



Part 1: A Manifesto on the Importance of Introspection; or ‘the effluent state of affairs in art, circa 2019’.

It started off as a joke.

The type of joke that is born from boredom. Boredom with a term that has been bastardised far outside of its original context to now mean one thing. That word is *immersive*, and the new meaning is *mediocrity*.

Immersive stands for thoughtless. It stands for organisations who have no creativity of their own, who use buzzwords as a means to attract audiences and clients to their products, which surprise, are also thoughtless and non-creative.

(See also ‘multisensory’ and ‘interdisciplinary’ for blanket terms that translate to mean ‘we heard this title and decided it would make us sound cool, so we used it without understanding why’. Luckily for these thoughtless and creative-less creatures, everything in life is multisensory – the typing of this manifesto has the sound of the keyboard paired with the sight of the words appearing in front of me as I feel the keys under my fingers and the chair I sit on. Everything is also ‘immersive’; that is, I am currently immersed in the situation of sitting down and writing about the stupidity of sheep as they flock to the latest trends.)

So, in honour of this immersion, I came up with a new term that means nothing.

Introspective Theatre. Introspective Experience. Introspective whatever-you-want-it-to-be.

But then, like any bad thought, it wouldn’t go away; instead, through an ironic twist of fate the potential of this term started taking shape. What *could* ‘Introspective’ mean? The Cambridge Dictionary definition is as such:

introspective *adjective*
uk  /ɪn.trəˈspek.tɪv/ us  /ɪn.trəˈspek.tɪv/

examining and considering your own ideas, thoughts, and feelings, instead of talking to other people about them.

Whilst the Merriam-Webster Definition differs slightly when defining Introspection:

Introspection *noun*
in-tro·spec-tion | \ ɪn-trə-ˈspek-shən \
Definition of *introspection*

: a reflective looking inward : an examination of one's own thoughts and feeling

Introspective Experiences then are those that force the receiver to be a part of the creative process – an integral part: their role is to absorb the information being delivered and translate it into a meaningful message that they are then free to make any use of. The role of the creative is to curate an atmosphere conducive to thoughtful processing; the role of the audience to complete the circle by engaging directly; their response the final link in the chain.

Whereas Immersive and Multisensory Experiences are designed to allow the audience to lose themselves in a false reality (that is, the well designed experiences as opposed to buzzword trash), Introspective Experiences are designed to allow people to explore themselves through curated realities – be it a classical music performance, food design, art exhibition, theatrical performance. Perception leads to Introspection. And if perception is the target of the precursors, the natural evolution is to now take these tools developed from crossmodal artistic and scientific research processes, and utilise them in creating experiences that encourage something far deeper: *Introspection*.¹

¹ Not to be confused with Mindfulness - another term birthed in quality (as a [therapy treatment](#) researched and developed by groups such as the Department of Psychiatry, University of Oxford) and quickly adopted by the undiscerning masses ([hipster self-trained meditation ‘gurus’](#) for

Further, Introspective Experiences are open to further research by combining the artistic with the fields of philosophy² (specifically Philosophy of the Mind and Phenomenology) and experimental psychology. As the natural evolutionary partner of sensory experience, opening an epistemological discussion exploring the relationship between curated perception and its introspective derivations - and the potential of this as it relates to individual experience - allows a new branch of Crossmodalist enquiry to open. From a design and technological point of view, an emphasis on introspective design would encourage a higher value placed on the product, as opposed to that of continuous consumerism and one-upmanship that pervades the highly competitive industries.

An Introspective Experience respects the audience's intelligence enough to trust them to make their own decision on the quality of experience. It encourages them to take ownership of their experience, rather than rely on a buzzword to sell them a ticket. It will remain so until it becomes itself a buzzword, at which point we shall create another word to define our work. And therein lies the whole trick of this game: introspective experiences are not a new thing. Introspective Experience is simply a synonym for *Quality*. Any creation of Quality will have the hallmarks of Introspective Experience, and vice versa.

How to create Introspective Experiences? Put thought and action into your design process. Respect the audience's potential. Create atmospheres conducive to private reflection. Insist upon nothing except an audience who is open to the potential of a deep connection with what you're presenting. If Immersive and Multi-sensory experiences are based primarily on the concept of delivering perceptual information at another, design your Introspective Experience in a way that allows the audience to be released from purely passive consumption of your work.

By doing so, we have the potential of creating truly meaningful artworks of immense value to those receiving it.

[tech industry creativity](#)). Further, the trend for 'self-help' by reflection, meditation, and looking into yourself to earn your chia matcha latte risks bastardising this term before it even emerges.

² Eric Schwitzgebel gives a full philosophical definition of Introspection at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/introspection/>. From the introduction:

Introspection, as the term is used in contemporary philosophy of mind, is a means of learning about one's own currently ongoing, or perhaps very recently past, mental states or processes. You can, of course, learn about your own mind in the same way you learn about others' minds—by reading psychology texts, by observing facial expressions (in a mirror), by examining readouts of brain activity, by noting patterns of past behavior—but it's generally thought that you can also learn about your mind *introspectively*, in a way that no one else can. But what exactly is introspection? No simple characterization is widely accepted. Although introspection must be a process that yields knowledge only of one's own current mental states, more than one type of process fits this characterization.

Introspection is a key concept in epistemology, since introspective knowledge is often thought to be particularly secure, maybe even immune to skeptical doubt. Introspective knowledge is also often held to be more immediate or direct than sensory knowledge. Both of these putative features of introspection have been cited in support of the idea that introspective knowledge can serve as a ground or foundation for other sorts of knowledge.

Introspection is also central to philosophy of mind, both as a process worth study in its own right and as a court of appeal for other claims about the mind. Philosophers of mind offer a variety of theories of the nature of introspection; and philosophical claims about consciousness, emotion, free will, personal identity, thought, belief, imagery, perception, and other mental phenomena are often thought to have introspective consequences or to be susceptible to introspective verification. For similar reasons, empirical psychologists too have discussed the accuracy of introspective judgments and the role of introspection in the science of the mind.