

“What about the excluded part after the cropping?”

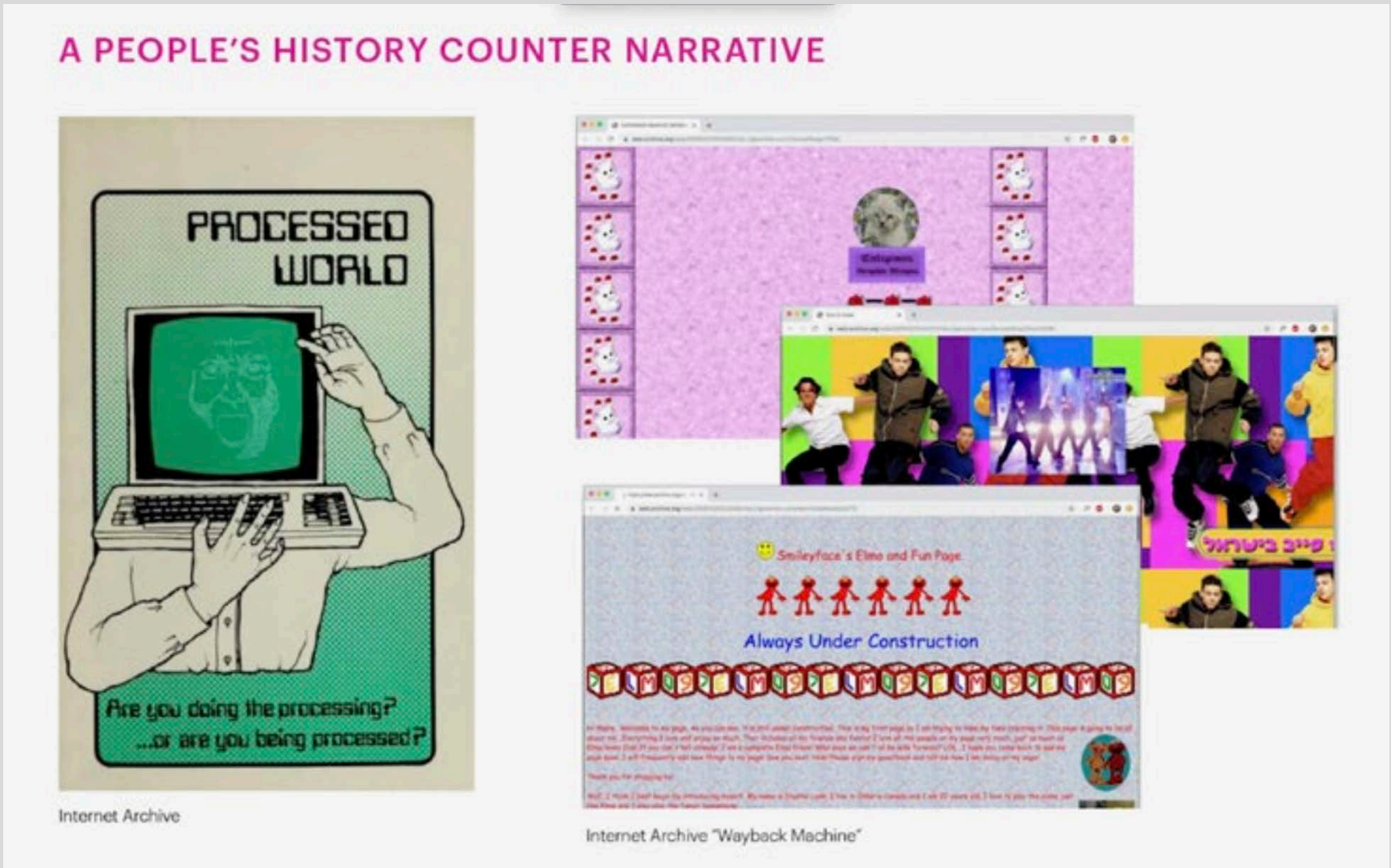
Franca Barbera

Cropping is not merely about reframing a photograph or trimming an audio track. To crop is being selective, thus its use in the creative world is far more extensive. In fact, artists and designers are constantly engaged in the act of selecting, and employing it as the most fundamental means of generating and conveying meaning.

However, the content that has been excluded through the “cropping” process also possesses its unique form of existence. In this project, for example, it’s the remnants left after cropping a photograph. If in filmmaking, it could be considered as ‘NG’ footage.

On a broader scale, it could even encompass styles and perspectives excluded from the mainstream narratives of design history, which was discussed in “Messy History vs Neat History”by Martha Scotford.

Would deliberately highlighting those excluded content create a different narrative or generate new knowledge?



