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- A Postmodern Lighting Design*

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Abstract:

The atmosphere we experience, or try to create as designers, is often surrounded by a mythical aura, which easily gets neglected or preproposed when doing a design. Designers often forget that an atmosphere should be seen in connection with the experience of something more profound such as memory and recognition. Society and culture have a large impact on what it is to experience an atmosphere. When we experience it is in relation to our cultural memory. This study investigates what an atmosphere of loneliness structurally is recognized as. With the aim of being able to create an atmosphere with a lighting and visual communication design, the human experience is explored philosophically and through the tendency of pop cultural media. The conclusion is that our underlying structure of loneliness is the inconsistency between the expected reality and the actual experienced reality, as an uncanny relationship. This leads to a crisis in our temporality, where we feel nostalgic for our presence and future, due to the lost connection we have to the past. This atmosphere of nostalgia is found in the style of cyberpunk and vaporwave. The technique used to accomplish this is by pastiche, uncanny experience and an intertextual staging effect.

Aalborg University Copenhagen

Faculty of Engineering and Science

Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology

Master of Science

Lighting Design Master Thesis

The Atmosphere of Loneliness

A Postmodern Lighting Design

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Abstract

The atmosphere we experience, or try to create as designers, is often surrounded by a mythical aura, which easily gets neglected or preproposed when doing a design. Designers often forget that an atmosphere should be seen in connection with the experience of something more profound such as memory and recognition. Society and culture have a large impact on what it is to experience an atmosphere. When we experience it is in relation to our cultural memory. This study investigates what an atmosphere of loneliness structurally is recognized as. With the aim of being able to create an atmosphere with a lighting and visual communication design, the human experience is explored philosophically and through the tendency of pop cultural media. The conclusion is that our underlying structure of loneliness is the inconsistency between the expected reality and the actual experienced reality, as an uncanny relationship. This leads to a crisis in our temporality, where we feel nostalgic for our presence and future, due to the lost connection we have to the past. This atmosphere of nostalgia is found in the style of cyberpunk and vaporwave. The technique used to accomplish this is by pastiche, uncanny experience and an intertextual staging effect.

Summary

In the past year of 2020 and 2021, the Covid-19 has been an all-encompassing event in most people's lives. The lockdown has also revealed how the realities, we rely our everyday life on, not only during Covid-19 but in this decade, makes us experience our lived world. The realities of the media. What we also have seen, in the time of Covid-19, is an increase of people feeling lonely and estranged from other fellow citizens.

The main aim of this study is to explore the atmosphere of loneliness and investigate its relation with pop culture. This should lead to a lighting and visual communication design proposal for an atmosphere of loneliness. The atmosphere is what takes us to the knowable in our life. It is related to style, which is the memory and recognition of movements in art and culture - the cultural memory. Therefore style is also an atmosphere, because they both are connected to our memory. either as pre-experience or as a part of our culture.

The phenomenon of loneliness is suggested to be the lack of context and connection. Lack of context and connection is suggested to be the lack of participation in the world.

Loneliness could therefore be argued in relation to Heidegger as a detachment of the present, which makes us unable to project any idea into the future. In other words what we, through our pre-experience, expect does not meet what we actually experience, and this creates an alienated relationship to the experience.

This new conflicting relationship towards the present is one element of the postmodern alienation. The different concepts of narrative and mood presented in postmodernism is pastiche, irony, parody, fragmentation, intertextuality, ect. The key concept is the gathering around the past, and the nostalgia for it.

What is suggested in this study is that the atmosphere of loneliness can be found in postmodern pop cultural media, which creates an inconsistency between the expected reality and the actual experienced reality. This is found in the atmosphere and style of cyberpunk and vaporwave, as they create an uncanny relation towards the presence and future due to the lost relation to the past, which is the reason why we constantly feel nostalgia for it. These styles give us the possibility to realise the alienated relationship contemporary between the reality and the saturated hyperreal. The accomplishment of a lighting and visual communication design in a style of pastiche, uncanny experience and an intertextual staging effect, creates the ability of a created atmosphere of loneliness.

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Introduction

In the past year of 2020 and 2021, the Covid-19 has been an all-encompassing event in most people's lives. The young generation, to whom this is the first experienced pandemic on a scale, as Covid-19 has developed to be, has experienced a new way of living, which in many ways is a drastic change. Under the national lockdowns, contemporary communicative technology may have reached its potential, and has given us the opportunity to see how it can support our everyday living in distance from each other, in the effort of maintaining a social life when the others are not physically present. The lockdown has also revealed how the realities, we rely our everyday life on, not only during Covid-19 but in this decade, makes us experience our lived world. These realities count not only social media and digital communication tools, but also the fictional content from streaming services, as well as the information from the news and through other media. This has truly been the time of the media, and the development of content has been on the level of extreme.

What we also have seen, in the time of Covid-19, is an increase of people feeling lonely and estranged from other fellow citizens in the west, investigated in a large study called Covid-minds (Varga, T.V., Bu, F., Dissing, A.S., Elsenburg, L.K., Bustamante, Matta, J., van Zon, S.K.R. ... Rod, N.H., 2021).

One of the answers could be that the individual has been isolated, but some of the expectations we have for technology today is that it offers a way to be social and entertained without us being close to each other. So why is it that we still see an increase in loneliness, when we have all the tools to not be? This article tries to investigate contemporary society's tendencies when it comes to experiencing our reality, and why the mass of media images are argued as a way to alienate us. Perhaps the increase of loneliness is not only a symptom of the societal changes Covid-19 brought to us, but a symptom of the consequences the extension of power media have conquered in the last decades.

The main aim of this study is to explore the atmosphere of loneliness and investigate its relation with pop culture. This should lead to a lighting and visual communication design proposal for an atmosphere of loneliness.

Vision

An atmosphere is often referred to as a mystic aura, but this study aims to propose that there is something more fundamental in an atmosphere, rather than being only a mystic aura. The ability of being able to create an intended atmosphere lies in the ability to understand the intended atmosphere.

In that light we should understand what an atmosphere consists of, when we are proposing an atmosphere created by a lighting design.

Research question

What this study intends to research is the relation between how we experience an atmosphere, and a phenomena's underlying structure. To study the atmosphere the following research question will be used:

What is the underlying structure and experience of an atmosphere of loneliness and how can a lighting and visual communication design thereby be used in the creation of one?

To answer this research question, will this study use the exploratory research method to investigate tendencies in society and culture, as well as getting a deeper understanding of what it is to experience. In combination with a survey method to verify some of the proposed structures of the atmosphere of loneliness, a lighting and visual communication design will be proposed.

Methodology

Exploratory research method

The exploratory research method is used in this study to investigate the underlying structure of a phenomenon. This phenomenon is studied in relation to a visual experience, and is researched philosophically and culturally to find the commonalities related to the evolution of how this phenomenon is experienced. To investigate a phenomenon it is important to look at the phenomenon in a broad view with no fixed direction. So to study the phenomenon it is important to look at the cultural and philosophical points that might explain it, and make these points visible. The exploratory method is used to research a design, and a possibility of creating an experience of this phenomenon. The purpose of conducting the study exploratory is to examine, analyze and investigate this experience. This is done in connecting with the design approach and by use of case studies, which can connect the investigation with visual examples (Stebbins, 2001).

Visual communication

The study is a combination of visual communication and lighting design. A visual experience has a specific effect on our perception and our cognitive processing of information. We as humans recognize visual elements and patterns, and after we begin to process the visual information we are exposed to, we are able to reach the long-term memory. The experience of participants is together with the exploratory research used to verify and investigate the findings to see if some of the same patterns appear (Christian, Smyth, 2008).

Web survey

The visual communication research is conducted by the use of a web survey. The web survey is usable as it can utilize visual communication and the study is able to verify the patterns from the exploratory research. The participants will be exposed to different image material and are able to define their overall experience by a given word list with pre chosen words. The question asked in the web survey is an open question, which is chosen to make the response time longer, which would make the processing of the image material slow with the ability of activating the long-term memory (Christian, Smyth, 2008).

Literature research

The literature research will be an exploratory study of the atmosphere of loneliness in relation to the cultural memory of contemporary society. Atmosphere is connected to our memory and world, and to deeply understand how loneliness is experienced today, this study will focus on the movement in art, culture and society with a philosophical approach to how and why we experience loneliness, to then be able to create an atmosphere with a lighting design.

Atmosphere and style

Light is what makes us see the world and all that it contains. It makes us recognize textures, shapes, color, materiality and depth, and it can bring us back to knowable places, estrange us from the expected, deceive us and evoke something lost, due to the atmosphere it creates. In this study the focus is the experience of the atmosphere in images, art and pop cultural media, which, due to its two-dimensionality, rely on the feeling of illumination and colors, but still have an overall atmosphere. The atmosphere is what we first experience rather than the concept or narrative (Pallasmaa, 2014). It is therefore important to understand what creates an atmosphere in the aim to create one.

“We project our own impressions, memories, aspirations and feelings onto the canvas. It is like a perfect psychoanalytical transference, where the patient imposes upon the therapist a replay of experiences with parents and other important individuals, or like the repetition of a word or a tone in Buddhist meditation” (Kandel in Lone, 2017).

What Kandel is suggesting is that the atmosphere is what takes us to the knowable in our life. It is related to style, which is the memory and recognition of movements in art and culture - the cultural memory. Therefore style is also an atmosphere, because they both are connected to our memory. either as pre-experience or as a part of our culture.

Common structures of the phenomenon loneliness

To understand what the atmosphere of loneliness is and how we would be able to create it, the first subject to investigate is the phenomenon of loneliness itself.

Loneliness is not a contemporary phenomenon, but something each of us experience from time to another. When I encounter the phenomenon of loneliness, there are some different topics I am considering.

The first: *How is loneliness experienced?*

The second: *What does it mean to be lonely or to consider oneself as lonely?*

This division of loneliness into an experience and consciousness grounds itself into the fact that people tend to see loneliness as a feeling. People *feel lonely*, and therapists acknowledge this. *Feeling alone* is the fact that we are conscious about *being-alone*, and therefore loneliness is a phenomenon of consciousness. *Feeling alone* could therefore be considered as an experience of loneliness (Borodulin and Asiliev, 1999).

The phenomenon of loneliness was researched in 2007 by Karin Dahlberg. The study interviewed 100 participants in the age of 12 to 82, both female and male. The findings in this study is that the experience of loneliness is described by the participants as: *figure against background*. Dahlberg argues that this background is *the background of fellowship*, which is interpreted as *the fellowship with others* or the experience of *belonging*. The sense of *belonging* is essential because *fellowship with others* also refers to situations where we interact and are among others, but it is our close ones which give the sense of *belonging*. In this light the first conclusion from Dahlberg's study is that loneliness is *the absence of important ones* in our life. Another structure of loneliness, which Dahlberg suggests, is *the lack of context and connection* as one of the key points for the phenomenon of loneliness. *Lack of context and connection* is suggested to be *the lack of participation in the world*. The sense of *belonging* could explain why we can feel alone with people around us, and the same sense can make loneliness disappear though we are alone, but we connect and belong to someone in distance (Dahlberg, 2007)

Solitude is also discussed as the positive branch of the phenomenon of loneliness in Dahlberg's study, but as this research investigates the atmosphere of loneliness as a negative contemporary tendency the concepts in relation are only pointed out.

