



***“I want to be a
forensic scientist
playboy bunny”***

*A creative consideration of the contradictions
and complexities of being a contemporary woman.*



This exegesis is submitted to the Auckland University of Technology
for the Master of Philosophy

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Lisa Waldner



Bachelor of Design AUT University: Auckland. 2005
Bachelor of Art & Design Honours [First Class] AUT University: Auckland. 2011



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 13 December 2012

Signed

Date



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Dedication



I would like to dedicate this thesis to all of the amazing, strong women I have had the honour of meeting in my life, of whom the most powerful are my two sisters, Trudi Waldner and Nikki White. You have given me strength, courage, and best of all, laughter.



Abstract



The moving image work *I want to be a forensic scientist playboy bunny* offers a creative consideration of contemporary female representation. This thesis considers how a typographic discourse might communicate the current complexities and contradictions inherent in the lived lives of young New Zealand women.¹ These lives navigate a culture dominated by a postfeminist sensibility that is manufactured and reinforced throughout popular media.

¹ · The participants interviewed for this project were between 18 and 35 years of age.



Introduction





The conception of this research began many years ago during a conversation with a friend's 14-year-old sister. During this conversation I asked her what profession she was thinking about training for. Intelligent and articulate, she answered straight away. She was thinking about a course of study that would lead her into forensic science but she would also really like to pose for Playboy magazine at some stage.

Her comment has remained in my mind for over seven years. Initially this was due to my amazement that these two ideas could sit alongside one another so comfortably in a young person's mind. I was surprised that there was no conflict in ideals; that each profession held equal value. As time passed I came to realise that her response encapsulated something of the complexities of what it means to be a woman today.

This project aims to address this ambivalence, taking a critical studies approach to what it identifies as distinctly postfeminist consumer culture. In creating this work I am interested to express the complexity inherent in women's lived experience of our representational culture. These are lived lives that must negotiate an accumulation of culturally produced (often contradictory) meanings, which together construct our social understanding of femininity.

This exegesis contextualises the moving image work that is the outcome of the research. The document is divided into five chapters.

In the first chapter I position myself through a profile of my work and interests as an academic researcher, designer, and feminist. Following this I provide a review of contextual knowledge that culturally and theoretically positions my creative outcome. In this regard, I consider contextual theory, artwork, and popular culture material that this work both draws upon and contributes to. In this chapter I also present theory connected to kinetic typography and relevant examples of its current use.

Chapter Three outlines the critical framework underpinning the project, drawing on a critical studies approach to cultural analysis. In discussing specific ideas it maps its findings onto both the review of contextual knowledge and the project itself. The concluding section of this chapter offers a commentary on the work, discussing the specific mechanics of design work created for my final moving image piece.

The fourth chapter presents a discussion of the reflexive, heuristic methodology employed in the development and resolution of the project. In addition, I discuss specific methods applied to the making of the moving image piece including interviews as transformative devices, discursive process of assembly, techniques of self-reporting, and applications of wall writing.

Chapter Five is the closing chapter and offers a brief discussion of the thesis' contribution to knowledge and its potential for further research.

A large, intricate pink decorative wreath with swirling floral and scrollwork patterns, framing the central text.

Chapter 1
Positioning the researcher



I am a 35 year-old mother of one. Having worked as a professional graphic designer and photographer, I returned to university in 2011 with the intention of training for a career in higher education. Since becoming a parent my sensitivity to our media-saturated environment has been heightened as I reflect on what my son will learn from a society that accepts consumer culture as a significant educator.

When I walk through the mall, pick up a magazine, or hear pop music, I am confronted by highly gendered, commodity-linked representations of both sexes. I worry about what messages my son and my friends' children involuntarily absorb as part of their day-to-day living.

Consequently, I have begun to ask questions.

I utilise my skills as a visual communicator to encourage thinking and discussion about the way media and consumer culture shape what it means to be a woman (and therefore what it means to be a man).

My aspirations as an educator in visual communications further compel me to understand and deconstruct the cultural landscape that students today must navigate.

In the year preceding this thesis I completed a Bachelor of Art and Design Honours degree (with first class honours). That dissertation enabled me to extend my passion for photography into a fully realised project, where I was able to explore relationships between the urban non-place and notions of contemplation (see figures 1:2–1:3). Building upon my skills as a photographer and designer this work helped me develop both my critical thinking skills, and my ability as a researcher.

From the time I was quite young, I have had an interest in social issues. However, becoming a designer gave me the means by which I could engage with those concerns that sat outside of the commercial environment. Working as a designer with a non-commercial marketing mandate at the Auckland Regional Council meant I was often dealing with the entire city as an audience.

I grew up in the eighties, firmly ensconced in white, suburban, middle-New Zealand. I never felt my gender made any difference to my life choices, let alone presented any restrictions. Having said that, as a girl I had little exposure to feminism, having only a vague sense of it as a political movement of the past.



Figure 1:1. Lisa Waldner. (2011) *Corner space*. [Part of an exhibition for my Honours project titled *Pause*]. This research utilised images of everyday transitional spaces as a means of creating a new site to experience contemplation.

Indeed at this time, what is now known as second wave feminism² had splintered into various factions due to opposing views on central issues such the anti-pornography vs. sex-positive debate (Levy, 2005, pp. 63–70). Feminism had also lost much of its consolidated momentum (Pilcher & Wheelen, 2004).

The start of the 1990s marked the beginning of my adolescence, which resulted in exposure to new experiences and ideas. During this time, as most teenagers do, I tried on many different guises, aligning myself at various stages with metal music, alternative grunge culture, vegetarianism, and the underground drum 'n' bass scene. Generally, I positioned myself near to, but never entirely within, sub-cultures. Politically-minded and with a strong sense of self I had definite views on what was 'right' and 'wrong', especially when it came to the appearance and actions of women. I felt sure of what constituted being a contemporary, empowered woman and what did not. Wearing revealing clothing, high heels, and acting like a bimbo did not, but neither did dressing in an overly conservative or feminine way, not caring about appearances, or being a prude. Shaving legs and armpits was okay as well as wearing some makeup in certain circumstances. Speaking your mind was always preferable to staying quiet, as was holding your own when the guys talked dirty. Being a 'girly girl' was an insult but there was always an imperative to remain attractive to the opposite sex.

2 · The term refers to the concentrated efforts of the women's liberation movement that began in the 1960s. Central concerns for feminists of this period included: equal pay, employment and education opportunities for women, reproductive rights, political representation, and challenging dominant cultural norms of marriage and motherhood (Arden McHugh, 2007; Gamble, 2002; Valenti, 2007).

Looking back I can see what a complex set of rules I had for myself and for others. I also see what a complicated cultural landscape I was navigating. Feminism of the sixties and seventies was important but historical. Within advertising, images of women being empowered began to be coterminous with overt sexuality.³ Use of irony and terms such as 'girl power' were abundant in advertising, music, and everyday life. Consumption was becoming more than the purchase of goods, morphing instead into a pastime, then onwards into a mode of self-identification. Although I had no knowledge of it at the time, a new type of feminism was being conceived, one that was synonymous with burgeoning consumer culture. The women involved in this movement labeled themselves as third wave⁴ feminists.

Having said that, through my twenties and early thirties I always felt that I could point to what was sexist and what was not; what was a fitting way for self-respecting women to look and act and what was not. My return to university last year and subsequent teaching role have led to a questioning of this. I look around at female students' dress and behaviour and I start to examine the certainty of my ideas. Observing current music and advertising trends I ask myself: If something looks like stereotype, acts like a stereotype, even if it goes by another name, is it still not a stereotype? Do these trends indicate we are a more sexist culture or a more open-minded one than before? And more importantly, how much of what is accepted as normal is formed by the cumulative, ubiquitous voices of consumer culture?



Figures 1:2 and 1:3. Lisa Waldner. (2011). *Documentation of Honours exhibition digital photographs*. The project *Pause: creating space for contemplation* culminated in a public exhibition that included three large-scale prints as well as an artist's book.

3 · Around this time the highly documented Wonderbra advertisements came out. Many theorists (R. Gill, 2008; McRobbie, 2004) mark this as a turning point in how women were being addressed in the media, with a new focus on the self-knowing, sexually agentic female, taking pleasure in her appearance for her own sake.

4 · Third wave feminism is a highly contested term with a variety of definitions (Steinberg, Parmar, & Richard, 2008). In general terms it can be explained as a type of feminism that emerged in the early 1990s, which accepted the gains of second wave feminism but questioned its supposed limitations. These limitations included prescriptive views on appearance and sexuality, particularly heterosexuality, and, perhaps most importantly, the exclusion of ethnicities and social statuses other than white, middle-class women from second wave feminist discourse (Gillis, Howie, & Munford, 2007; Pilcher & Wheelen, 2004).

A large, intricate pink decorative wreath with floral and scrollwork patterns, framing the central text.

Chapter 2

A review of contextual knowledge

This chapter provides a review of contextual knowledge relating to the moving image work *I want to be a forensic scientist playboy bunny* and the conceptual environment that supported its development. It is divided into three sections:

- 🌀 contextual theory
- 🌀 art, design, and popular texts
- 🌀 kinetic typography

2:1 · Contextual theory

2:1:1 · Consumerism as a cultural educator

Lewis (2002), Miles (1998), and Sandlin & McLaren (2010) contend that consumer culture affects almost every aspect of our lived experience. Its ubiquitous nature is best described by de Certeau (1984) as silently insinuating itself everywhere to the point it that becomes almost invisible (pp. xii–xiii). The pervasiveness of consumption across social class, gender, and race has resulted in a significant amount of theory which considers the role of consumerism in the creation of personal identity (Bocock, 1993; Giddens, 1991; Kellner, 1992; Storey, 1996). Feeding into this discourse are theories related to the complex function of consumption in both creation and dissemination of culture within Western capitalist society (Bocock, 1993; Featherstone, 1991; Lewis, 2002; Storey, 1996). Miles (1998) frames this influence as having a fundamental affect on how we conduct our personal and social lives. Our lived experience becomes informed by the “master narratives” of popular media culture (Sandlin & Maudlin, 2012, p. 175).

If consumer culture is viewed as such it becomes possible to conceive of it as a significant educative force in our lives (Giroux, 2001; Martens, 2005), so much so that there is a call for consumption to have its own critical pedagogy (Sandlin & McLaren, 2010). By considering this alongside Butler’s (1999) theory of gender as performance based on a set of socially agreed upon meanings, we may have a framework through which to regard consumerism’s function in the construction of what it is to be a contemporary woman.

2:1:2 · Feminism and consumer culture

There has long been an uneasy relationship between feminism and consumerism. First wave feminism⁵ saw the suffragettes separate women’s interests from capitalist progressivism to create the political space for female emancipation (Lewis, 2002). While during the height of the second wave, feminist resistance was often directed at dominant cultural representations of women promulgated through consumer culture (Dyer, 1982; Goffman, 1978; Lazarus & Wunderlich, 1979; Williamson, 2002). McRobbie (2009) suggests it is these critiques of female media representation that became a defining feature of socialist-feminist scholarship.

It was in the early to mid 1990s that the connection between women’s liberation and consumption became more complex. Consumer culture changed gear to accommodate a media savvy, wage-earning female public whose rights had been enshrined in legislation. Gill (2008) suggests that this led to a marked shift in media texts wherein the language of feminist discourse was appropriated in order to harness the cultural power of feminism. Used as a marketing mechanism, feminist language and connotations came to be re-presented in such a way as to render them non-threatening. Labeled as ‘commodity feminism’ (Goldman, 1992) and ‘popular feminism’ (McRobbie, 2008) this process is discussed by a significant number of writers including Douglas (1995), Heath (2006), Lury (2011), and Whelehan (2000).

Gill (2008) built on this idea, positing within popular media culture (from the 1990s onwards), the emergence of a new, sexually agentic female protagonist. This new female figure (who is still present today) was distinguished by overt displays of hetero-normative ‘sexiness’,⁶ which were presented as a type of empowerment. Halliwell, Malson, & Tischner (2011) comment on the potentially negative effects of this new representation of women. While Walter (2010) and Genz (2006) point to the use of irony as a “get-out clause” (ibid., p. 346) problematising the naming of these cultural texts as sexist.

The 1990s also saw the rise of the self-labeled third wave feminist movement, which took a complex stance towards consumer culture. Krollokke and Sorenson (2005) describe ‘third wavers’ reclamation of overt femininity as a resistance to the perceived anti-femininity of the second wave and a subversion of popular

5 · Refers to the initial, organised women’s liberation movement in Europe and the United States during the late 19th century and early 20th century. Concerned with access and equal opportunities for women, a key focus during this time was securing women’s right to vote (Krollokke & Sorensen, 2005).

6 · Gill (2008) points to this normative homogeneity being “organized around a slim yet curvaceous, toned, hairless, young body” (p. 44).

culture. Put more simply, third wave women embraced their “girliness as well as power” (Baumgardner & Richards, 2004, p. 59). Budgeon (2011) also points out a third wave tendency to view popular culture as a site of both pleasure and critique. Heywood and Drake (1997) suggest that acceptance of contradiction is a distinguishing feature of the third wave.

2:1:3 · *Contemporary feminism*

This research recognises feminism’s historical lack of both unified definition and agenda (Hooks, 1984). Therefore, rather than plotting the variations of feminism and resulting discourses, this review serves to map out the territory my work resides in while acknowledging the contradictions inherent in women’s rights movements.

Feminism’s current ‘condition’ is a hotly debated topic within the feminist academy with diverse and oftentimes conflicting opinions defining a contemporary women’s movement (or debating if there even is one).⁷ Gill and Scharff (2011), McRobbie (2008), and Lazar (2011) however agree that consumer culture plays an important role in forming and disseminating mainstream views of feminism. Crymble (2012), Gill (2008), and Halliwell et al. (2011) focus on the complicated relationship between women, consumption, and feminist discourse. McRobbie (2009) and Tasker & Negra (2007b) specifically discuss mass media’s role in creating a highly negative public perception of feminism.

McRobbie (2009) believes that our current social and cultural landscape may be recognised as postfeminist. Accordingly, this thesis adopts Gill’s (2007a) view that postfeminism is best understood as a sensibility made up of interrelated elements which when combined can assist in analysing contemporary cultural texts. Press (2011) suggests that this sensibility is characterised primarily by the positioning of the (female) body as the new site of (feminine) identity. McRobbie (2004) argues that Neoliberal individualism enables previously feminist tropes of ‘choice’ and ‘freedom’ to be used as catch cries in the consumption-driven pursuit of bodily perfection. Gill (2007a) links this quest for the perfect body (identity) to the rise of intense surveillance of the (feminine) self as we see a shift from objectification to subjectification. Tasker & Negra (2007b), Lazar (2009), and McRobbie (2004) suggest that a postfeminist sensibility is made possible by accessing contradictory positions on feminism. This stance simultaneously accepts feminist gains as common sense while reviling feminism as a political movement.

7 · Within the academic sphere there are three labels for the current state of feminism: Postfeminism (Gill, 2007a; McRobbie, 2004; Tasker & Negra, 2007a), third wave feminism (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003; Genz, 2006), and more recently the suggestion of a fourth wave (Diamond, 2009; Peay, 2005; Solomon, 2009). As noted already, these terms all have diverse and varying definitions.

2:2 · Art, design and popular texts in the public domain

2:2:1 *Feminism and graphic design*

Reckitt (Reckitt & Phelan, 2012) discusses feminism's significant contribution to the art world as well as noting political achievements made by feminist artists. However Jones (2010) draws attention to the nature of feminism's role within visual culture,⁸ recommending we no longer separate 'low' (commercial) art from 'high' (fine) art. Accordingly, this thesis is interested in graphic design's (potential) relationship to feminist discourse. This is because it draws inspiration from feminist art practice and popular media texts.

