

**Bugter Chet (2020), *Fat Belly Boy Booklet*, self-published.**

**Bugter Chet (2021), *Selfieing Together: Exploring the Wider Scope of the Selfie as Self-Love Praxis*, Available at: <https://www.fashionstudiesjournal.org/digital-engagement-d/2022/8/8/selfieing-together-exploring-the-wider-scope-of-the-selfie-as-self-love-praxis>.**

Chet Bugter's exploration of self-love through the medium of the selfie has been profoundly inspirational for my own work. If we think about graphic communication design, there are infinite ways in which we can convey our message. What struck me most was his innovative choice to use something as ordinary as the selfie to tackle such a profound topic. By doing so, he prompts reflection on beauty and self-acceptance and he also managed to create a sense of community, inviting everyone in his personal introspections. During this course, I learned the importance of accessibility in my work and I think his work is a great example of that. He inspired me to put myself and my own experiences into my work and explore personal topics through my own experience, which I hadn't done before. His work encouraged me to push the boundaries of my own practice, prompting me to experiment with different mediums and adopt a more explorative approach. In doing so, I've come to appreciate the value of embracing imperfection and the journey of creation, rather than solely focusing on having a neat and final outcome of my work. Moreover, his work helped me grow as a graphic designer practitioner. It made me reflect on how my previous education affected the way I work and the way I look at things and especially myself.

Speaking visually about his self-published zine, I believe selecting the zine format was the best choice to convey his concept and that's also why I found the topic and the choice of medium particularly intelligent in terms of accessibility for everyone. Initially, I too considered creating a zine featuring various iterations of my exploration into the imagery of my nose and its reflection on beauty standards within my practice of graphic communication design. However, I eventually opted not to follow any guidelines or rules. Instead, I embraced experimentation with my iterations and I was satisfied during the process. The structure of Bugter's zine isn't rigid, which inspired me to adopt a similar explorative approach in my practice. While I typically prefer defined layouts (yes, I'm a Virgo), I found that the lack of structure complemented the theme he discusses really well.

What also struck me in his practice was how he engaged with the personal experiences and testimonials of others. Initially, my own work was very objective and detached from my personal experience. I felt like I hadn't been giving importance nor space to my own thoughts, which may have contributed to experiencing a "writer's block" during my journey. However, one day, I opened up to one of my peers and friends in my course, and that proved to be incredibly helpful. Our conversation allowed me to reflect on myself and to hear her own different experiences that somehow resonated with mine. Communicating with her gave me have a broader perspective on my work and, most importantly, on the audience I was creating it for. From that day, I began collecting testimonials about societal beauty standards, and each one served as inspiration for my work and research. With my work, I aimed to speak for them and provide them with a sense of understanding and comfort through my efforts.

**Varda Agnès (2000), *The Gleaners and I*, Paris: Ciné Tamaris.**

Agnès Varda's approach to look at things inspired a change in my work perspective. While watching this film I remember feeling a bit disturbed by what she showed, however her way of describing the reality around her made me progressively curious during the screening. Varda finds curiosity and beauty in the mundane and the discarded. She captures the aesthetics of objects that are often considered ugly by conventional standards. Through her lens, even decaying items become subjects of beauty and contemplation. In my work, I tried to place myself in another perspective of things as she did. I embraced my disturbing emotions to make room for my discomfort and use it in my practice.

**Sondergaard Marie Louise Juul (2020), *Staying with the Trouble through Design: A Critical-Feminist Design Manifesto*, Available at: <https://mljuul.com/Design-Manifesto#:~:text=By%20staying%20with%20the%20trouble,end%20up%20as%20tomorrow's%20problem>.**

Sondergaard's Manifesto served as the initial spark that ignited my journey of using my creative work as a form of therapy. Throughout the entire project, I struggled several times, often finding myself at odds with my own self-criticism, to the point where I hesitated to even open my laptop for days on end. Reflecting on this, I realised that I tend to be overly harsh on myself, judging my own work too much.

