

**Engage the  
look gently**

**Unexplored  
territory**







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# Unexplored territory

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# CONTENTS

- 9 ~18**    **Abstract**  
Open Your Eyes  
See What You Can Not See  
See Differently
- 19 ~ 30**    **Project**  
Unexplored territory
- 31 ~ 38**    **Bibliography**
- 39 ~ 41**    **Iconography**





# **Abstract**



In today's world, we are invaded by images and we are constantly invited to look at something. As graphic designers we are able to pass on messages visually, we have the power to act on these looks, and therefore to induce a particular behavior. I questioned the appropriation and reception of messages by people, especially when some messages are taboo subjects.

How can graphic designers deal with subjects that are not visible, that should not be represented, because they are censored or hidden. The underlying question is how can a picture pass on messages about taboo subjects in a sweet and poetic way.

**Open Your Eyes**

In the first part entitled «Open your eyes», I studied the techniques and strategies used to pass on messages. I focused my study on the techniques used in marketing and advertising.

I started my research with the book Propaganda written by Edward Bernays, the founder of the profession of public relation advisor in 1928. He used Freud's theories of the unconscious and applied them to marketing.

In his book he explained the importance of applied arts in this field, because he realized that to sell better, an image added values to the message.

Advertising resorts to all sorts of visuals and relies on graphic designers' skills.

In the past, graphic design followed in a functionalist logic created from the doctrine of Louis Henry Sullivan, an American architect - «form follows function» . Images were closely connected to the message and had to be as efficient and effective as possible. Graphic designers were simply seen as performers. This resulted in giving place to a shaped and formatted imagination, leading to a loss of imagination.

Bernard Stiegler, the founder and president of the Ars industrialis association and French philosopher, works on the issues of the current changes. He tells us there is a loss of attention. He explains that today's capitalism is based on the constant rapture of attention and desire through media anchored in the consumer society. That is what he calls «libidinal economy».

With a loss of imagination and a loss of attention, we can wonder how to pass on messages in a world saturated with messages and information.

# **See What You Can Not See**

The second part, entitled «See What You Can not See» is about taboos, prohibitions and censorship and questions the place of design regarding these prohibitions. Design is intended to create artifacts to question our world. It can be the mediator between taboos and people.

We can notice a need among artists to transgress prohibitions in order to test their limits, to experiment some freedom of creation when the laws and standards become too oppressive, or simply to play with them. In the case of censorship, the term is connoted negatively. It is synonymous with infringement of freedom of expression. If we look at it from another perspective, couldn't it be seen as a creative engine, like a game for which you have to hack the rules?

Hays code, which set the moral guidelines for Hollywood cinema from the 30's to the 60's is a case in point. Some writers played with these constraints by diverting the cinematographic techniques. It was see a way for them to stimulate their inventiveness.

Hitchcock is a relevant example. As a genius of metaphorical narration, he offered various grids of reading his films. He understood that besides the choice of his actresses and the scenario, the situation, the way of framing his shots and filming the objects generated symbols and metaphors. We can refer to the final scene of «North by Northwest», following the kissing scene between the two main actors, Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint. We can see a train entering a tunnel, which is a scene with strong sexual connotations.

**See Differently**



Finally in the third part entitled « See differently», I studied how to boost the impact of an image, how to make it rough in order to arouse the viewer's interest. Confronted to the loss of imagination and attention that induces a loss of belief for storytelling, what can be done? How can graphic designers as experts in images reaveal the strangeness of images. How can they jam them ? How to surprise viewers and arouse the unexpected? I questioned the ornamentation, meaning and function of artifacts as well as the materials and media used.

According to the philosopher Wilem Flusser «the world will have no more story to tell». This creates some disenchantment and Annick Lantenois, an art historian specialized in graphic design, explains that some graphic designers resort to ornamentation again to fill this void. For William Morris, a founding member of the arts and craft, applied arts are the activity that gives ornamental qualities to utility objects. This activity aims to reconcile art and life.

In the opposition between meaning and function, interaction comes from the material(s) and the medium used. They influence the reading of objects, and therefore our perception. If we compare the Bayeux tapestry which is several meters long and a book that tells the same story, that of the Battle of Hasting, the way in which the reader deals with them will not result in the same effect. It is not the same approach, the same appropriation. The historical event and the story of the battle will not be perceived in the same way.



