake?" One basic answer to this question given the theoretical framework is that a hyper-real object is fake while the supernormal object is real. However there is another real version of objecthood, the original.

The original object has two versions, the objects of low batch manufacture and the prototypes made in order to finalize the designed object. Or is it the first sketch (even if it is drawn posthumously for publication), or the first mock-up? The question seems subjective.

But what of the other originals, the very first batch, or the first manufacturer? Are they not the most valuable? And even if they are, they are often poorly constructed, using inferior materials and are not cost effective. For designers these select few originals are the *real* objects, the distinctly authentic objects of production.

A dichotomy exists here. The only authentic objects of mass manufacture are the classic pieces, which remained in production. The recently re-produced versions of classic designs give the first objects their sentimentality. The profusion of meanings regarding the continual production of such objects gives them their iconic stature.

Two examples of classic designs occur in the work of Mies van der Rohe and Alvar Aalto.

Focusing on Mies van der Rohe's Cantilever Chair (MR 10 and MR 20) from 1927, the chair resembles Mart Stam's cantilever chair. Indeed it was the first chair without back legs. However Mies' design differed from Stam's in that MR 10 was based on "dynamically floating circular forms"[240] shown in the first sketches by Mies. The MR 10 and MR 20 chairs (MR 20 is the same design with additional armrests) were developed like many of Mies's designs through a series of iterative prototypes. "The process of gradually changing the technical and aesthetic aspects did not, however, follow a linear development toward an ideal form."[241] Like the Barcelona Chair, MR 10 would be refined many times over the years of manufacture.

The first series manufactured by Metallgewerbe Joseph Müller or BMG (although this is not curtain) were crafted by hand, each chair differs from the last and had a rather odd construction method.[242] The leather covering the chair was fastened on by "twenty-two nikel-plated, round head slotted bolts", and "all have signs of being made individually by

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[240] Helmut Reuter and Birgit Schulte, *Mies and Modern Living*, 112.
[241] Reuter & Schulte, *Mies and Modern Living*, 113.
[242] Ibid, 114

hand".[243] The original series were far from identical "[a]lthough it is obvious that they are basically meant to be part of a series, not one of the chairs seems to have been constructed before the exact templates and tools were selected."[244]

If Mies van der Rohe's MR 10 cantilever chair is placed back into the spectrum, nothing particularly dramatic is revealed. The original production of the chair can be considered the real chair and situates itself on the supernormal side of the spectrum – the first order of simulation: counterfeit[245]. Through the mass production of MR 10 (not as famous as Barcelona Chair, but designed to used by all classes and therefore more idealistic) it reaches the second order of simulation: Mass Production. However today the production of MR 10 by Thonet is not an original copy, but rather a non-original.

The price of a Thonet MR 10 now titled S 533 N is still relatively high. This economic value or political economic value; the structural relationship between *production* and *consumption*, still evades the

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[243] Ibid, 116
[244] Ibid.
[245] The counterfeit from each of the original pieces to themselves, because the chairs differed so distinctly it is clear that the final templates and tools were not yet selected, when they were produced thus each original chair is technically counterfeit.

intentions of the design; to be widely distributed to all classes.[246] The added complexity of the original complicates the objects existing political economic value. The structural relationship is distorted due to the objects continual production. Absence is presented as presence, it is not a 'mask' of some other meaning, but rather a *profusion* of non-originals, a kind of physical sound-image of the original, a third order simulation. The non-original finally precedes the original, and becomes reality itself.

Another more contemporary scenario exists. The history of the MR 10 chair helps to define the current copy as being real or part of a hyperreal simulation. However recently in 2007 Artek under the direction of Tom Dixon *produced* a range of furniture titled Second Cycle – a project that involved buying classic pieces of furniture designed by Alvar Aalto and reselling the used chairs back to the public.

The intention was to send a message of sustainability and encourage the reuse of perfectly functional objects. The reselling of second-hand objects or originals with all the patina, damage and artefacts deforms the sound-image's already complicated relationship.

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[246] Reuter & Schulte, *Mies and Modern Living*, 112.

The original is still the 'real', while the non-original copies are still hyperreal – the original designs that are still in production. Or are they? Given that Artek still use the same factory since 1935 and produces its furniture from the same birch wood from the same forest, does that not make it still an original design? What then of Second Cycle, used chairs sold as new/old with the label "Original ALVAR AALTO design 2ND CYCLE" attached to the underside, is this 'original' an image of an image, or the image itself – only exhausted?

