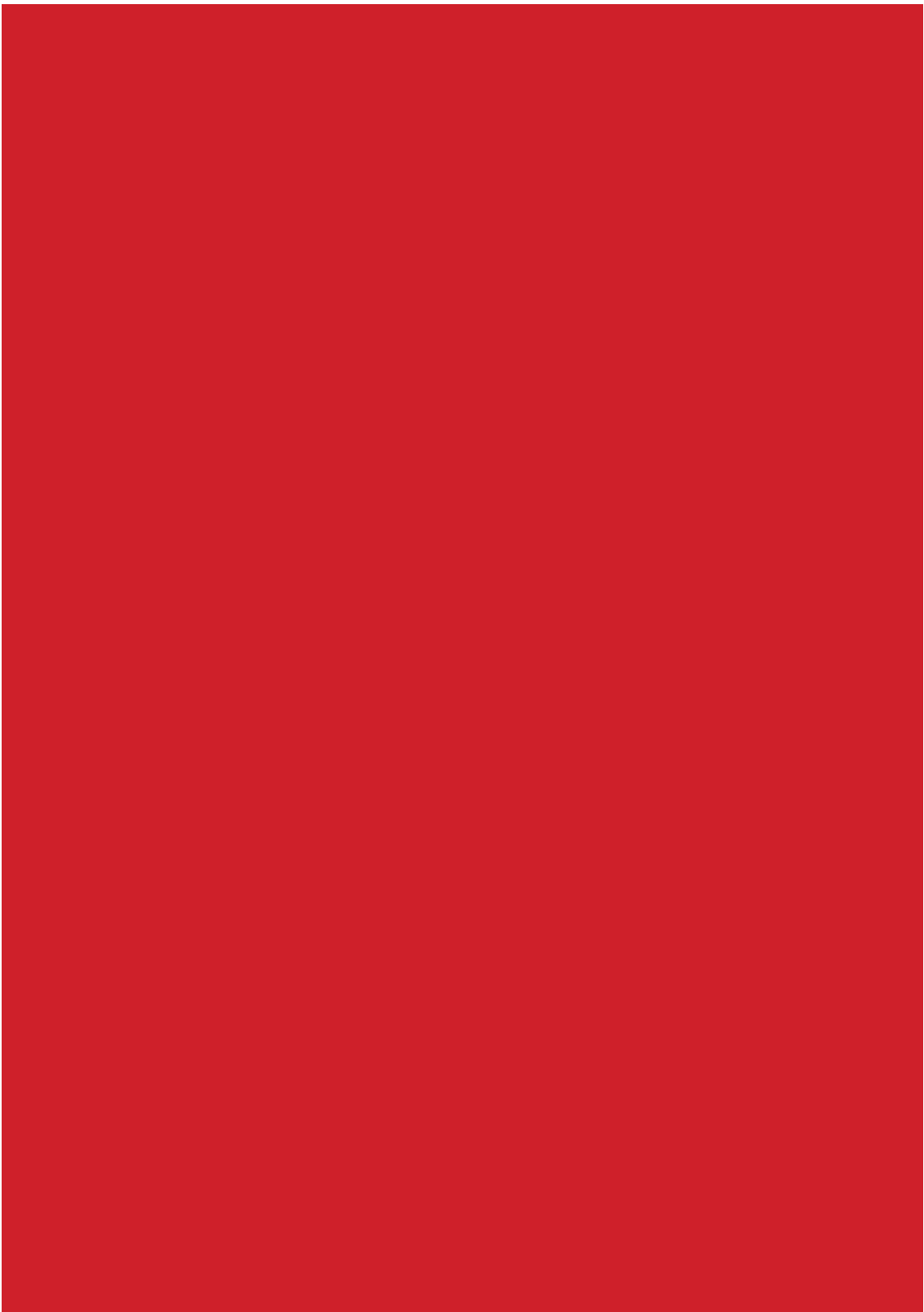


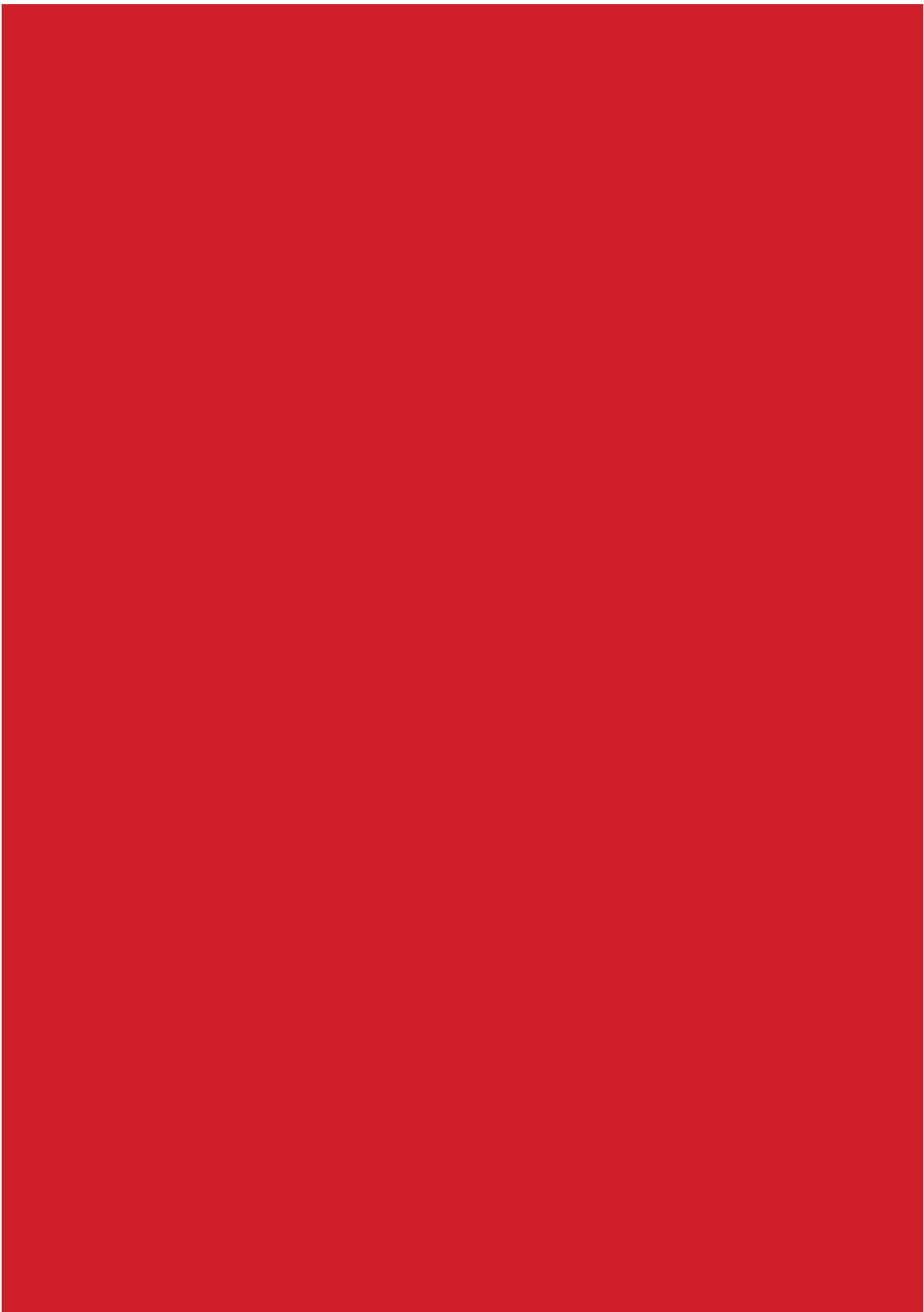
What is *Silence*
to you?







Silence,
as Strategy



Aguirre, Imanol Iraeta;
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(2026)

"What is silence to you?"
Silence as Strategy

"The Legibility Conditions of
Communicative Silence as Strategic
and Creative Practice"

Elisava, Barcelona.

This research investigates Brand Silence:

The practice through which
absence and *restraint* become
communicative tools,
and the conditions under
which a brand's *silence reads*
as a deliberate choice rather
than a failure.

Its central distinction is simple but
largely unexamined.

The difference between the
brand that *chooses silence* and
the brand that *is silenced*.

What separates them is agency, and
agency is exactly what the sector's vocabulary
has lacked.

Drawing on philosophy,
semiotics, neuroscience, brand
strategy, and political theory,

The thesis maps three registers
in which silence operates.

(Material, Structural, and Hermeneutic)

Also, six interdependent
conditions that make it legible.

Its contribution is a working
vocabulary and toolkit for
using silence as strategy.

Tested in real time,

Against the 2024–2026
reversal of “quiet luxury” and
the homogenising pressure of
generative AI.

Carried beyond the page into a
book and a platform.

Keywords:

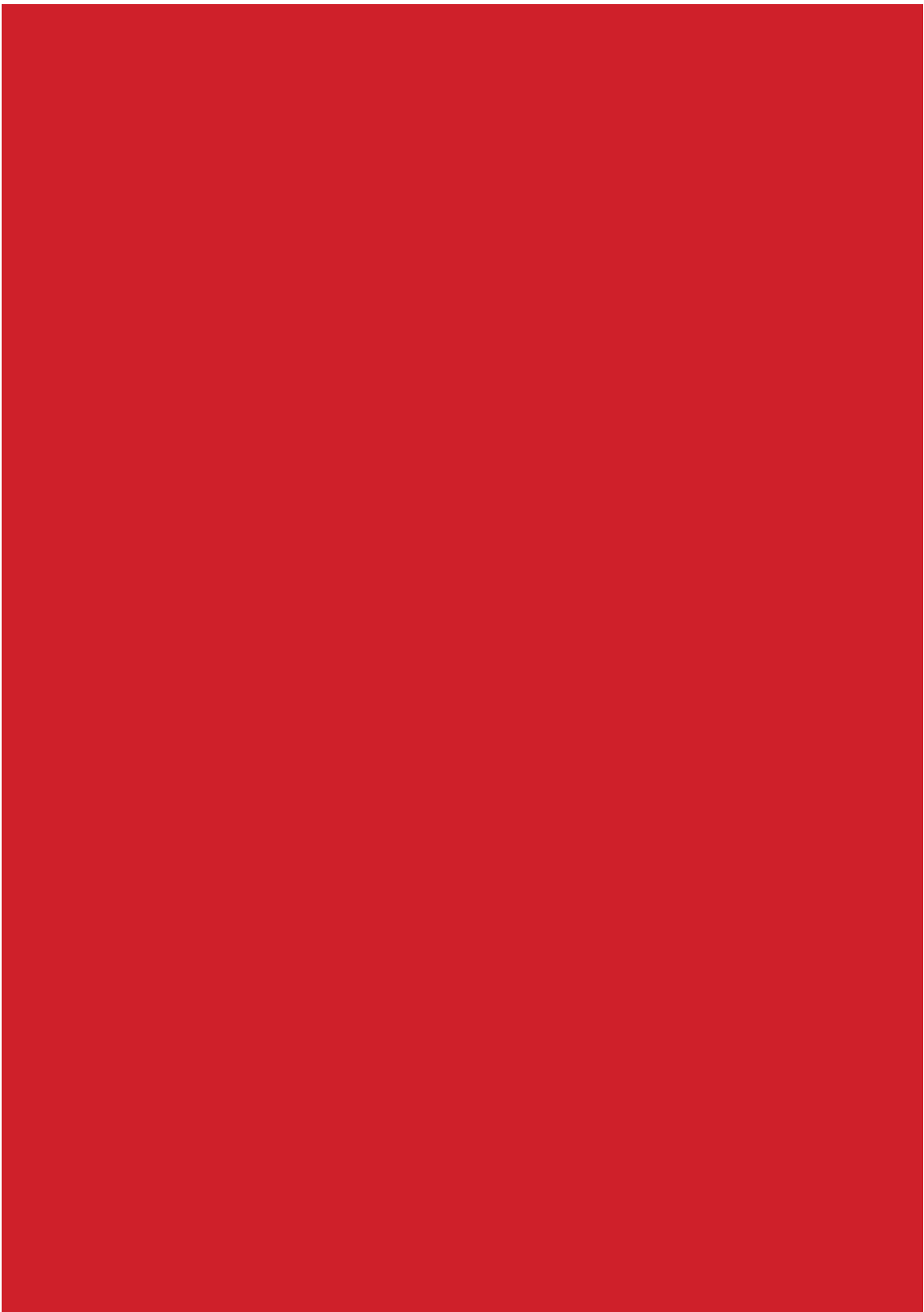
Brand Silence - Semiotic Saturation - Negative Space
Attention Economy - Quiet Luxury - Authenticity
Cultural Homogenization - Brand Strategy

We thank our advisors at ELISAVA, whose insistence on precision kept the argument from drifting into the very abstraction it set out to critique, and whose questions were often more useful than any answer.

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Special thanks to the eighteen artists, designers, and strategists who answered the question What is silence to you? sometimes with an honesty that exceeded the format of a questionnaire.

We thank the collaborators who helped us test the audiovisual piece.



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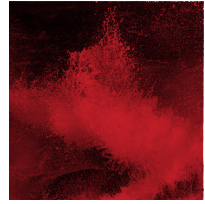


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Atin Aya



[001.1]

The *Communicative* Landscape

More than a decade into the social digital era in which branding moved from selling products to occupying consumer lifestyles, the communicative environment has shifted in ways the sector is still catching up with. What was once a landscape of deliberate brand gestures has become one of permanent output; where the pressure to maintain presence across every available channel has produced a common condition. The attention economy rewards presence, frequency, and consistency across every available channel, not because brands always have something to say, but because absence is assumed to mean irrelevance.

The result is a growing environment in which
communication has become pollution.

