ALISON GRACE

DECONSTRUCTION OF SEMIOTICS IN ADVERTISING

Student ID: 19823567

AGP603

Variable Assessment:

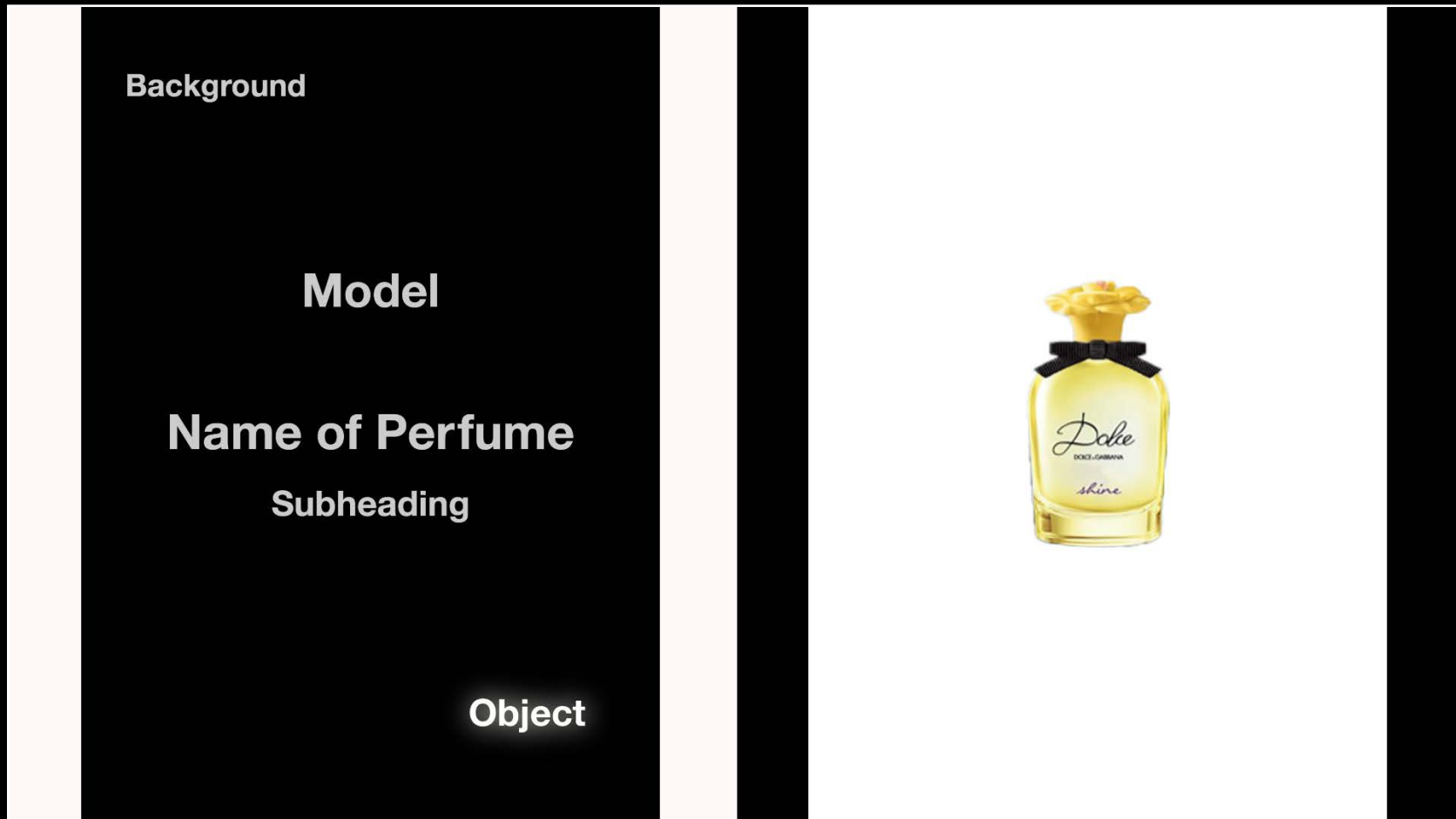Studio 20 credits | CCS 60 credits

Brief:

