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Nomadness

HOW CAN DESIGN ALLOW PEOPLE TO LOSE  
THEIR SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN PUBLIC  
SPACES?

PERCEIVED MADNESS CAN CAUSE DISCOMFORT  
IN PUBLIC SPACES. HOWEVER PEOPLE ACTING  
OUT OF ORDER CREATES A CONTRAST WITH  
STANDARDIZED BEHAVIOURS AND BRINGS AWA-  
RENESS OF SOCIAL ORDER.

*'Prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems'*

Foucault, (1972). Introduction Capitalism and Schizophrenia Anti-Oedipus, pVII

This essay aims to explore the ways in which social norms are sedentary, and how their barriers can be transgressed by achieving madness. Normality is defined by shared beliefs, unspoken rules of social behaviours. This creates a common definition of reality which is defined as what the majority of a group considers as normal. Public spaces are the stage of normality. Each public space has its own codes depending on their history, culture, rituals and economical system. De-familiarity towards those spaces allow the shaping of different realities. Madness in term of self focus, where the ego centric focus is not based materialistic needs but on the self. How individuals attached to other value than materiality have troubles existing in a society. Design can project future scenarios using tools as humour, fear and exaggeration of abnormal situations de-familiarization as a tool to help difference and flows in using objects.

Fabienne Laumonier, journalist for Arte Radio, investigates madness in a documentary called *White Madness*. In this title, “white” refers to the white of “white magic” which suggest that there is a positive madness and a negative madness.

*‘Madness is a moment, a process when a text created by somebody’s brain replaces reality. Madness embodies all psychoses, it is a generic term that we don’t really use anymore which had lost its value and now is only used to say that something is mad! I like this word, it marks the marginality of the psychotic person towards society, whereas the word schizophrenic feels more like clinical term, like a clean packaging name, and is reassuring. Madness is not reassuring.’*

(translated from French, Arte Radio documentary by Fabienne Laumonier, 18/09/2014)

Joris, who was diagnosed as schizophrenic thirteen years ago, explains his desire to become mad. “Madness is a story, a text taking place in somebody’s head and replaces reality” Reality is defined as what the majority of a group considers as normal. For Joris, normality is the ability to be a social and an economical agent who is actively part of a system of production. Schizophrenia is a disorder which excludes people from this process of being normal. But who defines normality? Neither the mad, nor the public are able to control the reality of events and occurrences: those which might seem out of place to one person are commonplace to another. What is deemed real and what is deemed unreal is dictated by a general consensus that an experience or story is normal. (Fabienne Laumonier, *La Folie Blanche* (2014) Arte Radio, 18/09/2014)

The more people share a story, the more normal it becomes. Back in university Joris was terrorized by the number of people walking around the campus. One day he saw helicopters flying above him, it seemed -to him- as though they were looking for him. It was impossible to escape. “This”, he says, “was the beginning of my hallucinations”. From an outside point of view, the helicopters were not after him. However, he heard them and had a panicked reaction to the situation. One could argue that hallucinations aren’t real as they are part of someone’s imagination. But as G. Bachelard defines in *The Poetic of Space*, “*imagination is a phenomena which requires images to be lived and seen as events taken from life*”. Joris’s hallucinations are phenomena which could fit within this definition of imagination as part of reality. Therefore we can question whether one

reality is more valid than an other.

The clinical term 'schizophrenic' that Joris perceives as a label, a "clean", "packaging name", applies a recognised, medical label to a condition of madness, allowing it to be recognised and controlled as an affliction within society. However the term 'madness' provokes the opposite reaction. Madness is the unknown, unable to be controlled.

To Foucault: *"madness is excluded by the subject who doubts as a means of qualifying himself as doubting subject"*.

Foucault is saying that a group can exclude any individual that they cannot predict the actions of. And conventions and normality are built as protection against potential danger. Those doubts are the seeds for the rejection of an individual from a group. Madness is out of the bounds of normal behaviour and is therefore out of control. However abnormality depends on *"the subject who doubts"* which is the public. The man free from any social consciousness represents a danger to the order of society.

Conventions and norms are invisible barriers that society has made physical. *Images of the street* specifies that the infrastructures are coming from beliefs, rituals, and culture. The essay of Riley E. Dunlap and William Michelson tries to situate agents from capitalist societies into their environment and understand how spatial organization influences social order. The authors describe the environment as a scene, comparable as a theatre where the stories are perceived and acted differently in different context. The environment is shaped by social, economical and cultures factors which means that architecture of public spaces are shaped by common beliefs. The comparison made of a stage *social relations and actors or of the narrative theme may be interpreted differently with different stage settings.* ( socio-behavioral qualities of the built environment) In public spaces, the first element of security is the judgement of the pedestrians. Spaces are designed for the public to be the first element of surveillance. When André Breton writes *Nadja*, he attempts to show how the stage inevitably creates madness.