Disappearance

The concept of time is perhaps more important then first realised. From the vantage point of industrial design, fashion design has a comparatively quick turnaround – a six months for each collection and three months of use. Industrial designed objects are commonly used for up to seventy years or more, while architectural works are sustainably longer. Other disciplines include literature – which seems timeless, and food – which is gone in seconds.

The relationship of *production* to the time of *consumption* is what to some degree gives an object its value[247]. The repetition of each of these disciplines also defines their profession and the craftsmanship involved; hundreds a day for food, thousands of copies of books and one version of a building. Is the lifespan of a crafted object (including music, film and theatre) relative to the disappearance of objects physicality?

Paul Virilio explores the architecture of disappearance found within bunkers in *Bunker Archaeology* (1994). The text analyzes photographic documentation of bunkers taken by Virilio from 1958 to 1965. It should be noted that Virilio does not believe in Baudrillard's 'simulation' "To me, what takes place is substitution" by which Virilio means to say that substitution is when one reality replaces the original, by which the original reality will be forgotten.[248] Substitution for example acts over time, we have no real understanding of the Egyptians,

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[247] 'Value' has been used several times rather loosely; Baudrillard defined and extended the value given to objects in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972) including Marx's 'use value' or 'functional value', 'exchange value', 'sign value' – the value of an object within the system of objects and the 'symbolic value'. The complexity of the value system is not discussed here in-depth as the focus of this text is towards the construction of objects rather then their exchange.

[248] John Armitage, *Paul Virilio: From Modernism to Hypermodernism and Beyond*, 43

Virilio explains, "we are clueless about what it looked like, about what it sounded like."[249]

In *Bunker Archaeology* the original object is negated, found, lasting, deteriorating. The grey abandoned bunkers are "prematurely worn and smoothed to avoid all impact" all superfluous forms are suppressed until all that remains is the autonomous object.[250] It is as if the object itself was made to withstand time, to withstand the *substitution* all together, the physicality of the archetypal form – the very solidity of the concrete itself – absorbs the absence of time.

By taking past originals into the present the definition of 'real' is challenged, or rather the reality of current contemporary objects is made clear (or unclear) through the juxtaposition to the past. What makes this case unique is the past 'original' is presented as 'new', and evaluated as such (in terms of meaning), its sound-image is rendered again, the 'pattern' and relationships within the sound-image are strengthened and the system of objects is re-modelled.

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[249] Ibid.
[250] Paul Virilio, *Bunker Archeology*, 44.

Open Design

Paul Virilio describes a different kind of 'disappearance' that relies on the sound-image and here better described as the pattern-image. In *Aesthetics of Disappearance* (1991) Virilio begins by describing the momentary lapses of time, which occur frequently each day. The absences he calls 'picnolepsy' and suggests children experience this absence most frequently.[251]

Any child 'suffering' from repeated picnolepsy is considered to be believing in lies and thus punished, the lapse of physical presence is considered false and of not occurring in reality.[252] Through discipline the belief of such moments, or rather the validity of such moments is lost. The reality is deemed unreal, invisible and fake.

The objects or scenes within the mind sketch-out the sound-image as if it were part of reality. It seems that reality does not exist as singular objects without reference – even sound-images have a context. The response to objects if caused upon the senses does not mean they are abstract and disconnected to other objects. "When we place a bouquet

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[251] Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, 9-10
[252] Ibid, 10.

under the eyes of the young picnoleptic and we ask him to draw it, he draws not only the bouquet but also the person who is supposed to have placed it in the vase, and even the field of flowers where it was possibly gathered."[253] The sound-images themselves form an 'environment' or relationship within the context of their associated meanings; this is why 'sound-image' has become more commonly known as the pattern-image.

Studio Practice

The largely theoretical discussion thus far has revealed that the sound-image does not exist in a traditional 'manufactured' process. It is with trepidation that any industrial designer could apply such theory; which appear more mythical then practical, to their studio practice.

The theoretical or rather philosophical grounds covered do occasionally offer possible *methods* of *production*. The ultimate intention is not to awe the designer with the complexities of his or her practice when in the studio, but to reassure them that the enormities at hand are 'common

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[253] Ibid.

practice', as Penny Sparke notes "[design] is a complex task that in many ways demands superhuman qualities" and within the history of design there is no better representation then the New Avant-Gardes – The Italians."[254]

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[254] Penny Sparke, *A Century of Design*, 6

PART TWO

The Origin of the Designer

Germany, early nineteenth century.