This project focuses on semiotics in visual advertising. We are constantly exposed to ads, from the streets to our homes, and in various forms. The advertising industry is part of our everyday culture, communicating with us various messages through texts, images, and sounds. By deconstructing elements of adverts, I'm hoping to understand the theories and ideologies of semiotics within, and educate others on the strategies used in marketing. What are the different semiotic elements of an advert? Does the viewer/reader need to fully understand every aspect and its message? And what role does he have in this exchange?
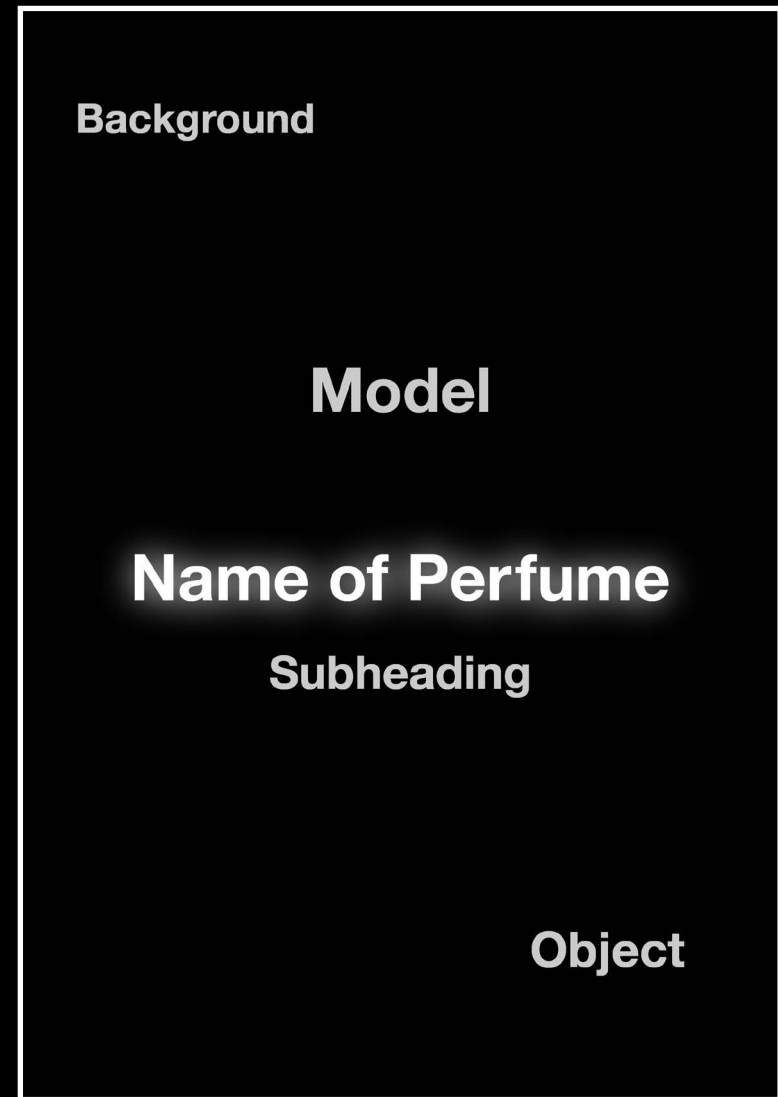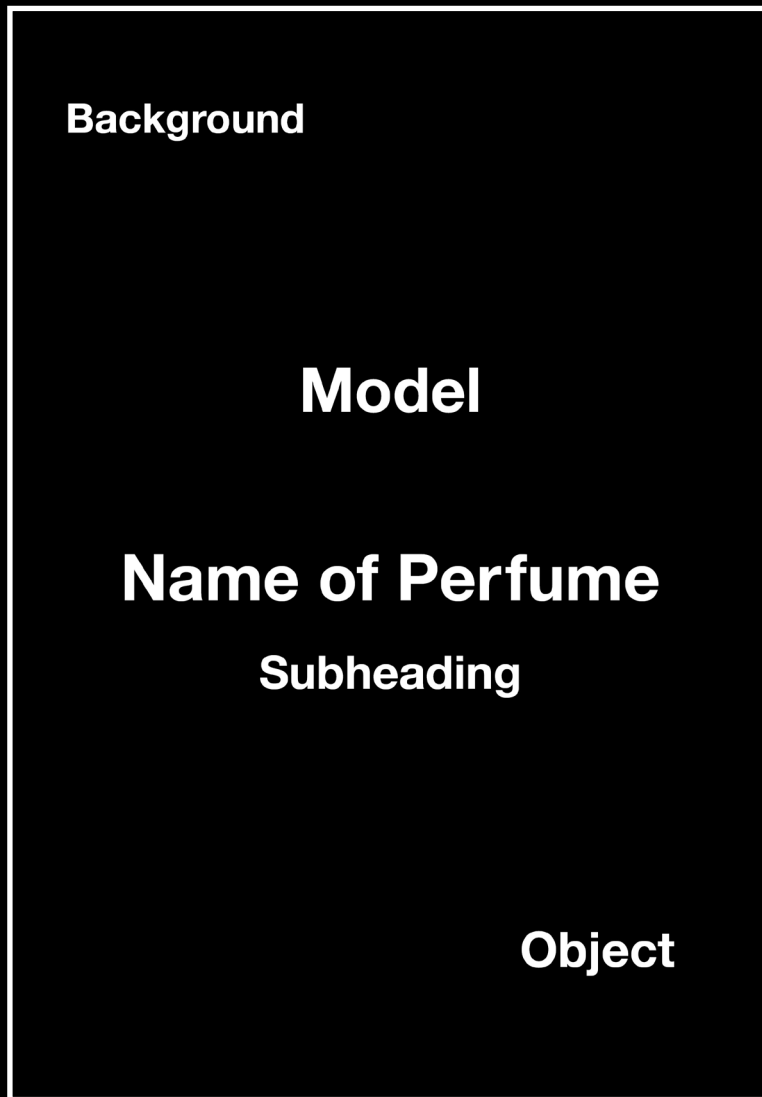
Description:

For this project, I created a video where I analyse the different semiotic elements found in perfume adverts. The screen is split in two: on the left side is a basic prototype of the poster, with the words put in as a place holder, which light up when being described. The second side shows a gif animation of the element depicted.