Scotford (1994) notes the historical lack of attention to the role of women in the field of graphic design. Perhaps this also explains the lack of literature regarding feminist graphic designers and feminist graphic design.⁹ There are some isolated exceptions including feminist designer Sheila Levrant de Bretteville (fig. 2:1), culture jam activists Guerilla Girls (fig. 2:2), a New Zealand feminist graphic design blog ('Feminism and Graphic Design' n.d.), and the occasional public seminar such as Stockholm's *A history of its own?* series (de Smet, Smärta, & De Bondt, 2012).

The art of Jenni Holzer (fig. 2:3) and Barbara Kruger (figs. 2:4–5) traverses the boundaries of fine art and graphic design. The work of these practitioners is particularly significant to this project as both utilise type as an integral component. Furthermore, both artists offer commentaries on feminine roles and the use of language in mediated culture.

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It can be viewed at:
<http://artweek.la/issue/november-5-2012/article/do-in-it-in-public-feminism-and-art-at-the-womans-building>

Figure 2:1. Sheila Levrant de Bretteville. (1975) *Poster for Women in design conference*.

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Figure 2:2. Guerilla Girls. (1989) *Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?* [Poster]. In *Art and feminism*, London: Phaidon, p. 153.

8 · Here I draw from Jones's (2010) definition of visual culture as "a rubric and a model of critical thinking about the world of images saturating contemporary life" (p. 2).

9 · I would like to note that at the time of writing this thesis, a book titled *Women in Graphic Design 1890–2012* (Bartelsheim & Brüning, 2012) has just been released.

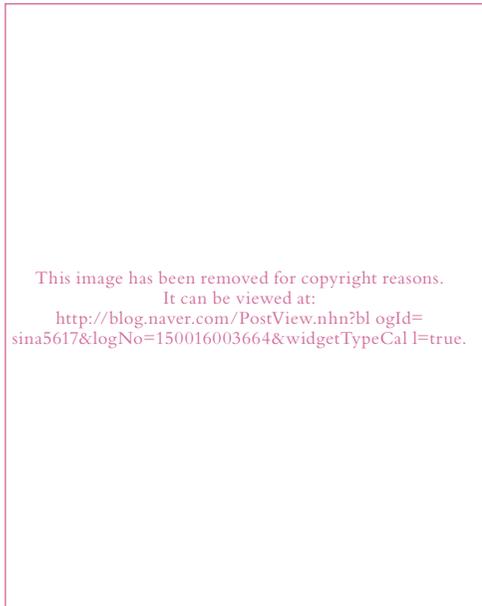


Figure 2.3. Jenni Holzer. (2004). *For London* [Projection].

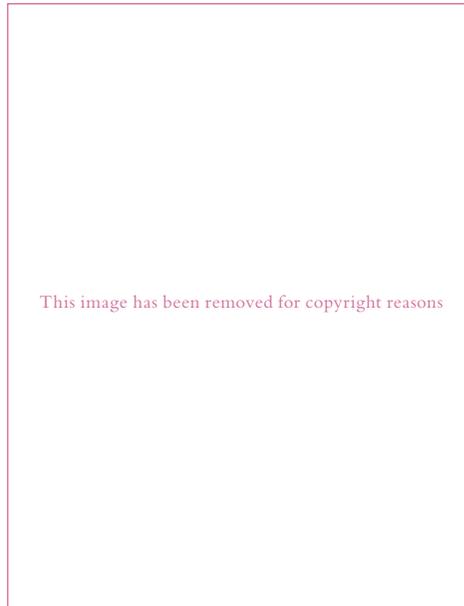


Figure 2.4. Barbara Kruger. (1987). *Untitled (Your body is a battle ground)*. In *Art and feminism*, London: Phaidon, p.152.

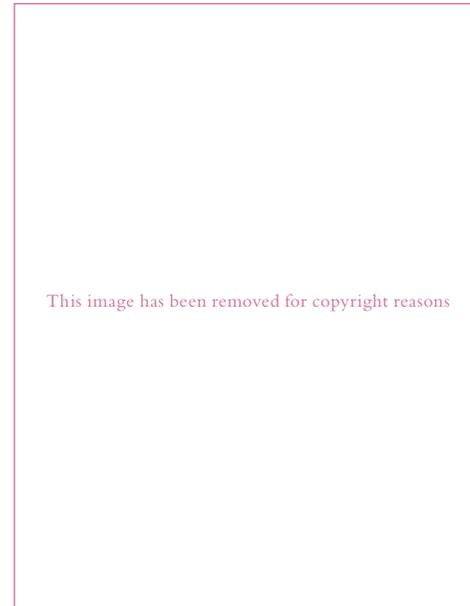


Figure 2.5. Barbara Kruger. (1991) *All violence... Stereotype* [Installation]. In *stop, think, go, do: How typography and graphic design influence behavior*. Beverly, MA, USA: Rockport Publishers, p.105.

2:2:2 · Popular culture texts

There are a few notable feminist presences in contemporary popular culture, including blogs (*Feministing*, n.d., *Jezebel*, n.d., *The F-Word*, n.d., *The Vagenda*, n.d.), online and print magazines (*Bitch Media*, n.d., *BUST Magazine*, n.d., *Kate*, n.d.), and the Russian punk band *Pussy Riot*.

This practice draws from and comments on a variety of contemporary cultural texts including popular contemporary music videos featuring female artists, lyrics from popular songs, brand advertising, and women's magazines (figs. 2:5–9). In analysing these cultural products I borrow from the cultural studies model, drawing from “whatever fields are necessary to produce knowledge required for a particular project” (Grossberg, Nelson, & Treicher, 1992, p. 2). The position developed through this analysis is in line with Walter’s (2010) assertion that we may have returned to a sexist manner of representing women. That this goes relatively unnoticed in wider culture supports Gill’s (2007) claim that visual media products are informed by post-feminist sensibilities. Or as Tasker & Negra (2007b) suggest, we may have become a culture of post-critique.



Figure 2:6. Samra Hamri. (2012). Screen capture from Nicki Minaj's *Superbass* music video.



Figure 2:7. Lisa Waldner. (May, 2012). *Consumption conversation A1 poster encapsulating ethos of project*. Copy for this poster was made up of lyrics (white) from Katy Perry's hit song *Last Friday night* (Perry, 2011) interspersed with fragments of brand advertising (pink).



Figure 2:9. Australian *Cosmopolitan*. (2012). *Lady garden maintenance: What guys really prefer down there*. In June issue of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. ACP media: Auckland.



Figure 2:8. Lisa Waldner. (July, 2012). *Documentation of Female representation in contemporary public advertising*. Digital photograph. Kingsland, Auckland.

2:3 · Kinetic typography

2:3:1 · *Theory relating to typographic discourse*

Type commentator Katie Salen (2001) suggests that typography carries embedded signifiers of cultural marginalisation. Accordingly, this work activates supposedly feminine typographic treatments as a means of re-appropriating a marginalised and commodified voice. Consequently type selection is informed by current typographic treatments found in women's magazines (figs. 2:10–13), shop front displays (figs. 2:13–19), and forms of contemporary advertising targeted at female consumers (figs. 2:20–22). Appropriation of contemporary 'feminine' typographic treatments and ornamentation acts to subvert and comment upon the overly 'girlish voice' which has surfaced in marketing of late (figs. 2:123–27).¹⁰

This work uses kinetic type¹¹ as its main design device. Due to its emergent nature, and perhaps its predominantly commercial applications, theory related to this field is limited. Therefore this thesis draws from existing kinetic type theory (Brownie, 2007; Woolman, 2005) and where necessary, from more conventional typographic discourse (Bringhurst, 2004; Kinross, 1997). Of the theory that does exist regarding kinetic type, Hilner (2005), Van Gastel (2005), and Malik et al. (2009) all point to the expressive potential of this form, asserting its ability to portray emotion and enhance meaning. Worthington (1998) suggests that such type can add layers of significance to a text not possible in the medium of print.

10 · Elements of this extreme femininity I noted include use of bright shades of pink, flora (particularly floral motifs), birds, and baby animals, as well as highly decorative chandeliers, faux Edwardian furniture and ornamental mirrors.

11 · Also known as spatio-temporal typography (Woolman & Bellantoni, 2000), type in motion (Woolman, 2005), temporal type (Brownie, 2007), and animated text (Malik, Aitken, & Waalen, 2009a). The term kinetic refers to type that moves in time and space ("The Importance of Kinetic Typography in Motion Graphics Design," 2010).

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Figure 2:10. Australian Cosmopolitan. (2012). Cover of June issue of Cosmopolitan magazine. ACP media: Auckland. Much of the type selection for my moving image was taken from this cover in particular.

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Figure 2:11. UK Cosmopolitan. (2012). Cover of June issue of Cosmopolitan magazine. Hearst Magazines: London. It is interesting to compare the typographic approaches of Australian Cosmo magazine vs. the UK edition. Similar typefaces are used but this version has a heavier use of embellishment and ornament.

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Figure 2:12. New Zealand Girlfriend. (2012). Cover of August issue of Girlfriend magazine. APN media: Auckland. Although this is a magazine aimed at the teen market, I thought it was interesting to see the similarity in typography selection and treatment.

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Figure 2:13. New Zealand Cleo. (2012). Cover of December issue of Cleo magazine. ACP media: Auckland. Cleo's target market is 18–29, making it a good reference point for how my demographic is spoken to typographically.



Figure 2:14. Lisa Waldner. (May, 2012). Documentation of vinyl type applied to Glassons window 1. Queen Street, Auckland.



Figure 2:15. Lisa Waldner. (May, 2012). Documentation of vinyl type applied to Dotti window 1. Queen Street, Auckland.



Figure 2:16. Lisa Waldner. (September, 2012). *Documentation of Glassons window display*. Durham Lane, Auckland.



Figure 2:17. Lisa Waldner. (May, 2012). *Documentation of Smith and Caughey winter window display*. Queen Street, Auckland.



Figure 2:18. Lisa Waldner. (September, 2012). *Documentation of Smith and Caughey spring window display*. Queen Street, Auckland.



Figure 2:19. Lisa Waldner. (September, 2012). *Documentation of Yvette Hellyer window display*. Fort Street, Auckland.

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Figure 2:20. ACP media.(September, 2012). *Horoscope and advice page*. In Sunday magazine, p. 36. ACP media: Auckland.

Figure 2:21. Lisa Waldner. (November, 2012). *Documentation of point of sale advertising for h2go zero*. Symonds Street, Auckland.



Figure 2:22. Lisa Waldner. (October, 2012). *Documentation of Special K bus shelter advertising*. Mount Eden Road, Auckland.

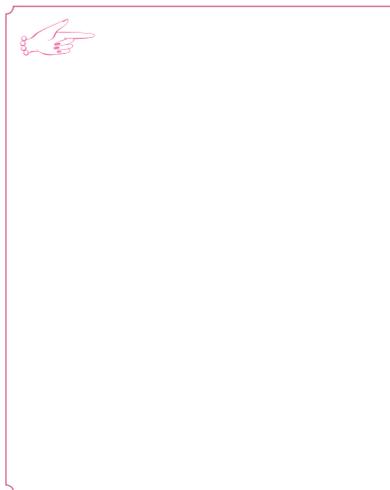


Figure 2:23. Lisa Waldner. (May, 2012). *29 second excerpt from video log of visit to Dotti store*. Queen Street, Auckland. This video is part of some 'undercover' documentation I did using my phone camera. I entered the store as if I were speaking on the phone so I could film in the store without any issue. The footage shows the girly décor as well as type application within the store.



Figure 2:24. Lisa Waldner. (May, 2012). Documentation of changing room in Bendon store 1. St. Lukes Mall, Auckland.



Figure 2:25. Lisa Waldner. (May, 2012). Documentation of changing room in Bendon store 2. St. Lukes Mall, Auckland.



Figure 2:26. (September, 2012). Lisa Waldner. Documentation of changing room in Glassons flagship store 1. Queen Street, Auckland.



Figure 2:27. Lisa Waldner. (September, 2012). Documentation of changing room in Glassons flagship store 2. Queen Street, Auckland.

2:3:2 · Kinetic typography in popular culture

The popularity and currency of this form can be evidenced in a number of ways. Vimeo has an entire channel dedicated to kinetic type (MarcoPapale, n.d.). Popular music artists employ kinetic type in their videos including Katy Perry (Martinez, 2012; McLaren, 2012), Gossip (Price, 2012), and P!nk (RCA Records, 2012) (see figs. 2:28–31).

Recent examples of kinetic type in the tertiary education domain include commercials for AUT University (Consortium, 2012, 2011) and Unitec (Morton, 2012) excerpts of which can be viewed in figures 2:32–33. This form of typographical discourse (as user generated texts) is now almost ubiquitous on YouTube.

The most innovative developments in this area may arguably be seen in film and television titles. Significant recent examples being MK12's sequence for *Stranger Than Fiction* (Mark Forster, 2006) and Danny Yount's work on *Six Feet Under* (Ball, 2001), parts of which can be viewed in figures 2:34–35.¹² In these instances, kinetic type refers to but ultimately sits outside of the narrative.¹³ When animated type appears within the body of a film it often appears as part of technology as in *Iron Man 2* (Favreau, 2008) and *Quantum of Solace* (Forster, 2008). This can be seen in figures 2:36–37. Kinetic type within a film is also sometimes used to reinforce information referred to in the script, as in *Fight Club's* IKEA sequence (Fincher, 1999) or *Zombieland's* rules to avoid zombies (Fleischer, 2009) in figures 2:38–39.¹⁴ Interestingly, the recent feminist film *Miss Representation* (Newsom, 2011) incorporates kinetic type into its trailer.

The above examples build on a rich history of title sequences that include the work of Saul Bass (1959, 1960), Maurice Binder (1968) and Kyle Cooper (1994, 1995, 2005). Titles created by these designers often progressed the role of type beyond the presentation of titles and credits. Being kinetic, the type in their sequences was able to operate with sound, light, and pace. Thus typography was able to engage with the ethos of the film and become part of the diegesis of the work itself. Normally these sequences pre-empted the narrative but in cases like Cooper's (1995) title sequence for *Se7en* (Fincher, 1995), it was used as a divider between acts two and three in the narrative.



Figure 2:28. Jessie McLaren. (2012). 13 second excerpt from Katy Perry's *Dressin' up* lyric video. This video is a good example of how meaning can be emphasised or implied through kinetic type.



Figure 2:29. Emilio Martinez. (2012). 11 second excerpt from Katy Perry's *Part of me* lyric video.



Figure 2:30. James Price. (2012). 14 second excerpt from *Gossip's Move in the right direction* music video. This clip displays how kinetic typography can be integrated with live action in order to imply a 3-dimensional space.

12 · For a further selection of title sequences that use kinetic type see <http://www.artofthetitle.com/> and use the search word 'type'.

13 · As such it may be understood as extra-diegetic. In other words, it speaks to but exists outside of the core content of the film.

14 · The exception to this is the silent film *Boy* (Ings, 2004) which uses type to reinforce narrative.

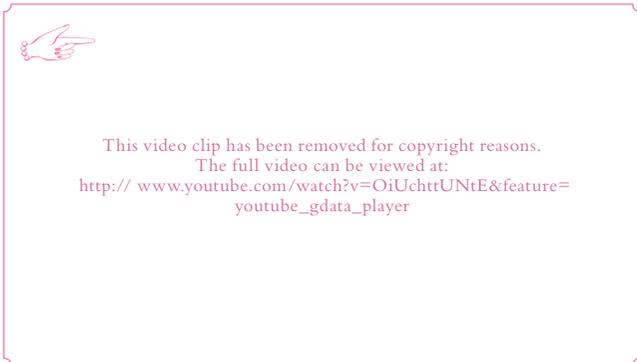


Figure 2.31. RCA Records. (2012). 11 second excerpt *P!nk's Walk of Shame lyric video*.



Figure 2.32. Consortium. (2012). 14 second excerpt from *AUT University: Defining the future of the changing world advertisement*. 3-dimensional kinetic typography integrated with live action.