War.

Walter Gropius returns reverent and shell shocked, in the first war he
served with distinction in the German cavalry.

"If ever there were an experience that could change a nice, self-satisfied,
middle-of-the-road Socialist designer into an evangelical utopian

idealist, serving at the front in World War I would be that experience."[255]

The modernists had a different agenda "[t]hey hated the falsity of society as they knew it," they wanted to start again. "Imagine coming back to your nice Victorian home after that…How were you suppose to sit on your little golden ballroom chair, wearing your dinner jacket and sipping your *digestif*, after what you had been through, pretending nothing had changed?"[256]

Instead of mass-producing objects to be used in war, why not use the same mass production methods to make cups and saucers. Was equality such a bad concept? Socialism, utopia, the designers of their time believed in some way that they were the regulators, that they really could bring about a change. The new motto was simple: produce "[t]he greatest quantity, in the shortest possible time."[257]

<div align="center">

Germany, mid-nineteenth century.

War.

Again.

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[255] Natalia Ilyin, *Chasing the Perfect*, 30
[256] Ibid, 31.
[257] Andrea Branzi, *Learning from Milan*, 14

Italy is rebuilding.

Milan arose from the rubble to dominate the disciplines of design and fashion arguably to this very day. The second modernity as it is sometimes called, had an inverse effect on *production*; the objective was simple: produce "[t]he greatest quality in shortest possible time."[258]

However quality in this case did not come in material selection as it had done in previous eras, rather quality would be attributed to an objects pattern-image. A new type of design would emerge through the pattern-image, the signification of the objects meaning, a new language for design would emerge, a language that would offset the emotions of the *consumer*.

The movement (although it was more a mentality then a stylistic approach to design – a style) gained many affiliations including: Radical Design, Open Design, Post-modernism, and Anti-Design, all of which can be referred to as the New Avant-Gardes.

Like the Bauhaus and the Germans before them, these radical new designers were often architects. Through this period from the 1940's to

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[258] Ibid.

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the 1980's a shift was about to occur. Design in Italy would change from a culture defined by architects to a culture of designers. The title designer would become permanently detached from the frame of reference of architecture.[259]

Empty Houses

The new designers – the New Avant-Gardes – would take onboard a new responsibility. At a rapid pace Pop culture would erase modernity with a shift of focus from *production* to *consumption*.[260] The second modernity marked a change in perspective, "an acceptance of Modernity as an artificial cultural system based neither on the principle of necessity nor on the principle of identity but on a set of conventional cultural and linguistic values."[261]

Just as the 'designer' arrived as his own entity the focus of manufacture also changed. Suddenly Baudrillard's *profusion* of (sound)images reached a concerning degree. The Italian Designer Andrea Branzi

[259] Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, *Il Modo Italiano*, 35.
[260] Andrea Branzi, *Learning from Milan*, 10.
[261] Branzi, *Learning from Milan*, 71.

reiterates the profusion of objects in *Territories of the Imagination* from his radical book *Learning from Milan* (1988), "Until the end of the eighteenth century architecture was the sole representative of the world of construction. The only non-natural objects in man's environment were architectural buildings, houses, palaces, monuments, and roads. Other objects were rare and absolutely secondary…Architecture produced and controlled the whole set of signs…[a]t the beginning of last century, the home of a reasonably well-off family of four contained a set of objects comprising no more then 150-200 items, including crockery and clothing. The home of a comparable family today might contain 2500 to 3000 objects."[262]

Responsibility

In a post-industrial society the role of the designer is not to 'produce' so much as to realise his place within the system of 'consumption' and his responsibility of creating the 'profusion' of images, signs, and meanings.

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[262] Ibid, 14.

The industrial designer can be quickly blamed for his role in the production of objects and contributing towards a consumer society. However some thought must be given to the associated responsibility handed over to the designer to rationalize such an obligation and respond to it accordingly. Responding to these demands was what the Italian designers excelled at.