The lack of participation in the world is something crucial to the understanding of *being* in phenomenology. Heidegger argued that *being* is *being in the world*. *Being in the world* is one interpretation of Heidegger's term Dasein (Heidegger in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2021). What he means with *being* relates to a subject and object relationship that is not separate. We are thrown into a world and through the discourses and experiences is how we understand ourselves. That is why we do not question every object and are conscious about them, but we understand them as a part of our existence. The important part of

Heidegger's theory of *being* for this research is the familiarity to our present and the ideas we project towards the future, in which way we act to reach this idea. The relationship with the past is therefore the familiarity and a guidance to act. The relationship between past, present and future is what Heidegger calls temporality. (Heidegger in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2021). This is also why the estrangement of a present might relate to an unfamiliarity. We are unable to recognize this experience until it has become familiar. Unfamiliarity creates a consciousness of the network of entities we activate to reach the projected idea. Why this is important in relation to loneliness is the founding of Dahlberg saying *involuntary loneliness is the lack of context* (Dahlberg, 2007) Loneliness could therefore be argued in relation to Heidegger as a detachment of the present, which makes us unable to project any idea into the future. In other words what we, through our pre-experience, expect does not meet what we actually experience, and this creates an alienated relationship to the experience.

Alienation is therefore argued as an important concept of loneliness. The further exploration of this concept begins in the period of modernity and towards this thesis contemporary argument of the concept of alienation.

Modernism

The modern period was the period of the grand narratives, technological development and ideas of the future. The aim for the transcendental truth and the forecast of the old traditions, dominated the way of modern thinking. This led to a new revelation of the term alienation. Alienation became a subject which Marx would base a majority of his work on. He coined alienation in a new direction which was largely more based on the negative tendency of industrialism, capitalism and the inequality capitalism creates. The theory is fundamentally grounded in the relationship between the social classes - bourgeoisie and proletariat. The acts of the bourgeoisie makes the proletariat alienated from their natural human essence (Burkitt, 2019).

The importance of Marx's theory of alienation lies, in this article, in the alienation which the individual might meet in its lived world. The enhanced functional and rational thinking in modernity creates an alienation that involves the loss of connection to others, to ourselves and to the space we inhabit.

The alienation of spaces is also coined as a non-place. The distinction between a place and the non-place is the fact that a place is somewhere we can relate to. We feel a sense of home-coming. It has roots in history and tells us something, therefore it has meaning. A non-place is the opposite. It lacks meaning and has no history. This could be airports and supermarkets, which could be defined as homogeneous and pre-fabricated (Dylan Trigg, 2017)

The alienation of places in cities in modernity was a product of the dominated view on functional progress and a forecasting of traditions. One great example of an artist which capsulated the modernist alienation in art and an aesthetic is Edward Hopper.

Hopper is a modernist painter and investigates themes like isolation and alienation from the modernist period. The American city is the main focus in Hopper's paintings which is portrayed with a realistic approach. But the atmosphere he chooses enhances the desolation and danger rather than elegance and seduction. The city in Hopper's paintings is simple and mostly reduced to geometrical shapes, but in a sharp composition. He often used the three point lighting seen in the contemporary Hollywood industry, which may relate to the cinematic style his paintings have. At the same time he uses harsh light, which also gives his art pieces a noir kind of style.

The people in Hopper's painting are isolated or as he describes himself: "I describe the absence of sociability between individuals" (Hopper in Lynley, 2020)

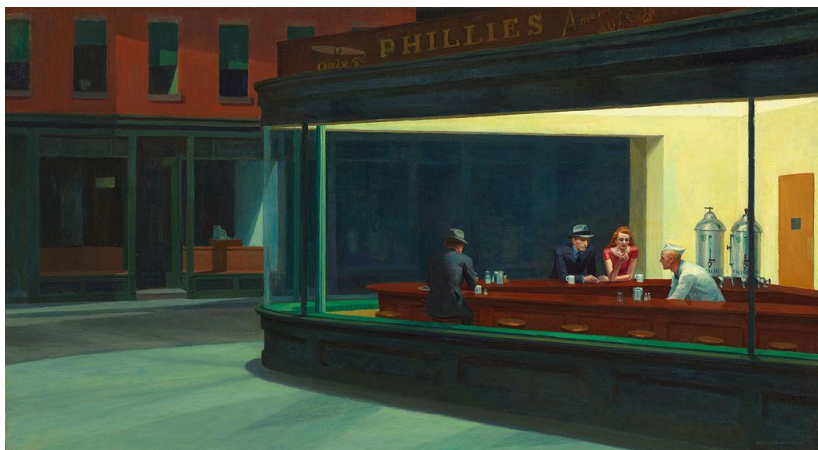


Fig 1. Nighthawks by Edward Hopper [1]

The atmosphere of loneliness in modernity could with the above descriptions be the concepts of alienating places, and the estrangement for other people. Places which we do not connect to, and where we find no relation to history. The functional street that reveals how we see our

world as a resource ready to be used. It is the loss of history to places and the disconnection to our human-essence that alienates us. The main focus to alienation and to an atmosphere of loneliness can therefore be created through space, structures and geometry in functional favour.

Postmodernism

As the modernistic way of thinking was grounded in grand narratives and scientific progress, which relied on rational and functional thinking, a fixed linear timeline and a looking forward to the future, a longing for the past began to evolve. The postmodern society revisited the past with a nostalgic yearning towards the mystic from before. Form began to dominate as function was rejected. In connection to looking towards the past, postmodern art has a unifying movement as it is characterized as a non-movement period. The period has no specific style but is instead defined as pastiche or parody (Willette, 2012).

Pastiche is this form of longing of what has been and can therefore be defined as a repetition and revival of already established forms from the majority's cultural memories, with no direct reference. Postmodern architecture arose in a new way that was familiar but yet something else and something new. Willette refers to this as a change of styles to something commodified in which they “lost their place in history and therefore their grip on reality”.

This can be explained by one of the key concepts in postmodernism: intertextuality.

Intertextuality is when a form refers to other forms, which both means that it weakens the relationship between form and reality and by referring to another form it is strengthening its own appearance as a form. Pastiche is by itself intertextual. The strategy of a pastiche is to refer to another form and to the contemporary world and thereby show the postmodern world in a new light (Willette, 2012).

The maybe most knowable of postmodern pastiche is Andy Warhol's pop art. Warhol's artworks are a perfect example of the postmodern rejection of the deeper meaning, which overlaid the art of modernism and instead being relative and inauthentic, with the lack of originality with a rejection of traditional conventions (Hagman, 2010).

In Cindy Sherman's depictions of herself in different settings and narratives, we see the art of pastiche. The photos mimic past movies, but these past movies are fully fictional.



Fig 2. Untitled stills 2 by Cindy Sherman [2]

The use of pastiche is in this case seen by referring to another aesthetic or style, where the mise-en-scene is not obvious, but the atmosphere she creates leads to vaguely remembered or misremembered movie stills from the past. What we see in Sherman's photos is depictions of multiple female characters though the model is all Cindy Sherman (Hoesterey, 1995).

The purpose of pastiche should not only be seen as a longing for the past but also how the repetition of the past is expressed in relation to the contemporary. This new way of being expressed creates a spark of our own individual narrative (Willette, 2012). The art critic Craig Owens argues that this form of postmodern narrative could be seen as a form of allegory. Imposition of new meaning in borrowed images, objects and narratives. (Owens, 1980) This applied widely in pop cultural media. An effort to reach pastness not by representing its historical content, but through style and the qualities of the images (Willette, 2012).

This new conflicting relationship towards the present is one element of the postmodern alienation. The different concepts of narrative and mood presented in postmodernism is pastiche, irony, parody, fragmentation, intertextuality, ect. The key concept is the gathering around the past, and the nostalgia for it (Willette, 2012)

The phenomenon of Nostalgia

The phenomenon of nostalgia is contemporal to be thought of as a longing for the past, or a sentimentality of the past. The term comes from the greek compound of *nostos* and *algos*, translated to *homecoming* and *pain*. It was coined by the Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer in 1688 which thought of it as a disease that created *erroneous representations* which would cause the afflicted to *lose touch with the present* (Boym, 2002).

The psychological conclusion today is that nostalgia is an inherent part of the human experience, and studies have pointed out that the experience of nostalgia may have a restorative function in social support for people who had a reduced experience of social support caused by loneliness. Another result was that the effect of loneliness increased the experience of nostalgia (Zhou, 2008).

The emotional map and cognitions of loneliness is characterized by unhappiness, pessimism, self-blame and depression (Anderson, Miller, Riger, Dill, and Sedikides, 1994; Cacioppo and Hawkley, 2005). Nostalgia is, on the other hand, more emotional ambivalence but is dominated by positive emotions, often to a nostalgic past where the self is surrounded by close others. What is profound is that the coactivation of the expression of happiness and sadness is often in the reflection of nostalgic recollections rather than ordinary or positive events. (Wildschut, Stephan, Sedikides, Routledge, & Arndt, 2008). The experience of happiness was though more frequently evoked rather than the experience of sadness in the recollection of nostalgic events (Zhou, 2008).

Restorative and reflective Nostalgia

Nostalgia is by Svetlana Boym suggests to be defined as *longing for a home that no longer exists - or never existed* (Boym, 2002). To this definition two types of nostalgia are introduced both as spatial expressions. The first is the *restorative nostalgia*, which deals with the reconstruction of the lost home. Second is *reflective nostalgia*, which is a more fragmented nostalgic recollection, which has no destination (Legg, 2004).

Restorative nostalgia defines a true identity and nature which belongs as an inherent part of a place. So more than rebuilding the historical past, the reconstruction of rituals of *home* and the features of this identity, is the point of interest in restorative nostalgia (Legg, 2004)

An example of *restorative nostalgia* in the reconstruction of The Cathedral Saint Alexander Nevsky after it was destroyed by Stalin.



