

Personal Research Report for the Past Year.

James Gibson

Within this document is written my personal research introduction, aim and challenges.

A number of articles discussing the the topics included can be read by following this link: <https://hi.co/people/bigson2000>. As this research is ongoing, subsequent articles will be published as and when completed.

How to Verbally Explain.

Me.

I'm a designer.

A designer of not only things, but process, and thinking.

Questioning design responsibilities of design in the now.

What, when, where, how, and who to design for.

Considering sustainable implications, environmentally, economically, and personal.

Exploring and experiencing ways of living and working, asking the question: what does it mean to be creative in the now?

Aim.

Personal Introduction.

“One day’s exposure to mountains is better than a cartload of books.”^[1]

How can we find way a to be creative, live, learn, and educate which is fitting to our needs in the now?

I aim to use my time—of which I’m lucky enough to be able to somewhat control—in the pursuit of experiences in order to learn, document, and communicate intending to self-improve and ultimately educate. In this manner I hope to create a number of bridging questions enabling concrete starting points for further research and positive change.

“The only way to experience an experience is to experience it”^[2]

To achieve this or gain a deeper understanding, I have set myself a number of challenges. The purpose of which is to deliberately position myself out of my—cultural normality—comfort zone. Each challenge will focus on one or more of the main topics set by this project; live, work, food, body, mind. I will continue to personally document and share my activities, findings, epiphanies, successes and failures as I go; in addition to contributing to the main project activities and documentation. Aiming to create a series of complete articles discussing each subject in depth, compiled together as a set of publishable documents (online and/or print,). These document can then be shared and used—by myself or others—for future reference in our projects creative curriculum in the following years.

“Experience wins every time.”^[5]

Challenges.

Notes on Living Outside Cultural Norms.

#live #work

#campeveryday #todaysoffice #todaycommute #outdooronline

Disrupting / challenging *home* and *office* and exploring the balance between *life* and *work*.

Challenging the inefficient modern norm of living, seeing through the misleading and dishonest intentions of the lazy house builders and greedy service providers, where wastefulness is designed-in and personal comfort, or inspiration a distant ideal.

What alternatives do we have?

What happens if we reject this irresponsible behaviour dressed up and disguised and modern —designer—comfortable living? This is what I did, for the last year I've been exploring a different way of living and documenting the journey and the way in-which it affects me, my creativity and my approach to *life* and *work*.

“None of the brute creation requires more than Food and Shelter. The necessaries of life for man in this climate may, accurately enough, be distributed under the several heads of Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel; for not till we have secured these are we prepared to entertain the true problems of life with freedom and a prospect of success.” [^1]

If we consider the basic requirements being Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel, *Thoreau (1854)*. Could we at the time of writing this suggest another necessity: technology? I question and speculate that we as individuals have become so dependent on... (heard before) I should say, that considering the amount of information readily available and the way in which we—I—create, view, depend on it, older forms of communicating are simply inadequate, therefore if we reject the now—which depends heavily on being connected—are we alienating ourselves in a debilitating way? Shouldn't we embrace and accept this as an essential requirement. I ask the question: *How would you fill your time without it?*, a subject which also needs tackling, perhaps rephrasing it: *How might we balance our dependency on such things?* I believe finding a balance is closer to the point, as rejecting could be seen as rejecting *all* modern life & society, which is not the intention; for we should promote the questioning of it, and promote the rejection of falsities dressed-up as modern comforts.

“No way of thinking or doing, however ancient, can be trusted without proof.” [^1]

As complete disconnection isn't a realistic (nor desired) option, now or in Thoreau's lifetime, therefore is it possible to propose a new etiquette or prioritisation for creative living, working,

and learning; considering Office, Home, Commute, Time, Etiquette, Communication?

“the smarter question probes what we are happy to share, with whom and in what context,” [^5]

Notes on Possessions & Creativity.

#body #mind

#theonlypossession

“The body is the only possession that everybody has, it is, as it were, a natural property.” [^3]

If my body is the only true possession I own, then shouldn't I take better care of it?

“The more you know, the less you need.” [^8]

Growing up and inheriting the values and behaviours of a consumer driven society, with our socially induced subjective ownership of property; more often than not, simply filling empty lives with short lived happiness in the form of new possessions. Perhaps it's time to relearn some true values of living, of physical and mental wellbeing. Reconsidering or balancing our needs and desires; not only in the property we possess, but the property we create, be it art or design, functional or dead. Just because we *can* make or *want* to make, isn't necessarily enough justification to actually make it. I feel a personal need to adjust my value scale—and that of the institution that employs me—being more conscious, looking past personal egotistical gain and considering the impact our *creativity* has on a larger scale. Material, energy, time, and the environment being core considerations, coming far before my subjective personal, often fickle-whimsical needs. Before making responsible decisions regarding what I consume or produce, I propose starting with a reevaluation regarding possessions and ownership in order to filter the *things* I own, buy, make and use of.