# Project



I felt an urge to develop this research and put it into practice in my project.

I decided to work on the taboo of feminine sexuality to target female teenagers, to help them during that period of bodily transformations and transitions.

Teenagers do not dare to talk about it because they feel uncomfortable and ashamed. They can feel oppressed by these taboos. This usually results in a lack of self-esteem and discomfort that prevent them from being free.

Indeed, we live in a world where taboos and social norms generate intimate conflicts. A lot of conditioning comes from a generational legacy. With the evolution of these norms, some prohibitions disappeared. We can then say that intellectually we are free, but not intimately.

In my research, I worked on an intimate design as a gentle and poetic mediator. For that I planned to work with poetry, not in the literary sense, but by naming things differently in order to evoke other imaginaries.

I tried to reinforce sensitivity. I spoke a different language, both peaceful and humane, tinged with fantasy to tame such a complex subject (sexuality as a taboo).

I planned to adopt a benevolent posture to help those young people. I talked about the hedonistic aspect of sex, the discovery of oneself, the acceptance of one's body and the taming of one's desires.

I worked on illustrations to heal the evils arising from the intimate conflict caused by taboos and prohibitions.

I wanted to speak about pleasure, the discovery of oneself, the acceptance of desires, and impulses. I created a universe to highlight the «unsaid and unrepresented». I wanted to help them to release the tensions between the mind and the body.

During an interview with the nurses of Saint Exupéry High school in Marseille, and through my readings, I noticed a lack of significant mediation. Indeed, in the field of sex education, there is a wide range of tools concerning prevention against STDs or for contraception but very little on pleasure and desire or the psychological aspect of sex.

Through different readings including that of *Sexpowerment when sex frees the woman (and the man)!* by Camille Emmanuelle, and *Flesh and soul, the hypersexualization of young girls* by Blanche Martire, I realized that the problems of teenage girls were not only internal and psychological but that they could be linked to external factors.

The external problems (related to the environment of adolescents) come from a number of stereotypes, clichés and prejudices which should be deconstructed.

There is a first circle of transmitters of prejudices among teenagers. For example we can see rumors about the sexuality of boys «who have a so-called mechanical orgasm», or about that of girls who have a blooming sexuality «who are seen as «sluts» or “nymphomaniacs». There is a second circle of emitters that impose a norm for femininity and sexuality, like women’s magazines, advertising, cosmetic companies and pornography. Numerous reports focus on the lack of sex education and lack of anatomical knowledge.

These problems can lead to intimate conflicts among some teenage girls causing a loss of self-confidence and internal tensions. They can influence their perception of the image of their body. Major complexes are related to

modesty, physical and body appearance, weight and body hair.

I also studied masturbation, first time love apprehension and the confusion between love and sex.

I see the project as a springboard for my future professional life. Indeed, one of the challenges of edition today, as I was told by the illustrator Laurence Cleyet-Merle, is to find a happy medium between traditional publishing and digital techniques. This is why I wanted to create an editorial object as a hybridization between the real and the virtual in order to mix the tangible with the digital like Etienne Mineur with Volumique edition.

My goal was to create an interactive narration between visible and invisible, veiled and unveiled, using augmented reality to create a playful process that would break the taboo barriers.

# **Unexplored territory**



The two main steps of my project

My project can be divided into two parts

First an experimental part linked to my research which consists of three prototypes and a more advanced part where I put in perspective two sorts of devices.

In this first experimental step, I wanted to create prototypes related to interactivity in order to arouse curiosity to erase the taboo of sexuality. I first wanted to create prototypes related to digital and tangible interactivity.

The first to was a tactile poster made with a makey makey card that represented the sex of a woman and indicated with poetic names the anatomical point of a vulva (Everest pleasure for the clitoris, lake defended for the urethra, orgasmic abyss for the entry of the vagina and sanctuary of privileges for the anus).

This poster could be used as an object of mediation between teenager and health professionals when discussing anatomy.

The criticism that I can make of this poster is that it is a playful object that makes you want to touch so it allows the reappropriation and the taming of the body. However it is an object which requires a whole connection and a computer therefore not handy, with only a sound interaction.

