

LIKE MARILYN WITH ULYSSES::
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It's hard not to think about Marilyn Monroe. And when discussing design research, minds start wandering. To Marilyn, in movies and magazines. In fiction. To Marilyn singing "Happy Birthday" to President Kennedy.

Mmmmmm.

And minds wander to the famous photo of Marilyn, pictured outdoors with bare feet while she reads the last pages of James Joyce's novel Ulysses.

Joyce boasted that the novel contains so many riddles that it would keep professors busy for a hundred years arguing about what he meant. While history will prove him right, it will be a cold comfort. He died long before Norma Jean became Marilyn Monroe.

It is almost an impossible meeting. The meeting between an inaccessible intellectual fortresses and the starlet of the century. Marilyn should be stupid like a shoe. She should be shallow, the very symbol of shape and seduction. Design, actually.

Submerged in Ulysses with bare feet, this picture of Marilyn tells another story.

The picture tells a story about possible futures for design. Design is products and processes. Shape and giving form. And giving form is both aesthetics and analysis. Today, more and more is labeled as design, from hair and babies, to pharmaceuticals, engineering, and politics. And we educate designers without aesthetic sensibility. What a nasty thought.

It is then that it helps to think about Marilyn Monroe. We can never do it too often. Especially not when making policy for design research.

Design is an analytical discipline with an aesthetic sensibility. Design research must be the impossible meeting between razor sharp sensibility and advanced analytical methodology. Design research must lay the ground for future design. The design of the future must seduce with beauty, business, brains, and bare feet.

Like Marilyn with Ulysses.