“Everything we personally own that's made, sold, shipped, stored, cleaned, and ultimately thrown away does some environmental harm every step of the way, harm that we're either directly responsible for or is done on our behalf.” [^8]

Starting with the body—adding to my regular excursions into the mountains—I propose to learn yoga, and document change and reaction within. Building on my own experience of the positive effects of regular physical exercise, I intend to look more closely, examining the physical and mental reaction—both positive and negative—yoga has on my personal life and work, and—if at all—how it might affect my creative output. In short, can changing one's body and mind through yoga change, your perspective on creativity?

The body is not only a possession it is also an instrument which we use to satisfy our needs, furthermore it changes to the use we make of it. If we do not use our muscle they become flabbier, weaker, even to the extreme point of becoming unusable; on the contrary, our body become stronger and healthier the more it is used.[^3]

Notes on A Necessity to Communicate.

#mind #body

#hello

“In every walk with Nature one receives far more than he seeks”. [^4]

There is a strange phenomenon where as soon as you place a foot on a hiking or mountain trail, people start greeting ‘hello’; where just a few steps earlier you are lost in the anonymous mass of modern society. In an extreme case, I’ve known colleagues of more than 5 years, who struggle to greet or even ignore each other when passing in the corridor. Is it the act of stepping into nature that brings about shift or unchaining of social barriers. Or is it a filter, for a particular type of person who would naturally say hello, if not disoriented by complex urban etiquettes.

As mentioned in my text, Notes on Living Outside Cultural Norms. *A Chance Meeting*: “I find that a mountain top is perhaps the most suited location for meeting interesting people.”[^6] Believing Muir right when saying: *“In every walk with Nature one receives far more than he seeks”.* [^4] May I suggest, not only from the delight of being in nature and experiencing it’s ever changing moods; also from the people you meet and the conversations partaken along the way. Therefore, I plan to further my ability to communicate by improving my Japanese language skills, in order to more easily exchange thoughts with the interesting and inspiring people I meet; furthermore improving works and homelife too. Once again documenting my thoughts, feelings and insight along the way in photography and words; the eventual outcome is at this time unknown, along with my success. Nevertheless, I will have a number of meetings, stories, and observations to share, no doubt having untold worth.

“The fleeting hour of life of those who love the hills is quickly spent, but the hills are eternal. Always there will be the lonely ridge, the dancing beck, the silent forest; always there will be the exhilaration of the summits. These are for the seeking, and those who seek and find while there is still time will be blessed both in mind and body.”[^7]

Mountain Academy - Ikeda.

Theoretical and Dialectical Research

A platform inside the reach of mountain culture from which to view and discuss our sociocultural norms.

Theory

- A looking at, viewing, beholding.
- A contemplative or speculative understandings of natural things.

It's ever more easy to get information, but does that make it any easier to choose the information to act upon?

I hypothesise that the more we uncover —often contradictory, often incomplete— the more it leads us to apathy and immobility. With this tendency to overload, we become overwhelmed and unable to see where and what to start or change.

We can relearn how to look and discover through our own eyes and our own experiences. Giving time to find truths and share these experiences in order to educate and aid positive action.

Dialectic

- The art of investigating or discussing the truth of opinions.
- An enquiry into metaphysical contradictions and their solutions.

Communicating is effortless with the aid of our 'always-on' devices and networks, but one could argue that face to face communication is suffering. The act of discussing one's own thoughts and opinions, learning and forming a shared schema of how to live (and work) is lost. Overtaken by ephemeral fickle outbursts aided by social media. There is the fear that our education system failing us. Failing to teach free discussion, producing graduates who more often than not have forgotten how to think for themselves, with no critical outlook.

What if we took learning out of the system? Removing the classroom from the school and creating a platform from which to view and discuss. A situation where the hierarchical structures are flattened and everyone becomes a student and a teacher.

Purpose

- Rekindle the spirit of the campfire discussion.

The Mountain Academy (M.A) is a place for face to face communication aiming to bridge the gap between passively consuming and actively doing. To decipher our knowledge while sharing and forming opinions and ways to act upon them.

Through the various activities at M.A we hope to make decisions making easier by experiencing and discussing, determining for ourselves through the discovery of truths. Actively teaching by example and leading examined lives, in order to to establish clear starting points for others to research further and champion. Relearning the meaning of 'quality' and 'value' in order to find a balance in life and work and to become healthy in body and mind.

In practice

- Stage one 2015-16
 - Planning and acquiring materials.
 - Permission to use and build has been approved by the landowner: Tsuchikawa-san (An active member of Ikeda community).

- Stage one 2016-17
 - To build a basic platform in the foothills of Ikeda Mountain.
 - Hold a number of ad-hoc activities and workshops in order to learn and plan a future program.
 - Complete construction and plan further facilities and builds.

