

Research on Disseminating Design Practices—Material Carriers & Immaterial Information

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Abstract: This essay examines the relationship between material carriers and immaterial information through three disseminating writing methods - creative travel journals, magazine articles, and online magazine articles, and addresses the following issues: the narrative feature of substance, the interactive relationship between material and immaterial, and the responsibilities of graphic design in the context of epidemic.

1. Introduction

In complex environmental systems, the barriers between material and immaterial are constantly being broken down. The symbolic information such as images and words on the surface of the material carrier and the background, story and emotion it carries makes the material have a narrative function. Similarly, immaterial information acquires materiality through the material medium, breaking through the traditional flat communication method and becoming three-dimensional and flowing. The blending of the two makes the form of information exchange more abundant.

1.1 Escape from the mainland!: a creative travel journal

This travelogue is a creative description of a hiking tour of Cramond Island. Cramond Island is an isolated island almost off the mainland. The only way to the island is a narrow dyke, which adds to the island's mystery. This outdoor research experience was the source of inspiration for my project. As Bill Bryson(1991) wrote about his European travels [1] in his book *Neither Here nor There*, I think a creative travel journal can vividly record the interaction between inspiration and the material world, leading the audience to intuitively and interestingly experience and Touch this mysterious place.

1.2 The Collection Exhibition of Cramond Island’: a magazine article

After the trip to the island, I decided to write a corresponding article for an exhibition I curated, ‘The Collection Exhibition of Cramond Island,’ which will be documented in the 'material and Image' magazine I founded. The audience's interaction with these collections from the island further validates the narrative capabilities of matter. Through the visual re-creation of the collected objects in this exhibition, we can effectively show the audience the effect of material on the presentation

and expression of images. At the same time, I also hope that I can attract more followers to my exhibition to pave the way for future dissemination.

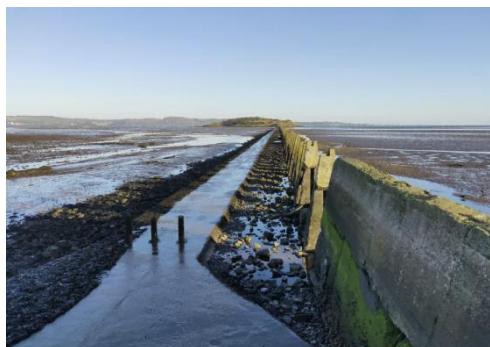
1.3 Interview with Graphic Designer ‘Renee’: an online magazine article

This is an online article from Material and Image magazine documenting an online virtual conversation with artist Renee. In the interview, she explains the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on her designs and how she responded. This interview discusses the adverse effects of substances on information exchange in the context of the epidemic, and the closed state and inner conflict presented by human beings in the face of changes in the living environment. At the same time, she also expressed the impact of the epidemic environment on her design practice, how a designer can resist the epidemic environment from the perspective of graphic design. What kind of responsibility the graphic design bears in the epidemic environment is effectively discussed.

2. Escape from the Mainland

"Travel - it leaves you speechless and then turns you into a storyteller."- Ibn Battutah [2]

The plan to escape from the mainland starts with a narrow path that leads to the island (e.g. 'Figure. 1'). This is the only way to reach the island. The mysterious trail that periodically appears due to the tides also adds a bit of unpredictability to the journey. Walking towards the island, the wet mud covered the sides of my shoes, the increasingly open environment and the sound of the waves crashing, as if swearing freedom to me. Closer... more closer... I passed the rows of seawall pillars beside me. Some fell, some still stood, and the old moss seemed to gnaw at their life. The sun shone through the gaps in the stone pillars, and I felt like I seemed to pass through the movie's whirlpool.



