

Positions Through Essaying
Written Component

Preface

I start my video essay with nine typical advertisements featuring women as users of household products. These scenes seem to be exactly what a woman does in a day.

So, what is a woman's day like?

*Scene 1:

A woman gets
up, washes her
face and reads
a magazine.

Section 1

FRAMING DESIRE:

The Fashion Magazine as a Visual System

Fashion magazines carry many beautiful images to advertise products, and these images also subtly arouse readers' desire to consume with their bright visual forms.

In my iterations, weaving is an intervention – or even destruction – of the consumption system represented by advertising images. The tighter the spreads are, the harder it is to flip through, which means there are more advertising images on the spreads. Therefore, the difficulty of page turning is not only a physical perception difficulty, but also a disruption of the magazine's symbol flow mechanism (which means the convention that the symbols in the magazine are easily accepted by readers). Different densities of weaving force the audience to withdraw from the original unconscious consumption.

*Scene 2:
She puts on
makeup, goes
shopping, and
buys clothes.

Section 2

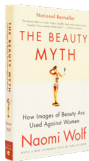
ASSIGNED ROLES:

Women's Identities in the Fashion Magazine

Under the guidance of mainstream fashion media, women unknowingly cater to the rules created by capitalism to promote consumption.



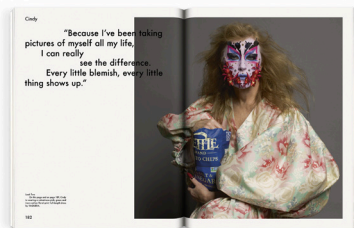
Let's take *Harper's Bazaar* as an example. As a mainstream fashion magazine targeting women, it uses polished images and dense content to subtly guide readers to follow the rules of consumerism – rules that benefit capitalism. This aligns with Naomi Wolf's argument in *The Beauty Myth*: that beauty ideals are not natural, but constructed to distract and undermine women as they gain social power.



1. *The Beauty Myth*

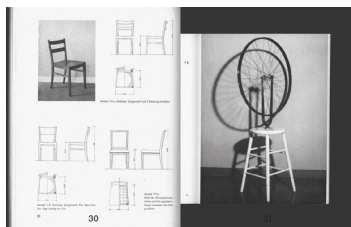


Compared to this, *The Gentlewoman* offers a quieter alternative. Though it still promotes products, its clean layout, restrained imagery and use of Futura font create space for critique. In Issue 19's, artist Cindy Sherman appears with a beard on the cover, challenging feminine norms. Another image glamorises a bag of crisps – turning the logic of luxury inside out.



2. *The Gentlewoman*, Issue n° 19

This contrast helped me see how mainstream media visually pressures women – encouraging them to become the “perfect woman” through consumption. In this system, women are not just consumers. Their bodies are also consumed.



3. *In Order of Pages*

Veronika Spierenburg's *In Order of Pages* offered a strong reference for my project. By reordering scanned pages purely by page number, she disrupted original contexts and created a subjective, fragmented form of reading. Inspired by this, I experimented with inserting unrelated or non-commercial content into a fashion magazine – to break its narrative flow and reduce the images' commodity value.

I began with one issue of *Harper's Bazaar*. Whenever a woman appeared presenting a product – whether a hand or a full body – I covered her. I used pages from the same magazine, matching pages from a men's magazine, extracts from literature, and binary patterns.

This led to a new question: is fashion the only space where women are placed in this disadvantaged position?

*Scene 3:
She shops at the supermarket, comes home, washes the vegetables, and puts the kid to bed. Her day ends.

Section 3

DOMESTIC CONTINUATIONS:
*Disrupting the Defaults of Consumption
and Labour*

Beyond stereotypical categories like fashion, everyday household spending – meant to be shared – is also quietly assigned to women, turning consumption into an invisible form of labour.

This is evident in household product adverts, where women are shown again and again as default users. But this role isn't neutral, nor necessary – it should be replaceable.

Looking back at *In Order of Pages*, Spierenburg's method – extract, standardise, reassemble – became a model for me. I apply a similar logic by embedding household product ads into a fashion magazine format. On the surface, it looks familiar – but inside, the content is replaced. Through layout and subtle disruption, I challenge the gendered logic of consumer media. Spierenburg's work also pushed me to avoid heavy symbolism. Instead, I rely on structure, masking and pacing to let the viewer construct their own critical response.

My enquiry now feels fully formed:
my project uses fashion magazines
as a visual medium to intervene in
the phenomenon of women being
defaulted as “consumers” and
“women as consumed” in

household consumption, thereby revealing how this visual structure continues to discipline women in non-fashion fields.

This is my final output. I placed my redesigned magazine beside the original issue of *Harper's Bazaar*. The new version follows a split-page format: left pages explore “women as consumers”, while right pages reveal “women as consumed.”



On the left, each page features AI-generated imagery where household products are styled in the visual language of fashion. At first, the images are surrounded by fashion objects and aesthetics – familiar poses, glossy lighting. But gradually, the fashion elements fade, leaving only the domestic objects. This visual transition is designed to expose how even the most ordinary, everyday purchases are quietly framed as feminine. The accompanying text builds a quiet narrative – showing how consumption shifts from appearance to expectation, and finally, to obligation.



On the right, I used existing household product advertisements. I covered all visible parts of the female body with grey geometric shapes and added the word replaceable. At



first, it's not always clear whether the model is a woman. But as the pages continue, even with these obstructions, our visual training makes it obvious. The sequence is meant to slowly reveal how women's bodies are used – not just to support the product, but as part of the product itself. The text follows the same visual rhythm, ending with a simple recognition: the female figure is everywhere, but she doesn't need to be.

Conclusion

This video essay began with a simple question: What is a woman's day like? But during the process, I realised that the hardest part wasn't designing the interventions – it was recognising what had become too familiar to question. Beyond the topic of female consumption, learning to notice what feels "normal" – and to think against it – might be something that requires ongoing practice.

1. Wolf, N. (2002) 'Introduction', *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, pp. 1–8.
2. Jonkers, G. and van Bennekom, J. (eds.) (2019) *The Gentlewoman*, Issue n° 19. London.
3. Spierenburg, V. (2013) *In Order of Pages*. Baden: Kodoji Press.