

Method of Contextualising

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GOOGLE'S STREET VIEWS

Google's *Street Views*(2022) presents some critical discourses it suggests by paying attention to Trekker Backpack(2018), which is used to shoot Google Street View(GSV) among various objects of V&A. The project, consisting of three videos and a publication, focused on the controversy over GSV's long-criticized privacy issue and the idea of 'human behind the camera' over the anonymity of the footage.

According to the description on V&A, google's documentation of our landscapes continues to change how we navigate and understand the world(Google, 2018). In other words, this can be interpreted as Google is curating the world through a medium called Street View. Naturally, GSV also plays a positive role as a medium for recording the world. However, aren't we still overlooking the privacy issue too much? Are we aware of the existence behind the curated GSV even though we use it every day? Isn't the public accepting GSV too uncritically? Starting with several questions, at *Google's Street Views*(2022), each of us became a photographer and shot 360-degree street views by mimicking GSV. And based on that footage, we set up three different personas. The final video format, which can be operated by mouse drag, allows audiences to interact. Based on the assumption of how GSV, which can seem neutral, can have various perspectives, we tried to put GSV in a new context and to make it a project that presents the new discourse.

PROCESS -'PRIVACY'

The critical evaluation of GSV has continued since it appeared in 2007. And the most popular topic was the privacy issue. Even though there were several cases of invasion of privacy, Google argued that it was not intended. And despite their claims, the issue of privacy has always been discussed. Our enquiry also began at this point. 'Can't you say that privacy is protected just because the face is covered?', 'If someone can observe private spaces through GSV, shouldn't it also be considered that privacy is invaded?'

However, on the contrary, there is also a view that positively evaluates the Street View. Jordan E. Segall present the function as surveillance of GSV, referring as '*Street View images consistently allow users to witness terrain and areas for safety, house hunting, travel, and even crime solving*(Jordan, 2010).'

The most general view of GSV is the critical perspective that it is invading privacy, and this positive evaluation brought a new perspective in the process of the project. This led our project to be interested in the behind scenes of GSV, not just enquiries about privacy over the production process.

PROCESS, POSITION; HUMAN BEHIND GSV

Our position, which took a step further from the general point of view that GSV is infringing on privacy, was to remind that there are photographers or Google, behind the Street View. *Google's Street Views*(2022) is a reminder of the existence of humans behind GSV that appears anonymous without an author. It suggests that Google may not be neutral, and that's why it should be more aware of the defenceless use of GSV.

Street View seems anonymous with an author. Even if many footages are captured by vehicles or machines of Google, someone is always involved in its process where street views are filmed. In this context, as mentioned in *Exhaustive Images: Surveillance, Sovereignty, and Subjectivity in Google Maps Street View*(2011), 'Our assumption, as viewers, that these images of suffering were caught "by chance", particularly in the case of Google Maps Street View, has the troubling effect of framing specific moments of desubjectification as random, unintentional, or beyond the scope of human agency.' Also, the expressions used to describe Rafman's Nine Eyes series in the article can be substituted for this project.

Although Google claims that the application "contains imagery that is no different from what you might see driving or walking down the street," the project 'Google's Street Views(2022)' proves that something different occurs when these events are captured and represented photographically(Gabrielle, 2011).

360-DEGREE VIDEOS & 3 PERSONAS

Google's Street Views(2022) sets up personas in each of the three images and emphasizes people or landscapes that arouse interest from that persona's point of view. Each one-minute video, containing the scenery of Soho's downtown area, Kingscross Station, and the residential area, shows three different perspectives that can be had as a photographer of GSV.

In the three videos, each of the different personas presents the perspective of a neutral, photographer as a camera, and photographer as an individual person. Persona1 shows a natural perspective by collecting various comments from GSV's review and showing the majority of opinions on the place. Persona2 and 3 express the perspective of the photographer who is filming. The only difference between them is that persona 2 is based on the viewpoint of the device

observing what is happening in front of the lens, and persona 3 is in the viewpoint of the individual walking through the place. Publication, which organizes these videos, also consists of three parts with three different forms, such as transparent paper, roulette table-game, and the personal diary.