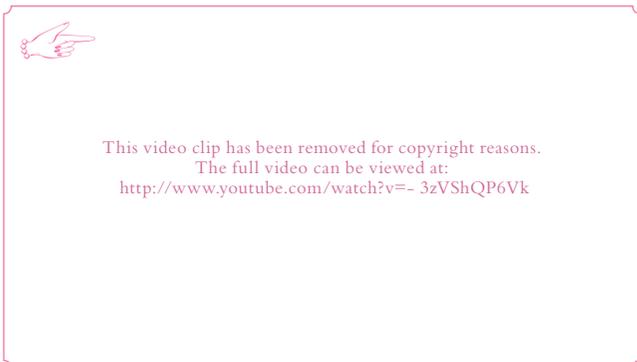


Figure 2.33. Andy Morton. (2012). 21 second excerpt from *Unitec: We make the people who make it advertisement*. Kinetic typography integrated with live action.

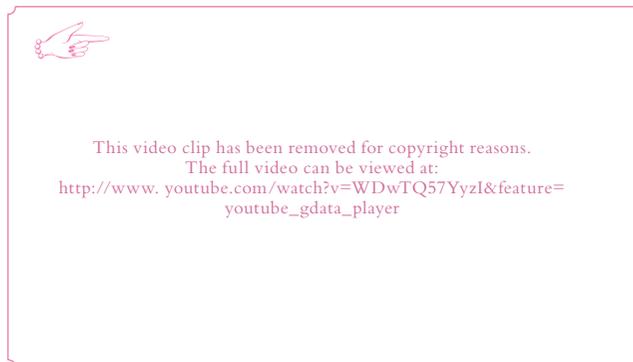


Figure 2.34. MK12. (2006). 21 second excerpt from *Stranger than Fiction title sequence*. Detail of kinetic typography integrated with live action in film title sequence.



Figure 2.35. Danny Yount. (2001). 21 second excerpt from *Six Feet Under title sequence*. Detail of kinetic typography integrated with live action in TV series title sequence.



Figure 2.36. Jayse Hansen. (2008). Screen shot of *Iron man's HUD from Iron Man*.



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It can be viewed at:
<http://www.artofthetitle.com/title/quantum-of-solace/>

Figure 2:37. MK12. (2001). Screen shot of M's office data wall from *Quantum of Solace*.



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The full video can be viewed at:
http://www.criticalcommons.org/Members/adiab/clips/FF_FincherFigurehtClub-possum.mp4

Figure 2:38. 10 second excerpt from *Fight Club* (1999). Kinetic typography integrated with live action within the body of a film.



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The full video can be viewed at:
<http://www.artofthetitle.com/title/zombieland/>

Figure 2:39. Ben Conrad. (2009). 4 second excerpt from *Zombieland*. Kinetic typography integrated with live action within the body of a film.

2:3:3 · Kinetic typography as political activism

Kinetic typography is frequently used to promote human rights issues (ECHR – *European Convention on Human Rights*, 2012; Creativa, 2012). A notable example of this is the recent *Girl Effect* (Man vs. Magnet, 2010) featured in figure 2:40. This form of typographical activism has a number of historical precedents with arguably the most seminal work being Simon Robson's (aka Knife Party) 2003 animated protest, *War Corporation*. This animation was followed with other kinetic texts of which *Taking Liberties* (Robson, 2007) is the probably the most widely distributed. Robson's work generally uses type as an accent on monologue, however the relationship between type and image is often closely linked in his work (see figs. 2:41–42).

Interestingly, animated type is also being used as a voice of dissent by members of the public. YouTube users Daniel Fischer (fischography, 2012) and DJ Shades UK (2011) recently responded typographically to fellow users' self generated YouTube content (Ben Shaw, 2011) from the London riots (see fig. 2:43–45). The use of online networks to disseminate such messages is an advantage earlier texts could never have hoped to access. This form of discourse builds on the phenomenon of viral marketing, albeit it is concerned with the distribution of ideas rather than products and services.

In this work, what is evidenced is a curious, and increasingly common phenomenon where members of the public are able to 'talk back' using the same visual language and delivery systems employed by the powers they are critiquing.



Figure 2:40. Man vs. Magnet. (2010). 29 second excerpt from *Girl Effect*.



Figure. 2:41 Simon Robson aka Knife Party. (2003). 21 second excerpt from *War Corporation: What Barry Says*. Typographic political activism at its finest.



Figure 2:42 Simon Robson aka Knife Party. (2007). 14 second excerpt from *Taking Liberties*.

2:4 · Conclusion to chapter

This research does not attempt to explain or map consumer culture's flow and production of meaning, nor does it seek to account for individual construction of these meanings. Instead it points to the complicated nature of these exchanges and raises the complex cultural negotiations women make on a daily basis. In a postfeminist mediascape, these negotiations often require processing and consolidation of contradictory signifiers regarding what is socially acceptable and desirable for women. My thesis is a creative response to this situation. It aims to reflect the environment it emerges from by using the same visual language usually found in consumer messaging. This work is therefore in part a study of representation, and is also an expression of the voice of women who negotiate the complex, commodified landscape that cultural meanings are produced in.



This video clip has been removed for copyright reasons.
The full video can be viewed at:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G18EmYGGpY1&feature=youtube_gdata_%20player

Figure 2:43. Ben Shaw. (August, 2011) *Get real rioters: amazing speech by fearless West Indian woman in face of Hackney riots*. Original video footage uploaded to YouTube was taken on a camera phone during London riots of 2011.



Figure 2:44. Daniel Fischer (June, 2012). *18 second excerpt from Hackney Woman London Riot: Kinetic typography*. This is a typographic response to footage featured in figure 2:34.



This video clip has been removed for copyright reasons.
The full video can be viewed at:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pt7BQBZfXf4&feature=youtube_gdata_player

Figure 2:45. DJ Shades UK. (August, 2011). *10 second excerpt from Hackney Woman Remix, London Riots: "You Lot P-ss Me Off"*. Another typographic response to footage featured in figure 2:34, this example features a remixed version of the speaker comments.

A large, intricate pink decorative wreath with swirling floral and scrollwork patterns, framing the central text.

Chapter 3
Critical framework

“Sexy, strong” “Voiceless” “Powerful”
“Buried” “Confident” “Confused”
“Everywhere, nowhere” “Complicated”.

The above comments, collected as part of an audience participation exercise (Waldner, 2012), illustrate a complex, contradictory lived experience of feminism.¹⁵ As Gamble (2000, p. viii) asserts, feminism is characterised by its multifaceted nature, and finding agreement on its aims is a potentially futile task. Accordingly, this research does not seek to define the varying forms of feminism, nor its articulations in the feminist academy. Rather it draws upon this very multiplicity as a catalyst for the creation of a typographic/filmic text. Accordingly, this chapter explores aspects of ambivalence, contradiction, and complexity inherent in relationships between contemporary feminism, consumerism, and the manufacturing of female identity.

3:1 · Consumerism as culture

3:1:1 · Consumerism as a cultural educator

This research defines culture as the production, circulation, and consumption of meaning (Storey, 2012, p. 28).¹⁶ Therefore, as consumerism touches most aspects of contemporary lived experience (Sandlin & McLaren, 2010) it may be argued that we exist in a consumer culture. Consequently, the texts of consumer culture may be viewed as primary sites from which we learn the meanings of our society. The collective accumulation of these may be seen as creating a “regime of truth” (McRobbie, 2008, p. 532). Thus, this work interests itself in the cumulative power of our representational culture, which piles messages on top of residues of what already exists. As Diane Negra suggests:

The necessity for this sort of composite approach [to media] stems from my belief that a potent combination of cinematic, televisual, journalistic, and other discourses cumulatively articulate the character and content of female experience... These forms currently compromise an echo chamber of repetition and reinforcement. (Negra, 2009, p. 9)

Accordingly, my research has turned to popular culture as a primary reference point, seeing it as a way of indicating what society currently defines how women should be and what they should desire. I have selected cultural artefacts that are used to speak to a select demographic¹⁷ including women’s magazines,¹⁸ outdoor advertising, popular women’s clothing stores,¹⁹ and popular music.²⁰ While analysing²¹ these texts I began to identify themes that corresponded with Gill’s (2007a, 2007b) assertions that contemporary media products are characterised by a postfeminist sensibility. Interestingly, similar sentiments (especially those surrounding contradiction) were reflected in interview data I collected.

3:1:2 · Feminism and consumer culture

A postfeminist sensibility is underpinned by a conflicting stance towards feminism. Tasker & Negra (2005) suggest that this ‘double address’ entails a construction of feminism wherein feminist gains are simultaneously accepted while feminism itself is repudiated. McRobbie (2004, p. 255) suggests this is a “complexification” of Faludi’s earlier concept of feminist backlash (1992). This is because feminism is taken into account (portrayed as achieved) in order to present the movement as unnecessary. McRobbie (2004) argues that this ‘doing’ of feminism can in fact result in its ‘undoing’. Evidence of this complexification appears across popular culture.

One form is commodity feminism (Goldman, 1992) wherein terms of feminism are appropriated in order to sell a commodity (advertising being a principle area in which this can be observed²²). Gill (2008) suggests such texts “incorporate the cultural power and energy of feminism while simultaneously neutralising or domesticating the force of its social/political critique” (p. 39). Commodity feminism sees the feminist catch cries of ‘freedom’ and ‘empowerment’ crudely yoked to liberating oneself from concerns of physical imperfections (dilemmas which can be neatly solved by a product or service). Thus empowerment can be attained through looking ‘good’, a goal achieved primarily through the use of numerous commodities. The significance of incorporating feminism into consumer culture in this way should not be underestimated. It denotes a complex, commodified appropriation of feminism which “deflects second-wave feminist positions, which imply a polarisation of ‘feminist’ and ‘feminine’ identities, while it is allied with third-wave and post feminist friendly perspectives that erase the distinction between the two identities” (Lazar, 2011, pp. 37–38). In other words, all the boxes are ticked, and critique of such texts is averted on multiple fronts.

15 · This is a selection from the 38 self-recorded answers I collected after an audience participation exercise at a postgraduate conference held in July 2012. See appendix 1 for a full list of these responses.

16 · This approach originates from cultural studies, an area encapsulated by critical studies.

17 · The demographic I was working with for this project was women between the ages of 18 and 35. A large portion of this age range (15–30) is recognized as being the influential and media savvy ‘Gen-Y’ (De Royck, Van den Bergh, Sbarbaro, & Veris, 2011). However I extended this range so I could speak with women near my own age and so the size of the demographic would allow me the opportunity to gauge similarities and differences across a spectrum of ages.

18 · *Cleo*, *Next*, and *Cosmopolitan*.

19 · See the methodology chapter for a discussion of stores visited and information recorded.

20 · Music selection was based either on chart success, significant YouTube hits, and/or suggestions from my interviewees. Analyses of popular music texts (lyrics, performance, and imagery) were an important aspect of this project. Not only do female music artists represent and promote identity constructs for contemporary young women, they do so within a highly commodified context. Everything about how an artist looks and behaves is a potential selling point and music videos are a prime vehicle for disseminating this information. Additionally, musicians literally act and perform for an (unseen) audience, within a setting that adds another level of narrative to the song. Songs are then watched on screens or heard on the radio, in public/private spaces of malls, gyms, workplaces and university quads.

21 · This work does not purport to be a systematic or empirical study. Popular culture texts were studied as a means of gauging what is currently presented as successful and desirable forms of femininity.

22 · For a useful discussion of how this functions in practice see Lazar (2009, 2011).

Critical reading of many contemporary cultural texts is further complicated by dominant neoliberal discourses that promote individual freedom and choice²³ as fundamental 'rights'. Thus, women are presented as active subjects asserting their 'right' to be beautiful (Lazar, 2009). Therefore, by implication anyone questioning this must be an unattractive, overly-serious feminist. This takes us to another part of the equation: the cultural presentation of feminism as out-dated, humourless, and sexless. Examples of this can be seen in recent Tui beer advertising (fig. 3:1) and comments from pop star Lady Gaga²⁴ (fig. 3:2). Comparably negative attitudes towards feminism were expressed by my interviewees, although these were curiously presented alongside seemingly feminist viewpoints (see fig. 3:3). These apparent contradictions I suggest point to a lived experience of the postfeminist sensibility that highlights the complex negotiation of feminism we see reflected in popular culture.



Figure 3:1. Solomon Burton. (February, 2012). *Having a beer with the Auckland feminist group would be fun Tui Billboard*. Ellerslie, Auckland.

This billboard was created by the Tui beer company after a complaint was laid by Auckland Feminist Action accusing Tui's television advertising campaign of being demeaning to women. Unsurprisingly there was a great deal of public support for Tui's anti-feminist stance with many suggesting the complainants lacked a sense of humour (Gillies, 2012). The billboard was featured at numerous physical sites and was also on the Tui beer social media page.



This video clip has been removed for copyright reasons.
The full video can be viewed at:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKjL36YXPIs&feature=youtube_gdata_player.

Figure 3:2. Gjermund Japee. (August, 2009). *Lady Gaga: Interview with Daily News Norway*. In this (now infamous) interview Lady Gaga initially takes a seemingly feminist stance when responding to questions regarding how she uses her sexuality in her performances. However, her reaction to being labeled a feminist indicates a rejection of the term itself. This reflects wider societal repudiation of feminism and its connotations as well as a contradictory (and arguably postfeminist) standpoint.



Figure 3:3. Lisa Waldner. (July 2012). *Not a word I would use a lot. 14 second excerpt from response to interview question "What does feminism mean to you?"*. This was one of many statements I collected wherein an interviewee contradicted them self in some way. Such comments led me to recognise the contradictory stance towards feminism that is a recognised tenet of a postfeminist sensibility. This particular statement was one the first that made clear the complex negotiations involved in postfeminist culture, and that this should be an important part of my work.

23 · Interestingly, these words overlap with feminist discourse.

24 · Lady Gaga later did a reversal on these anti-feminist comments in another YouTube broadcast (*Lady Gaga on Feminism*, 2011). That Gaga changed stance so deftly (there is no mention of her previous comment in the newer video) reveals the complexity of taking a public stance on feminism and also suggests that contradiction resides effortlessly in popular culture. It should be noted that she also discusses the inherent contradictions of women as part of her diatribe in the newer clip.

3:1:3 · Contemporary feminism and postfeminist consumer culture?

Tasker & Negra suggest that even the most cursory of cultural analysis reveals postfeminism to be our dominant discursive system. In this paradigm, they argue, the goals of feminism are (supposedly) achieved²⁵ and women are positioned as free individuals responsible for their own life course. Freed from traditional ties of kinship and institutions, responsibility for a ‘successful’ or ‘unsuccessful’ life rests solely with the individual (Gill, 2007). To paraphrase an interview participant: feminism means freedom to choose, but once you’ve made your bed, you must lie in it (fig. 3:4). This statement reveals a complex interpretation of individual responsibility with regards to gender equality. By positioning feminism as a personal choice, rather than societal change, potential ‘consequences’ of this choice become something individual women must bear. Although this may read as a warning for women who ‘choose’ freedom, I see it as the interviewee’s negotiation of what consumer culture presents. It is precisely this nuance and multiplicity that I attempt to convey in my work, because this appears to be what it is to negotiate being a contemporary woman.

McRobbie (2004) discusses parallels between postfeminist, consumerism-based notions of freedom and choice and a wider societal shift towards neoliberal individualism. Both structures equate individual freedom with individual accountability, making invisible constraints of race, class, and gender. ‘Freedom’ to choose in this sense is ultimately limited as one risks failure for making ‘incorrect’ life choices. Moreover, as feminine success is predominantly measured in terms of physical appearance, women are at constant risk of ‘failing’ if they don’t fit the narrow requirements of (commercially constructed) attractiveness. That women should tread such a ‘fine line’ to achieve ideal femininity is a central theme of this thesis as it embodies the negotiation of multiple and contradictory messages that are part of everyday experience (see fig 3:5).