Fig. 3. The rebuilt Cathedral Saint Alexander Nevsky [3]

Reflective nostalgia is explained by Boym as the concern about places with a fragmented image that is not unified. Places with history which are experienced rootless, due to its ever changing identity. These spaces are therefore dominated by the local tradition of autonomy. (Legg, 2004)

One example is St. Petersburg which, regardless of its old historical roots, has undergone different nomenclature, and the autonomy of this place is therefore fragmented (Legg, 2004)

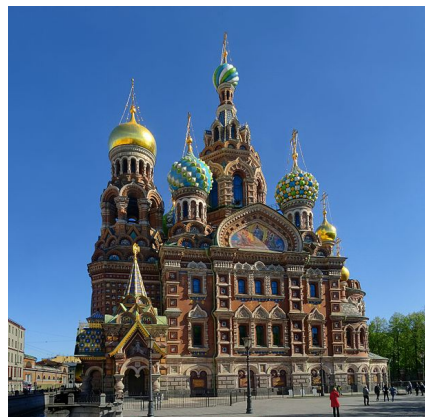


Fig. 4. St Petersburg [4]

A more general explanation of Boym's two types of nostalgia would define *restorative nostalgia* as the attempt to return to the past and relive it as exact as it was. However this is why *restorative nostalgia* is associated with *algos* or *pain*. Because in this attempt we also notice that time does not allow us to return to the past.

As for *reflective nostalgia* this type is the more general understanding of nostalgia in its offering of pleasure or nostos homecoming. Due to the fact that reflective nostalgia is the understanding of the past as the past. In this accept we:

“appreciate our memories for what they are—mental recreations of past experiences—and to take aesthetic pleasure in our present experience of a memory without fretting over the fact that we can never actually relive that moment in time” (McDonald, 2017)

So the fact that we are comprehensive with the imagined nostalgia in the present, makes it connected to our lived world, and not something that estranges the present. Instead nostalgia might provide a way to find meaning. Related to the pleasure which nostalgia can provide, the evoking of nostalgia is related to periods of transition, to find back to the stability we experience in the past through memories. Nostalgia is therefore suggested to be a way for us to find back to stability, so we are able to overcome present changes, which appear complex and not predictable (Batcho, 2017).

However this argument could also state that our lived world does evoke unfamiliarity, which is why we hunt the nostalgic atmosphere, yearning towards a past, which can provide us with familiarity. If that is the case, we could start to question why the past is such a profound topic of contemporary culture. And in that case we might also understand why a crisis of temporality is a proposed state of contemporary existence.

Nostalgia and media

The experience of nostalgia is so positively related that the contemporary media overflow our world with images that are trying to create nostalgic experiences. We see it with highly successful tv shows like *Stranger Things*, the second *Blade Runner* movie, and in advertising and product resurrection like *Nintendo*.



Fig. 5. Nintendo Classic Mini launched in 2016. [5]

The same applies in the music industry. The eighties analog synthesizer got a revival and new subgenres like *Chillwave*, *Synthwave*, *Vaporwave* and *Retrowave*, which rely on their appeal for nostalgia, have found their way into contemporary culture.

So why are we so obsessed with the past, or the imagination of the past?

To understand the underlying tendency or phenomenon of contemporary cultures it is interesting to look at the two musical subgenres: *Vaporwave* and *Hauntology*.

The approach to *Vaporwave* is to sample an old song, often from the eighties and make it sound as we would think of eighties music today, this means that the frame rate is reduced and rearranged so the chronology of the song is changed and rely on looping important melodic parts.

The subgenre's other main part is nostalgic imagery which complements the music, either old video material from the eighties or nineties which have been modified or a static image which copies the style of the same period. The result is a soundtrack for a fictional eighties science fiction movie. Andy Bennett calls this *received nostalgia* - feeling nostalgic for a time which the self has no connection to other than it is popular culture. An imagined past where listener's reconstruct nostalgia with personal memories to newly constructed memories from a non-existent time which is never experienced, yearning to a past that is unreachable in the present (Bennett in Ballam-Cross, 2021).

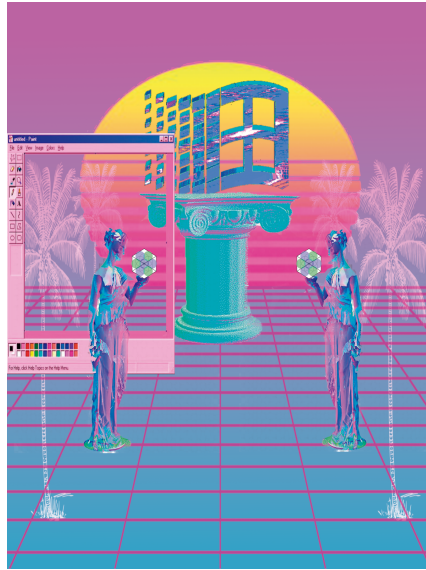


Fig. 6. Example of Vaporwave graphics [6]

Another explanation can be found in Booker's interpretation of Fredric Jameson. In his book *Postmodern Hollywood: What's New in Film and why it Makes Us Feel So Strange*, he argues that the complexity and fragmentation we experience in postmodern society could be seen as a schizophrenic experience of the contemporary world. This experience makes us isolated and disconnected, due to the fact that with a loss of connection there is no imaginable future in our horizon (Booker, 2007).

Nostalgia for the future

While this might lead to a meaninglessness and an imagined dystopian future, the writer Mark Fisher goes so far to say that we no longer can imagine a future, and that we find ourselves in a nostalgia for being able to imagine. This is why we still seek the future we imagined in the beginning of postmodernism, because in that period we were still able to be culturally innovative. In contemporary society we feel nostalgia for the possibility to imagine. Fisher interprets this tendency as a part of the concept of hauntology (Fisher, 2012).

The basis of hauntology was coined by Jacques Derrida, and has thereby been further discussed and extended by Fisher. Hauntology came from the concept of a persistence of the past elements, experienced as being haunted by a ghost. (Fisher, 2012)

Fisher interprets this concept by looking at how futuristic music sounds in 2005. The sound of the future is *not strange or dissonant* anymore, but instead evoke nostalgia and could as well have been produced in nineteen nineties. Fisher argues that the pastiche discussed by Jameson has become too familiar.

“By the twenty-first century, the kind of pastiche which Jameson discusses was now no longer exceptional; in fact it had become so taken for granted that it was not liable to be noticed anymore” (Fisher, 2012, p.17)

“there was no leading edge of innovation anymore” (Fisher, 2012, p.16).

The insistence of pastiche makes us exhausted by familiarity, and we find ourselves with a loss of cultural innovation and new kinds of sensorial experience. The reason for this loss is, as Fisher argues, the tendency to rely cultural innovation on technology, which today have made us unable to renew as the cultural technology only has become better at simulating style. (Fisher, 2012)

This is why we today feel a nostalgia for the future we were able to imagine in the past, which reveals that we are only able to create pastiche today. (Fisher, 2012)

Uncanny experience

The uncanny experience is something this research sees, as an important concept for the postmodern movement, and to create an estranged yet familiar atmosphere.

The expression uncanny is widely related to the work of Freud in his essay *Uncanny* (Freud, 1919). Uncanny is defined as the experience of something strangely familiar.

“Freud commits himself to a reading of the uncanny which implicates an ambivalent duality between the familiar and the unfamiliar” (Trigg, 2006, p. 30).

This interpretation of Freud by Trigg explains how the experience is the toggling between something pre-experienced yet estranged from this. Where it meets nostalgia is by defining uncanny as homely and unhomely (Trigg, 2006), which could relate to the *reflective nostalgia* and its *homecoming*, but as something experienced differently. This experience could refer to

the fragmentation and schizophrenic experience (Booker, 2007). As something that makes us question our presence.

Another term that is closely related to this, is defamiliarization. Instead of something strangely familiar, defamiliarization is the loss of familiarity in regards to common things or experience. This can also be used as an effect to emotional distance people to something viewed. One famous for this effect is the theater practitioner Bertolt Brecht. The effect is also called alienation-effect and distancing-effect, and its purpose is to make a representation of reality and not reality itself. (Brecht in Britannica, 2021)

Pastiche can be seen as a form of being uncanny or a defamiliarization, due to the familiarity it evokes in an unfamiliar way. It can therefore also create the experience of something artificial, as it represents a style but is not the style itself.

The uncanny experience is also addressed in Heidegger theory of *nearness*. *Nearness* is *being-itself*, which is experienced in action like crossing a bridge. As an opposition to nearness Heidegger sees *distancelessness*. *Distancelessness* is experienced in the contemporary world when we watch the news or talk to a customer on another continent (Kouppanou, 2019). In fact *distancelessness* is when:

“Distance in time and space are shrinking” (Heidegger, 1971, p.165).

But this does not imply that distancelessness is nearness, because nearness is not the experience of a shortening of distance (Kouppanou, 2019). For Heidegger modern media replaces one type of experience with another, in instance knowledge is replaced by information and the original image by the simulacra from our screen (Kouppanou, 2019). This creates an uncanny experience of the real world. It defamiliarizes us from the other, because we have created an illusion that the otherness is accessible though they are not in reality.

Temporality and reality in crisis

Prior to modernity's concept of the truth and the future, postmodernity is engaged in the past and identity. Niemeyer argues therefore that nostalgia is not only a trend, but is the way we relate positively and negatively to time and space. This attention towards the past is a way to reconstruct the past, present and future in our contemporary world. Niemeyer argues with the

use of Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality, that we find ourselves being nostalgic for the real, and through Boyer that nostalgia is an indication of the crisis of temporality. We create worlds we can feel nostalgia for as a form of escapism (Niemeyer, 2014).

If we focus on the concepts of the postmodern philosopher Baudrillard, what he claimed was that the postmodern society creates situations where the subject loses the connection with reality prior to the ideas in modern theory being a representation for reality and truth (Kellner, 2020). What Baudrillard would claim was that the subjects flee from the uncanny reality into a pleasant world of hyperreality which is the realities that media and technology makes us experience. But in this world the subject is fragmented and has lost connection. This other reality which the media provide is being assembled to what Baudrillard refers to as Simulacrum - A hyperreality and an image of what we used to experience as reality. In a postmodern world the subject's being or existence is in this case only relying on the media and technology experience. (Kellner, 2020)

The atmosphere of loneliness is in postmodernity, therefore argued being the loss of reality and temporality.

Case study

The postmodern atmosphere can be divided into the uncanny atmosphere of familiarity and unfamiliarity. This uncanny experience is the nostalgia for the mystic past on how we choose to remember it, leading towards fragmentation and meaninglessness. This atmosphere deals with the nostalgia for the presence. The other atmosphere is the nostalgia for the future. These two could also be explained as the pastiche of the exceptional uncanny pastiche, and the nostalgia of being able to imagine a future even though this future is dystopian. In the investigation of these two fairly complex statements, and the creation of the postmodern atmosphere of loneliness, two postmodern pop cultural genres or styles have been studied, in terms of how the uncanny atmosphere is created with the use of a lighting design and colors.

1. Cyberpunk

The subgenre to science fiction; cyberpunk, was a literary movement in the beginning of the nineteen eighties. It was widely dominated by a postmodern, dystopian, near future, which questioned the capitalistic western society's thinking of the liberal self. Like other science fiction the main theme is the relationship between the natural and unnatural, but instead of privileging humans in the center of things, cyberpunk dwells with the ontology of, what it is to be human. Offering other modalities in opposition to the conventional thinking of human existence. (Hollinger, 1990).

