The Seed Branching Apples

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Giulia Chan

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Before Everything

Between semesters, we worked in our class on the abstract of our respective Master's theses and thought about which projects we wanted to pursue in the next semester. As I had no new ideas for my studies during my summer holiday under the dry sun of southern Spain (and felt very comfortable doing so), I decided to continue with the last open idea from my essay from the previous semester. From the original motivation to use the time in the Master's programme at ECAL to orientate myself as a designer and to show possible paths for my future practice, I asked myself whether it was the collective experience within the course that I had missed in my previous work — the collective learning with and from each other. This gave me the desire to collaborate with someone from the class in one of the three projects to be chosen in the current semester. A practice that seemed to go against the nature of ECAL, where so much emphasis is placed on the quality of the production and end products of each project.

Lying on the beach sweating, I spent my time contemplating my various project ideas and drawing incoherent sketches in the sand. After failing at a few unsolvable Sudoku puzzles, I read an interview with Chantra Malee and Lucas Sharp in eye magazine and learnt about their company story. While their story spurred me on to think about the future, my first ideas remained relatively tangible and clumsy. I didn't seem to be really enthusiastic about them. Slowly, the sun rose in my face and moved further and further towards the horizon.

I slowly realised that there seemed to be a loose thread running through my projects. From the curiosity to explore expressive possibilities of character-specific micro-properties in different sizes, to a research on the history of the DIN typeface, which in my opinion failed due to the ambitions of optimal legibility in the field of signalling ethics, to the desire for a resulting typeface interpretation, the idea of 'scale' seemed to permeate everything. I liked having an overarching theme that linked the projects together.

I remembered a project by Giulia from my class in which she designed various abstract grids in a workshop by Radim in the first semester based on Superstudio's practice, collaging them playfully and creating new forms. I contacted her and we arranged to meet for a chat.

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The grid and the scale

It all started when Chan asked me if I wanted to collaborate with him in a project. He was interested in the concept of scale and grid, and the outcome of the project that I started during Radim Peško's workshop during the first year.

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I was looking at Italian Radical Design experience in the 1960's – 1970's, specifically at Superstudio's practice building provocative utopias through their art, in contrast with the Modern Movement in the architectural field. Their speculations are fascinating, and we started researching to see how their work and visions could be projected and transformed in our decade, the 2020s.

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In fact, what Superstudio called Monumento Continuo, a giant grid going around the entire planet — or net, we could also say — could've been interpreted as the internet today. Wrapping and connecting the globe together, making everybody feel so distant but somehow connected.

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Or is it the opposite? Does the internet and the complexity of the nowadays world make us feel more connected or more far from each other? Isolated?

Collaborating

On the way from Andalusia to Weimar, Giulia and I spoke on the phone a few days later and I asked her if she would like to work with me on one of the three projects. Even though the internet connection on the Deutsche Bahn Inter City Express didn't exactly make communication easy, we were both completely convinced and motivated to work on something together this semester. She also liked the connection to the topic of my master's thesis, a collective design practice. I was therefore very pleased that she was not only prepared to pursue a specific topic in our collaboration, but also to make our collaboration the topic itself on a meta-level in an initially undefined way.

Let's fast forward a little. The longest day of the year in our hemisphere was over and the DB has already brought me back to Lausanne through several cities with surprising reliability. A week before the start of the new semester, we received an offer from Julia Born to work on a real project. Originally it was probably passed on to her, but she thought it would be a great project for students and passed it on with the favour of the client. Helen Thomas and Emelie Apperce from the collective platform women writing architecture were looking for designers to support them with the cross-media design of a new book series to be published. The first edition of the so-called chapbook series was to focus on the risks Summer Islam faces in her practice as an architect and member of the Material Cultures collective. The chapters of the book were organised according to different social spheres of influence and the scale of her roles.

The topic and, above all, the people involved were a perfect match for my topics and interests in the upcoming semester. Coincidentally, there was one person in my class who was just as interested in the subject matter of the project as I was: Giulia. So, in addition to the other project, we started working together on another project – the typography project.

First Thoughts

The semester began. In our first conversation, we talked about the project with Radim and Giulia's reference, the Radical Design movement from Italy in the 70s. We talked about Superstudio and similar visionaries who used their conceptual work to bring utopias of the future into the present. From our perspective today, their visions should be viewed critically. Let's just say they haven't aged well putting their imagery in context with the climate crisis and the idea of the anthroprocene. Nevertheless, we were very inspired by their points of view and we wonder who is dealing with such topics in a global way today. In addition to Benjamin Bratton and the former Strelka Institute, we also thought of critical examples such as Elon Musk's Starlink project or Bezos, who seem to be suffering from extreme delusions of scale.

As we were researching, information just kept coming. Benjamin Bratton and The Stack, data, cloud, blockchain, transhumanism. We could think about all the social, anthropological, environmental, technological issues. The scale of what we were looking at was actually really big. The world got a lot more complex in the last 60 years, and what Superstudio called Monumento Continuo is something that now flows invisibly as a network and information and energy.

Superstudio's famous Continuous Monument — a globally pervasive architectural form captured in drawings and collages — brought us to the idea of transhumanism in relation to Musk and co, which is about enhancing the senses and physical abilities of human beings through technology. The capitalist excuse of being able to stop the climate crisis with technological innovations and therefore continuing to exploit the resources available to us came as a nasty reminder. Just like the Starlink project, in which a large number of satellites are launched into the near earth atmosphere to create global access to the internet. Some of the satellites are already being replaced at launch. It is planned that they will break down. "Then we'll just shoot more into the air," Musk explains. A utopia with planned obsolescence.

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Back in the '70s, there was of course a tendency to go back to a primitive modus vivendi, in symbiosis with nature. The Radical Design movement is also known for Global Tools, an experimental group composed by all the biggest designers of the time, who experimented a new way of teaching and learning design together.

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Similarly to the narrative of the Whole Earth Catalogue, which contained instructions and articles touching the topics of self sufficiency and ecology — how to build your own geodetic sun dome, for example — the Global Tools focused on topics such as survival and constructions, learning to build your own tools and use them, keeping in mind your relationship between the human body and nature.

So who has 'real' utopian visions today, especially those that Giulia and I could relate to? We first decided to bring the visions of Radical Design into our present, on the premise of judging them by today's standards. We realised that we had major problems with this, as everything can be critically questioned. We were blocked by the way in which topics were repeatedly discussed and criticised on the Internet from all sides. The excessive flood of information in our feeds prevented us from thinking about anything specific. We didn't want to simply criticise Superstudio from today's perspective without being able to offer an alternative. We wanted to do something meaningful. The topic of scale showed its relevance again: How small would we have to stay to be able to say something that describes real problems under the lense of speculative design?

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The intention was continuing to read, to learn, to talk about it and to understand what we wanted to do with the information we gathered. The scale was our point of view, the lens that we could put while looking at the various topics. The means of writing is something that could actually fit our way of working. It is a non linear tool, something that goes far from a grid, and it is common to all disciplines. We want to formulate thoughts, ideas, spaces, and to make connections.

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We want to make our own Monumento Continuo. Our own space of connections and thoughts and data that we could collect and share together.

Where is all the Fun?

We started talking to Radim, who was already around our class, meeting the first year students and giving their first workshop after the introduction. We talked about our project, ideas and problems. We talked about how Giulia and talked, how we came to thoughts. Somehow together, we found out that we have put all the specific examples and ideas into a mixer and blended them really good. So good that we ended up with a blended mass of not knowing where to go. We stepped back. Inspired by the project "Kar-A-Sutra" from 1972, where Mario Bellini did a study for Citroen and developed multiple concepts, of what a car could be used for, we were longing for the fun.

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Turning Point

All this research brought us to Kar-a-sutra. Italian Radical Design is known to be witty, provocative and fun. Mario Bellini's work is one of the most evident examples of freedom and expression in design. His Kar-a-sutra is just a car, that can be everything but a car. It's a space where you can make things happen. The name is of course provocative but there's more behind it:

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Taking a human made object and daily activity and subvert it. In the 1972 exhibition "Italy: the New Domestic Landscape" at MoMa, NY, the car is presented along with a research book. Here Bellini explores absurd and bizarre scenarios of creating spaces inside the car, where everything becomes possible, like shifting from 4 to 12 passengers to conversate together, to fitting a grand piano inside it just to seek pleasure and laughter.

Where was the Fun? You could clearly see how the times of the 70s influenced how the Bellini's project took shape. A photoshoot in nowhere with a bunch of costumed people performing in a model of a car, clearly meant to never really take shape in the real world. Nowadays the project feels like a music video from a stoner rock band. We slowly shifted our point of view to not find people who envision tangible utopias of our current world, but to people who just deal with the present time in an enjoyable way. We were basically seeking inspiration on how to have fun. Like really having fun. Not in way memes make us having fun. They seem to always be a double sided sword as they also became part of the information overload, sweetening up our endless scrolls but in the same time making them longer and longer.

The car is seen as an evil object: it pollutes our cities and destroys our landscapes. Bellini proposes then a way to subvert what he calls the Car-Human system converting it into a Mobile Human Space.

Bellini's work felt suddenly so simple but so true. Talking with Radim, we thought "where did we leave the fun?". Are we even allowed to enjoy ourselves and talk about fun given everything that is happening in the world during this decade?

I felt guilty even to think about it. But it clicked something in our heads. The collaboration we wanted was something that we could describe as meaningful and joyful. And all the topics that we were looking at were just the expression of the contemporary doomscrolling we are subjected to everyday.

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It is true, we are all connected if we want to. And the research itself that we were conducting to find a topic or issue to talk about and why not, also partially solve, was making our heads spinning. We were encountering something big. The scale was starting to grow and grow and we were left with a lot of questions. We would read alone and then talk together about the stuff that we read. But none of those things actually made us feel great.

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The idea of having access to all the information in the world is something that can easily overwhelm curious people.

We were strongly experiencing an information overflow, that lead only to more information. And no fun, ever. Because Earth is complicated, it is full of issues accumulated along her gigantic lifespan.

So what were we talking of now? What should our project be about? On the one hand we were looking for examples of dealing with the present time in a way that it is fun. On the other hand the way Giulia and I were collaborating became an aspect we wanted to focus.

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Collaboration and action then became the keywords. What we needed was to reconnect. Reconnect with each other, and reconnect with our bodies, while making something with our hands. The next step would've been to engage our bodies in crafts activities to do so. One of the rules was to do it without thinking about the ongoing project, but just to enjoy the process. Another rule we set: we had to really engage our bodies and feel the time passing.

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We started searching for activities and try out different things. For me, I recently got interested in crochet, I knew it was something that I've always wanted to learn, but never got the chance to sit and do it once for all.

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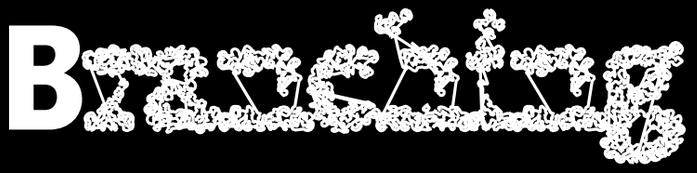

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74 A talk about Objects & Methods
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78 Sharing Apples and a fil rouge
80 Good Sad Happy Bad: DIY
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86 Talking to Stuart Bailey
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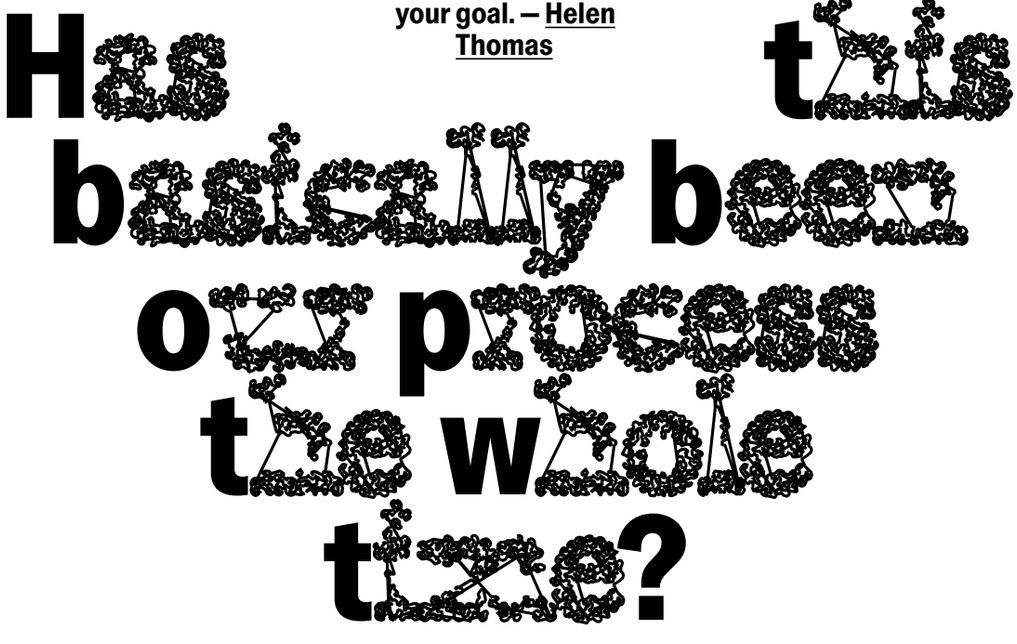
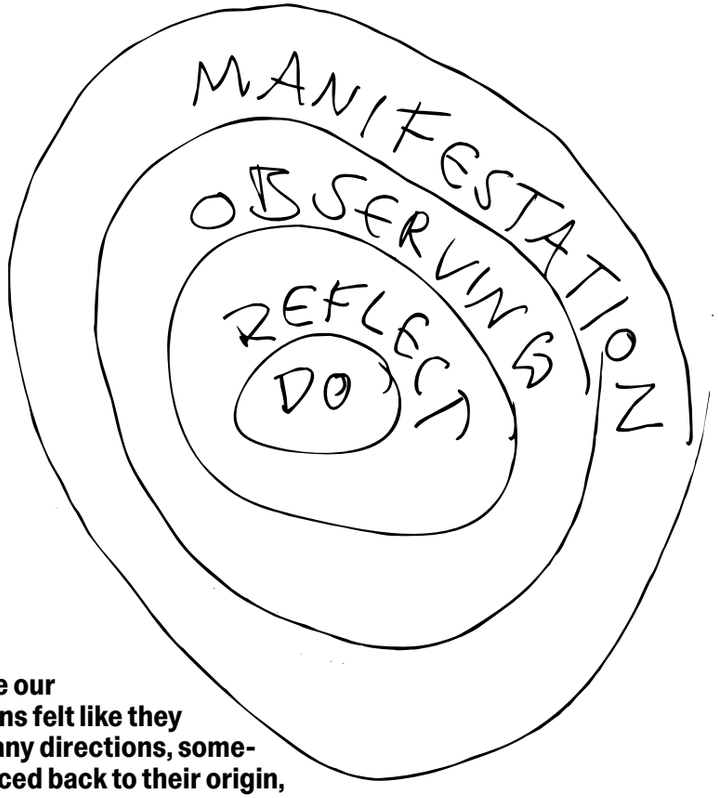
Understanding Time

