

WRITTEN RESPONSE

Cultural Criticism and Transformation

By bell hooks



Conditional Design

A manifesto for artists and designers.

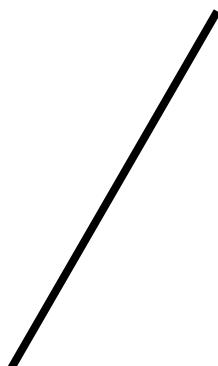
Luna Maurer, Edo Paulus, Jonathan Puckey,
Roel Wouters

CRITICAL CONSUMPTION OF POPULAR CULTURE

A Manifesto for the Creative Consumer

As creative consumers, we must recognize mainstream media for what it is: the most powerful form of pedagogy we encounter. It shapes our desires, our assumptions, and our understanding of who holds significance in society. We must critique it more rigorously than any other medium, as it is almost dangerously persuasive. Popular culture reinforces racial, gendered, sexual, caste-based, and social hierarchies, often without our conscious awareness. It profits from our comfort, circulating narratives produced by historically privileged consumers while marginalizing, misrepresenting, and even erasing all others.

As an “intelligent” community, we cannot retreat into elitism or dismiss the mainstream as beneath our intellect. We must meet popular culture with care and accountability, recognising that even its humour, irony, or spectacle can carry deep harm. These messages inflict wounds that are both immediate and enduring. It is our responsibility, as members of the global network, to identify these harms and to act. We must employ every accessible medium to draw attention to injustice and to cultivate space for more ethical and empathetic narratives.



RESPONSIBILITY

Our responsibility is to make space for marginalised voices, to recognise and amplify their contributions, and to actively pass on the mic within mainstream media.

We seek an equitable distribution of representation while preserving the essence of a democratic, free-speech environment.

We must also resist reproducing harmful dominant narratives, even when doing so feels convenient, comfortable, or profitable.

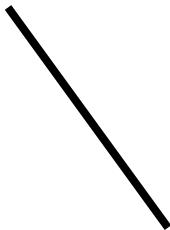
ENGAGEMENT

Our medium is engagement: through non-violent protest, creative intervention, and the steady work of critique.

We must participate in rewriting, subverting, and mitigating the harm perpetuated by mainstream narratives.

Our interventions are not only acts of response but also deliberate efforts to reshape the cultural landscape, holding media accountable and cultivating critical awareness among audiences.

We also commit to engaging with lesser-heard narratives and to normalising ethical consumption as an everyday cultural practice.



VISION

We envision a media landscape that acknowledges difference without commodifying it, neither sustaining prejudice nor disguising hierarchy as diversity. Power is distributed rather than displayed, and accountability replaces performative displays of inclusion or awareness.

Audiences engage critically, aware of how media constructs value and consent.

This vision maintains the principles of free speech while insisting on responsibility, equity, and rigour in cultural production.