Shortly after the beginning of the literary movement, the director Ridley Scott created the visual style of cyberpunk in his movie *Blade Runner*. Compared to the common science fiction universe, *Blade Runner* takes place in a futuristic city and not in a distant place from earth. The city represents itself in a post industrial decay, in reference and in critique of late capitalism and postmodernism. (Bruno, 1987).

The representation and the appearance of the near futuristic city in *Blade Runner* is filled with pastiche and a dystopian atmosphere. This chapter will deconstruct the spaciality, materiality, color and lighting design from different scenes of *Blade Runner* (1982) and the sequel *Blade Runner 2049* (2017).

The postmodern metropolis

The architecture, place and spatiality in Los Angeles - the name of the city in *Blade Runner*, appears large and overpopulated, not with reference to the *functional* modernism, with strict

lines and equal skyscrapers. Instead there is no order in the large constructions, but still they fit together as the buildings create a unity in a chaotic and fragmented image.

Los Angeles from *Blade Runner* does not appear as the contemporary city Los Angeles, but instead refers to the atmosphere from other cities like New York and Tokyo. The architecture is pastiche, and gives a *deja vu* to the architectural styles of Greek, Eastern Ancient and Egypt cultures. The structures consist though partly of metal and concrete, which gives it an industrial look.

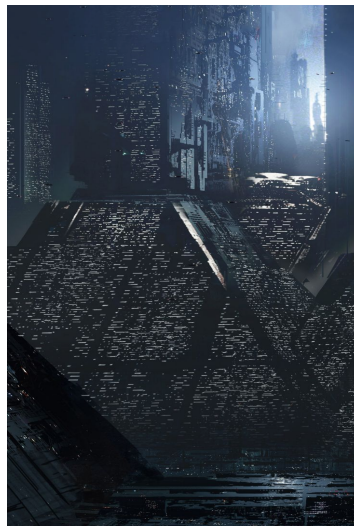


Fig 7. Los Angeles in Blade Runner [7]

The buildings have pattern and displacements of mini construction on the large construction. The fragmented image of the city creates familiarity with its use of the name Los Angeles and by the familiarity of unique architectural styles it copies. However the image is also unfamiliar and fragmented, due to its references to other cities and new ways of constructing these well known architectural styles.

Lighting design properties

The light sources which are present in this still image, consists mainly of the windows, which act as one of Richard Kelly's light effects: Play of brilliance. (Neuman, 2010). The large number of windows is ordered in groups and creates an experience of an artificial and digitized atmosphere. The windows act as points of information and are not illuminating other surfaces.

What mainly illuminates the buildings is a large directional light source. The light source makes you think of a powerful moon or a cold artificial sun. This light source creates the focal glow and illuminates the fog in the scene, which acts as the ambient luminescence, and

makes a glowing effect. (Neuman, 2010). The strong directional light creates high contrast, and reveals the materiality and depth, and due to its side directions, it creates long shadows as the sun in the golden hour.

Material

The materiality of the city appears mainly as concrete or steel - glossy material, and reflections from water on the ground breaks up the plane surfaces.

Color

The city is grey and dull and the colors appearing are only from the light sources CCT value, consisting of the windows intermediate CCT value and the bright moon with its cold CCT value.

Big business - commercialised city

In the future imagined in cyberpunk commercial signs are everywhere and the use of neon-like glowing light in vibrant colors is an important image of the future city. It is the foreseeing of late capitalism's evolution of the society into a dystopian future, and the total neglect of the individual favored big business. The holograms fall into the uncanny sensation of life and movement.



Fig 8. Monogram 1 in Blade Runner 2049 [8]

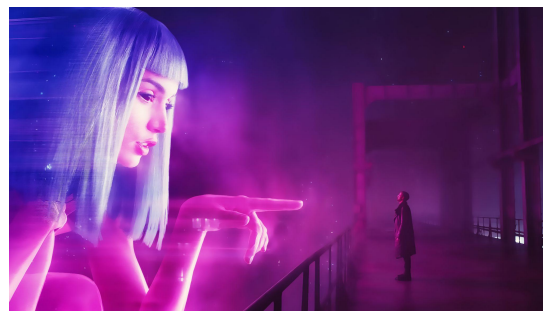


Fig 9. Monogram 2 in Blade Runner 2049 [9]

Lighting design properties

The light sources in the style of cyberpunk when we reach street level, consist of illuminated neon signs, holograms, fluorescent light sources and hazy ambient light. The neon signs and holograms act as area light with different hues and are unidirectional. This method of lighting combined with the hazy fog, the ambient luminescence; bright and multi-colored. There is an

artificiality of this environmental lighting as it creates a brightness in the nocturnal city, making everything flat and shadowless, as a form of staging effect. Another effect the neon signs and holograms create is in line with play of brilliants: The light creates information in themselves and shows another effect - glow.

Materiality

The materials are again concrete and steel, yet the maybe most important material for this type of lighting is the fog and haze. It is through the haze's interaction and illumination that the colors and flatness appear.

Color

The atmosphere of colors consists in these two images of a triade color combination and an analog combination. The triade consists of colors in between red, green and blue, and the analog around purple and pink. The colors of purple and pink are especially used in the nineteen eighties and nineteen ninetieth pop cultural aesthetic.

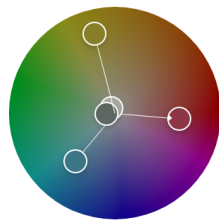


Fig 10. Color wheel of fig 8

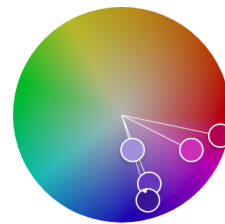


Fig 11. Color wheel of fig 9

In the first images, the use of fluorescent intermediate CCT is also present. As fluorescents have a peak in the green wavelengths, it can create an uncanny effect. Especially if the human skin is illuminated by a fluorescent light it can appear strange and as if the person was sick.

God's eye

A specific atmosphere in *Blade Runner* makes the pastiche style noticeable. The use of a single directional light source to create the haunting atmosphere of noir. The use of the noir lighting technique creates in *Blade Runner* an invasion of privacy atmosphere instead of the fear of darkness in noir. I define this type of lighting in *Blade Runner* as God's eye, as they give the experience of an invasion of privacy, almost as a visualization of a surveillance society.



Fig 12. God's Eye lighting in Blade Runner [10]

Lighting design properties

The scene lighting design consists of a single powerful light source, making everything dark and contrasty. The character is back lit and does therefore only appear as a silhouette. The haze and the blinds give the light cone texture.

Materiality and color

The materiality is haze and fog, which makes the light distribution visible. The light has a cold CCT value.

Floating world - toxicating and pollutions

The glowing effect is made possible by the haze and fog of the cyberpunk city, which creates this hazy atmospheric light. The appearance of the haze on the street level can be compared to how other big cities appear, like New York. In the world of cyberpunk the hazy atmospheric light could visualize the late industrialism's toxicity by the illumination of the smoke, which gives the atmosphere a hue of purple, yellow or green, which does not appear warm, but gives people a strangeness in their appearance, as if they were flooded by a color. The term Floating World is a useful metaphor for the life and experience of a place, which appears segregated from the world of nature and is dragged into a human made, artificial and synthetic world. The lack of sky visibility creates a ceiling, which makes it difficult to sense elevation and ground, and therefore creates an experience as a Floating World.



Fig 13. Floating world - Blade Runner 2049 [11]

Lighting design properties

The hazy lighting acts in this scene as ambient luminescence as we saw in the street level scene with the neon signs. But as it was clear that the ambient lighting came from the neon light, the source of the hazy lighting is in this case more unclear. The ambient luminescence is also more strong, which is why we imagine the sun as the light source.

Color

The colors of the ambient lighting are overflowing every object in the scene. In this case it creates the polluted atmosphere as if the lighting from the sun was reacting to something in the air, creating the orange hue. The color combination in this scene is monochromatic.



Fig 14. Color wheel of Fig 13.

2. Vaporwave

The other case study is the style of *Vaporwave*. Instead of being a style of a movie, *Vaporwave* is an audio-visual music genre. The genre relies on the use of pop culture media as images, graphic and video clips. *Vaporwave* was established during the 2010's as a part of the different subgenres that grew out of the internet in this period. It has strings to the different micro-cultures as *synthwave* (Ballam-Cross, 2021), which is grounded in nostalgic and ironic reconstructions of eighties and nineties sounds and aesthetics. *Vaporwave* has taken its name from *vaporware* the argot of: The computer companies adoption of new technology which never comes in production, but is promoted to make interest around the company. This aesthetic cliché depicts retro imaginary to expose the immorality of capitalists and the underlying emptiness behind the curtain of late capitalism (Koc, 2017). The journalist Simon Chandler also states that the underlying theme of this subgenre, is a critical thinking of consumerism and its inherent part of contemporary society. He states that we are caught in a nostalgia generated by the media. In his article *Escaping Reality: the Iconography of Vaporwave* (Chandler, 2016), Chandler points out some distinct audio-visual elements of *Vaporwave*. One example is *the mall*, which Chandler thinks is an objectification of the consumer society, ironically represented as this heavenly place of perfection. Other elements are *video game* aesthetics grids and checkerboards and icons as the Sega Saturn, with its carefree childhood nostalgia, *japanese* and *asian imaginary*, *neo-classicism* and *surrealism*, *hazy skylines*, *the living place*, *obsolete tech* and *design*, *nineties television* and *the summer* and *sea* in connection with *palms* (Chandler, 2016). These are both stylistic categories in regards to the atmosphere and objects.



Fig 15. The cover artwork for *Floral Shoppe* (2011) [12]

The image material is internet covers for the different music tracks. To take one that has a great status in *Vaporwave* is the artist *Macintosh Plus*. In many ways the cover image of his album *Floral Shopper* consists of multiple of the above mentioned elements: *Roman statue*, *checkerboard*, *asian text* as the title and *the hazy city*. The color pink is very present and the vibrant, neon colored atmosphere is dominant in the depiction of the city, which is some of the features suggested by Koc (Koc, 2017). Koc related these stylistic features to the aesthetics of David Lynch's (1991) *Twin Peaks*.



Fig 16. Vaporwave aesthetic from Reddit [13]

Lighting design properties

The lighting properties of *Vaporwave* could be characterized by its dominating ambient luminescence which makes surfaces even colored, and creates the flatness of the different elements. The elements act thereby as props in a scene, which gives it the same kind of staging effect as mentioned in *Cyberpunk*. The other is the effect of neon light and the glowiness which appears with the appearance of the hazy atmosphere.

Materiality

The materiality is both diffuse surfaces giving it its flatness and evenness together with the haze. The glossy floor and shiny steel is another materiality also seen in *cyberpunk*, and last the use of water as both reflector and transparent glowing material.

Colors

What is very distinct in Vaporwave is the overflowing of a hue, especially pink and purple. The first image by Macintosh Plus consists of an analog color combination around pink towards the red. The other images consist also of an analog combination around pink but are more moved towards blue. This is again an example of the nostalgia for the colors of the nineteen eighties and nineteen nineties (Juicebox interaction, 2021).