The video relies heavily on the descriptive audio, which explains the components. The audio stages a fictitious meeting between advertisers creating their own perfume advert, where they analyse other campaigns and the different components of the poster. It uses some quotes and citations of other people, such as Roland Barthes and Steven Lepitak.
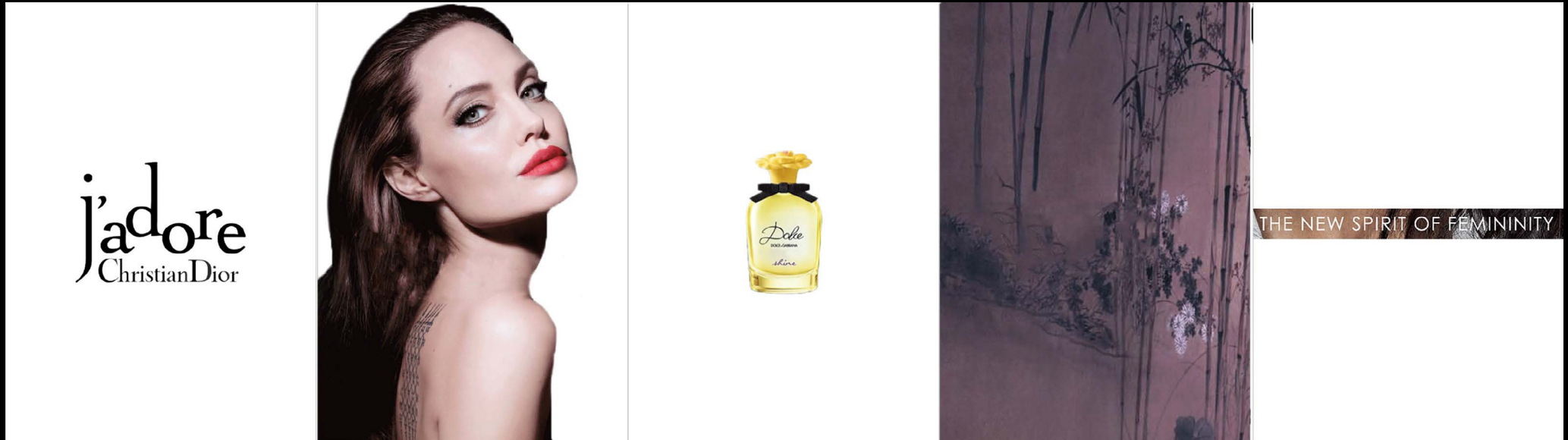
Background

Model

Name of Perfume

Subheading

Object

Final Outcome: https://youtu.be/KNzVdPFnmNU

Background

Model

Name of Perfume

Subheading

Object

Background

Model

Name of Perfume

Subheading

Object

Left: Poster with the different semiotic elements of a perfume ad
Right: Same poster, lit up with "Name of the perfume" element, where the audio would describe it

Playlist of GIFs elements used: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpwHEtWlVwCcLPKzFSqoL4tphYEDQ7GkJ

Intro:
Welcome everyone, we ready? Perfect, let's create our perfume advert, shall we? We need to analyse every part of the poster beforehand. So that we fully understand what we're showing and telling. As Steven Lepitak (Europe bureau chief of ad week) said it, Advertisement is a psychology. We want people to buy our product. And how do we sell people a smell if they can't access it? By showing other elements! We're talking about semiotics here, you know, the visual language of sign and symbols? We need to capture the spirit of the perfume. You can be sure, when it comes to advertising, everything is intentional. Let's get started

Title:
 So this should be straight forward, its the main element of the advert. Usually there are two elements: the name of the perfume and the brand. They can be placed together but not always. Sometimes the name of the perfume is bigger and is the first heading, other times it will be the brand that is placed first. The title should be big enough, not too big, but just enough to grab your attention. There is no specific zone to place it in the advert, as long as it doesn't hide the model or the bottle. The letters should be elegant and thin. This is a feminine perfume so it needs to illustrate that. It can be either a sherif or non sherif font, it really depends on what we want it to reflect; sheriff is more elegant, traditional, while non sheriff is modern, relaxed.. Of course there's always Mugler or Kenzo that do their own style, but that works with their image. the title needs to be the same as the bottle, you wouldn't want to confuse people when they go buy it! Ok so color... black or white? I think white, it will stand out more with the background, and it will be easier to catch the eye too. It's not a strict rule, you can use other colours but these two work best.

Models:
The Model needs to be beautiful, airbrushed with no imperfection whatsoever. We can use a celebrity, someone that women would want to be like, and smell like to associate themselves with. It's preferable that she looks directly to the viewer, to communicate in some way to them, it should be intense or playful. Desire is a great emotion to emphasize. Should she smile? Not necessarily, it depends on the mood we are trying to set here... Clothing wise, she should be wearing a high fashion brand, the same as the perfume, something feminine, that is associated to the style of the perfume you know? Many wear elegant and luxurious dresses but not always, look at Zoe Kravitz in Black Opium, she's more rocker chic. Or you know what, does she need clothes at all? That would be incredibly sexy and that's very important! And we're all thinking the same thing when we see someone naked right? Desire, again! Men find them attractive; women will want to be seen that way. Hair should be let down, or at least looking effortlessly glamourous. Model should be wearing beautiful makeup, yeah. Accessories? Jewellery is a status for wealth and status, same as the clothes really. As long as it works with the global image. Should she hold the bottle? Hmm most brands place the bottle in its own hierarchy in the ad. Let's go back to that when we'll discuss the object part. There should be good lighting too. So that the model is glowing. Have we finished with... ethnicity? What do you mean? There's a lack of diversity? Hm I guess you're right... That is something to consider, why is that? What kind of message are we sending then? That only white women can smell good? Or that beauty is define by your ethnicity? We should work on that...

