

To Crop

Written Component

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This is a design by graphic designer Takada Yui. I would say it looks like a number seven. It can be surprising how quickly it was created. And its original size was as large as this.

To crop, is to trim or cut down a photograph or an image, typically to remove unwanted parts, to adjust its composition or to be able to frame it. Cropping remains an essential practice used by visual creators, including painters, photographers, documentary directors, and graphic designers. Takada Yui extensively employed similar methods to create various compositions, which are archived in a separate Instagram account.

I closely looked at these cropped images. They resonate with the Spirit of Adhocism, as said by Charles Jencks: '...the rebirth of a democratic mode and style, where everyone can create his personal environment out of impersonal subsystems, whether they are new or old, modern or antique. By realizing his immediate needs, by combining ad hoc parts, the individual creates, sustains and transcends himself.'

When considering cropping as an ad hoc activity, the most obvious frame I can think of is this. It's straight forward. Anyone who take photos with a phone can crop with it. I began to peer through this small window, trying to perceive the cacophony of those ordinary and transient moments.

It's intriguing how, when I attempted to create compositions using my surroundings, I began to see things differently. Countless possibilities emerged, and various moments were framed during the process.

Groceries. Tuesday dinner. Spring. A conversation with a friend that I always had for 7 years. And with a new friend. The Victoria Line.

They were like letters I address to my future self, sealed with a stamp. What was dispatched? What lays within those envelopes?

This is a number 7. If you saw the original mural, chances are you wouldn't notice it, but I did, so it's mine. Actually, I went back to the same place and never found it again. It's a 7 of that moment.

How interesting that people here have to write the same message three times in three languages. When they are crammed into this little square, one can likely guess what each part is saying, but understanding the entirety of all three becomes impossible. That day, I realized that I had spent over 600 days in this city without leaving.

This, I found in my phone album. It was captured on August 2018, here in London. I don't remember what it was, it might have been a mistake, flashlight beam. On May 21, 2023, I decided to crop this image, while having a phone call with a friend. It was her birthday. We were here 5 years ago, in London, together.

But is it good enough? If the goal was to observe and document the every day, there were countless additional things that could be done. I could record dates and places, keep a detailed diary, gather leaves and petals, pen my thoughts into debates and my feelings into verses. Or I could simply capture a complete photograph. What is so significant about cropping and trimming? Perhaps the appeal lies in its simplicity, as it doesn't demand days of work or years of training. Yet, it still requires some effort, allowing my thoughts and emotions to guide me in capturing the unique essence of a particular moment. Maybe it's about its ephemerality, unfolding within a brief 30 seconds, that allows it to be an ad hoc creative activity accessible to almost everyone.

So What if just the stamp? How much will be retained as time goes by? I can still likely see that it's a seven. That it was taken in London, in a narrow alley crowded with graffiti, that it was the beginning of May, that it was...

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In the dictionary, gleaning is defined figuratively as a mental activity. To glean facts, acts and deeds, to glean information. And for forgetful me, it's what I have gleaned that tells where I've been.

I walk my little camera among the coloured cabbages, and film other vegetables which catch my eye.

I was glad. I immediately filled them up close and set about filming perilously with one hand, my other hand gleaning heart-shaped potatoes.

Again one hand filming the other hand, and more trucks. I'd like to capture them. To retain things passing? No, just to play.

Bibliography

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