

Noticing Posting

Year: 1988
Level: First Years, Spring Semester 2
Unit: 10222 Drawing 2
Days: October 13, 14, 21, 27, 28, November 3, 4, 10, 11, 17,18, 24.
Duration: 3 days x 4 groups

Origin

At the time of conceiving this project I was working my way through Proust's 'A La Recherche du Temps Perdu', which, as an extended reflection on memory and remembering (as recollection), continually transfixes and transfigures apparently mundane occurrences made memorable. Levels of awareness: of noticing, observing, recognising, appear significant to the capacity for vivid recall. For the visual artist observational skills are crucial to development.

Premise

This project focussed initially on triggering those states of mind in which things and experiences are self-consciously noticed. The site chosen for this noticing was within the environment of a supermarket, specifically the food aisles. An arbitrary supermarket was chosen: Woolworths in Penrith Plaza, being the nearest supermarket to the Peachtree studios. The supermarket was chosen as a venue as all the objects encountered within it have been designed to be noticed, items compete against one another for the customer's attention, each aisle is a concentrated visual spectacle. It is an irony that this visual feast is rendered mundane through familiarity and repetition, the 'weekly shop' is reduced to the level of a chore that has to be done. For the customer, supermarket visits are usually strictly targeted by a shopping list and habitual pathways of selection. The preliminary challenge was to break the customary habits normally associated with these kinds of visits. The students were directed to visit the supermarket, not as 'customers', but as 'unaccustomers' from the perspective of being unaccustomed to the experience of being-in-a-supermarket, as if it were something very strange, being encountered for the very first time.

Significant to this experience was that the initial visit took place with no intention of shopping as such. The usual reason for visiting the supermarket to buy groceries was nullified, and the process of gathering items in a trolley or basket negated. The acquisitive activity that all shoppers participate in was thus de-activated. Immediately raising those issues of well why-am-I-here? and what-am-I-supposed-to-be-doing?

In refusing to acknowledge or recognise items in the supermarket as commodities (essentially packaged food capable of being purchased), students were encouraged to view the entire foodhall as a curious installation devoid of any apparent purpose or meaning, other than as a place through which people circulate and sight-see, as if it were an elaborate work of art in an Art Gallery where an extraordinary variety of things appear to be exhibited and the longer you looked at these things the stranger they became.

Key to this shift in reception or reaction to the familiar circumstance of the supermarket was in trying to position ones responses within the mind-set of a tourist visiting an obscure and exotic country, where the habits and customs of the culture are entirely foreign to one's own and one is vividly aware of the oddness of occurrences taking place around you.

The students were asked to take in the sights: as sight-seers and spend an extended period of time observing and taking note of the experiences that they were having. A state of reconnoitring was suggested which entailed a degree of loitering. Students were encouraged to record in a notebook anything of interest that they noticed.

Shopping List

The students were issued with a photocopied sheet of an arbitrary junk mail advertisement, advertising 17 items currently being discounted in the shop: Cadbury Bar Lines, San Remo Pasta, Continental Cup-A-Soup, Coke drinks, Sorbent Toilet Tissue, Mortein Fly Spray, Lux Toilet Soap, SPC Jelly Fruit, Heinz Baked Beans, Cottee's Jam, Stradbroke Cigarettes, Joyhill Milk, Fairy Cooking Margarine, Dandy Knobs Devon, Berri Fruit Juice, Nanna's Snack Pies, Oak Ice Cream. Superimposed over a portion of this advert was the image of a postcard depicting six 'Picturesque Isle of Wight Bays'. A Quote from Proust was also collaged discretely across the advert:

'It is our noticing them that puts things in a room, our growing used to them that takes them away again and clears a space for us.'