Available at: <https://sobt.co.uk/cramond-island/>

Figure 1: Scotland Off the Beaten Track Seawall across the tide, 2022

The hustle and bustle of the city gradually fade away with the shadow of the mainland. The silent island is like a lazy beauty lying sleepily on the soft water. The boulders seem to have become its loyal islanders on this lonely island (e.g. 'Figure. 2'). Even the black spread didn't bring any bleakness to the island. At the end of the seawall, I made my first footsteps on this isolated island. The rising horizon made me eagerly anticipate the view on the other side of the mountain. Before climbing the hill, some boulders seemed to pre-set some tests for the escape mission. The seaweeds were intertwined with the piled-up gravel, savagely rampaging across the vast beach. I walk shakily on the smooth and slick stones. Broken paths appear to be expected on this island.

The view from the top of the mountain is invigorating. The white lichen coils around the boulder outline a series of circular patterns, layered with green moss, making a natural beauty visually perceived. The wind whistled in my ears, and the January air was still stingingly cold, so I wrapped

my clothes even more tightly. I started noticing that the colour of the stones also started to layer due to the difference in humidity caused by the altitude. As you go up, the stone's colour is no longer like the soft and deep black, but gradually transitions to orange-yellow, and the top is also dotted with white lichens. I can't help but sigh at the vastness of the material world. People can quickly know its long-term living environment and growth state through the surface features of the material. Although the island was uninhabited for a long time, the earliest evidence of human activity can be found in crevices in the rocks. Bottle caps with production dates and rotting cruise ship parts all tell visitors about the island's history.



Available at: <https://sobt.co.uk/cramond-island/>

Figure 2: Scotland Off the Beaten Track Rocks with different layers of colors, 2022

The island's remains make the island a narrator of history. When planning my trip, I looked through the relevant information. Crammed Island was used as a fort during World War II to prevent the invasion of the Firth of Forth [3]. These buildings and bunkers are still preserved on the island. At the top of the hillside stands the remains of a brick building covered in graffiti (e.g. 'Figure. 3'), and the interior space is not significant. There are narrow windows high on the walls, which are also the only source of indoor light, so the interior of the building is very dim. The back of the building has a square window through which pedestrians can be seen strolling by the sea. The interior walls are also covered with graffiti, which adds a flamboyant personality to the historic building. The large weeds on the island have become a paradise for people to have a picnic. Crossing a lawn, another ruin covered in graffiti came into view again (e.g. 'Figure. 4'). This low house seems to be swallowed up by graffiti and has become a drawing board for "artists."



A graffitied World War II building on Cramond Island, 2018 Available at: <https://www.wayfaringkiwi.com/cramond-island-edinburgh-photographs/>

Figure 3: Yvette Webster



Available at: <https://www.wayfaringkiwi.com/cramond-island-edinburgh-photographs/>

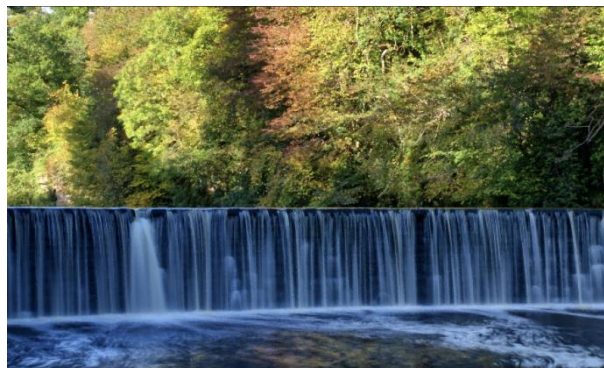
Figure 4: Yvette Webster Another building covered in graffiti on Cramond Island, 2018

Numerous densely vegetated trails lead to all corners of the island, and curiosity led me to choose a route that points to the island's highest point. Both sides of the path were covered with trees and thorns of various shapes, and the thorns of the thorns slid across my ankles with a slight tingling sensation. Many relic buildings are also covered with graffiti along the path (e.g. 'Figure. 5'), and time traces can be seen on them. The island's highest point is an excellent viewpoint overlooking the land of freedom. The boundary between the sea and the sky in the distance is blurred, and the world seems to be occupied by blue. Some seabirds flew low in the air, and the others stood quietly on the beach. The cold seemed insignificant in this scene. Continue along the famous River Almond Walkway. At the end of the walk is an island's hidden paradise - Cramond Brig. The sound of the waterfall is remarkably abrupt in a quiet environment (e.g. 'Figure. 6'), the shadow of the bridge is quietly reflected in the water (e.g. 'Figure. 7'), and the air is filled with moist water vapor.