*'A few months ago, one has told me that Nadja was mad. After giving herself to eccentric behaviours in the corridors of her hotel, she apparently had to be locked up at the mental institution of Vaucluse.'*

*Breton, A (1964). Nadja p159*

Nadja's lack of social barriers and public awareness have enabled her to be labelled mad. "One" has perceived Nadja's behaviour as diverting from normal behaviours. "One" is the outside observer, the judge of the social order from which Nadja is diverting.

Breton discredits the judgment of the public by using the word "apparently". Nadja's actions were not suitable for the space she was acting in. Therefore, for public tranquility she has been placed in a mental institution.

The space making the actor, or the actor making the space is what Breton says later in the paragraph *one must never have been in mental institutions to not know that they make madmen as the correctional houses make thieves* (Breton, A (1964). Nadja, p160) as well as G. Bachelard in *The Poetic of Space* saying that *the house shapes the man*, which suggests that the over control of society makes citizens of fear. Spaces are shaped by the desires of societies, our desire is to protect ourself. It is the desire of fear. In Foucault's introduction of *Anti-Oedipus*, he explains that *"flows and productions of desire will simply be viewed as the unconscious of the social production"*. As the unconscious of social production is about protection, mental institutions are created by fears. Any living thing that doesn't recognise fear as desirable is excluded from society.

In the Documentary *Surveillance and Apocalypse*, David Moore explains that the politics of fear of the United-States after the terrorist attacked of the 11/09, have turned public spaces as private corporation, recognising one single way of behaving. The space belong to the norms.

*At the same time we are in a moment of history when public space is increasingly privatised, in corporate into global capitalism, and placed under surveillance. This is a process that renders the presentation of public space a corporate monopoly serviced by a statepolitics of fear post 9/11.*

*(Documentary Surveillance and Apocalypse: David Moore and Angela Weight in conversation about The Last Things (2008) Belfast Exposed Photography, 21/08/2008)*

*The global capitalism suggests that cities following a system of production also share a common architecture which means that habits will be shaped by this one common belief. For Moore, this system is maintained by a statepolitics of fear turned as a desire.*

*When an individual does not share social desire, he cannot be part of the society. The main problems of productivity is the acknowledgment that any living thing is productive. As Deleuze and Guattari explain in Anti-Oedipus everything is a machine except the schizo.*

*‘The ego, however, is like daddy-mommy: the schizo has long since ceased to believe in it. He is somewhere else, beyond or behind or below these problems, rather than immersed in them. And wherever he is, there are problems, insurmountable sufferings, unbearable needs. But why try to bring him back to what he has escaped from, why set him back down amid problems that are no longer problems to him, why mock his truth by believing that we have paid it its due by merely figuratively taking our hats off to it? ‘*

*Guattari, F and Deleuze, G (1972).Capitalism and Schizophrenia Anti-Oepidus. p416*

The ego, used as a psychoanalytical term, is defined in this context as the perception of reality. Being conscious of the self is being conscious of existing in a society. Existing as an actor pushed to produce and to be aware of the boundaries imposed by normality. The schizo has stopped living in material culture. His desires are no longer depending on the ‘*working machine*’. The working machine is a machine able to produce and to reproduce. In a society based on materialistic needs, somebody like Joris or Nadja, whose desire are immaterial will be excluded. And as Deleuze and Guattari ask *why try to bring him back to what he has escaped from?* Escaping would mean that

society is kept prisoner therefore the disorder comes from the system of production. The schizo is the one legitimately allowed to run away from it.

From street interviews, done over the summer, asking the question "What is madness?" 60% of the people have answered "work" (primary observations, August 2014, Cannes). During an interview with Fabienne Lamonier, she explained that after a long period of stability Joris would become bored of reality. By stopping his medication he would provoke a manic phase in order to escape.