For me, this understanding of time has evolved with age. I no longer feel the same pressure to work constantly or to prove myself through productivity. It's also connected to having a sense of purpose or a vision — a general idea of where you're headed, even if the exact path isn't clear. This flexibility allows you to bring different things into the process while still moving toward your goal. — Helen Thomas



Our Fun & Do Manifesto



Because our conversations felt like they were going in many directions, sometimes not easily traced back to their origin, we decided to develop a conversational tool for orientation. To do this, we defined the different levels on which we wanted to focus our communication in our project - the different scales on which we move verbally, so to speak, returning to the starting point of the project. In the end, it laid the groundwork for our own manifesto without actually formulating one. It represented a specific turning point in the project, where we decided to move from a specific focus on one issue to embracing the complexity and unknown paths that we might encounter and then decide to take. We divided our modes of conversation into four scales.

In defining the scales and thus shaping the conversational tool, we decided to go in a very unusual direction for a project in ecal. One that allows communication and conversation to be seen as a kind of productive matter. By welcoming this approach, we are shifting our value system. In a school where value is mostly given and measured by the quality of the result produced (mostly the functionality and beauty of the physically tangible surfaces), we propose to measure the outcome by what we learn from each other and to find out who we are and who we want to be.

Scale 1: Do

In the first scale we want to engage our bodies, finally arriving at a doing part of our project in which we materialise our feelings about the overwhelming flow of information we consume in our daily lives. In the beginning we thought that everything that could fall into this scale would be an object, not knowing that later even this tool would become an object that could be seen as scale one. It can be considered the tool's heart, the center of our onion.

Scale 2: Reflect

The second layer is the reflection that we do when we talk about why we do the things of scale one. So everything in scale one is surrounded by reflection. As a conversational tool, scale two shows the true power of collaboration. We reflect on what we do to help us cope with everything. We share thoughts, feelings and ideas in order to become brave enough to move into unknown territory that we would not enter alone.

Scale 3: Observe

Basically, the lines you are reading now fall into the third scale. Here we are thinking about the way we communicate as we reflect. It becomes necessary to think about and document our reflections in order to be able to synthesise them into our methodology. We leave our bodies and float above ourselves to observe the third entity that is formed by our collaboration. This includes the space, the medium, the time, the channel, the tools, etc. in which communication takes place.

Scale 4: Manifestation

In our evaluation, which marks an official end to the potential first chapter of Fun & Do, we need to manifest everything that has come out of our interactions. During the writing of this text, it becomes the main layer that we are talking about. So it concerns all the scales that have been edited and put together.

Kar-A-Sutra

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Italy: The new domestic landscape

Research by Mario Bellini

The Museum of Modem Art, NY

Produced by Centro Cassina

The Stack

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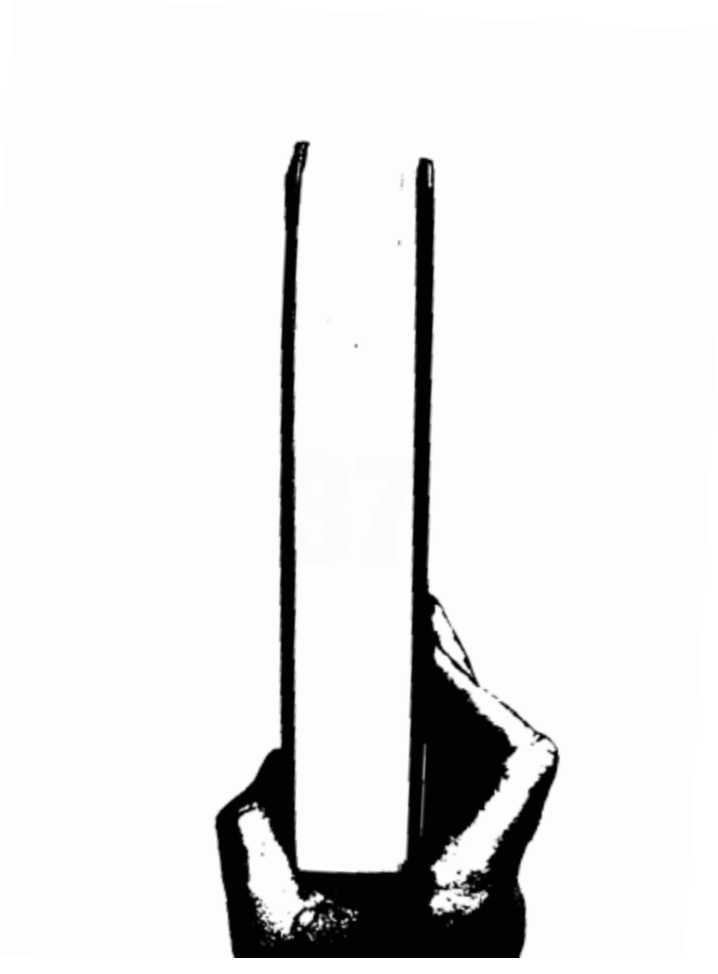
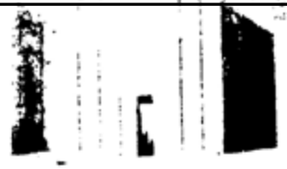


"Good: A book that has ~~been~~ not been read but is in good condition. Very minimal damage to the cover including scuff marks, but no holes or tears. The dust jacket for hard covers may not be included. Binding has minimal wear. The majority of pages are undamaged with minimal creasing or tearing, minimal pencil underlining of text, no highlighting of text, no writing in margins. No missing pages. See the seller's listing for full details and description of any imperfections."

Written by
jeremburk_6 (4405)
99.9% positive

https://www.ebay.com/itm/186480985493

Monumento Continuo



- Per chi come noi sia convinto che l'architettura è uno dei pochi mezzi per rendere visibile in terra l'ordine cosmico, per porre ordine tra le cose e soprattutto per affermare la capacità umana di agire secondo ragione, è "moderata utopia" potizzare un futuro prossimo in cui tutta la architettura sia prodotta da un unico atto da un solo "disegno" capace di chiarire una volta per tutte i motivi che hanno spinto l'uomo a innalzare dolmen, menhir, piramidi, e a tracciare città quadrate, circolari, stellari e infine a segnare (ultima ratio) una linea bianca nel deserto.
La grande muraglia cinese, il vallo d'Adriano, le autostrade, come i paralleli e i meridiani, sono i segni tangibili della nostra comprensione della terra.
Crediamo in un futuro di "architettura ritrovata", in un futuro in cui l'architettura riprenda i suoi pieni poteri abbandonando ogni sua ambigua designazione e ponendosi come unica alternativa alla natura.
Nel binomio natura naturans e natura naturata scegliamo il secondo termine.
Eliminando miraggi e fate morgane di architetture spontanee, architetture della sensibilit[illegible] architetti, architettur[illegible]stiche, ci dirigiamo ver[illegible]nto continuo" una archite[illegible]ente emergente in un[illegible]tinuo: la terra resa om[illegible] dalla cultura e da tutti gli inevitabili imperialismi.

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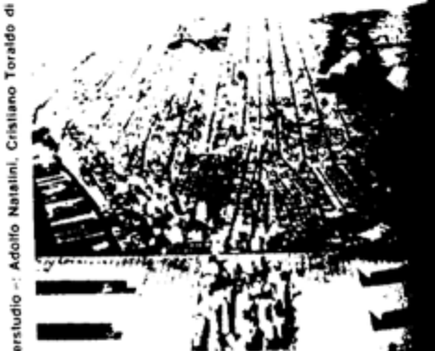
SUPERSTUDIO: DISCORSI PER IMMAG



erstudio -: Adolfo Natalini, Cristiano Toraldo di Francia, Piero Frassinelli, Roberto Magris

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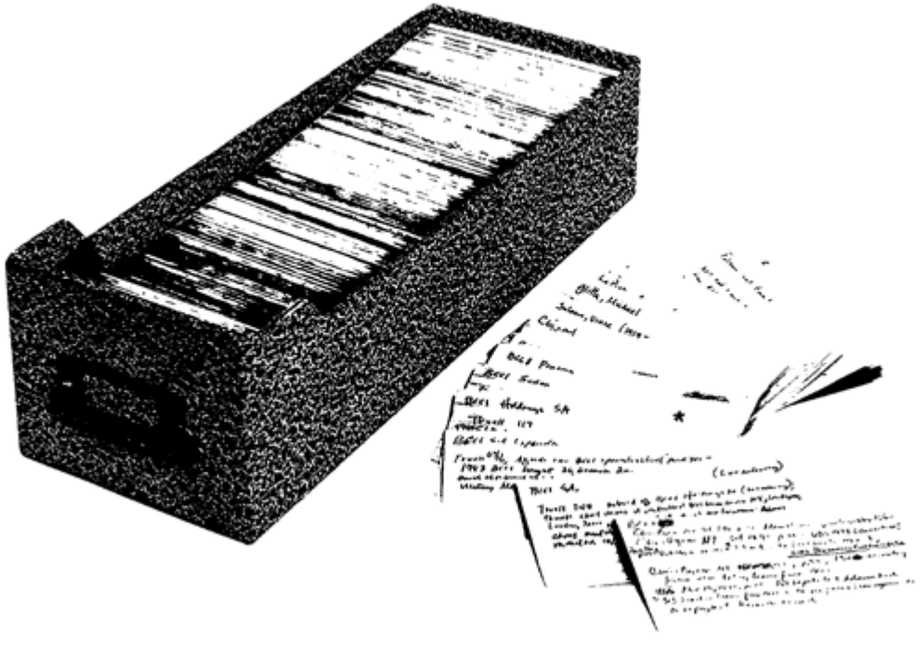
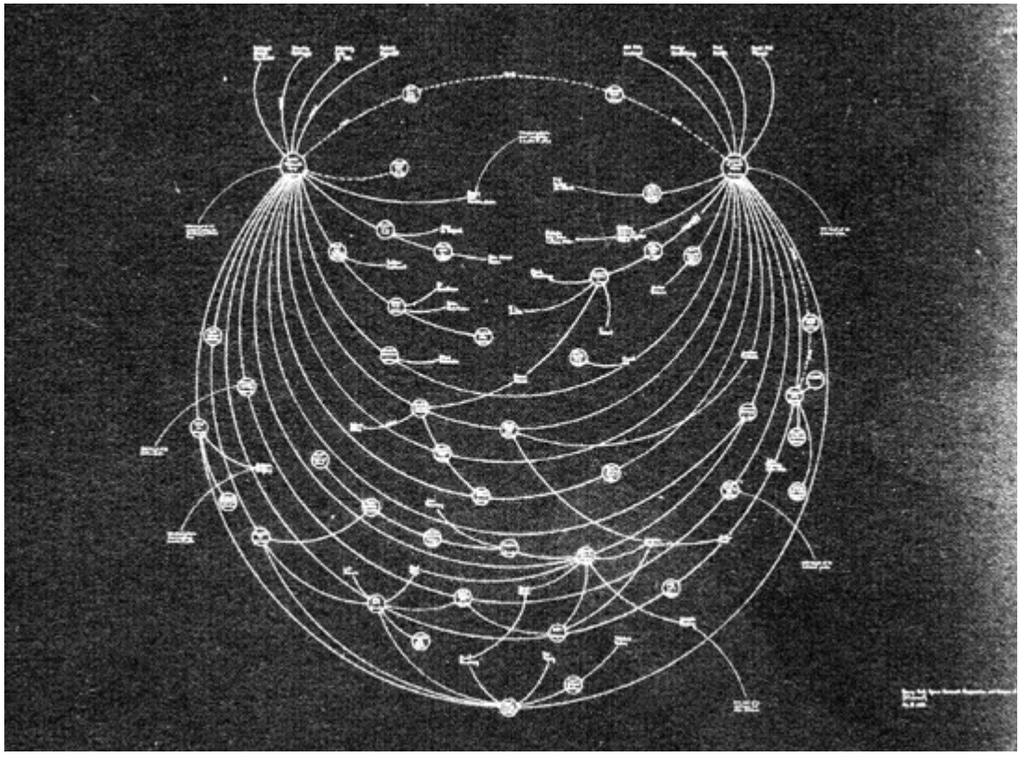
Mark Lombardi





Mark Lombardi was an artist who illustrated and visualised complex financial and political scandals in intricate drawings. His work transformed tangled narratives into understandable visual stories, revealing hidden connections and networks. One notable work, 'George W. Bush, Harken Energy, and Jackson Stephens. 1979–90', illustrates the complicated financial dealings in which George W. Bush was involved before his presidency. Lombardi's meticulous research and artistic approach provide a powerful method for understanding and communicating complex information.