Available at: <https://sobt.co.uk/cramond-island/>

Figure 5: Scotland Off the Beaten Track Highest point of the island, 2022



Available at: <https://www.expedia.com/Edinburgh-Cramond-Bridge.dx6132230>

Figure 6: Expedia The Fall, 2018



Available at: https://www.edinburghcollected.org/picture_memories/cramond-bridge-river-almond/

Figure 7: Edinburgh Collected Cramond Brig, 2022

I chose to return to the starting position along the coastline to explore the secret stories hidden by the sea. The traces of sea creatures spitting sand are displayed on the soft and damp mudflats, forming a magical and natural beauty. The flying seabirds also returned to the beach to rest at this time. Broken shells became beach decorations, and barnacles and seaweeds displayed their pictorial language on the black boulders (e.g. 'Figure. 8'). Walking on the beach, the elasticity of the mudflat under your feet can make you deeply feel the depth of every step. An extended period has given the island many sojourn communities, such as crabs living in broken wine bottles, seaweeds growing from stone tips, etc. Each of which is like an artistic treasure gifted by nature to humanity. On this island, it seems like everything is growing most wantonly. Urged by the tide, I set foot on the dam for the return journey, Urged by the tide. Perhaps soon, the road to this mysterious island will be wrapped in seawater, and the island will once again become an untouchable hidden place.



Figure 8: Fan Zhang Coastal Beach, 2022 "It continue to remain silent, ready to tell its secrets to the next visitor."

3. The Collection Exhibition of Cramond Island

A week ago, Chinese artist Renee participated in the 2022 artist's design exhibition in Edinburgh, Scotland. This exhibition has been held at the University of Edinburgh Art Center for the third consecutive year and has achieved great success in the previous two years. The exhibition will be open for about two weeks, and various well-known art industry workers are also invited to participate in this exhibition. This show will also be available to the public. Designer Renee will present the collections she brought from the island during her previous trips to Cramond Island in this exhibition (e.g. 'Figure. 9'). Unlike prior arrangements, this exhibition will be held outdoors throughout. Regarding the reasons for choosing the outdoor environment, Renee believes that most of the collections in the exhibition are collected in the natural environment, so the outdoor

environment can better present the original living state of the material. She experimented with new visual expressions to interpret these collections, bringing an excellent visual perception for the audience. The audience is also allowed to recreate these collections on the spot. The final creation results will also be displayed in the exhibition as collections, which might be a fresh interactive experience for the visitors.

On the launch day, fans flocked to the art center, eager to see the collections from the mysterious island and the recreated visual works being sold. They hoped to have the opportunity to communicate with well-known designers fully. From the collections exhibited this time, it can be seen that Renee pays more attention to the information culture and story emotion carried by the material itself when selecting the collections. One of the more representative ones is a rock burned to different levels, the parasitic colony on the fragments of the wine bottle, etc. The designer puts these substances into sealed bags to preserve the original state of the substances and uses a black pen to record when and where they were collected on the surface of the plastic bags. Visitors can view the evolutionary history of these collections by observing traces on their surfaces, some due to the natural environment and some derived from human activities. Renee believes that the interaction between the audience and matter is also an important part of her design: "By looking at the different feelings and interpretations of the same matter by different audiences, the narrative function of material is further studied, which has brought a lot of critical help to my design. "

There is an interesting interactive experiment in the exhibition. Viewers were asked to paste the collections on a whiteboard according to the time and location marked on the collections and finally form a real-life map composed of these collections. It can be observed that some visitors marked their creative ideas and some exciting comments next to the posted substances, which seems to be some interesting design reflections. Some visitors shared their feelings about participating in this event to Material and Image: "I think this experience is very novel, human superiority always makes us ignore some substances around us, this time we have the opportunity to 'zoom in' to see They, go hear what happened to them, it's really cool! " The settings of these events have attracted many fans for the exhibition and received a lot of praise in the comments on the designer's social account. Through this exhibition, the narrative function of matter is confirmed. More thoughts on the relationship between material pages and immaterial information have been widely discussed: What do material carriers have for immaterial information? Presentation and function? Does this effect have to be positive? How to deal with negative adverse when they occur?