Saturation disorients the sender as much as the receiver, and what gets lost in that disorientation is the possibility of deliberate communicative choice. What acoustic ecology calls a “lo-fi soundscape” (Schafer, 1977: 43) is an environment of cumulative

density, where the sheer volume of competing signals has made individual signals indistinguishable. Beyond a metaphor for market saturation, it is a practical description of what saturation does to the capacity to hear and to attend. The solution most brands apply is to compete at the same volume, and, with sufficient nerve, a louder one, which is precisely the first move by which the lo-fi soundscape becomes a looping accumulation. Translated into brand environments, individual signals drown in communicative noise, and brands that contribute to the noise become invisible through the very effort to be seen.

Directed attention is finite, beyond its
most obvious limits.

It depletes through use and recovers only in the absence of demands (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989: 178–180), not in the presence of “better” content, as many competitors would suggest, but in genuine cognitive rest. Each “brand message” or signal a consumer encounters leaves cognitive residue that, when it accumulates, impairs the processing of subsequent messages (Leroy, 2009: 168–172). The attention economy has tended to treat this limit as if it did not exist, which is why the logical endpoint of that economy is an audience that has stopped processing at all. Herbert Simon named the scarcity decades before the feed industrialised it: a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention, and attention becomes the resource that information consumes (Simon, 1971: 40–41). Neural habituation is the technical name for what brands call fatigue: constant stimulation causes neurons to stop firing in response. Invisibility is no longer the main risk of silence in an overwhelming setting;

the deeper risk is the reduction of one's
own capacity to make noise again.

The agricultural parallel is structural with this context, and becomes pointed in relation to the ownership of mainstream digital media: as fallow land is not wasted land but land being restored to a capacity that continuous cultivation would have destroyed, degrowth scholarship has begun to apply an equivalent logic to marketing itself (Lloveras, Marshall, Vandeventer and Pansera, 2022: 1785–1790), asking whether growth, at sufficient intensity, destroys the very conditions that made growth meaningful. “Brand Silence” is the communicative form of that question, soon to be introduced. A brand that communicates less but with greater intentionality does not perform a different marketing strategy.

It operates under a different premise
about what communication is for.

This is where the project stands: to question the current means of communication in relation to silence, understood both as the position from which to question the opposing noise and as the absence of assets within the existing panorama. To give this phenomenon ground, throughout this research we refer to it as Brand Silence. Brand Silence is the term through which we address the field in which volatility and absence operate through brands; what fills that field is determined by conditions that are rarely made explicit. By identifying those conditions, and the criteria that shape them, the research works toward the question of not subscribing to noise.

[001.2]

Consistency, Risk and Actuality in *Current Brand Strategies*

Three coordinates map the urgency of this premise. First, consistency. The digital environment has made brand presence a measurable obligation in ways no previous medium demanded. What was once a matter of campaign cycles and seasonal presence has compressed into a permanent standard of output. Accounts that go without publishing for a single week consistently underperform their own baseline growth rates across platforms, a pattern Buffer's 2026 analysis of nearly five million channel-week observations terms the "no-post penalty" (Buffer, 2026). The metric exists, the pressure is real, and the sector has responded by treating continuous presence as a baseline condition rather than a strategic choice. What gets less attention is that the metric was designed by platforms with a direct interest in maximising publishing activity,

so the incentive structure and the performance
standard are being set by the same actor.

Second, risk. Building brand equity on frequency produces a specific kind of fragility. Research on brand resilience shows that the capacity to absorb a crisis, a controversy, or a prolonged silence depends on the depth of prior associations and the coherence of prior behaviour, not on volume. A brand that has spent years accumulating meaningful signals can afford intervals of withdrawal. A brand that has spent years accumulating posts cannot.

Frequency without depth is not a brand strategy. It is a dependency.

Third, actuality. The cultural response to that dependency is already visible and already mutating, which is the more honest to say. The shift from conspicuous to inconspicuous consumption among educated elites, documented by Currid-Halkett in “The Sum of Small Things” (2017: 38–55), reframed visibility itself as something the secure could afford to renounce; communicative restraint became aspirational in categories where presence had been devalued by overuse. By 2024 this had crystallised into a popular grammar of restraint: “deinfluencing” or more controversial “fatigue”, for example, are terms in which creators discouraged purchases, gave way to “underconsumption core,” a TikTok movement that by mid-year had generated tens of millions of posts celebrating reuse, repair, and the refusal to buy (Corporate Knights, 2024). Yet the same cycle illustrates the instability of the position. By 2025, analysts were already declaring “quiet luxury” outdated and “loud luxury” (large logos, statement design) back in favour, with one survey finding a majority of luxury buyers now preferring expressive, logo-forward pieces over understated ones (CNBC, 2025). The version of silence that emerged from this moment was, in other words, largely a luxury position and a trend, available to brands with enough accumulated equity to step back without disappearing, and exhausted at roughly the speed of any other trend.

The question of who else can access it, and under what conditions, is what the following sections set out to examine; precisely because the trend's reversal does not retire the question but sharpens it.

Core Thesis and Research Scope

The most important distinction this research makes is between the brand that chooses silence and the brand that is silenced, rather than in the multiple ways brands can get along with the concept. Both conditions share the same surface appearance: absence, withdrawal, a gap in the communicative landscape. What separates them most importantly, is agency, and agency is precisely what the current discourse around brand silence has failed to address, and will be developed within the contents of the synthesis.

The sector has developed a vocabulary for the first condition and almost none for the second.

The central claim of this thesis follows from that distinction: communicative silence becomes a strategic instrument only when an interpretive frame renders the absence legible as intentional, and the construction of that frame is the actual design problem. Primarily, silence is not the opposite of communication. It is a form of communication that operates under stricter legibility conditions than speech, and it produces meaning only when a frame exists that makes the absence interpretable as chosen. Every discipline the research draws from (from science to semiotics and philosophy) converges on the same structural insight. That two last conditions are the ones the existing literature has handled least honestly.

The legibility of silence cannot be politically neutral.

A withdrawal reads as confidence or as failure depending on the structural position of the brand performing it.

That position is crucial to the link branding today holds with psychology and culture.

What follows is an attempt to map those conditions with enough precision to make them usable beyond the contexts in which silence has traditionally been studied.

The thesis moves through four movements:

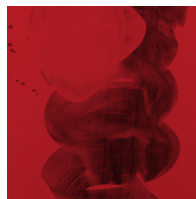
The three registers through which brand silence manifests, the legibility conditions that determine whether silence functions, the risk taxonomy that identifies where and how it fails, and the methodology that produced the framework.

Accompanying the theoretical architecture is a separate object: a book that collects instances of silence from artists across cultures and disciplines, not as case studies but as evidence of a different kind; silences that were never strategic, never designed to generate desire, but that carry cultural weight precisely because they answered to nothing other than their own necessity.

The ambition is not to make silence available to everyone as a tactic.

It is to make the conditions visible enough that the decision to use it, or to question it, can be made with clarity. Roland Barthes described something structurally close in literature: a degree zero of writing since modernity, a language so stripped of historical and social intention that it tends toward silence, toward a voice that no longer wields language as a tool but surrenders to it, until the language itself seems to speak alone (Barthes, 2005).

fig. 003
Guillermo Fornes



*We came to
silence because we
had something to say
that noise could
not carry.*

*Silence, as we
understand it, is a
deliberate act of creative
and intellectual agency.*

*The decision
to withhold, to pause, to
refuse the frequency
of the expected, because
the work demands it.*

*What the market
calls silence is a quieter
performance.*

*A more selective
presence.*

*A withdrawal that
still competes, only at a
lower volume.*

*We mean the silence that
precedes a decision.*

*The silence that
holds a position without
announcing it.*

*The silence that belongs
to the work before it belongs
to anyone else.*

Brand Silence

[002]

Having established the urgency and the core thesis, we turn first to the question of where brand silence manifests. The intentional agency of individuals, groups, and brands is deep enough to form three distinct registers.

First,
The Material register

which captures the direct perceptual experience of silence, through the body, before any interpretation is formed.

Second,
The Structural register

captures silence as enacted in a field of social actors (brands, platforms, publics, industries) whose communicative choices exist in permanent relation to one another.

Third,
The Hermeneutic register

the interpretive layer in which silence does not touch the intention of brands or individuals directly but influences it through accumulated meaning, cultural drift, and forces operating largely outside any single actor's control.

The three registers are not independent; they are nested. Material silence (a blank label) creates structural silence (absence from the brand-identification system), which produces hermeneutic silence (the audience interprets the absence as either mystique or error).

The framework's practical value lies in recognising which register a brand is operating in and ensuring the legibility conditions are met at that level.

fig. 004
Cabritas



Material *Silence*

The most immediate register in which brand silence operates is the one closest to the body. Before any interpretation is formed, before cultural context or institutional memory has been consulted, there is the raw encounter with an environment that is quieter than expected; silence as direct perceptible experience across auditory, visual, and temporal dimensions. What makes this register distinct from the others is that its effects do not require the audience to understand what is happening.

Saying this, its effects are physiological
before they are semantic.

Auditory Dimension

Auditory silence is perhaps the least theorised dimension of sonic branding. The field has invested heavily in the positive thinking of universal attention, like jingles, earworms or notification sounds, and treated quietness as something more like the mere absence of these investments. What Bernardi's cardiovascular research demonstrated is that silence following stimulation produces relaxation responses measurably deeper than silence alone (Bernardi, Porta and Sleight, 2006: 448–450).

The pause after the note does more
than the note.

Applied to how brands inhabit sonic environments, this reframes auditory silence not as a failure to produce sound but as the moment in which the preceding communication is allowed to complete itself inside the listener. It remits to brands like Beats by Dre, where the leading figure of a composed sound producer, who is known for layering and sampling sound, is directing sober, but powerful enough for hardcore fans. The brand that understands this is designing a physiological relationship with its audience, is one in which withdrawal is the active ingredient, and we will agree on this a lot, further in the next chapters.

Visual Dimension

Visual silence is spatial rather than temporal; in other words, it exists all at once rather than unfolding in sequence. Negative space, in design discourse, has long been discussed in terms of balance, clarity, and aesthetic restraint.

What the rhetorical reading adds is that negative space does not merely clean up a composition; it makes an argument. It claims that what is absent is not missing.

The blank white tag of Maison Margiela (no name, four white stitches, a numbered system with no explanation) was not a minimalist gesture. It was an empty one. It did not reduce information. It replaced information with a question, and left the question open long enough for desire to fill it (Hara, 2007: 256–260).

Temporal Dimension

Temporal silence operates on the implicit signal that frequency sends before content is even considered. To communicate constantly is to claim that newness is a primary value, that relevance requires perpetual presence.

Every one of these claims is a position, and temporal silence is its negation. The brand that communicates rarely implies that what it says has been worth waiting for. The brand that does not chase events implies a temporality that exceeds news cycles.

Structural Silence

Where the Material register operates at the level of individual experience, the Structural register operates at the level of collective behaviour. Silence here is not something encountered in the body but enacted in a field of social actors (brands, platforms, publics, industries) whose communicative choices exist in permanent relation to one another.

Strategic Dimension

Strategic silence refers to the discipline of knowing when not to respond, and recognising that response is not always the appropriate form of engagement.

The brands most associated with cultural authority are characteristically the least reactive.

They select their moments. They allow interpretations to circulate without correction, not because they have nothing to say, but because they understand that restraint, when legible as intentional, communicates a fluent standard of engagement.

Platform Dimension

Platform silence names the withdrawal from communicative channels that have been normalised as mandatory.

Social media presence has migrated from optional to expected to effectively constitutive of brand existence. Against that background, a deletion is not a quiet act.

Bottega Veneta's disappearance from all social platforms in January 2021 was readable as confidence precisely because it refused to perform within a system whose logic the brand had already outgrown. The case has aged instructively: rather than reversing course on Western platforms, the brand allowed a cottage industry of fan accounts to carry its presence, the largest of which, @newbottega, accumulated some two million followers while the house itself stayed absent (nss magazine, 2024).

The silence did not erase the brand's social presence; it displaced the authorship of that presence onto the audience. Lush Cosmetics arrived at similar territory through a different door when withdrawing from Facebook and Instagram across forty-eight countries citing the documented harms of those platforms (Haugen, 2021). The commercial results in both cases were positive, but the mechanisms were distinct.

Frequency Dimension

Frequency silence concerns the rhythm of communication rather than its presence or absence on any given channel. The Row has no Instagram presence and barely markets itself; its scarcity of communication is inseparable from the scarcity logic that governs the objects it produces.

ECM Records has operated for over fifty years on a frequency and aesthetic restraint that functions as the label's most consistent brand signal, more durable than any single release (Carr, 1991). What these cases share is not minimalism as style but selectivity as principle.

Hermeneutic Silence

The Hermeneutic register describes a third territory, distinct from both the designed and the enacted. Here silence is not chosen by the brand nor collectively produced through social dynamics, but accumulated, inherited, or imposed through the passage of time, cultural drift, and forces that operate largely outside any single actor's control. This register draws on the critique the Spanish philosopher Víctor Samuel Rivera advanced within Gianni Vattimo's "weak thought", silent violence as a produced, authored, consequential reality treated as something vain, in juxtaposition to the violence Rivera and Roland Barthes located in common (connotation versus denotation of the absent image): what forces people to modify, alter, and accommodate their historical existence in its meaning. In this sense, hermeneutic silence involves the moments in which it is the connected and passive audience that makes the most of what is missing.

Audience Dimension

Audience silence names the phenomenon by which a brand's communicative absence is filled not by the brand's own latent equity but by the independent creative and interpretive activity of its public.

Pan Am filed for Chapter 11 in
January 1991.