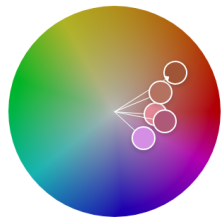


Fig 17. Color wheel of fig. 15



Fig 18. Color wheel of fig. 16

Web survey

The literature research and case studies, concludes that the atmosphere of loneliness is contemporary to be found as the atmosphere that makes us alienated from reality and illuminates a crisis of our temporality. This survey study will investigate people's experience of the style and atmosphere in 9 pop cultural images. At the same time the aim is to investigate the possibility of a postmodern lighting design, in the creation of an atmosphere that either relies on the uncanny experience of pastiche and its fragmented relationship to the presence, or the atmosphere that leads us to an experience of previous conceptions of the future and therefore states our nostalgia for the future.

Considerations

While a qualitative study is more in depth of a phenomenon's actual structure, due to the qualitative method's approach in revealing participants' common experience patterns, what is considered in this study is the size of such a study. And as this study relies heavily on a theoretical exploratory approach to reach the common structures of an atmosphere of loneliness, a survey study is therefore instead chosen to reveal and verify the patterns of pre chosen words from the findings of the exploratory research in a word list. While this might not reveal the true structures of the atmosphere, it will point towards some common definitions which the participants find of the word list they are given, and give some verification.

Survey design

To test the impact of a lighting design through visual communication in the creation of the ironic reconstructed nostalgia, a test has been conducted with the purpose of framing postmodern definitions in relation to different lighting designs and color combinations and the media style it creates. The purpose with this study is to investigate the long-term memory and associations which makes us experience an atmosphere. 31 participants (18 female and 13 male), from the age of 24 to 36, were exposed to 9 images, and asked an open question to each. They were able to answer with 19 pre chosen words from a word list. The participants were allowed to choose a maximum of 3 definitions from the word list.

Image material

The image material was randomly chosen from pop cultural media, associated with three different style periods.

The first period is the style of pop cultural media from around 1922 to 1942. A poster with the Kameliadamen (1922) from the artist Sven Brasch, a still image from the movie Casablanca (1942) in color, and a still image from the movie Grand Budapest Hotel (2012) with a style from WW2.



Fig 17. Casablanca [14]



Fig 18. Kameliadamen [15]

Fig 19. Grand Budapest Hotel [16]

The second period is the postmodern thematized style. A still image from the movie Blade Runner 2049 (2017) taking the style of cyberpunk, a cover image from Macintosh Plus (2011) taking the style of vaporwave, and last a photography *Untitled(The father)* by the artist Gregory Crewdson (2007), with the style of the nineties mystic, with reference to David Lynch and Steven Spielberg.



Fig 20. Macintosh Plus [12]



Fig 21. Untitled "Father" [17]

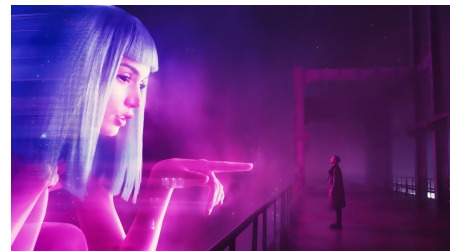


Fig 22. Blade Runner 2049 [18]

The third period is the contemporary style of pop cultural media with no distinct postmodernism characteristics. A poster of Game of Thrones (2011), a still image from a Nike commercial (2021), and a still image from the movie Parasite (2019).



Fig 23. Parasite [19]



Fig 24. Nike commercial [20]



Fig 25. Game of Thrones [21]

Word list

The study was conducted as a survey where participants should describe the style of the 9 images dispersed in random order. The participants had 19 different words to choose from. The list of words were a combination of words, synonyms, interpretations and opposites of which define the characteristics of postmodernism (Willette, 2012; Sharman, Chaudhary, 2011). The study of the visual communication of pop cultural media, investigates if pop cultural media, based on their style, could be interpreted as the experience of a postmodern atmosphere.

<i>Calm</i>	<i>Anxiety</i>
<i>Cold</i>	<i>Warm</i>
<i>Ironic</i>	<i>Sincere</i>
<i>Parody</i>	<i>Original</i>
<i>Utopian</i>	<i>Dystopian</i>
<i>Futuristic</i>	<i>Past</i>
<i>Playful</i>	<i>Serious</i>
<i>Dreamy</i>	<i>Realistic</i>
<i>Nostalgic</i>	<i>Contemporary</i>
<i>Neutral</i>	

Results

Gender
31 svar

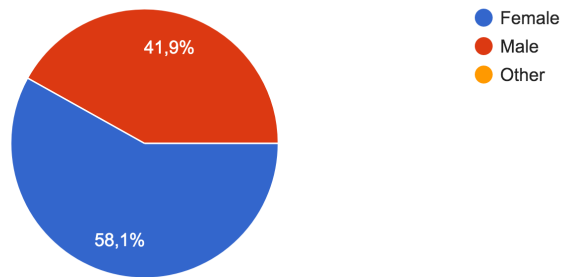


Fig 26. Web survey - Gender

Age
31 svar

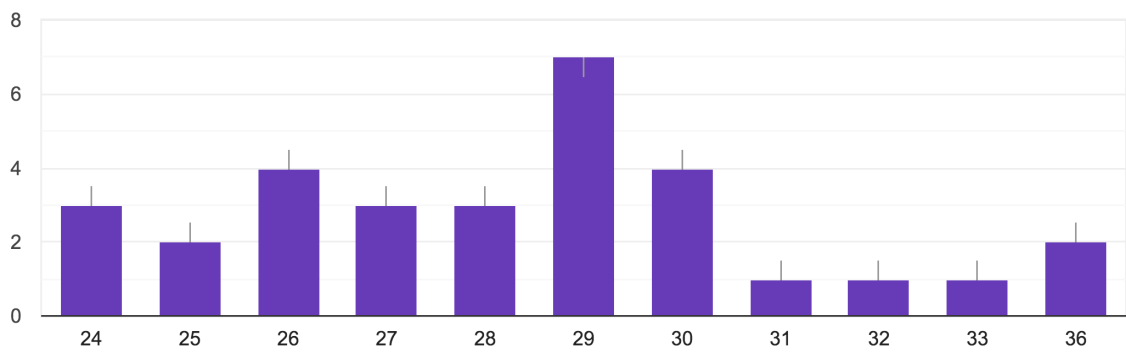


Fig 27. Web survey - Age distribution

The results from *The first period*:

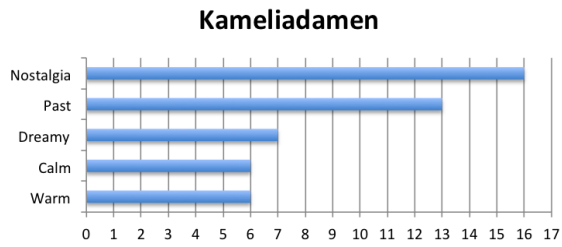


Fig 28. Answers to Kameliadamen fig. 18

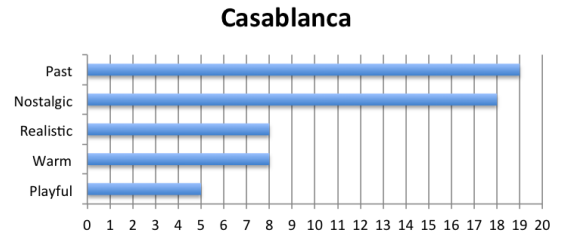


Fig 29. Answers to Casablanca fig. 17

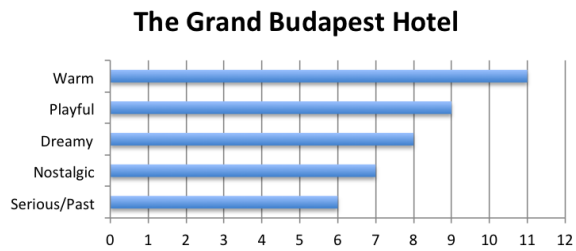


Fig 30. Answers to The Grand Budapest Hotel fig. 19

The results from *the second period*:

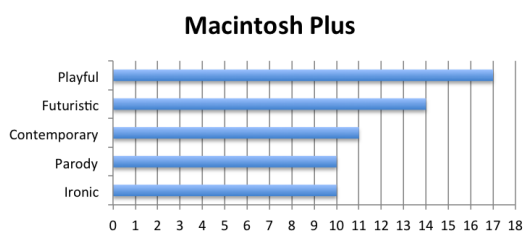


Fig 31. Answers to Macintosh Plus fig. 20

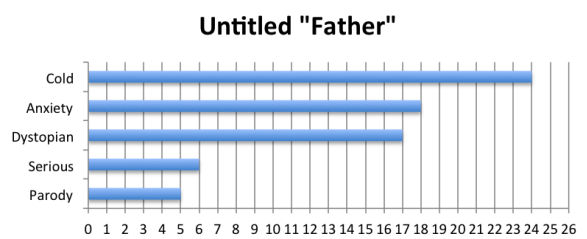


Fig 32. Answers to Untitled "Father" fig. 21

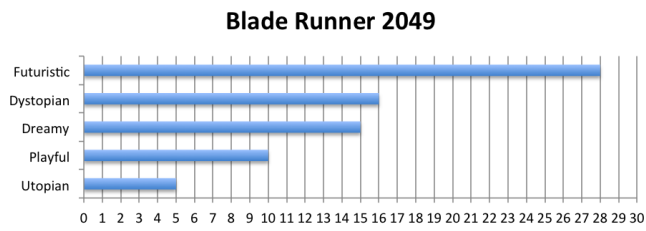


Fig 33. Answers to Blade Runner 2049 fig 22

The results from *the third period*:

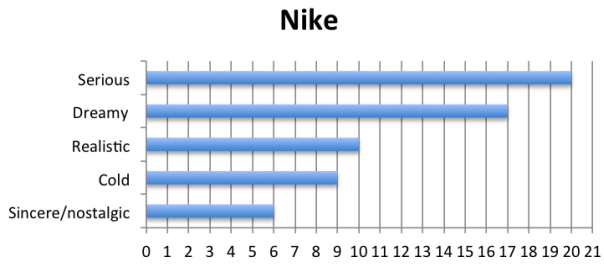


Fig 34. Answers to Nike commercial fig. 24

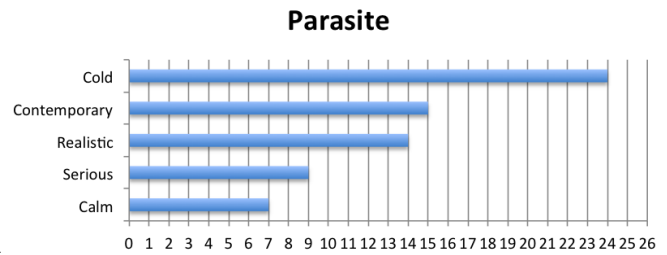


Fig 35. Answers to Parasite fig. 23

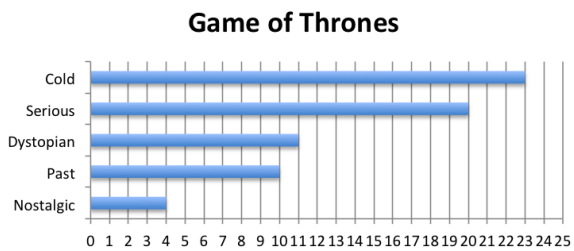


Fig 36. Answers to Game of Thrones fig. 25

Web survey analysis

As an extension of the findings from the literature research the analysis will focus on three subjects. Nostalgia for the future, the exceptional uncanny nostalgia and modernism related to a metamodernism movement.