- Stage one 2017-18
 - Hold a number of activities and events throughout the year archiving as we go.

Who

- The Students and Professors at IAMAS
- Ikeda local community
- Ogaki community
- Graduate Students of IAMAS
- Local creative community
- Visiting lecturers and workshops

What

- Workshops
- Events
- Lectures
- Talks
- Camp

Members

- IAMAS

- Tab
 - Ikeda Community
-

Neo Cocreation.

In Neo District, up in the mountainous area of Gifu Prefecture, 40 percent of the entire community is depopulated with most inhabitants being senior citizens, and that change is accelerating. Agriculture and forestry is falling into decline, and though there are concerns about depopulation and an aging population, Neo's current state can't be changed. In contrast, in Neo, there are about 60 elementary and middle school students, so the generation that will shoulder the future of Neo is being raised. For the sake of these children's future, it is necessary to solve the region's issues together with the region by bringing in new perspectives and methods rather than the perspectives of elder citizens and government policies, and revitalize a sustainable region.

In this project, we bring together the elder citizens who that have carried on the traditions of various arts of living the Neo District and the children of the new generation, and by letting creative outside members participate in that, we develop a structure for creating new regional industries and cultures. Through the structure of integrating the cooperation of two different generations, and the collaboration of the techniques/know-how of a regional society and modern society, under the guidance of new design thinking, we will forge a rich and fun livelihood for Neo. Through this process, we aim for residents to build an "ability to create", and increase the number of small businesses in the region, and to link a new, civic economy that they create to the rejuvenation of the region.

This project is a collaborative research by IAMAS, GREYCELL and TAB Inc., and by utilizing the strengths of each organization in the research, we can expect more holistic results. The main research heads are as follows.

IAMAS

With an Asset-Based Community Development Approach as their foundation, through fieldwork, they familiarize themselves with said assets including people, land, knowledge, institution, goods etc.), and search for their latent potential. The goal of their research is to, while communicating with many local residents, fuse various assets from a region with new designs, technology, and art, and co-create new things with the people of that region.

GREYCELL

Utilizing their experience as a venture company that moved here from Tokyo, they propose natural environments that allow for more creativity, and promote 2 base activities and migration for creators (ICT ventures, designers and engineers, artists, etc.) that work in cities. Simultaneously, they research how these regions contribute to a creative economy.

TAB Inc.

Renovates vacant houses and stores, which have increased following the declining population of a region, to match modern lifestyles while utilizing the good qualities of the building and the regional environment, and researches the form of creating new places. From their experience renovating vacant houses and buildings in Ogaki and Gifu, they implement the creation of spaces and environments that arouse the creativity of creative

people. Even in Neo, they connect their practices towards changing residents' awareness and interest towards regional properties (vacant houses, etc.).

Today's Office

What makes an office or a classroom? Is it the people, the place or the tools?

Through the Neo-co project we are discovering that changing our location can change our thinking and inspire new ideas. Uncovering innovative (new & old) approaches to solving and finding solutions never imagined before.

Immerse yourself in the unknown... get lost to find yourself.

Craft, Fabrication and Sustainability.

Craft, Fabrication and Sustainability: a project consisting the Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Sciences [IAMAS], Gifu Academy of Forest Science and Culture and TAB Co., Ltd. Through sharing skills, know-how and methods, we will create a platform supporting the growth of small sustainable businesses; utilising both hand and digital fabrication tools and techniques.

Exhibitions

NYC 1995

September 2015

Japonica

Kyoto

NYC 1995

November 2015

Burr Gallery

Ogaki

Typogaki

December 2016

Ogaki Biennale

Ogaki

ZAKKA Goods & Things

February - June 2016

21_21 DESIGN SIGHT

Tokyo

Typogaki

March 2016

Softopia 1F

Ogaki

[^1]:Thoreau, H.D. *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, August 9, 1854 (Ticknor and Fields: Boston)

[^2]:Bill Moggridge.

[^3]:Erich Fromm, *The Art of Being*, March 1, 1993 (Constable and Company Ltd; United Kingdom)

[^4]: Muir, J. *Steep Trails*, 1918 (University of California Press, California)

[^5:]Chipchase, J. *Great To See You*. Available from:

<<https://medium.com/hidden-in-plain-sight/506834e10105>>. [June 30, 2013].

[^6]:Gibson, J. *Notes on Living Outside Cultural Norms. A Chance Meeting*. Available from:

<<https://hi.co/moments/ezwfdfle>>[March 31, 2014].

[^7]:Wainwright, A.W, *A Pictorial Guide To The Lakeland Fells*, June 30, 2005, (Frances Lincoln Ltd; London)

[^8]:Chouinard, Y. *Let My People Go Surfing: The Education of a Reluctant Businessman*, September 5, 2006 (Penguin Books, London)