Gerry Bull, Space Research Corporation, and Armscor of Pretoria, South Africa, ca. 1972–80 (5th version), 1999, colored pencil and graphite on paper, approx. 70 × 60 inches

medium.com/@ben_fry/learning-from-lombardi-a28032a7eb5

Notion

Our digital space, our personal rabbit hole where we can pile up links in huge databases, write things and navigate our research process. The good thing is that everything is in the same place. The bad thing is that it is all in the same place.

FUNDO

Search
Inbox 1

Favorites

WWA

Shared

Links
Mapping out stuff

Table

Conversations

Aa Name	Tags	Date	Author
First Co[redacted]	[redacted]	September 18, 2024	
[redacted]	[redacted]	September 19, 2024	
Chat with Radim	[redacted]	September 19, 2024	
Appunti Giulia	[redacted]	September 26, 2024	
Keywords	[redacted]	September 26, 2024	
Kai (C)	[redacted]	October 1, 2024	
Alice (G)	[redacted]	October 1, 2024	
Alice (C)	[redacted]	October 1, 2024	
Matthieu		October 2, 2024	
RWO	[redacted]	October 9, 2024	Written by Giulia
Stuart Bertolotti Bailey	[redacted]	December 18, 2024	
Dinner talks	[redacted]		

+ New page

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Research

Aa Name	Tags	Link	Notes
Symbiotic Parasites	[redacted]	medium.com/@gi[redacted]	Please I don't want to put it in the process book lol
Hidetoshi Mitsuzaki	[redacted]	[redacted] i.html	Friend of Chan
Antikythera	[redacted]	antikythera.org	
H&dM	[redacted]	herzogdemeuron.com/	Idk why but Wayne and Roland talked to me about this last year
Speculative futures	[redacted]	docs.google.com/doc...mjz3n7	I found this in the rabbit hole. Might be inspiring
Lineto's Superstudio	[redacted]	lineto.com/typ... #light	mmmmh
Superstudio on Mindscapes	[redacted]	are.na/blo... 445591	Summary of their practice, narrated by Superstudio themselves, divided by years
Notes from (re)programming strategies for self-renewal			
Ecosia rage on Mastodon	[redacted]	hci.social/@fa... 357251	From Kai's mastodon
Italy A new domestic landscape		moma.org/cal... s/1783	
PHOTO-2024-10-01-22-00-01 2			
PHOTO-2024-10-01-22-00-01			

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New Reader

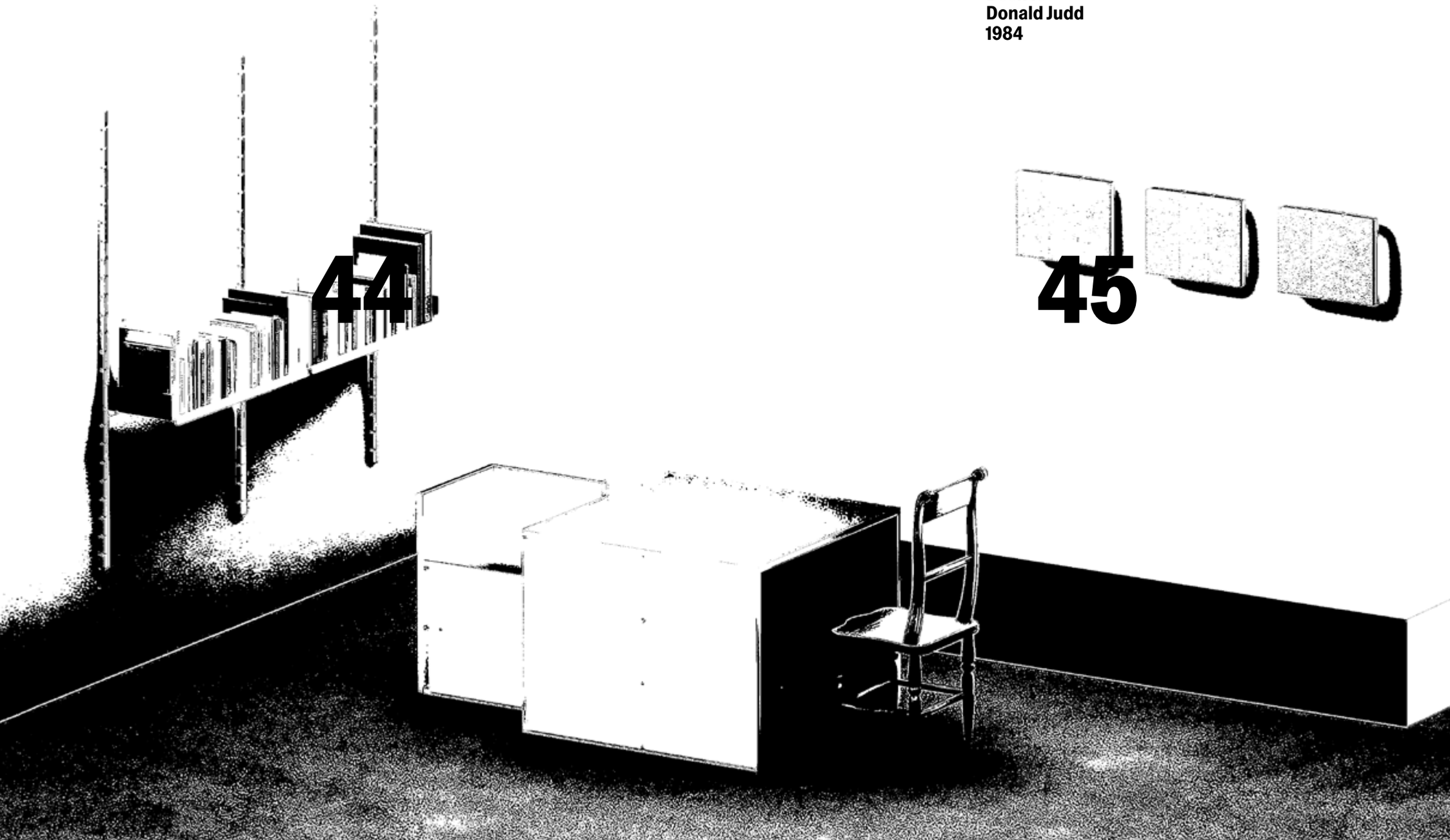
About

Reading Room: is a library of books selected by artists, politicians, musicians, scientists, educators, public figures and more in response to the question: In isolation, what parts of yourself have you recovered?

Chair [viii]
Dozie Kanu
2019

Corner Chair 15
Donald Judd
1984

Desk 10
Donald Judd
1984



Talking to RWO

After structuring the layers of our conversation, which then became the basis for an unwritten manifesto, we had the opportunity to meet and talk with Johanna Ehde & Elisabeth Rafstedt of Rietlanden Women's Office, a Swedish duo who run their practice in Amsterdam at the intersection of graphic design, design research and self-publishing, focusing mainly on the meaning of their collaborative practice and their relationship as collaborators.

There is a “radical potential of friendship yet to be capitalised

The two designers are working on an ongoing publication series called *MrsHeresies* about collaborative graphic design practices and the ornamental as a form of work critique.

Meeting the two of them came at the right time and the right place, as this was exactly what we were dealing with. One of the first things we learnt from their point of view was that we would have to develop our own *infrastructure* to start working together, as our surrounding environment does not provide one for us to work in groups. So we had to build it ourselves. The lack of it may be because, as type designers, we often find ourselves designing alone, whereas, ironically, the very nature of a typeface is to be shared and used by others.

RWO's practice is built on an interesting basis: the ornament as a concept, including the notion of "ornamental life", based on William Morris's idea of the ornamental medieval element that comes to life through rest and agency, thereby subverting industrialisation. As spontaneously produced visual traces of invisible work, the ornament shows the individual's appreciation of the work itself.

Another core part of their practice is Design in Conversation, which deals with the question of when one is actually able to design through exchange. Especially when the (digital) tools we use as designers today are designed to work against rather than with. Every time there is a design co-creation, you are more likely to design alone and then share the result with others. This is where conversation becomes the critical element of co-design: because we are designing side by side, we have to give each other verbal instructions, which is when you naturally create a common language over time. Not English, not Italian, not German. The emphasis is on naming and developing the language needed to interpret and decode what is being created together.

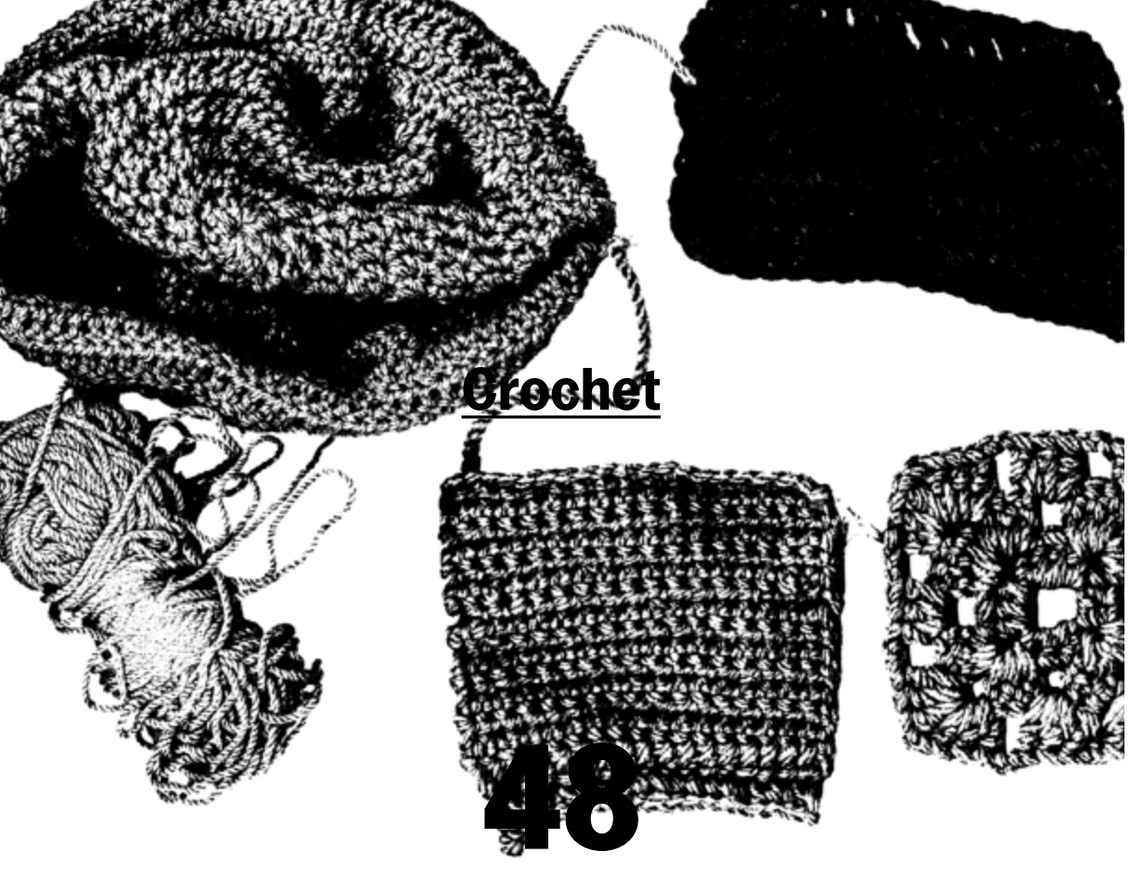
Inevitably, a reference system for communication is built up between the partners - a kind of coded language that becomes more and more complex, made up first of words, then of expressions, sensations and tones of voice. In the process of working together, a new language inevitably develops between the working partners, a new and personal form of communication that manifests itself through its very own existence.

When we started talking about the presentation of the project at the end of the semester, the evaluations, it became clear that scale 4 of our conversation tool, the scale of manifestation, becomes very important. The manifestation of everything we do will embrace everything else. While the manifestation stage was emphasised, we were reminded that in the end, whatever is created, we cannot predict the reactions that will come with it, where it will land, who it will influence and if or when all of this might happen. Johanna and Elisabeth challenged us to think beyond the two-dimensionality of our conversational tool. Perhaps one scale could jump over another and influence the other behind it. It could create a shape that is even higher than three dimensional: a hypercube perhaps?

In general, what fascinated all of us was the search for a lifelong practice that never gets boring. Continually learning from each other, even outside the walls of ECAL. According to both of them, the beauty of our collaboration lies in making the whole working process visible, which relates our work to the concept of Maintenance Art. A genre where typically undervalued, mundane and repetitive tasks associated with everyday life – such as cleaning, organising and caring – are contextualised to the realm of art.

As we talked to them, we understood more clearly that we wanted to have conversations, interactions and thus connections. As visible in our example of Bellini's *Kar-a-sutra*, we were looking for a (social) space where connections could happen. "After food, sleep and shelter, connection is probably what we need most as human beings".

With our feet back on the ground, we asked Elisabeth and Johanna if they had some practical, hands-on ideas for fostering our connection. They came up with two: gift giving and collaborative graphic design. Regarding the first idea, they advised us to make something with our hands that would be given as a surprise. It should contain an inside joke, something that just the two of us could relate to, something that could be super simple. Even an airdropped picture with a funny caption could work. As mentioned, naming and context change everything. Regarding the idea of collaborative graphic design, we thought about bringing the activity to the first level of conversation, the 'do-scale', rather than leaving the graphic design part until the end of the project when we document everything. So we decided to drop our initial restriction of doing something in the first scale that could not be graphic design. We decided to reintroduce graphic design into the rest of the project by giving us prompts, something to design and a specific timeframe to do it.