The exceptional uncanny nostalgia

The pop images from *the second period*, chosen for their postmodern characteristics, shared by the participants a common experience in their style as something of the future. One of the words which is chosen is dystopian. The idea of a dystopian is the future we might fear to reach, or as a cynicism and skepticism towards the idea of the future (Willette, 2012). The other word which is chosen is the more neutral style of futuristic, which just points towards the future. Seen in relation to some of the other definitions chosen by the participants, such as anxiety and parody, the postmodern meaninglessness is arguably a subject of all the images from the second period (Booker, 2007).

The experience of a style or atmosphere as meaningless points towards the isolation and disconnection characterized in postmodernism as a consequence of the style pastiche. The loss of connection ruins the imaginable future and makes the expectation of it dystopic.

Playful and parody are other postmodern definitions (Sharman, Chaudhary, 2011). Parody is like pastiche, one of the key concepts in postmodernism and stands for its distance from the past it represents to make fun of its meaning. Parody is therefore also seen in connection with playfulness, as it does not treat the subject seriously, but instead positioning itself with an ironic distance. The experience of the image is by the participants also defined as contemporary, which together with futuristic and parody points towards both past, present and future. This could indicate a temporal crisis and an ironic relation to temporality.

Vaporwave is experienced contemporary as a style or atmosphere of contemporary culture but is also defined as a parody. This combination suggests that contemporary culture is a parody, and as the participants also define it as futuristic, tells us that there is not a great expectation towards the future.

Nostalgia for the future

Another aspect, which could be analyzed from the common definition of these images being futuristic, is the argument that we have reached our imaginable capability of a future (Fisher, 2012), and that the future still looks as we imagined it in the beginning of postmodernism. While all of these images are produced in the twentieth first century, the stylistic themes place them in the style of the eighties and nineties, which might argue that we are nostalgic or we seek to evoke a nostalgia. The envision of the future as a place, covered in neon light and old technology is for rational thoughts quite paradoxical and ironic, as these all are obsolete lighting technology, and only are used in creation of art and communication. This might again emphasize the inability to imagine anything new, and that we are living in a postmodern society, where identity and form are more important than function.

Modernism and metamodernism

The two pop images *Casablanca* and *Kameliadamen* produced in the period of modernity both rate high in: Past and nostalgic. This might indicate a correlation between the interpretation of the meaning of these two words. Another commonality between these two pop images from *the first period* is the warm experience, which could indicate a positive nostalgia related to the style of modernism.

The structure of these images' style adds to the argument that we have a common recognition of something authentic, even though we are not all familiar with the content of the images but the style, we are able to put in a context.

The style of *The Grand Budapest Hotel* is experienced differently than the others from the *first period*. It could be argued that the style is a pastiche of the two other images, and thereby the style of pop cultural modernism.

The commonalities are not as clear for the participants as the others images from *the first period*. It could be argued that there is a fragmented relation to the style. Rated highest is warm and playful. Playful could both point towards postmodernism and modernity, however in connection with nostalgic and past, the style and atmosphere points more in direction towards modernism.

The score on Serious is another aspect which is not in line with postmodernism. This is why it could be argued to be a part of metamodernism. Oscillating between postmodernism and

modernism, and instead of nihilism and skepticism, it is characterized as sincere and quirky, with development and the future in the horizon again (Baciua, Bocos, Baciú-Urzica, 2015).

The pop images from *the third period* show general commonalities in the experience of them as being serious, realistic, sincere and contemporary. Pointing towards a presence which is not only parodic and ironic but serious, as we might not want to distance ourselves from the present, and therefore can imagine a future. Another definition of the three images in *the third period* is cold. Together with realistic and contemporary, this could still indicate an alienating relationship with the presence, and a reality which is not as warm and pleasant as we imagine the past. In contrast to *the second period* of pop culture media, there is not in *the third period* the same escapism, which we for instance relate to in parody. This could indicate that some of the pop images are moving in a direction rather than we see with the postmodernity non-direction.

Reflections on methodological approach

The web survey conducted is a small study, and is therefore used in combination with the findings from the literature research. The survey is used to validate some of the argued statements regarding the atmosphere of loneliness in a postmodern society.

One of the areas worth of discussion is, how valid the results of the survey is, when it is designed as a quantitative test with pre chosen words, instead of a qualitative test, where a meaning is analysed from the description of a participant's experience. (Brinkmann and Tanggaard, 2015). One of the problems of this type of investigation regards the semiotics of the words for the word list, in which the participants are to define the style of the 9 images. As some of the words are not everyday used, there could be different interpretations of the meaning of the words. This could lead to an avoidance of these words, or a misinterpretation of the meaning of the words. How this could be avoided was, by questioning the participants, on what they interpret as the meaning of the words they choose. This would enhance the size of the study, and make it more time consuming to respond to the web survey.

In the survey, for the majority of images, it was possible to have common definitions selected by the participants which validate a common interpretation of the words' semiotics.

Another area is the amount of images in the test. By having three images for each style period, there is a possibility of seeing a pattern of what the participants find defining for the image's style and atmosphere. What could be an issue is when a definition is not fully supported, but instead several definitions are chosen, as seen with some of the images. This could have been resolved by having a larger amount of images, that would support a wider spectrum of the different styles.

The design

As this study is researched in combination with visual communication and lighting design the overall appearance of light and color is the key interest. Therefore the characteristic of the positioning and history of the place is not in the same interest as the appearance of light and color, and a mundane common space is therefore chosen.

Space

The space chosen for the creation of an atmosphere of loneliness with a lighting design is a mundane public space imagined as a restaurant. It has several objects with different functions as well as no direct reference. The materiality is varied so the elements consist of metal, glossy, diffuse and translucent materials.

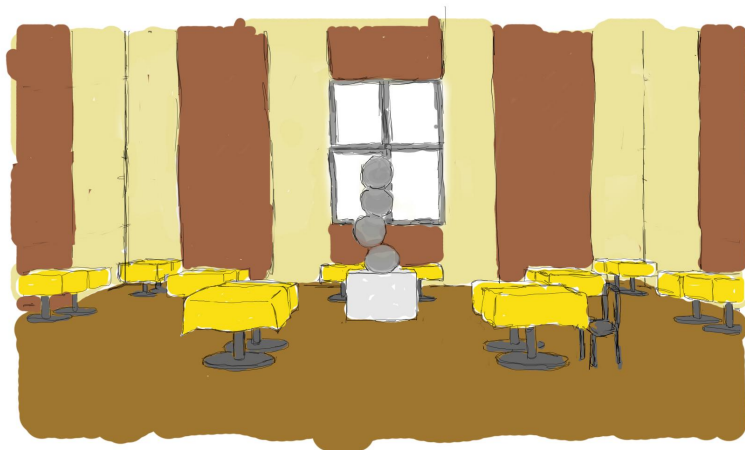


Fig 37. Sketch of restaurant



Fig 38. 3D visualization of restaurant

Inspirations towards the aesthetics of loneliness

The aesthetics of loneliness is in modernity the revealing of a functional alienating world. In a postmodern contemporary society the attention is instead towards the forms and not only functions we experience in the contemporary world, in purpose of evoking memories where we find ourselves estranged from the world.

This research heavily sees postmodern lighting and pop media as the aesthetics which alienate us for not only places but our world and reality, in the creation of nostalgia and expectation to our reality which cannot be experienced in reality. Due to this founding the lighting design for an atmosphere of loneliness will rely on a reconstructed nostalgia or a pastness.

The inspiration for this nostalgia is through pastiche and how the light and colours are used, with an enhanced focus on the findings from the case study of both *Cyberpunk* and *Vaporwave*.

Concept 1.



Fig 39. Blade Runner 2049 [11]

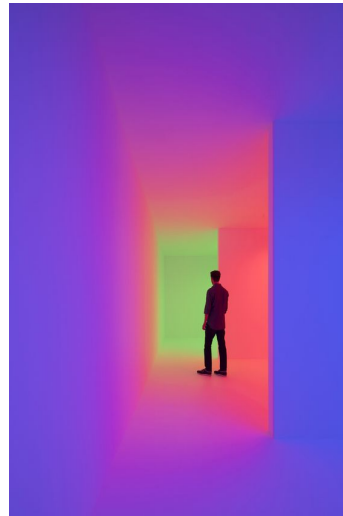


Fig 40. Tunnel piece by James Turrell [22]



Fig 41. Islands by Carl Burton [23]

The example of the work of James Turrells is a great reference of the use of colored ambient and area light, in the play with the appearance of colors in combination to each other, and the revealing effect of how the world or the spatiality is perceived to us, in the new constellation which this can give. Another artist which uses some of the same concepts is the artist Carl Burton. Turning mundane places into something relatable as a different reality, which we can escape to.

3D visualization



Fig 42. Concept 1. 3D visualization 1



Fig 43. Concept 1. 3D visualization 2



Fig 44. Concept 1. 3D visualization 3

To have the flush of color, in the concept of giving the space a single color, to enhance the sensation of the hue, the idea in the first concept is to use haze as medium. The haze is a good material to illuminate and at the same time, it increases the spatiality as the walls are not visible. This can give a sense of claustrophobia and disconnect the viewer from the surroundings. This concept uses the same abandoned atmosphere as *Blade Runner 2049*, and can therefore be seen as a pastiche.

The first image uses an intermediate CCT value, the second an orange hue and the last a red hue.

Concept 2.



Fig 45. Exorcist movie still [24]



Fig 46. untitled (Ray of light) by Gregory Crewdson [25]

The mystical and uncanny effect with reference to the noir style, is a very dominant lighting setup used in postmodernism. There is a cold and horrifying atmosphere related to the strong spotlight effect, with its cold CCT value. This effect is today associated with Steven Spielberg and David Lynch.

