

# Written response:

## Methods of contextualising

When looking at the same Architectural spikes, the three of us had slightly different interests: Cecilia was interested in the relationship between design and social issues, Vita was interested in the power structures behind the spikes and I was interested in the Hostile Architecture object itself. Looking at our research I had the critical question: What is the spikes we used for not against the homeless bus as a rebellion against authority? I was then asked to answer this question. From there, we further became interested in the power hidden in Hostile Architecture, which led to the group position We want to explore how to flip the power dynamic of who is being controlled. I became interested in the relationship between design and behaviour during this process. This is because my previous projects have been one-way communication, where I visualised or conveyed messages, but I wanted to try an interactive design. In fact, when I experimented with visuals, it was very interesting to see how peoples behaviour changed by design, and they were interested as well, which led to the development of new ideas. If I hadnt worked with them, I might have remained stuck in the object perspective.



**Laranjo, F. (2014) *Critical graphic design: Critical of what?, Modes of Criticism.***

Our project is largely related to the three criticalities identified by the author. Based on these criticalities, I imagined how the designers who created this object must have felt. Did the designers themselves have any self-awareness or reflection on what they were doing? Did they think about what impact they would have on society? Or did they have to follow the wishes of their clients despite these mixed feelings? Either way, I felt that the object lacked criticality, as described in this reading. This perspective led us to reflect on our position. We are privileged to be able to study at CSM, but on the other hand we did not want to be the ones wielding power. I felt that what we could do was to stand in the middle between those who try to control through power and those who are controlled, and to engage people in visual communication and make them think about what is good for society. Having clarified the position, we asked, “What if we flip the control position?” “What kind of design makes people feel in control?” “What kind of design changes people’s behaviour?” which led to the creation of new critical questions.

# 2

**Perec, G. (2008) *Species of spaces and other pieces*. London, England: Penguin Classics.**

Just as Perec(2008) made objective, detailed and repetitive observations of the city of Paris, our encounter with Architectural spike allowed us to focus on and closely observe hostile architecture in the city. We asked where they were, what materials they were made of, what shape they were, how big and wide they were, and how painful they were to sit on. Such detailed observations helped us to translate them into different media. For example, we lined up pins in the same way as real spikes, or conversely spaced the pins differently from the real ones, in different orientations, and compared the pain produced by the different spacing. This helped us to understand the shape of the spikes, not only visually but also tactilely. Furthermore, like Perec's broadening of his field of observation from a small space to a larger space, we broadened our perspective from the observation of small spikes to look at the social context in which they were manufactured, the power structures, which led to the group's position 'We want to explore how to flip the power dynamic of who is being controlled.'



**Norman, N. (2000) *The contemporary picturesque*.  
London: Book Works.**

This book is about repressive urban architecture, which feels related to *City of Quartz* (Davis, 2006), but the main difference is that it is visually oriented. Furthermore, as the book includes buildings that are also in London, it made me realise how our everyday lives are full of aggressive designs and exclusive architecture that give us a sense of power. When I looked into it, I was shocked to find that similar designs abound in Japan, where I come from. Furthermore, our interest in the relationship between power and architecture led us to actually take and collect photos of what kind of hostile architecture there is in the city, and to actually sit on it and compare the pain. Furthermore, we made a miniature model of a spike using drawing pins, which caused more pain than we had imagined. Through this experiment, I was horrified by the lack of criticality of the people who made these for homeless people. On the other hand, I realised that whether our perspective is unbiased or critical is subjective, which is why it is important to consider our 'position'.



**Davis, M. (2006) *City of Quartz: Excavating the future in Los Angeles*. London: Verso Books.**

I feel that the “spatial apartheid” that we can see in Los Angeles is similarly happening here in London. Gentrified areas push street dwellers, ‘unsavoury groups’ or the poor out of the space as ‘invisible’. I think Architectural spikes is an example of this. The measures described in Chapter 4 restrict the water sources and toilets available to street dwellers, and show how people are deprived of their human rights in a way that is unthinkable in the developed US. What I have realised from reading this book is that these measures are not a fundamental solution. However, in the course of this project I found it very difficult to aim for a fundamental solution to the problem. If anything could be achieved, it would be that there would be no more poor street people and everyone would be able to live in affluence. However, we understood that the root cause of the problem had many factors and that it was not a simple matter. I look back on this project as a search for what we could at least do in the face of such dilemmas.



**Gilles, P. (2019) *le repos du fakir.***

The work shows the Hostile Architecture in the city and shows people lying or sitting on it. I was really drawn to the irony of this piece. The way in which the objects are projected in an unsubtle way reminded me of *The Gleaners and I* (Varda, 2000), which seemed to me to be a metaphorical or ironic critique of society, rather than a direct one. I was influenced by this work and incorporated it into my final road sign design. For example, I designed a sign with the message “Sorry for hurting you” along with an image of a person in pain from a spike. The #AntiHomelessSpikes protests were a direct appeal to the powers that be, but what we as designers can do is to use the visuals to create a message that is not only a warning to those who are hurt by the spikes, but also a message of irony to those who created the spikes. I thought that what designers can do is an approach that uses visuals to convey a message to society and encourage action. This process made me rethink what it is that I can do because I am a designer. The power of the visual is a double-edged blade that can sometimes serve a negative direction. That is why I had to use that power carefully, always questioning my position and thinking about what it should be for society.

# 6

*Piano staircase (2020) Thefuntheory.com.*

We got caught up in the object of the spike during the course of the project and were struggling with how to link it to visual communication. At that stage of the project, I researched with an interest in “what kind of design influences people’s behaviour” and I found this case study. It shows how a staircase was designed to look like a piano and play a sound, which led many people to use the stairs instead of the escalator. We were having a discussion on “What if we flip the power dynamic of who is being controlled?” and decided to experiment with this case study as a reference. We placed objects on university stairs and in corridors to observe how people’s behaviour changed. In addition, we placed arrow marks on the staircases in order to control the flow of people going up and down the staircases by us. What was interesting to me was that we didn’t see much of a behavioural change when we just placed the arrow symbols, but when we drew a single line down the middle, people’s behaviour changed significantly. In this moment, I was able to experience the interesting power of visuals. This work and experimentation allowed us to further develop the project, focusing on the axes of “design” and “action”.

### **From reading list**

1. Laranjo, F. (2014) Critical graphic design: Critical of what?, Modes of Criticism. Available at: <https://modesofcriticism.org/critical-graphic-design/> (Accessed: 8 February 2023).
2. Perec, G. (2008) Species of spaces and other pieces. London, England: Penguin Classics.

### **Other readings**

1. Norman, N. (2000) The contemporary picturesque. London: Book Works.
2. Davis, M. (2006) City of Quartz: Excavating the future in Los Angeles. London: Verso Books.

### **Visual reference**

1. Gilles, P. (2019) le repos du fakir. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/325833046>.
2. Piano staircase (2020) Thefuntheory.com. Available at: <https://www.thefuntheory.com/piano-staircase/> (Accessed: 14 February 2023).