The reorganization collapsed within months, and on December 4 the airline ceased operations, abruptly ending a brand that had defined the long-haul jet age and international commercial aviation (Mitchell, 2026). Pan Am has since accumulated a cultural presence (in film, in design nostalgia, in lifestyle branding) that the living airline never achieved with the same intensity further in the time. The brand is more legible as an idea now, once it stopped being an entity and once the audience noticed the weight of that legacy.

Retrospective Dimension

Retrospective silence describes the meaning assigned to past silence after the fact, the reinterpretation of what a brand did not say or do, viewed through a lens that was not available at the time. Helmut Lang's withdrawal from fashion in 2005, and his subsequent transformation of his own archives into sculpture, became retrospectively legible as one of the most coherent artistic statements in the industry precisely because the distance of time allowed the gesture's logic to become visible, while it is continuing to inspire from a position of respect to that particular time (Spindler, 2005).

Contextual Dimension

Contextual silence is the most structurally determined of the three, describing silence that is only legible as silence in relation to what surrounds it. A brand that communicates at half the frequency of its industry, for example, is not quiet; it is quiet relative to a norm, a sector, and the norm is what makes the particular quiet meaningful. What it's implied in this category, is that contextual silence is permanently unstable: as the communicative environment shifts, the same behaviour can move from restraint to standard, or to excess without the brand having changed anything at all. The spiral of silence mechanism is relevant here at the level of industry-wide convergence (Noelle-Neumann, 1993), where brands collectively migrate toward similar communicative frequencies and the brand that does not migrate acquires a contextual silence it may or may not have sought. This also applies to migration to social platforms, where the willingness to voice a minority position is measurably lower online than offline (Pew Research Center, 2014), so the convergence is, if anything, tighter in the environments where brands now publish.

Liminal Silences

[Parasitic, Spillover, and Residue]

Beyond certain inherited silences, many operations occur at the edges of the Hermeneutic register, describing what happens when silence bleeds into adjacent territories or leaves residue that outlasts the brand that produced it. Controversy, illicit branding, and mediatic practice share a common ground in considering silence in all its practical dimensions.

Parasitic silence names the condition of a very common mediatic practice that gains meaning from the communicative noise of others without participating in it.

When the wellness industry spent a decade screaming about authenticity, the brands that said nothing about authenticity acquired, by contrast, a quality of authenticity no campaign could have produced. Liquid Death built a category position in still and sparkling water by loudly inhabiting the aesthetic vocabulary of heavy metal, but the silence of brands like Evian in response to that provocation became, retroactively, its own kind of statement (Schultz, 2021).

Spillover silence is a frequent but demanding practice that explains how a brand's absence in one domain generates meaning in another entirely.

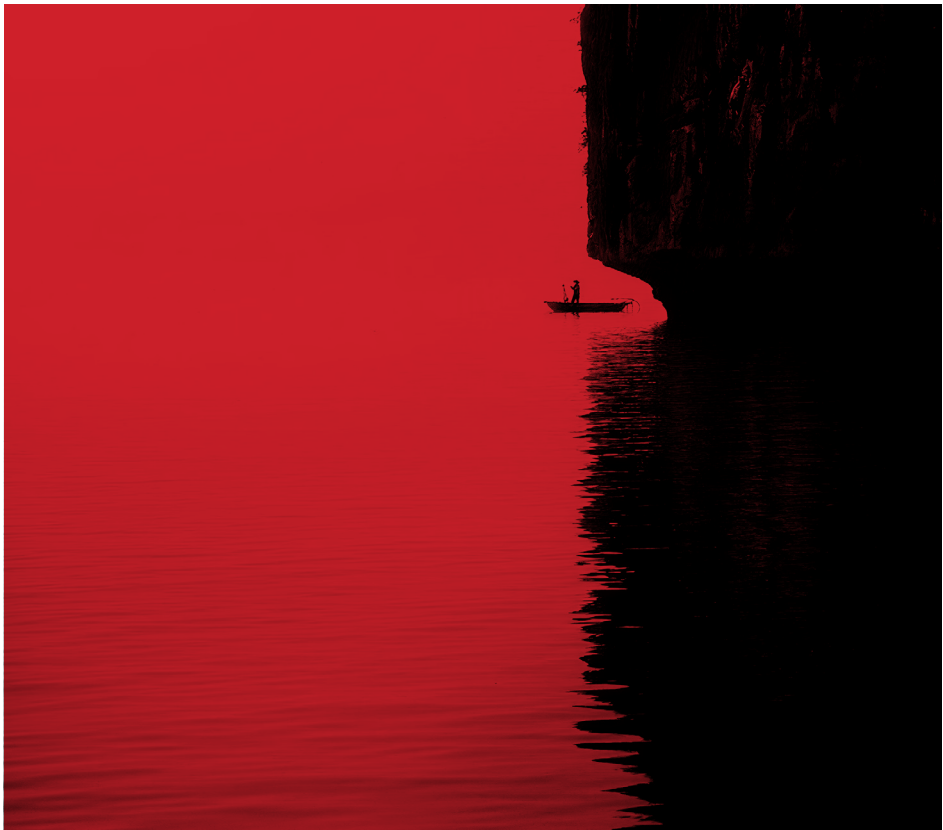
Apple's notoriously sparse communication about product failures produced silence in the domain of corporate accountability that spilled directly into the domain of product mythology, reinforcing among a significant portion of its audience the conviction that the company was too serious about design to be distracted by criticism (Manjoo, 2016). Boeing's prolonged institutional silence following the 737 MAX crashes demonstrates the same mechanism in reverse. In this sense, the direction of the spill is not controlled by the brand, but what the audience already believes.

Post-silence residue describes the accumulated weight that a period of silence deposits on whatever comes after it.

When Phoebe Philo announced her return to fashion in 2023, after a silence of six years, the residue of that silence had compounded to a degree that made the announcement itself almost secondary (Fury, 2023). The contrast effect that Bernardi documented at the cardiovascular level operates culturally as well, but with an important asymmetry: the residue raises the stakes for whatever breaks the silence, and it raises them in proportion to the silence's duration and the equity of the brand that maintained it.

Breaking silence is never neutral. It is always
measured against the silence it ends.

fig. 005
Anthropomorphis



The Legibility Conditions

[003]

Each condition below is expressed by its conceptual foundation and followed by its strategic implications.

A seventh condition closes the section, but it belongs to a different order.

The first six describe what silence requires; the seventh turns the framework back on the practitioner who would use it.

[003.1]

Creating the Field in
Which Absence
Registers as Contrast

Semiotic *Saturation*

Brand Silence works when the communicative environment is saturated enough for absence to register as contrast. But stating this as a principle is insufficient. The question that matters for branding is not whether saturation is necessary but how a brand enters or generates the saturated field that makes its own withdrawal legible. Three distinct pathways emerge from the literature and from practice, each operating at a different scale.



fig. 006
David Wojnarowicz



fig. 007
Louis Vuitton

Pathway 001

Competing in a standardised market.

When an entire category converges on similar communicative codes (visual vocabulary, platforms) the branding acquires a contrast effect it did not need to manufacture. The saturation is provided by the category itself. Roland Barthes's concept of "white writing" (Barthes, 1953: 76–78) describes exactly this condition: the zero degree of brand communication immediately becomes a recognisable brand strategy because "neutral" is never neutral within a system of signs. Umberto Eco's argument that there is no fixed meta-structure governing sign systems (Eco, 1968: 45–52) means that a brand's silence becomes the absent structure par excellence, most visible precisely when the brand stops speaking.

A brand in a market where every competitor publishes daily, uses the same colour palette, and chases the same audience does not need to build saturation.

It inherits it. Its only task is to recognise
the contrast value of withdrawal within that
inherited field.

The convergence has a name once it is automated: when entire categories generate identity work through the same large language models and the same template ecosystems, the surplus of sameness produced is exactly the saturated field against which a different decision registers (Doshi and Hauser, 2024).

Deliberate prior accumulation.

Luciano Bernardi's cardiovascular research demonstrated a principle with direct structural implications for branding: silence following stimulation produces relaxation responses measurably deeper than silence alone (Bernardi, Porta and Sleight, 2006: 448–450).

The pause after the note does
more than the note.

Translated into brand strategy, this means that a period of intensive, coherent communicative presence, not merely of volume, creates the perceptual substrate against which subsequent withdrawal registers as intentional and productive.

Bottega Veneta's deletion of its social media accounts in January 2021 generated more cultural heat than any campaign the brand had run, not because social media deletion is inherently powerful but because the brand had spent years building enough communicative density, through its intrecciato leather code, its editorial voice, its fashion-week presence, for the absence to register against the accumulated weight of what preceded it. The fan account new bottega emerged organically and grew to some two million followers, generating more engagement than any corporate strategy had produced (NSS magazine, 2024).

The silence did not erase the brand's
social presence; it displaced authorship of
that presence onto the audience.

Parasitic positioning.

A brand can also acquire semiotic saturation without producing it, by positioning itself adjacent to cultural movements loud enough to generate surplus meaning. When the wellness industry spent the better part of a decade screaming about authenticity, the brands that said nothing about authenticity acquired, by contrast, a quality of authenticity no campaign could have produced. When every competitor launches a limited edition, a collaboration, a capsule, a drop, the brand that releases nothing becomes the implicit comment on all of them. This is not strategy so much as structural advantage, but it can be cultivated by a brand that understands where the noise is concentrated and positions itself deliberately at its margin.

What unites these three pathways
is a single operational principle

Silence is not a message in itself but a relationship to a field. The field must be legible for the absence within it to carry meaning. A brand that attempts silence in a field the audience does not perceive as saturated produces nothing. A brand that identifies or builds the saturated field and then withdraws from it produces the contrast upon which every subsequent condition depends.

Apophatic *Architecture*

Designing Through
Systematic Negation

Where the first condition concerns the field in which silence operates, this second condition concerns the method by which a brand constructs meaning through what it refuses to say. The distinction is critical. Semiotic saturation is about the environment; apophatic architecture is about the internal design logic of the brand itself.

A brand can exist in a perfectly saturated market and still fail at silence if it has no method for making absence productive.

The apophatic tradition in theology proposes that the most truthful approach to something exceeding the capacity of language is systematic negation: stripping away every positive claim until what remains is productive unknowing rather than false precision (Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, 5th–6th century; Eckhart, c. 1300). The argument is not theological decoration in this context, what happens when naming something imposes a limitation that the thing itself does not have, and the question must be solved.

Maimonides argued that the most truthful thing one can say about God is what God is not (Maimonides, 1190). The thesis connection is direct: a brand practising via negativa defines itself by what it refuses to claim, and in doing so creates a space of projected meaning no tagline could equal.

A brand's deepest values (trust, belonging, identity) do not survive articulation intact.

The moment they are stated, they become claims, and claims invite to scrutiny. Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing (Wittgenstein, 1921: proposition 4.1212) provides the sharpest philosophical blade: certain things cannot be stated without diminishing them. They can only be demonstrated, enacted, withheld in ways that allow the audience to encounter them rather than receive them as information. The silence at the end of the *Tractatus* is not a failure of expression. Wittgenstein told his publisher Ludwig von Ficker that “the book’s point is an ethical one... My work consists of two parts, the one presented here plus all that I have NOT written.

And it is precisely this second part that is the important one” (Luckhardt, 1979: 94).

The apophatic tradition has already crossed disciplinary boundaries into post- structuralism, feminism, and embodiment (Boesel and Keller, 2009), making the leap to branding not just defensible but overdue. Kenya Hara’s distinction between minimalism and emptiness (Hara, 2007: 256–260) provides the sharpest operational tool. Minimalism removes until what remains is clean; emptiness creates a receptive vessel, a space the audience is invited to inhabit with their own meaning, addressing different human needs.

A brand operating under apophatic logic is not trying to say less.

It is designing a container that the audience fills. The task shifts from producing messages to producing the conditions in which meaning arises. This distinction also marks the precise point at which the Western appropriation of restraint went wrong: a brand that removes its logo is practising minimalism, while a brand that removes its logo to leave a question is practising emptiness, and the trade press that declared “quiet luxury” outdated by 2025 was reacting to the former (cleaned surface mistaken for depth) rather than to the latter (Wright, 2025).

Susan Sontag's argument that silence is "inescapably, a form of speech (in many instances, of complaint or indictment) and an element in a dialogue" (Sontag, 1969) confirms the apophatic design principle: the artist, or brand, that creates silence must produce what Sontag calls "a full void, an enriching emptiness, a resonating or eloquent silence." Her observation that "total objects with missing parts are more impressive than partial objects" could serve as a design brief for brand communication. Maurice Blanchot extends this further in a way the communicator is reframed not as message producer but as one who listens to silence and gives it form (Blanchot, 1955).

Three design operations follow.

First, subtraction keeps a record; systematically identifying which brand claims can be removed without loss; discovering that their removal generates more meaning than their presence.

Second, vessel design: creating brand touchpoints (packaging, retail spaces, digital interfaces) that function as empty containers rather than full messages, inviting the audience to project rather than receive.

Third, productive withholding: the deliberate retention of information that the market expects to be disclosed (price, process, inspiration), creating the cognitive incompleteness that the next condition will address in neurological terms.

The silence architect, in this context, is the person who understands that the space left by not saying something is itself a material, with properties that can be worked.

fig. 008
Splash Hockney



Cognitive Sustenance

Keeping the Brand
Alive Inside the
Consumer's Silence

The previous condition explained how a brand designs the space that silence opens. This condition addresses a different problem: what happens inside the consumer's mind once that space is open.

Silence does not automaticall
produce meaning.

It can just as easily produce forgetting,
indifference, or anxiety.

The question that matters for brand strategy is not whether silence activates the brain but how a brand ensures that the activation produces integration rather than emptiness.