Gill (2007b) connects the rise of individualism with an increase in female self-surveillance. Women’s magazines are common cultural texts that recognisably encourage self-surveillance.²⁶ In these publications, what is acceptable/unacceptable is clearly (and narrowly) mapped out, as labels thin/too curvy, too muscly/too soft are applied to celebrity bodies (fig. 3:6). This practice is also extended to ‘real people’ with some magazines inviting readers to rate bodies of everyday volunteers (fig. 3:7). Self-surveillance fits perfectly with the (appropriated) tropes of personal choice and freedom as individuals are framed as ‘choosing’ thinness or fatness. The same texts offer commodified solutions to solve women’s many ‘problems’. The solutions (or choices) come in the form of correctly selected wardrobe items, exercise regimes, beauty therapies, makeup, etcetera. Most worryingly, external societal pressure becomes more difficult to name once surveillance is internalised. This is because it can then be perceived as personal choice.²⁷



Figure 3:4. Lisa Waldner. (July 2012). *The freedom to choose*. 11 second excerpt from response to the interview question “What does feminism mean to you?”. As an example highlighting a complex and cautionary position with regards to feminism, I found this to be indicative of the wider, complicated attitudes towards feminism that women must navigate. In other words, although women are now able to make their own choices, they are expected to ‘choose’ wisely because there will be no sympathy for those who choose ‘incorrectly’.



Figure 3:5. Lisa Waldner. (May 2012). *Tall, not too tall*. 23 second excerpt from a response to the interview question “Can you tell me about society’s female ideal in terms of looks?”. This response from two sisters whom I interviewed at the same time really underscored the seemingly impossible nature of the female ideal we are presented with in popular culture. Both women appear to acknowledge the absurdity of this narrow definition as they start to play on one another’s comments. This excerpt was pivotal for my practice as it led to me realising that all of the ideals we are presented with end up piling up one top of each other, that nothing is replacing, only added to. This led to the development of the overlapping voices and typography in my final moving image work.

25 · According to the *Global gender report* (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2011) there is no country in the world that can completely claim gender equality. This report utilises multiple measures, including female social and participation, in order to gauge this. As of 2011, New Zealand featured at number six in the global gender ranking, having slipped from its previous spot at number five (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2011). In the *New Zealand census of women’s participation 2012* (McGregor, 2012) it is said that progress on gender equality has slowed to a snail’s pace because it is no longer seen as a priority in New Zealand. Worryingly, the census suggests the lack of attention to this issue is most evident among young women.

26 · Here I refer to magazines such as *NW*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Cleo*

27 · In the methodology chapter 4:1:4 there is an example of how this idea is dealt with in practice.



Figure 3.6. NW (November, 2012) Cover of November 26 issue of NW magazine. ACP Media: Auckland, New Zealand. A recent cover of NW magazine is typical of this publication. It highlights a no-win situation for women in terms of physical appearance. We see each of the three different bikini clad women have their bodies labeled as “bonkers”, implying that none of them have got it quite ‘right’. In other words they are too muscular, their breasts are too large, or they had the indecency to be in possession of a fat roll.



Figure 3.7. Australian Cosmopolitan (2012), *Sealed section*. In June issue of Cosmopolitan magazine, p. 116-117. ACP media: Auckland. This article, rating ‘normal people’, could be seen as transferring the expectation of perfection into everyday life. Each body has a rating applied to it that, notably, appears as a percentage thereby implying some kind of test is taking place that one can either ‘pass’ or ‘fail’. The highest scoring body (far left) is the female who arguably best fits into heterosexual norms of feminine desirability (young, slim but curvy, long hair, pert breasts). Interestingly, her pose is also the most reminiscent of a pin-up or model.



3:2 · Art, design and popular texts in the public domain

3:2:1 · *Feminist art and graphic design*

“Good design is feminist design”, Sheila Levrant de Bretteville once famously stated (Levrant de Bretteville, 2009). But one might ask: Is there such a thing as recognisably feminist design in mass media? A survey of the mainstream cultural landscape shows little in the way of feminist graphic design with the exception of a few feminist blogs such as *The F-word* (n.d), *Jezebel* (n.d), and *The Vagenda* (n.d) and the occasional feminist magazine such as *Bitch*, *Kate*, or *Bust*.²⁸ Instead we must look to the art world for graphic applications of feminist thought. Arguably the most influential practitioner in this field is Barbara Kruger who, interestingly, has a background in graphic design (Reckitt & Phelan, 2012). Since the 1980s Kruger has applied her distinctive style of white, red, and black type onto appropriated imagery in order to comment on a number of feminist concerns (figs. 3:8–10).

Although I am influenced by Kruger’s practice I note an important difference in approach, namely that the typographic voice in Kruger’s work is always the same. Accordingly, even when the language is borrowed, the timbre of the artist remains dominant²⁹. The work of Jenni Holzer (figs. 3:11–12) is also influential as it treats language and words as art while using them as commentary.³⁰ However I find her work also has a monologue-like quality. In light of these observations I suggest that there is a significant gap in the field of graphic design ready for a new type of feminist discourse that challenges the expectations of feminist art as didactic. This research addresses this gap, creating a new discourse that aims not to persuade or proselytise, but to initiate dialogue through the presentation of a dialogue. In doing so I do not attempt to provide answers, instead I have created an ambivalent text that reflects upon contemporary female experiences of a media-driven culture.

28 · These feminist media forms do indeed employ current design styles, potentially giving them a broad cultural reach. But considering consumers of these sites and magazines are most likely subscribers and/or identify with feminist politics in some way, the potential of graphic design to reach wide and varied audiences is not being activated.

29 · The exception to this is Kruger’s video work *Twelve* (Kruger, 2004). In this work, interviews are projected onto the sides of a room, while subtitles run underneath.

30 · Holzer also has a strong emphasis on creating public-facing work, which is the direction I hope to take my work after the completion of this thesis.

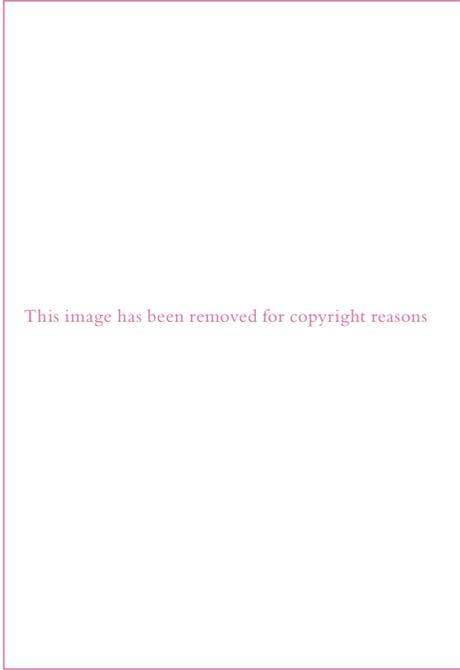


Figure 3:8. Barbara Kruger. (1982). *Untitled (you are not yourself)*. In *Art and Feminism*, London: Phaidon, p.123. Reckitt & Phelan (2012) note the shift in feminist art that Kruger's work signaled, stating, "Like Holzer she observed that coercion was effected through the way we receive verbal or visual messages, as we consume the codes circulated by anonymous sources of power. Kruger sought to intercept this process and reverse its logic" (p. 123).

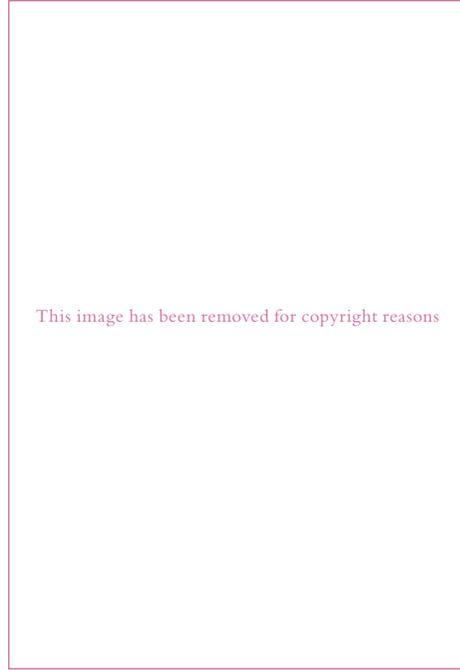


Figure 3:9. Barbara Kruger. (n.d.) *Help!, Bus Shelter project for Public Art fund, Inc.* Queens, New York. In *Stop, Think, Go, Do: How Typography and Graphic Design Influence Behavior*. Beverly, MA, USA: Rockport Publishers, p.107. This bus shelter is one of a number of public works created by Kruger. By utilising sites usually associated with advertising (Kruger also works with billboards), the artist creates an interplay suggestive of the power of advertising.

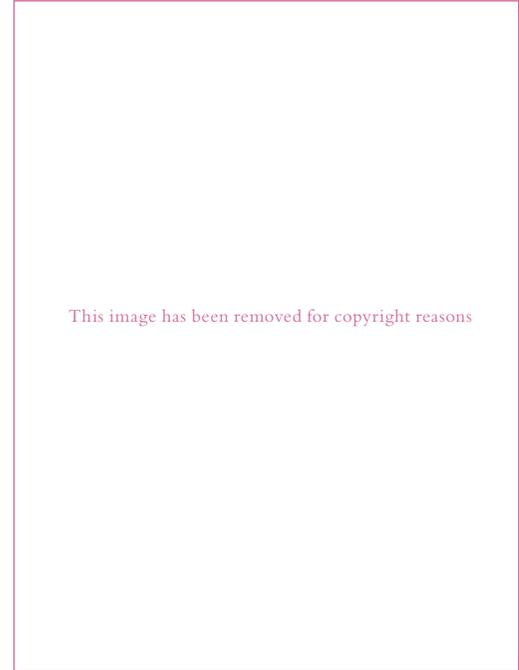


Figure 3:10. Barbara Kruger. (2010). *W magazine cover: It's all about me, I mean you, I mean me*. A recent cover designed by Kruger for women's magazine W featuring reality TV star Kim Kardashian. At first I was surprised to see Kruger join forces with W (and by proxy with Kim Kardashian) but after further consideration I recognised this as a powerful commentary on the narcissism embodied by such publications and celebrities. I enjoy the interplay with current media culture and applaud Kruger on gaining such a wide (and possibly unsuspecting) audience.

3:2:2 · *Popular culture texts*

My research practice is interested in cumulative and complex culturally produced meanings regarding women's appearance and behaviour. In a postfeminist mediascape, straightforward feminist analysis of many cultural texts is difficult. Press (2011) suggests that this is largely due to a shift that locates the female body as a new site of femininity. In other words, femininity is no longer about possession of feminine behavioural skills but is about the ownership of a sexy, youthful, and heterosexually desirable body. This change in ideals places far more women at risk of 'failing' to be feminine as very few of us fit the strict criteria. The quest for an ideal physical form, or even a socially acceptable one is for most women facilitated by a selection of diet, wardrobe, fitness, and beauty 'choices' on offer. By framing societal requirements as choices, women are made responsible for choosing a constantly updated series of self-improvement regimes for their own 'satisfaction'.³¹

Gill (2008) suggests that a further aspect of postfeminist sensibility, which may problematise the critique of cultural texts is the ubiquity of a standardised portrayal of female sexual agency (fig. 3:11). Within this construction, displays of (female) sexuality³² are framed as solely for the personal enjoyment of the woman performing the role of 'sexy'. In other words, women are presented as dressing and acting sexy as a way of feeling good about/pleasing themselves, rather than doing it for the pleasure of others. This is a marked shift from more traditional tropes of female objectification for the pleasure of the male gaze. But herein lies the issue. The framing of what could be considered stereotypically sexist depictions of women as being 'for her own pleasure' deftly deflects critique. This is because women are positioned as empowered by overtly displaying their sexuality³³. Halliwell, Malson & Tischner (2011) suggest that rather than promoting female empowerment, these representations act to negate gender equality as women's value is still being measured predominantly by physical appearance.

While collecting and researching popular culture material for this thesis I have noted a marked return to overt expressions of femininity. The most common example of this is in local and international fashions that are currently trending towards traditionally feminine embellishments³⁴ and high-heeled shoes seemingly designed for display rather than walking³⁵ (figs. 3:13–14). However, a more distinctive manifestation may be found in popular culture texts in which the hypersexual is entwined with an over-the-top girlishness (figs. 3:15–17). Here we see women oscillate between being sexually knowing and girlishly

innocent. This contradictory stereotype is hardly new; it may be argued that is merely a new rendition of the Madonna/whore archetype or a commodification of the Lolita phenomenon. However, I would suggest that there is a significant difference here in that these contradictory female caricatures are both constructed and interpreted within a neoliberal landscape preoccupied with individual choice. In such an environment, because choice is lauded as freedom, criticism is effectively silenced.

Alongside this sexy/girlish type, during this research I have noticed numerous representations figuring women as dumb or silly oftentimes combined with notions of narcissism³⁶ (figs. 3:17–20). McRobbie (2009) suggests this may signal a postfeminist 'sigh of relief' at the thought of a (welcome) return to "a kind of scatterbrain and endearing femininity" (p. 12). That many of these representations are underpinned by implications of selfishness indicates that feminine identity is not only vacuous but is something to be constructed through choice of manufactured commodities.

31 · It is worth noting that interview participants found it much easier to name the physical attributes, rather than behaviours of society's current representational female ideal.

32 · It should be noted that the sexualised dress style and racy actions of this figure almost always fit traditional heteronormative measures of desirability.

33 · Gill (2008) argues that the sexually agentic woman is actually a limiting paradigm because her representation almost always fits with heteronormative archetypes.

34 · Some examples of this are trends towards floaty, sheer fabrics in pastel colours, long skirts, pleats, lace collars, and 1950s style dresses. This return to femininity can be observed in the proliferation of these styles in popular mainstream stores such as Glassons, Max and Dotti. In a wider context, indicators of this can be seen in posts by respected fashion commentator Suzy Menkes (Menkes, 2012) as well as in current trend reports by *Vogue* (Maccalister-Smith, 2012) and *Marie Claire* (Vingan, 2012).

35 · The ongoing popularity of difficult to wear high-heeled shoes (Instyle, 2012; Pantin, 2012; Rutherford, 2012) ignores their impractical nature.

36 · Douglas (1995) suggests that during the 1980s the commodification of feminism saw the movement morph into female narcissism and that notions of liberation and equality became framed as personal, private desires.

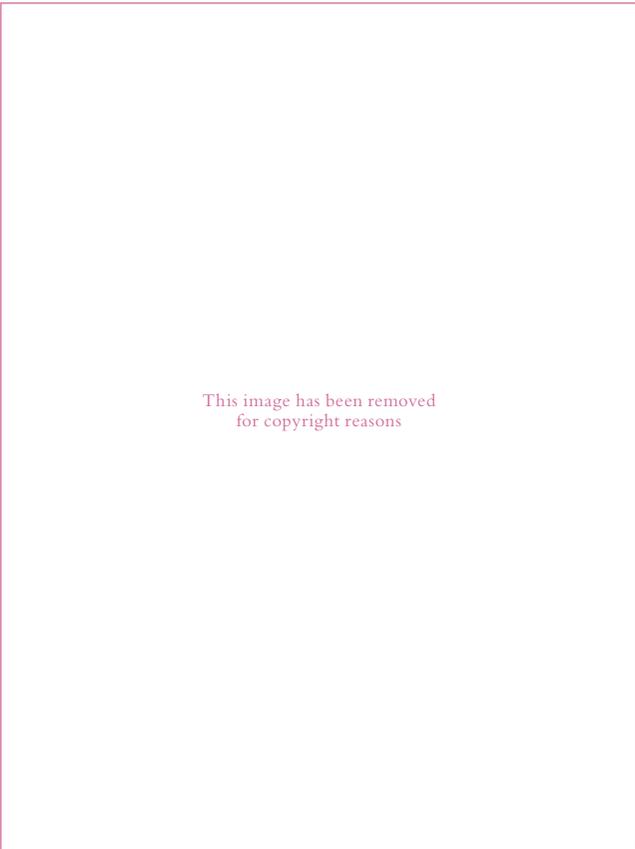


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The full video can be viewed at:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBxt_v0WF6Y&feature=youtube_gdata_player

Figure 3:11. Dave Meyers. (2012). *Screen shot from Rhianna's Music video Where have you been?* This scene shows Music artist Rhianna sliding her hand down onto her crotch while looking at the camera in a knowing and sexually assertive manner. Upon first reading, this may appear as a positive representation of female sexuality however this shot is quickly followed by the lyrics “You can have me all you want, anyway, any day”. The contradiction of offering oneself up for someone else’s pleasure (note she doesn’t speak of her own desire only that of another) creates a complex reading.

