

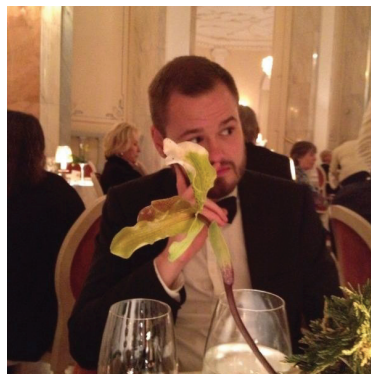
Perspectives

The dissertation opens onto three perspectives that could be pursued in future research:

- The issue of everyday communication and semantics as related to the social side of sign circulation whereby such communication extends beyond the conscious grasp of specific senders and receivers.
- Examples of overlooked signs of a more controlled nature (e.g. signs on cash and credit cards) or even signs that are consciously construed to function as overlooked (e.g. subliminal advertising).
- The possibilities of creative, subversive and/or critical appropriations and usages of overlooked signs.

About Jakob Rosendal

Jakob Rosendal, MA in Art History and Philosophy. He produced his PhD dissertation at the School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University, where he has been part of the research programme Cultural Transformations and co-founded the research unit Sexuality Studies. His research focus is on visual culture and the everyday, sexuality and psychoanalysis, semiology and ideology critique.



Contact

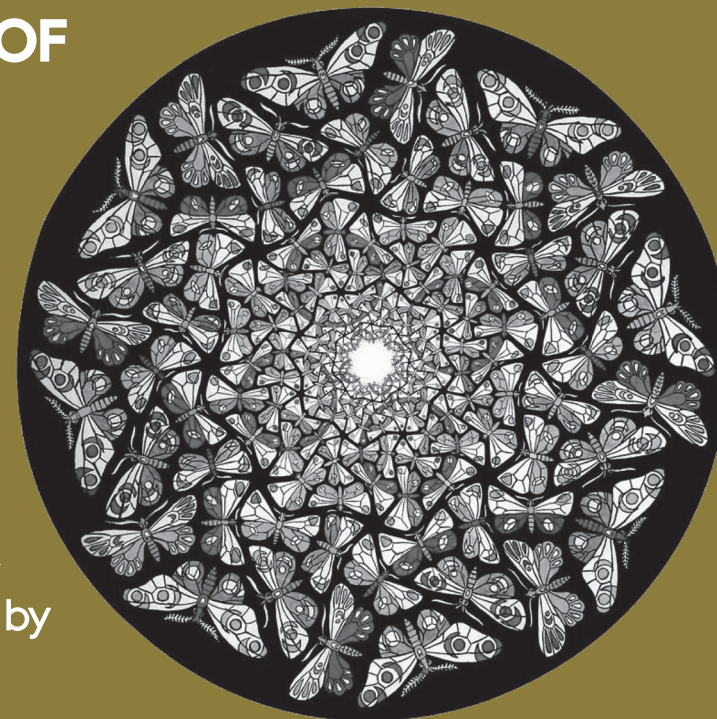
Jakob Rosendal
e-mail: jr@cc.au.dk
mobile: +45 31 23 00 08

Aarhus University
School of Communication and Culture
Langelandsgade 139
Jens Chr. Skous Vej 2 og 4 (bygning 1485 og 1481)
8000 Aarhus C

REFERENCE

OVERLOOKED SIGNS

ON THE IDEOLOGICAL FANTASIES OF EVERYDAY VISUAL CULTURE



PhD Dissertation by
Jakob Rosendal



AARHUS UNIVERSITET

OVERLOOKED SIGNS ON THE IDEOLOGICAL FANTASIES OF EVERYDAY VISUAL CULTURE

Summary of the main points of PhD dissertation *Overlooked Signs – On the Ideological Fantasies of Everyday Visual Culture* by Jakob Rosendal, School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University.

The dissertation focuses on contemporary everyday visual culture and develops a theory of everyday signs, the ways in which they function as overlooked, and the meanings and ideologies as well as the fantasies and enjoyment that are part of the circulation of such signs.

The Overlooked Sign

The main accomplishment of the dissertation has been to theorize the particular everyday character of everyday visual culture through the concept of the overlooked sign. The verb 'to overlook', meaning both to see and not to see, nicely captures the everyday as a paradoxical phenomenon that is unapparent, yet unhidden, simultaneously visible and invisible. This concept of the overlooked sign thus serves to advance Visual Culture, as this discipline has emphasized the importance of the everyday from its beginnings, but without addressing it directly.

Modes of Backgrounding

The concept of the overlooked sign is developed further throughout the dissertation by trying to analyse different ways that signs become overlooked. These ways of becoming overloo-

ked are what, metaphorically speaking, pushes the signs into a not as readily noticeable background. They thus constitute what is called different modes of backgrounding. These modes are shown to be a work at the level of ideology, communication and the sign itself. The most important mode of backgrounding is that of repetition, as the highly or sufficiently repeated sign turns into an overlooked sign.

Ornaments and the Society of Enjoyment

A first analysis of a type of overlooked sign concerns the ornaments of everyday visual culture. These ornaments are first divided into a framing and a dis-framing kind of ornamentation. It is then argued that the dis-framing kind of ornament, exactly by constituting a formal transgression, serves as expressions of (sexual) enjoyment of a seemingly transgressive kind. In this way the dis-framing ornament is shown to be indicative of what within Lacanian psychoanalysis is known as the society of enjoyment, where enjoyment is no longer prohibited, but rather something that is required of us.

The Flower Sign and Sexual Difference

A structural semantic analysis of the flower sign as overlooked sign demonstrates how this sign entails a sexist understanding of the woman that persists within the overlooked of everyday visual culture, making of the woman a more childish and homebound being for whom the imperatives of cleanliness and beauty are stronger. Furthermore, it is shown how the flower sign more fundamentally also functions as a third element that comes between woman and man, that is how the flower also can be seen as a pure signifier that enacts a first divide that becomes constitutive of the sexual difference.

Conclusion

Drawing on the three theoretical strands of Saussurean semiology, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and Žižekian ideology critique the dissertation attempts to get at the intertwinement of ideology, the unconscious, and the everyday within a specific type of sign, that of the overlooked sign in its repetitive circulation, and in that way both understand its meaning-making processes and criticize its ideological effects. In conclusion the dissertation presents an overview of the various modes of backgrounding encountered through the different analyses.