The neuroscientific foundation is now well established, but a decade ago, study on adult hippocampal neurogenesis in mice used silence as its control condition, the neutral baseline against which auditory stimuli would be measured.

The control outperformed every experimental condition (Kirste, Nicola, Kronenberg, Walker, Liu and Bhatt, 2015: 1224–1226). Two hours of silence per day produced new cells in the hippocampus that differentiated into functioning neurons and integrated into existing circuits. The finding was accidental: the researchers were not studying silence; they happened to notice what silence did when it lasted.

Silence was not the absence of effect. It was
the most productive condition.

When external stimulation ceases, the brain does not go quiet. It activates the Default Mode Network (Raichle, MacLeod, Snyder, Powers, Gusnard and Shulman, 2001: 676–680), the set of structures responsible for self-referential thought, autobiographical narrative, and the

simulation of future scenarios. This is where the self-story happens: where experience gets integrated into identity, where the past gets organised into memory, where possibilities get rehearsed before they are tested. When a brand goes silent, it does not create emptiness. It creates the conditions under which the consumer's brain activates precisely the system (self-referential processing, autobiographical narrative, future simulation, identity assimilation) where brand meaning is most durably encoded. Two decades of subsequent work have complicated the early picture, and honesty requires the caveat: the network is not a single faculty for “brand reflection” but a distributed system implicated in functions as varied as memory, mind-wandering, and social cognition, and its activation guarantees self-referential processing, not self-referential processing about any particular brand (Menon, 2023). The strategic point survives the caveat, but it sharpens it: silence opens the door to the room where identity is assembled; it does not determine what the consumer assembles there.

But activation alone is not enough.

The DMN is not brand-loyal; it processes whatever material is most salient to the self. A brand that goes silent without having deposited the right kind of material in the consumer's memory risks activating the DMN toward other brands, or toward nothing at all. The Zeigarnik effect provides the first mechanism (Zeigarnik, 1927: 1–32). Incomplete tasks are remembered significantly better than completed ones. The brain maintains an open file on unresolved things; completion closes the file. A brand that resolves everything, explains everything, answers every question, leaves no productive ambiguity, closing its self file in the consumer's cognition.

**A brand that withholds something keeps
its file open.**

The second mechanism is identity anchoring. The DMN's self-referential processing integrates external material into the self-narrative only when that material connects to existing self-concepts. Brands that have built associations with identity relevant categories, like the famous who I am, who I want to become, what community I belong to, frameworks deposit material that the DMN will return to during silence. The pre-condition for productive silence is therefore not merely brand awareness but identity-level brand encoding,

assuming the proper scale of the signals
in their environment.

The third mechanism is emotional residue. Bernardi's research on cardiovascular properties during communication demonstrated that silence after stimulation produces responses deeper than silence alone (Bernardi, Porta and Sleight, 2006: 448–450). A brand that communicates with intensity or experiences that generate genuine emotional response that then withdraw, creates the neurological conditions under which the silence itself becomes restorative, and the brand becomes cognitively associated with that restoration.

In sum, cognitive sustenance requires three prior deposits: incompleteness (to keep the file open), identity relevance (to ensure the DMN returns to the brand), and emotional charge (to make the silence restorative rather than empty).

Without these deposits, silence is just absence.

With them, silence becomes the space in which the consumer does something with the brand that no advertising spend can replicate: integrates it into their own narrative.

fig. 009
Saint Anne



fig. 010
René Magritte



Non-Verbal Infrastructure

Building the Register
That Carries the
Communicative Load

Before going silent verbally, a brand must ensure that its visual, material, and experiential language is robust enough to carry the full communicative load. Silence transfers the burden from the verbal to the non-verbal register; that register must be prepared. The transfer is not a switch; it is a phased process that requires deliberate construction across at least four registers.

First,
Material Codes

Maison Martin Margiela's blank white label (a tag with no name, attached by four white stitches, a numbered system with no explanation) was not a minimalist gesture. It was the construction of a complete material language that could carry the full weight of brand identity without a single word. Bottega Veneta's intrecciato leather weave functions identically: a material signature so distinctive that it identifies the brand across any context, any scale, any product category, without requiring a logo, a name, or a verbal explanation.

Second,
Spatial Grammar

Retail environments, packaging, and physical brand spaces constitute a spatial language that operates independently of verbal content. Tadao Ando's Church of the Light (1989) derives its entire spiritual experience from a cruciform void cut into a concrete wall: "If you give people nothingness they can ponder what can be achieved from that nothingness." (Ando, 1989).

The principle translates directly into
brand space design.

Third,
Experiential Rituals

Max Picard's framing of silence as "a primary, objective reality" and "a complete world unto itself" (Picard, 1948: 211) suggests that silence is not a void to be filled but a space that functions as the "third speaker" in any dialogue. The Japanese concept of *ma*, denoting meaningful negative space, interval, or pause, "an emptiness full of possibilities, like a promise yet to be fulfilled" offers the most complete non-Western theoretical framework for this design practice (Pilgrim, 1986: 247–255).

Zeami Motokiyo's concept of *ma* in Noh drama
theorised strategic pauses that build
emotional resonance by allowing energies to
encounter and transform one another.

Fourth,
Sensory Signatures

The Bernardi principle reframes sonic branding: the pause after the sound does more than the sound. A brand that designs not only its sonic presence but its sonic absence can construct a sensory register that carries meaning in the absence of stimulation. ECM Records, founded in 1969 with the tagline "the most beautiful sound next to silence," has operated for over fifty years on a frequency and aesthetic restraint that functions as the label's most consistent brand signal (Carr, 1991).

The goal is not the elimination of verbal communication but the construction of a non-verbal infrastructure robust enough that verbal silence does not produce communicative silence. The brand that has built this infrastructure can afford silence. The brand that has not cannot.

Power Coherence

Silence is never politically neutral. There is not one “silence” but many, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses (Foucault, 1978: 27). The not-said is not an omission; it is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said. But the question that matters for branding is not the observation that silence carries political weight; since this is by now well established, we’re exploring how does a brand maintain critical engagement with the full topology of silence, including its violent and its generous dimensions, and derive strategic coherence from that engagement?

Gianni Vattimo’s concept of *pensiero debole* (weak thought) proposed that the reduction of violence in discourse requires the weakening of strong metaphysical claims (Rivera, 2021); the abandonment of the idea that any single framework can capture the totality of truth. Applied to Brand Silence, weak thought suggests that a brand’s withdrawal from assertive communication is not passivity but an active reduction of discursive violence:

the brand that stops claiming superiority, stops explaining itself, stops filling every silence with justification etc. practises a form of communicative humility that Vattimo would recognise as ethically generative. But Vattimo’s framework, taken alone, risks obscuring the opposite face of the same structure.

The mechanism through which collective silence becomes self-reinforcing is well documented (Noelle-Neumann, 1993). Individuals and institutions scan their environment for prevailing opinion and self-censor when they perceive their position to be in the minority. The corporate version produces communicative cowardice dressed as strategy. The ACT UP “Silence = Death” poster (Gran Fury Collective, 1987) made the political structure of silence visible, as a proof of this.

Silence will never be the absence of a position
for wealthy brands.

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Qui tacet consentire videtur.

The critical insight is that both deliberate luxury silence and silence born of shame or complicity are, at bottom, strategic acts. The difference between them does not lie in the silence itself, which is formally identical, but in the permeability toward future equity that each one constructs. A brand that falls silent from a position of generative restraint creates permeability: the audience can enter the silence, project meaning, and build a relationship. A brand that falls silent from a position of evasion creates impermeability: the audience encounters not an open space but a wall, and what accumulates on the outside of that wall is not desire but resentment.

Three conditions of
use emerge.

First, declared intent: a brand approaching silence can signal (once, and not as ongoing justification) the orientation of its withdrawal. Lush Cosmetics withdrew from Facebook and Instagram across forty-eight countries citing the documented harms of those platforms (Haugen, 2021), framing absence as ethical position rather than aesthetic choice.

Second, stakeholder awareness: a brand must assess whose silence is being performed, its own, another one, or the silence it is imposing on constituencies that would prefer to be heard.

Third, equity, meaning consumer trust and commercial value combined: before withdrawing, a brand must honestly evaluate whether its silence will read as luxury or erasure, confidence or indifference. This evaluation is not about the brand’s self-perception but more about the audience’s structural position and self-awareness.

Temporal Design

The Mechanics
Exclusive to
Duration, Rhythm,
and Sequence

Brand silence must be timed, but saying this is as informative as saying brand communication must be targeted. The question that justifies temporal design as an independent condition.

What elements exclusive or relative to
time can make a brand's strategic silence
function better?

Such elements emerge, and the case for treating the interval itself as a carrier of meaning has an empirical precedent the sector rarely cites, like when memory for brand associations improves when exposures are spaced rather than massed (Noel, 2006) as we mentioned earlier, which in this case implies that the gap between communications is not dead time but part of what is being communicated.

First,
Duration Thresholds

There is a temporal window within which silence shifts from mystique to irrelevance, and the boundaries of that window are set not by the brand but by the audience's tolerance for unresolved information. Phoebe Philo's six-year silence before launching her own brand in 2023 demonstrates both the power and the risk of extended duration: the residue of the silence had compounded to a degree that made the announcement itself almost secondary, but the gap between what the silence had promised and what the collection delivered became the primary critical event (Fury, 2023). The practical implication is that duration must be calibrated not to the brand's internal timeline but to the half-life of the audience's cognitive open file.

Second,
Rhythm As An
Independent Variable

Can prove very effective but has the most intricacy. Brunello Cucinelli's concept of *otium* like productive reflection as an alternative to accelerated production (Casali, 2015) is both a brand philosophy and a temporal claim, because the interval between communications is itself meaningful, and restraint over time accumulates into a quality of attention that frequency destroys. The practical question here is not how long to be silent but what rhythm the silence establishes, and whether that rhythm carries a temporal signature distinct enough to function as a brand signal in its own right.

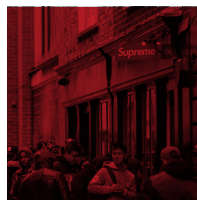
Third,
Narrative Arc
Positioning

A brand's silence occurs at a specific point in its own narrative arc (early, middle, or late) and the meaning of the silence shifts depending on that position. Silence at the beginning of a brand's life is invisible; the brand has not yet built the narrative against which silence becomes legible. Silence in the middle produces the creative tension that the cardiovascular contrast effect predicts. Silence at the end (Helmut Lang's abrupt 2005 departure from fashion) becomes retrospectively legible as one of the most coherent artistic statements in the industry (Spindler, 2005).

Fourth,
Compound
Accumulation

Silence, unlike communication, accrues value in a non-linear fashion. The first day of silence may go unnoticed; the first week generates curiosity; the first month produces mythology; the first year creates a category of its own. Pan Am ceased operations in 1991 after trying to sell their assets and dissolve the income, then failing, and has since accumulated a cultural presence that the living airline never achieved with the same intensity. The compound accumulation of silence means that the same silence deployed in a banal moment and in a crisis moment are not merely read differently; they accumulate differently, and what they accumulate cannot be retrieved or redirected once it has formed, and mostly without the brand's notice.

fig. 011
Supreme



The Space for *Authenticity*

The previous six conditions describe what silence requires. This one describes what it returns, and for that reason it sits in the framework as a reflexive condition that the practice of silence imposes on the practitioner. It does not ask whether a brand has built the field, the architecture, the infrastructure. Instead, it asks what the person designing the silence actually thinks silence is for, and it treats that question as a working tool rather than a preamble.

There is a special kind of inspiration that accumulates slowly and stays.

It comes from going out and asking, from the friction of hearing someone answer from a completely different formation, a different cultural relationship to absence, a different history of restraint. What that friction produces is harder to locate than a reference or a trend, and precisely for that reason it is harder to lose.

It does not depend on proximity to what the market currently validates.

The question this condition proposes is literal, “What is silence to you?” and asking it is a device for de-automatisation.

The act of genuinely seeking someone else’s answer, across disciplines, cultures, and industries, forces a confrontation with one’s own assumptions that no internal process of refinement can produce. The diversity of those answers, their textures, their contradictions, their distances from one another, is not decorative material. It is the substance from which a practice that exceeds trend can be built.

This condition is also where the framework registers the pressure it was built under.

Homogenisation did not begin with artificial intelligence; the flattening of cultural texture into a sterile, “premium”-looking minimalism is a much older product of Western cultural standardisation. But generative systems are the most accelerated chapter of that history, and the empirical concern is now specific rather than rhetorical: large-scale studies of generative AI find that it can raise the quality of any individual output while reducing the diversity of outputs in aggregate, so that a population of creators using the same tools converges on a narrower band of work (Doshi and Hauser, 2024).

The interviews conducted for this research returned the same observation in the practitioners’ own vocabulary “a kind of flattening”, “everything ends up looking identical”, “a closed echo chamber detached from cultural” specificity etc. The Space for Authenticity is the framework’s answer to the reframing of silence out of the elite aestheticism to the fertile ground on which any identity, from any culture or position, individual, can resist blind replication and reveal itself in a less mediated state.

The seventh condition is therefore the bridge from the theoretical architecture to the primary research: the methodology that follows is, in a sense, this condition enacted.

fig. 012
Cascografías



Risk Taxonomy

[004]

When Silence *Fails*

The same properties that make silence a productive communicative tool make it difficult to control and harder to predict. Silence makes audiences uncomfortable, in many ways. It demands an active reading of what is not there, and that demand sits uneasily inside an environment built on frictionless consumption. The unfamiliarity produces a specific kind of anxiety: the suspicion that something has gone wrong, that the brand has forgotten, abandoned, or simply run out of things to say, and many more forms.

That anxiety is partly the product of a communicative culture that has trained its audiences to equate presence with vitality and absence with decline.