Bottle:
The object that we are trying to sell is the perfume bottle. It should obviously be visible , but not take a huge portion of the advert. People need to be able to recognise when they buy it but it's only a small part of the message we're trying to communicate, which involves more the model and the background. Sometimes, the name of the perfume will be solely placed on the bottle, so be sure it's clear and easy to read. The design of the bottle is not up to us, but we need it to look appealing, make sure there's good lighting, for it to be bright and shine. It's usually placed on the bottom side of the advert, although on occasion, the model can be holding it. In doing so, there is a direct link between the two. The bottle is an object of desire, that the model keeps close to her, or shows off. What we're trying to say is that to be more like the woman shown in the advert, you should wear her perfume. The colours of the bottle should also be considered when looking at the background and lighting.

Background:
The background is often overlooked, and yet this will give the whole tone to the advert. It sets the mood. For instance, if the setting is a dark background, or set at night, it will give a more sultry effect, and provide an idea of the smell and strength of the perfume. While if it's a clear or floral background, it will remind us of springtime, and of a crispy and fresh smell. The images need to be very good quality, and lighting here is vital: a golden glow can make it the perfume look richer, while a bright light can make things look more youthful. Location settings are great as they give the viewer an indirect experience. If it's set in on a beach, on the Italian countryside or in a famous city like Paris, it will make people think of holidays and travels. It will reminisce them positive feelings, or dreams of it. If it's a luxurious place, where people wish to go, they'll associate this with the possible smell of the perfume. It can also be an indoor area, like a bedroom, a restaurant or another kind of building, giving a sense of intimacy. The background can even be a basic colour like black or white. It needs to reflect the story we're telling about this perfume: who would wear it, what type of smell does it resemble, what's it's spirit etc.
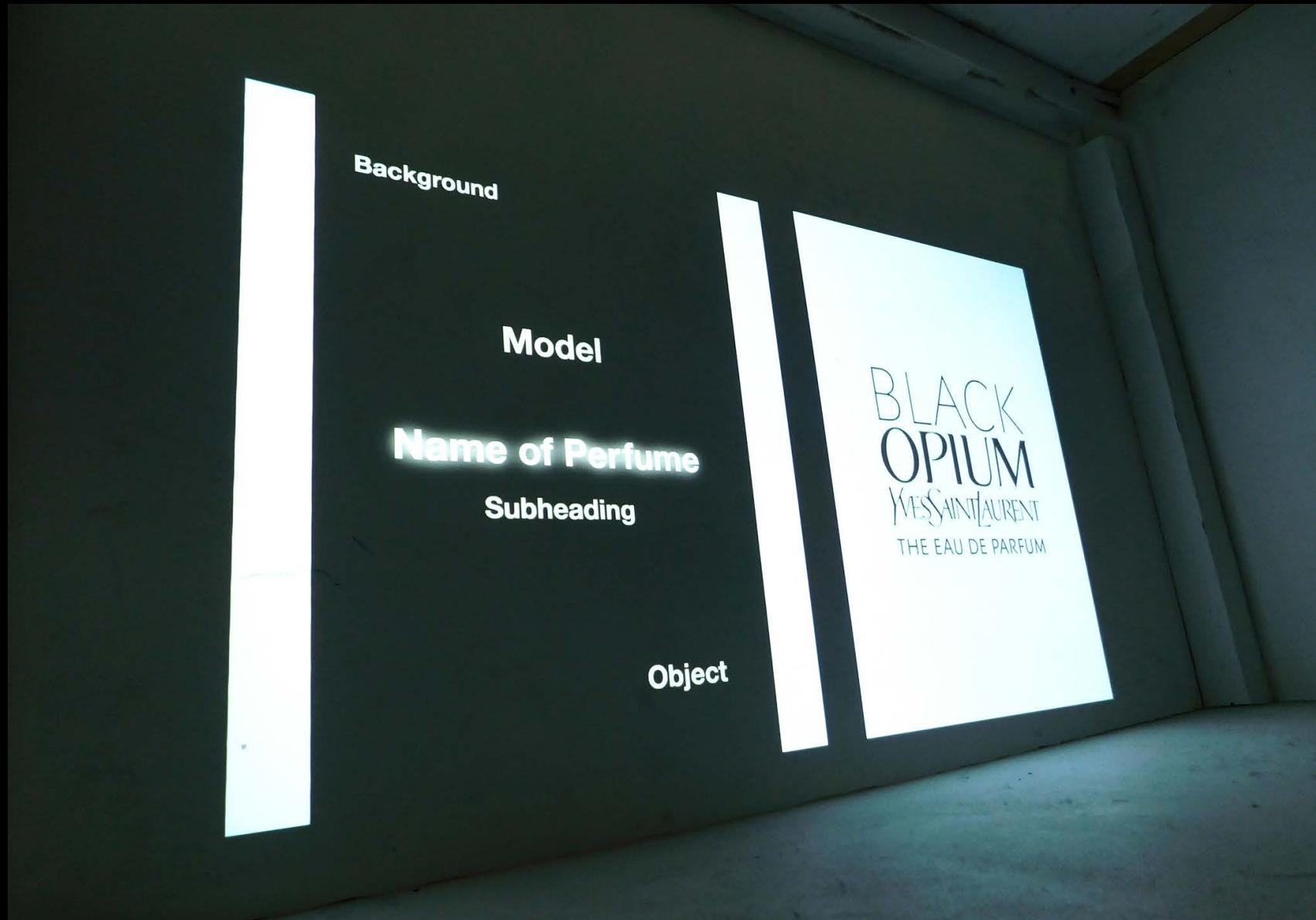
Subheading:
The subheading is not necessary. It brings an additional information about the perfume, usually it's to say it is the new fragrance of the brand, with an additional adjective, like intense or floral. Otherwise, it can give us the name of the model, a hashtag, a phrase to reinforce the image or the site where to purchase the perfume. It's also the smallest part of the adverts, quite discreet. Roland Barthes, a theorist on semiotics, did show that there is a relationship between the text and the image, so if there is a subheading, it is intentional.