Foucault *believes that what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic*. The schizo is nomadic from normality. Regulated by medication, his stability varies and creates a rhythm of social consciousness which, in theory, would allow him to be a part of the productive system. From an individual perspective, madness is the actual system of production, on the other hand manic phases are becoming desirable. They allow the escape from the repetitive pattern of work "commuting, working, sleeping" (Lefebvre, H. (1992) 'Éléments de rythmanalyse. Introduction à la connaissance des rythmes', *Anthropologie de l'espace habité*, pp. 140-141). Boredom comes from the unchanging patterns of social consciousness. The real life is the working machine where all elements of human nature are considered as source of productivity. In this quote Deleuze and Guattari state that production based on the unconscious desire of a society based on the family. Family is here defined as a concept of normality that is imposed as a model, as an social unconscious desire. Mum, dad are machines of reproduction that the schizophrenic is no longer part of. He escaped from this reality of work; it is desirable to escape from this productive reality.

In the essay written in 1509, *Praise of Folly*, Erasmus portrays madness as a power of mind. For him *the wise men hide in books where they learn blinding concepts while remaining stagnant, whereas the madmen go through their own reality by taking risks*. Hesitation and fear, according to Erasmus, are the two obstacles which block growth and actions, by pointing out the danger. Social unconsciousness get rid of those barriers, nevertheless very few people are able to understand the advantage of never hesitating and taking risks. (*Praise of Folly*, Erasmus p36).



*The man who looks for security, even in the mind, is like a man who would chop off his limbs in order to have artificial ones which will give him no pain or trouble. No pain, no trouble – this is the neurotic's dream of a tranquilized and conflict-free existence. (Guattari, F and Deleuze, G (1972).*

*Capitalism and Schizophrenia Anti-Oedipus p428 )*

Deleuze and Guattari explain that the neurotic is a human being who finds solutions in comfort by avoiding problems, therefore entering an aseptic life style which is re-inforced by most consumer products responding to the egocentric desire. (what is the egocentric desire?) The artificial limbs replace human feelings. Pain, fears, and sadness, are not to be avoided but confronted. They are perceived as negative events outside of the established system of desire. There are no spaces or structures which provoke and praise fears which means that they are constantly suppressed, so that when they arise they cause discomfort. Conflicts are important in order to de-familiarize groups from their environments. The underexposure of people to fear in public spaces means that there is no space for unpredictability in social behavior. *The man who looks for security, even in the mind, away from pain and trouble Deleuze and Guattari (1983) where his environment is not disturbed by differences. (Capitalism and Schizophrenia Anti-Oedipus p428 )*

The over protective policy applied by capitalist system creates an anti-productive effect where fears are responsible for the lack of risk taking which leads to aseptic life styles. There is, however, one space allowing those repressed feelings to be publicly expressed; theatre. The radio podcast *Tears of a clown* on BBC brings the relationship between clowning and depression. It explains how a large amount of stand-up comedians have been through traumatic events and uses them humorous purposes. However, to a certain extent laughter is used for hiding from pain. For the public the sincerity of those stories is what make them successful *“what the public want from an artist is sincerity” (Tears of a Clown (2014) BBC Radio, 01/11/2014)* . Seems to work in both senses, the public is getting out of his context as well as the neurotic gets cured. However he is just passing from the box of pathology to the box of clowning. It is a jump from one category to another using laughter to normalise social disorders. They become controlled and therefore it isn't madness anymore. It is the accepted madness, the one attached to a social status. It is acceptable to be

different till it is productive. The fool is the ultimate anti-social character recognised as normal. He is more powerful than the audience that he mimics. He mocks reality in order to normalise perceived madness.

Writers and poets have criticized the marginalisation of people with deviant behaviors. In *Exercises in Style* the french poet Raymond Queneau writes the story of a bus ride where a young man in Paris has an argument with a gentleman who keep stepping on his toes. By using different writing styles, Queneau expresses the witness of the situation and shows how abnormality is determined by the observer. Here are quotes from stories of three passengers who assisted to the scene.

## Word game

All of the sudden this young man attacked his enemy- a man standing behind him. He accused him in particular of not behaving as politely as one would in a chapel. (...)

*Word game, Exercises in Styles, R. Queneau, p17*

## Hesitation

-(...) But one (or two?) of them was making himself conspicuous, I don't really know in what way. For his megalomania? For his adiposity? For his melancholy? (...) He started to quarrel, yes, that's right with, no doubt, another passenger (man or woman? Child or old age pensioner?) This ended, this finished by ending in a common place sort of way, probably by the flight of one of the two adversaries.

*Hesitation, Exercises in Styles, R. Queneau P35-36*

## Cross-examination

-Did you particularly notice any of them?

-An individual who had a very long neck and a plait round his hat.

-Was his demeanour as singular as his attire and his anatomy?