Crochet

After much discussion and thought, it was time to start *doing* something that might work as a way of escaping the information overload.

I finally chose crochet as my first beginner-friendly activity to enter the world of textile crafts. Knitting, sewing and crocheting are mostly seen as relaxing and mechanical activities that can bring people together - especially women in the past - but for me, especially at the beginning, it was more about enjoying solitude, concentrating, not feeling time passing and finding a space for myself, all without feeling guilty about not working.

Being a mechanical activity, it takes a few hours to learn and get used to the basic movements. Choosing crochet as a fun activity to learn was strategic, as well as fascinating, to observe the process with a fast learning curve. Going from nothing to something that looks okay is really quick - one or two full immersion afternoons, I would say.

So I finally woke up one Saturday morning with a mission: find some yarn and hooks to get started. I went to Sostrene Grene, a Danish shop in the centre of Lausanne, where I knew I would find what I was looking for. I didn't even know that I had to choose yarn and hook sizes. I let my instinct take over and went home with a 4 mm hook, red, yellow and white mixed yarn. Little did I know that all the measurements were wrong. Thanks to Stephanie, I learned that there is a tiny symbol on the yarn packaging that tells you the best hook size, along with the weight, so you know how long you can crochet before it is finished.

Let's go back to Saturday afternoon. After shopping, I stayed at home all afternoon and watched tutorials to learn the basic stitches. It was quite an intense session and I thought it might be interesting to record the feeling with some notes. Looking back, it's not easy to remember the exact moment when I understood that what I was doing was right.

Crochet entry #1

Friday night progress, 2 hours. Finally getting the hang of it. I got hooked. P.s. Something weird happened to the edge. Will find out. P.p.s. my posture is bad. Have to find a way to not feel pain at left hand and right shoulder.

General feeling: doing this is really nice. I just think about where to put the next hook and I don't scroll my phone before sleeping for hours. I can't say it's relaxing for now but it's definitely exciting to see the result.

Chan: It looks super nice, very even! Maybe I also have to try

Crochet entry #2

*Today I finally learnt all the types of stitches with a new size of thread and hook (5,5-6,5) that Stephanie told me to buy single, half double, double, triple!
and I understood why my edges are not straight. Will fix it next time*

Crochet entry #3

*circles! I am becoming addicted to the process so I started watching tutorials yesterday night until 2,30 a.m. I couldn't understand how to do so I decided to sleep over it and give myself an hour in the morning to try again. Luckily we also changed the hour (-1) so actually I didn't waste time (Giulia's math).
This process is more meditative because you have to count which stitch are you inside and how many stitches you have to do there. So 1 of 1, 1 of 2, 2 of 2, and again. It seems like a prayer or something like that. It's really hard in the beginning to think about something else while doing this.*

Chan: That looooks crazeey! Damn!!!

interesting fact: the process is really systematic and it maybe can be taken as inspiration for type design too. Every row you do an "increase", so 2 stitches in the same hole, two stitches every two holes and two stitches every three holes and so on. It's funny how you can spot very easily the mistake in the "coding" process, because it's really visual in the end. It can be a nice metaphor. The more I understand how these patterns work, the more interesting it gets to so some parallels with computing and typing

mistake: it should be concentric circles, it became a spiral/blob thing

Sharing the notes was of course a way of keeping the memories of the learning process alive, but also a way of sharing everything with Chan, which was ultimately the main goal. We created a chat for this very purpose: to write live updates quickly without losing them in the depths of the internet. Starting with just the crochet updates, it quickly became a pot into which we could throw inspiring things. Chan spent some of his time swimming and hiking - real physical activity, you might say - but he was eventually intrigued by my excitement and decided to try it himself.

But instead of sending him a bunch of tutorials, we sat down together at the Rolex Learning Center's Cafeteria and I did a little demo for him.

Revel in Chaos

"There's just so much to do!"

These words should be sung with joy. Therefore, in conclusion, what I say to you is this: **REVEL IN CHAOS**. Might sound unprofessional but, no, the best events planners, promoters, venue managers I've worked with, they buzz off the non-stopness of it all.

Being a juggler means not worrying if you drop a ball every so often.

It amazes me, it depresses me, how commonly artists spend the days preceding a show feeling shit. This Is The Work. If the process of sharing your art is joyful, the audience feels it. So get in there. Have fun. And when mistakes are made, move on.

Because you know what? Whether it's a wedding or exhibition, if you're stressed through prep, there's never going to come a moment of "Job done! Time to enjoy life!"

That avalanche of tasks – big, insignificant, complicated jobs – are the unavoidable truth of events planning AKA doing something in the world.

Let me end by sharing a piece of wisdom from a friend of mine. He worked

in the box office of the Millennium Dome. (For those who don't know: what is now the O2 Arena in London was originally constructed as an exhibition celebrating Britain and the year 2000.) At its peak, with a line of visitors stretching miles, his philosophy and coping mechanism was this: "The queue is as long as the person in front of you."

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Real-Time Realist #2

designed by Jungmyung Lee
2019, J-LTF Press
pages: 240

OUT OF STOCK!

No Stopwatch

When people dislike the direction an institution takes, they often call it 'commodified'. In simple terms, commodification means putting a price tag on something that was previously free. Selling a gift, basically. But art & design education (hereafter simply 'design education') has always come with a price tag, being a gift only partially and only in specific circumstances, such as when accompanied by a scholarship. More commonly, this is not the case, thus education is a service that a student purchase, much like a good haircut.

The reason why I treat something as sacred as education in such mundane terms is that I believe the issue is not so much commodification itself, but the kind of commodity design education is becoming – specifically, a luxury experience. Just consider the tuition for non-European people studying in the Netherlands, which is growing at a ridiculous rate (sometimes increasing by 10, 15% from one year to the next), the housing crisis in many European cities (highlighted by the somewhat design-y protest in Barcelona with water guns shot at tourists), and, more prosaically, inflation. So, the increasing exclusivity of design education is both a systemic issue that can only be addressed at a governmental level, and one that is indeed shaped by educational institutions

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the decisions taken by alone.

What is to be done? Truth be told, educators like myself are in the worst position to influence institutions or even to demand transparency from them: we are temporary, disposable, fully alienated from any structural decision-making process. When it comes to facilities, infrastructure, organization of staff, student fees, etc., we remain in the dark, until the lights go on and it's too late – the decision has already been made. In this sense, students seem to have more leverage, because they are not dependent on the school for subsistence.

That being said, in this article I don't want to criticize luxury education, as its exclusivity is obvious. Instead, I want to praise a luxurious aspect of education which is positive and ought to be defended: leisure. If we think of luxury as abundance, then leisure is abundance of time. Design education can be – and perhaps already was – one of the few accessible place where "Fully Automated Luxury Communism" is actually possible. In fact, leisure is not something that education should aim to achieve, but what education fundamentally is: the word 'school' comes from the Greek skholē and the Latin otium, both meaning 'leisure'. However, as we will see, it is precisely a malicious form of automation, or better yet, mechanization, that prevents this luxury.

Certainly, I'm not the first to champion leisure. To name a few, Bertrand Russell (In Praise of Idleness) and Josef Pieper (Leisure: The Basis of Culture) have made similar arguments. The former wrote: "At present, the universities are supposed to provide, in a more systematic way, what the leisure class provided accidentally and as a by-product". The latter: "In leisure – not of course exclusively in leisure, but always in leisure – the truly human values are saved and preserved because leisure is the means whereby the sphere of the 'specifically human' can, over and again, left behind".

Perhaps where my perspective differs from those above is in the use of the term. When I speak about leisure, I refer to something quite specific, at the same time similar to and different from the usual meaning of the word, that is, time free from work. I think of leisure not in terms of the content a school provides (such as fun, entertaining topics) but as the nature of the time spent within its walls. In this sense, leisure is about the rhythm of education. While education, not being work, seems leisurely by default (and yet what one does at school is not devoid of effort), its rhythm might make it worryingly work-like.

Leisure is the luxury of spending hours, if not days, on an issue or question whose utility and aim are not fully clarified, being those aim and utility part of the reflection. We shouldn't confuse political urgency, that is, the present reality knocking at the school's door, with an attitude that deprives us of the only wealth we have, both as students and teachers: time. Exactly because the things we care about are urgent, we need all the time in the world to address them.

Now, everything in contemporary education seems to conspire against a leisurely use of the educator's time: nonsensical bureaucratic tasks, an increase in student numbers not matched by an increase in staff or teaching hours, new digital platforms that need to be learned, the management of hybrid teaching, and so on. The pandemic exacerbated all of this, to the point that several of my colleagues called it quits.

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Many of these issues are both structural, if not global, since they're determined by larger forces (think of the sudden hegemony of Microsoft Teams), and local, meaning that single institutions have a role to play. What about educators, then? Is there any role they can play? I tend to dismiss the idea that they are just passive victims of larger systems. Unfortunately, this non-passive view implies that not only are educators capable of improving those systems, but they can also contribute to their deterioration.

Such deterioration is sometimes due to what I call scapegoat syndrome. Educator suffers from this when they are willing to sacrifice themselves for a greater good, generally vague and abstract, such as the "the students' well-being". Teaching is traditionally considered a vocational activity, thus neither a job nor a profession. Now, a vocation needs to be displayed to others and to oneself. Self-sacrifice is a way to do so.

A clear example of scapegoat syndrome is when teachers stays at school overtime (one, two hours) to conduct tutorials with each student of classes of forty or even fifty. After a while, educators become exhausted by these extras and start shrinking contact time with students to fifteen, ten, even five minutes each. How far

can one go? Ask Eubuilides of Mileto, who wondered: “if a heap is reduced by a single grain at a time, the question is: at what exact point does it cease to be considered a heap?”

To manage such little heaps of time, you need to be efficient, and to be efficient, you need tools, which unsurprisingly are the same tools of the Taylorist factory – you need a stopwatch. During one of my first teaching experiences, after realizing that overtime was the norm rather than the exception, I uploaded an old poster in the school group. The poster depicted a worker with a wristwatch for a head, accompanied by these words: “If you liked school. you’ll love work. Work: a prison of measured time.” This is more or less what I wrote under the image: “To avoid delays, it was suggested to use a timer and be strict with the allocated time. I reject this form of rationalization. I’d rather risk speaking less with some of you than creating a Fordist tutoring environment that affects all of you.”

Some decades ago philosopher of design Vilém Flusser imagined a new kind of school in which technics would not looked down upon, “the place where homo faber becomes homo sapiens sapiens because he has realized that manufacturing means the same thing as learning”. In fact, he believed that this new model was already emerging: “Such factory-schools and school-factories are coming into existence everywhere.” His prophecy came undeniably true but, alas, most schools can be called “school-factories” not for the ennobling of craft and technology, but for the application of industrial modes of control and coercion. In my case, the content of education is still ‘educational’, but we begin getting alarmingly close to the school programs documented by Allan Sekula in his School is a Factory project, where education becomes a theatrical guise for semi-skilled job training of working-class students.

To challenge this industrial mode of education, or at least be alarmed by it, I propose the following rule of thumb: If a timer is needed during teaching hours, something is wrong at your school. Of course, final presentations are an exception (though a bit more time for toilet breaks would be appreciated).

The realization that something is wrong is good but insufficient. A further step is required: you, as a teacher, must refuse both to stay overtime and to taylorize your teaching. Hopefully, you’re not alone in this refusal. As a consequence, some students may be penalized because they have no chance to talk to you. So, they will complain. The crucial point is directing such complaint. If you help channel the complaint towards HR or management, suddenly the problem appears as structural, and it becomes clear that has nothing to do with you and your vocation. You don’t need to be the scapegoat anymore.

In addition to the rule of thumb, I want to suggest a threshold below which a school cannot be considered leisurely. This threshold shouldn’t not to be taken literally but rather as a guiding measure. This threshold is: thirty minutes of contact with a student minimum. If less time is available, we are in school-factory territory. What if only twenty minutes are needed? Then, something else will come up, perhaps more important than the tutorial itself. The student might finally find the courage to ask a question she was shy about, might seek an opinion on a sensitive issue, might open up about some crippling doubt of hers. The surplus time (‘surplus’ being itself an abuse of language) offered by the threshold is meant for the embarrassing silence, like the one that precedes the first question after a public lecture. That embarrassing silence is crucial for achieving a sense of comfort that allows us to address the things that really matter. As such, it must be protected and nourished. That silence is becoming a luxury, and that’s what’s truly embarrassing.

[Written by Silvio Lorusso in 2024. Article included in the Raise Your Voice zine curated by Baltan Laboratories.]

Poster from Agitate! Educate! Organize!
American Labor Posters by Lincoln Cushing and Timothy W. Drescher.

Dinners With Roulette

The start of a new school year feels a little like the start of a new season of a TV series. New challenges, new characters, new sets. The same thing happened with the transition from MATD-1 to MATD-2. A lot of people moved, most of us found a comfortable place to live, new flatmates, new friends.

At the beginning of the year we established Jamie and Chan's new apartment as our headquarters for meetings, gatherings, dinners and fun times. Located literally 5 minutes from ECAL, it has a big, bright living room, a nice kitchen and a cozy, warm atmosphere.