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The full video can be viewed at:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cfCgLGjFDM&feature=youtube_gdata_player

Figure 3:12. Melina Matsoukas. (2012). *Screen shot from Christina Aguilera's music video Your Body.* This shot shows Christina exiting a men’s bathroom stall after having seemingly seduced then violently killed a man. She wipes blue liquid from the side of her mouth, the implication is that this is perhaps blood as the man lies dead behind her. However this is also a signifier, lifted from pornography, that she has just received a ‘cum shot’ to the face. This pornographic reference undermines any agency that was set up in this scenario, as it indicates male pleasure has been at her expense (she must clean up after it).



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Figure 3:13 New Zealand Fashion Quarterly. (2012). *Cover of November issues for New Zealand Fashion Quarterly*. ACP Media: Auckland. This cover encapsulates many aspects of a return to feminine styling within fashion. The large headline “Sweetness and light” sets up a feminine framing, playing on a phrase generally used to refer to women or girls therefore implying feminine traits and styling are desirable. The use of pastel colours reflects the current popularity of this palette in the fashion world. While the distinctly 1950’s style dress, created from a classic and highly decorative brocade, highlights a nostalgia for mid century femininity. The model is also traditionally feminine with long, blonde hair, a slender physique, and small waist. Interestingly the traditional feminine elements are offset by metallic, geometric accessories creating a juxtaposition of sorts. This use of opposing elements further emphasises the softness in the feminine attributes. I would suggest this can be seen as an indicator of a wider acceptance and celebration of contradiction.



Figure 3:14 Lisa Waldner. (March, 2012). *Documentation of 'Must have' high heeled shoes in Rubi shoes*. St. Lukes mall, Auckland. That the accompanying signage points to these shoes as a “must have” indicates that they should be a wardrobe staple for all women despite their impracticality for most daily activities.



Figure 3:15 Lisa Waldner. (December, 2012). *Documentation of street advertising for pop star Nicki Minaj's Pink Friday perfume range*. Upper Queen Street, Auckland. In this street poster popular music artist Nicki Minaj is presented in a decidedly feminine outfit in a completely pink setting. Her poses and tutu seemingly refer to the appearance of a dancing ballerina dolls commonly found inside jewellery boxes for young girls. This display of girlishness is not uncommon for Minaj. Importantly however she is an artist who frequently uses extremely explicit sexual references in her songs, complete with overt displays of what could be described as hyper sexuality.

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It can be viewed at:
<http://www.vibe.com/photo-gallery/katy-perrys-20-sexiest-photos>



Figure 3:16 *Katy Perry naked in clouds*. (2011). In this still from Katy Perry's California girls video shoot we see music artist Katy Perry overtly mix the girlish with sexual knowing. Her hairstyle (complete with side bow) is that of a young girl with the fluffy pink cloud like surroundings reinforcing this girliness. Her tucked knee, pointed toe pose indicates a coyness which is in opposition to the sexually knowing gaze she gives the camera.

Figure 3:17 Lisa Waldner. (July, 2012). *Documentation of female presentation in Dotti window display*. St. Lukes mall, Auckland. This model is dressed in a very child-like way and poses to look like a pigeon toed, shy little girl. This is in direct contradiction to her very adult high-heeled shoes, bare tanned legs, and very short skirt length.



Figure 3:18 Lisa Waldner. (June, 2011). *Documentation of female representation in Forever New window display*. Sylvia Park mall, Auckland. The model in the image not only has a wide-eyed, open-mouthed look of vacancy but she looks upward in the manner of a child.



Figure 3:19 Lisa Waldner. (June, 2011). *Documentation of vacuous advertising targeted at women, in Rubi Shoes window display*. Sylvia Park mall, Auckland. "Shoes make me happy..." This advertisement highlights the cool-styling of both narcissism and stupidity in the commercial realm. The words are framed by quote marks implying this comment has been/would likely have been uttered in reality.



Figure 3:20 Lisa Waldner. (August, 2012). *Documentation of advertising figuring women as silly, in bus shelter advertising for Colgate whitening products*. Kingsland, Auckland. The model here holds the pose of a flighty and silly girl signified by looking upwards, hand held out at an angle and knees cocked inwards.



Figure 3:21 Lisa Waldner. (August, 2012). *Documentation of T-shirt 'I heart shoes, bags, and boys'*. Point Chevalier, Auckland. I find it bizarre that such vacuous phrases are emblazoned across t-shirts made for adult women. Such artefacts reinforce stereotypes of women as only concerned with shopping and seeking romance.

3:2:3 · *Negotiation*

Living in a consumer culture means constant negotiation as we make sense of the multiple, often contradictory, meanings that form our circuit of culture.³⁷ For women this cycle includes navigating the appropriation (and resulting dilution) of our own emancipation. That this re-presentation of liberation is used as a marketed tool to further reinforce normative and restrictive gender values is astounding in its complexity.

If gender is understood as a performance, based in part on the meanings created within consumer culture, then I would argue it is not merely a reenactment of what is seen and heard, but is a complex set of negotiations. I suggest that performing gender involves both a navigation and a reenactment of the ambivalence found in popular culture. It is the complexity of this navigation that I seek to highlight in my moving image work.

3:3 · Kinetic typography

3:3:1 · *Typographic discourse*

Because this research is a response to issues relating to contemporary female representation I have chosen to appropriate the girlish, overly feminine tone I found utilised in a wide selection of popular culture texts. This approach takes into account Salen's (2001) identification of typography as a signifier of social difference. Fonts such as Didot, Bauer Bodoni (specifically the italic versions), and Avenir are currently popular choices for signifying femininity.³⁸ Use of these fonts in my works acts to subvert and comment on their function as a commodified feminine voice. Their use also breaks with stylistic codes normally associated with feminist discourse in graphic design texts.³⁹

The creative outcome of this thesis also breaks with the plethora of kinetic type works easily found on YouTube, which present fast paced interpretations of film dialogue. These pieces generally work in rectangular blocks of discourse that adhere to notions of the grid and embody a strongly authoritative, sans-serif form of visual discourse. My work, while symmetrical, is not like this. This is because I use typographical agency against itself. In other words, through the use of decorative, ornamentally embellished type I construct a typographical discourse wherein feminised type critiques the values it usually endorses.

Interview excerpts of women talking about their experience of identity and feminism in a mediated society lends a personal tone to this work. Thus, the visual language of commodity⁴⁰ creates a complex reading, reflecting themes of contradiction and ambivalence. In appropriating aspects of the consumer sphere, a commentary is created which refers to the cyclic and cannibalistic nature of commercial culture.⁴¹ Consequently, the application of feminine type acts to subvert the film text's own appropriation.

In my moving image work, type selection, treatment, and timing are orchestrated to create distinctive and separate voices as a way of emphasising both difference and similarity in experience. My work attempts to suggest the complexity of everyday social interaction with media but also to convey the subtly and nuance in the women's comments.

37 · Here I refer to Johnson's oft-cited diagram (2004, p. 284) which goes some way towards illustrating the complex cycle of representation and appropriation that occurs in mediated culture.

38 · Illustrations of this kind can be found in the review of contextual knowledge chapter.

39 · The typeface normally used in Kruger's work (Futura Bold Oblique) has an authoritative and assertive quality reminiscent of an imperative, or assertive signage.

40 · Here I refer to my use of feminised fonts found in women's magazines, advertising, and shop displays (see the methodology chapter for examples of this). In addition, kinetic type is generally associated with commercial media forms like movie titles and screen-based advertising.

41 · This describes the process whereby consumers appropriate aspects of the representational culture while popular culture appropriates lived experience in an endless cycle. In other words, consumers and consumer culture feed off one another.

3:4 · Explication

I want to be a forensic scientist *playboy bunny* does not seek to proselytise. It strategically selects young women's observations and opinions, and re-contextualises these into environments suggestive of women's everyday interactions with consumer culture. In this process audio recordings are interfaced and punctuated with typographical interpretations and these are embedded into visual and audio contexts. The final moving image work is divided into three sections: the home environment, the car, and the mall. These environments, although discrete are subtly connected by transitions designed to support the flow between ideas and contexts.

3:4:1 · Section one – Home/private space

Central concept

In this first section we see and hear women's personal thoughts on feminism presented in a setting suggestive of a private, domestic space. Within this space there is no uninvited outside influence. Here the external messages (and related pressures) of a consumer-driven culture are limited. The women's musings are private. These are things not discussed in the open. They are personal and, revealingly, ambivalent thoughts on feminism

The environment

This world is constructed from still photographs and augmented environmental sound. Here the intimate and the familiar; a tap turning on and off, footsteps, and keys jangling, suggest a woman preparing to leave the privacy of her home. This suggestion of personal/domestic space is interposed with audio bites from interviews. Interview excerpts for this section were selected because they illustrated ambivalence. The still images used as graphic elements suggest a neutral yet recognisably domestic environment. Personal items, such as keys, a coffee cup ring, and tiles call to mind the mundane and familiar aspects of daily life.

Typographical treatment

In this section, typography is simple and uncluttered. Type is evenly paced, centrally justified, and measured. I do this to suggest the comparative control over external influence we have in personal, private spaces. However, each voice appears stylistically unique. This reinforces the fact that we are listening to a selection of distinctive reflections on a single theme. Comments

exist in isolation from one another; there is no overlap and little interaction as one follows the other. This singularity is suggestive of individual opinion rather than a collective voice, just as feminism currently has no collective voice, only singular critique.

3:4:2 · Section two – Car/transitional space

Central concept

Situated inside a vehicle entering the city, women now discuss ideas relating to society rather than the self. This is a space of transition, a semi-private space in which our control over what is seen and heard is comparatively diminished. However, as we approach the city the messages of consumer culture increase, creating external and internal type-scapes that are cluttered, ambivalent, anxious, and difficult to navigate.

The environment

The initial audio of a car engine running positions us firmly in a driver's environment. The radio is switched on, and the mediated world enters. In this environment, women's voices begin as singular and separated then quickly start to overlap each other, implying a rapid buildup of external pressures and related anxieties as we travel further into the mediated world. Slightly desaturated live footage forms a backdrop for an increasingly complex accumulation of ideas and voices.

Typographical treatment

Although there is overlap in this section, each 'voice' has a distinct typographic treatment. Font selection and typographic approach reflect the commercial voice of the shopping environment, which the driver is travelling towards. Here embellished type is used to critique the values it is normally used to promote. The typography creates a cluttered, busy space filled with visual noise—all the ideals and voices, no matter how contradictory, exist at the same time—nothing is erased. The women's reflections appear as cumulative. This echoes the complexity of cultural expectations encountered as one transitions from the private domain to the displayed and judged domain of the shopping mall.



3:4:3 · *Section Three – Mall/public space*

Central concept

In this phase of the work, women speak in the context of the retail space. They discuss the pressures they experience from a culture that correlates identity and self-worth with consumption. Here we hear women talk about how this disquiet is dealt with in daily life (thus the multilayered meanings of this world of consumption are navigated in personal ways). The mall is treated as a physical manifestation of consumer culture, it is a place where influences are created and played out.

The environment

Audio bites of popular music, foot traffic, and women's voices, fade in and out of this realm. They occasionally overlap to reflect the layered surfaces of the commercial environment. In this sanitised but text-rich environment, multiple, cultural meanings are present. Locked off live-action footage emphasises the attractiveness of the mall environment. The environment is shot as a point of view experience. This provides a more fertile ground for embedding typographical discourse because the text remains focused on the ideas rather than on an encounter with a 'character'. We listen to, and watch ideas as if they were in our head.

Typographical treatment

The setting is shiny and glamorous. The comments we hear jar against this veneer but are incorporated typographically into the 3-dimensional space, just as all critique is appropriated and absorbed by the industrial consumer complex. The fact that the voices we encounter (aurally and visually) become part of physical surroundings also alludes to the deeply embedded nature of anxieties surrounding commodity-constructed identity. There is not a demarcation here between the idea and the environment. Ideas grow across shop windows. They run to meet us on the floor, they breathe the air that we absorb. Our opinions become part of the world we consume. Our thoughts, re-contextualised, are fed back to us in a seamless closure between the self and the commodity. They are contradictory, reflective and embedded.

A large, intricate pink floral wreath with swirling patterns and leaf-like motifs, framing the central text.

Chapter 4
Methodology

The nature and applicability of a heuristic inquiry

This research may be broadly described as a heuristic inquiry. Originating from the Greek *heuriskein*, translated as “discover or to find” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9), heuristics suggests an approach, rather than a methodology that places a researcher’s inner frame of reference at the centre of an investigation (p. 12). In other words, a heuristic inquiry positions subjectivity and tacit knowledge⁴² as fundamental to producing insightful and original results but it does not prescribe an established formula for attaining outcomes (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985).

Ings (2011) addresses the use of heuristics in the context of graphic design based postgraduate research. Significantly, he points to the autobiographical nature of this approach as complementary to emerging notions of the designer as author, suggesting that this approach may assist design practitioners in addressing issues of social responsibility. Douglass and Moustakas (1985, p.40) also note, “When pursued through intimate and authentic processes of the self, the ‘data’ that emerge are autobiographical, original, and accurately descriptive of the textures and structures of lived experience”.

It is recognised that heuristic research design will vary according to a practitioner’s area of investigation (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Ings, 2011). Accordingly, I have constructed a methodological framework appropriate to this project that includes aspects of narrative inquiry,⁴³ self-reporting, and wall writing; all of which are informed by self-reflective practice. Thus the methodological framework designed for this project is founded on the heuristic principle that research as a process of dialogue forms a type of non-linear dialectic (Kleining & Witt, 2000). In explaining the dynamics of this approach I will now discuss the methods used to explicate the process. Because these methods are based around the characteristics of discourse, I use the metaphor of conversation as a way of explaining their application.

We may trace the trajectory of the research by considering the following ideas:

-  *talk*
-  *listen*
-  *assemble*
-  *assess*

42 · Defined as knowing more than we can articulate (Polanyi, 2009), tacit knowledge is highly valued in a heuristic inquiry because it is understood as forming the primary basis for decision making (Ings, 2011; Moustakas, 1990; Scrivener, 2000).

43 · While I understand that Narrative Inquiry can develop into a complex and discrete methodological framework, I use only aspects of it inside a heuristic framework. In this regard I am interested in how people ‘story’ their identities in the context of perceptions of feminism and consumer culture. This ‘storying’ is the source of audio data that I import in to the research.

4:1 · Talk

4:1:1 · *Collecting and thinking*

The process of talking to others has been essential to the creation of this work. The most apparent form this took was the series audio interviews I conducted with women⁴⁴ early in the year. These recordings captured not only opinions, but also a certain paralinguistic richness⁴⁵ that suggested rich potentials for how I might treat the design of the work (see figs. 4:1–2). The process of interviewing women also had a transformative affect on the course of the research.

First, the formulation of interview questions helped me clarify the kinds of information I was seeking.⁴⁶ Questions were reviewed both during and after interview sessions as I moved incrementally closer to an understanding of what it was that I was encountering. Second, interviews helped me learn about participants' perceptions of media influence and current female ideals. Importantly, these discussions altered my data collection process as the data⁴⁷ directed me to new cultural sites that had not formed part of my original consideration.



Figure 4:1 Lisa Waldner. (June, 2012). *Carla happy with my lot v1 (with sound)*. Kinetic type experiment with interview audio. This was one of the first kinetic type experiments I created using interview audio. The point size of each word was chosen to reflect emphasis in the recorded statement. I focused on timing the type to synchronise with the pace of Carla's speech. Although I didn't match this exactly, the experiment revealed how timing could be an important consideration if the typography was used to enhance comprehension.