3D visualization

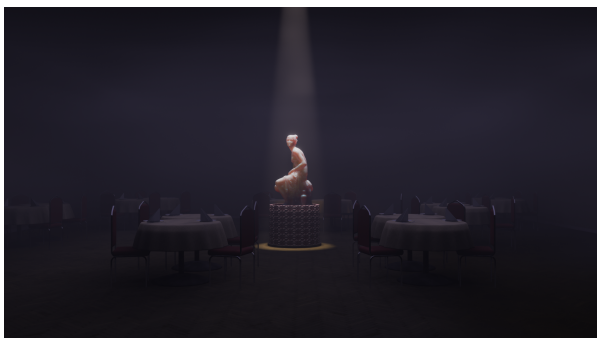


Fig 47. Concept 2. 3D visualization 1



Fig 48. Concept 2. 3D visualization 2



Fig 49. Concept 1. 3D visualization 3

This concept is exploring the effect of the spotlight as a way to give it a staging effect, which makes it intertextual as something fictional. The ambient lighting or haze lighting creates a softness, with both an intermediate and cold CCT value, which is used complementary with the spotlight's CCT value. The last example is with the use of the orange hue as spotlight color to create a more uncanny effect to the pastiche of this nineties aesthetic.

Concept 3.

The next concept investigates the grid aesthetic with its reference to retro games. This concept is also seen in other eighties movies with the new ability of creating 3D simulation. The neon colors are a great part of the style. Some of these elements also contribute to the vaporwave aesthetic.

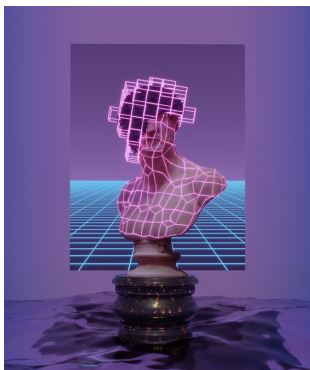


Fig 50. Vaporwave aesthetic from Reddit [26]



Fig 51. Tron movie still [27]

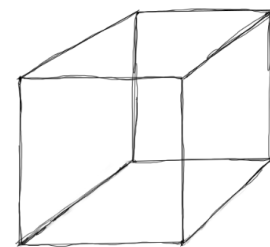


Fig 52. Sketched cube

3D visualization

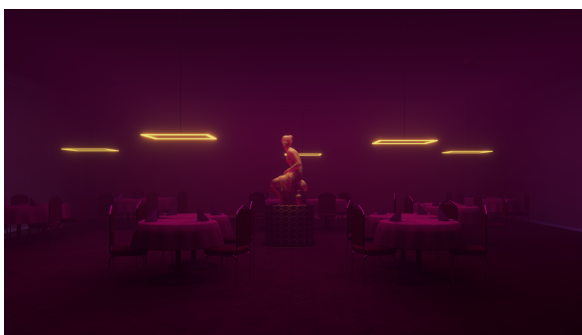


Fig 53. Concept 3. 3D visualization 1



Fig 54. Concept 3. 3D visualization 2

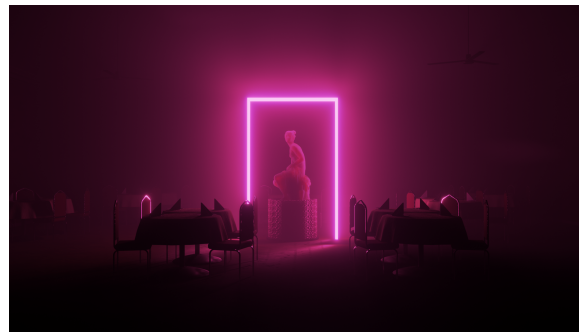


Fig. 55. Concept 3. 3D visualization 3

All of the images make use of these simple grid light sources, to evoke the aesthetic of retro games. The grids are only for decoration and could therefore be argued as a form in contrast to a functional light source. The first visualization uses the same atmosphere ambient luminescence as concept 1 with a pink hue with glowing orange shapes. The second and third visualization focuses on the statue and the contrasty relationship between the ancient and new neon aesthetic, with an orange and pink hue.

Concept 4.

The fourth concept investigates the use of color and brightness to reach a more positive evocation of nostalgia for the eighties and nineties through the vaporwave aesthetic. This aesthetic uses colors and gradients between the light blue, pink and purple hue.

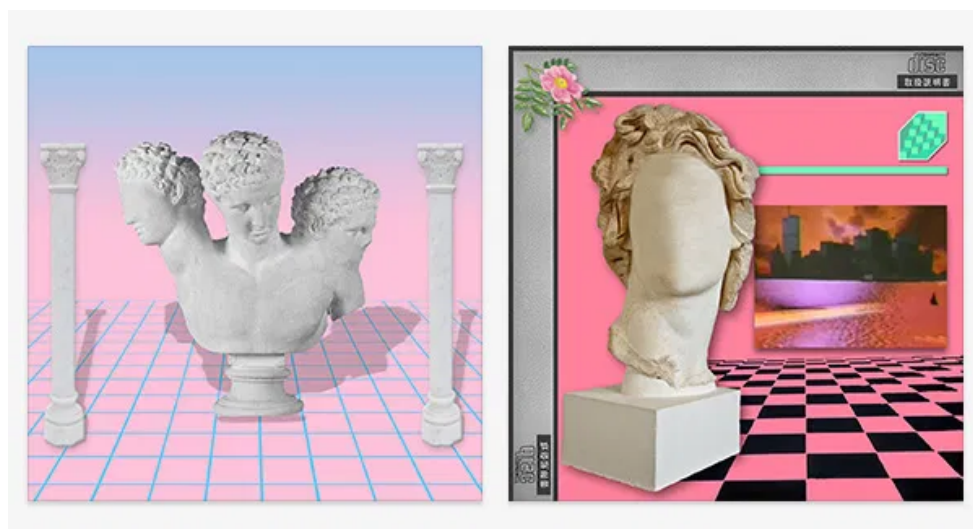


Fig 56. Macintosh Plus two album covers [28]

3D visualization



Fig 57. Concept 4. 3D visualization 1



Fig 58. Concept 4. 3D visualization 2

The first visualization investigates the characteristics of *vaporwave* with the use of a higher luminous output from the big area light and a hue towards the lighter blue and pink.

The second visualization breaks with the realistic lighting setup so the elements in the space get broken up, and therefore loses its coherency. When the floor is made as light sources its color and surface gets evened out, much more in relation to the vaporwave single colored graphic surfaces.

Final design

The atmosphere and style which dominates the pop cultural media in postmodernism, gathers around pastiche - evoking nostalgia for a pastness or something recognizable. This can be by the pleasure of an imagined nostalgia as a way of escaping the presence or simply due to the nostalgic moment, where it was possible to imagine the future.

Postmodern lighting design could be defined as staged lighting, as this installation makes us aware of the action of us looking at it - a postmodern lighting design of intertextuality. This is what the pastiche lighting design makes us do, recognize and either comment in the form of parody or as sensation of the pastness. Postmodern lighting design creates by staging itself, an atmosphere of artificiality. The way of making it artificial or staged is the use of an uncanny effect, which is accomplished with the use of colored or dreamy light sources and effects.

The final design is chosen as it has a pleasurable atmosphere, which could be argued to positioning it as late postmodernism. We are forgetting the meaninglessness in the hyperreal (Kellner, Douglas, 2020), and are seeking ways of escaping the crisis of temporality. The final design lays upon the vaporwave aesthetic, and the way we wish to remember the past.



Fig 59. Final design

Discussion

The atmosphere of loneliness is analysed and investigated in this study from a Heideggerian way of interpreting experience and being (Wheeler, 2020). The statement regarding loneliness as a lack of context (Dahlberg, 2007) and thereby an estrangement from the world, can meet its issues, when it is argued as an atmosphere. Are we actually experiencing loneliness in an atmosphere of postmodern nostalgia, or is it a more common trend in contemporary society? In this discussion the example from the lockdown under Covid-19 can be a good example. What could explain the loneliness people experienced under Covid-19, might be connected to the isolation and to be apart from our close ones, as well as the fact that it was not possible to project any ideas into the future, while being in a situation as the lockdown. The same experience is what this study argues is the case in a postmodern society and not only in relation to Covid-19. This is where this study meets its challenges, as there has been an extraordinary increase in people feeling lonely under Covid-19 (Varga, T.V., Bu, F., Dissing, A.S., Elsenburg, L.K., Bustamante, Matta, J., van Zon, S.K.R. ... Rod, N.H., 2021), which could cause doubt that we are experiencing a common loneliness in a contemporary, media saturated society. But the fact that we feel lonely, when we are conscious about being alone (Borodulin and Asiliev, 1999), might be why loneliness was triggered under the lockdown. That we became conscious about the temporal crisis we are living in, and the experience of this loneliness might be unconscious in our everyday life unrelated to Covid-19.

What this study in the end concludes and creates with a lighting design, is an atmosphere that consists of the underlying structures, which alienates us from our lived world. It creates an alienation towards our reality and temporality. But this might not be a conscious experience of loneliness, if we are living a life and in a world, where we do not reflect on our reality. This is also why this study has explored philosophical ways of arguing what the phenomenon of loneliness is as an atmosphere.

This should therefore be seen as a proposition and a possible way of experiencing loneliness grounded in a deeper proposal towards the underlying structures of an atmosphere.

Conclusion

The underlying structure of an atmosphere is recognition, personal and cultural memories (Kandel in Lone, 2017). This study suggests that the atmosphere of loneliness can be found in postmodern pop cultural media, which creates an inconsistency between the expected reality and the actual experienced reality. This is found in the atmosphere and style of cyberpunk and vaporwave, as they create an uncanny relation towards the presence and future due to the lost relation to the past, which is the reason why we constantly feel nostalgia for it. These styles give us the possibility to realise the alienated relationship contemporary between the reality and the saturated hyperreal (Kellner, 2020) created by the pop cultural media, which is the reason we forget the nearness and choose the distancelessness (Kouppanou, 2019).

A postmodern lighting design creates the mood of something pleasant or familiar that we cannot relate our lived world to, and therefore we find ourselves in a mode of escapism. The technique used to accomplish this is by pastiche, uncanny experience and an intertextual staging effect.