The Italian designers[263] followed a utopian dream, but to their credit they understood the unreachable nature of designing objects for the neglected and underprivileged. Like William Morris and John Ruskin the Italians respected the people involved in the creation of design rather then focusing on what the market demands, as Ettore Sottsass points out "[m]arketing managers think they know what that market is. But a good designer knows that he doesn't know."[264]

In a time when the economic success of companies was defined by the consumption of the market, these designers considered the market and the factories were made up of individual people, "[o]ne of the most

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[263] The proportion of Italian designers in industrial design is staggering, if not surprisingly familiar, names like: Ettore Sottsass, Enzo Mari, Pier Giacomo & Achille Castiglioni, Mario Bellini, Gio Ponti, Carlo Mollino, Vico Magistretti, Marco Zanuso, Joe Colombo, Antonio Citterio, Bruno Munari, Alessandro Mendini, and Gaetano Pesce (even Richard Sapper made his name in Italy).
[264] Sottsass and Museo Alessi, *Design Interviews*, 48.

complicated things for a serious designer is to understand who will actually be using his product," states Sottsass. [265]

A Second Strategy

Two methodologies in Italian Industrial design present themselves. The first strategy is more obvious and ideally more rational; that of the *modernists*. They aspire to Rome, to classical architecture, to the great cultures of the past. They idealise the perfection of construction and have an understanding of technology and form. The modernist revises what has worked in the past and presents it anew as its rational best.

The second strategy like a mythological story has a moral rather than rule or script. It is based on the development of human experience and circumstance. The second strategy allows for the *production* of sound-images within the studio practice and the mass re-production of objects offered by major companies.

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[265] Sottsass & Alessi, *Design Interviews*, 49.

The recently deceased Italian product designer Ettore Sottsass describes his break from the design studio to discover a kind of psychological object. The journey takes him away from the act of consumption and into a world without belongings.

A Culture without Possessions

Ettore Sottsass, like many designers, was originally trained as an architect. His transformation into a designer began with his consultancy work for Olivetti in 1959. However the industrial design career of Sottsass is defined by two periods. The second and most important period is illustrated here.

Ettore Sottsass first leaves Italy for America, and discovers Pop. Pop art, Pop culture, consumerism and kitsch. And then without any substantial reasoning in October of 1961 Sottsass travels with Fernanda Pivano to South Asia. They visit India, Ceylon, Nepal and Burma, where Sottsass was to have an authentic experience with an ancient culture.[266] From this amount of information it would seem that

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[266] Barbara Radice, *Ettore Sottsass*, 59.

Sottsass was about to follow the first of the two major strategies; that of the *modernist*. This façade presents only an illusion as Enzo Mari reiterates the designer's position in society "the best best-designed objects are done by socialist thinkers in a capitalist system", Sottsass was (even according to Mari) about to step outside the traditional role of the 'designer' and to do so he distanced himself from the design studio.[267]

Sottsass leaves his home in Milan to travel to India with young Fernanda Pivano.

As described in the biography of Ettore Sottsass (written by his soon to be wife Barbara Radice) India has a unique condition; it has hardly changed since 1500 B.C. "along a thread of never-interrupted traditions."[268] In this sense India endures as an ancient culture, it is as if Le Corbusier has walked into the Pantheon and is met by the same people who constructed it. Sottsass left for India for almost no reason other then as Sottsass explains "it was the most mysterious place I could think of."[269]

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[267] David Ryan, "Enzo Mari and the Process of Design," 35
[268] Barbara Radice, *Ettore Sottsass*, 59.
[269] Ibid.

The 'streets'[270] are teeming with life, and although cars and bicycles are present, most people walk barefoot.[271] Women have "straight backs", for carrying heavy loads atop their heads, and "high breasts and undulating hips recognizable in ancient sculpture."[272] The silhouettes of people and animals resemble the imagery from pottery thousands of years earlier; it is as though life has remained unaltered by the objects of the day. On psychological level the sound-images associated with physical objects of the past have remained consistent and largely faithful to their original meanings.[273]

There is poverty and pestilence, leprosy and burning corpses, there is nothing one can do to escape the constant bombardment of odours. Death and disease are visible and part of everyday life. To Sottsass this reveals a converse reaction, rather then feeling anxious (like in the metropolis of today) the decaying of life is accepted and normalized, causing a "sense of great calm."[274]

In this context the body itself becomes integral to the physiological and spiritual worlds, "[o]ne need only think of yoga discipline and tantrism,

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[270] The word 'street' is used lightly in the 1960's a trip to India was almost indecipherable, the idea of a hotel was much to be desired.
[271] Radice, *Ettore Sottsass*, 59.
[272] Ibid.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Radice, *Ettore Sottsass*, 61.

where Samadhi[275] is attained through the exercise of the body and not its negation."[276] The logic of Western thought does not immediately apply to Indian culture, which is to say that the *modernist* with his appetite for functional forms and logic in construction would have little significance for the spiritual people of India. Without the presence of a sound-image an object would have little meaning in someone's life. Linguistic nothingness.

