Written Response V

(Unit 1 Brief 5: Methods of Contextualising)

Runlan (Cecilia) Lin

Part One:

In this collaborative exploration, I gradually realized the qualities I need to cultivate as a creator and practitioner when engaging with the context of disability justice and accessibility. Based on this experience, I have summarized three guiding principles for myself:

1. Exploring Disability Justice from a Non-Discriminatory Perspective

As designers, we must constantly reflect on our creations and consider whether they may unintentionally cause harm or discomfort to disabled communities. At the same time, our perspective should not be confined to disability itself. Instead of solely focusing on disabled individuals' experiences, we should critically examine the systems that exclude them. By questioning the rigid structures and rhythms imposed by society, we can rethink what is considered “normal” and challenge systemic barriers.

2. Placing Ourselves in the Same Position as Disabled Individuals

During this project, I found myself navigating a strict schedule similar to the 9-to-5 work structure. When I felt unwell and had to pause my progress, I had to make up for the lost work in my personal time, all while worrying about falling behind. This experience made me reflect: How do we define disability? Does disability always equate to illness? Can disability be understood as a fluid state rather than a fixed identity?

By maintaining a questioning attitude, I was able to step back and observe the broader rhythm of the system. In this sense, we—disabled and non-disabled individuals alike—are all subjected to societal conditioning and expectations. Recognizing this parallel can offer new insights into systemic inequalities.

3. Leveraging Visual Communication

In our group exploration, we used playful and experimental methods to critique work time structures and the perception of labor. By harnessing our strengths in visual storytelling, materials, and form, we conducted various iterations to refine our message. This process allowed us to create moments of engagement where viewers could not only understand but also *feel* our perspective. By using humor and interaction, we encouraged audiences to step into our narrative and foster new conversations.

Part Two:

1. Written response to texts from the reading list

1.1 *Conditional Design Workbook*

It was the clear creative rules and "conditions" we established that allowed our project to progress systematically. At the same time, we engaged in multiple iterations, continuously questioning and refining our approach to effectively convey our ideas, ensuring that our exploration remained ongoing.

Overall, our work used the 9-to-5 work system as a framework, focusing on the unseen labor within it. By altering mediums and interactive formats, we sought to challenge and reshape the narrative, ultimately encouraging more people to recognize the complexity and diversity of labor. With these guiding conditions, we maintained a clear objective and conducted numerous visual experiments and iterations, allowing our message to emerge in an undeniable way.

We emphasized the significance of process. In our practice, we experimented with folding, juxtaposing, and stitching as methods of shaping the way our work communicated with the audience. In my previous project, I struggled with diverging and deeply iterating on ideas, often hesitating when deciding which direction to pursue. However, in this project, I applied the lessons I had learned—I was able to collaborate with my group members through continuous discussions, discovering new creative directions. This experience helped me truly understand the essence of iteration.

Blauvelt, A., Maurer, L., Paulus, E., Puckey, J., Wouters, R. (2013) *Conditional Design Workbook*. Amsterdam: Valiz, pp. ii–xiv.

1.2 *Beneficience and contemporary art: when aesthetic judgment meets ethical judgment*

At the beginning of this project, we often struggled with how to approach our research. We were concerned that we might not fully understand the experiences of disabled individuals and were unsure how to create work in a way that was non-discriminatory. Then, a line from an article inspired us: *does not happen so that the work should at the same time settle and put an end to strife by an insipid agreement, but so that the strife may remain a strife.* Yes—art, as a tool for critical thinking, may not directly solve social issues, but it can compel audiences to confront them.

This realization led us to embrace discomfort as a necessary element in our work, allowing audiences to fully enter our context. Our work contains many forms of conflict—between time and space, the public and the private, structure and material. By deliberately creating a sense of unease, we draw attention to the issue of invisible labor and encourage deeper reflection.

Beyond discomfort, we also introduced metaphor. In our work, everyone is represented as a potato —erasing individual differences. Rather than focusing solely on the struggles of disabled individuals within social systems, why not take a broader perspective and examine the discomfort that these systems impose on everyone? In this way, all those burdened by rigid work structures exist within the same framework. Instead of designing a "comfortable" pace for disabled individuals, we wanted to pose a question to the system itself: Is the work-life rhythm that people have always adhered to truly reasonable? This is why we gradually shifted our focus to the 9-to-5 work schedule, exploring ways to break the rhythm for a broader audience.

Bolt, B. (2021) 'Beneficience and contemporary art: when aesthetic judgment meets ethical judgment', *The Meeting of Aesthetics and Ethics in the Academy: Challenges for Creative Practice Researchers in Higher Education*, pp. 153–166.

2. Written response to texts that we find outside the reading list

2.1 *The Invisible Work*

The Invisible Work (Arlene Kaplan Daniels, 1987) highlights how what is considered "real work" in society is closely tied to paid, high-productivity labor. In contrast, unpaid and non-productive labor within private spaces—despite its essential social functions—is often regarded as insignificant.