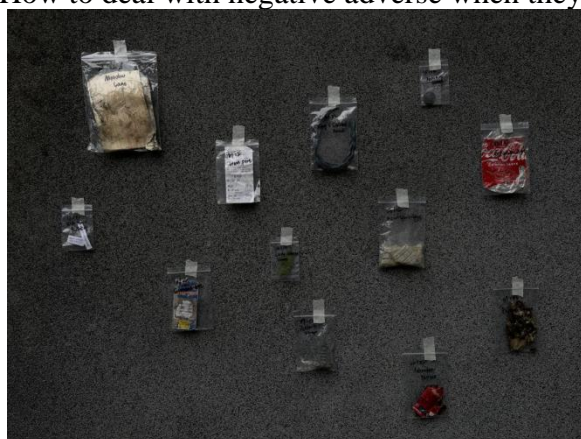


Figure 9: Fan Zhang The Collection Exhibition of Cramond Island, 2022

The relationship between material and immaterial is complex. To a certain extent, the combination of material carrier and immaterial information determines the final presentation effect of the work. How should the relationship between the two be constructed? How should creative

expression be followed? In the current situation where the public's aesthetics and design tastes are constantly improving, and the forms of information exchange are constantly enriched, society has put forward higher requirements for the design field. The direction contemporary designers continue to explore is following a multi-dimensional creative process and finding the most suitable form for presenting design works.

4. Interview with Graphic Designer 'Renee'

A conversation with Renee - a graphic designer and artist, about the changes in her creative environment and work practices under the Covid-19 epidemic.

- Miss Renee, can you briefly introduce what research or practice you are mainly engaged in during the epidemic?

Of course! During the COVID-19 epidemic, I mainly focus on researching the interaction between the material and the immaterial. In the complex environmental system, the barriers between material and immaterial are constantly broken, and the process of blending the two enriches the forms of information exchange and presentation. So I try to explore this issue from different angles, hoping to find more interesting and creative inspirations from the process of practice.

- Is there any particular reason that this theme appeals to you? What is its original inspiration?

(laughs) I have to admit that my initial inspiration came from an out-of-body dream. This dream made me start to think about what the relationship between spirit and material entities is. I even went to look up some sources to see how this question was answered in philosophy. Yazdi mentions in his book that the immaterial is where the material exists, and when the material exists is the time the immaterial exists [4]. I think this point is fascinating, and it inspires me to start thinking about the hidden connection between them. I have never imagined that there is no independent existence between material and the information it transmits. The relationship between the two should be interdependent and exist simultaneously. I think it is a brand new point of view for me. But just knowing these don't seem comprehensive, I started my subsequent research to test the specific connection between the two from various aspects to inform my practice.

- How do you think this topic is relevant to your major?

Well, I think the subject is an intuitive reflection of my profession. I'm currently a graduate student in graphic design at the University of Edinburgh, and I've been experimenting with how to express visual language in non-traditional forms. Generally speaking, the output of graphic work is mainly a combination of two directions - visual effects and communication media. The same visual language will show different characteristics in different media. It can be seen that the material medium itself will affect the readability of visual information. As far as graphic design is concerned, material reflection in graphic design usually refers to printed media such as paper, PVC, etc.[5] At the same time, immaterial information includes words, images, emotions, stories, etc. When we start to design a project, we need to consider the most suitable design scheme for the project itself. We are choosing the types of material and immaterial at this time. Therefore, I think the combination of material media and immaterial information determines the final presentation effect of the work to a certain extent.

- People are locked at home in the epidemic environment. Has this influenced your design practice?