-At the very beginning, no; it was normal, but in the end it proved to be that of a slightly hypotonic paranoiac cyclothymic in a state of hypergastric irritability.

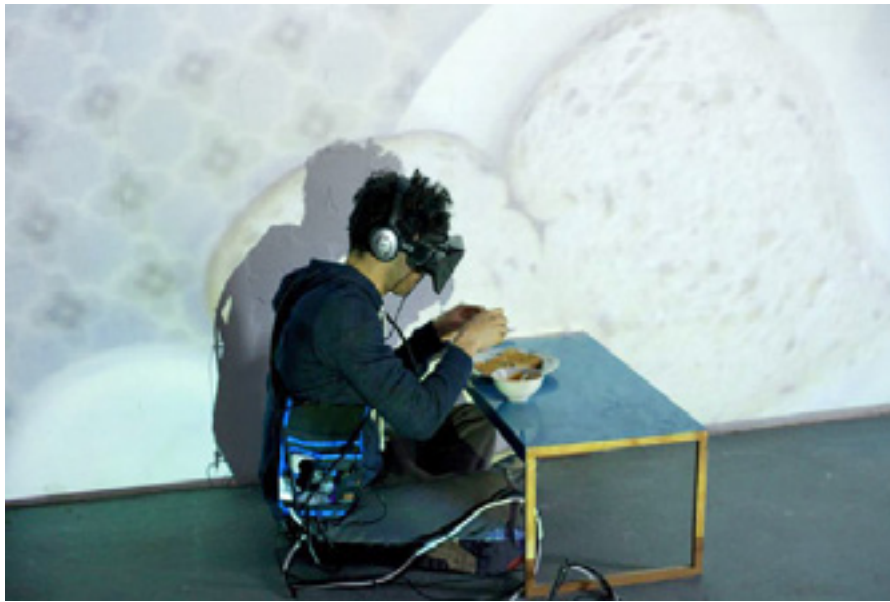
(...)

-Was there any sequel to this incident?

*Cross-examination, Exercises in Styles, R. Queneau P91*

The observers are using the common language of defence. In the first text, the words attacked, enemy and accused are setting a scene of insecurity. According to the passenger, the accusation came from the young man's irritation towards a misconducted behaviour in a public space. The abnormality here comes from a lack of politeness which is one of the social codes imposed by unspoken social rules. Politeness acts as a defence. It supposes that both men, the offender and the receiver, shared some behavioural codes acknowledged and respected - as one would in a chapel- for protecting the security of the space. Exposed behaviours which break such social laws are considered as abnormal. The second and third text are revealing the necessity of the public to classify abnormality in order to understand it - "For his megalomania? For his adiposity? For his melancholy?" and "It was normal, but in the end it proved to be that of a slightly hypotonic paranoiac cyclothymic in a state of hypergastric irritability." These terms belong to a medical vocabulary, here used to justify an uncomfortable behaviour. Psychiatric words show that the passenger is trying to categorise the people within this situation. But is also a mockery of the exaggerated reaction of the public.

According to Renée Riese Hubert The Coherence of Breton's «Nadja» is based on *expressing his estrangement from an existing order which pushes him to find a new direction*. He uses Nadja as a source of inspiration by capturing the sincerity of her attitude. Images beyond the realms of reality are used by poets, writers, sculptors, architects and painters as inspiration. Breton admires Nadja, Nadja admires Nietzsche, Nietzsche is admired by the public. When actions are not limited by any social norms the public is envious of the madman. Being out of control is an individual desire that leads to an escape from the productive system. Madness is an unspoken desire.



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Mark Farid



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Escape from the physicality of this system is possible through the use of virtual reality. For example, in an article published by Designboom on the 20th November 2014, Mark Farid is experiencing 28 days of isolation from the physical world using a headset. Throughout this month, he lived in a world comparable to a video game, where sound and images were artificial. This experiment asks if living in a physical world is necessary. Can human beings be satisfied by virtuality? This object is mimicking *the schizo* (Guattari, F and Deleuze, G 1972) by being self-centered and unable to interact with the outside. The emergence of virtual reality has created a parallel between the physical and the intangible life. From the point of view of the observer, the visual language of the headset is not indicating the emotional aspect or the experience that Mark is receiving. The object has three components, an eye cash, a screen and headphones. Only the mouth is uncovered. Everything is designed to deprive the senses of anything but the virtual world. However, as much as the headset is an extreme product, it falls into the category of normality. There is no communication with any other people. However the fact that the mask is attached to cables shows to the observer the normality of this product. They are not escaping the views of others, only themselves. It allows the user to experience a reality in which he is the only one. It is nearly impossible for the observer to interact as facial expressions are entirely covered. This could be considered as a *schizo* (Guattari, F and Deleuze, G 1972) machine as it disables people from being productive. It also maintains the security of normality as the user cannot engage with anything but the headset when it is in use. The user becomes separate from normality rather than changing normality. The headset is an indicator for the outside world that disconnection is acceptable. Objects have been made to escape physical reality and to virtually misbehave. However the lack of interaction with other people doesn't provoke the changing of behaviours.





