Methods of Translating
Written Response

"Re-presenting" Hito Steyerl's *In the Defence of the Poor Image* (2009) into the 'assignment form' of David Reinfurt's *A *New* Program for Graphic Design* (2020)

Assignment 1, Poor Image as Resistance

Understanding the Transition from a "Perfect" Image to a "Poor" Image according to Hito Steyerl's *In Defense of the Poor Image* (2009)

This is an in-depth, semester length process that will record the evolution of an image from its pristine to its "poor" form.

Week 1-2: On Distribution

Start a chain reaction that creates a poor image. Record where they come from, who owns its original authorship, and the message behind it. Let the process begin. Reproduce it, re-edit, reformat it - the faster it moves, the more deterioration it must suffer. Make the image accessible (let others change it as well). Make it abstract to the point that its identity becomes the decontextualized distortion and no longer traces back to the original message.

Consider: What is the new identity assumed by the poor image? Does it still hold on to its source as an effigy that has travelled the world (quickly and cheaply) or has created an economy of its own?

Week 3-4: On Authorship and Ownership

Note the perfect image that preceded the poor image and note the relationship it has with the original author and audience. Would they still claim the image - diminished as it has now become? Does loss of focus also indicate a loss in its privilege as high art? Which part of the sociopolitical structure of the capitalist economy does it occupy?

If not, who has co-opted, adopted the image instead? Referencing the commodification of culture, with commercialization of cinema and its dispersion in multiplexes, consider how the poor image becomes marginalized and how it also carries with it the new owners of the image.

Week 5-9: Degradation as Politics

As you continue to distort the image, as it proceeds to create new contexts with every iteration, amplify certain connotations and then others. You might work with deliberate compression, data corruption, or re-recording until an image loses its contours. Note how they alter perceptions of truth and authority.

Every change as a charged political decision, the image must become a site of struggle between accessibility and erasure, seated between smoothness of its authority and then the friction of participation. Question if these community-led alterations on the poor image make the image more or less authentic?

Week 10-12: The Final Poor Image

Now that the image is sufficiently evolved from its source content, juxtapose it with its original "perfect" source. Place both images in a busy space, like a shops or malls, or even a digital space (eg, a sponsored ad versus a "shit"post) and investigate which becomes the hero image, while which one becomes more popular? Does the poor image participate in the over-curated and exclusively owned "good visual culture", or does it refuse the concept of ownership by being owned by no one at all, and yet everyone?

Lastly, consider which of the two images is more representative of reality. Note if the poverty of an image is a subversion of cultural elitism.

In *Defense of the Poor Image* (2012), Hito Steyerl argues that low-resolution, widely shared, or pirated images carry their own form of power valuing circulation over clarity and participation over perfection. To engage with the poor image is to confront ways of seeing, and who controls the interpretation of the message. This assignment invites you to think of the image as not a polished object but instead a record of movement, compression and collective use - to show how culture resists exclusivity through collective mimeographs of reality.

References

Reinfurt, D. (2020) *A *New* Program for Graphic Design*. Edited by A.M. Eugenia Bell. Inventory Press / O-R-G.

Steyerl, H. (2009) "*In Defense of the Poor Image*," e-flux [Preprint], (10). Available at: https://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image.

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