For the generations forming their brand literacy inside permanent digital saturation, silence has carried an almost imperative sense of irrelevance (of being overtaken, of ceding ground that the algorithm will refuse to return). The fear is structural, and it is precisely that which, as much as any strategic miscalculation, that produces the failure modes this section maps.



fig. 013
Silenced



fig. 014
Wellness

[004.1]

The *Ghost* Trap

[Condition 01 Violation]

It is natural for a brand that has not yet built sufficient equity to acquire silence and be forgotten rather than mythologised. The audience hasn't built enough mental models of the brand against which to interpret the absence. As a result, the brand simply ceases to exist in the consumer's cognitive landscape. This is the negation of the Zeigarnik effect, in all senses: if no "open loop" has been created, there is nothing to close. A brand that goes silent prematurely accelerates the destruction side of this asymmetry. The ghost trap is the most common failure mode for emerging brands that confuse aspiration with execution. They have seen Bottega Veneta delete its Instagram, and they believe they can do the same. The emerging brand's deletion occurs before anyone has noticed the brand exists.

[004.2]

The *Tone-Deaf* Moment

[Conditions 5–6 Violation]

A brand falls silent during a social crisis, and the silence is read as complicity, indifference, or cowardice. Silvia Rivera's tentación de irrealidad would agree if these terms were applied to the corporate: the brand desires to experience a violent communicative landscape as if it were banal. The audience does not share this desire (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2017). The spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1993) amplifies this: when multiple brands fall silent simultaneously on a controversial topic, each brand's silence reinforces the others', producing collective communicative cowardice that the audience reads correctly as such. The tone-deaf moment is not a failure of timing alone; it is a failure of power coherence, mostly, because the brand has not assessed whose silence is being performed, or whether its silence reads as luxury or erasure in the current political moment.

[004.3]

The Void of Meaning

[Conditions 2–4 Violation]

A brand that withdraws a lot without having constructed the frame with contextual cues to guide interpretation will force the audience to fill the void with assumptions the brand does not control. Barthes's concept of anchorage provides the same semiotic mechanism as what we're providing: without anchorage, the audience defaults to denotation (nothing is being communicated) rather than arriving at the intended connotation (luxury, confidence, mystery). The void of meaning is the failure mode most closely related to the absence of non-verbal infrastructure: the brand has not built the material, spatial, experiential, or sensory registers necessary to carry communication in the absence of words. The legal parallel, in court, says that simply remaining silent, without a prior express invocation (Salinas, 2013), could be used against the defendant. The brand equivalent: silence without a prior declaration of intent is not strategic withdrawal but abandonment.

[004.4]

The Fiasco Effect

[The Structural Risk]

When silence becomes a widely adopted strategy, it loses its differentiating power. Kotler and Pfoertsch's Fiasco Effect from ingredient branding applies: once the majority of brands adopt the same strategy, differentiation collapses and price competition begins. If "post-digital retreat" becomes normalised, just as luxury fashion's 2020s trend suggested, silence will need, and is currently in the way of being differentiated from other silences, a second-order problem the framework must anticipate. The 2024-2026 cycle supplies the live demonstration. The version of restraint that crystallised as "quiet luxury" was adopted broadly enough that

by 2025 it was being declared exhausted, with analysts and surveys reporting a swing back toward “loud luxury” with large logos and bold design statements (Wright, 2025; CNBC, 2025). The oscillation has a structure the marketing literature already mapped: the prominence of a brand’s signalling is itself a strategic variable, with “quiet” goods addressing those who read subtle cues and “loud” goods addressing those who need the signal legible to everyone (Han, Nunes and Drèze, 2010: 15–18). Quiet and loud are not better and worse taste; they are signals calibrated to different audiences, which is exactly why a market can rotate between them without resolving anything. That reversal is the Fiesco Effect operating in real time: a silence adopted as trend differentiated nothing once everyone owned it, and the market simply rotated to its opposite. This effect is by far the most structurally interesting failure mode because it is the only one that arises from the success of the strategy itself instead of its inadequacy. The framework’s response is embedded in the conditions themselves: the specificity of the non verbal infrastructure, the depth of the apophatic design logic, the sophistication of the temporal calibration, these are the variables that differentiate one silence from another when silence itself becomes commonplace. The distinction the framework insists on throughout, between the silence, in the one hand, that is a designed relationship to a field and, in the other hand, the silence that merely borrows the grammar of withdrawal to produce ordinary attention, is exactly what the loud-luxury reversal could not erode, because it was never trend-deep to begin with.

Methodology

[005]

Research Design

This research employs a cross-disciplinary close reading methodology, processing primary texts spanning philosophy, semiotics, neuroscience, brand strategy, visual rhetoric, political theory, and contemporary art, and a second, empirical strand, consisting of a set of semi-structured interviews with practising artists, designers, and strategists. The reading research method implied keeping one question in mind as first and last instance:

under what conditions does
communicative silence become legible as
intentional, meaningful, and strategically
effective in branding?

Every concept that answered or complicated that question was internalised, and every concept that did not was set aside. A set of interdependent conditions that must be met for brand silence to function was thought to respond to the aim to build a solid framework. The interviews were then introduced not to validate the framework statistically but to test its vocabulary against the lived experience of people who design with absence, and to populate the seventh condition with the diversity it requires.

Source and Artist *Selection and Clustering*

The textual sources fell into five natural clusters, each providing a different angle on legibility: (1) philosophical foundations of silence (2) semiotic and rhetorical mechanisms and Foss's conditions for visual rhetoric; (3) neurological and cognitive science, with a particular interest in the Default Mode Network research (Raichle et al., 2001), hippocampal neurogenesis under silence (Kirste et al., 2015), the Zeigarnik effect,

along with Bernardi's cardiovascular studies; (4) brand strategy and market dynamics, including contemporary case studies (Bottega Veneta, Margiela, Lush); (5) political topology and risk, anchored in Foucault, Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence, and Rivera's critique of Vattimo's weak thought (Rivera, 2021).

The interview participants were selected to maximise variation rather than representativeness. The fifteen contributors work across graphic design, motion design, industrial and interior design, painting, music, brand strategy, and experiential design, and across diverse cultural geographies. This is a purposive, non-probabilistic sample, and the bias is deliberate and worth naming: every participant is a creative practitioner, which means the framework is tested against the population most likely to be sympathetic to restraint and least representative of the mass-market brands for which silence is the riskiest. The sample is also small, and the instrument was administered in two languages, with the attendant translation slippage.

These limitations are real and bear directly on the scope of the claims in Section 7.

The compensating strength is depth: each conversation allowed the same ten-question instrument closely enough to allow comparison, while leaving room for answers the framework had not anticipated.

[005.3]

Framework Construction Logic

The framework was constructed through iterative synthesis rather than deductive imposition. The seven legibility conditions of the initial framework were refined into six through the elimination of redundancy and the sharpening of distinctions between conditions that initially overlapped; notably, the separation of environmental contrast as a precondition absorbed into Semiotic Saturation, and the integration of frame construction into Apophatic Architecture as its operational method. The three registers (Material, Structural, Hermeneutic) emerged

as a refinement of an earlier three-column model (Sensorial, Societal, Acquired), retaining the original's structural logic while clarifying the level of analysis each register addresses. The risk taxonomy was naturally derived since each failure mode was mapped to the specific condition or conditions whose violation produces it, ensuring that the taxonomy is not merely descriptive but diagnostic, as it tells a brand not only what went wrong but which condition was inadequately met.

The seventh, reflexive condition was reintroduced after the interviews, not as one of the six structural prerequisites but as the condition that the act of conducting the interviews itself revealed.

As a last note on the architecture of the argument, the thesis presents registers before conditions because the registers describe where silence operates, while the conditions describe how it becomes legible. Understanding the territory before the principles was judged more productive than the reverse. The risk taxonomy follows the conditions because the failure modes are intelligible only in relation to the conditions they violate, naturally.

[005.4]

Instrument and Field

The *Interviews*

The instrument comprised ten questions moving from the general to the specific. The first four established the participant's creative orientation: what inspires them, what they consider authentic, the values they work by, and their relationship to trends. The next two asked directly what silence means to them, personally and within their practice, and how they encounter or use it. The seventh asked how "blind replication", understood as the unconscious adoption of global trends and standards under the pressure to fit in affects their work.

The eighth invited a single thing they
would do differently.

The ninth presented the project's own reframing (silence not as blank void but as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity) and asked how they would apply it in their field. The tenth asked what advice they would give the next generation of creatives seeking their own authentic language.

The design of these questions mattered
to the interpretation of its results.

Since the first four questions were deliberately not about silence, participants are meant to arrive at the questions about silence without having been primed to frame their practice around it. Then when the ninth question, as the only one that disclosed the project's thesis, was placed late enough that participants answered it against the grain of their own already-stated positions rather than in anticipation of them.

The interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish; the Spanish responses are translated, and where a phrase carries a connotation that did not survive translation cleanly, the original sense has been preserved over the literal wording through slight modifications.

The dissenting answers were kept, not smoothed, because they are the evidence that the Space for Authenticity is doing its job: it is supposed to return contradiction, not consensus.

Interviews

[006]

What inspires you to create?

I would say that the term “inspire” has a weird meaning in our society. It has nothing to do with real life. There is no such thing like inspiration.

What do you consider authentic?

Being cool without pretending.

What values do you go by while creating?

Surprise and possibility.

What is your relationship with trends?

Trends are trash.

What does “silence” mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

I like silence, it's a very good engine to work.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

I work in silence. Especially the very early and very late silence is magic.

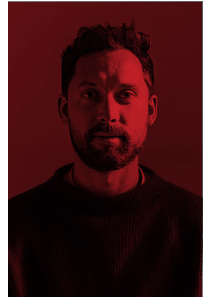
I can work best in silence.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this “blind replication” affect your creative practice?

I feel isolated from trends. Trends are not interesting to me. It's better to know than to follow them.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

Be patient.



Mark Bohle
Designer & Artist

What inspires you to create?

Boredom.

What do you consider authentic?

A signature; a distinct identity.

What values do you go by while creating?

A strong conceptual foundation.

What is your relationship with trends?

I don't have much of a relationship with trends.

What does "silence" mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

Peace, home, warmth, confidence.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

It is an incredibly interesting concept. In motion design, it would manifest as something static, or as a sharp contrast between what is normative, how things "should" be, and what actually is. For instance, an engine that makes no sound, or a dancer who remains completely still (also the pause button).

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this "blind replication" affect your creative practice?

I suppose it affects me unconsciously simply by the nature of working with other people, but I don't pay much attention to it.

What is the one thing you could do differently?

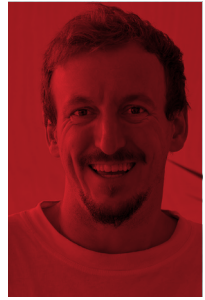
Shifting my point of view toward a strong conceptual foundation.

Instead of silence as blank, pure void, we propose it as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity. How would you apply this strategy in your field?

Silence is the pause button, but it is also everything that happens right before you press "play."

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

To be entirely themselves and actively search for their own unique way to express who they are.



Gerard Mallandrich
Motion Designer

What does “silence” mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

It gives me peace. It is an absolute luxury. I am surrounded by people and stimuli all day long, so having a brief moment of quiet brings me immense peace. I have very few silent moments during the day, like when I'm in the gym sauna, but I enjoy them deeply. Within my creative practice, I never work completely alone; every project involves a team.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

I believe it doesn't really exist anymore, and we are actively conditioning ourselves to live without it. The moment we get five minutes of peace, we immediately pull out TikTok or open a social network.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this “blind replication” affect your creative practice?

We live in a complex era. Social pressure is exhausting, to post constantly, to look a certain way, to do things by a strict standard. Fortunately, my career has been somewhat different, and my status allows me to act the way I do. But it is definitely tough. Even if sales are going well. You are forced to maintain a permanent external presence.

What is the one thing you could do differently?

Not losing identity. We are so globalized that everyone is ending up doing the exact same thing. Keeping yourself entirely loyal to your own identity is becoming increasingly difficult.

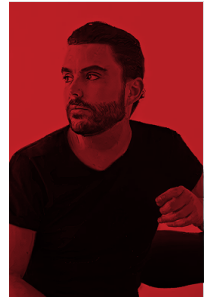
Instead of silence as blank, pure void, we propose it as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity. How would you apply this strategy in your field?

I believe that kind of silence can act as a conscious pause to make you think. We are thinking less and executing faster

every day. Everything is automated and hyper-accelerated. We can obtain the “correct” response to anything in seconds. However, the strategy lies in being hyper-aware of this acceleration and trying every single day to return to yourself, ensuring you don’t get lost in the noise, even if it’s only for a few minutes.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

Never lose sight of who you are and where you come from. Treasure your identity above all else, because it is the only asset that truly makes you different from one another. Travel, explore, and build an internal identity toolbox that is as solid and strong as possible. Read deeply, meet diverse people, and nourish your inner self.



Raul de la Cerda
Industrial Designer

What inspires you to create?

I am inspired by thinking of creativity as a problem-solving tool, rather than merely an expression of emotion or personal character.

What do you consider authentic?

Imperfection. Accepting it and embracing it completely.

What values do you go by while creating?

Patience. Empathy. Vulnerability.

What is your relationship with trends?

It's complicated. I believe trends are a reflection of our current cultural moment, but I think we should always appeal to more transcendent values and concepts, especially when trying to build community and identity.

What does "silence" mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

Silence is essential; it is absolutely indispensable. It seems to me that only silence gives meaning to everything that precedes or follows it. Silence is the most luminous, clear part of my creative process.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

Silence is entirely uncommon in my industry, and I attribute this to the intense FOMO that creatives and brand managers feel regarding the need to constantly be part of the conversation. I believe they completely forget that choosing not to voice an opinion is also a powerful posture.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this "blind replication" affect your creative practice?