The days and evenings at 49D - the house number that has become the apartment's official nickname, located on Rue de Lausanne - became more and more intense. The first inaugural dinner was a real cooking show: (note: insert pictures I took with my camera?) Jamie shared his knowledge of traditional Japanese cooking and taught us how to make gyoza and meat-filled rice balls. Little did we know at the time that this would be the first in a long series of get-togethers and communal cooking sessions. Food is an expression of culture, tradition, experimentation and sharing. For many cultures, eating together is a sacred moment when smartphones can be shut down to pick up forks - or chopsticks, depending on the evening's menu - and talk about everything and anything

<u>List of some recipes shared together, in more or less random order, during this semester:</u>

- Saffron risotto
- Pumpkin risotto
- Fennel risotto
- Spaghetti with tomato
- Spaghetti with tomato fusion with a touch of class from Vee, who added dashi straight from Jamie's Japanese cupboard
- Gnocchi with Parmesan fondue
- Pasta carbonara
- Vegetarian Ramen
- Ramen with meat
- Pasta with tomato, courgettes and other vegetables I can't remember
- Quiche with spinach and ricotta cheese
- Lactose-free tiramisu
- Tajarin with mushrooms, gorgonzola, pears, cream and parmesan cheese
- Pad Kra Pao
- Tom Kha Gai
- Egg drop soup

To switch off the brain after a long day of "pushing pixels" - as we nicknamed the type design discipline - we organised several 'Roulette Movie Nights' in addition to the dinners. Each attendee could choose a film to put on a 'wheel of fortune', which would randomly choose for us. One of these was Kung Fu Hustle: a Hong Kong-produced film recommended by Vee, a caricatured and completely unrealistic parody of stereotypical kung fu films.

When we set out on this project, we started organising activities and gatherings together with the idea of preparing a thorough documentation.

Writing a logbook, taking videos or photos, making notes... In doing so, we risked depriving the project of its main purpose and goal: to connect and be present, together. Doing things with the aim of documenting them later loses its original purpose. And the purpose is that we want to do something where we do not overthink it, but just do it. That is why we do not have detailed transcripts of the conversations that took place during these lived moments, or logs day by day. We have deliberately chosen to live them as they were, accepting their transience and the loss of data — or memory — over time. But there is of course so much to learn when you gather 12 different people from 10 different countries. A lot of it is related to language and culture.

(Re)programming Strategies For Self-renewal

Published by: Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana

Format: 10.5 x 16.7 cm
Pages: 230
Language: EN
Year: 2022
ISBN: 978-961-7173-00-0

I am particularly fond of this idea that we are earthbound because we ourselves are colonies of viruses and bacteria and cannot really move to another planet and start again. Could you explain this lovely concept and how did you get there? (p.12)

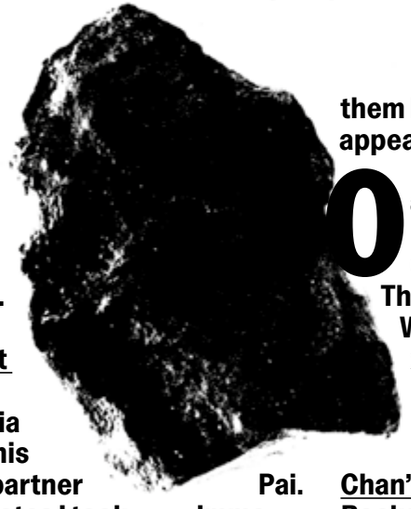
It was mind-boggling to me. About five or ten years ago I began to read this, and so did everybody else. A new fact was put into the world that people now think of as always-already, "Oh, we always knew that" but 20 years ago we didn't. Approximately 50 percent of the DNA inside your body is not human DNA. Think about that for a while and you realize you're a collaboration like a forest or any other biome, any ecological space like a swamp because we are kind of swampy, being 90 percent water. The collaboration of all those bacteria, all those viruses, all those small creatures inside you and your gut, in particular, that create your mood and help you with your cognition. What we define as our self, which is kind of your stream of consciousness, is the thinking tip of a pyramid of biological activities.

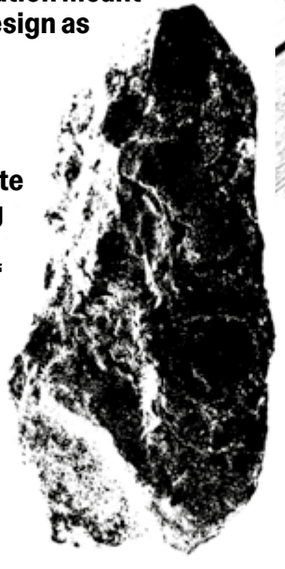
The Earth thing gets deranged if you stay too clean. You need to get your hands in the dirt every once in a while and be a gardener etc. to get connected with Earth's bacteria and refresh your load so your gut microbiome benefits from some contact with the rest of the world. It starts from birth with your mom. With that in mind, the whole fantasy of leaving Earth and going off into space, just in evolutionary terms, falls apart. In my science fiction, where I postulate a Solar System-wide civilization, the humans go back to Earth every seven years for a sabbatical to renew their bacterial load because then they simply live longer. None of this will be well quantified for centuries to come but to me it was one of those facts that came about in my adult lifetime and really changed everything about how we think of our relationship to the Earth.

1h Sessions

After talking to Johanna and Elisabeth from RWO, we decided to try a one-hour design challenge. The rules we set were clear: each person would think of three prompts to bring to the other on the day of the challenge. *Prompts in the sense of inspirational artefacts that could serve as a starting point for design. Of course, everything had to be a surprise. And the nature of the prompt could have been anything - images, sounds, films, songs, stories, anything we thought would fit into the experiment.

You decide on a medium together: then, after 1 hour has passed, the participants can decide whether to exchange their work and continue designing. The aim is to lose the idea of ownership of one's work, to accept the other person's taste and design choices and make them your own in a new way. This was a bit unusual in the context of the larger project, because for us collaboration meant sharing the entire design process. In this case, we took an hour to design as if we were alone, but with the other person's prompt in mind.





The experiment

On Oct 21st, we came to ECAL with 3 different prompts each.

Chan's Prompt #1

Chan told Giulia a story about his walk with his partner Pai. Here are the notes I took immediately after him talking to me.

"Chan and Pai went for a hike yesterday. They encountered a path which they couldn't continue because it was closed. But they decided to go there anyway. Maybe it was closed because it was muddy. Chan also saw a fossil there, of pretty big size compared to his shoe, which made him wonder about the time when there was water in that area, which was crazy because it's so high. He also picked up some stones from there, in the shadow. This is maybe why they are cold when you touch. The three stones are three different sizes and Chan chose them because of their matte appearance, not reflecting light. And the colors are also pretty cool."

Chan's Prompt #2

The scene from Wim Wenders' Paris, Texas, where the man screams "We are all doomed!"

Chan's Prompt #3

Rocks that Chan picked from a specific site on his hiking day.

Giulia's Prompt #1

Charlie XCX's song Von Dutch, instrumental version.

Giulia's Prompt #2

A lost cap at the bus stop in front of her place.

Giulia's Prompt #3

One of the first crochet try-outs.

After designing the posters, we found that the most exciting part of the session was actually discovering the prompts, not looking at the final result. The graphic output is serving as a trace witnessing the passing of time. Although it was cool to see how much we could create in such a short time, the outcome will always be influenced by many emotional factors. It was almost like preparing a gift. The commitment and the feeling of sharing something you like with the other person. Thinking about the after ECAL future, we could think about integrating this kind of activity to connect with each other and design together again, even if we are all living in different parts of the world, with different time zones. It definitely works as a remote activity format and could spark interesting conversations. In the end, anything can be a prompt. Writing this at the end of the process, before the evaluation - remembering that this project will live on after the actual deadline - was perhaps the first trace of what would have become the newsletter.

Screaming Man From Wim Wender's: "Paris Texas"
You will all be caught
With your diapers down!
That is a promise!
I make you this promise
On my mother's head!

For right here, today. Standing on the very head of my mother
Which is now on God's green earth
Which everybody
Who wasn't born in a fucking sewer
Ought to know and understand
To the very marrow of their bones!

They will invade you
In your beds
They will snatch you from your hot tubs
They will pluck you right out of
Your fancy sports cars!

There is nowhere
Absolutely nowhere
In this God forsaken valley

I'm talking about from the range of my voice
Right here
Clear out to the goddamn Mojave Desert
And beyond that
Clear out past Barstows
And everywhere else in the valley all the way to Arizona

None of that area will be called the safety zone!
There will be no safety zone!
I can guarantee you
The safety zone
Will be eliminated

Eradicated

You will all be extradited
To the land of no return!

It's a navigation to nowhere
And if you think
That's going to be fun
You've got another think coming

I maybe a slime-bucket
But believe me
I know what the hell I am talking about
I am not crazy

And don't say
I didn't warn you!
I warned you! I warned all of you!

Paris, Texas

Director: Wim Wenders
Writer(s): Sam Shepard (story), L.M. Kit Carson (screenplay), and Sam Shepard (screenplay adaptation)
Producer: Anatole Dauman, Don Guest, and Wim Wenders
Cinematography: Robby Müller
Music: Ry Cooder
Genre: Drama
Release Date: May 19, 1984 (Cannes Film Festival)
Running Time: 145 minutes
Country: West Germany, France, United States

Designing Friction

About the autors
Luna Maurer and Roel Wouters are an artist duo working across the worlds of design and digital culture. They co-founded Moniker, a studio for interactive design, in 2012 – it ran until 2023, when they closed its doors to pursue projects individually, and collaboratively. Maurer and Wouters are also the co-authors of Conditional Design, a design method focused on processes rather than products. They are based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

A call for friction in digital culture

As designers, entrepreneurs and architects of digital culture we feel the urge to refocus how we deal with our digital futures. Designing Friction is a proposal to change the way we think when producing or interacting with digital technology.

What is friction?
Friction is resistance. It derives from physical interaction between humans, and humans and things – its reach is holistic. All senses, elements and emotions play a role: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, air, earth, temperature, agitation, passion, joy, sadness... With movement comes friction. The more we move and act, the more friction we encounter. The more friction there is, the more we engage and care. Friction drives our engagement. Friction, in this context, is not synonymous with either anger or conflict, nor is it malfunctioning technology. Friction is an essential ingredient that makes up our humanness and sparks human connection. Friction is a lively, intrinsic experience.

Loss of friction
Digital technology has long pursued the goal of eliminating friction, striving for seamlessness. We now navigate a sea of frictionless experiences. (With the possible exception of two factor authentication.) :-)

Function and form are detached
Digital technology goes hand-in-hand with the loss of physical resistance. Philosopher Haroon Sheikh explains that digital technology turns our interactions with things into interactions with devices. A thing is split into its object, or form, and its function. A device is the same object for each function. It's your purse, your musical instrument and your letterbox, each of which now demands the same bodily action.

Removing physical human interaction
Instead of using our whole hand to interact, we now often use our fingertips to swipe screens or interact with air. Each new app or innovation replaces a previously friction-laden human interaction process, David Byrne states. Transactions with machines are perceived to be smoother than interactions with fellow humans.

Convenience and immediacy
Everything can be effortlessly and immediately accessed from behind our screens. We stay home due to home-delivery, dating apps, online classes and endless on-demand entertainment. We are facing 'death by convenience'. In such a reality, movement is trimmed down to a minimum.

Predictability
In this reality, data is king. In creating convenience, all our actions are recorded and translated into data, rendering them readable and predictable. The better the data, the better the predictability. Unpredictability, human messiness and unforeseen actions are all friction, and counter this goal. Predictable futures can be controlled.

Loss of autonomy
Keeping friction out maintains a fragile equilibrium. Enter AI — technology becomes omnipresent, and evolves from being a tool, to being a companion with humanlike appeal. We are on the verge of committing our emotions to AI, plunging into an emotional dependency. AI indulges us, consumes us. Its appeal gives us the comforts and conveniences we learn to seek. To get satisfaction from interaction with a model, you need to perform your predictable self. It becomes almost impossible to step out, to live frictionfully. Our autonomy is at stake.

Philosopher Miriam Rasch argues that complete removal of friction means standing still. A completely predictable future is no future, but a continuous present. In a world where even our deepest desires can be foreseen, where we have lost our autonomy, we long for what remains beyond the domain of data, algorithms and databases and AI.

Proposal

A world headed for a frictionless reality begs the question: how can we create a desirable future with digital technology? How can we access, develop and relate to it? We like to see designing friction as a fundamental design principle when working with digital culture. Instead of following design ethics that strive to eliminate friction, we suggest to not only allow, but embrace friction. To facilitate it: design [products with] digital technology in a way that makes space for our humanness. Here friction is a core ingredient. Digital technology should create environments and situations in which we can truly connect with each other, as well as with the unknown, the uncontrolled, with all senses, all elements, all emotions. It should create situations that are not predicted, measured and calculated beforehand; situations that result from and amount to the present moment. Here are some ideas on what 'designing friction' might entail.

Discomfort

Embrace uncomfortable situations. In uncomfortable environments we can discover the richness and breadth of friction. Uncomfortable situations help you to feel structures you are not adjusted to, you can learn and discover. With friction we get immersed, we get creative, we get alive. Discomfort allows us to experience boundaries both physically and mentally (these are necessary and productive). Designing friction is exploring boundaries.

Time delay

Friction makes things slower and that is okay! The fastest response might not be the best one to design for. Instant gratification is what digital technology currently optimizes for. This results in the loss of desire, waiting and boredom. Avoiding boredom makes us pick up a device as soon as we have nothing to do. Being bored lets you start new fascinations. Boredom gets us into productive flow. When friction acts to slow things down it allows us to step into the now. Designing friction is fuelling longing and desire; it allows boredom and allows for a slower pace.

Engage the body

When interacting with screens we lack resistance. Swiping screens makes our world more superficial. Human life gains depth when having thing-relations. Thing-relations tend to bring us together physically and create connections. Designing friction requires thinking about how to increase our resistance. How can we engage our hands and whole bodies? How can these bodily engagements bring us together?