All of these processes went through three specific directions of iterating 360-degree videos taken at the eye-level of the floor as if 99 experiments were conducted with one text through *Exercise in Style* (Queneau, 1998). The project is inspired by the process of *Exercise in Style* (1998) in the aspect of having the process that edited in slightly different forms and showed different personalities through iterating.

CURATED IMAGES

The main points of the videos are images that appear in virtual space in a 360-degree video like GSV. This is the same way Sarah Charles presents her idea. She displays only certain events on the front page of 27 newspapers published on the same day so that expressing how news looks depending on the newspaper company and what the editor perceives each event and news (Charlesworth, 1979). Both of her work and Google's Street view is disclosing its idea by emphasizing certain points.

The objects emphasized by each persona are square-shaped pop-up images that float in the video and disappear. These are just images that crop a part of the original video, but they come out randomly at a 360-degree angle and disappear. This makes people wander around in the video. And this feature is most strongly revealed in the video of persona2. The interesting point here is that because of the speed at which the photographer is walking and the speed at which the image disappears in the video, the audience constantly focuses and finds the object that this photographer is pointing out. Just as GSV curates the world through this medium, the photographer's perspective forces the audience to find the specific things in the video. Through active manipulation, the audience naturally finds the object to be guided as soon as the video is delivered, and they lose an opportunity to catch other things in the video. Eventually, viewers who have watched the video will remember the video, focusing on what the human behind the camera curated.

COMMENTARY

Commenting added on these videos shows the characteristics of each persona more clearly. Videos without commenting still emphasize and show certain images, as *Movie-Television-News-History* (1979), making us aware that there is a personality that is not neutral. But they do not clearly show that each persona is different. In this context, Google's *Street Views* (2022) is finally completed with the addition of commenting. Comments added to the video, as in *Exhausting a Crowd* (McDonald, 2015), provides an opportunity for the audience to recognize various objects in the video. It also shows what is happening in videos of daily life where nothing seems to happen, like Kyle's motif, and how the human behind the camera perceives it. This commenting is further maximized in publication. The comments shown with the image in different configurations highlights that there may be events that cannot be found in the original footage.

PROCESS AND POSITION AS A DESIGNER

In our daily life, GSV is used for various purposes. People use it to check the area in advance before going to a place they don't know or to relieve their longing for the area they lived in in the past. Furthermore, some people go to virtual travel using GSV as there are limitations of travelling due to Pandemic. As such, in our daily lives, we accept and use Street Views uncritically without awareness.

As mentioned in several ways in previous paragraphs, this project focuses on the social influence created by GSV. Therefore, it reminds us that we should pay attention to the various discourses they create, not indiscriminately access the searches provided in the digital age where personal information has become the biggest issue. The project, which began with an individual interest in an object called *Trekker Backpack* (2018), has expanded its project boundary to the social influence of GSV through various questions and enquiries. In other words, as Maze refers in his book, we did our own discipline, but at the same time, we are working in a critical designer's position addressing pressing issues in society (Laranjo, 2014).

¹Google (2018). *Trekker Backpack*. [ABS plastic, aluminum and textile strapping].

²Laranjo, F. ed., (2014). *Critical Graphic Design: Critical of What?* | Modes of Criticism. [online] modesofcriticism.org/critical-graphic-design/ [Accessed 27 Feb. 2022].

³Fillip (2011). *Exhaustive Images : Surveillance, Sovereignty, and Subjectivity in Google Maps Street View* (Gabrielle Moser). [online] Fillip. Available at: <https://fillip.ca/content/exhaustive-images> [Accessed 28 Feb. 2022].

⁴Segall, J.E. (2011). *Google Street View: Walking the Line of Privacy- Intrusion upon Seclusion and Publicity Given to Private Facts in the Digital Age*. JD Thesis.

⁵Charlesworth, S. (1979). *Movie-Television-News-History*. [Twenty-seven chromogenic color prints, printed 2010].

⁶McDonald, K. (2015). *Exhausting a Crowd*. [Digital] Available at: <https://www.exhaustingacrowd.com/saintbrieuc> [Accessed 28 Feb. 2022].

⁷Queneau, R. (1998). *Exercises in Style*. John Calder.