

LIQUID GOLD

Modes of Design & Learning Outcomes



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MODES OF DESIGN

ABSTRACT

The production and consumption of breastmilk is presented in a speculative way as a mean to question our assumptions surrounding the taboo of breastfeeding and breastmilk that exists today. It also draws out possible implications.

INTENTION & AIMS

In this piece of project, the intention is to allow the audience question their own assumptions surrounding the act of breastfeeding and breastmilk. The normalcy of it, of acceptance or rejection. It is not about solving the issue but to create possible platforms to explore our own judgement on why we choose to accept certain practices but reject another. Using speculative design as a tool allows us to revisit our values, beliefs and behavior towards this matter in new light. Speculative design is also useful to defy the logic of today.

OBJECTIVES

Can human milk sharing system be as acceptable as that of blood, egg or sperm donation? After all, they are all replenishable bodily fluids and tissues. I wanted to find out what makes it indecent for women to breastfeed their babies in public. Is it because it disrupts the border between motherhood and sexuality? And why is it appalling for us to consume milk from our own species but acceptable with animal's milk.

Even with the possibility of overlooking the matter of taboo, what does it mean when we consume products that come from our own body. Do we have more strict regulations when it comes to selecting food from our own species?

Adapting from what we know today as Milk Bank and Wet Nurse, this project has some degree of inspiration and relevance to it. Instead of conforming and accepting what seems normal today, I decided to upscale our understanding of the two mentioned entities and let us explore the meaning of it again without the pressure from our society.

SYNOPSIS

This project began when I realized that it is considered public indecent to breastfeed in public. It is set in the unbiased future where breastmilk is a commodity. Breastmilk is harvested regardless of gender and ethnicity. This project will look at the circulation of milk and its pathway. As a new commodity derived from human, this will intersect various aspects, such as laws governing bodily fluids, commodification and its values. Technology and media; from milk harvesting facility, screening and marketing. This will all shape the future of milk sharing. The bad and good implications are presented as well and they're all reflection of what our society stands for today. The good and the ugly.

The presentation starts with a short video that is being told by a person who is preparing herself to be a donor of human milk. She tells her story about a company that does screening to select the best donor. She shares her testimonies of being harvested for milk and pondering on her contribution towards mankind. As milk is looked as another form of food, this milk is produced as another form of product as well which is cheese.

Adapting from the video, a few cultural probes will be made to realize the storyline into physical matter. These probes could be folders containing the profile of milk donors, milk pump machine, and a mock up scene of "The Human Cheese Shop." These are complementary designs that comes along with the future of human milk sharing.

The human cheese shop is made into physical by a waiter presenting human cheese on a platter as a tasting session. Turning bodily fluid into something more palatable perhaps. Our ideas are anything but fixed and if breastmilk has the possibility of supporting the said scenarios, perhaps it's time to make some milk kin of our own.

VISUALS



[Image 1 -12] →
Adaptation from Milestone
1 depicting preliminary story
line of Human Milk World



[Image 13] →
Human Milk as commodity in
small packaging.



[Image 13] →
Screening of human beings based on
appearance, health and mental status.
Milk is graded based on total scores.

Milk Donor Profile of Dagfinnur Valgeirsson

Donor type Induced lactation with Prolactin shots

Birthday February 27, 1995
Occupation Applicator
Marital status Single
Children 0
Favourite food Pecan and corn crepes

Height 177 centimeters
Weight 78 kilograms
Blood type A+

Smoking YES
Social Drugs YES
Alcohol YES
Sickness High Cholesterol
Medication NO
Allergy Nuts
Organ/tissue transplant NEVER

Geo coordinates 48.902641, 2.520183

It has been verified that applicant **did not** have
any criminal records

GRADE D



[Image 14] →
Milk harvesting facility

We have two choices, either we continue to hurtle down our current path. Or we begin to question the systems beliefs, the things giving it legitimacy.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a designer, my role is not limited to just creating aesthetics and solving issues. I believe designers are able to open up discussions into a broader context that sometimes even questions our own logic of today. What I am interested in, though, is the idea of possible futures and using them as tools to better understand the present and to discuss the kind of future people want or wished for.

What began as just a project to understand more about society's perception about the female-maternal body had led me to discover many more layers in reflection to the project's progress. It was unexpected but as I allow myself to delve in to the reality of creating a speculative design I realise our ideas and practice is anything but fixed.

The more I think about this possible future that seems impossible to reach now, the more I find that it is becoming a reality of my own. I no longer find that it is an unbelievable future. Many of my peers who grew together with me in this project felt the same way and consuming only human milk is not that absurd after all. This logic will be crazy for people who have not journeyed with me as they will find it appalling at their first hearing.

For me in this project, the future of human milk sharing is not a destination I created to land on or something that I am striving for everyone but it is looked upon as a medium to aid imaginative thoughts. And with imaginative thoughts come critics. The project was proven to not be immune to ethical debate and instead had spark more debates in ourselves, discussing our own morality as well. The attention of the public is directed to the consumption, objectification, and commodification of human or non-human bodies and their bodily fluids.

The project had evolved and is not limited to just babies and milk but also crossed issues that includes feminism, cultural taboo, environment, animal rights, social and bio-economics.

If it actually ended with just breastmilk as how it is understood today and trying to solve an issue, I feel the material did not reach its critical potential. Breastmilk is seldom discussed in design field but always a research in the medical practice. Perhaps because we find it hard to steer away from the relationship of breastmilk, its nutrition and baby's food. The story usually ends there.

In fact, there is a duality in human milk that is relevant in this field. Breastmilk is a cultural material and a material culture. A cultural material is more commonly used in an art project where else a material culture is what we can call "goods", "commodities" or "products". And in this case, I have come to learn the process of commodity capitalism on how to commodify, regulate and oversee a product that is not yet available in the major market with artistic sense.

[Image 15] →

Human milk is now available and being marketed on the shelf at our local grocery stores. A consumer is seen selecting his choice of milk.