Non-positive

Acknowledge the fulfilment in the non-positive. Today's digital technology creates a society that is in 'pursuit of happiness', in awe of positivity. (As a counterweight of the negativity it produces?) Smoothness doesn't injure. It doesn't produce resistance. It enforces the Like. These mechanisms feed our desire for attention and being seen. Designing friction cherishes the non-positive, the 'digital unseen', the disagreement, the doubt, the vulnerable, the complicated. This is what makes us human. Perform your unpredictable self. Design environments and situations that trigger and facilitate unpredictable behaviour. De-automise. Step out of your pattern. Do something strange.

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Friction perceived as an obstacle might in fact be a possibility for connection.

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Being Present

We tried different activities that might help us to switch off the phone and feel alive in the present: walking, swimming, crocheting, talking. Just after one of the meetings, where the question of being present felt particularly relevant, Chan happened to listen to a podcast that seemed particularly appropriate to the theme: *Sternstunde Philosophie*, featuring Marina Abramović in conversation with Barbara Bleisch. My inability to understand German led us to find an alternative solution for sharing. Chan would listen to the podcast again for me and then summarise the important parts so that I could read them instead of listening. He would also highlight some parts that he felt were most relevant to our research process.

The discussion revolved around themes of presence, transformation and self-awareness, with Abramović sharing her philosophy and experiences as a performance artist. Abramović highlighted how her art seeks to ground both the artist and the audience in the immediacy of the moment, explaining the importance of meditation and the emotional impact of eye contact.

1. Presence and transformation

1.1 Looking back on your own work and the role of the past

Barbara Bleisch warmly welcomes Marina Abramović and asks what feelings she gets from looking at her own exhibition.

Marina Abramović explains that she consciously tries not to have any nostalgic feelings. She lives in the here and now and is already working on new projects. The retrospective is for the public, not for herself. She doesn't see her past as something she wants to emotionally immerse herself in in order to avoid melancholic feelings.

1.2 The importance of presence and the goal of presence

Barbara Bleisch shows interest in Abramović's 'Balkan Baroque' and the aim of leading people into absolute presence.

Marina Abramović explains that she wants to lead viewers to radical presence with her works. She is concerned with the awareness that the present moment is the only thing that counts. At a time when people often live in the past or future, she sees presence as a means of experiencing the true self and the essence of life.

youtube.com/watch?v=31vha_qko7M&t=4s

1.3 Meditation and presence in the arts

Barbara Bleisch asks Abramović how meditation and stillness contribute to her artistic practice.

Marina Abramović explains that her work is not just meditation, but aims to anchor people completely in the present moment. She wants people to detach themselves from thoughts of the past and future and focus their attention on the moment, as this is the only way a deeper connection and genuine communication can take place.

1.4 The power of eye contact

Barbara Bleisch asks why eye contact has such a strong effect, which Abramović often uses in her performances.

Marina Abramović explains that eye contact creates a deep connection because at that moment you open the 'window to the soul' and meet yourself. This direct contact often forces people to confront their own emotions and creates a strong sense of presence.

1.5 Transformation and the courage to change

Barbara Bleisch asks how Abramović understands transformation in her life and her art and what role leaving her own comfort zone plays in this.

Marina Abramović explains that change and overcoming her own fears are central to her work. She specifically looks for projects that challenge her because she believes that the true learning process lies in overcoming obstacles. For her, transformation means consciously doing things that are uncomfortable or unknown to her.

1.6 Presence and determination in performance art

Barbara Bleisch asks what makes a good performance for Abramović.

Marina Abramović replies that presence and determination are everything. She can see immediately whether someone has the necessary concentration and charisma. The content and ideas of the performance can emerge later - what matters is that the artists are fully present in the moment.

2. Overcoming limits and willpower

2.1 The art of overcoming and willpower

Barbara Bleisch addresses Abramović's willpower and shows videos of some of her most famous performances, which often push physical and emotional boundaries, such as Rhythm Ten and Balcan Baroque.

Marina Abramović explains that her focus on performance art has allowed her to pursue an intense career. Her goal has always been to push boundaries and focus on her art without distractions such as family. This dedication led to an extensive body of work.

2.2 Exercise in endurance and willpower through repetition

Barbara Bleisch mentions Abramović's exercise of counting grains of rice and the challenge it presents.

Marina Abramović describes the exercise as a means of strengthening willpower and calming the mind. At first, participants often become impatient and frustrated, but over time they find a steady breathing and an inner calm, which allows them to be fully absorbed in the moment and overcome their inner frustration.

2.3 Reactions to safe spaces and boundaries in art

Barbara Bleisch asks for Abramović's opinion on the safe space discussion and the importance of boundaries and safe spaces.

Marina Abramović replies that she does not like borders and that her entire career has been focused on breaking existing rules. In today's world of political correctness, she sees a threat to the freedom of art. She criticises the fact that too many security measures restrict art and prevent creative expression.

2.4 About the concept of the 'wall'

Barbara Bleisch asks about the symbolic title of Abramović's autobiography, Walking Through Walls, and what lies behind the 'walls' she wants to walk through. Marina Abramović replies that overcoming walls is a lifelong process that has to do with fears of pain, mortality and suffering. These themes are timeless and continue to characterise art today.

3. Collective experience and community

3.1 Collective experience and the power of silence

Barbara Bleisch refers to one of Abramović's performances at the Glastonbury Festival, where she asked the audience to be silent for seven minutes.

Marina Abramović describes the impressive experience of shared silence with ~200,000 people. This collective silence and the resulting unconditional love and community are transformative moments for her, in which she was able to feel the power of shared experience and collective energy.

youtu.be/VJtOwdtCTkM

3.2 The meaning of 'The Artist is Present'

Barbara Bleisch asks about Abramović's performance The Artist is Present, in which Abramović sat silently in front of the audience at the Museum of Modern Art in New York for months. Marina Abramović describes the intensive preparation and physical challenges of this performance. She trained for a year to be able to keep up the performance, without breaks or water. These encounters with thousands of visitors changed not only the audience, but also herself profoundly.

3.3 The role of the audience and the authorship of art

Barbara Bleisch asks to what extent the audience plays a role in the creation of Abramović's art.

Marina Abramović emphasises that a performance only becomes complete through the audience. The audience completes the art and thus becomes a co-author. Her work thrives on the interaction and reactions of the audience, and it is only through this that it unfolds its full effect.

3.4 The 'Decompression Room' in the exhibition

Barbara Bleisch mentions the 'Decompression Room' in Abramović's current exhibition, where visitors are asked to put down their watches and mobile phones and relax.

Marina Abramović describes this room as a special place to help people in Switzerland relax and open up to the experience of art. She criticises the Swiss preference for punctuality and performance orientation and sees the space as a place to calm down and sensitise oneself to the here and now.

beds_human_use.jpg

4. Childhood, family and personal development

4.1 Influence of her childhood and the role of her parents

Barbara Bleisch mentions Abramović's childhood, in which her parents were prominent figures in communist Yugos-

lavia and she was exposed to art at an early age. Marina Abramović reports that her mother was an art historian and took her to the Venice Biennale as a child, where she met artists such as Rauschenberg and Pollock. This early contact with art shaped her fascination for the creative and her later career path.

4.2 Forgiveness and transformation through biography work

Barbara Bleisch addresses Abramović's relationship with her parents, especially her mother, and asks about her ability to forgive.

Marina Abramović reports that she was only able to forgive her mother after her death when she found her diaries. These revelations helped her to understand and accept her mother's coldness and severity. Abramović sees forgiveness as an important act of transformation that enables her to let go of the past.

4.3 Human vulnerability and contradictions

Barbara Bleisch addresses Abramović's contradictions between strength and vulnerability and asks how she unites these in her art.

Marina Abramović explains that she consciously reveals all her contradictions. She tries not to hide anything, but to integrate all aspects, including insecurities and fears, as part of her art and her life.

5. Technology and today's art world

5.1 The effect of technology and alienation from experience

Barbara Bleisch asks about Abramović's thoughts on the use of technology today, especially in museums.

Marina Abramović criticises the fact that many visitors only perceive works of art through their cameras and no longer take the time to really experience the work. For her, the power of her art lies in the direct experience, which can only unfold when people are fully present and free themselves from digital distractions.

5.2 The concept of safety and nudity in art

Barbara Bleisch addresses the importance of nudity in Abramović's work, especially in Switzerland, where she might encounter resistance.

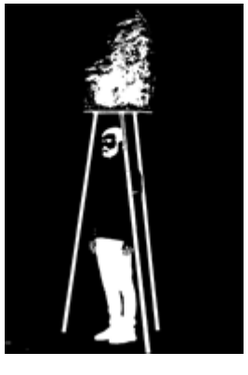
Marina Abramović explains that nudity often plays a central role in her performances to portray intimacy and vulnerability. She recounts an anecdote from Amsterdam in which a journalist overcame his fear of nudity by undressing in solidarity. For Abramović, this symbolises the urge to break through personal barriers.

6. The spiritual dimension of art

6.1 The dimension of time and the fascination with crystals

Barbara Bleisch asks about Abramović's love of crystals, which she sees as a metaphor for deep time periods.

Marina Abramović describes crystals as symbols of the planet's ancient energy and memory. For her, crystals carry a special power that connects us to deep time. She expresses this spiritual quality in her art through the so-called Transitory Objects', which enable viewers to connect directly with the energy of the crystals.



inner_sky.jpg

6.2 The connection to 'Deep Time' and to spiritual aspects of art

Barbara Bleisch asks Abramović about her fascination with the concept of 'Deep Time' and the energetic connection to ancient objects such as crystals. Marina Abramović describes how crystals carry the memory of the planet and create a connection to 'Deep Time'. She wants to make this energy tangible for people through her art so that they can experience not only the present, but also the depth and permanence of time more consciously.

7. The development of performance art

7.1 The development of performance art and Abramović's role

Barbara Bleisch notes that Abramović was once almost alone in being active in performance art and asks how she experienced the changes in the acceptance of this art form. Marina Abramović describes how she was considered a 'black sheep' in Yugoslavia and that performance art was not recognised much at the beginning. Only a few spectators attended her early performances and she was often criticised. Today, thousands of people are interested in her work, which she sees as a huge change.

7.2 The work 'Rhythm 0' and the concept of demons

Barbara Bleisch addresses Abramović's work Rhythm 0, in which the audience was able to use various objects to influence Abramović's body for six hours. Marina Abramović explains that Rhythm 0 revealed her understanding of the audience's 'demons'. People can become dangerous in certain situations, which became visible in this work. This showed her that there is darkness in everyone, and that through her performances she brings these hidden sides of people to light.

youtube.com/watch?v=xTBkbseXfOQ

8. Art as a tool for emotions and healing

8.1 Art as a tool for emotions and transformation

Barbara Bleisch compares Abramović's works with sculptures by Josef Beuys, which can also be seen as 'healing' objects. Marina Abramović emphasises that her objects are not intended as sculptures, but as tools to trigger emotional and transformative experiences. She encourages people to spend time with these objects, as their effect only unfolds through repeated and conscious use.

9. Passing on knowledge and art

9.1 Passing on her work and training the next generation

Barbara Bleisch addresses Abramović's founding of an institute to train young artists and asks how she teaches them her method.

Marina Abramović explains that she offers intensive training at the institute, where young artists practise long-term performances and develop their own works. She sees the passing on of her art as essential and finds it emotional to see her work in a new generation. The students carry out performances that originate from Abramović but are reinterpreted by the performers.

A talk about Objects & Methods

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IGAPya-Q0o

Hassan Rahim's lecture explores the interplay of obsession, duality and individuality in creative practice, and how these concepts shape his work as an artist and designer. He begins by emphasising the role of obsession as a driver of creativity, highlighting how his fascination with objects, cultural icons and aesthetics informs his artistic voice. Through personal anecdotes - such as his attachment to his father's BMW or a treasured Wu-Tang Clan T-shirt - Rahim demonstrates how objects transcend their physical form to become carriers of memory, emotion and meaning. These obsessions manifest in recurring themes and motifs in his work, often emerging subconsciously, and he encourages creatives to embrace their own fixations as a source of inspiration and authenticity

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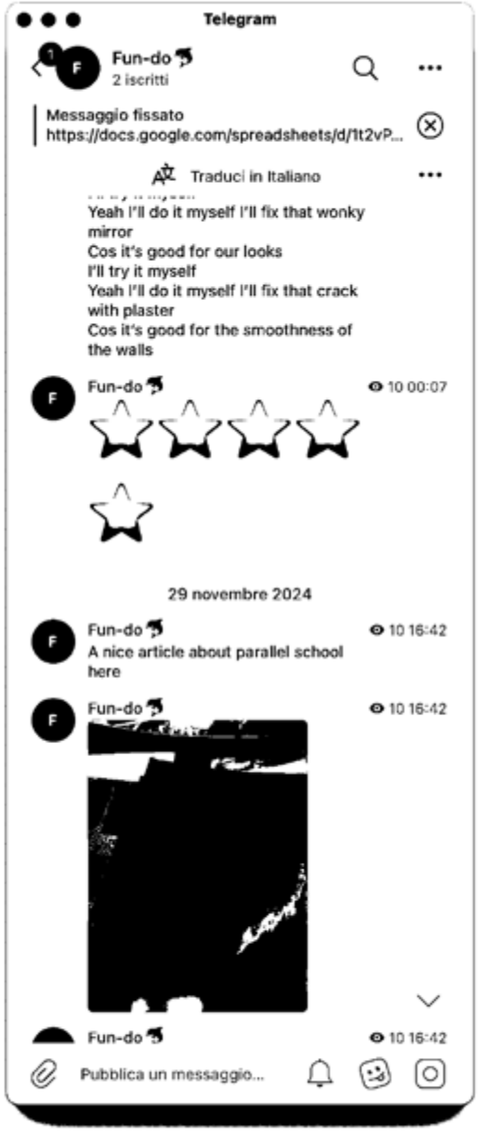
Rahim also explores the concept of duality, both in the artistic process and in one's own identity. As a self-taught designer who blurs the lines between art and design, he reflects on the tension between personal expression and the demands of client work. This duality, he explains, extends to balancing intuition and structure, obsession and perfectionism, and emotional attachment with the ability to detach when work is critiqued. Rahim highlights the importance of using both bubble thinking - generating expansive, non-linear ideas - and linear execution to refine and realise creative projects. He also challenges the notion that you have to choose between being an artist or a designer, instead promoting fluidity and versatility.

