

Positions through Contextualising

Week 03 | Intermediate Presentation

Uma B.



Previously on *Positions*
through Contextualising...

Using the findings of the interviews, where was value interpreted in their design?



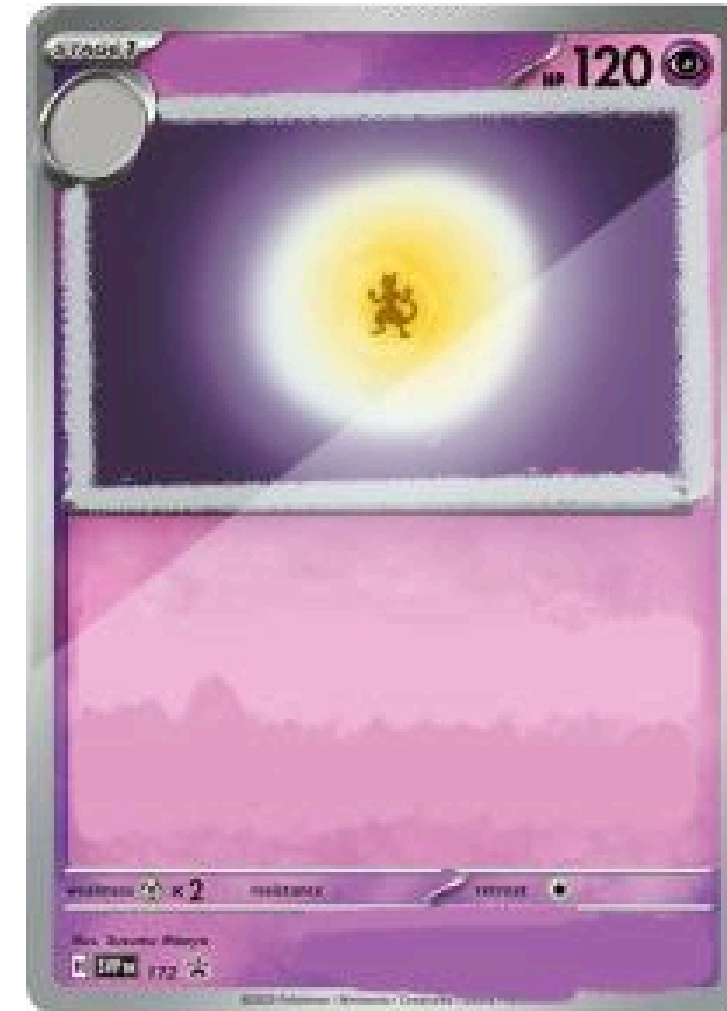
Illustration as the hook; in a boys' league



Knock-offs having a depreciative value



Foil and shiny Material as a class signifier



A gamble that can be exciting



A gateway to being a cool kid



Literally monetary value when held for resale

Approach

I was working with the qn of: **How does the design of these cards help to read different kinds of value in them?**

Crit takeaways from last week:

- One of the main points brought up was the visual vocabulary of the cards wasn't interacting enough with the idea and logic of value I wanted to interrogate
- Maybe cards could be a starting point instead of the final output.

New Questions

I looked back at my work and realized one more thing that had transpired:

While my reinterpretation sought to discover visual qualities on the card surface, I realised the central theme of my work - value - was rooted in the contexts of the object as opposed to its form.

Cultural capital is a qualitative measure of value, so value then, in these objects, was also developed culturally, in its interactions and circulations more than any other way.

New Questions

I moved towards exploring ways of interrogating value in the circulation of cards, in the economy that makes it compelling.

While looking more context on P.C, it was evident that one of the most prominent catch in their economy was the circulation of fakes.



Bootlegging as Creative Practice

Schwartz, B. (2023) *Unlicensed: Bootlegging as Creative Practice*. Amsterdam: Valiz.

Creativity is rarely “original” in a pure sense. He positions creative practice as always responding to existing images, systems, and objects. Bootlegging just makes that dependence visible instead of pretending originality appears from nowhere. There’s also a tension between “high” and “low” culture. The introduction moves between art theory, piracy, street markets, corporate branding, DIY publishing, and internet culture without treating them as separate worlds. That flattening feels deliberate.

Schwartz focusses on the instability of authorship in the circulation of bootlegs which make it particularly more interesting for me because **bootlegging is a direct affront to the cultural capital one seeks** in Bourdieu’s view .