Jammer coat, by Coop Himmelb

As an opposite example, the architecture firm Coop Himmelb designed a coat called Jammer coat which uses metallic fibers to block radio waves. Exhibited at the Triennale Design Museum in Milano the garment's is made to prevent from tracking by GPS. The goal is to escape from being followed. It questions the safety around virtuality constant exposure to virtuality as email, texting, internet access. The purpose of an over sized coat is not to be discrete or invisible. It comes an indicator of freedom, and promote a refusing of being reachable. However the observer knows that the user is still carrying his devises. The paradoxe of this product are the pockets specially designed to carry an Ipad, and Iphone. The coat is not made to protect from the cold anymore, but it is made for protecting privacy. It makes devises passive objects of surveillance. The user of the coat goes against his own decisions of possessing the devises. From the observer point of view, wearing the coat is a mark of distrust towards the outside. He protects himself from the invasion of his privacy in an intangible world. The invisibility of the enemies is a direct link with the paranoia of the schizo mentioned in Deleuze and Guattari's Anti Oedipus. The reason why the user is not perceived as Don Quichotte, fighting against mills, is because the intangibility of a danger has been accepted and recognised as normal. Furthermore, the coat's shape is an example on how object's functionality depends on this virtual world. It is made to escape surveillance. As soon as the devises put away, the user can walk without worry of being constantly connected. However, the phone could also be left at home as it is out of use when carried. It shows how the habit of having the devises constantly around is a necessity, so a norm. This shows that an intangible reality, comparable to the reality of *a schizo* (Guattari, F and Deleuze, G 1972), is accepted as normal.





*Berberian Sound Studio, (2012) Peter Strickland . UK Film Council*

In the film *Berberian Sound Studio* (2012), Gilderoy (Toby Jones), a sound engineer, takes a job working on the post-production of an Italian horror movie. Gilderoy is being kept in the studio, working in a state close to madness. He is forced to work under certain conditions, constantly exposed to violent sounds, screaming, and troubling noises. The way the film is produced induces a similar state in the viewer to that of the lead character. We see Gilderoy cut cabbages to provide the sound for a violent scene. We see only him and his story never the film that he is working on, and thus see the associations that must be made in his head. By repeating this pattern everyday he slowly enters a state of paranoia, where the reality of his work is replaced by the reality of the movie. For a moment he became a murderer. The use of vegetables as artefacts to imitate the gesture of horror leads him in an other reality. The substitution of an object for an other (like cutting a water melon instead of a woman) followed by the sound of the initial action, puts the viewer in the same emotional state as the perpetrator of this initial action. This phenomena is applicable to design. For example, if opening a door would make the sound of a child crying, over time the user will feel like the door is crying because of him. He will have an emotional reaction and thus attachment to the door. In the case of the movie, the images are more tangible than the physicality of a sound recording studio itself. In comparison to the headset which locked Mark in a virtual world, the lead character enters an other reality but still remains free and in control of his body movements. He is mentally dependent on an other reality. There are no objects to indicate a change of reality to the observer. Gilderoy changed reality by miming movements of the actions, in the case of Mark there are no movements. The body remains still. The lethargic state of Mark's body does allow physicality into his virtual world. The headset is not important. In *Berberian Sound Studio*, the facial features of the lead character become more extreme as objects of his surrounding become props of his own world. He is provoked into obsession and paranoia by a fictional reality. The associations he develops become the associations that the viewer develops through watching the film.



