TRIANGLE 1

dialogue 500 Open with Pages

During my one-on-one conversation with the guest speaker, I sought to advance my research more deeply, break free from existing mental inertia, and make my work more critical while establishing a stronger connection to the social context. Our discussion primarily focused on my previous "Knife and Gesture" project. We agreed this direction holds significant potential for development, though how to make it more impactful and coherent remains a challenge I need to address.

dialogue 500 Open with Pages

The three references provided by the guest speaker offered new insights. (MAS 005) is a series of digital images by designer James Langdon. The images primarily document hand movements through scans/visual recordings of hands grasping, pinching, and holding objects of various materials. They capture the diverse actions and traces of the "hand" interacting with matter, treating hand movements as signals for viewers to understand objects, environments, and cultures. This made me wonder if I could use this as a starting point to focus my project keywords on "gestures," treating them as a form of documentary content—much like the reference material—to create an archive. Gestures would become a way to showcase the "archaeological" process, carrying inherent emotional weight. Combining this with the second reference, Vilém Flusser's Gestures, which posits that gestures are not merely actions but carriers of culture, emotion, and meaning—both expressions and modes of communication. This resonates with my earlier exploration of "de-functionalizing the knife": Can gestures still be understood without the knife? Inspired by these writings, I realized that since gestures are not merely attached to objects but can themselves become both content and form, could we create a new virtual environment where gestures function as spatial elements within the environment (like architecture, plants, or food)? Furthermore, by refining the scope of research based on different cultural contexts, could we explore whether audiences can perceive the underlying emotions and atmosphere through the pure form of gestures alone? This line of thought led me to envision gestures no longer serving objects, but instead shaping an entirely new gesture-based world grounded in reality.

During a one-on-one conversation with the guest speaker, I conceived an idea: What if we made objects vanish from an image, replacing space with gestures? Would this construct a wholly new visual world? Carrying this thought, I explored it further with a friend. He pointed out that randomly selecting scenes for replacement might render images overly abstract, making them difficult for viewers to engage with and comprehend. This led us to a sudden realization: Could we instead choose highly mundane, almost overlooked spaces—like gestures while waiting for a bus, casual movements on school desks, or ordering gestures in a coffee shop? These scenes share a commonality: they are so ordinary they become almost transparent, rarely noticed, yet they carry our most frequent daily gestural interactions. If gestures replaced the bus, the street scene, the platform, and the people waiting, would the image evoke new sensations? Perhaps viewers might experience an alienation of familiar spaces: the mundane environment suddenly "gesturalized," the once-familiar space no longer stable, but forced to be reinterpreted.

Following this exploration, I intend to initiate my next research by treating gestures as substitutes for language, probing potential future possibilities. This approach also aims to construct a "gestural language space," revealing aspects of daily life often overlooked by viewers.

¶ PREVIEW

→ IS THE TOOL ASSIGNING MEANING TO THE GESTURE, OR DOES THE GESTURE CARRY INHERENT SIGNIFICANCE REGARDLESS OF THE OBJECT?

→ IS THERE A GAP BETWEEN HOW I PERCEIVED MY EXPERIENCE DURING THE JOURNEY AND HOW I REMEMBER IT NOW?

¶ 1V1 TUTORIAL - GUEST SPEAKER

During the conversation, we focused mainly on my earlier project on “knives and gestures.”

¶ 1V1 TUTORIAL - GUEST SPEAKER

A series of digital images that capture the hand’s gestures when holding, squeezing, or grasping different materials. These recordings treat gestures as signals through which viewers can interpret objects, environments, and cultural contexts.