Bootlegging as a practice inspired a a response. *What are the low-end / low-capital version of fancier motifs?*

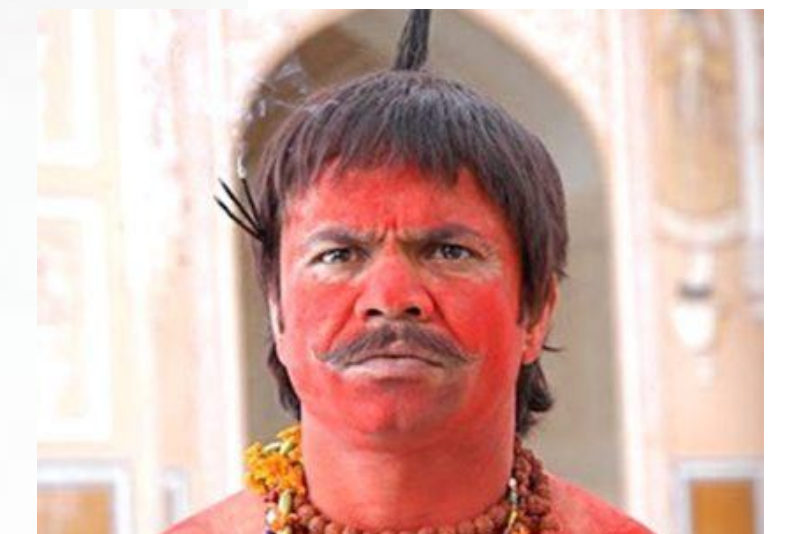
At this point I departed on working solely with cards, but decided to build a catalogue of high-value objects that have a tense relationship with their low-end subversions.

@Sage Ozo's Chota Pandit x Funko Pop Translation

Ceramic Bootleg Funko-Pop of Bhool Bhulaiyaa's Chota Pandit - a comic relief exorcist who is apparently driven mad after sighting a ghost. Bollywood Classic for no-brain comedy.

The thing is while Funko Pop makes exactly this - popular characters into figurines - but this is NOT the kind of character you would see on their roster.

The cultural capital of Funko Pop is high, and rather west-centric (save some anime collabs) - so this feels like a reclamation by engaging a collectible with content so 'low-culture'.





Juxtaposing value!

The idea is that value for these objects is only created in context to its related economy.

I chose a few objects and iterated on archiving their bootlegs or 'poorer' versions, placing in the context where its easier to map how value moves in that ecosystem. Then I extrapolated that across all other objects.



Eg. 1. A rare charizard x A 'spoof Pukemon' card.

'same-same but different' is a South/East/Asian colloquial way of pointing out something still is different despite its similar nature with what its being compared to. This booklet recognises and brings together some references that follow this idea - of how difference exists despite, and perhaps, because of similar visualities.

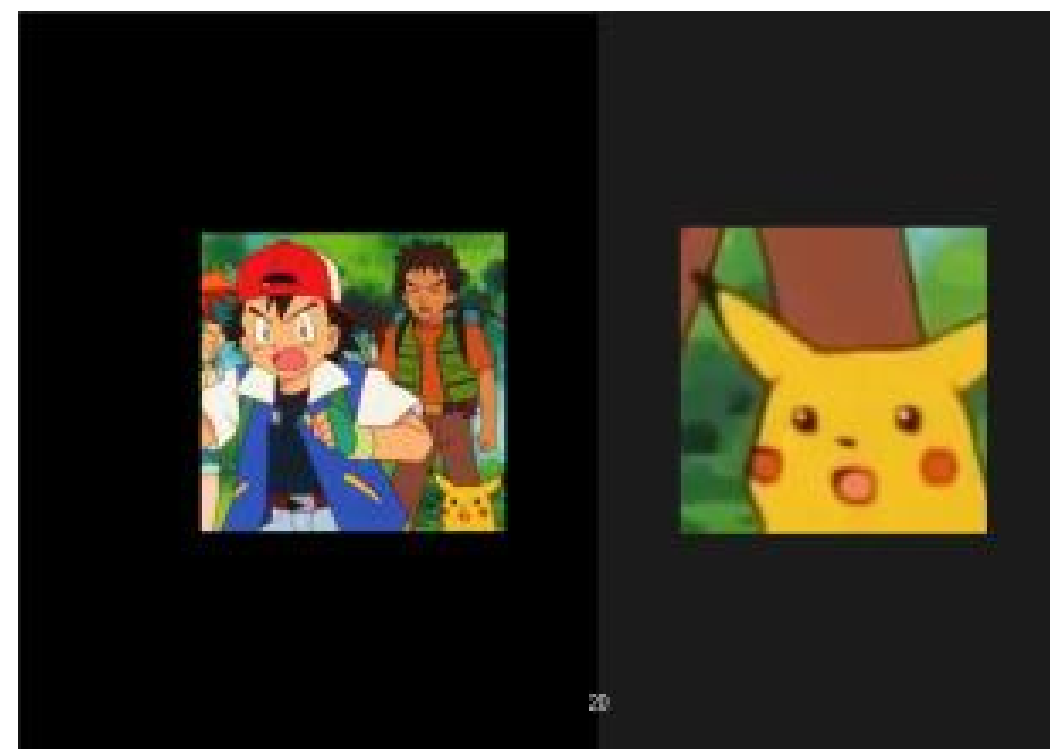
This book is an archive of references and images **that interrogate questions of value of cultural symbols and artefacts through symmetrical motifs.** It explores **the idea of translation from one point to another—sometimes linear, sometimes satirical—where value shifts in the negative space between images before it reaches the other side.** **Between each pair sits a tension, where culture is reinterpreted and revaluated, mostly as these motifs circulate and find belonging in different ways. The project examines how source material and/or forms with higher cultural capital, establish certain precedents that are then dismantled or reshaped through parodies, imitations, and other circulated versions.**

Bootlegging and counterfeiting examples challenge cultural capital in this enquiry - like Yilong Ma, in almost a Shanzhai way, or Majnu Bhai's questionable painting- there is a certain liberation in subverting the standard that the motif starts out with.