In an interview for Alessi in 2007 Sottsass begins by explaining the culture of a people who do not surround themselves with objects or even architecture. "In India there is no monotheism[277] but a form of religion whereby everybody pursues a divine being that is never there."[278]
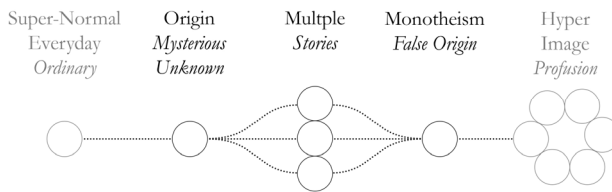
Diagram .16 Monotheism in Indian Culture

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[275] Samadhi: reaching high levels of concentration, in this case through the use of the body.
[276] Radice, *Ettore Sottsass*, 61.
[277] Monotheism: a belief in a single god.
[278] Sottsass and Museo Alessi, *Design Interviews*, 7.

"As for architecture in India, in the beginning there wasn't any."[279] The only objects or structures were alters, sometimes carved directly out of large rocks, or built through many layers of mud bricks "[t]hen they began not actually to build, but to carve out of rock grottoes and temples, places of meditation and solitude…But the idea of building that we have, of a structure with tensions in the structure itself or the pleasure of the structure itself, these are emotions the Indians have never felt."[280]

The places of solitude and mediation in India are numerous and even idiosyncratic "[t]he good thing about this culture is that it's made up of infinite stories"[281] and each story is necessary for the complexity of life. Sottsass found that the sound-image had a strong effect on his senses "India is the land of senses. Even what is known as Indian spiritualism…passes through the senses and not the mortification of the flesh."[282]

In a complete juxtaposition to his journey through India Sottsass also spend time in America. It is hard to believe he did not become aware of

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[279] Sottsass & Alessi, *Design Interviews*, 9.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid, 10.
[282] Barbara Radice, *Ettore Sottsass*, 61.

the use of imagery in American consumer culture – a fake pattern-image.

The profusion witnessed in western culture (as it came to grips with consumerism) could not have been more inversely projected by Indian culture at the time, the average person in India had next to nothing. Sottsass explains "[w]hen designing objects, I have thought hard about the state of those Indians who had no possessions, because traditionally the Indians – the peasants, not the Maharajas – had nothing but a bowl, they ate with their hands and put their food on banana leaves or other leaves, sitting on the ground and their clothing were pieces of cloth."[283]

What is the use of having tables and chairs when one sits on the ground to eat? And what use is a knife and fork if you eat with your hands?

The very notion of interior space is also challenged; from 'living' towards an inner experience of living. The interior is the temple, the windows are intentionally small and corridors intentionally narrow.[284] The interior helped to facilitate the re-production of the sound-image in its original form. The notion of fulfilment is radically presented

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[283] Sottsass and Museo Alessi, *Design Interviews*, 12.
[284] Ibid, 10.

without form or any rational function. The Indians "had themselves, their lives, their relationships with others, with their work and the seasons…[w]e are always closed inside rooms and the rooms are full of objects, and we have created and keep on creating what you might call a consumer culture, because we have more then would really be necessary."[285]

Constructions

Ettore Sottsass makes the point of construction and functionalism from the start of last century "Mies van der Rohe built using iron beams and girders: the essence of architecture lies in the structure, so the architectural emotions in designs should be determined by the structural process and construction."[286] However this functionalism quickly became "synonymous of convenience," reason alone had its limits.[287]

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[285] Ibid, 14.
[286] Ibid, 20
[287] Ibid, 21

Together with Andrea Branzi and a string of other talented designers Sottsass begin the Memphis group in the 1980's. Sottsass describes it simply as 'research'. A period of work Italian designer Enzo Mari[288] defines as "decorative art"[289] which by definition is true, however Sottsass states "[e]verything you call African art is not art. The Africans have had no galleries in which to exhibit art" each object was part of a ritual, "gods to be prayed to, to be imagined."[290] That is perhaps why much of the work of Ettore Sottsass resembles monuments "Nearly all the objects that I design have a base, and they don't touch the ground directly…it becomes a small monument."[291]

Sottsass struggled to understand how the sound-image of objects could be used by designers without any consideration, as he states, "I have never understood why first-class seats have to be red, like those in brothels. I have never understood why tea rooms for old ladies have to be pink, like ribbons for babies" the connotations of established objects could have nonsensical meanings. [292]

[288] Enzo Mari is a master of Italian design; the Italians refreshingly are open to define what industrial design is, what it is not.
[289] Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, *Il Modo Italiano*, 339.
[290] Ibid, 333.
[291] Sottsass and Museo Alessi, *Design Interviews*, 35.
[292] Barbara Radice, *Ettore Sottsass*, 185.