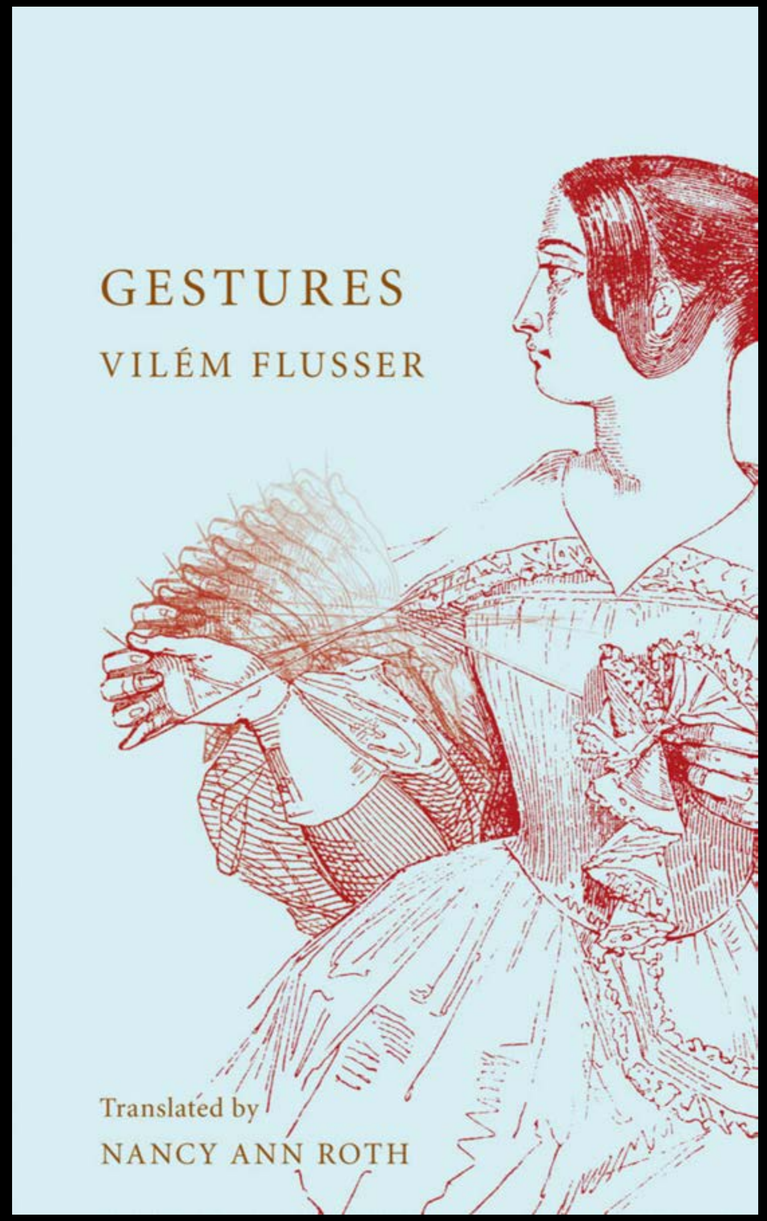
→ This inspired me to foreground “gesture” as a key concept in my own project—not only as bodily actions but also as records of interactions with materiality and carriers of emotion.

“ MAS 005 ”

¶ 1V1 TUTORIAL - GUEST SPEAKER

Flusser argues that gestures are not just movements of the body; they are cultural and communicative acts that embody meaning

→ Inspired by this, I began to consider creating a virtual environment composed entirely of gestures, where they function as spatial elements—like buildings, plants, or food. In this imagined world, gestures are no longer subordinate to objects but become autonomous forms shaping their own environment.



“ GESTURES ”

¶ 1V1 TUTORIAL - GUEST SPEAKER

Gestures need not serve objects—they can themselves become the foundation for constructing new environments and narratives

→

Considering creating a virtual environment composed entirely of gestures, where they function as spatial elements—like buildings, plants, or food.

¶ DIALOGUE WITH FRIEND

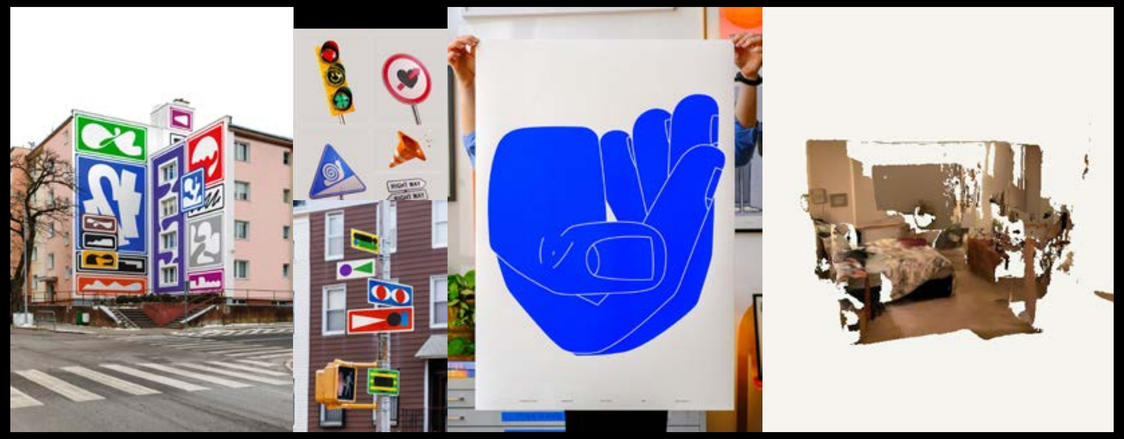
Randomly selecting scenes for replacement might render images overly abstract, making them difficult for viewers to engage with and comprehend.