Completely. In my case, I have drastically reduced the time I spend on social media. Yes, I miss out on immediate trends and potential surface-level opportunities, but I like to think that I am actively re-training my brain to think and analyze from elements of much greater cultural transcendence.

What is the one thing you could do differently?

I would like to be capable of being exposed to intense noise to discern what is actually useful and adapt it, without having to distance myself completely due to the anxiety it produces.

Instead of silence as blank, pure void, we propose it as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity. How would you apply this strategy in your field?

In my industry, I interpret this strategy as assuming that it carries a much higher strategic value to become the space for deep, meaningful conversations rather than aiming to be present in 100% of superficial daily discussions.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

Create without overthinking and without external expectations. Do it entirely for yourself, as your own personal showcase. It is of little use to guide ourselves by current market standards when, surely by next year, nobody will care about them anyway.



Daniel Mena
Entrepreneur &
Brand Consultant

What inspires you to create?

[05/17]

What inspires me most is trying to reconnect with something honest and human. A lot of my work comes from observing small emotional moments, childhood memories, dreams, awkward behaviors, or little contradictions in daily life. I'm very inspired by playfulness and intuition, trying to create from a place that feels less controlled and more instinctive. Traveling has also influenced me a lot, where I become more aware of different rhythms, and I get to pay attention to simple things, done differently.

What do you consider authentic?

For me authenticity is when something feels emotionally honest. It's not really about being perfect or completely original. It's more about creating without trying too hard to impress people or imitate something else. I think authentic work carries vulnerability and humanity. Sometimes imperfections, and things being a bit broken, are exactly what make something feel real.

What values do you go by while creating?

I try to work from honesty and intuition first. I value playfulness a lot, even when the themes are emotional or existential. I also like leaving space for interpretation instead of explaining everything too much. In general I care more about process than perfection. I enjoy when the material surprises me a little or when things happen naturally during the process.

What does "silence" mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

For me silence is clarity. Not necessarily literal silence, but space away from noise, pressure, comparison, and overstimulation. Creatively silence is important because it gives ideas room to grow naturally. I think some of the best ideas arrive quietly, not when you're forcing them.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you

intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

I think silence feels almost radical today because there's so much pressure to constantly produce, post, explain yourself, and stay visible. Sometimes silence gets interpreted as absence, but I actually think it can be a very powerful space for reflection and authenticity. I've definitely tried to protect moments of silence in my own process because that's usually when I reconnect with why I'm creating in the first place. I usually work in the middle of the night, where there's no one around; when the rest of the world is sleeping I feel like I'm getting ahead somehow, I can think better in that silent space.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this “blind replication” affect your creative practice?

I think it creates a kind of flattening. When people copy aesthetics or trends without questioning them, work can lose emotional depth and individuality. Social media definitely increases that pressure. I try to stay aware of it and ask myself if something genuinely resonates with me or if I'm just absorbing what's around me unconsciously.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

I'd say spend more time listening to yourself than comparing yourself to others. Learning how to be in silence with yourself might be one of the hardest but most beautiful things to achieve. Your voice usually develops slowly through experience, mistakes, obsessions, and curiosity. Don't rush it. And don't be afraid of imperfections, because sometimes the things that feel the most awkward, more cringe, or personal at first are actually what make your work unique.



Santiago Pani
Visual Artist

What inspires you to create?

Belonging.

What do you consider authentic?

Facts without pretension, from the heart.

What values do you go by while creating?

***Faith,
Hope,
Allowing.***

What is your relationship with trends?

Contextualising always, fun, distrustful.

What does “silence” mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

Space to allow what authentically needs to merge and we normally do not want to listen to.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

I intentionally prepare the space to let silence and silences be present.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this “blind replication” affect your creative practice?

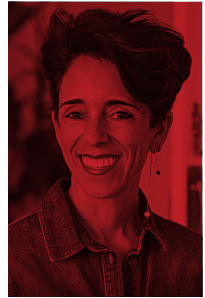
Following is the contrary of being creative.

Instead of silence as blank, pure void, we propose it as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity. How would you apply this strategy in your field?

Communication through silence, so powerful.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

You must fail a lot of times in order to find yourselves. But the result is worth it.



**Amaya Ledesma
del Fresno**
Communications Expert

What inspires you to create?

The need to see what I imagine materialized.

What do you consider authentic?

Something that is unique and has its own character.

What values do you go by while creating?

Functionality, ethics, responsibility, innovation.

What is your relationship with trends?

A lot; trends are information that you can choose to follow or not, but they mark a starting point for current needs.

What does “silence” mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

A lot; silence allows me to listen to my emotions, my thoughts, and my ideas.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

It is very necessary, and it is not always found in the city where I live.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this “blind replication” affect your creative practice?

Very little; although I review trends, they are not always a starting point for my creative practice.

What is the one thing you could do differently?

Following your inner voice, creating in an honest way toward the emotions you want to transmit.

Instead of silence as blank, pure void, we propose it as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity. How would you apply this strategy in your field?

In many ways, as a practice of self-knowledge and exploration to be able to understand your environment.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

That they know themselves, listen to themselves, and identify what makes them unique, both in their creative proposal and as a person.



Melissa Falcón
Designer

What inspires you to create?

Solving.

What do you consider authentic?

The mix of two or more worlds.

What values do you go by while creating?

Commitment and empathy.

What is your relationship with trends?

A good relationship; I like to stay at the vanguard of trends since, for me, it ends up being a way to immerse myself in society.

What does “silence” mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

On a creative level, I would say it is total disruption, and on a personal level, I would say it is chaos, disorder.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

I find it classy. Since my creative industry is advertising, I translate it to when a brand uses silence, meaning it speaks for itself a bit.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this “blind replication” affect your creative practice?

I don't fight against it; on the contrary, I end up using the trends I want to use unconsciously or because I like them on a personal level to carry out my work.

What is the one thing you could do differently?

Having a larger and more diverse creative group.

Instead of silence as blank, pure void, we propose it as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity. How would you apply this strategy in your field?

I really like design that generates silence for me; that is how I could carry it out.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

Mixing is the key.



Abel Ríos
Creative Director

What inspires you to create?

Life.

What do you consider authentic?

Creating from the necessity of letting something out.

What values do you go by while creating?

Truth.

What is your relationship with trends?

I try to integrate them into my narrative without losing myself.

What does “silence” mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

Peace, reflection, and depth, which are very important for both fields. Although I believe it can have quite a few interpretations.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

We are in a moment of a lot of minimalism and a lot of silence; few dare to be themselves. It seems like money is the goal, and I think that generates that uncomfortable silence in which music takes a back seat.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this “blind replication” affect your creative practice?

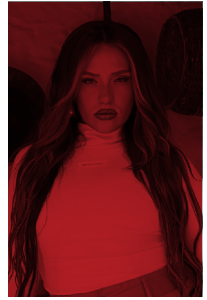
You have to eat, so if I include something that is trending, it is because I like it but also because I think about putting bread on my table. Just like anyone does in any other job.

What is the one thing you could do differently?

Moving to Thailand and screwing everyone else.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

That they seek to connect with God in every note they put out, that they truly connect with what their body and soul need to express. This goes way beyond recognition and money.



Lia Kali
Singer

What inspires you to create?

Building things that generate excitement, for myself and for others.

What do you consider authentic?

That which is surprising.

What values do you go by while creating?

Conceptual value, surprise, and formal excellence.

What is your relationship with trends?

I observe them and incorporate what I truly like with caution, after some time has passed since its peak popularity.

What does “silence” mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

Something that I appreciate when I desire it, and when I do not, it becomes a source of discomfort.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

I always believe it is better to remain silent when you do not have something important to say, in order to prioritize the messages that actually are important, and to act with a collective conscience.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this “blind replication” affect your creative practice?

I try to incorporate them only to the extent that they make sense to me.

What is the one thing you could do differently?

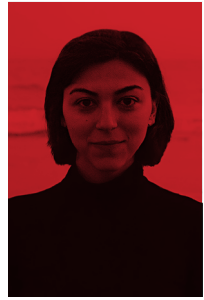
I always trust that my criteria evolves to do things better with time.

Instead of silence as blank, pure void, we propose it as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity. How would you apply this strategy in your field?

I would have to know the specific details to know how to apply it.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

That they be critical of their references, learn from others, and develop a strong capacity for work.



Paula López-Nuño
Creative Strategist &
Master's Director

What inspires you to create?

Any audiovisual output that moves me, especially when I see or hear something outside the established norms, inspires me to do similar things. As a specific example, I like to look at the creative processes of artists I admire; it gives me a lot of inspiration and the desire to create.

What do you consider authentic?

Counterculture, that which questions the current state of the world, that which does not follow trends and bets on opening a path that is unexplored... Risk, for me, is authentic.

What values do you go by while creating?

Exploring beyond the surface, giving things time to “cook.” I also move between putting restrictions on myself or, at times, giving myself free rein to do whatever I want, and then I filter. I believe everything comes from chaos, and our job is to organize that mental chaos.

What is your relationship with trends?

I try not to follow them because I feel it contaminates my work and makes it one more in the crowd; however, I like to be aware of what is happening.

What does “silence” mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

It is a fundamental part of my life, something I see as necessary to reach a creative end. Silence is needed to give rhythm, to speak louder. Specifically, when I produce music, I try to subtract my chaos instead of adding things; sometimes the simplest answer is a good pause.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

I relate it a lot to disconnecting from our digital environments. In reviewing references or projects beyond screens and beyond algorithms. Walking, visiting a flea market, having a conversation, and not depending on the noise that

***a multinational company imposes on us.
It is something I try to teach as much
as possible.***

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this “blind replication” affect your creative practice?

It affects my work team, in that designers only have one point of reference and everything ends up looking identical and not just in design, I feel this happens in most creative arts and crafts. It is a constant struggle not to allow Pinterest or Instagram to become hegemonic entities that prevent us from seeing beyond.

Instead of silence as blank, pure void, we propose it as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity. How would you apply this strategy in your field?

I could apply it in the sense that silence helps to detoxify and to find answers that are within the same container, separating yourself from a source that everyone else is drinking from.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

Invite people to disconnect, to look at more diverse sources, to review the past, and to explore worlds that seem distant to us, because if you dive deep into them, you can end up finding a pot of gold.



Camilo Roa
Graphic Designer

What inspires you to create?

Nature.

What do you consider authentic?

What's driven from a personal perspective.

What values do you go by while creating?

Honest.

What is your relationship with trends?

I try not to follow them so much.

What does “silence” mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

A personal moment to disconnect.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

Offline research, and yes.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this “blind replication” affect your creative practice?

It depends on the type of project. When it's commercial it is easy for this trend to get through your head; for more personal projects, not so much.

What is the one thing you could do differently?

Get out of social media.

Instead of silence as blank, pure void, we propose it as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity. How would you apply this strategy in your field?

Going more to nature.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

To do other things besides work that inspires you. To be curious and experimental.



Eduardo Paso Viola
Creative Director

What inspires you to create?

Design exists somewhere between creativity and science. Inspiration is guided by systematic observation, study, and context-specific inquiry rather than pure intuition. It comes from trying to understand people, histories, symbols, technologies, and social tensions.

What do you consider authentic?

Authenticity emerges when there is a strict coherence between intention, form, context, and meaning. It carries a singular resonance that feels necessary and sincere rather than artificially constructed merely to gain attention or follow a trend.

What values do you go by while creating?

Rigor, honesty, and good intentions. This means avoiding superficiality, maintaining transparency in process, and exercising ethical responsibility toward how design impacts people, cultures, and environments.

What is your relationship with trends?

I observe them from a critical distance. Trends can indicate cultural changes, but obsessively chasing them leads to visual uniformity and the loss of personal or contextual relevance.

What does “silence” mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

Silence is a blank space and an empty page waiting to be activated. It is a moment of suspension where thoughts can settle. Within creative practice, it is potential; it creates the ideal conditions for clarity, observation, and deep reflection.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

It is a form of mental space, rest, and calm within an environment saturated with sensory noise. It can communicate luxury, confidence, and sophistication for a brand that doesn't need to shout. I intentionally use it through empty

space, restrained visual systems, and the careful reduction of elements.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this “blind replication” affect your creative practice?

It contributes significantly to contemporary visual noise, causing brands to look and behave in remarkably similar ways. Design risks becoming a closed echo chamber detached from cultural complexity, leading to a severe loss of character, contrast, and critical thinking.

What is the one thing you could do differently?

We must stop designing primarily for professional approval within the industry itself, such as awards, blogs, or social media feeds. We need to recover critical distance and have the courage to embrace difference instead of optimizing toward sameness.

Instead of silence as blank, pure void, we propose it as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity. How would you apply this strategy in your field?

By shifting the mode of presence. Silence in contemporary design must be used as the ability to create distance from the predictable visual formulas dominating global communication. In a world of synthetic abundance, restraint becomes an explicit expression of human judgment.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

Stop looking at yourselves so much. Creative industries encourage an obsession with personal branding, but design is a profession of responsibility and service. Authenticity does not come from self-expression alone, but from coherence between values and actions.



Francesc Ribot
Researcher &
Design Theorist

What inspires you to create?

Real human connection, observing daily behaviors, reading, and looking for references in completely diverse places like independent magazines and platforms. I am inspired by maintaining an absolute, honest truth to what a project is.

What do you consider authentic?

Transparent, honest work that does not try to sell smoke or look like anything else. Authentic creations carry vulnerability, emotional sincerity, and human imperfection.

What values do you go by while creating?

Sincerity, absolute transparency, and an excess of respect for what is being said. I value treating processes horizontally and humanly.

What is your relationship with trends?