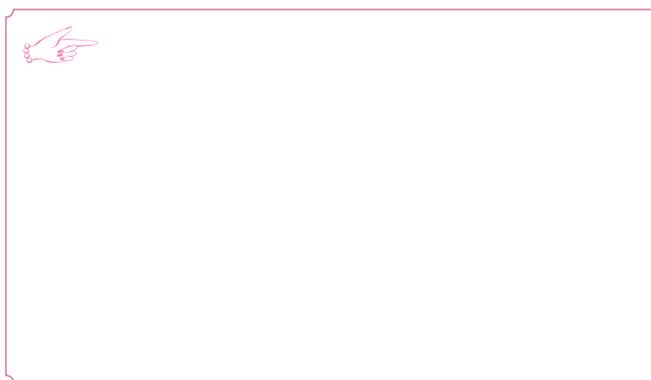


Figure 4:2 Lisa Waldner. (June, 2012). *Glassons window Albany 1 muzac*. Moving image experiment showing type composited into live action footage. This was a test to assess different combinations of data. At this stage of my practice I had a number of different elements I wanted to bring together including music, live footage, type, and statements taken from the interviews. I was interested in how music might interact with typographical dialogue. In this piece I felt the statements got lost because the movement in the footage and the music became too dominant. Through this experiment I realized that I needed to position the interviewee's voices at the forefront of the work.

44 · These women were between the ages of 18 and 35. All were from my wider peer circle and were accessed through personal networks.

45 · By this I refer to the tone, emphasis, volume, and aural nuances in the recordings. Thus, I was listening not only to content but also to the 'character' of what was being said. This not only influenced the pace of typographical responses but also the design of embellishments, the selection of words, and the diverse emphases placed on size, kerning, leading, and transition.

46 · See appendices for interview questions.

47 · Here I refer to questions relating to what interviewees purchased and where, and also to the kinds of cultural products they consumed such as music, magazines, television programmes and films.

4:1:2 · Analysis of interview data

Accessing the stories of others is a recognised starting point in field of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Interestingly, the authors also assert that this method “highlights ethical matters as well as shapes new theoretical understandings of people’s experiences” (p. 1). Accordingly, it was through the words of others that I began to understand my own experience of the current cultural landscape and consequently the nature of the landscape itself. As Bullough & Pinnegar (2001) note private experience can provide insight into public issues. In this research, interview responses were complex to analyse. They showed that women’s experiences were similar in many ways (fig. 4:3), different in others, and often contradictory in themselves (fig. 4:4).



Figure 4:3 Lisa Waldner. (July, 2012). *Example of similarities in comments. Compilation of audio samples taken from interview responses to the question “What does feminism mean to you?”*. The similarities evident in women’s views of feminism were quite striking. This suggested that feminism might be seen as a reviled caricature-like stereotype. This is something I found referred to in much of the postfeminist literature I was reading. The nature of these comments suggested that the subject of feminism might usefully feature at the beginning of the film because the sentiments were both shared and distinctive.



Figure 4:4 Lisa Waldner. (June, 2012). *She can speak her mind but she’s also quite meek. 15 second excerpt from a response to the interview questions “Can you tell me about your female ideal? How does she act, how does she look?”*. This example is one of a number of answers that helped me recognise contradiction as significant part of women’s lived experience. I found it particularly surprising that someone’s model of female behaviour could incorporate two such opposing ideas. Interestingly the interviewee goes on to identify this contradiction herself, suggesting that it is part of a natural “tension” that exists in “everything”. This response was one that I found jarring during the interview but also niggled at me for a long afterward. I can now see this was my intuition at work. Moustakas (1990) describes this intuition as guiding force, helping a researcher to find patterns and significance within their data (p. 23).

4:1:3 · Self-dialogue

Other important methods of ‘talking’ included a dialogue with myself⁴⁸ that took different forms including written journals, photography,⁴⁹ as well as audio and video logs (figs. 4:5-7). The process of journaling is often advocated in the area of design research (Gray & Malins, 2004; Newbury, 2001; Schön, 1983). Journals are my key spaces for reporting to myself on research progress, working through ideas, recording thoughts, and engaging in reflective writing (or speaking in the case of audio visual logs). I find that the act of verbalising my thoughts – either in written or spoken form – has the effect of making my internal processes external. As I force myself to put what is often a feeling or vague notion into language, connections between data are often clarified through the process of articulation. The following manifestations of self-journaling serve as useful illustrations.

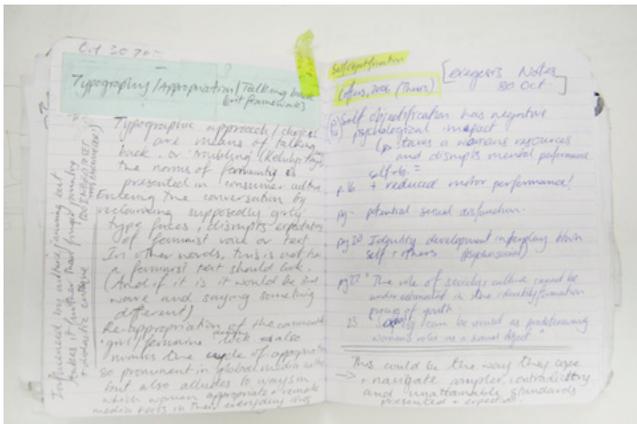


Figure 4:5 Lisa Waldner. (December, 2012). *Journal example 1-written diary*. This is the journal I carry with me at all times. It provides a central location for ordering my thoughts, recording quotes, and noting down tasks. More critically it offers me a space to engage in writing. I use writing as means of externalising ideas and problems I have hitherto been processing internally. Often I retrace written thoughts as a means of finding links and synergies between ideas.



Figure 4:6 Lisa Waldner. (April, 2012). *Journal example 2-audio diary*. 50 second excerpt from audio diary log. In this clip I am recording myself (while walking), speaking out loud about the potential meanings of my research. I find that walking initiates a different kind of thinking for me. This recording was early in my research process and I was trying to find the vocabulary to express emerging ideas.

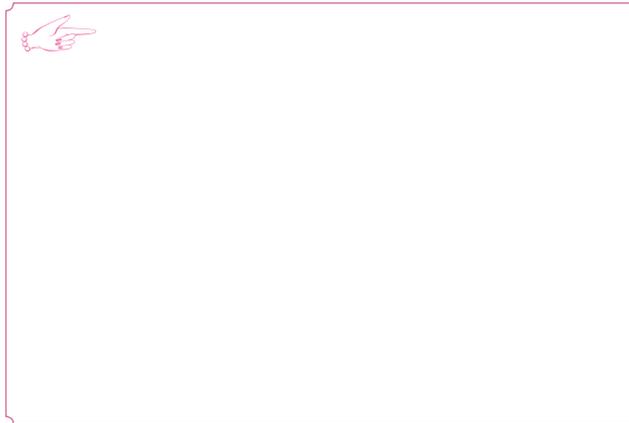


Figure 4:7 Lisa Waldner. (May, 2012). *Journal example 3-video diary*. Creating video logs was an altogether different process to the audio logs. I was often seated and I could see myself in the recorder, which meant I felt like I was presenting my ideas to someone else. I would often fix my hair in preparation for these recordings, which I later reflected on as a need to always look ‘good’ when presenting myself to another. This caused me to think about how deeply ingrained it must be groom oneself for encounters with others. These reflections on my own reactions to recording myself were an unexpected but valuable realisation.

48 · Moustakas (1990) notes the importance of self-dialogue in a heuristic inquiry, describing it as an “essential method” (p. 117).

49 · See appendix 1 for the body of images I created to use as stimulus for this work.

4:1:4 · *External dialogue*

Outside of the interview process, obtaining feedback from others is a significant component of my working process. In order to work through new concepts and gauge reaction to design work I regularly engage in dialogue with supervisors, colleagues, and peers. I also present my thinking in conference presentations (Waldner, 2012) and in exhibitions that profile emerging iterations of my thinking (see figures 4:10–12).

Speaking publicly about my work is helpful because it forces me to organise and articulate my thinking. I normally use a PowerPoint format containing embedded experiments (as moving image texts). However, the most useful aspect of conference presentations is the opportunity for questions and feedback at the conclusion of the paper's delivery. I normally use this time as an opportunity to gain feedback (figs. 4:8–9). As part of my AUT Postgraduate Conference presentation (2012) I posed to audience members the question, 'What does feminism look like today?' I asked them to note their answers on Post-It notes and to attach these to a public wall space. Not only did this act as a catalyst for rich discussion, but it also made manifest the level of contradiction and ambivalence I had identified in my paper. I noticed high levels of ambivalence in delegates' views, and this elevated my use of discourse surrounding contemporary feminism in emerging iterations of my practice.

In terms of exhibition (as a form of externalisation) I developed a set of typographic experiments for an installation in November 2012, called *Unexpected Spaces* (figs. 4:10–13). For this I created a series of typographical interventions on elevator doors that initially posed a question, and then revealed responses once the doors opened. Upon entering the lift passengers were presented with a partial answer to the question featured outside. Once lift doors closed, the conclusion to this statement was revealed. Because up until this point my work had existed solely in digital form I felt it might be useful to trial my thinking in the physical domain. On reflection, I realise that this was an attempt to reconnect interviewees' responses with the lived world. By using the typographical language of a commercial environment⁵⁰ I was able to refer to the lived experiences of a consumer driven environment. Both of these processes of external iteration suggested that future directions for this research might usefully be positioned in physical/lived environments.⁵¹



Figure 4:8 Lisa Waldner. (July, 2012). *Audience participation exercise during research presentation*. As well as sharing answers with one another, participants fed back to me and the audience resulting in a lively conversation. This, alongside the positive feedback received on my presentation made it clear to me that feminism is a still a very relevant (albeit diverse) topic for people. It also fortified my plans to take this work into a more public arena in the future.



Figure 4:9 Lisa Waldner. (July, 2012). *Audience participation exercise post-it notes*. These notes document the audience's self-recorded responses to a question about contemporary framings of feminism. After the conference I retained these notes to stimulate later thinking.

50 · During my research I noted the use of vinyl cut type as the ubiquitous material used in temporary shop window displays. Because of its semiotic association with the mall, I imported the material into these experiments.

51 · This experiment also served to make explicit women's sense of internal dialogue/pressure as it relates to peer surveillance. One piece of feedback I received was a comment overheard in the lifts, which responded to the type. One woman said to another, "Do you think some one really said that? Because that would be really sad if someone felt that way".



Figure 4:10 Lisa Waldner. (November, 2012). *Outside lift doors, level 3, WM building. AUT University, Auckland.*



Figure 4:11 Lisa Waldner. (November, 2012). *Inside back of lift, level 3, WM building. AUT University, Auckland.*



Figure 4:12 Lisa Waldner. (November, 2012). *Inside lift doors, level 3, WM building. AUT University, Auckland.*



Figure 4:13 Lisa Waldner. (November, 2012). *Video of lift installation in WM building. AUT University, Auckland.*

4:2 · Listen

In discussing the potential for optimising discovery in heuristic inquiries, Kleining and Witt (2000) advocate discourse ‘with’ research data, suggesting we ‘ask’ our material ‘questions’ in a similar way that we might ask a person. Through this process we receive ‘answers’. This causes us to continue the questioning process (para. 12).

Listening is integral to a heuristic inquiry if a practitioner is to authentically engage with emerging data and interations of their thinking. The complexity of this practice necessitates *listening* to and questioning many different types of data. This includes collected data and generated data. Different data require different listening practices and diverse responses. When *listening*, one engages in a process of immersion while simultaneously remaining open to the potential of discovery (Moustakas, 1990). Outlined below is a discussion of the forms my listening took in regards to my interactions with different data.

4:2:1 · *Listening while collecting*

Because I *listen* to data, how they are collected is significant. This is because while collecting I concurrently *listen* and *respond* to emerging issues. Thus, I remain flexible and reflexive. In this project, this approach has enabled me to remain open to gauging sentiment and context. Collecting popular culture material took different forms including (but not limited to) documenting public female representation⁵² on my small camera and phone, recording⁵³ shopping environments targeting female consumers, and collecting user-generated Internet material.⁵⁴ I recorded my responses to information both during and after collection. In doing so, I employed a responsive, reflexive approach that enabled me to think *through* and *into* data. As a consequence, commentary on collected data generated additional material for consideration (see fig. 4:14).



Figure 4:14 Lisa Waldner. (May, 2012). 30 second excerpt from *Undercover video recording in Glassons*. This video recorded my aural responses as well as the visual surroundings. While recording this material I remained open to my environment, noting design features that stood out to me. During this visit I noted décor, furnishings, music and graphic design elements such as window vinyls, and labels on clothing. These were all indicators of how women are spoken to in a commercial environment. In this data one sees in evidence an emphasis on ‘girlishness’.

52 · This included photography of public advertisements, women and how they presented themselves in public, shop windows, and magazine covers. Refer to appendix 1 for examples of this kind of imagery.

53 · Recording here refers to digital photography, audio and video footage.

54 · This included blogs that respond to female cultural representation, YouTube videos discussing pitfalls of feminism, music videos, and lifestyle blogs.

4:2:2 · *Listening to and cataloguing interview data*

The most literal form of listening in this project was the analysis of interview data. I reviewed each interview⁵⁵ multiple times, marking up points of interest as I went (fig. 4:15) and extracting clips as separate files. These were then ordered into themes (fig. 4:16). I listened attentively for emphasis and pauses in interviews, looking for added layers of significance that might be serve to enhance typographic treatments.

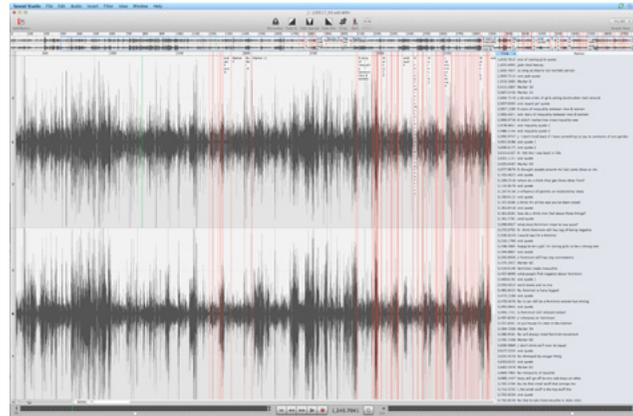


Figure 4:15 Lisa Waldner. (December, 2012). *Screenshot of audio mark up on interview file.* Placing (and accurately naming) markers in my audio files became an indispensable method as I analysed interview data. This meant I could easily find the point in the interview where a particular comment started and ended but more importantly, I could quickly look for common themes across data.

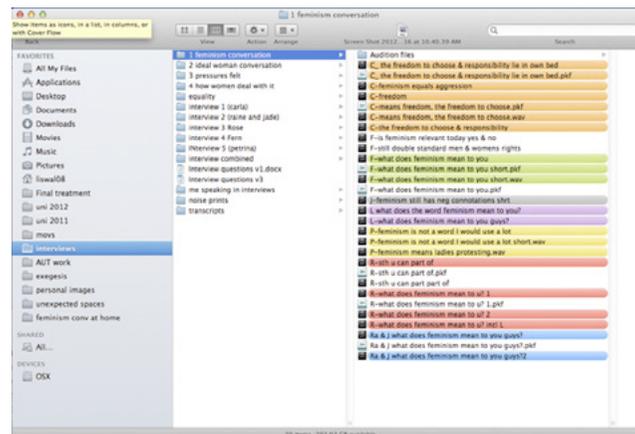


Figure 4:16 Lisa Waldner. (December, 2012). *Screen Shot of interview clip filing system.* I designed a specific coding system for my interview clips. This indicated participant (colour) and theme (code) and was a way to quickly tell what a comment referred to and to whom the interviewee was speaking. This kind of sorting allowed me to work quickly and intuitively with the many clips I had accumulated.