In the second version of the interactive poster I tried to create a visual interaction by changing the negative aspects of the first prototype. For that I used HP Reveal application (augmented reality). I made a silkscreen poster that could be augmented thanks to a smartphone. Like the first poster, this one offers the opportunity to

speak about anatomy by breaking taboos. This poster can be used more easily by health professionals wanting to organize a workshop on sex education.

My third prototype was about tangible interactivity and more related to the sense of touch. It is a set of cards to touch. From cards made in silkscreen (of a vulva), then augmented thanks to different paper and fabrics (glittering paper, velvet, ...), this device allows to explain through touch the different appearances of a vulva. With this game you can talk about differences, body hair and excitement.

Hypothesis on my future devices :

At the origin of this project, I wanted to make a project with an interactive narration to link a tangible medium to a digital one. I first planned to create an editorial object in lepporello (a book which unfolds like an accordion) which would be augmented using the application HP Reveal.

Indeed, the augmented reality changes the way we interact with the physical world. It is a superimposition of reality. This technology inserts real-world images through transient objects such as the camera of a mobile phone, tablet or special glasses. These cameras can trigger real elements to give access to virtual images.

The idea of the shape of the second device comes from the way a lepporello unfolds. That is to say in the same way as a horizontal frieze. I could then imagine the storyline within the lepporello could be broken into a scrollable band readable on tablet and smartphone with an application such as Phallaina.

To create the story, I focused on the problems that I had noted in my readings mentioned above. I took the metaphor of travel, road trip to the heart of a jungle to talk about the problems of female sexuality.

The starting point of this trip was be the image of a map in the shape of a female sex as an unexplored territory.

Unexplored territory is also the name of my project. It refers to Freud, who compared the sex of a woman to a black continent and to the fact that a woman's body has often been ignored, hidden, obscured and harmed. I wanted to take off the veil of obscurantism in order to «liberate» women and let them live their sexuality as they please.



There are two main questions regarding my project- a political questioning on the place of the body and sexuality and another dealing with the communication strategy concerning a subject that is not represented.

Indeed, as Camille Emmanuelle reminds us, the body is political, sex is political, orgasm is political. First sex refers to our deep intimacy, animality, desires and impulses and therefore the control of these induces behaviors with each other in our society.

Then there is the fight against stereotypes about sexuality and the economic, social and political impact of gender inequalities.

Last but not least the body of women has long been considered obscure by men and therefore by the society.

There is also the problem of communication or that of non-representation.

Indeed how to bring to highlight something that is hidden?

What communication strategy should designers choose?

In my project, I decided to go against some movements and feminist struggles such as the Riot Grrrl (a punk rock feminist movement of the 1990s). I decided to work in a softer way. But a question remains – Isn't a poetic approach another form of censorship?



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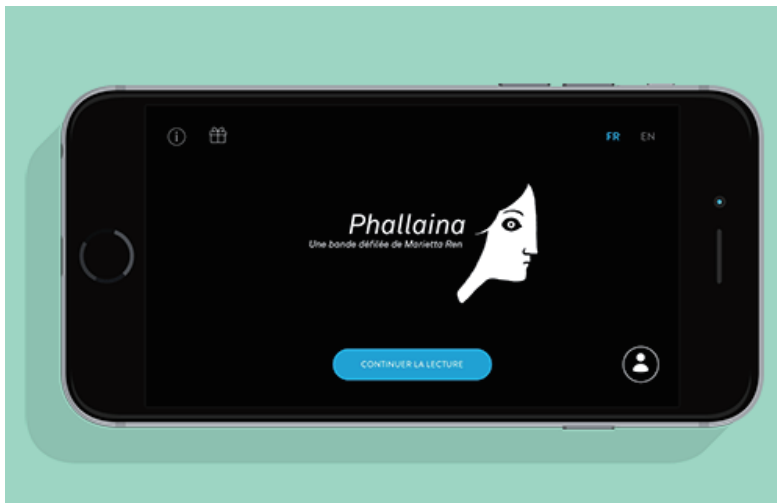