The pandemic has really troubled me a lot. Although the epidemic situation has improved now, and people are no longer forced to stay at home as before, many outdoor activities will still be restricted. I needed to do a lot of outdoor research when researching the material and immaterial project. Still, I had to give up some crowded research sites because I was worried about the

infection of the epidemic, which made me miss a lot of experimental opportunities. During this period, I struggled with the choice of research environment, which stagnated my practice progress and prevented me from focusing on my research. This sudden shift took a toll on me mentally and physically, and I couldn't find balance. But to be honest, I'm starting to recognize that the pandemic has provided me with a rare "forced still" opportunity, allowing me to calm down and think carefully about the direction of my design development. My design thinking began to shift from outward extension to inward self-reflection. Later, I began to think that perhaps the unique environment of the epidemic also brought more new possibilities to the design. So I tried to explore the material and immaterial living environment under the epidemic and thought about how graphic design should be expressed and applied.

- Have you tried to use your professional knowledge to solve some troubles caused by the epidemic?

I have recently been working on a sub-project under the topic of material and immaterial - masks in COVID-19. We all know that masks play an irreplaceable role in the epidemic. Still, in addition to the protective effect, the long-term coverage of masks on the face has caused certain difficulties in people's communication and information transmission. Therefore, in this project, I mainly explore the relationship between masks and emotional expression. Masks play a material role in the epidemic environment, and emotions are a kind of non-material information. I think this may be a good entry point.

- Is there any theoretical support for this research? Or, how can you prove that masks really affect emotional expression? You know our eyes are still exposed when we wear masks.

Indeed I was unsure at first, so I went to look up the sources and found that many people have done similar experiments to test this problem. Take, for example, an experiment devised by cognitive psychologists at the University of Huddersfield in the UK. He set up three experimental groups to confirm how much the effect of wearing a mask on face recognition was compared with the effect of wearing sunglasses. It can be seen from this experiment that due to the occlusion of masks, the accuracy of human emotion recognition will be greatly reduced. And it is especially true for children.

- Do you have any countermeasures or solutions for this phenomenon?

Yes, I try to develop possible solutions from a graphic design perspective. I tried to make a self-made mask, and the difference between this mask and the original mask is that it is composed of special material. I chose clear candy paper as the raw material for my mask. Because I think transparent candy paper can increase people's recognition of expressions. At the same time, it feels very fragile, which reflects the fragility of human connection under the epidemic. At the same time, I tried to paste some small notes with emotional sentences at the connection between the candy and the candy. These sentences are all emotional expressions derived from people's desire to communicate freely.

- Your design sounds very interesting. Has the pandemic made you question your identity as a designer or artist?

To be honest, I have always questioned whether I can be a qualified graphic designer or an artist. I'm always in the process of thinking about myself, and I don't think I have the "genius" talent that allows me to create visual expressions that are ahead of people's aesthetics. In particular, this epidemic has made me realize that graphic design cannot solve the problem. In the face of some practical issues, graphic design can only make it "beautiful" and cannot solve it, which makes me feel immensely struggling. I have been thinking about the meaning of graphic art creation, and aesthetics are insignificant in front of bread. But during this epidemic, I saw that some people who were isolated at home created many exciting things that they had never thought of before, such as creative graffiti, interesting installations, etc. All of these things declare that art can help people vent

their negative emotions when they feel anxious and depressed. Art seems to soothe the soul. I also finally found my value as a designer in this art. What's so bad, even if art only makes the world a little more beautiful than usual?

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, materiality has different meanings in various disciplines, but in general it can be defined as “quality possessed by things that make some impact on the material world by existing” [5]. From this perspective, the materiality of graphic design should not only be reflected in the physical properties of its constituent materials, but also in the dissemination method of projects, the audience interaction process, and other related contexts. Graphic design plays a crucial role as a converter in the process of interaction between material entities and immaterial information, enabling dialogue with nonexistent material entities through various communication methods such as screen-based, network, or virtual space. Particularly in the era of the epidemic, the compatibility of design and communication media is crucial. How to find the best combination will determine the final effect and expressiveness of the work to a certain extent.

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