On the reverse of this sheet there were six handwritten quotes:

1

"I cannot get over the feeling that the things closest to us, most constantly in sight, have always been the least noticed, that they remain the least known, and that if one is searching for the keys to things, one has the best chance of finding them in those things which are most copiously repeated." - Jean Dubuffet

2

"Things are in a sense, recognised before they are really seen or heard. 'What does it mean?' is the reaction that prevents perception." - Stuart Hampshire

3

"What can be immediately seen when we look at things, the image they offer to immediate sensible intuition, falls away. The calculating production of technology is an act without an image." - Martin Heidegger

4

"Recognition is perception arrested before it has a chance to develop freely. In recognition there is a beginning of an act of perception. But this beginning is not allowed to serve the development of a full perception of the thing recognised. It is arrested at the point where it will serve some other purpose, as we recognise a man on the street in order to greet or avoid him, not so as to see him for the sake of seeing what is there." - John Dewey

5

"With an admirable economy we learn to see only as much as is needful for our purposes. Almost all things which are useful in anyway put on more or less this cap of invisibility. If we look at the street itself we are almost sure to adjust ourselves in some way to its actual existence. We recognise an acquaintance, and wonder why he looks so dejected this morning, or become interested in a new fashion in hats - the moment we do that the spell is broken, we are reacting to life itself in however slight a degree, but, in the mirror, it is easier to abstract ourselves completely, and look upon the changing scene as a whole. It then, at once, takes on a visionary quality, and we become true spectators, not selecting what we will see, but seeing everything equally, and thereby we come to notice a number of appearances and relations of appearances, which would have escaped our notice before, owing to that perpetual economizing by selection of what impressions we will assimilate, which in life we perform by unconscious processes. The frame of the mirror, then, does to some extent turn the reflected scene from one that belongs to our actual life. The frame of the mirror makes its surface into a very rudimentary work of art, since it helps us to attain to artistic vision.' - Roger Fry

6

"The world is neither meaningful or absurd. It quite simply is. And that, in any case, is what is most remarkable about it. All around us, defying our pack of animistic or domesticating adjectives, things are there." - Alain Robbe-Grillet

Supermarket Visit

The students were directed to visit the supermarket and locate the 17 advertised items. This was to be viewed as something of a sight-seeing tour, highlighted by the discovery of each of the items in turn. In searching the aisles it was anticipated that eventually all the items would be found and 'noticed'. The students were encouraged to record and note the journey or route taken within the supermarket in locating the sites. They were allowed to purchase one of the 17 items, as a gratuitous act, enabling them to pass through the check-out and observe the transaction of exchange with the cashier.

Postcards

If the supermarket was to be viewed as a tourist destination, what would be some of the highlights of the trip? Students were then asked to create 5 standard sized postcards (15cm x 10cm) that would capture the 5 highlights of their supermarket visit, in sequence as they experienced them. What were the most noticeable encounters? What stood-out? How best could their five postcard images capture these memorable moments.

Writing & Posting

From the 5 postcards created the students were directed to select three and consider the following three recipients to post them to

1. To their former self aged 4
2. To their future self aged 54
3. To their current self

They were asked to write on the back of each postcard something about their visit (as tourist) to the supermarket, being mindful of how they might adjust the content, say different things in different ways to a child in the past, to an old person in the future, to one's peers at the current time. They were then to post all three to their home address.

Having received their delivered postcards, all were brought back to the studio for circulation amongst the group and final discussion.



CADBURY
BAR LINES
45[¢]



SAN REMO
PASTA 500g
89[¢]



CONTINENTAL
CUP-A-SOUP
89[¢]



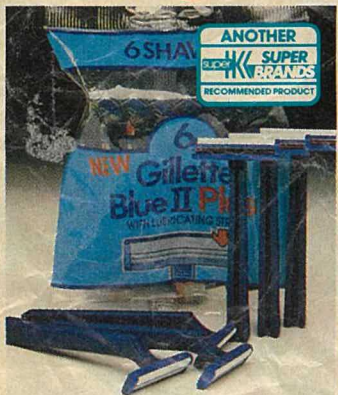
Coke range ~~2.95~~
DRINKS 6x375ml **2.69**



Lux 5 pack
TOILET SOAP **1.99**



COTTEE'S
JAMS 500g
1.49



GILLETTE BLUE II PLUS
RAZORS 6's & 8's
2.39



Schweppes 2L
SOFT DRINKS ~~1.80~~ **1.29**



12 Pack
TWISTIES 250g **2.99**



MORTEIN
FLY SPRAY 300g
2.00



HEINZ 440g
BAKED BEANS/SPAG.
2.00



Smoking reduces your fitness.
Health authority warning.