I strongly recommend not jumping on trends. Trends lift you up and give you a one-time success, but when the wave ends next month you are left completely stuck because you didn't take the time to think of something unique.

What does "silence" mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

Silence transmits revolution to me. Personally and creatively, it means a necessary space away from over-communication, a tool for clarity, and a resting place from the digital exhaustion imposed by modern media.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

It manifests as an explicit consequence of digital exhaustion. High-end fashion brands like The Row implement it by banning cell phones at runways to control exposure. In my own practice with brands like Methane James, we opted for being blind to the product and completely avoiding oversharing or digital advertising.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to

fit in. How does this “blind replication” affect your creative practice?

It creates a highly repetitive and boring visual environment. Clients get so obsessed with asking “is this going to go viral?” that they forget how to build a unique concept, turning social platforms into copycat spaces.

What is the one thing you could do differently?

Breaking business secrecy by reclaiming absolute corporate transparency. For example, studios like Casa Bien are revolutionary because they publish their exact internal salaries on GitHub, breaking the unhelpful silence of traditional businesses.

Instead of silence as blank, pure void, we propose it as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity. How would you apply this strategy in your field?

By intentionally forcing teams and clients to get bored and pause. Silence can cause initial market discomfort, but when a brand shuts up to think instead of shouting louder, it shifts its presence to focus on credibility and genuine creativity.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

Learn how to be in silence with yourself. Never look for references in just one place, look outside your immediate digital bubbles, and understand that you must fail multiple times in order to find your true voice.



Sofía Paura
Art Director

What inspires you to create?

The relationship between space, light, and the world we are living in.

What do you consider authentic?

Something that is based on tangible elements and contains components made by human beings.

What values do you go by while creating?

Immersion, spaces that tell stories, and originality.

What is your relationship with trends?

I follow technological trends and implement them directly into my art.

What does “silence” mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

For me, silence represents moments of deep attention used to create focus and clear differentiation between different energetic elements.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

Yes. Sometimes silence can create powerful moments of tension within my shows. It can also mark transition moments when changing from state A to state B, or it can be used to build necessary downtime inside my exhibitions.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this “blind replication” affect your creative practice?

In a way, it inspires me to take different approaches to art, but it also forces me to create elements to fit in. It is always a constant battle between personal authenticity and the expectations of clients, projects, and my audience.

What is the one thing you could do differently?

To keep believing in my true self, my creativity, and my own ideas.

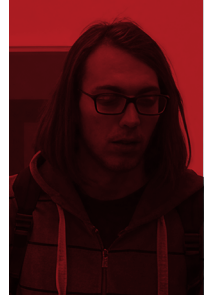
Instead of silence as blank, pure void, we propose it as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity. How would you apply this strategy in your field?

Silence can be used to create intense

***focus on specific moments and spaces,
drawing close attention to the small
details that might otherwise not be
preserved or noticed.***

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

Keep working with elements and inspiration drawn from your immediate surroundings. In a world that is digitalizing by the day, we need completely different outcomes from the use of technology to create unique narratives and fresh perspectives, thereby stimulating the process of thinking differently.



Jaco Schilp
Immersive Digital
Designer

What inspires you to create?

People.

What do you consider authentic?

Natural drive and intuition.

What values do you go by while creating?

Being honest and trusting the tensions within the creative process.

What is your relationship with trends?

It's good to be aware of them and to be able to play around them; I just try not to limit myself to them.

What does "silence" mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

I see silence as a connecting element, similar to white space in layouts.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

There's a kind of ritual tension in silence that is very interesting to experiment with in collective interactions; practising silence as a group is something that connects us with others.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this "blind replication" affect your creative practice?

The thing about trends is that not all of us perceive them in the same way, so expectations between clients, design teams, and final customers can be very different.

What is the one thing you could do differently?

Acknowledge the trend and analyze why it is a trend and how it matters in the context of the project.

Instead of silence as blank, pure void, we propose it as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity. How would you apply this strategy in your field?

Silence can work as a beginning, the tension before a start, a connection in between, and a magnificent ending of an event.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

Learn from others, try everything that resonates deeply with you, play, make mistakes, be patient, have fun, and enjoy the process.



Nico Venturelli
Designer

What inspires you to create?

The environment. "Inspiration" is everywhere; I don't think it is innate, as Descartes might describe it, but rather a simple thought that triggers emotions, which in turn generate the threads for assembling an idea. The difference lies in what each person does with that inspiration, which depends on their capacity for synthesis and interpretation.

What do you consider authentic?

Something whose value is tied to what it is, intrinsic value.

What values do you go by while creating?

Acting with honesty and responsibility toward my clients, my community, and myself.

What is your relationship with trends?

If you row in the same direction as the tide, eventually the current will drag you along.

What does "silence" mean to you, both personally and within your creative practice?

Silence is the noise of your thoughts.

How do you interpret silence within the current landscape of your creative field? Have you intentionally encountered or made use of it in your experience?

Yes, but as media silence, not sharing every aspect of your life on social networks and being concise with the "noise" you make. It is a practice I have incorporated for some years now.

Today we often follow global trends and standards almost unconsciously, driven by the pressure to fit in. How does this "blind replication" affect your creative practice?

Whoever always seeks to fit in lacks authenticity, not only professionally but personally.

What is the one thing you could do differently?

All or nothing, who knows; I have no predetermined guidelines for the path I should follow, and there are few references I can consult.

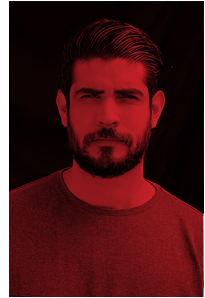
Instead of silence as blank, pure void, we propose it as a space to reveal authenticity and preserve cultural identity. How would you apply this strategy

in your field?

Simple: take social media away from a group of people. The real silence we live today is the silence of our thoughts, where we lose hours without critical reasoning, without the whispers of our own thinking, a silence that is not only unspoken but mental. I would explore that silence and see what results it yields.

What advice would you give the next generation of creatives looking to find their own authentic language?

If you are thinking of abandoning what you do, maybe you don't love it as much as you think.



Xavier Loránd
Designer

Practical Application

[007]

[0071]

The Design Concept

Red, Emotion, and
Colour as Resistance

What colour do you reach for when you want to signal “quiet” in branding today? Probably a soft grey, a bone white, a careful beige. That’s basically the whole palette of the restraint the market has already commodified, a stripped, privileged minimalism that scrubs cultural texture off things just so they’ll read as “premium” (and, weirdly, as “inclusive” while it flattens everything it touches).

So we went the other way and built
the project in red.

Red because it’s emotion, blood, alarm, a pulse. Because it’s the literal opposite of the bloodless grey that “quiet” has come to mean, and because the choice is itself the argument. It says silence isn’t the same as emptiness. The thing is, colour here is the resistance. It’s a deliberate counter to the decultured minimalism the thesis keeps naming as the real enemy hiding behind the convenient everyday villains.

[0072]

The Book

What is silence
to you?

The book collects the silences of several artists, designers, and strategists across different cultures and disciplines (the same people whose interviews sit in Section 5). The whole thing is organised around one question, the one that also names the seventh condition: What is silence to you? And the answers don’t agree with each other. Because the answers contradict each other (silence as peace for one person, as “total disruption” and “chaos” for another, as luxury, as discomfort, as the pause right before you press play), the book refuses to hand you the single marketable definition the trend cycle wants.

That refusal is the point.

It's an object you can hold, a curated room of difference whose value is in the textures and the distances between voices, not in any tidy or overcomplicated conclusion. The book is, in this sense, the public-facing, enriched extension of this thesis (which stays the source text), and what it adds is plurality and the featured artists whose restraint was never, ever a strategy.

fig. 015
Sonora



[007.3]

Booth Installation

Picture a fair: a lo-fi soundscape of a hundred booths all yelling at once. Ours is built as the opposite, a contrast field that's quieter, slower, and emptier than everything around it, so the absence reads as a choice and not as a budget problem. It's like an apophatic vessel at an efficient architectural scale. Will it actually work on real visitors? That's exactly what an installation, and not another paragraph, is for.

[007.4]

Web Platform

And then the platform, which honestly is the riskiest of the three, because it walks the argument straight into the medium that caused the problem.

No infinite scroll, no feed training your
eye to skim.



The manifesto isn't handed to you as a polished copy; you uncover it through your own action, and accidental scroll animation past the home page, so the central statement is something you reveal rather than consume. As a first contact with this platform, an augmented-reality piece lets the work occupy space in the first page, once you turn the red cover, via QR scanning, in the page itself. Built for one metric, and the one the conclusion argues for: gathering answers as to what is silence. Fair enough if that sounds idealistic, it's a digital object symbolically thought to "practice depth in the realm of reach".

Each one is a space designed to be filled, by
the reader, by the visitor, by you.

That, basically, is the only honest form this particular demonstration could take. Draw your idea of silence and resume your reading of the book, the screen is locked. Once you get to finish it, you will unlock access to the platform whenever you want in the future.

Conclusions and Synthesis

[008]

What the *Interviews Returned*

Three findings emerged with enough consistency to report, and one productive disagreement. The first finding is that practitioners overwhelmingly experience silence as a precondition of authentic work rather than as a communicative tactic. When asked what silence means to them, most returned to the same small cluster of words, “peace,” “clarity,” “depth,” “reflection,” “focus”, and only some described it as the most generative part of their process. One painter called it “the most luminous, clear part of my creative process.” An anonymous musician described his method as subtraction, saying: “the simplest answer is a good pause.” This locates the value of silence upstream of strategy, in the conditions of making, which is precisely where the Space for Authenticity claims it should sit.

The interviews suggest silence is first
an input the maker requires, and that the
two are not separable.

The second finding is that “blind replication” is recognised, named, and resented across disciplines, but managed in incompatible ways; several participants reported deliberate insulation from trends: “trends are trash”; “I feel isolated from trends, it’s better to know than to follow them”; a drastic reduction of social-media time accepted as the price of not being flattened. Others were candid about the economic floor under the table: “you have to eat, so if I include something that is trending, it is because I like it but also because I think about putting bread on my table.”

The refusal of replication is not
equally available to everyone; it is conditioned
by the same structural position that Condition
5 (Power Coherence) describes at the
level of brands.

The third finding is convergence on the diagnosis even where there was divergence on the cure. Participants independently described the

omogenising effect of unquestioned trend-following in nearly identical terms as “a kind of flattening,” work that “ends up looking identical,” design becoming “a closed echo chamber detached from cultural” specificity, brands that “look and behave in remarkably similar ways.” That this language arrived unprompted, from practitioners who had never explicitly theorised silence in several cases, is the strongest available corroboration that the convergence the framework worries about is not an academic abstraction but a felt condition of contemporary practice.

The productive disagreement concerned
silence itself.

For most participants silence was peace, clarity, as familiar as home. For one it was “total disruption” creatively and “chaos, disorder” personally; for another, something appreciated only when desired and “a source of discomfort” when not. As these last three examples make a rule of three, they become reminders that silence has no single value outside of shared emotions, that its meaning is assigned by the person who encounters it and conforms it into language.

From Reach to *Depth*

Here's the last thing we keep coming back to. This whole thesis can be simplified into one big move; a shift from the maximum reach available to the potential depth, from metrics to reflections, from grabbing attention to earning it, from hearing to listening etc. And the six legibility conditions are structural for a different kind of brand relationship perspective, the kind where a brand's restraint becomes a design material instead of a limitation, and where your interpretive work as an audience is the product rather than a risk somebody has to manage.

Brand silence works in layers.

As we've mapped it, it runs at the level of a body (Material), a whole field of brands and platforms watching each other (Structural), and at the level of meaning that piles up over years (Hermeneutic). So a brand using silence has to know which registers it wants to stand the most, and meet the conditions that live there according to one's perspective. And to prevent further doubt about risks, the taxonomy is also a small reminder that lets you trace the failure back to the exact condition that got skipped, which makes the framework diagnostic and not just descriptive.

But the interviews gave me something
the books couldn't.

For the people who actually make the work, silence shows up first as a precondition of being authentic and only later as anything a strategist would "deploy." That's the seventh condition, the Space for Authenticity, it keeps the question What is silence to you? open as a working tool, and it treats the messy spread of answers as raw material for a practice that can outlast a trend.

fig. 016
El Gallo



The Quiet-Signal Framework

So what's the actual contribution here?
A “quiet signal” framework, a way for brands to
communicate in the though of absence instead
of excess.

Most marketing runs on maximum reach,
the gut belief that more touchpoints and more
posts and more channels just mechanically
produce more equity.

The particular claim the conditions are named
after and start from is that for a brand with enough
equity, a solid non-verbal infrastructure, and an
honest read on its own power position, fewer
signals, more intention, designed silence, long
term positioning and productive disagreement
builds relationships that Maximum Reach can't.
In the end, swapping impressions for reflections
as your main metric isn't just a cute metaphor, it's
a real and unfortunately needed claim about what
communication is for. The wider culture is already
drifting this way. Some have been calling it “critical
ignoring,” the skill of deciding what doesn't get
past the threshold of your attention in the first
place, and they point out that the brands cutting
through now are the ones that feel edited rather
than exhaustive (Protein, 2026). That makes
sense to us. It's the same instinct Steve Jobs had
when he said focus is really about saying no to
a thousand things.

Implications and *Future* Directions

How far down the ladder can silence actually travel before a Ghost Trap (as in Chapter 4.1) swallows it?

We don't fully know.