# Iconography



Moving Masks, volumique edition,  
Etienne Mineur, 2017



Phallaina, Marietta Ren, 2016



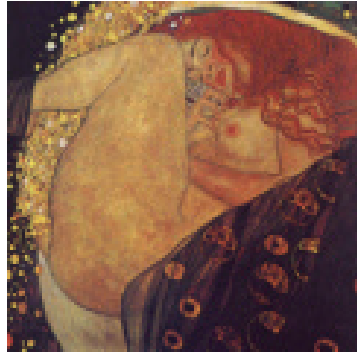


Final shot of *North by Northwest*  
by Alfred Hitchcock in 1959

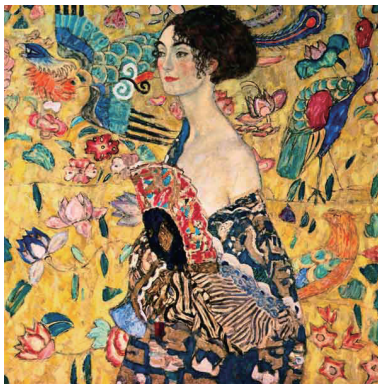
# INSPIRATION ~ Figure of Vénus



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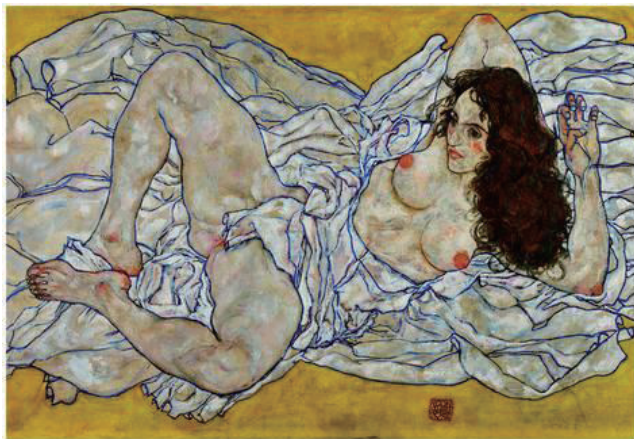
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1. Judith et Holopherne, Gustav Klimt (1901)

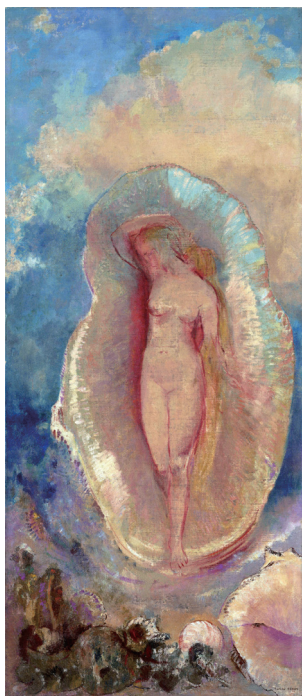
2. Danaé, Gustav Klimt (1907)

3. Gustav Klimt

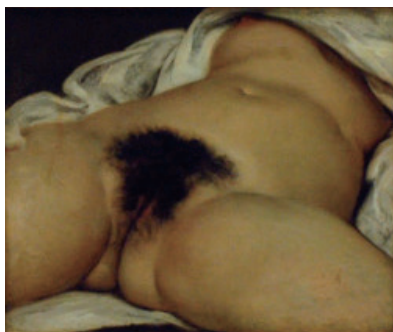
4. Peinture japonaise Geisha



1



2



3



4

1. Nude, Egon Schiele,
2. Naissance de Vénus, Odilon Redon (1912)
3. L'origine du monde, Gustave Courbet (1866)
4. Naissance de Vénus, Sandro Botticelli (1485).

# INSPIRATION ~ Vegetal



1



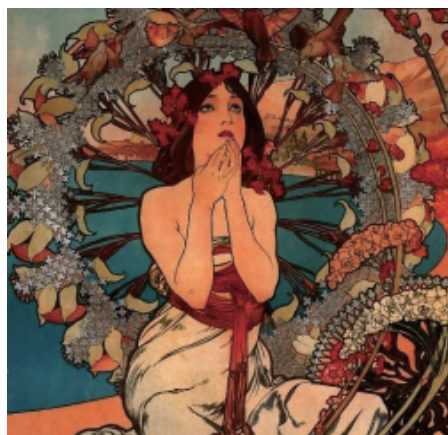
2



3



4



5

1. Pattern upholstery fabric Jardin d'Osier, Hermès (2014)
2. Art Nouveau pattern
3. Japanese pattern
4. Le Rêve, Henri Rousseau (1910)
5. Monte Carlo, Alphonse Mucha (1897)