Conclusion:
Ok let's review this: is the advert clear to understand and doing it's job? Looking at Williamson's analysis, it should "invite" the viewer to freely create themselves in the way it's being suggested by the ad. It's a question between signifier and signified: the only reason an advert works is if we give it signification. As Williamson said "Where the values are ideas, they are perpetuated by our constant deciphering or decoding the sign." So the advertising depends on the viewer's reading of it, and therefore has an important role in this exchange! It's not a question of being manipulated as we keep seeing all the time. I think we have all the elements for the perfume advert here. Ok well I think that works then, good job everyone. See you for the next ad.
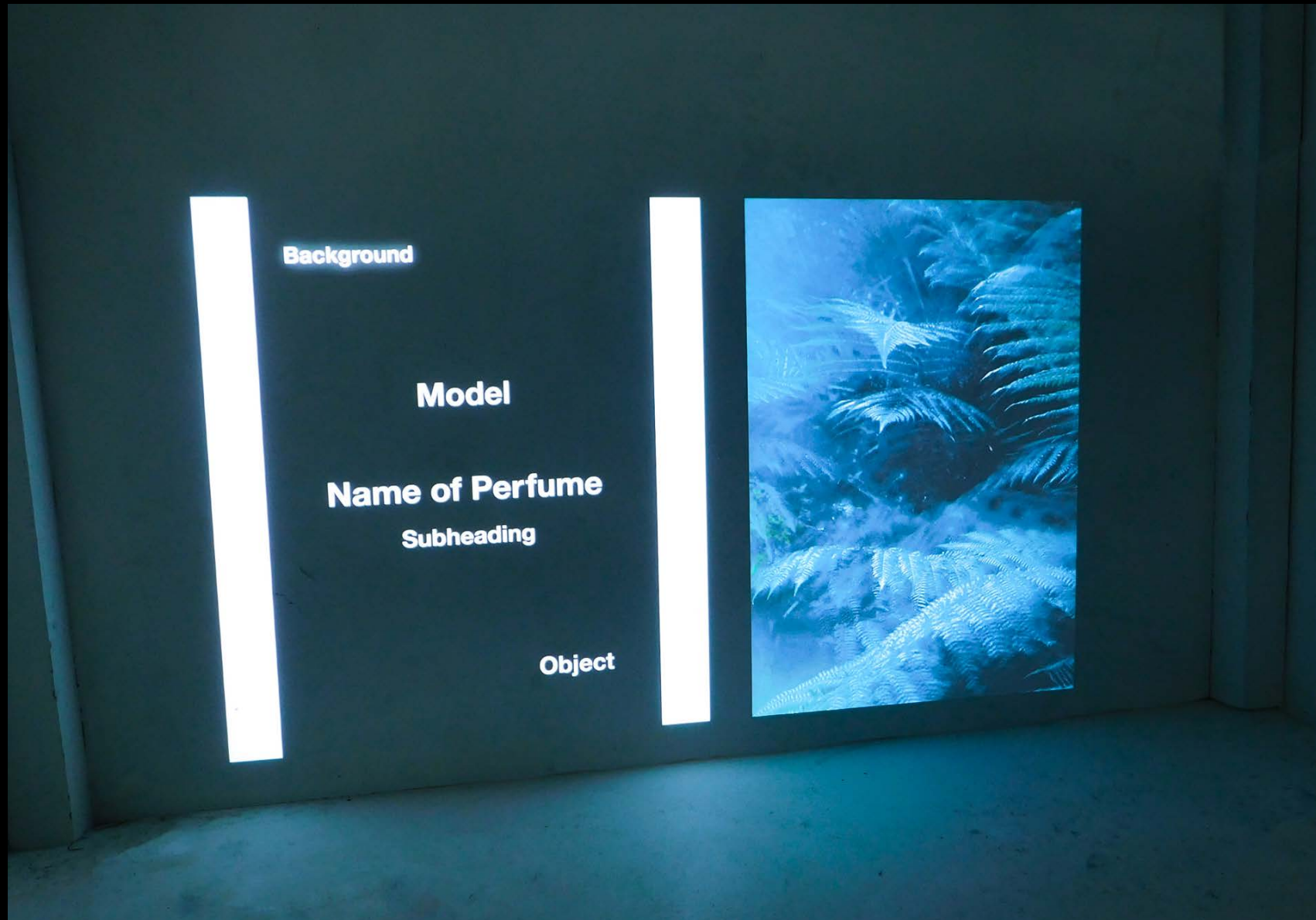
Script used for the video
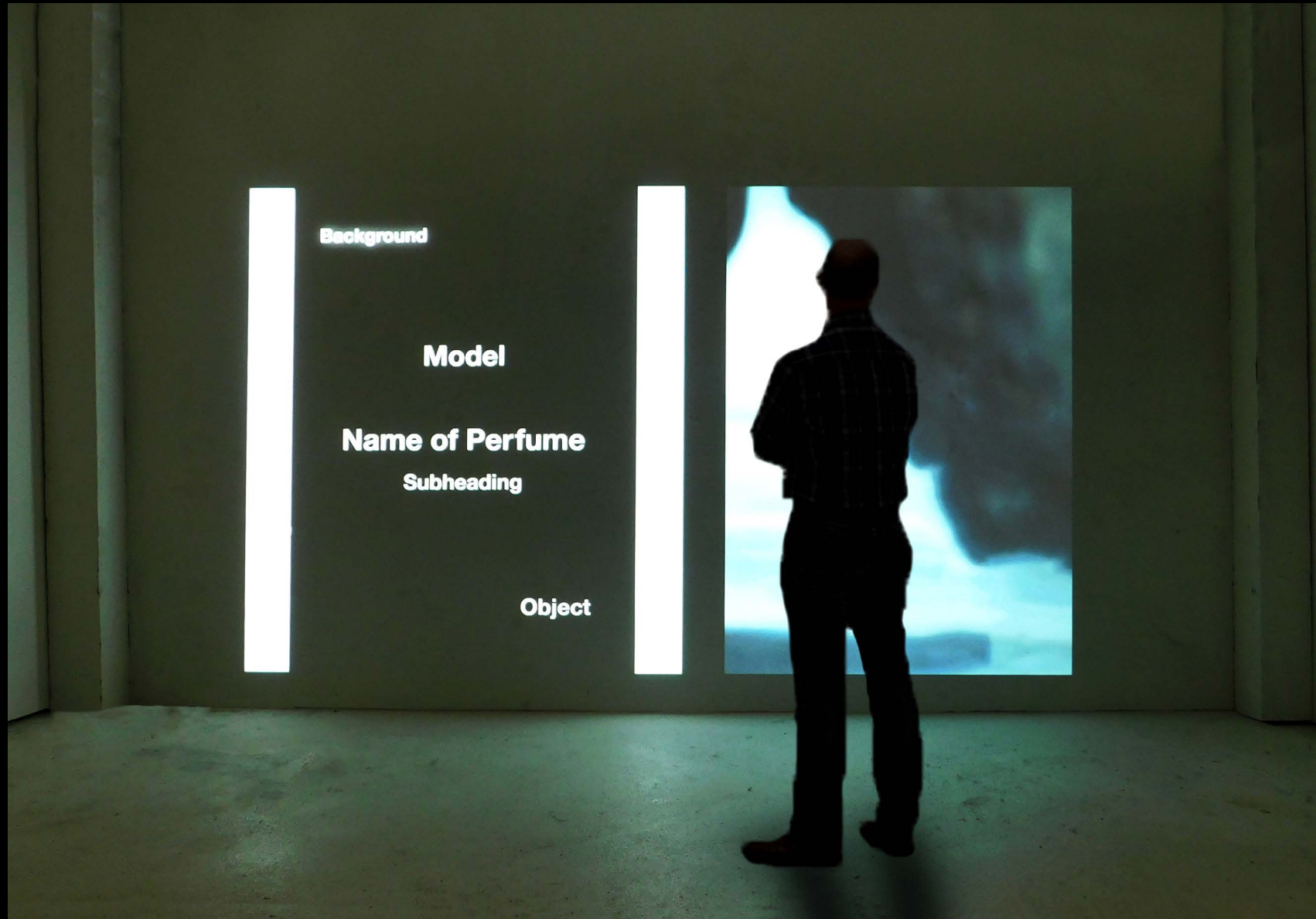
Installation shot
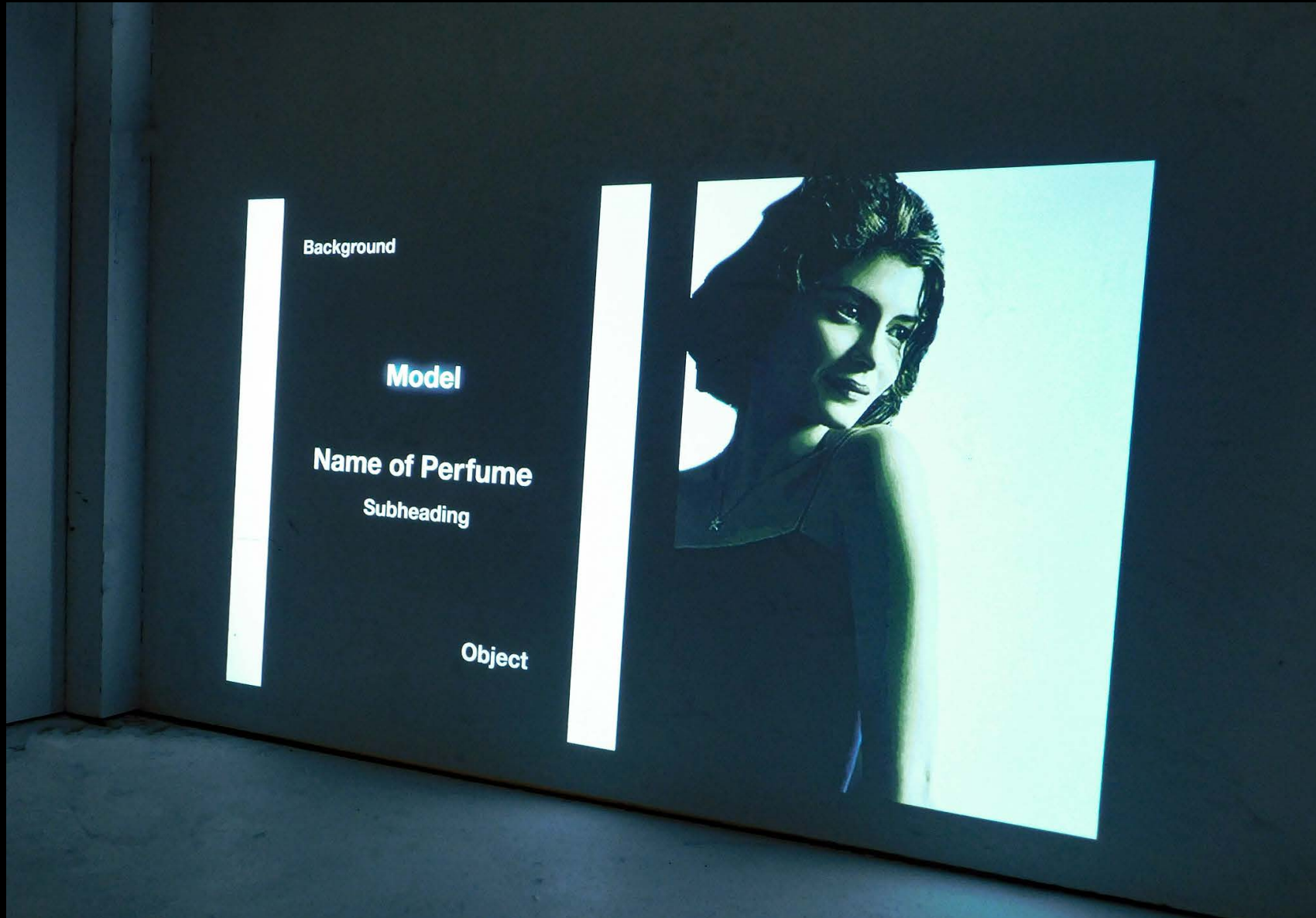
Installation shot