With this understanding of invisibility, we reflect on the 9-to-5 work system: does invisible labor exist within it as well? This question drives our exploration of unseen labor in the workplace and the additional, unpaid efforts people contribute beyond official working hours. For instance, the commute that encroaches on personal time to ensure punctuality, or the self-funded coffee purchases aimed at boosting productivity—these are forms of labor ignored by the productivity system but deeply significant to individuals.

When the intrusion of work time into personal life becomes normalized, and the boundaries between work and private time blur, can we disrupt this rhythm by making these overlooked forms of labor visible? We choose to use invisible work to disrupt work time—an act of resistance against the structures of labor.

This led us to a series of iterative experiments. One of the most challenging involved designing a spiral-structured publication that allowed audiences to see both the front and back at the same time. The overlapping content on both sides of the paper visualized the entanglement of time and space, offering a new perspective on their relationship to labor. Additionally, we incorporated stitching onto the paper, emphasizing the presence of invisible work—making these unseen efforts impossible to be ignored from any angle.

Our work aims to reveal the existence of invisible labor within workplaces, encouraging greater awareness and challenging conventional perceptions of labor and productivity. By disrupting and resisting existing rhythms, we hope to prompt a re-evaluation of labor's complexity and diversity, ensuring that individuals within these systems are seen.

Daniels, A. (1987) Invisible work. Social Problems, Dec., 1987, Vol. 34, No. 5 (Dec., 1987), Oxford University Press on behalf of the Society for the Study of Social Problems, pp. 403-415.

2.2 *Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time*

This article provided us with a perspective: how individuals with chronic illnesses experience and perceive the 9-5 work schedule, how they fear falling behind society's rhythm, and how they struggle to keep up with the "normal" order of the world. This insight helped us recognize the impact of traditional work structures on individuals with different physical and mental conditions, serving as the starting point for our project.

The concerns raised in the article led us to reflect further: beyond the pressure it imposes on disabled individuals, does the 9-5 work system also create anxiety for able-bodied people? This prompted us to examine the current work system, which operates based on high efficiency and productivity, filtering out those who cannot keep up—essentially creating a time-based selection mechanism. In this process, people, including those with disabilities, must break their natural rhythm, alter their thoughts and sensory experiences, and conform to the world's work pace—regardless of whether it is reasonable. This made us question: what sacrifices and omissions form the foundation of this so-called "normal" order?

This is why we chose to use a potato sorting machine and conveyor belts as metaphors for the work system—illustrating how individuals are shaped into "productive" entities.

Therefore, we sought to disrupt this rhythm. While we may not be able to change how the system functions, we hope to challenge and reconstruct time and space so that people's unseen efforts can at least be acknowledged. Raising questions, highlighting what has been overlooked, and interrupting the indifferent mechanisms of the system—this is the meaning of our work.

Samuels, E. (2017). Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time. Disability Studies Quarterly, [online] 37(3). doi:https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v37i3.5824.

3. Written response to design practices/projects

3.1 *Crip Time*

This film conveys metaphor through continuous repetitive actions, allowing me to feel the daily routines of individuals with chronic illnesses. Whether it is packing or taking medication, these actions resemble work—something that must be "clocked in" and completed at fixed times. As a result, a patient's life is repeatedly interrupted by medication. Yet, over time, it becomes unclear whether it is the social rhythm that disrupts medication schedules or the act of taking medication that disrupts life itself.

This blurred, mutual intrusion represents a nonlinear perception of time, which also aligns with our publication. The process of sewing onto it became my own form of repetitive action. Sometimes, I would sit motionless, sewing for an entire afternoon; other times, I was frequently interrupted by other tasks. At times, I felt exhausted by the process, and at others, I felt frustrated knowing that the effort behind it might go unnoticed by others. This allowed me to experience a state of slight disorientation.

Furthermore, we began to question: does taking medication count as invisible labor for patients? If we extend this thought back to the work system, perhaps we should pay more attention to the types of labor that are not conventionally recognized as "work" and reconsider how we understand and evaluate them. Ensuring that these traces of effort are not easily overlooked is one of the key goals of our project.

intern, A.V., Video, A. and intern, archive (2020). CAROLYN LAZARD, CRIP TIME, 2018. [online] Artforum. Availabl at:https://www.artforum.com/video/carolyn-lazard-crip-time-2018-167173/.

3.2 *the Clock*

Our project continuously explores how employees can interrupt and challenge the rhythm of societal work "norms," which are closely linked to the time and space of work and private life. As a result, *The Clock* (Christian Marclay, 2010), a 24-hour montage film deeply related to time, became an important reference for us in considering the form of our work.

In the first week, after experimenting with sound and visuals to create several videos aimed at conveying different perceptions of time flow, I attempted to return to the original definition of montage and reconsider how we could utilize it. Although montage is commonly associated with film editing, it actually originates from architecture. It refers to the combination of unrelated structures and materials to create new meanings that transcend time and space. The events and actions within a montage are nonlinear and uncertain, aligning with our theme of disrupting conventional rhythms.

Therefore, we decided to continue playing with this concept. In the final iteration of the second week, we chose to create publications using a twisted spiral structure and incorporated stitching and collage to express our understanding of nonlinear rhythms—allowing time to visually leap within the physical world. This represents how montage techniques manifest within the context of our work.

The Clock(2010) Christian Marclay https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/5746