

RECENT HAIRCUTS

Audience: 'What would you say is the difference between being cutting-edge and being gimmicky?'

Linda Nochlin: 'Most people see it as a difference of quality. And I know Michelangelo and all those masters have quality. But when I look at those masters, I long for a gimmick or two. Originality can be so boring. And second-rate art can be interesting in ways that first-rate art cannot afford to be.'

If truth be told, to begin an article with a quote is in itself a seriously gimmicky thing to do.¹

This word document similarly begins with the fear of a repression: maybe it's time to hear footsteps down the hallway, let drops of sweat fall on the keyboard and pretend they're tears. The window that opens on the street only lets in heat; one must settle with very little nowadays, fragrances of spring, humming birds, these kinds of things. Sometimes it feels like I'm melting down into one-dimension and sinking under the blanket term "gimmick", which is made of the finest satin.

Gimmick is etymologically defined as a device for "making a fair game crooked": a trick, or a "meme" that is also designed to proliferate, like a secret code. In this case the social contract that we are dealing with is not exactly a "fair game", but one of repression and self-emancipation.

Like an adolescent who has had too long and blissful a relationship with a loving mother, one has to fashion a personality, define a sexual identity and ultimately forge a personal "brand" through specific tropes and affectations in order to differentiate oneself from traditional modes of maturity (or the parents). Concurrently, the irrepressible eagerness to "fit in" is exacerbated by a general estrangement, the menacing backdrop of uselessness and exclusion. What emerges is a curious form of private revolution that specifically feeds off and iterates the bonds of repression that confine it.

This fragile equilibrium eventually sacrifices a significant amount of "depth" and "authenticity" in favor of inherent detachment: "board a yacht like someone boarding a yacht, or arrive at a party like someone arriving at a party"². While most of today's innovators choose to operate within the realm of flash-animation or Pixar, the modern heroes of style dedicate their lives to balancing themselves on the leading tip of a bell-curve that registers cultural-slumming.

On the other side of the curve, the best communication and media provide the most exemplary proliferation of the gimmick to glorify 'cutting edge' technology and innovative products. One might remember 2005 as "the year of the Razr" and, according to Motorola's chief executive Edward Zander, "the year of 2006 [was] more Razrs." The angle in which they chose to photograph the famed cellular phone for the pilot ad campaign was an accurate side view merely revealing an ultra thin metal slab. To be honest, between the silver and black V3, I had no choice but to purchase both.

Oh rotten and lonely phones, SACK OF PHONES, oh rotten and lonely phones.

¹ Tirdad Zolghadr, *Cheap tricks*, Frieze Issue 109 September 2007

² Mark Booth, *Camp*, Quartet Books London, 1983

The other day I found out that my handset's software design didn't match its edgy outer appearance was the same day I found out that what I really desired wasn't exactly a comfortable interface to make phone calls, but MORE Razrs. Or at least another one in a different color, like black for example; as long as the plastic surface allowed a reflection of my own set of values instead of a vague human figure. An evening outfit consisting solely of "my Razr and my sadness" and a pair of tight jeans. Imagine a party where, like a human disco-ball held by the wrists, Saint Sebastian hangs above multiple geysers of Grey Goose, and his bleeding torso is riddled with the arrows of adolescence and exclusion, vanity and self-hatred: "a setting sun; like the declining star, it is magnificent, without warmth and full of melancholy."³

³ Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, 1863