

Reflective Essay

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My initial research for this project was inspired by an in-person experience I had at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam last summer. I was able to see a major retrospective of General Idea's vast body of work. During this visit, I felt compelled by the many different avenues that General Idea followed, and decided to use this as a starting point for my research project for my Winter 2024 course Alternative Art Forms. General Idea worked within a conceptual art framework, so my initial research focused around contextual journal articles and essays outlining the general focus of conceptual work within the period that General Idea was working. This included both primary source documents and more recent works which historicized this period of art history. I had trouble in the beginning finding sources that were specific to my topic. I found that simply searching "General Idea" into databases gave me huge amounts of results, most of which weren't specific to the art group I was researching. I began to narrow down my search, instead using keywords like the member's names, specific artworks, or searching by author and subject in JSTOR instead of the group name. Many works referenced them or acknowledged their contributions to the sphere of conceptual art but did not analyze their work in-depth, so I turned to my professor for recommendations. She pointed me towards a scholar, Kirsten Fleur Olds, who had done major research into General Idea and the specific works I was interested in exploring. From there, I read her papers and searched through her bibliographies in order to find other sources that would help me in my own research. These sources proved to provide me both contextual information and detail-oriented results that allowed my own ideas and thesis to broaden.

Another major contribution to my information and research was the Art Library on the UW Seattle campus. I utilized the online library resources to find and hold any books related to General Idea which I then picked up in person. This allowed me a vast amount of contextual information and organization in order to place the pieces I was studying into a specific timeline and larger body of work. Through this resource, I was able to find a book by Gregg Bordowitz pertaining to the specific project I was researching. I found it helpful to have a source that dived deep into a specific piece that I was looking to understand more in depth. Understanding others' opinions on General Idea's work and the historical significance of a piece like *Imagevirus*

allowed me to develop my own original thoughts on the subject. This was an invaluable resource to my paper, and also led me to explore other art pieces that were important in understanding the *Imagevirus* project, which I was able to find in multiple parts posted on YouTube. I also frequently referenced the Art Library research guides, which directed me to specific databases that allowed me to access a broader range of sources. These guides outlined other database sources other than JSTOR like Oxford Bibliographies and the International Bibliography of Art. When I couldn't find a source on one database, I consulted the others, and often found success in this method.

Through this project, I learned a lot about research and the amount of resources available. I found that most of my sources were discovered through digging through digital archives, other researcher's bibliographies, and consulting experts in the field like librarians and professors. Through the books that I accessed at the Art Library, I was able to access a huge amount of photographs, art pieces, and writings from the artists themselves that were not available on any online sources. This proved helpful in my writing as I was able to build an in depth argument instead of one driven by surface level research. Much of my process for this project was simply understanding timelines and the conceptual framework of specific projects that General Idea undertook. Without the research component, my argument would not have been possible.