Installation shot
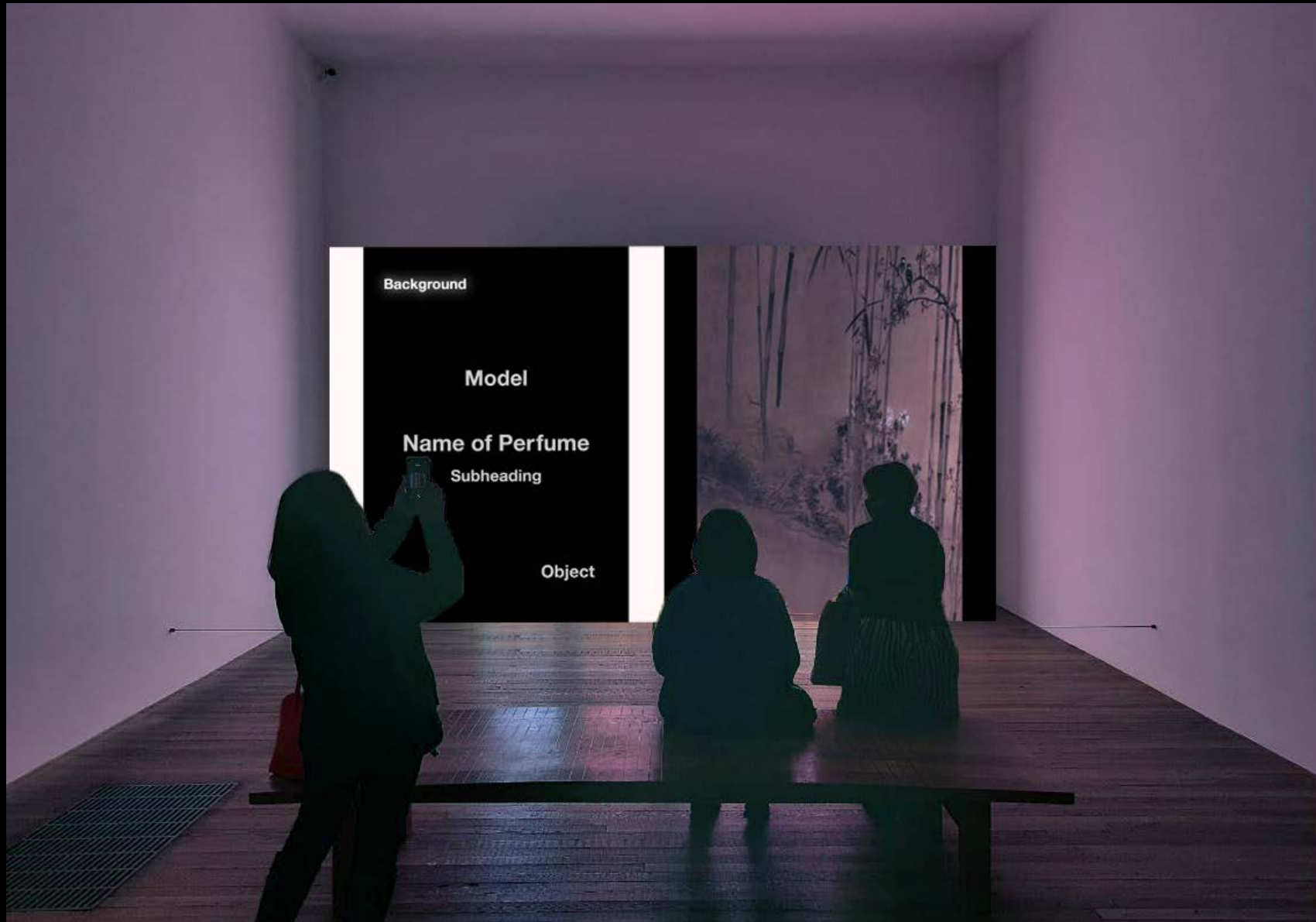
Installation shot

Installation shot, scale size

Animated Mockup: https://youtu.be/8bXC4BjdtVk

Intallation mockup, scale size

Reflection

For my project, I wanted to learn more about semiotic in adverts, and then educate people about it. Advertisement is often considered as a manipulative and money hungry business, but this is due to a misunderstanding on how it works. Through the video, I wish to give people the tools on how to properly analyse adverts. Using the prototype of a perfume advert, I analysed in depth the different semiotic elements and roles they each play, as well as what role the viewer (and consumer) takes part in this.

On the educational part and research, I believe to have achieved this aim. However, the video is quite long so people might lose interest. If I had more time, I would make divided the video in different parts and add a time frame, so it would be easier to see which part I'll be taking about and for how long. I think people would still learn from it, even if they don't watch the whole video. Another way I could expand the project would be to use a big room, have the basic poster in the middle of the wall, while multiple gifs play along side the poster, covering the whole room.

As this is a video, it can be adapted for different mediums, like with a projector or a TV set. However, the original idea is to have it projected and seen in a big space, with the sound playing in the exhibition. I also had in mind that in could be in a dark room, so that the viewer could be fully emerged while watching it, similarly to how he would identify himself in adverts.