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*Objects for a Lonely Man, Noam Toran, 2010*

As a similar example, Noam Toran's project, *Objects for a Lonely Man* (2001), deals with an anti social character who is obsessed with Godard's movie, *Breathless*. In order to become the lead character, the lonely man uses a set of objects from the film. The set contains a mannequin head of Jean Seberg (the lead actress), a gun, a hat, a telephone, Herald Tribune newspaper, a pair of sunglasses, ashtray, stressing wheel, rear view mirror and a pack of Gitanes non-filtered cigarettes. The gun is the power. It is the essential object for a lead character. It defines him as a hero, escaping from some sort of control. Generally, the escaping ends by death either of the enemy or himself. In both case the lead character remains a hero. By using the gun the Lonely Man becomes this eternal being. He reaches the superiority of laws and loses his social consciousness by projecting himself into an other character. The hat and the sunglasses are the artefacts of transformation. They are the skin of the lead character. They only are effective through the mirror, which makes him visually realise the loss of his ego for an other one. All those narcissistic objects are used to project a fantasy and to enhance the experience of the self by mimicking the gestures of an other person. This mental and physical transformation is similar to *the schizo* (Guattari, F and Deleuze, G 1972). This piece of critical design pushes the user to expand the reality imposed by social norms. The Lonely Man believes he his the lead character. He creates his own repetitive machine, which starts with the film, follows the scenes and ends. This cycle is comparable to a circle of production. It encourages the user to become his own system of production by becoming an unproductive machine. Like the schizo, he is an unproductive machine. In this case obsessions are considered as desirable when they are categorised as pathological by psychiatrists.



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Some companies specialise in provoking self-obsessions to create a dependence within the consumer. Say Fromage is a service design renting company, offering Photo Booths for events. During the summer 2014, the advertisement company Shots used a Booth and managed to get 80% of people passing by to stop and take a picture. The deal was : a picture for an email address. This business is based on the trade of the ego for personal data. The success of the product is shown by the consumer receiving a reflection of himself. It creates a flattering relationship, where the product becomes the mirror of the consumer's vanity. When the picture is taken there is the possibility to share it on social platforms as Facebook and Twitter. This has the effect of making the consumer conscious of his attitude and facial expressions, which are further accentuated by a screen displaying all pictures to the public. The booth provokes self consciousness, even though paradoxically it offers the possibility to dress up and be ridiculous. In this case scenario, the consumer is not merging in somebody else's head. The attempted of ridiculousness fails as the consumer is not acting out of the norm. Dressing up is the aim here, there is no transformation. The neurotic, as Deleuze and Guattari defines him, is passively part of a system of production. He is not exposed to any obsessions other than himself. He is paranoid and cares about the judgement of the public towards his appearance. It is a human-centered product.



*Bonnie and Clyde*, collection *Delirious objects* by Romain Cazier, Anna Heck and Leon Laskowski

Three students of ECAL worked on a collection of objects called Delirious Objects (Romain Cazier, Anna Heck and Leon Laskowski). Bonnie and Clyde is the story between a spoon and a coffee cup. When the cup is moved, the spoon follows it. This piece of design interaction adds movements to inanimate objects in order to create a reaction. It provokes the emotional attachment of the user through the recognition of their own behaviours. The protagonist is facing a common cup of coffee and a spoon.

The combination of the banality and the expected movements are creating an effect of surprise. It is used to defamiliarise the user with their environment. He becomes the spectator of his own life. The motion of the inanimate is the unusual. It suddenly feels like the spoon knows the cup is running away. Adding human actions to products brings a sense of attachment to it. In this case madness comes from not being able to control the objects. The objects decide and the user follows. Objects which act as they wish theoretically don't need a user. The importance is the reality it creates through a story or a narrative.



This essay tried to praise madness and its use as a tool to escape social boundaries. The work of Deleuze and Guattari explains how capitalism inhibits the ability of unproductive systems or behaviours to exist. Each individual is a state (The Wings of desire, Wim Wenders, 1987) - the irrationality of every individual has more value than the imposed rationale of a system of production. Madness is a state of mind, considered a disease, which brings a nomadic aspect to a sedentary society. The madman is not obsessed by his image; unlike the consumer who builds up his image through products that reflect his dream social category. Design has the power to change individuals realities by posing problems instead of solving them. Through the association of fictional situations with everyday habits, design can defamiliarise the user with his environment. Multiple ways are possible such as: distorting habits, changing the path and rhythms, the movements they imply, and following obsessions. We could argue that social media or video games are bringing this freedom, however none of these are engaging the body in tangible experience. Virtual experiences do not fully engage the individual in the same way that tangible experiences can; rather they just disengage people from aspects of reality. Creating a passivity towards reality as oppose to a different reality. And this passivity is becoming normal. Madness is a deep connection to the physical world that engages actions of the body. This defies the classical definition of madness as being a barrier between normality and the madman's own world. A more apt example of such a barrier would be virtual reality. Madness, or mad behaviours could serve to bring people closer to reality.

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