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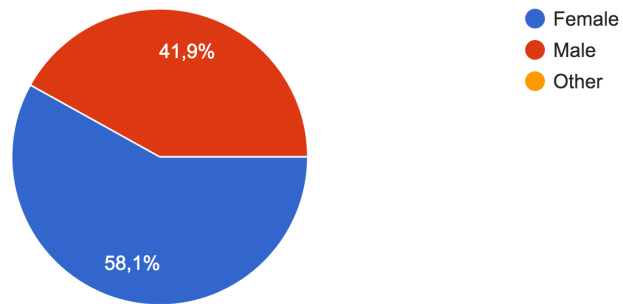
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A. Appendix

Survey Test

Gender

31 svar



Age

31 svar

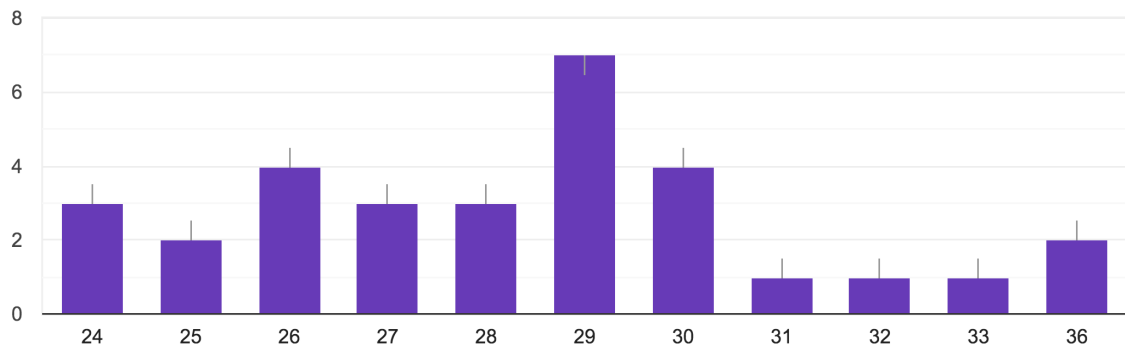


Image 1

Which words is best representative for the style? You can chose up to 3 words.

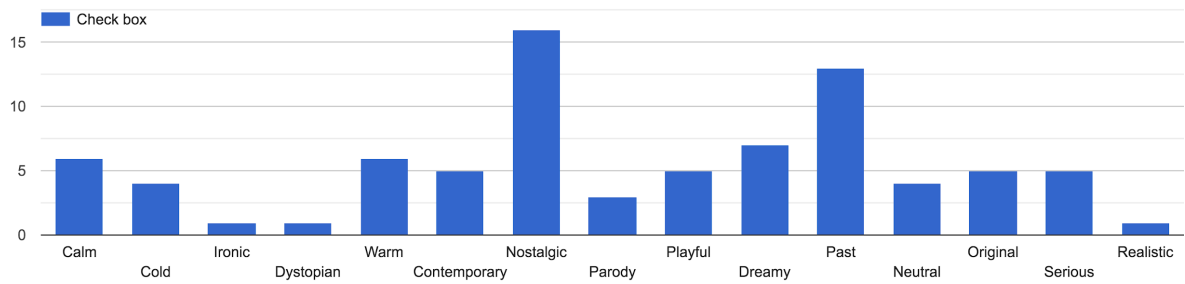


Image 2

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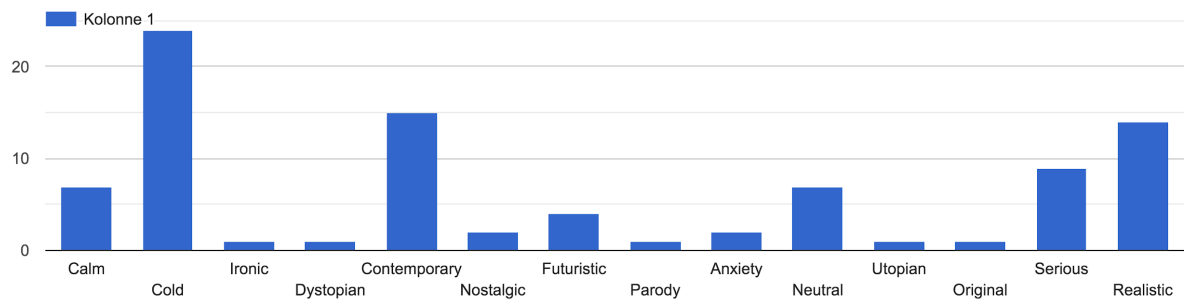


Image 3

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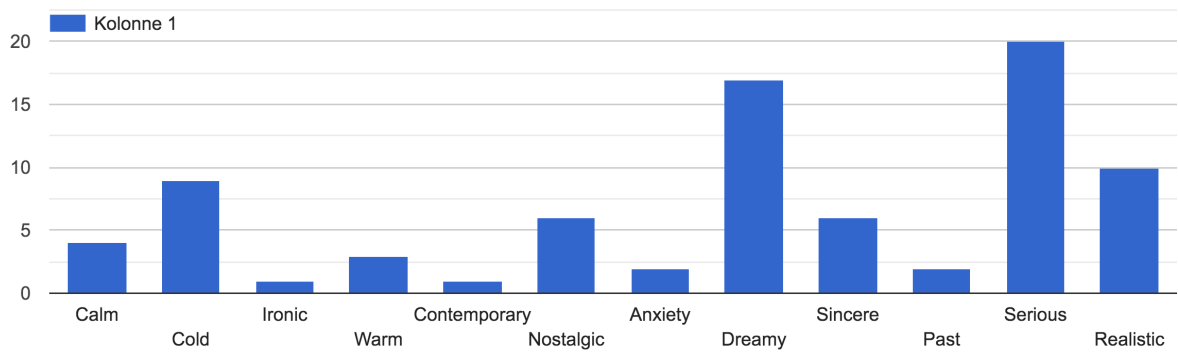


Image 4

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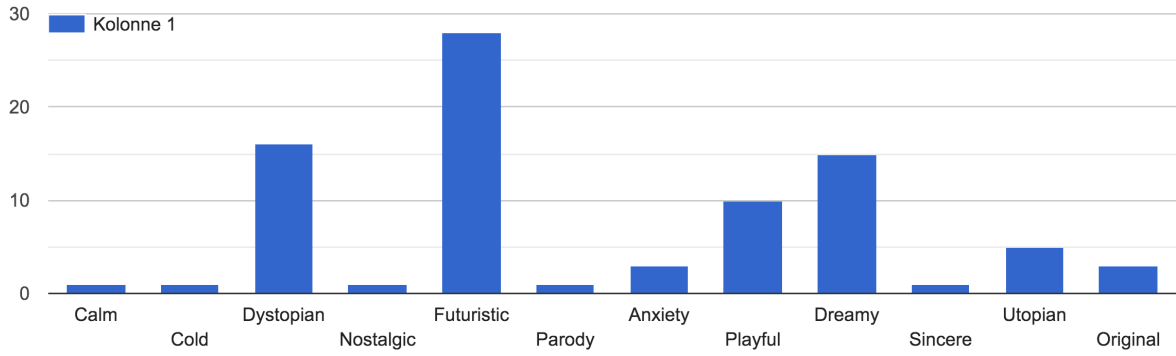


Image 5

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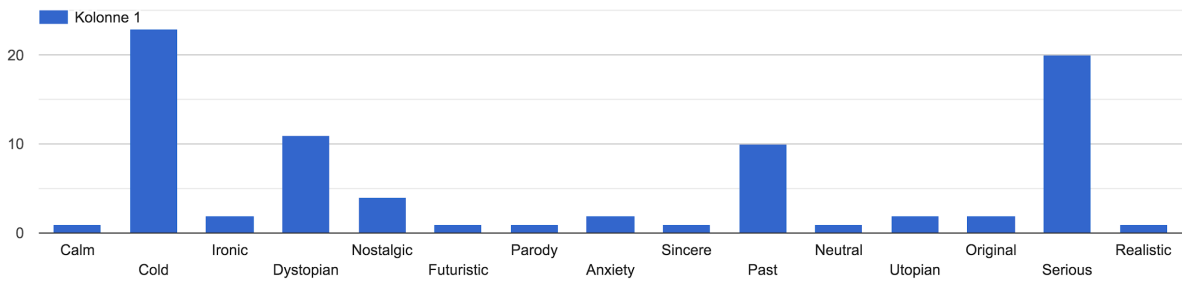


Image 6

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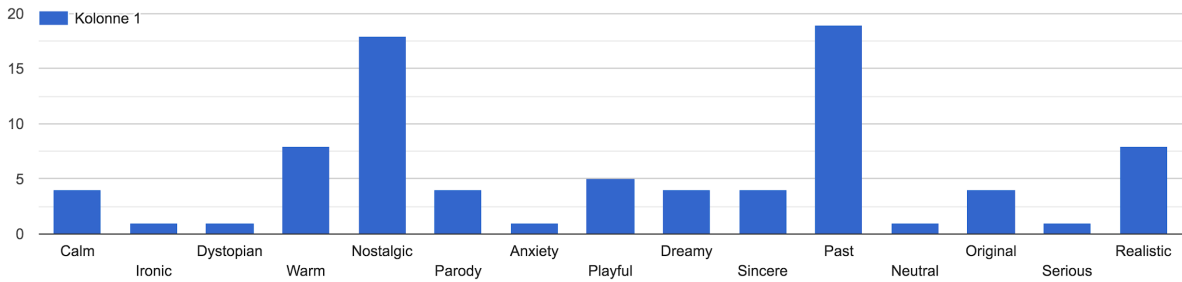


Image 7

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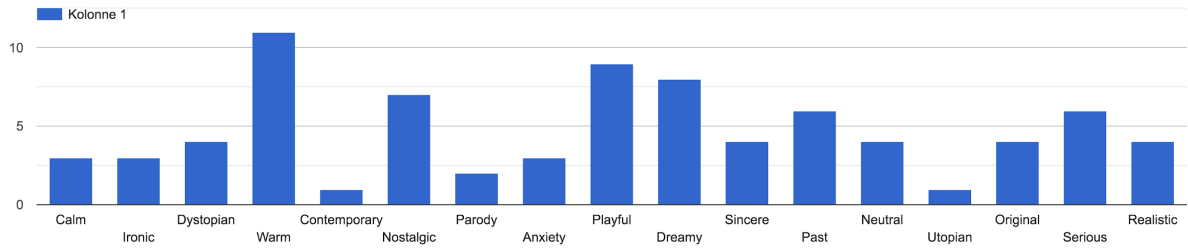


Image 8

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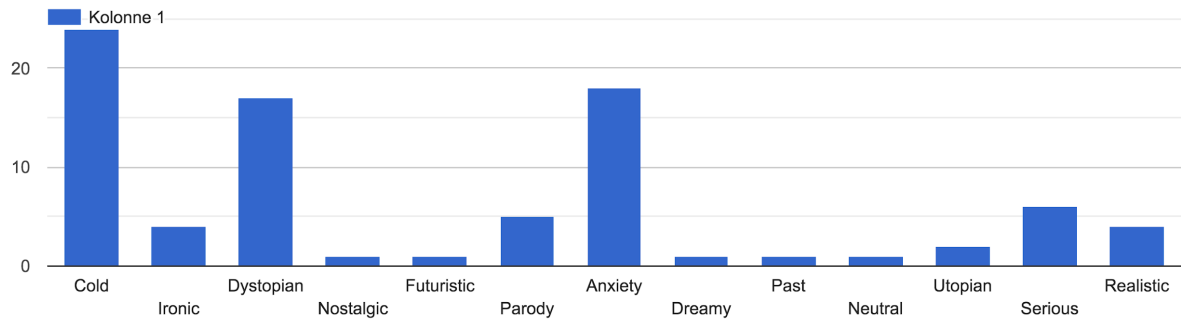


Image 9

Which words is best representative for the style? You can chose up to 3 words.

