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MA Graphic Design and Illustration,

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Title: Everyday Specials. How to celebrate the ordinary.

Modes of Design

For my master's project, I decided to work on the theme of everyday life, familiar situations, routines, moments, practices. We tend to give a meaning to out-of-ordinary moments filled with action: events, meetings, weekends, something to wait for, while everyday life simply passes by rather pushed aside and washy. I wanted to challenge this and create a project that puts dailiness in a spotlight. I decided to talk about the little pleasures that everyday life can offer and create a project that can make us more attentive and mindful.

My project discusses whether it is possible to create a strategy that will help to find a way to enjoy the ordinary. One of the questions I asked myself were: can giving a name to a mundane act make us see it in a new light? Can small, everyday life have a bigger meaning, value and how can my project discuss searching for it? How can I elevate dailiness, make it special, and at the same time document its intimacy and simplicity?

I started with the idea of creating an interactive contest that would allow people to vote for their favorite daily moments. My project changed as I worked on it, my reflection was also greatly influenced by how our life changed under the influence of Corona Crisis when suddenly the ordinary ceased to be so unnoticed. In the end, I decided that a campaign to highlight everyday practices and present them as pleasant rituals with quick instructions explaining how to conduct them would be the most appropriate form of conveying my intentions. I decided that the use of small looped animations can be a good way to capture the repetitiveness and the act of getting lost in action. Attention to detail and focus on one action at a time is my form of praise for what has been overlooked.

After having research on the four types of pleasure framework that distinguish physical, psychological, ideological, and social pleasures, as well as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow, I chose ten moments to illustrate, which I later used to create short, looped animations. My experience in a graphic design influenced the way I worked with illustrations. I was trying to create a coherent visual language that would support my concept.

A daily routine can change its status when it gets the name of a ritual that gives consistency in life and is presented as something to master. I have been reading about various philosophical concepts concerning the role of repetition in the process of shaping the habit and its role in working towards living in an active and purposeful way. I concluded that repetition can become a developing practice, a work of self-awareness, and the improvement of relations with the world.

I also had in mind that people like clues and games and enriching my project with a set of humorous instructions gives it another layer and creates something to discover beyond its

purely visual form. By giving the rules of the act I wanted to show that experiencing pleasure can be an attentive act that is not always easy to perform yet, can become enjoyable.

An important element of my project is the context in which I intend to present it. Since I am discussing something that anyone can relate to, I wanted to show it in a place where it can reach as many people as possible. We are trained by advertising and the media to reach out for entertainment and excitement, but at the same time, we often blame it for the distraction that keeps us from being fully present in reality. The commercial world promises us "something better": being in a better place, surrounded by a better subject, a better lifestyle. I wanted to take advantage of this mechanism of promised satisfaction that commercial venues are associated with yet, don't promise anything other than what we can already find in our lives: everyday pleasures that are easily accessible and free of charge. I wanted to see if the presentation of the ordinary in a place where we are used to seeing products can make the familiar more interesting.

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Self Assessment

One of the goals for me while working on this project was to develop more as an illustrator. My professional experience is primarily from graphic design, and illustration and storytelling are areas that I started working with more during my Master's studies. Therefore I wanted my master's project to allow me to keep on exploring illustration. At the same time, I wanted the concept I decided to work on to become an area where I can convey my individuality as a designer and incorporate certain warmth and humor that I have in looking at the world.

I used to migrate a lot between digital and hand-drawn illustrations and I didn't have a fixed methodology of how I do. In this project, I wanted to experiment with collage, creating textures, and pattern which was something interesting for me, but also develop in character design and figurative illustration. I tried to incorporate as many hand-crafted imperfections as possible, and a scanner became my closest companion. I spent some time to find a satisfactory way to use the lines in my illustration, which initially consisted mainly of forms and shapes.

One of the challenges I faced was how to create a coherent visual style that could support my idea, which would be rich in tactile textures reflecting a certain atmosphere, emotion, yet relatively simple and easy to animate later. Working with animation was also an area I had not had the opportunity to work with before. All my previous experience in it has been a few attempts with stop-motion animation but doing it fully in After Effect was a new challenge.

People, their experiences, and stories are what interests me strongly. Social issues, stereotypes, and some kind of problems are what I often want to address in the projects I work on. I wanted to use my skills gained as a designer/illustrator to create a project that is aimed at making a difference. I was also interested in the opportunity that public space offers for the presentation purposes and dialog with a viewer that it offers.

During my master's studies, I also became interested in writing and started to use the texts that I wrote myself in my works. While working on the project, I was exploring various possibilities of incorporating words into it. I tried with longer texts, using more poetic language and abstraction, testing how the understanding of my project changes. Eventually, I decided to keep it short because the space for which my project is intended is a place where people spend very little time and the message I send must be as clear as possible.

I wanted to create a project that probably won't appeal to everyone, but to which everyone, with a bit of encouragement, can relate. Speaking of everyday practices, emotions, and pleasures that most of us experience, I wanted to create a project that was as inclusive as possible.

I am aware that if I try to speak to everyone and present my work in a commercial context, I myself may be accused of being commercial, but my intention was to challenge the role of advertising today and to propose the use of new commercial places: the digital screens, for new purposes.