Our Communication Channel Telegram



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At some point, we decided that we needed a way to update each other with ideas, live documentation and everything related to the project in a casual way, separated from the chat that we already used daily, not to get the data lost in personal conversation. We choose Telegram and created a channel named Fun-do. We also chose a dolphin as our icon, dolphins are fun.

Sharing Apples and a fil rouge

When you spend a lot of time together, especially when you think about the relational dynamics of interactions, you experience different moments when you're discussing something complex and abstract and suddenly it all makes sense, but when you try to explain it to someone else in a different moment and context, it doesn't make sense anymore. It is something ephemeral that lives in the moment, a kind of epiphany, a collective clarity.

In our case we called it "The Apple and the Red Thread". We'll try to explain how we came to that in the following lines, probably failing to make anyone understand what it is, given the nature of the phenomenon itself.

In our initial meeting with Radim, where we talked about our overconsumption of information and online behaviour, he mentioned a thought that kept sticking in our following conversations. It was about the metaphor of sharing apples. When you share it, you end up with half (or a fraction of) the initial apple. Even though apples and instagram posts are not really comparable, the thought of loosing something when you "share" something online seemed to have something truthful to it. We imagined what this loss could be in that case.

A few days later we meet in Rolex Learning Center during the weekend to work on our project. After a while Giulia taught Chan how to do crochet and lends him material to continue experimenting with it. For the initial step, Chan learned how to do the single and the double stitch. A stitch which demands for attention in the beginning but will get super easy after a while. To learn it, Giulia gave him red yarn. He used the red yarn to crochet a first small rectangle that later on becomes a red formless but voluminous object as Chan just intuitively came up with random stitching directions. It became just big enough to stick the hand inside.

Proud of what it became he brought it to school the next day, to show it to Giulia. You could easily see that time and care went into producing it, but also how the missing experience and amateurish ignorance of rules made it somehow hard to reproduce. It drifted apart from how Giulia learned how to do crochet, with given precise instructions and rules when to do what. So even though we shared knowledge, how it was used and what it brought up seemed to be completely irrational and unforeseeable. Which reminded us of the sharing an apple analogy. Craving an apple after lunch, we put it inside the red thingy, making it an apple holding bag. Heureka! It clicked. And then after all, the bag was done with red yarn.

And there were more elements coming together for an absurd alignment of coincidences, one of them being a youtube video of a guy cutting an apple in half with a ninja technique — Chan tried to replicate it for Radim , but it is not so easy as it is shown on the internet. That happened at the same time when we were talking about wanting to find a *fil rouge* for our project, a common thread to weave our topics along. Which brought us to think about the Chinese and Japanese legend of the "Red Thread of Fate", an invisible thread that connects people and soulmates during their lives, which from a romantic and poetic point of view is actually the reason why Chan and Giulia got together to work on this project. Not because of their free will apparently, but because of the inevitability of destiny.

Quickly googling the legend brought us to find the western reinterpretation of it, which was narrated by Plato in The Symposium: not a red thread connecting people together weaving their fate, but their own nature. Following the greek myth, people were once complete or "double" entities. Zeus, being jealous of them because of their arrogance, decided to split them in two — again, like an apple. This is the reason why people feel the need to come together and find their soulmate, their other half.

This finding brought us to think again about the sharing of the apples. If the apple is knowledge, what does splitting an apple mean? What does one loose and what does one gain when sharing? If someome shares a piece of their apple, thr other person will always get something back. Might be the exact half of the apple one person was looking for, or it could be another slice of apple split differently that doesn't match the previous half. Or maybe it's a pear. One certain thing is that it's impossible to predict what one will get in the end. And that, we could say, is the beauty of sharing.

Good Sad Happy Bad:
"DIY"

It won't last forever
cos nothing does
At least I know
I tried to stop the rust
It won't last forever
cos nothing does
The point is to do it
to do it yourself
I'll try it myself
Yeah I'll do it myself
I'll fix that squeaky hinge
Cos it's good for the noise
I'll try it myself
Yeah I'll do it myself
I'll fix that wonky shelf
Cos it's good for our books
I'll try it myself
Yeah I'll do it myself I'll fix
that broken curtain rail
Cos it's good for the light
It can rain
It can pour

I'll try it myself
Yeah I'll do it myself I'll fix
that leaky pipe
Cos it's good for the sink
and all the things that live
under it
I'll try it myself
Yeah I'll do it myself I'll fix
that wonky mirror
Cos it's good for our looks
I'll try it myself
Yeah I'll do it myself I'll fix
that crack with plaster
Cos it's good for the
smoothness of the walls

Lyrics written by:
CJ Calderwood, Marc Pell,
Mica Levi, Raisa Khan

Conditional Design Manifesto

Through the influence of the media and technology on our world, our lives are increasingly characterized by speed and constant change. We live in a dynamic, data-driven society that is continually sparking new forms of human interaction and social contexts. Instead of romanticizing the past, we want to adapt our way of working to coincide with these developments, and we want our work to reflect the here and now. We want to embrace the complexity of this landscape, deliver insight into it and show both its beauty and its shortcomings.

Our work focuses on processes rather than products: things that adapt to their environment, emphasize change and show difference.

Instead of operating under the terms of Graphic Design, Interaction Design, Media Art or Sound Design, we want to introduce Conditional Design as a term that refers to our approach rather than our chosen media. We conduct our activities using the methods of philosophers, engineers, inventors and mystics.

Process

The process is the product.

The most important aspects of a process are time, relationship and change. The process produces formations rather than forms.

We search for unexpected but correlative, emergent patterns.

Even though a process has the appearance of objectivity, we realize the fact that it stems from subjective intentions.

Logic

Logic is our tool.

Logic is our method for accentuating the ungraspable.

A clear and logical setting emphasizes that which does not seem to fit within it. We use logic to design the conditions through which the process can take place.

Design conditions using intelligible rules.

Avoid arbitrary randomness.

Difference should have a reason.

Use rules as constraints.

Constraints sharpen the perspective on the process and stimulate play within the limitations.

Input

The input is our material.

Input engages logic and activates and influences the process.

Input should come from our external and complex environment: nature, society and its human interactions.

Written by
Luna Maurer,
Edo Paulus,
Jonathan Puckey,
Roel Wouters

Pray to Kerning

I believe
in kerning.

I pray to
it everyday.

Radim Peško to Kai Bernau 16/12/2024

Talking to Stuart Bertolotti Bailey

Context

Stuart visiting our class as a pre-jury for our thesis. Additional meetings were offered to talk about our projects. As G saw some overlaps in collaborative works that Stuart did, also regarding finding a way of publishing analog and digital we decided to talk to him.

Conversational Notes

- the Newsletter serves as a channel to communicate the content that we gather from the class
- Stuart is reminding us to design sth. that we are committed to
- producing the printed version of dotdotdot magazine was fruitful for the content also being published online due to the fact that the gates that had to be traversed during production (e.g. meetings or printing deadlines) were already passed
- these gates also serve as a tool to keep being committed to doing the magazine
- Stuart once again reminded us to find sth where we stay committed while also seeing it realistically
- the simplicity of how a medium is designed or structured can increase the committment to engagement of all the people involved
- Stuart highlights the importance of editing the content and take responsibility to give the according quality to the medium (in respect to the content)
- we should show that we care about what we do
- I guess that also can increase engagement of the others to also care about what we do

- The most important thing is to design something you're really gonna commit to.
- DDD was out every 6 months.
- It was printed, so you have to go through a lot of gates before printing. It is different from digital matter. Online, you can correct the mistakes.
- Commitment to regularity. Stuart was part of a space in NY that was open as a bookshop on Saturday, connected to the Art Universities such as Yale. They had press hype, they were published in some newspaper so this helped to keep the shop open.
- Stuart worked at ICA in London. London Contemporary Art, as a Head of Design. He worked on the identity, website.
- He decided the role "Head of Design" himself, when they asked him how he wanted to be called.
- There was a desire for the digital channel, they created an online cinema, called Cinema 3. There were movies released to be streamed.
- During the pandemic, they sent a newsletter everyday, with a list of recommendations all through the summer.
- During pandemic, in Tallin at the Estonia Design School people were invited to write a short text related to design.
- An advice: make things simple. Even within a group, it makes a difference. Take responsibility and edit the stuff.
- Don't flatten the voice, but correct the mistakes and edit. The editing does not compromise authenticity.
- Do not let too much freedom to the people. Even if there can be an experimental voice change.
- Objects: alongside the serving library, there is a collection of objects. They are all originals, and they are attached to the essays. They craft a learning environment.

Newsletter

Once again, we found ourselves chatting. The idea of the newsletter came almost out of nowhere. It was the natural consequence of probably yet another the-apple-and-the-red-thread moment that the chit-chat brought us to. How to bring to the people the warm feeling of togetherness outside of ECAL's spaces and time? Especially disconnecting from social media, the only place where we could actually get news from the people we care about without direcly asking. Social media became a place where information finds you, and not the opposite. It is really hard to navigate our Instagram feed without loosing your purpose, feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, confused.

We need to claim our space online, to craft a little corner for ourselves where to keep memories. In one of the meetings with Alice, we talked about the concept of keepsake. A box of memories, a treasure chest. But also something that comes a little bit as a surprise, like a fortune cookie. We can't wait to read what the others want to share.

A call for entries
Starting from the collaboration between Giulia and Chan, we want to keep the community from our class that we built up during studies in ecal and therefore create a tool/platform for us to stay in touch with each other to keep exchanging, from wherever we all are and are going to be: the keepsake.

Open Call
What we came up with is the idea of a yet to be named newsletter (any recommendations are welcome – "onlyfriends" is discarded, sorry jboy). The newsletter will consist of different kinds of sections and lives by out entries that we add to it. For example in a busy month it might be less (or more, who knows). So now we need you and your material.*

Deadline
It would be good if we could gather the material by 31st of December, so we still have time to put them together.

For us by us
As we are doing it for us in the first place, don't be afraid to share. Every section can be interpreted as you like. There is no wrong entry. The shape of the newsletter will be defined by the collective action. If you miss a section or have an idea for a platform, or any kind of remark, let's talk about it. Have fun ;)

Keep in mind: The first newsletter is going to be sent during evaluations, meaning that the professors will see and might be reading it. As we want to stay authentic, we can edit everything that you don't want to be read by others than us.

This will change in future: One day you'll all be able to put your content to a platform that then will auto generate the newsletter, but we won't be able to program this until evaluations.

Sections

Announcements
A space for typeface and project releases, as well as open calls for collaborations and projects — before Instagram sees it. Or maybe you're looking for a new job, you're moving to another city, and you want to reconnect to the group.

Proofing & Feedback
Just like in MATD class, sharing proofs and typeface ideas to get a fresh point of view. Initial sketches or just references are welcome.

Recipes
Whether it's something you just tried, your latest experiment, or a traditional recipe of your grandma. Just like you would do if you cooked for your friends on saturday night.

Wall
Imagine you have your MATD tiny corner/wall behind you, or in front of you. A place to recreate your daily moodboard, could be just a glimpse, without too many explanations.

Cringe of the Week
It doesn't have to be that cringe, but we love funny stories. A tiny cafè corner to giggle before going further in reading the newsletter.

Fonts in Use
Your typefaces got used? Someone shared your fonts on are.na, instagram, or vk.com?

Memes
Lol.

Suggestions
That's a nice tool! How do you do that? That was a nice exhibition, here are some pics. Where to find raclette outside Suisseland. We have to talk.

Playlist
Everyone shares one current favorite tune.

Meetups, Live-Locations & Travel diary
Wherever we all are and go, there might be someone closer to you than you think. Let us know your next moves if you want to meet up.

Reviews, Insights or Gossip
Someone might encounter some industry insight or have an experience that shapes our thinking of what we do. Could be a good or a bad experience with a famous agency, could be a how to do kickflips with your portfolio.

Interviews & Conversations
Conversations that happened or happen between people from the class on topics that are, or are not relevant to us. Guest cameos might appear ;)

Blackboard/Aléatoire
Anything that comes to your mind and doesn't fit anywhere else. A place for portrait-sketches, lists, you name it.

A password

90

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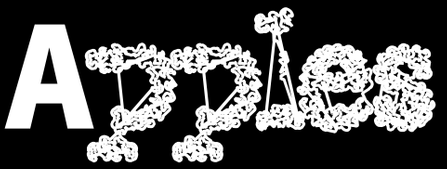
MATDkeepsake2025+

3



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Apples

G So, today is the 14th of January. We're wrapping up the project, previously named Fun-Do, now it has another name which is going to be in the cover of the book. So now we are looking back at the beginning of the project to find out how we got here here, right?

C Yeah, I think it's maybe related to our tool for conversation that became a kind of manifesto, as a third scale. It's finding out what we learned, observing the project with a little bit of distance, even though we're still fully connected to it as we are in the last week before evaluations — which might be also a good point, to step back from the production and think about it again.