55 · There were five interviews completed with a total of six participants (one interview recorded two interviewees).

4:2:3 · *Listening while generating creative material*

Although data collection and cataloguing were important, my creative experiments were the main agents in the project's creative syntheses (fig. 4:17–19). These experiments were largely responses to collected data and my reflections upon them. The data and my discourse with them served as a form of self-dialogue that permeated the inquiry. I recorded women's thinking, conversed with it, and with data relating to the environments they spoke about.

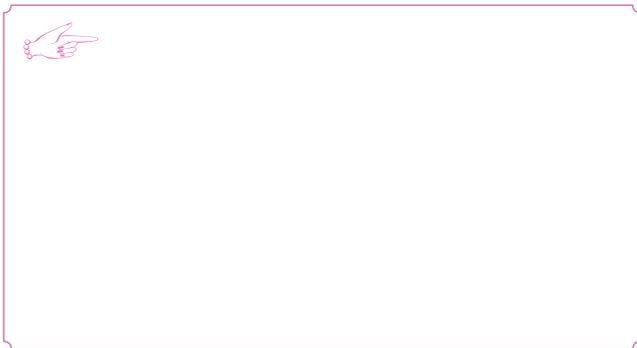


Figure 4:17 Lisa Waldner. (May, 2012). *Carla quote in mall 1a*. This was among the first set of experiments I conducted where I placed kinetic type into a 3-dimensional environment. The effect of this 'lived world' being written into in the manner of vinyl cut advertising had the potential to have a lot of impact. This evocation of a commercial voice signalled a step towards appropriation of 3-D space. However, I found the dynamic created between the blank stare of the mannequin and the interviewee's voice and sentiment to be incongruous.

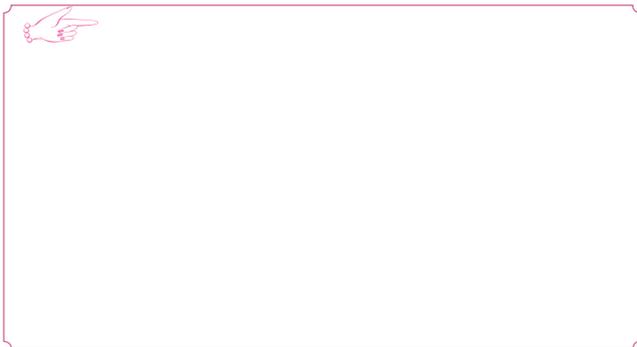


Figure 4:19 Lisa Waldner. (May, 2012). *Carla quote in mall 2a*. One of the final trials in this set, this was effective in terms of readability and its suggestion of type existing in a 3-D space. This test highlighted that the selection of type colour would be particularly important when placing type into images with many different colours. I particularly like how the type in this piece seems to pour off the window into the space where a shopper would normally stand.

Figure 4:18 Lisa Waldner. (May, 2012). *Carla quote in mall 1*. A further iteration of the previous experiment, in this test I wanted to further push the limitations of placing kinetic type into 3-dimensional space. The horizontal, flat angle of this affects legibility, particularly at the beginning of the quote. This led me away from placing type into such flat spaces. With this trial I began to note the static limitation of using still photography and subsequently started to experiment with live action footage in order to increase the potential of verisimilitude.

4:3 · Assemble

As the project progressed, I orchestrated data into filmic experiments that were increasingly refined and correlated until they formed a cohesive text (the final film).

The number of variables involved made this a challenging task due to the nature of time-based media. This is because each design decision impacted on surrounding elements temporally and contextually. Each element was in conversation with the next and my task was to consider whether the meanings created in these exchanges correlated with tacit understandings underpinning the project (see fig. 4:20). When there was a connection, I would follow the new pathway either during an assembly or as a separate experiment. This approach has been described by Schön (1983) in his notion of reflection-in-action as well as by Gray & Malins (2004) in their discussion of supplementary reflection-for-action.

For Schön (1983) *knowing through doing* is key to reflective practice. It was only by assembling data into moving image experiments that I came to understand the nature of my research. This occurred incrementally and also in more revealing 'aha' moments (fig. 4:21–22). One example of this is when I became increasingly aware of my desire to squeeze into my work as many elements as possible. This led to the realisation that I was intuitively attempting to replicate my experiences of living in a complex, hyper-commodified media-scape (fig 4:23–24).

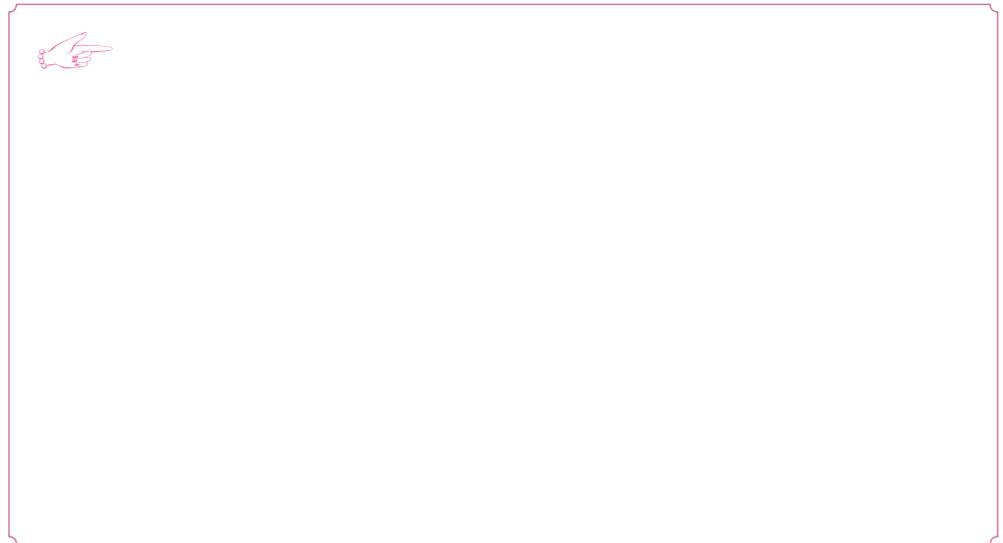


Figure 4:20 Lisa Waldner. (May, 2012). *Moving image experiment 1b*. In this early experiment I trialled the combination of many different types of collected data. I positioned the music as the 'hero' of the work allowing it to set the pace for the transitions. Taking a cue from the title of the song I was using ('Primadonna girl!'), I designed the opening graphic of an embellished mirror. There are aspects of this experiment that worked well, such as synchronicity between music and image, the creation of a definite mood within the piece, and the use of upbeat music as a drawcard. However, the interviewees' comments were subsumed by the more dominant elements. Although the music was catchy it was too overpowering.

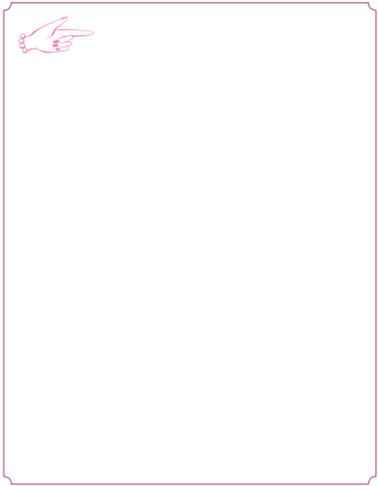


Figure 4:21 Lisa Waldner. (June, 2012). *Freedom test 2*. For this test I concentrated on matching the movement and appearance/disappearance of the type to the pace of the speaker. I was also attempting to emphasise her sentiments while suggesting additional meanings. This was a frustrating task because I was trying to work out what I was trying to communicate while constructing the work. I managed to get the timing to synchronise, and the first section of the experiment is in keeping with the comment. However, the 'made your bed' in the latter half is far too comical looking and similar to an After Effects monologue I had seen on YouTube.



Figure 4:22 Lisa Waldner. (June, 2012). *Overlap*. This short piece was an early test that I put aside in favour of developing other areas. However it was a real 'aha!' moment both when I created it and also when I later came back to it. The timing and the overlap of words lends itself to notions of escalating meanings while still remaining readable and interesting.



Figure 4:23 Lisa Waldner. (June, 2012). *Time lapse 1a music test 2*. In this trial I utilised a timer on a camera, which I had strapped to my body. I wanted to recreate the experience of entering a mall and being hit with a wall of meanings. I also experimented with embedding some theory in this piece. I used a quote from theory I was reading at the time to create the typography towards the end. The overall result is too literal and the choice of the bold sans-serif face is too dominant and authoritative.



Figure 4:24 Lisa Waldner. (June, 2012). *Time lapse 2 music test 1*. Part of the same set of time-lapse experiments, this test was an attempt to emulate the fast-paced onslaught of images in a retail space. I found it to be too jerky and haphazard.

4:4 · Assess

In order to assess how theory I was reading connected with my creative practice I engaged in wall writing. In keeping with Gray & Malin's (2004) claim that research diaries can take many forms, I saw this self-reflective method as an extension of the journaling process. I find working at these larger scales less restrictive both physically and mentally, as I am able to get all of my thoughts out onto one surface and map connections between them (figs. 4:25–26).

As part of the self-dialogue inherent in heuristic inquiries Douglass & Moustakas, (1985), Sela-Smith (2002), and Ings (2011) suggest that a researcher might critically assess their own work by absorbing it “into the self” (Ings, p. 343). In doing this the researcher ensures that what is being produced connects with tacit understanding of the problem at hand.⁵⁶ However, it is also argued that findings might usefully be opened up to external review (Ings, 2011). In a design context I believe that feedback on creative practice is crucial to avoid work becoming too self-referential and/or incomprehensible to others. Accordingly, my supervisors and peers independently reviewed most of my visual experiments. Naturally, feedback differed on occasion but in all instances I was encouraged to only take advice that connected with my intuitive understanding of the research. See figure 4:26–27 for an example of a piece of work that was taken through this review process.

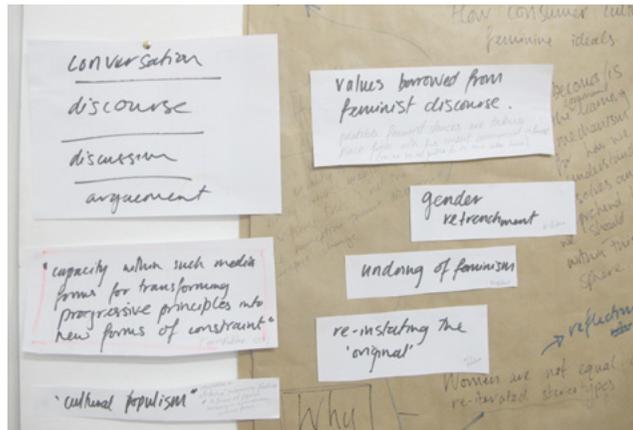


Figure 4:25–26 Lisa Waldner. (June, 2012). *Wall writing in studio*. In addition to the large-scale writing and networking I adhered repositionable notes alongside ideas. I found this a useful way of easily moving and grouping concepts.

56 · Sela-Smith (2002) offers a useful expansion on this idea. She argues that if one disrupts the internal evaluative processes of a heuristic inquiry one can disturb the finely-wrought relationships that enable connections to be made.

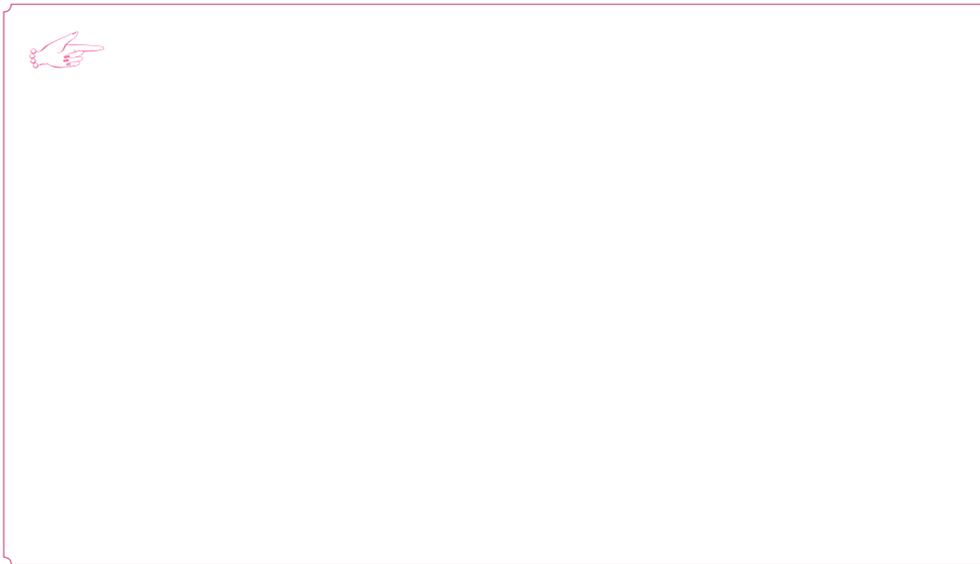


Figure 4:26 Lisa Waldner. (September, 2012). *Crowded type exp 1*. This was my first attempt at creating a typographic and aural overlap. The result is in keeping with the notion of consumer culture's multiple voices creating a clutter.

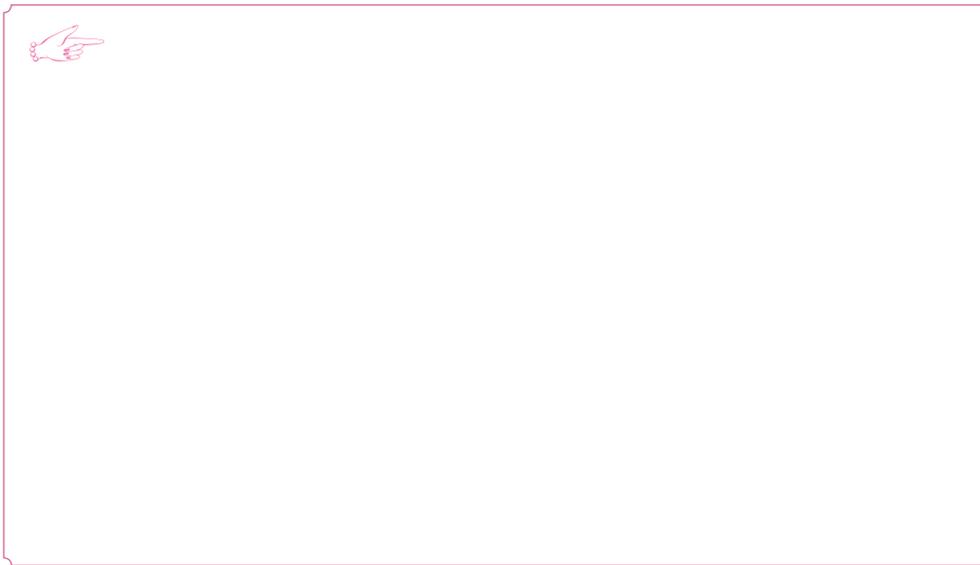


Figure 4:27 Lisa Waldner. (October, 2012). *Crowded type exp 1*. This initial (and basic) attempt to place my crowded conversation into the lived world was successful and led to a further, more sophisticated, development of this concept into my final work.