Four Counter-Narratives for Graphic Design History, 2020
<https://vimeo.com/392124519>

“What about the shape of the frame? ”

Franca Barbera

The frame used for cropping is a boundary, a filter, and the form of that frame itself implies a predefined standard. What if the boundary’s shape changes? What if it’s a triangle, a circle, or even three-dimensional?

Franca Barbera suggested that this might be what this project was missing. A highly systematic research doesn’t mean every aspect should remain consistent. On the contrary, when different quantities become variables, it might create layers and sometimes unexpected new perspectives.

Similarly, this insight isn’t limited to the cropping of images. Visualizing judging criteria for various themes as ‘frames’ and experimenting with the changing of their shape, and form, might also be a way of conducting research through a visual perspective.

“Is the cropped-out image really the core to be communicated?”

Danni Xu

Danni remarked that there seemed to be a rather huge gap between her understanding of the images and what the designer intended to convey, even with the designer’s explanations. She found her initial understanding upon seeing the images more convincing, to herself.

However, her reaction after watching the video essay was different – she spontaneously picked up her phone and shot and cropped for a minute in the café where she was. Images she took connected with her immediate experience, creating a hidden meaning that only she could understand.

“It’s a casual form of photography, allowing one to just focus on the present self and the surroundings. Rather than struggling to imagine what others go through when they cropped an image, it was easier for me to immediately experience the act myself to understand.” Danni said. “The images produced in this process may only have meaning to the person involved, I think that should be the point of this activity. ”

What if there are different ways to communicate a research project or a piece of design? What if in some cases the emphasis should not be on the result of design but on the design process itself?



Photos and cropping by Danni Xu as a response, 2023

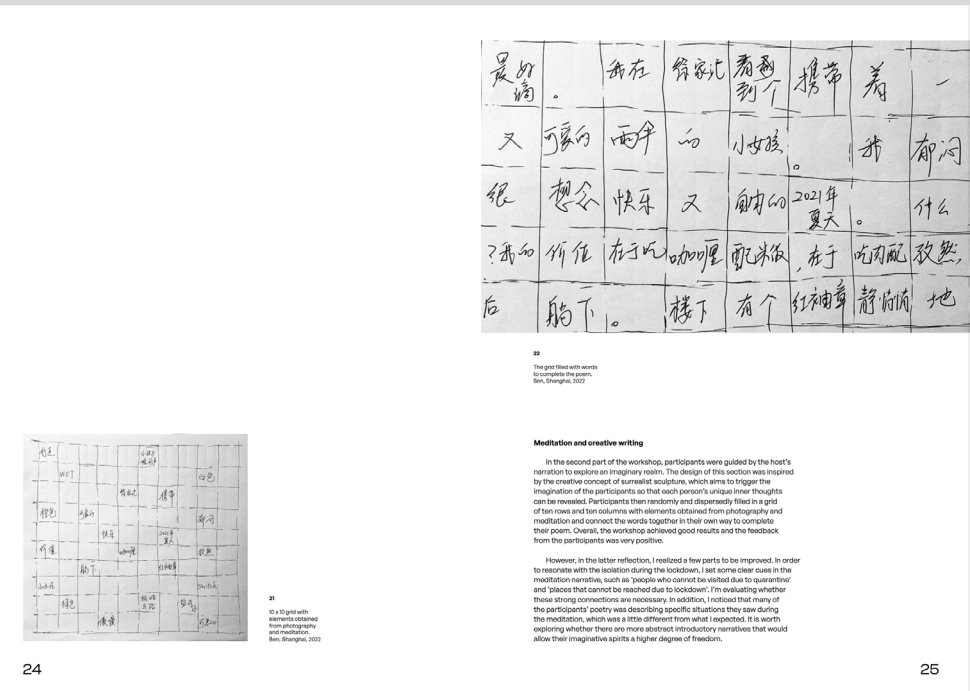
“The current inquiry is too broad, lacking a clear focus.”

My present interests trace back to an experimental project conducted a few years ago, during a significant pandemic lockdown in Shanghai.

This project employed unconventional methods of interviewing and revealed unique narratives from the participants of the project, subsequently igniting my sustained investigative pursuit.

I am committed to the ongoing exploration of methods for the articulation and documentation of elusive concepts such as emotions, identity, and intricate perspectives.”The Seam of Shanghai”

thrived within its specific context, meeting a genuine need for expression and documentation in that particular situation, making it meaningful and relatable. Conversely, the current project lacks a well-defined contextual framework or target audience, thereby making its content unclear for the audience, who might struggle to discern its significance.



Reference, research method and realisation of The Seam of Shanghai, by Siyang Chen, 2021