

Teoria dos media

Aspectos performativos da comunicação em rede e cultura participativa



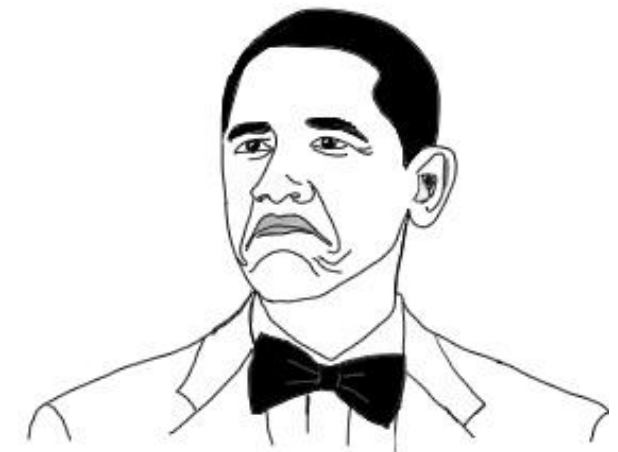
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Neste módulo pretende-se pensar nas formas como usamos a comunicação contemporânea feita em grande parte através da **produção de imagens que criamos, apropriamos e colocamos a circular digitalmente**. Podemos dizer que a era digital que molda as nossas vidas nos impõe **um certo tipo de performatividade**, no duplo sentido da palavra. Ou seja, exige-nos, por um lado, um certo tipo de **habilidades (skills)** que exibimos e das quais precisamos para **conseguir navegar nesse mundo de conexão digital**, e, por outro lado, faz-nos **incorporar modelos de comportamento reconhecidos e codificados culturalmente**, mesmo que muito recentes e em constante transformação. Um dos mais conhecidos teóricos dos estudos performativos diz-nos que:

As performances marcam identidades, dobram (*bend*) o tempo, remodelam e adornam o corpo e contam histórias. As performances - artísticas, ritualísticas ou da vida comum - são feitas de *restored behaviors*, acções performadas para as quais as pessoas treinam, para as quais praticam e ensaiam. Na realização artística, esse treino e esforço consciente é claro. Mas também na vida quotidiana envolve anos de treino, de aprendizagem de fragmentos de comportamentos apropriados, de procura de como ajustar e performar a nossa própria vida em relação às circunstâncias pessoais e sociais. (...)
(Schechner 2002: 22)

Na sessão de hoje convido-vos a pensar sobre a **importância desta performatividade na era digital** e sobre quais serão os **processos visuais - gráficos ou multimédia - em que estas estão assentes**? Que formas encontram os indivíduos e que narrativas e plataformas têm disponíveis hoje para performarem a sua própria vida e a sua relação com o mundo? E, mais importante do que tudo, **de que maneira esta forma de comunicação está a influenciar o campo do design gráfico e do design multimédia?**

A partir de um workshop organizado por Daniela Fortunado (Mestrado em Design Gráfico ESAD.CR) serão realizadas algumas experimentações para reflectir sobre estas questões.



NOT BAD

Metahaven (2014)¹

The meme

The notion of the “meme” was introduced by the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in the late 1970s as a way to describe what he called a “cultural gene.” **Memes are units of culture and behaviour, which survive and spread via imitation and adaptation.** Examples of memes are dances, catchphrases, greetings, hairstyles. **On the internet, they can be pictures of cute cats or unicorns;** they can be Rick Astley videos or perverse sexual images. Memes play a distinct role in protest; they seem to be to the resistance of today what “political posters” were to yesterday – the **embodiment of shared ideas in a community.** They can be JPEGs, or rumours. Indeed, part of their appeal is that memes seem to **spread spontaneously.** Paul Mason, the BBC’s travelling chronicler of all things crisis-related, found that “with the internet [...] and above all with the advent of social media, it’s become possible to observe the development of memes at an accelerated pace [...]. What happens is that ideas arise, are immediately ‘market tested’, and then are seen to either take off, bubble under, insinuate themselves into the mainstream, or, if they are deemed no good, disappear.” (...)

Memes are not phenomena of language; they are phenomena with language. From words that simply “annotate” a meme, conveying its minimally required meaning in a given context, to words that become an integral part of the meme’s functioning. The standard internet meme is an image captioned with heavy type, superimposed on it “for humorous effect” (says Wikipedia). **The sentences that are thus part of the image create some kind of strange loop or self-reference; but they also involve tacit knowledge on the part of the viewer.** An example is the portrait of the Boromir character from the *Lord of the Rings Trilogy*, captioned with a sentence starting with “One does not simply...” In the original film, the actor Sean Bean says: “One does not simply walk into Mordor. Its black gates are guarded by more than just orks.”²² The “One does not simply...” meme has this sentence completed in different ways:

One does not simply grow his dick six inches in three easy steps.

