Week 3

OBSERVATION

“But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.”

JOHN BERGER, WAYS OF SEEING
WHAT WE SEE & WHAT WE BELIEVE
WHAT WE EXPECT TO SEE & WHAT WE BELIEVE
Inattentional Blindness

The Invisible Gorilla Test (1999)
Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris
Inattentional Blindness

The Invisible Gorilla Test (1999)
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WHAT WE SEE IS
WHAT WE BELIEVE!
The way we observe is affected by a whole series of learnt assumptions and experiences.
A phenomenon of perception caused by exposure to an unstructured and homogeneous visual field. Since our brains are designed to find patterns, it can start to make things up when there's no real pattern to find. The Ganzfeld effect frequently causes hallucinations and an altered state of mind.
“It is important to realize that observation is much more than merely seeing something; it also involves a mental process. In all observations there are two elements: (a) the sense-perceptual element (usually visual) and (b) the mental, which may be partly conscious and partly unconscious.”

- *The Art of Scientific Investigation*, W.I.B. Beveridge
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Active observation involves firstly noticing some object or event. The thing noticed will only become significant if the mind of the observer either consciously or unconsciously relates it to some relevant knowledge or past experience, or if in pondering on it subsequently he arrives at some hypothesis.”

- The Art of Scientific Investigation, W. I. B. Beveridge
HOW TO PRACTICE?

1. Identify what to observe.
2. Become familiar with the object/event in its setting.
3. Determine how to observe the object or event (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell, measurement).
4. Consider any biases or frames of reference that may impact the observation.
5. Decide on a format for recording the observation.
6. Use your sensory elements to observe the object/event and identify the details.

7. Immediate review: After observing the event, try to process the information that you observed in as many modes as available to you, e.g., writing, speaking, typing, drawing, acting out, seeing, etc.

Immediate active processing is an important part of active observation.
FOVEAL VISION & SACCADe
The act of consciously considering one's own thought processes by planning, monitoring, and evaluating them.
(thinking about your thinking)
THEATRICALITY & ABSORPTION

Jeff Wall, *Picture for Women*, 1979

Édouard Manet, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, 1882
Jeff Wall, Adrian Walker, Artist, *Drawing From a Specimen in a Laboratory in the Dept. of Anatomy at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1992*

Jean-Baptiste-Simeon Chardin *A Bar at The Young Draughtsman, 1737*

**THEATRICALITY & ABSORPTION**
Similarity occurs when two or more subjects look similar to one another. By applying this principle into our image we can make a visual interaction between different elements on our image or generate a new content through those interactions.

The repetition within forms caused by this principle, can have a pleasing appearance, and will often instill a feeling of harmony or rhythm.
Anomaly happens when a visual subject disrupts a similar pattern or a harmony and as a result it becomes a foveal point.

Anomaly draws the viewer’s attention to one specific area in the scene, which could relieve the monotony of the scene by breaking up the regularity of surface.
Continuation occurs when our eye is compelled to move through one part of the image and continue to another part.

By using this principle we can create a fluid movement or ‘eye-flow’ between compositional elements, and along with different subjects.
Gestalt Theory or Gestaltism, is a psychological term coined by Berlin School in 1920, defines that the human eye sees objects in their entirety before perceiving their individual parts, suggesting the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. To practice active observation, we can use these principles derived from Gestalt theory to identify attributes, behaviors, and relationships about objects or events and also increase our ability to gather data from our surroundings.