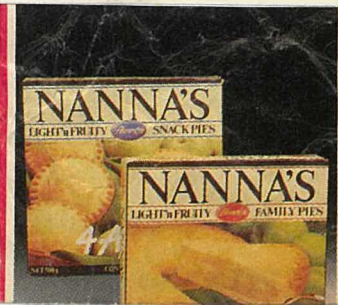
Stradbroke 35's
CIGS ~~14.70 ctn~~ **13.39 ctn**



Berri ~~3.86~~
FRUIT JUICE 2L **2.69**



WIN UP TO
\$10,000*
SCRATCH AND WIN FANTASTIC



Oak 4L
ICE CREAM ~~3.99~~ **2.89**



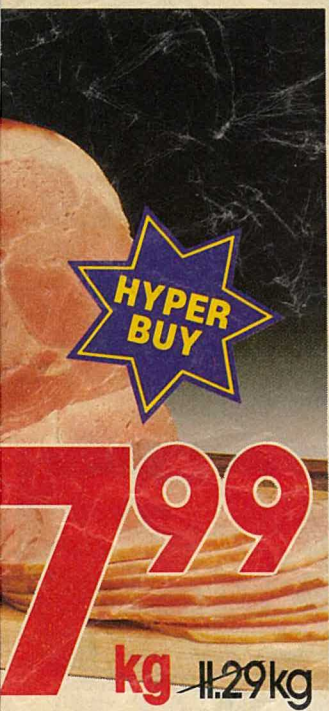
Presto 375g
DANDY KNOBS ~~1.88~~ **1.19**

It is our noticing them that puts things in a room, our growing used to them that takes them away again and clears a space for us.

79[¢]

FOOD

es it better!



7.99
kg 11.29kg



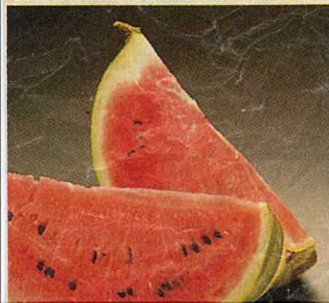
WHITE/WHOLEMEAL
FRENCH STICKS 450g
99c 1.30



Fresh 250g
CARAMEL BUNS 1.45 **99c**



White 6Pk
SCOTCH ROLLS 1.45 **99c**



250g
FRUIT RINGS 1.45 **99c**

super **K** mart

THE HYPERMARKET

A GREAT KMART PLUS A SUPERMARKET



DAFFODIL 500g POLY
MARGARINE **89c** 1.52



CORDINA FROZEN
CHICKEN No. 15 **2.99** 5.07





PICTURESQUE ISLE OF WIGHT BAYS



31st Aug. '88

PUBLIS

By air mail
Par avion



Dear Terry Fran a Jess,
as you can see by the
card we are on holiday
for a week, staying at a
place out in the country
We have been touring
all around the Island. The
weather has been good but
we have had a few heavy
showers this morning, but
it's not going to stop getting
out. Home all is well

Nick

SHANKLIN I.W.
COPYRIGHT

Printed by Jarrold & Sons Ltd, Norwich

MR & MRS T C Hayes
25, Brook Road
Greenbrook, 2773.
N. S. W.
Australia

Top left: FRESHWATER BAY. Top centre: COMPTON
BAY. Top right: ALUM BAY. Bottom left:
WHITECLIFF BAY. Bottom centre: SANDOWN BAY.
Bottom right: COLWELL BAY

KIW 760

Love from Elsie Vic + Nanna.