→ Could we instead choose highly mundane, almost overlooked spaces—like gestures while waiting for a bus, casual movements on school desks, or ordering gestures in a coffee shop

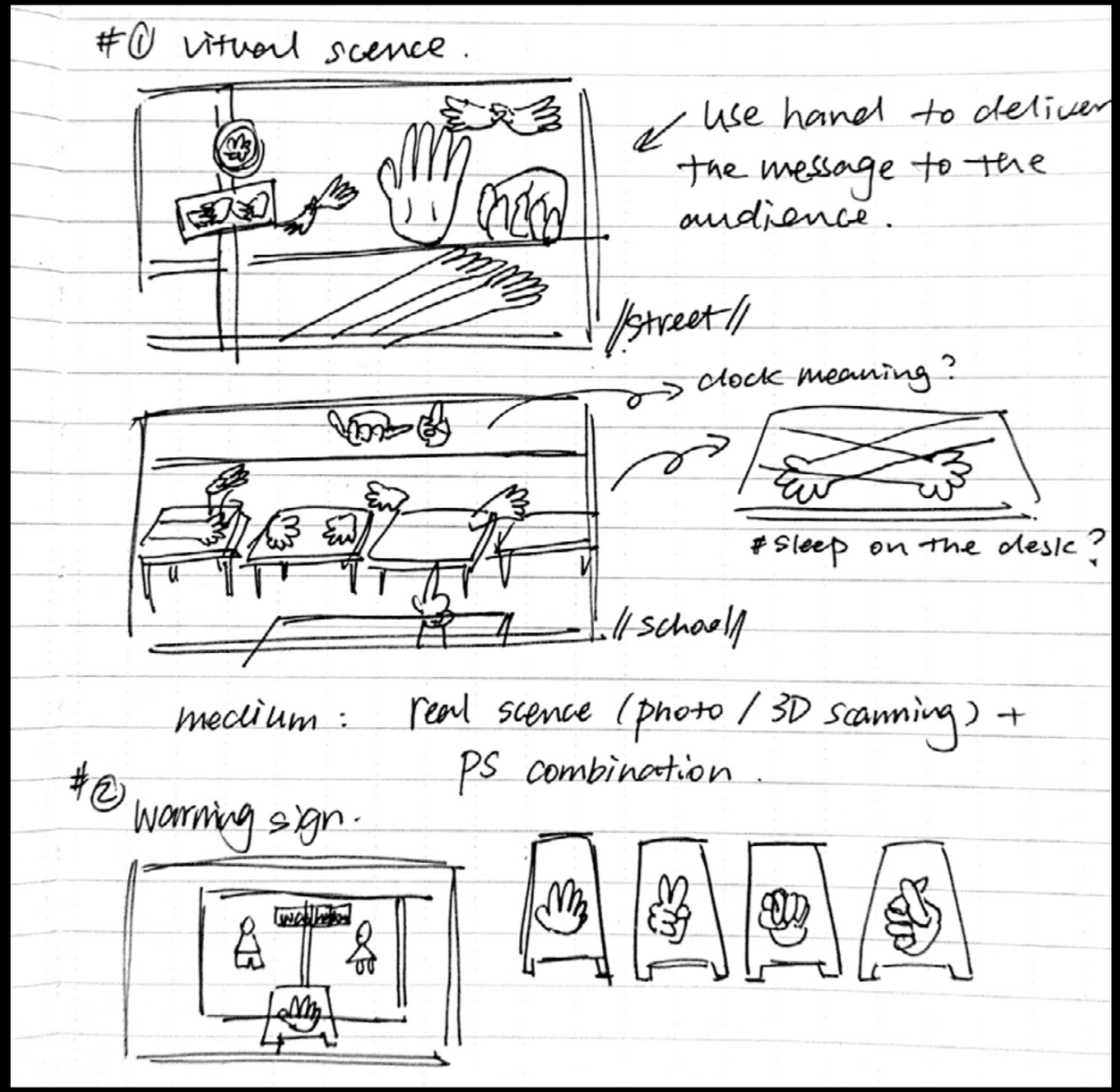
→ If gestures replaced the bus, the street scene, the platform, and the people waiting, would the image evoke new sensations? Perhaps viewers might experience an alienation of familiar spaces: the mundane environment suddenly “gesturalized,” the once-familiar space no longer stable, but forced to be reinterpreted.