G Is that really true? Because I felt like in this last week, in which everything had to be produced, I was starting to detach a little bit and to feel it as this project is not “my child” anymore. And I think that's completely normal at this point, but I think it's also nice if maybe we talk about how it was born, how it grew up and try to see what we learned from it.

One of the things that I wrote on my notes, which also Alice Savoie said during our last meeting, it that this project *has to be taken for what it is*. Something really fluid that evolved in time, I would say, and with with us as well, doing this kind of metamorphosis day by day, highly dependant from inspiration, conversations and people.

But I think the *fil rouge* that we’ve always had, no matter the topic, was the the *urge to communicate it* *in a way in which the other person could get it*, which is not always easy. Besides the language barrier — remember we are all talking English together but nobody is a mother tongue, sharing is exactly as giving a gift: you never know how the person will react and what they would do with it. For example, if you share a video of a lecture with me, I will remember some moments which are relevant to me, but maybe not to you and could trascend the reason why you shared it in the first place. So I think, for me, one of the most important things that I learned is the constant challenge on how to communicate to the other person and to understand each other completely. This is, of course, easier if you know the person really well. And in our case, it wasn't that like that. In the beginning we were just classmates.

C But yeah, also not complete strangers.

G Of course, but if we look back at our messages and the way we used to talk, we can really see how both the way in which we talk about the project and the everyday language between ourselves have changed. So there has been a lot of personal development, in the friendship and in the understanding of the other person.

C I think it also relates to what we heard from RWO (Rietlanden’s Women’s Office): you cannot foresee how the stuff that we say or that we do is perceived, but also we have to care about what we do. I think that's also kind of relating to like the way to formulate your thoughts. It's about this notion of efficiency that Julia Born talked about in one of her lectures: how can you become efficient in a collaborative practice? RWO answered this question saying “if you talk to your friend, you measure the time differently from your friend, and you measure your own time, which means that maybe you come more to a point, or you become more precise in what you want to communicate”. And I believe this way thinking also shaped our way of communicating, being precise, even though sometimes while I was in the school I felt the urge to be productive. And the conversations that we had, even though they were very interesting and we took a lot of different kinds of paths, were sometimes affected by the surrounding that is constantly is pushing us to to produce something, even now. Also, it feels a little bit alien to me to come back last week before evaluations to take a moment of reflection, which is like a forced break somehow. But I feel like it's also very important to do this.

G We will have the opportunity to do this without thinking about evaluation just right after we finish. But I think it's also nice that we set this framework, with a goal and with a deadline, even though it goes a little bit against the nature of the project itself. But thanks to this balance, the project had the opportunity to actually grow and not be left apart, which is a risk when you do something just for fun and you are overloaded by work. Maybe we will not be able to carry this on in the future — I hope we will (*laughs*).

So I think that's super nice that we had this experience like a sort of demo of how it could be to host and organize a sort of *thinking club*. For example: every Thursday, we see each other one hour, and we talk about stuff. It's not something institutionalized, it happens when you are in a bubble of friends that think and like the same things that you do. And for me this is maybe the first time that I meet someone that wants to talk about your daily research.

C That's why Alice was calling it therapy. Like *design therapy.* I would not call it therapy somehow.

G Therapy is when you go deep to search inside yourself.

C I mean, we went inside ourselves, I feel like.

G But not in such a personal way, I would say. Not in a deeply emotional way, but still in an emotional way.

C Maybe not *only* in an emotional way but in a passionate way. What we did and do is our passion, which is why we are here in the first place, I guess. And I think that's where I would also draw the line between what Alice called a therapy and what we actually did. I see Stuart Bailey’s path related to that. He did a lot of publishing throughout his career, which in turn influenced his work as a designer. What was very interesting was to see the beginnings of Dot Dot Dot magazine, where he and the other people were back then and what seems to be interesting to them now. Stuart’s career seems to be very inspired by talking and thinking about his passion that then influenced his way of working and the outcome. When I looked it up, it felt like Stuart and the other early people involved in the magazine, are on complete different tracks nowadays. And I think because of his continuation of the mag and further collaborations his work (still) is far more interesting to experience. Some of the others might value work differently than Stuart and I think, one can see that in the outcomes. This is why I really appreciated our collaboration as we were reflecting a lot on what we did. Not only as individuals and not only as fellow students in ECAL. I think through all of the themes that we talked about, there was this kind of *third entity*

that some people see when a collaboration is happening which will heavily influence our future work and ways of working.

G Another thing I really liked about the project, even if it wasn't meant to happen in the beginning, is that I really pushed myself out of the box. So in a way, I'm also going along with the productive-pushing philosophy of ECAL. It didn't look like it, but I really think it's a project where I pushed myself the most. Yesterday I was thinking: what if I just did my three projects alone? Where would I be now? What would my outcome be? Would I have already finished and printed everything? Maybe I would have worked faster staying in my comfort zone. For example, writing doesn't come that natural to me. I feel a little bit frustrated while doing it. But this time, I really wanted to do it, as it was of course useful for the project, but also a way to communicate with you, and I'm 100% sure that I never wouldn't have done that alone.

C Did this benefit or change the way you write, or wrote your thesis until now, for example?

G I don't know yet, but I think it will. Because I took it as a sort of exercise. What happens here in the Masters is that you enter the class with your own set of skills, and then you can maybe update what you know, but you mostly stay in your comfort zone. And I see this in people, aesthetically and also conceptually, they stay in their comfort zone. I understood this during the first worship with Radim, where we had to pick a manifesto — little did I know it would've become the reason why we came together at some point — and I chose a topic I was comfortable with, staying inside this bubble of knowledge that I already had. Within our collaboration it was the opposite. Every time we talked I could learn something new. And it's really cool how it's not a lecture, not a book, but a person that brings you knowledge with the critical thinking and everything that comes with it.

It's not like listening to a lecture, it's not like having a casual conversation in a cafè. It's in between. It can be described like this: lighthearted, because it's with a friend; deep, because the topics we touch may be really complex to understand, or simply something that I never heard of. But more than that, everything that we share we consider meaningful, and that it's super nice. It's cool to receive knowledge from the personal selection of a person. It's like having a guided tour of their bookshelf.

C Now we live in a time where this kind of friendly suggestions are exchanged from algorithms, right? Which I think it's a bit more anonymous, but in the end what I guess algorithms do, is connecting people through their common interests. If you listen to a track, the algorithm will suggest you other tracks based on which songs other people with your same taste listen to. So there is some collective memory behind it, even though it's anonymous, which is the difference, maybe. But I think also, through our interests in all the personal stuff that we like, there's this unique perspective. And sharing these perspectives also became the key point of this project, right?

G Yes, which is also manifested in the final newsletter. In the end, everything is connected. About the algorithm, I think it's now Instagram has this option of putting a note on a post, where you can put a tiny bubble to write no more than three or four words. When you click on it, it says: "If you put a note in this post, people will have more chance to see it". After I put my comment, I get a notification everytime someone else likes the post, just because it has my note on it. In this latest experimentation of Instagram, maybe they are trying to find a way to recreate your bubble and to come back again to your inner circle, instead of just being lost inside the internet with strangers as audience that put meaningless comments under your stuff.

But it will never be as precious as if someone does it for you and talks to you in real life, intentionally. How will we do that when we're not together anymore? Social media is the first thing that comes to my mind when I want to *spy* on someone else life and see how it's doing.

C But maybe that's the point also. *Spying* means like looking what others do without them being present in an interaction with you. It's gonna be interesting how our newsletter, for example, will not serve as a platform to be very personal, as it is a newsletter, but also personal in a way. I think that in the future it will be different, but still again, it will be also different to the other digital ways of communication nowadays, which I think is why I am also liking the study of the newsletter, even though as RW said, we will not be able to foresee how, how long, or even *if* the newsletter it's going to survive.

G Or if it's going to be read or not.

C I'm sure that people will read it. But then in the end. It's not about the people reading it, because when no one's participating, then there's nothing to read. So yeah, let's see. (*laughs*)

G Regarding this, I think it will be interesting for us when this project is finished, to maybe set up some dates during our diploma semester when we will be ultra focused on one project. Like a 1 hour chat in which we ask ourselves what has changed, what is happening, how do you feel in this environment, how are people reacting to this new task that they were given, and what we can do to bring everyone together a little bit more, if it's going to be something that we feel we need.

C Coming back to the question from Radim, let's try to describe what we did in three words or three sentences.

G I think one of the words could be a t*hink tank*, that is also kinda emotional and personal sometimes. So it's not a think tank for researchers and scientists, but it's method with which we tried to bring back and highlight the emotional and social side of our work. So, I would say emotional Think Tank.

C Yeah, it's quite hard to explain what it was about. Even though it's super easy to talk about it. And I think between the lines, the meaning is quite obvious, but it depends also on the reader of these lines I guess, which is something that we learned from the last conversation with Radim and Alice. They're two very different characters.

G The French gardener and the British gardener, right?

C Or the gardener and the architect or the gardener, yeah. I feel like in these walls of ECAL this project felt very different because it was, as we already mentioned quite a few times, not about this quality of the surface, right? We try to find out what we want to do in a collaborative project. In the end, it's not about like one specific topic, but we went through different paths, and then in the end it was the way that we took together that it was the result for me. I

think it's like going for a walk together, if we see this semester as a walk, or the time at ECAL, which is also something that we want to preserve. In these two years, we get to know each other and the whole class, and we share this short amount of time together in our lifespan that will influence our future selves. But somehow we want to build a knot between us that will stay also after leaving, which now becomes the newsletter. But actually I think it's the friendship of the whole class. It's the the community aspect of the class, which might not be naturally, given.

G Yeah. And for me, while you were talking, I also thought about this concept of breaking the fourth wall. If our evaluation day is a play, we are breaking the fourth wall because we are showing the backstage. We're not acting anymore. You know what I mean? We are talking to the audience and we're showing ourselves not as designers, as actors, but as the people that are behind that. So I think that could be a metaphor to describe what we were doing.

C Yeah, that's a very natural thing, also, right? Seeing everything as a conversation and not as a presentation, or seeing the presentation as some kind of conversation between all the people involved on a very on a human level, I would say.

G I ask you one of the questions that I always ask myself. If you had to redo this, would you change something, or would you do everything the same? The question might be a paradox, because everything was so connected to coincidences and talking to people, that if you had to redo this in the same way, you wouldn't be able to do that.

C One thing is learning through working together. But also, talking to a lot of people about working together, I feel like, on one hand, all these very all these aspects that we kind of try to not deny, but in a way, maybe sometimes, I felt like we were we went around some challenges, some tasks, like skipping those tasks, like documenting, for example, what we do, talking about it, but also somehow writing everything down, or just consciously taking time to gather the material and edit the material, because now I feel like it happens now that we are doing this, which is also good, that We have this deadline. But I think, in a way, I'm relating to what Stuart was calling the gates. Yes, they had to went through having this money for the magazine, having to talk to printers, having to talk to different kinds of people, to have those checkpoints. And I think, like, of course, we are here in the study program with evaluations as our deadline, but in the world after, there might be no one giving us deadlines. So it has to come for us from ourselves, which is something that I'm very bad in and I think this is something that I could take also from this project, is learning,

G Yeah, but I think it also was also necessary to not put deadlines between ourselves, to maximize the freedom, and then, of course, having this institutional deadline in Which, of course, you have to respect and to deliver. I think it was nice because it's maybe the last time in life that I can do that, you know, like doing something without putting deadlines ourselves, or, I don't know, I felt like in some way, the fact that we are writing this now and we are wrapping it up, it makes sense. It would have been completely different if we would have done it before. Even if we documented perfectly and wrote our thoughts step by step, we would have needed a wrap it up moment like this, because perspective changed from one day to another. It was the nature of this project, as we wrote in the index, to branch. It will keep growing and evolving. There are some aspects of it we cannot control. If we did it in another way, it would have been a completely different project.

C It's similar to taking notes, to remember what you said which is something you do a lot. I do it sometimes, but then I rarely read them. It just stays as an experience in my head.

If we would'have done it differently, writing and documenting more and taking the time to collect, in the end maybe something would have gone lost. Which comes out of the freedom that you mentioned. I think it's totally true, and maybe this is another learning of the project, that if we revalue our time basically the things that we prioritize to do, maybe we also find out more what is it about for us, what is important to us.

G I think that this question is particularly relevant now what we are approaching our Diploma Project. I want to take with me what I learnt in this experience to think about what I really like, and not do just something that looks good. It has to have a meaning for me. I feel like now I unlocked a new way of thinking and working that I will keep with me forever, reminding me that there is always more behind the surface. There is a lot to discover in everything that I do.

G I think what it was also very inspiring to hear was what Leonardo from Omnitype said. He said that he found out that in ECAL is totally ok ti just delve into the production mode and produce stuff. I think in the university he attended before he always had to find reasons and explain your choices.

G I had the same experience, which is also why I decided to come to ECAL. I was missing some freedom.

C In a way it is something that can be really freeing. Seeing ourselves also as craftspeople, pushing pixels very hard. they beauty in type design for me lays in this simplicity of the craft, which is then again very complex when you look closer. And just loosing ourselves in these moments, in these tunnels of crafting is also very beautiful. Which relates to the things we talked about at the beginning of the project, doing something where we are present in what we do and we are not distracted by internet. Even though type design nowadays has a lot to do with the computer.

G For me the beauty is in the balance. If you just push pixels, that stops making sense at some point. And if you only think about thinking, that also stops making sense. But if you combine the two things, it works.

C In the end I just want to say *thank you*. (laughs)

G Yes! Thank you so much. It was a crazy journey.

C I think it was a very beautiful project on a very personal level.

G Crazy how things happen by chance sometimes. I would have never imagined to do something like this here.

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