However before the Memphis group was ever established Ettore Sottsass had a number of thrilling and financially crippling years. In 1970 he meet a woman by the name of Eulalia Grau.

For six years Sottsass completed very little work and fell deeply in love. Together with Eulalia's Siamese cat DumDum they travelled around Spain visiting bustling cities and deserted landscapes. That was the context in which Ettore Sottsass slowly started his 'research'.

Sottsass drew many sketches that he called *constructions* "since they were not really architecture but studies in architectural language, metaphors of situations, settings, atmospheres."[293] Sottsass, removed from the constructed world, began to question the usefulness of structures in developed countries. This 'research' then slowly became physical in the Pyrenees where he made a door out of sticks and string entitled *Design for the destinies of man: Design of a door to enter into darkness* (1972-74) "At that point what do I say? I say it is not so much the design of the door that is important, but rather the fact that I enter into darkness…that is what is important. The door is a moment –

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[293] Ibid, 182.

psychically, culturally and sensorially – more important then the actual design of the door."[294]

Linguistic Imbalance

The *constructions* which Ettore Sottsass worked on take on the role of the sound-image (the signifier, representing the meaning of any object and its complex relationship to its culture) and present it as a physical manifestation for the senses to react.

The pattern-image or sound-image *is* the literal connection to human experience. It is how we culturally respond to objects and why we renege against unfamiliar objects from foreign cultures. The sound-image presents an avid expression of our own experience back to us, as Sottsass attests "I have always been concerned with not being aware that one is living, and I want to feel that I am really living, dramatically living."[295]

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[294] Sottsass and Museo Alessi, *Design Interviews*, 26.
[295] Ibid, 17.

Several years prior to his *constructions* Sottsass wrote of the relationship between people and his soon to be designed 'metaphors' "What relationship is there between people's thoughts and the space they occupy? Who knows if there is a relationship? A true, profound relationship of reciprocal cause and effect whereby you can say 'if it's like that, that's the way it is,' instead of having to say 'it's like that but it can also be any other way you like'."[296] Sottsass in the deserted outskirts of Spain began to answer some of these questions.

Sometime between 1970 and 1976 with Eulalia Grau and her cat DumDum Ettore Sottsass would begin to design a series of *design metaphors* (also known as 'constructions' and his 'research'). Sottsass wanted to know what affect a product would have on consumers, or rather everyday people.[297] *Design for the rights of man: Do you want to look at the wall or do you want to look at the valley?* (1972-74) asks the user to decide what to do in his environment with a chair; the very concept of peoples relationship to objects in an environment is a critical development in thinking. Note that the relationship to nature is not the intention of this question, rather the user's ability to *construct* the design literally out of thin air.

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[296] Barbara Radice, *Ettore Sottsass*, 185.
[297] Sottsass and Museo Alessi, *Design Interviews*, 29.

There is little difference between construction and production, for instance the backward engineering of Derrida's de-construction; the sound-image is a constructed pattern of linguistic relationships.

In nature there is no man-made object, only conceptual relationships exist between people and nature. That is to say only the linguistic relationships within the pattern-image has any relationship to constructed objects. This leads Sottsass towards a need to communicate through non-physical *images* in which the senses or emotions of a person are trigged and enhanced.

"Why should all the materials in a piece of furniture be linguistically on the same level?"[298] Sottsass states, why is that 'pattern' which controls the meaning of objects and materials unimpeachable? "If I make a piece of furniture, why should it be either all in wood, or all in marble or bronze or gold? Why can't I put together a collage of materials instead, with different linguistic backgrounds and then wait for a minor shock, like that of a battery, which is made of different metals that produce a subtle electricity?"[299]

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[298] Sottsass & Alessi, *Design Interviews*, 37.
[299] Ibid.