IDEA

§ PLACE GESTURES IN THE REAL SPACE AND USE THEM TO CONVEY INFORMATION



§ DIFFERENT GESTURES PLACED ON WARNING SIGNS AND IN DIFFERENT LOCATIONS CONVEY DIFFERENT MESSAGES



POSITIONS THROUGH TRIANGULATING

§ PART I - STUDIO

RECAP:

if gestures replace objects, architecture, or emotions in real-life scenes, will viewers still be able to understand the information?

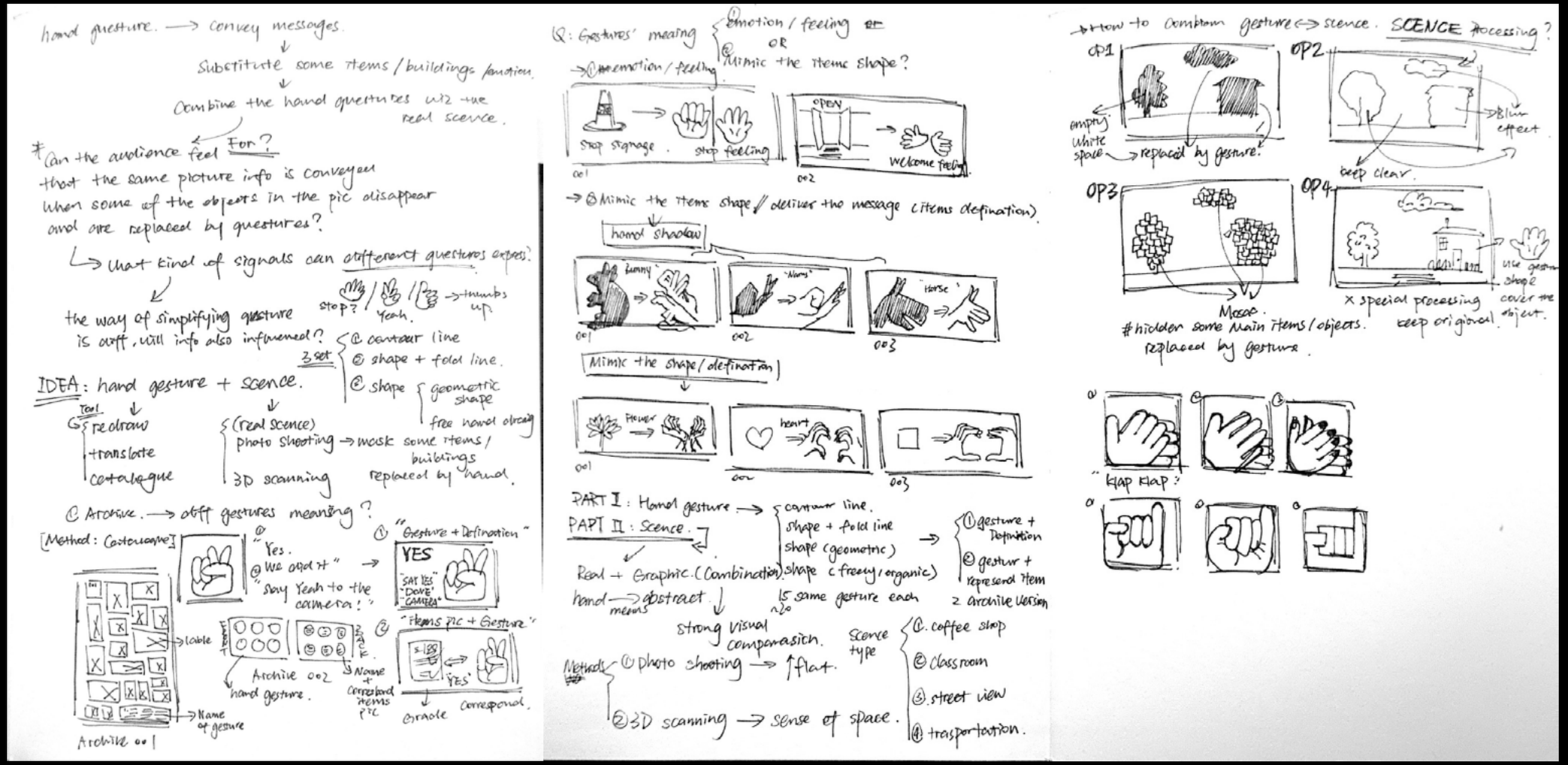
NEW questions:

- To what extent can gestures effectively replace objects?

- What are the limitations?

- What kinds of signals do gestures actually communicate—emotions, objects, or social conventions?

I considered: gestures as carriers of emotions/feelings, or gestures that mimic the shape/definition of objects. Based on this, I divided my study into two parts — gestures (lines, shapes, simplified forms) and scenes (photography or 3D scanning).



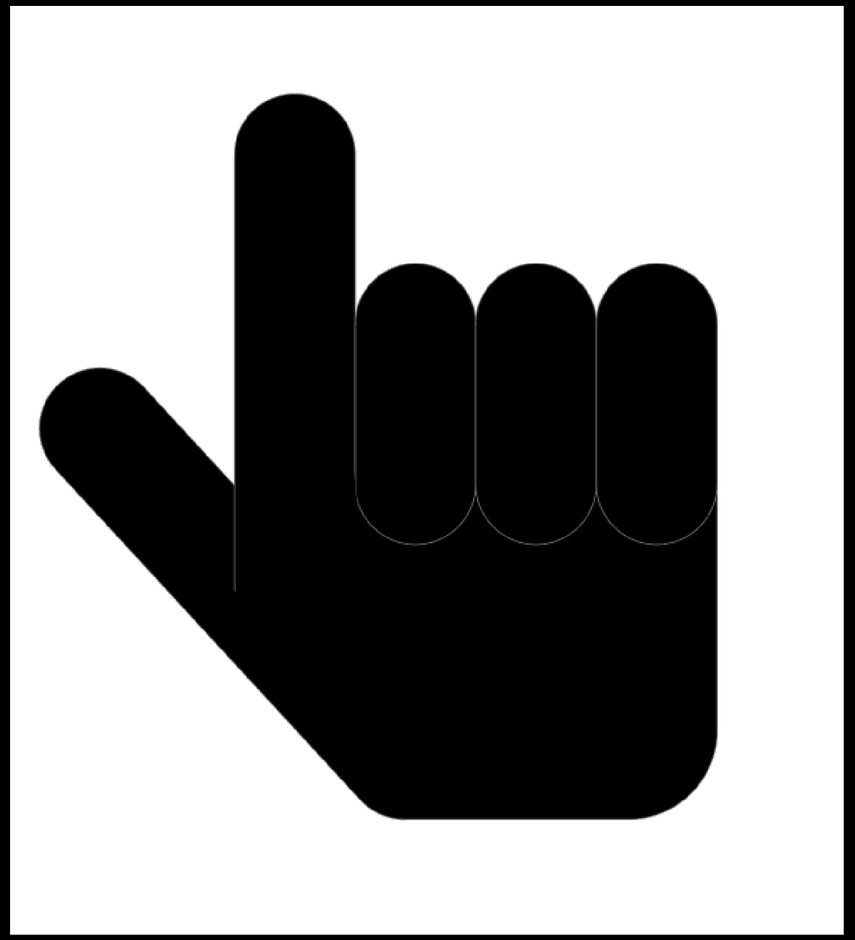
SIMPLIFICATION OF GESTURES

REDRAWING / TRANSLATING / CATALOGING

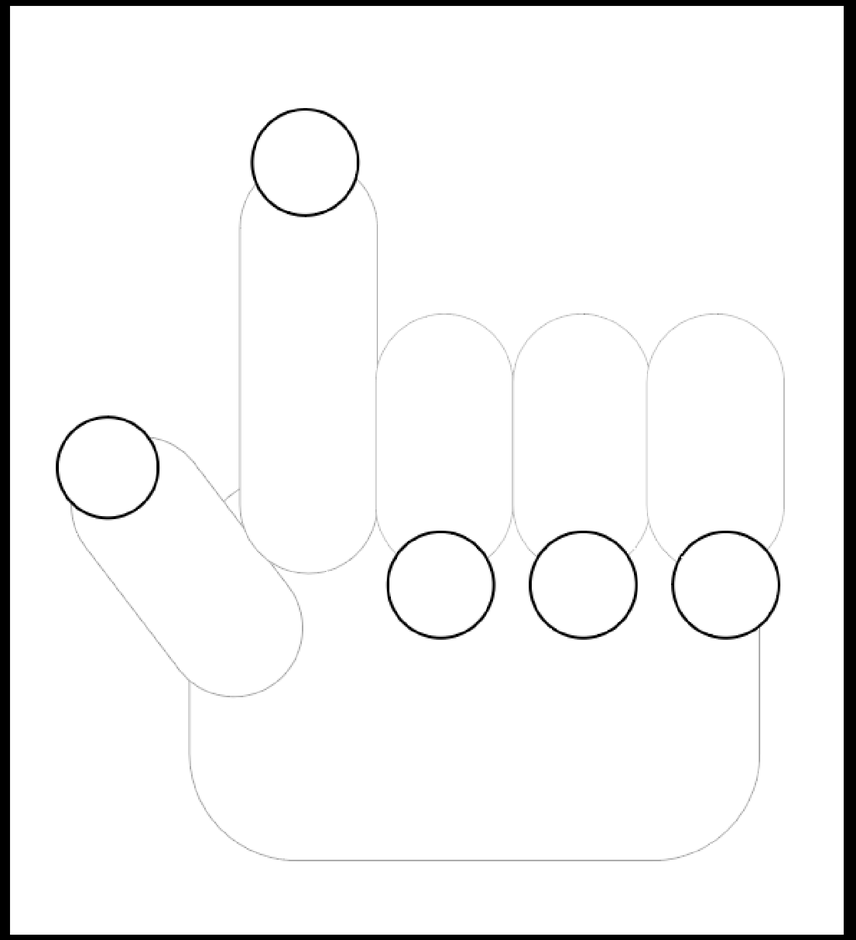
I want the flat simplified forms to collide with realistic scenes, creating tension. Just as gestures are not usually used for information transmission, but in this project, they confront conventional systems of meaning.

