



Olafur Eliasson, *Beauty* 1993

## SMOKE AND MIRRORS

*noun* [plural] mainly US

UK /smaʊk ən 'mɪr.əz/ US /s'mu:k ən 'mɪr.əz/

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Something that is described as smoke and mirrors is intended to make you believe that something is being done or is true, when it is not:

• *The new budget isn't smoke and mirrors; it's an honest attempt to reduce the deficit.*

– SMART Vocabulary: related words and phrases

### Creating a distraction

<a href="#">distract</a>	<a href="#">distracting</a>
<a href="#">distractingly</a>	<a href="#">distraction</a>
<a href="#">diversion</a>	<a href="#">divert</a>
<a href="#">escape</a>	<a href="#">mind</a>
<a href="#">misdirection</a>	<a href="#">put</a>
<a href="#">put someone off their stride</a> idiom	<a href="#">put something off</a>
<a href="#">rabbit hole</a>	<a href="#">sidetrack</a>
<a href="#">stride</a>	<a href="#">subject</a>
<a href="#">take</a>	<a href="#">take someone out of himself/herself</a>
<a href="#">take someone's mind off something</a> idiom	

From espionage to escapology, Fake news to chat GPT, the meta-verse to VR consoles, trying to find “truth” and decipher what is “real” or who/ what we can “trust” is becoming increasingly difficult.

Artists and Designers have used illusion and mimicry to trick, persuade and confuse us through the creation grand spectacles or discreet alterations or centuries.

We are asking you to become a truth embellisher / magician. How will you confuse, surprise, misdirect or deceive us?

## PROJECT TASK

Consider the phrase **Smoke and Mirrors** in its broadest sense. Apply the processes of analysis and reconfiguration to **ONE** of the following sources:

**An object** (think electrical items, furniture, toys, clothing)

**A material** (think things that change state, things that transform, things that unravel, things that change in different conditions) freezing, boiling, melting, eroding, burning, unravelling, shredding, smashing, exploding). Think materials that might be presented as one thing but are actually another (in food styling ice cream is often mash potato!)

**A text** (think puns, play on words, metaphors, phrases with multiple meanings. How can you use words and language to trick, mislead, mis represent, confuse?)

**A manifesto or campaign** (think politics, adverts, activism, slogan)

**An image** (think photo, media image, advertising image, personal image, old image, found image)

**A building** (think domestic, leisure, civic, place of work, commercial, public, semi-public, private)

**Construct an Artefact / Object / Film / Performance that re-presents the information you have gathered from your source in a new configuration.**

## METHODOLOGY

**1. Research 2 artists/designers from the list below. Put images and notes in a small sketchbook.**

Olafur Eliasson | Anrealage | Adbusters | Christian Boltanski | Es Devlin | Richard Wilson | George Rouses | Jenny Holzer | We Make Carpets | Susan Colis | Carnovsky | Studio Swine | Lauren Bowker | Rottingdean Bazaar | Christo and Jeanne Claude | Jon Stezaker | *Magic* MIT Press edited by Jamie Sutcliffe

**2. Research 2 ‘magical concepts’. Again, include images and notes in a small sketchbook.** This could include: magic tricks | magic techniques | Specific card tricks | escape suits | Houdini | holograms | foreshortening | depth of field | optical illusions | camouflage (dazzle ships)

### **3. Analysis. Conduct your own practical research and record this.**

Start by analysing chosen subject and record what might be possible from the perspective of Smoke and Mirrors (how might you apply the research you conducted in task 2 to your subject?).

How can you re-present your subject to surprise, confuse, lie to or persuade your audience? Does your subject mimic something else? Is its true shape, meaning, purpose camouflaged, hidden or distracted by something else

Do you physically need to deconstruct your subject to get a better understanding of it? If so what processes you you use? Record your findings. (photography, sketches, film, sound? Consider slow motion film, close ups, different view points, speed of change, before during and after shots, etc, etc. ) What have you learnt about your subject? What discoveries have you made? How do you present these?

### **4. Make / Execute / Implement / Reconfigure (including sketches, proposed designs, annotation) and record this. How are you going to reconfigure your subject to create something new?**

This could be organic, playful, meticulously considered or unpredictable, it will be led by the information you have gathered. How many ways can you reconfigure your subject to surprise / bamboozle the viewer? How can you subvert your subjects function / meaning / aesthetic into something deceptively different? You might create something completely unrecognisable from its original form.

Draw, photograph, and make notes on the development of your idea. We want to see your decision making so please include ALL of your thinking. This includes all the ideas that you rejected as well as any tests, samples etc that went wrong. We want to see how you problem solve!

Material and media are your choice - Although consider updating traditional materials and methods.

### **5. Photograph your final Artefact / Object / Film / Performance**

Document your response photographically (this could be a series of images or moquettes that document change or a short film or animation (no longer than 1 min). Your documentation should demonstrate the change that your subject underwent.

You can use a sketchbook or larger sheets of paper to showcase your work.

### **6. Make some brief notes answering these questions.**

Reflective questions...

How has your subject changed? How has the meaning of your subject changed? How does your subject surprise / deceive / camouflage? What might you do differently if you were to do the project again?

**We are aware that most of you are working hard for your final exams, this project should not interfere or take time away from your studies. Please spend no longer than a few days undertaking this task.**

**PLEASE do not contact us for guidance, we want you to try something new, make independent decisions and find your own solutions - We don't know what to expect from you and that's exciting. Don't be afraid to make a few mistakes, this is part of the creative process as long as you record and document the processes. We hope you enjoy the project!**

Application Deadline: 14th February 2024.

Please submit your entry project so that it is included as part of your portfolio. Please sign post it clearly within your portfolio.