With this project, I can see myself as an educational designer, a researcher, but also an advertiser. I also enjoy working with imagery and moving images.

Bibliography:

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-Wernick, Andrew. *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression.* London: Sage Publications, 1991. Print.
-"#131: Why are perfume adverts so weird?". Shot & Chaser. Spotify. 4 Apr. 2022. Web. 5 Apr. 2022.

Image list:

-Boss *Alive* advert, 2020
-Burberry *Body* advert, 2012
-Calvin Klein *Beauty* advert, 2013
-Cartier *La Panthere* advert, 2015
-Chanel *Gabrielle* advert, 2017
-Chanel *Coco Mademoiselle* advert, 2020
-Chanel *No 5* advert, 2005
-Dior *J'adore* advert, 2011
-Dior *Joy* advert, 2018
-Dior *Miss Dior* advert, 2021
-Dolce & Gabanna *Dolce* advert, 2014
-Dolce & Gabanna *Shine* advert, 2020
-Dolce & Gabanna *The Only One* advert, 2018
-Giorgio Armani *Acqua Di Gioia* advert, 2017
-Giorgio Armani *Si* advert, 2018
-Givenchy *L'Interdit* advert, 2018

-Givenchy *Live Irresistible* advert, 2015
-Gucci *Bamboo* advert, 2016
-Guerlain *Mon Guerlain* advert, 2018
-Kenzo *Flower in the Air* advert, 2014
-Kenzo *World* advert, 2017
-Lancome *Idole* advert, 2019
-Louis Vuitton *Coeur Battant* advert, 2019
-Mugler *Alien* advert, 2021
-Mugler *Alien Goddess* advert, 2021
-Mugler *Aura* advert, 2007
-Tom Ford *Black Orchid* advert, 2016
-Valentino *Born in Roma* advert, 2019
-Victor & Rolf *Flowerbomb* advert, 2005
-Yves Saint Laurent *Black Opium Neon* advert, 2020
-Yves Saint Laurent *Libre* advert, 2019
-Yves Saint Laurent *Manifesto* advert, 2012