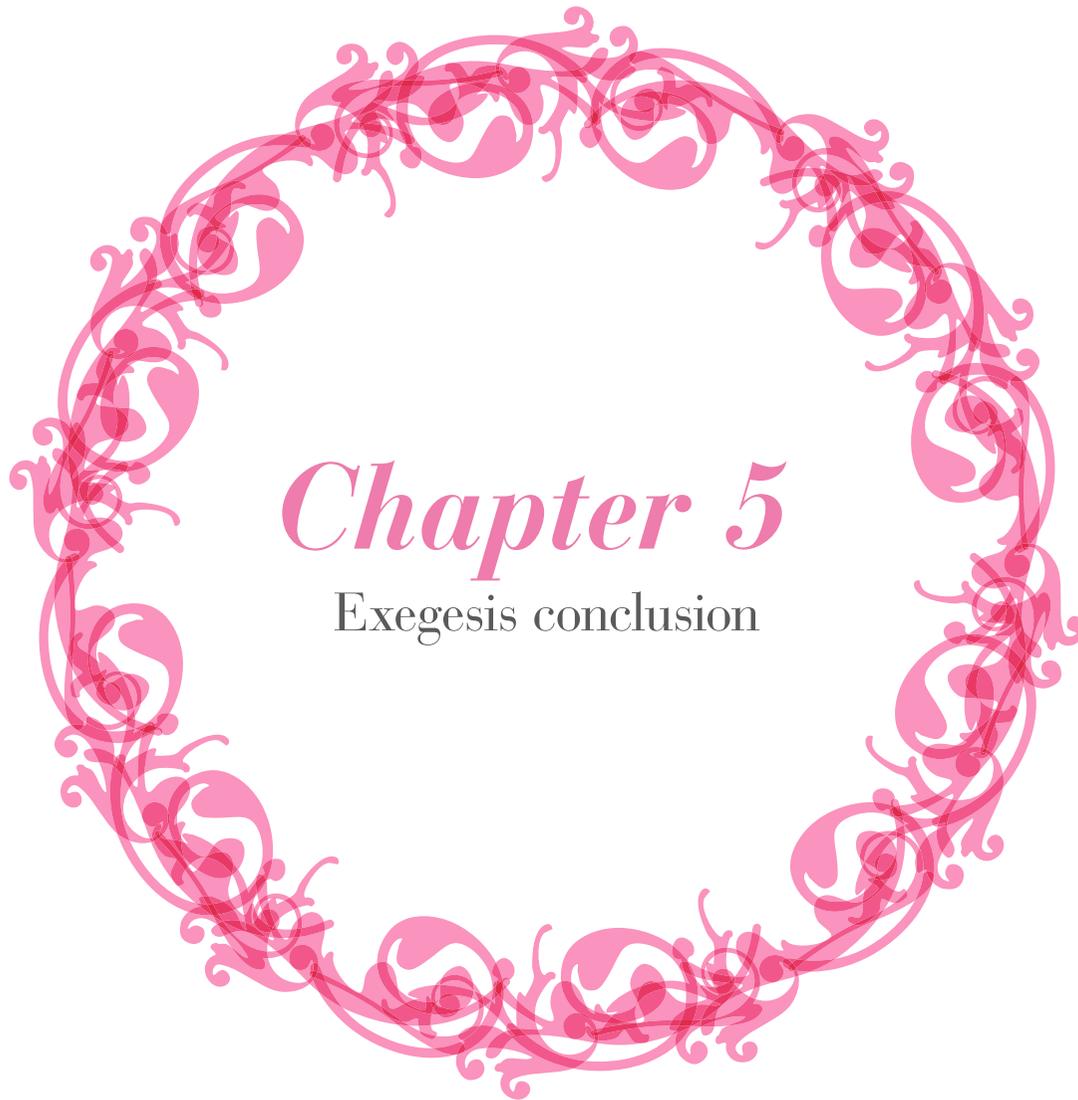
4:5 · Challenges and conclusion to chapter

Methodologically, the approach of:

talk
listen
assemble
assess

complemented my aim of creating a typographic discourse. A heuristic inquiry is based in dialogue; one with the self as well as with data. This makes it an appropriate model for a research project which itself intends to create further dialogue.

However, heuristics is not without its challenges. As Kleining and Witt (2000) note, if a researcher is truly engaged in a heuristic inquiry then answers to their investigation may not come in a timely manner. This is because of the high level of personal insight and ‘self consciousness’ required for a robust engagement with the approach. In other words, if you are really connecting with your tacit understanding of a problem then you can’t delude yourself into thinking that you’ve found an answer when it doesn’t fit. As one of my supervisors puts it, you need to tune in to your “bullshit detector” (Ings, 2012). Many solutions to my research question were developed throughout the year. Frustratingly, it was only through attempts to execute these solutions that it became clear whether or not they would fit. Working in a time-based medium meant this was at times a lengthy and trying process. However the experience of heuristic inquiry gained in my honours degree helped me to place more faith in the process during this project. It allowed me to surrender to the process just as Moustakas (1990) recommends.

A large, intricate pink decorative wreath with floral and scrollwork patterns, framing the central text.

Chapter 5
Exegesis conclusion

5:1 · Contribution to knowledge

The moving image work *I want to be a forensic scientist playboy bunny* addresses everyday concerns of young New Zealand women in the vernacular of consumer culture. This provides contemporary feminism with an original voice, cast in a typographic style that comments on its own (commodified) appropriation. The non-proselytising approach of this work increases the potential of its appeal to a wider audience. When considering the current lack of graphic design interrogation applied to the postfeminist cultural environment (in which our understandings of gender are created and played out), it is clear that contributions like this film offer potential enrichment to a paucity of debate. By utilising the power of visual communication for political ends, the project contributes to a distinct corpus of work where graphic designers have moved beyond service provision and engaged their voices as the critics and the consciences of society. Beyond its political and design contribution, this thesis also adds to an increasing body of Art and Design scholarship, both in its creative articulation of the exegesis (as an interactive form of discourse) and in the manner in which it explores relationships between theory and practice.

5:2 · Where to from here?

The word *thesis* comes from the Greek word *θέσις*, meaning 'something put forth'. As such it refers to an intellectual proposition or idea. However, ideas are living things, and although an academic thesis might eventually be presented for examination, the ideas behind it continue to develop. This thesis is designed to grow. As well as publishing and presenting its findings I intend to eventually take this work into a practice-led PhD. However, more significant, and immediate, for me personally is the drive to create more publicly positioned work based on themes and connections I have discovered during the project. Accordingly, my final exhibition will be followed by the creation of more public interventions in commercial environments. I believe that more public, feminist discourse needs to occur and should be encouraged in a way that average people can access and connect

with it. Graphic design is perfectly positioned to achieve this. If change is to occur in wider culture it needs to start with the discourse of everyday people. Feminism is about how women live and experience their lives; it is not something that belongs solely in the academy. We need to start talking about feminism again. We need to question ways in which consumer culture drags feminism from its lonely grave, and uses it to justify a commodified construction of femininity. Because, surely, freedom is more than simply the right to align one's self with commercial commodities.

A large, ornate pink floral wreath with intricate scrollwork and leaf patterns, framing the central text.

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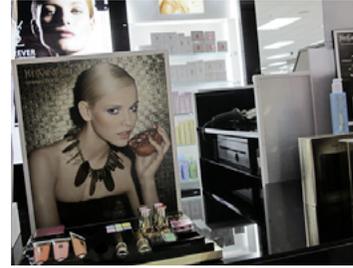
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A large, intricate pink decorative wreath with swirling floral and vine patterns. The word "Appendices" is centered within the wreath in a pink, italicized serif font.

Appendices

Appendix 1 · Collected images

These images were created to record my own lived experience of female representation. This corpus of images was used as a catalyst for my thinking.

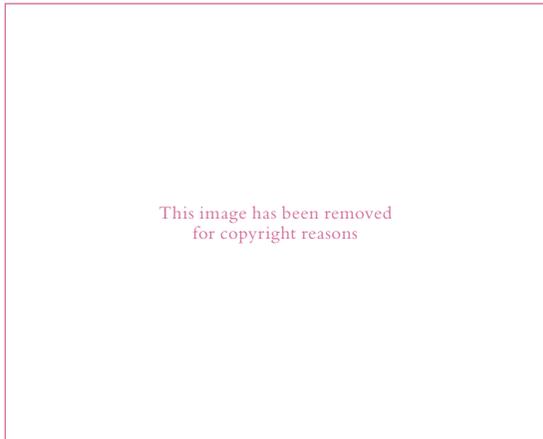
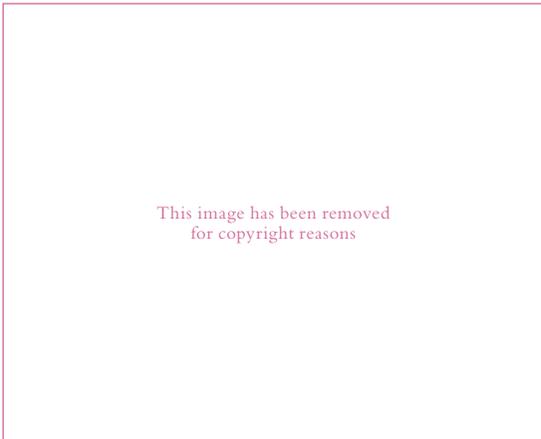
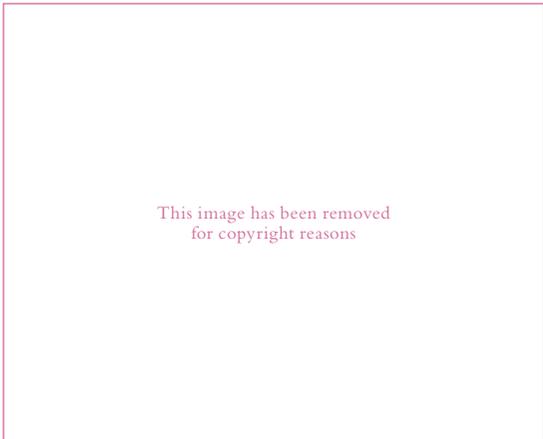


Appendix 1 · Collected images—phone photographs



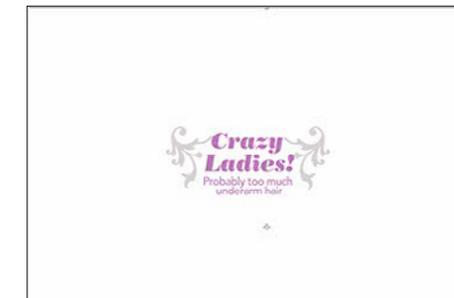
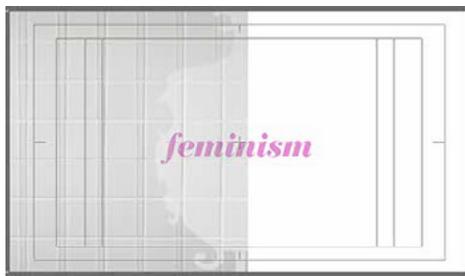


Appendix 1 · Collected images: Websites



Appendix 2 · Screen shots–Work in progress

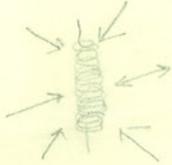
While working I took screen shots to record snippets of design I particularly liked. Often these were compositions that didn't translate well into moving image but worked as static pieces. I was really drawn to the point at which both words were present at once. After reflecting on this I realised that I wanted to recreate the clutter and 'noise' of multiple voices. This technique was to become a signature feature of the final film.



Appendix 3 · Conference presentation Post-It notes

<p>My friend Marieke - Powerful and and Directed</p>	<p>Something we were encouraged to move away from, something old fashioned ideals.</p>	<p>Strong, powerful and confident women. ☺</p>	<p>old fashioned misunderstood relevant</p>
<p>Feminism today: Woman ... is ... I do not like feminism!</p>	<p>buried</p>	<p>exactly what you said @ the start feminist scientist play boy bunny</p>	<p>It looks like the absence of hope.</p>
<p>women in power women making decisions for themselves women being active women fighting for the rights of all minorities</p>	<p>① TRANSPARENT ② IN NZ ARRIVED.</p>	<p>well have to say, I don't know if it looks like anything.</p>	<p>feminism- today is the ideals of woman, body shapes, fashion, lifestyle.</p>

Appendix 3 · Conference presentation Post-It notes

<p>Still Radicalised therefore Empowered!</p>	<p><u>Freedom to be who you are.</u></p>		<p>Power Monologue.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - equal rights - the career women - right to choose 	<p>free, able, Strong, </p>	<p>Mixed up </p>	
<p>GREY </p>	<p>Manly Manly</p>	<p>Soxy Strong Individual Tech Savvy</p>	<p>its a toy in a Sand box half covered by Sands</p> <hr/>

Appendix 3 · Conference presentation Post-It notes

<p><i>observed</i> Some Power taken for granted Other power maintained entrenched status quo not critiqued</p>	<p>FEELS GOOD AND Looks like the image in my MIRROR</p>	<p>A PLACE WHERE <u>SOLID</u> IS SOMETHING I HAVE GROWN UP WITH AND ITS OUR CHANCE.</p>	<p>everywhere nowhere.</p>
<p>Women empowered to achieve their aspirations.</p>	<p>Confused, Spilt, lost in Post-modern rhetoric. Carrie Payne vs.</p>	<p>assertiveness confident about using a woman</p>	<p>↓ Faishon ↓ beauty</p>
<p>MULTI-LAYERED + NON-TRANSPARENT</p>	<p>Me. Muddy. complicated. contentious. irritating. what is it? what do we want to be what I want, what "you" think. <i>other woman.</i></p>	<p>still a desire for equality & girl-reccers good with the bad.</p>	<p>I. ME</p>

Appendix 4 · Interview questions submitted to AUTECH

Media consumption

How do you spend your spare time?

Do you watch television?

If yes, How much and how often? Any shows in particular?

If no, why not?

Do you buy or read magazines regularly?

If yes, which ones?

If no, why not?

Do you read any online?

Are there any advertising campaigns that you think of as particularly good or bad?

How do you use the internet in your spare time? What site do you visit most often?

Do you use Facebook?

If yes, how much and how often?

What do you check on there?

Do you follow links to other sites?

What kind of sites are these?

Do you use YouTube?

Do you watch videos, upload them or both?

What kind of things do you watch?

How do you find out about content on YouTube?

What music are you into at the moment?

Have you seen any music videos lately?

If yes, can you think of any that you like or dislike?

Can you describe your music tastes over the last few years?

Anyone you were into and gone off? Why?

Have you seen any movies within the last year that you particularly liked or disliked?

Are there any upcoming movies you'd like to see?

Any you would avoid? Why?



Appendix 4 · Interview questions submitted to AUTECH

Media influence

Considering the different types of media you interact with, do you feel any kind of pressure to be a certain way?
If yes, how does this affect you?

In your opinion is there a particular female ideal portrayed in the media we've been discussing?
If yes, how would you describe her? What does she look like? How does she behave?

Feminism

Do you think woman are equal to men?
If not, how are we not equal?

Do you think men feel we are equal?
If not, how so?

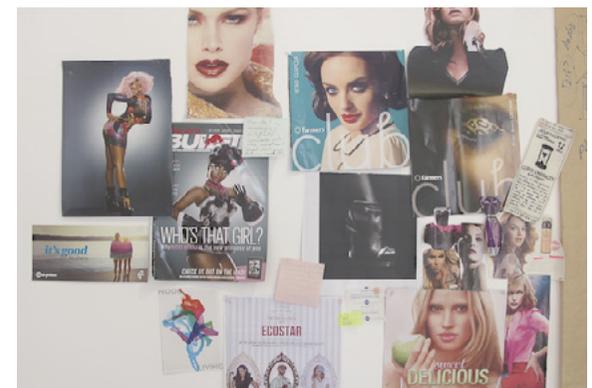
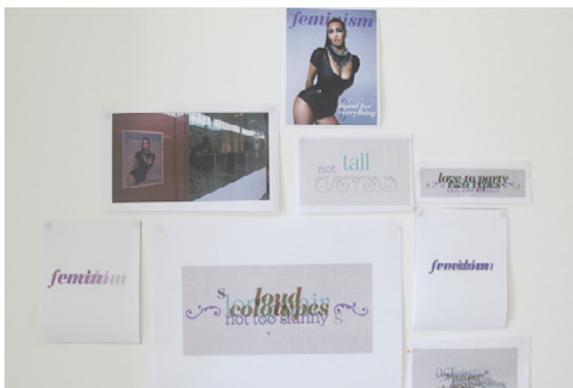
How do you think men think about these things?

How do you think other women feel about these issues?

What does the word feminism mean to you?

Do you think it's relevant today?

Appendix 5 · Exhibition documentation



Appendix 5 · Exhibition documentation





Appendix 5 · Exhibition documentation