One does not simply topple a Ugandan warlord by pressing “like” on Facebook. One does not simply log out of a friend’s Facebook without making him gay.

A fictional, but widely known, point of reference is tinkered with to create new implications, to the point that one no longer thinks of Tolkien and Peter Jackson at all. But the remainder of that commonly held reference point, the **tacit knowledge**, which is that I know that you know that I know that particular part of *The Lord of the Rings enables* the joke, *any joke*, that follows. If, for instance, the same sentence would be based on a film that no one has ever seen, its mention would never achieve the same immediate impact. A meme can tap into a collective memory and transform the “outcome” of a commonly held starting point to different ends. (...)

Longevity of a meme in a digital network is in most cases guaranteed; a file may very well never be erased, and exist as long as the server exists that stores it. Then, copy-fidelity is guaranteed if a meme spreads by forwarding and reblogging a digital original. The meme’s distribution into the gene pool is then completely without loss of quality. If a meme spreads by *imitation*, changes made in the process are still traceable when compared to an “original”. **Memes tend to be most successful if they get both copied and imitated.** (...)

Many internet memes share distinctive features shaped by the **unwritten rules of their commonly held world** – be it **software used, the online forum inhabited, a language spoken, or a set of aesthetic preferences.** This, in turn, has led to the predictable misconception that anything produced following those unwritten rules is bound to become a meme. This is not the case. **Successful memes balance their reference to a commonly held world with an element giving them a strikingly new meaning. The more “advanced” a meme is, the more its meaning will be implied by manipulation of the context in which the meme appears.** (...)

Memes offer no explanation as to exactly why some of them work and others don’t. They are hard to orchestrate at a larger scale; their success is always also an accident. Sheer quantity is about the only working strategy available.

EXCERTOS RETIRADOS DA OBRA:

METAHAVEN (2014), “The meme”, *Can Jokes bring down Governments? Memes, Design and Politics*. Moscovo: Strelka Press, pp.

¹ Para mais informações sobre os autores membros do estúdio de design holandês Metahaven ver “What is Metahaven? Sarah Hromack unpacks the work of the Dutch design studio” (em <<https://www.frieze.com/article/what-metahaven>>).

Critical Meme reader (2021)

Chloë Arkenbout, Jack Wilson and Daniel de Zeeuw

What will become of memes, then, hinges on developments too elaborate, unstable, and entangled to fully anticipate. **In their conceptual idiosyncrasy and their phenomenal evanescence, memes reflect the socio-technical milieu in which they insert themselves.** And as they become woven into **our communicative repertoires**, the meme in all likelihood will lose claim to its status as a unique cultural or digital object. There will be a time when this meme reader will make people smile nostalgically, and there will be a time when it will all seem all so ridiculous and stupid. But, while we do not want to heroize memes, they do, for us now, represent a critical moment when the instrumentarium of a global media spectacle is looped and becomes a self-consuming excess, and the life it implicates in its fundamental irresponsibility suddenly bursts out in laughter. **The question remains what kind of laughter memes potentialize, and who is laughing:** is it the liberating, carnivalesque kind, or the grotesque kind that defers to viral media in nihilistic embrace? Is it the kind of emancipatory laughter of political activists, or that of authoritarian leaders and their troll armies as they leverage memetic tactics to maliciously nudge their subjects or incite violence against minorities?

EXCERTOS RETIRADOS DA OBRA:

Arkenbout, C.; Wilson, J.; de Zeeuw, D. (2021) *Critical Meme Reader: Global Mutations of the Viral Image*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, p.16.

Critical Meme reader II (2022)

Chloë Arkenbout and Laurence Scherz

The true political power of memes lies in their **potential to be used as a proactive design practice**, to **build imaginaries** for a better world. By thinking through alternative stories of possible futures, **memes can become a way of talking in-depth about the implications of those potential outcomes of our society.** (...)

Memes can be powerful vehicles in challenging our 'mental models' about the world, and can potentially lift our 'blindness', those that limit our creativity and resourcefulness. They allow us to anticipate difficult times, and to **make us see opportunities which otherwise would have remained invisible to us.** (...)

How about we start seeing memes for what they truly are? A boundless source of inspiration, a starting point for the radical change so desperately needed in the world. Our reality may be grim, but our future doesn't have to be. Let us, for the love of memes, make it playful, euphoric, abundant. Let us dance upon the graves of nihilist media and worship our new gods: the memes.

EXCERTOS RETIRADOS DA OBRA:

Arkenbout, C. & Scherz, L. (2022) *Critical Meme Reader II: Memetic Tacticality*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, pp. 15-16, .



**EVERYTHING
WENT
BETTER
THAN
EXPECTED**