Ettore Sottsass

The account described above outlines the journey that Ettore Sottsass travelled in order to render the pattern-image visible through design. Although Sottsass was influenced by his travel to India and America, he was also influenced by his early education in ancient Greece.

Like many Italians the ancient was inversely rendered as present; Sottsass had a innate knowledge of 'constructions' "[t]he columns of the Parthenon were carved by Phidias, someone called Phidias, okay . . . who knew what a column was because he was a sculptor. For him a column was an important object" like the modernists of the first avant-garde, the perfection of past societies inspired their work greatly. [300]

The account of Sottsass manifesting the *potential object* into designed objects is not a universal discovery, nor is it the origin of conceptual design (conceptual art developed around the same time frame); rather it is a story of one of the great product designers questioning his role

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[300] Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, *Il Modo Italiano*, 332.

within the system of mass manufacture and user consumption. Sottsass openly considers the moral difficulties of design "I would like those users to be young people, poor kids who have nowhere to go but would like to drink out of a glass designed by me. That would be terrific. But since that doesn't happen" Sottsass continues "I could also design for a reasonably sensitive American millionaire, so I try to pull him down. Then, it becomes interesting to see what will happen…."[301] The manipulation which Sottsass describes is evident not in the object itself but rather the sound-image.

Physical Image

Sottsass finds in an empty desert the conceptual underside of designer's inadequacies. Emotive responses. Happiness. A need to communicate, even if it is not rational, if it is irrational. The New Avant-garde designers in Italy differed from the rest of the world. They persevered. After the folly of postmodernism the Italians found a new path for designers to take, a new philosophy of what a designer *could* be. Design was a serious practice.

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[301] Sottsass and Museo Alessi, *Design Interviews*, 51.

Perhaps it is the society that has come to accept individual's expression as a form of normalcy, which allows the radical design that borders on conceptual art pieces acceptable. With social networking via the Internet and an approximation of young people as being 'unique' while retaining a commonality amongst their peers permits a new generation of young designers towards personal and conceptual expression, often adopting archetypal forms to communicate the significance of an object's meaning. The potential to consider the sound-image as an integral component of industrial designed objects, given their mass re-production, could alter the profession of design. The radically work of contemporary young designers around the globe indicates an adoption of this mentality.

In a society that is reaching *image saturation* a designed object requires psychological consideration.

Blur

Blur is at once the individual expression (*Stories*) of designer's and the representations of *images* (*Unknown*), but is also the complex

relationship between objects within their own system of meaning. A system, which in terms of images (and relationships) is reaching saturation (*Profusion*).

Super-Normal	Origin	Multple	Monotheism	Hyper
Everyday	*Mysterious*	*Stories*	*False Origin*	Image
Ordinary	*Unknown*			*Profusion*
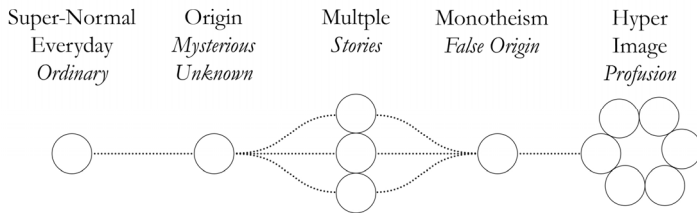
Diagram .17 The Structural Origins of Objects: Blur

The *potential object* becomes in some cases the objects of desire – some of which adopt such attention through their own linguistic relationships. The increasingly saturated system of objects layer up into an irreversible superimposed image due to the moments in the ordinary activities in our everyday lives. The quotidian object itself gives meaning to the *unknown* potential object. The 'electricity', which Sottsass speaks of – although associated with our negative reactions – is an obvious manipulation of the system in order to cause a reaction. Perhaps shocking is ok.

The spectrum drawn at this stage seems to break apart. The normal and hyper define each other though opposing relationships; the normal is singular – although made of many objects, while the hyper is made up of many non-objects – an extension of the multiple versions of unknown origins. It seems that the step between multiple and hyper is largely forgotten and often a barrier to the realization of the hyper or rather the *blur*.

Absence

One last theme must be acknowledged. The traditional modelling of semiotic systems is mapped horizontally as a system and vertically for change in signification. The vertical modelling is based on the change of time, and represents a new configuration of the system of signs. But where does the isolated signifier occur? Paul Virilio speaks of small absences in time called picnolepsy, these lapses constitute an absence presented as a presence even if their reality is invisible and fake.