The book also operates as a scale, with "higher" capital on one end and "lower" capital on the other. This comparison **raises questions of equitability, since the conditions shaping the meaning of each image differ significantly, and also exist independently.** For eg. The Local Kolhapuri slippers (p.9) still have more cultural capital within its local populace, no matter its co-option by Prada. Conversely, Yoga (p.15) has found far more patronage in its modern image than its prior one. These examples reflect their own realities. In doing so, it challenges the authority of authenticity and opens up questions around access, democracy, and the role of bootlegging. **As the object moves from one end to the other, it carries the same idea, but its meaning is fundamentally altered.**



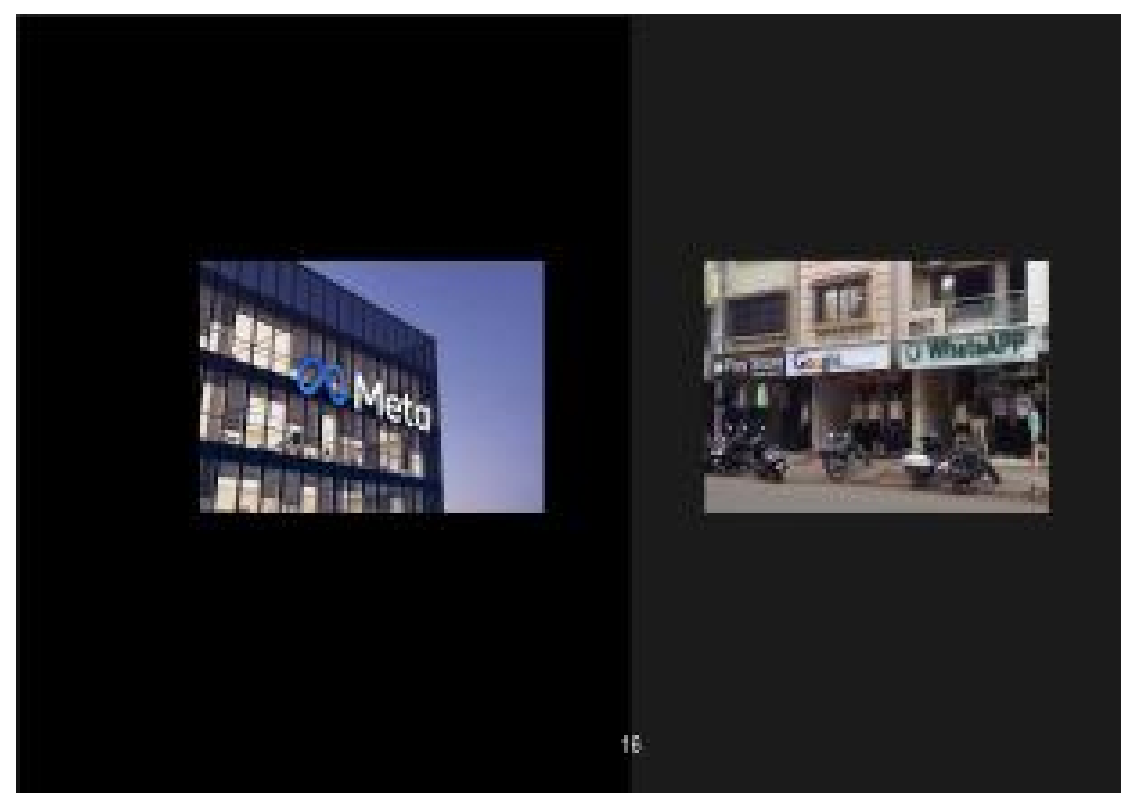
8



20



9



16



7



6



14



Line of Enquiry

I believe I'll be moving forward with the interrogation of value - I quite enjoyed recognising and relating two ends of the spectrum - maybe the next point of action is a mix of the two.

A dilution or concentration of value by adding new elements to it - to make it muddy on purpose and increase the sense of discomfort(?)

Next Steps:



- I really want to do smth similar to a literal translation as this reference moving forward. (not sure if I want 3d because a bit of skill gap there). Literally remixing objects of different 'values' - creating imbalances.
- I am - sadly - still feeling that *making* still has more potential. (I am a theory girl hhaha) I would love advice/inspo on that if anyone has any -