The framework grew mostly out of luxury and heritage brands, the ones sitting on decades of accumulated capital, and the interviews widen the cultural frame without settling the question of access. In the end, it's not needed, not within the direction of inspiration or creativity, since doing so would inevitably start mixing politics with aesthetics. Refusing replication isn't equally available to everyone, but more so, isn't in the first interest of everyone who's willing to start or manage a brand. Let alone, a freelancer with rent due and a heritage house with a vault of equity or a local small village fruit seller do not stand in the same place when they consider going quiet. So whether these conditions adapt for emerging brands, for non-profits, for public institutions, or for cultural movements with none of luxury's structural advantages, that's still open. The methodology has real limits too (a small, purposive sample tilted toward creative practitioners), which means you should read these conclusions as a foundation for more work, not a verdict.

The obvious next step is testing the conditions quantitatively against mass-market brands and against audiences who have no patience for restraint at all.

Moreover, we believe two forces are going to keep stress-testing this framework, and we want to name them. One is the luxury whiplash: the “quiet luxury” wave that broke and snapped back into “loud luxury” almost overnight. Ana Andjelic reads it well when she notes that the most coveted things now aren't the most expensive but the most obscure, and that luxury got addicted to growth at scale and high price until consumers simply stopped buying the story (Andjelic, 2026).

That's the Fiesco Effect we described in 4.4,
a silence held only as a trend differentiates
nothing the moment everyone owns it.

The other force is AI, and it doesn't retire my argument so much as sharpen it. As more identity work funnels through the same models and the same templates, the world fills up with competent sameness, and that surplus of sameness is exactly the saturated field a genuinely different decision registers against. The same shift can be framed from the other side: when polish gets cheap, the scarce thing becomes a recognisably human point of view, and "stupidity" (instinct, friction, refusing to optimise) starts to look less like failure and more like resistance (Protein, 2026b), and they're right.

And here's where it ties back to
the whole thesis.

The reporting on whether machines can have taste keeps landing on one structural limit: a model can only ever reflect what already exists, because it trains on the past, so it's "always going to be a beat behind" the person who reads a room, a body, a chance encounter on the street (Schulz, 2026). That's not a small technical caveat. It's the same human faculty silence depends on. Choosing to go quiet is a bet on context, on your audience's ability to interpret an absence, and context is precisely what a backward-looking system can't originate.

So the danger isn't that AI will out-style us.

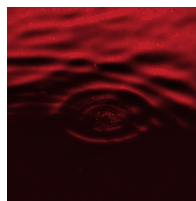
The danger is subtler: that we start borrowing our own language from the average of everyone else's, optimising toward a voice the machine already finds legible, and call that authenticity. Ultimately, frameworks like ours serve the recall for means of organically articulating frameworks that develop into wider communication; because authenticity built from the median is just sameness with better lighting, after all. If you let the model condition how you sound, you don't find your own register, you don't inherit the model's, but the crowd's. And a brand that inherits the

crowd's voice has nothing left to make silent, because it never had anything of its own to withhold, if it makes sense, The whole value of silence is that it points back to a specific someone who chose it.

Outsource that choice and the
silence goes hollow.

crowd's voice has nothing left to make silent, because it never had anything of its own to withhold, if it makes sense, The whole value of silence is that it points back to a specific someone who chose it.

fig. 017
Quiet Inquiry



The question was never
whether brands *should speak*
less or subscribe to a global
call for degrowth.

The real question is,

Whether, when you choose
silence, *you actually know what*
you're doing with it.

Do you?

In this case, what did you get
from *silence*, all around?

We express sincere gratitude
for your readership.

Hopefully, this research
has *sparked new insights*,
anticipating that these
findings prove both *effective*
and *engaging* for current
industry challenges.

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[009]

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Fig. 001 Alberto Schommer, *Itsasoa (The Sea)* Black-and-white photograph of a breaking wave, from the series and photobook *Itsasoa*, published by Fundación Kutxa, San Sebastián, 1999.

Fig. 002 Atin Aya, *Retrato del Silencio (Portrait of Silence)* RTVE Docu Film; La Favorita Produce, 2024

Fig. 003 Guillermo Fornes, *Pintar el Silencio (Painting Silence)* 2016.

Fig. 004 Graciela Iturbide, *Cabritas antes de la matanza (Little Goats Before the Slaughter)* Gelatin silver print. La Mixteca, Oaxaca, Mexico, 1992.

Fig. 005 Alexandre Manuel, *Anthropomorphis* 2017. Portuguese artist represented at Art Madrid.

Fig. 006 David Wojnarowicz, *Untitled (Face in Dirt)* Gelatin silver print, 1991. The artist's face half-buried in cracked desert earth, made shortly before his death from AIDS-related illness in 1992.

Fig. 007 Louis Vuitton, custom dress by Nicolas Ghesquière Custom Louis Vuitton dress designed by Nicolas Ghesquière for the Critics' Choice Awards. Photograph by Myles Hendrik.

Fig. 008 David Hockney, *The Splash* Acrylic on canvas, 183 × 183 cm, 1966.

Fig. 009 Unknown artist, *Saint Anne Wall* painting (tempera al secco on plaster) from Faras Cathedral, Nubia (present-day Sudan), 8th–9th century AD. The saint raises her index finger to her lips in a gesture read as sacred silence. Collection of the National Museum in Warsaw.

Fig. 010 René Magritte, *La Trahison des images* (*The Treachery of Images*) 1929. Photo by Thomas Hawk / CC BY-NC 2.0 (2026).

Fig. 011 Supreme, Queue outside the Supreme store, Peter Street, London. Photographer unknown (editorial photograph).

Fig. 012 Alberto Schommer, *Cascografías* From the series *Cascografías* (1974–1991): black-and-white photographic collage with male nude, fragmented architecture and torn surfaces.

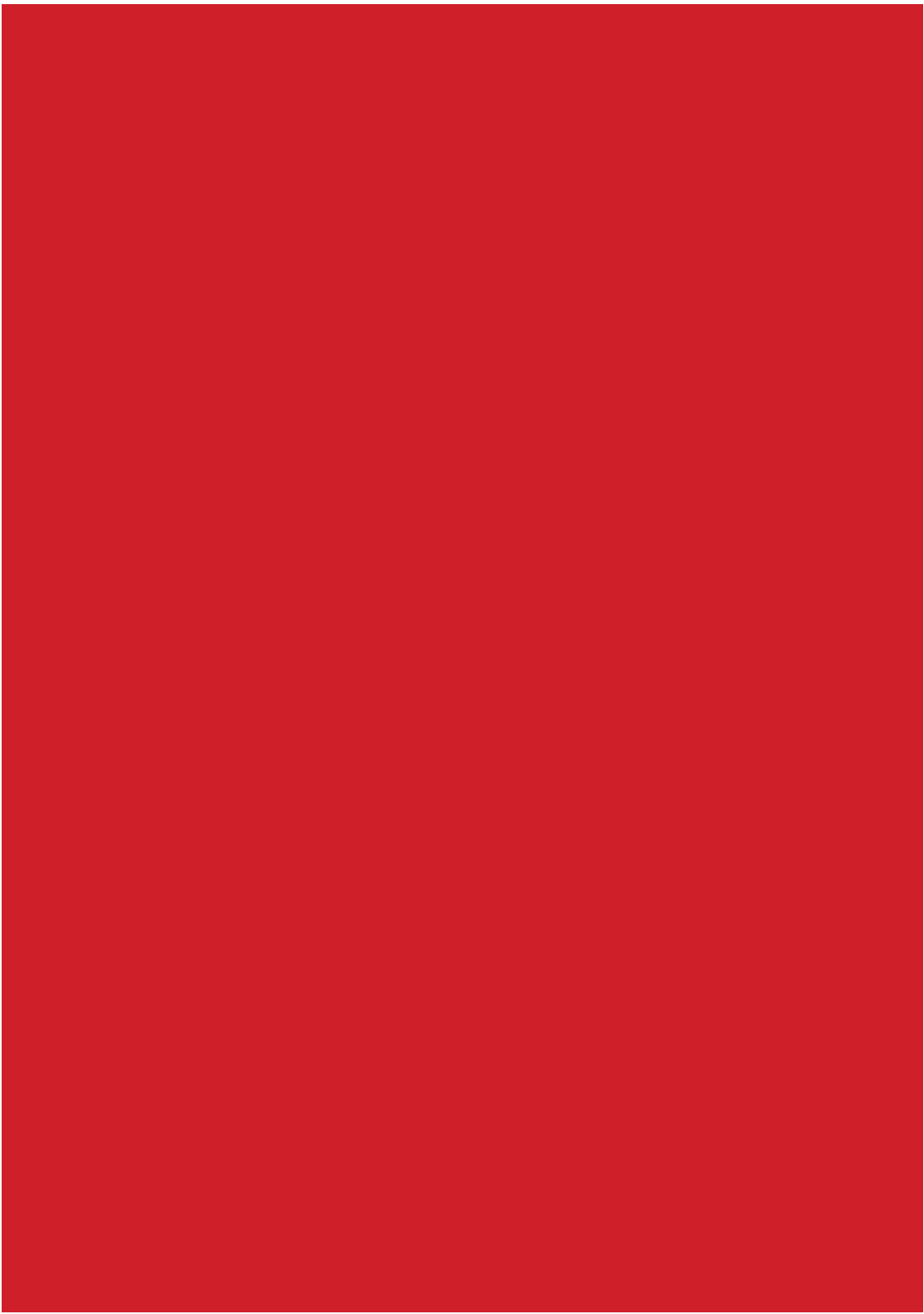
Fig. 013 Iñaki Fernandez Arza, *Silenced* 2nd place in *Il Amorebieta-Etxano* Photography Awards. Guipuzkoa.

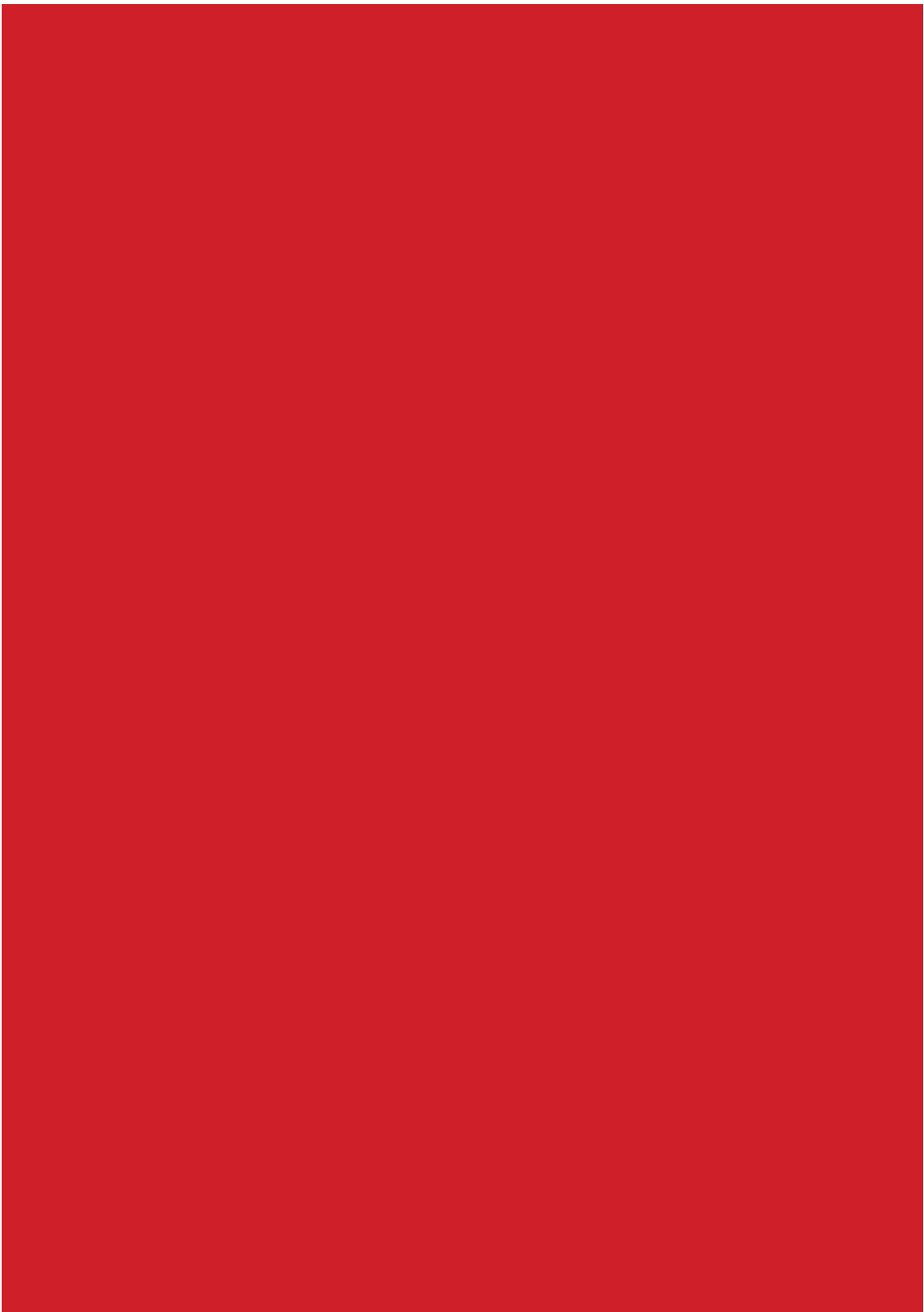
Fig. 014 Wellness Industry Overhead view of a commercial gym: treadmills, spin bikes and weight stations. Photographer unknown. Oil on canvas, 120 × 160 cm, 2023.

Fig. 015 Graciela Iturbide, *Desierto de Sonora* (*Sonoran Desert*) Gelatin silver print. Sonora, Mexico, 1979.

Fig. 016 Graciela Iturbide, *El gallo* (*The Rooster*) Gelatin silver print. Juchitán, Oaxaca, Mexico, 1986.

Fig. 017 Hua Jia Rui Rui, *Quiet Inquiry*, Digital photography. 2024.







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