Virilio explains this how a child will draw all the referenced signifiers relating to a signifier when asked to draw an image. Such references

allow for the vivid presence of the signifier in the lapses of time, time separating the systems of signification virtually collapses.

The intertwining of the object itself is best formed through the physicality of these configured *absences*. As Virilio observed in the abandoned bunkers the superfluous forms suppress the signifiers vertical mapping from taking place. The autonomous forms themselves withstand substitution, transformation and permutation. The perceivable absences absorb the alterations of time.

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Glossary

Italics denote unconventional use of terminology
* denotes terms listed elsewhere in the glossary

Absolute Origin See *transcendental signified.

Acoustic-image Saussure's original French translation of *vocal image*, is the equivalent of the *signifier in the construction of the *sign.

Brisure French, used by Derrida, translated to mean both breaking and joining, is related to *deconstruction.

Concept The counterpart of the *sound-image, is equivalent to the signified in the construction of the *sign.

Consumption The consumption of goods and services. However *hyperreal objects can also be consumed, even founded upon consumption – see Baudrillard.

Deconstruction Derrida's translation of Heidegger's *Destruktion*. Originally a French mechanical term denoting the process of disassembly in order to understand parts in relation to the whole. Equivalent words include, **différance*, *trace, **brisure* and supplement.

Différance French, used by Derrida, meaning to differ and defer. An

attempt to reduce the configuration that governs a totality. To 'move' or 'shake' an origin within a *system.

Hyperreality A *signifier layered upon a *signifier, an *image which masks its own structural *origin.

Image From *sound-image, also relates to any media replication of reality. The mental construction of a physical object.

Linguistics The scientific study of *language, relating to its structural system.

Modernism A social movement and style from the inner war period of 1918-1939. Was defined as a style at the *International Style* exhibition.

Modernist A person who seeks to modernise the current time in which they live. See *modernism.

Myth The *second-order-semiological system as defined by Barthes. A *sign been configured as the *origin of a second system's signified.

Origin The structural centre of the semiological system. Also see *transcendental signified.

Psychological thought Thoughts pertaining to mental images, see *sound-image.

Pattern From *pattern-image, also relates to the structural configuration of the semiological system.

Pattern-image A development of the term *sound-image, incorporating the inherent pattern within a system.

Phonetics The study of spoken sounds, relating to *phonology.

Phonology The study of the evolution of sounds (spoken not written).

Saussure's term derived from physiology.

Poststructuralism Evolution of *structuralism, often associated with *deconstructivism.

Potential Language Proposed by Saussure, the possibility of a spoken language that is never verbalized, based solely on *sound-images. See also *acoustic-image.

Produced The result of a semiological system. Often the structural origin or *transcendental signified.

Psychological Object Relating to *sound-image.

Reality Relating to the first instance of a system – see Baudrillard.

Second-order-semiological The second layer of the semiological system defined by Barthes, see *myth. A

*sign been configured as the *origin of a second system's signified.

Semantics The scientific study of meaning within a system. First applied to *linguistics.

System Referring to the semiological system of any sign or larger structural system.

Semiology Often called semiotics, the study signs and the *systems that govern them.

Semiotics Often used as a instead of, or as a synonym of *semiology. Semiotics is commonly used to refer to the philosophical study of signs, whereas *semiology refers to the linguistic study of signs, however the term semiotic frequently represents both enquiries.

Sign A double entity comprised of the *signifier and the *signified.

Signified The counterpart of the *signifier, also referred to as the concept, object or origin. Reference to a physical object.

Signifier The counterpart of the *signified, also referred to as the *sound-image or psychological object. Reference to the mental recollection of a physical object.

Sound-image From *acoustic image, Saussure's original French translation of *vocal image*, is the equivalent of the *signifier in the construction of the *sign.

Structuralism A scientific method of analysis that maps the configuration of parts within a system. See *semiology

Super-normal Defined by the exhibition *Super Normal*, describing sensations of ordinary objects, relating to the *transcendental signified within a shared cultural system. Often defined by absence.

System Relating to the semiological system, see *semiology.

Trace French origin also meaning track or mark, used by Derrida. Trace is his own interpretation of Heidegger's *Being*. Saussure refers to it as the trace-structure. Trace is the mark toward a deferring origin, literally the sewing between the texture of the fabric, the weave that binds the components together within a false origin .

Transcendental signified The absolute centre or *origin of any *system, which all *signifiers point to.

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