Initially, when I came across this article, I didn't like it too much. It seemed to present a very "European" perspective, offering simplistic solutions to complex issues that couldn't possibly be resolved with just a few sentences. As I read through the points of the manifesto, I found myself confused about its classification as a "Critical-Feminist" Manifesto. I couldn't quite grasp why it was labeled as feminist. Maybe **"#11 Use feminist humour. The critical-feminist designer uses feminist humour and a playful approach to engage with trouble."**? In my own creative journey, I've come to understand the significance of addressing feminist perspectives within artistic practice and the importance of doing so thoughtfully. I think the Manifesto talks about different parts of feminism, but they don't really fit together well. Each point feels somewhat isolated, without a clear line of reasoning connecting them. However, as I started my journey, I found myself revisiting certain points of the Manifesto and gradually finding resonance with them. To cite one of them **"#1 Designing should not be a way out of trouble, but a way of staying with the trouble."** In troubled times where social, cultural and political issues are inherently intertwined with technologies, design is not the solution but rather part of the problem. By staying with the trouble of present issues and technologies' inherent responsibilities in the unfolding of these issues, the critical-feminist designer uses design to stay with the trouble rather than propose (yet another) solution that will end up as tomorrow's problem."

I found the part about design and responsibilities particularly resonant. It prompted me to reflect on how I often fail to take responsibility of my challenges in my work. Instead of acknowledging the difficulties I face, I tend to immediately criticise myself for not being able to produce something quickly and beautifully enough. This creative journey has not only led me to explore my discomfort with my body (societal beauty standards – my nose), but it has also taught me the importance of "staying with the trouble". This means embracing also those times when I lacked of motivation in my work. However, I've realised that when I allow self-judgment to take over, my ability to think critically becomes stifled, leading to a destructive cycle of negativity.

Out of all my references, I decided to include this Manifesto, even though I wasn't entirely convinced of its value initially. However, as I progressed with my work, I came to appreciate how it pushed me to engage with it critically, rather than simply highlighting aspects I liked.

**Ahmed Sara (2017), *Living a Feminist Life*, Durham: Duke University Press.**

I found Sara Ahmed's book enlightening for my critical thinking. As a woman, since today I've never realised how often unconsciously I address a feminist topic in my practices. There's no particular reason but I couldn't see myself able to talk about it in the right way. Ahmed's approach emphasizes the importance of intersectionality in feminism – a new term for me – which includes understanding on how different aspects of identity intersect and impact one's experiences. The male gaze and beauty standards that I addressed in my work are often influenced by identities (race, gender, etc.). The author discusses how living a feminist life involves challenging societal norms and expectations, which includes beauty standards imposed by the male gaze. Like I aimed to do in my work, Ahmed's work encourages women to define their own standards of beauty and self-worth outside of patriarchal norms.

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**Alleyne Allyssia (2021), *Eww, I love it. When did illustration get so gross?*, Available at: <https://www.itsnicethat.com/features/grotesque-illustration-231123>.**

"Opening Instagram can feel like stepping into a world of stylised, sanitised imagery, where harsh realities are carefully omitted and imperfections are buffed out to a hyperreal shine. But of late, the platform's developed a slimy, sweaty, subversive streak, as artists across disciplines – from digital painting and 3D design to AI-assisted generative art – embrace clashing colours, exaggerated textures, and revolting motifs that disturb and draw you in at the same time. **Welcome to the gross-out renaissance.**". I chose to include this reference in my list because I found it really captivating. Beyond just the illustrations, I believe the article is very well-written and it resonates with various aspects of my own practice. In my work, I explore themes related to my educational background and how I used to focus solely on creating an "aesthetically pleasing" graphic design outcome. However, I think my way of working changed over this brief and I was drawn to how Allyssia Alleyne discusses a new "gross-out renaissance". Indeed, working on this project felt like a personal renaissance for me and I embraced a different perspective and explored themes that pushed me out of my comfort zone. It was refreshing yet challenging to start working with a different approach.