Experiemnt

Shape + line combination



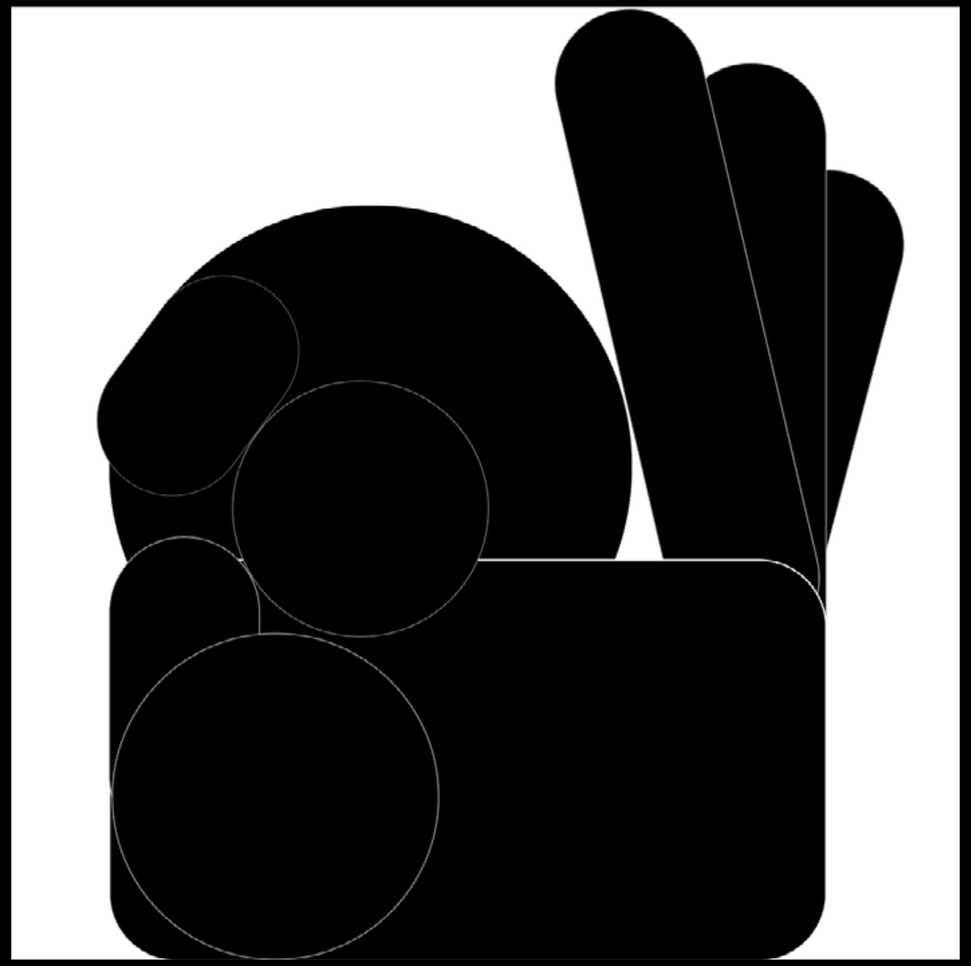
Line-based simplification



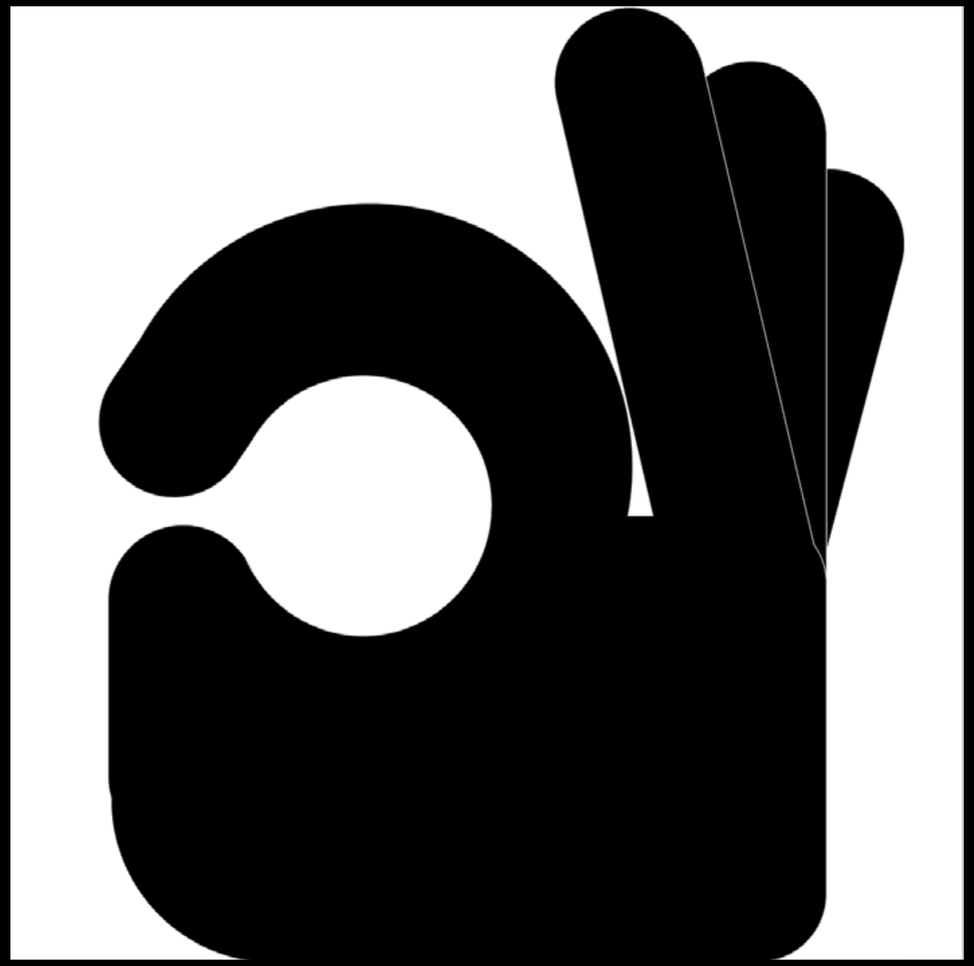
Process

It mainly integrates the overall shape and internal detailed lines, while not showing the wrinkles and unique features of the hand, in order to eliminate the interference when reading information

STEP 1: Summarize the shape



STEP 2: Eliminate extra shape

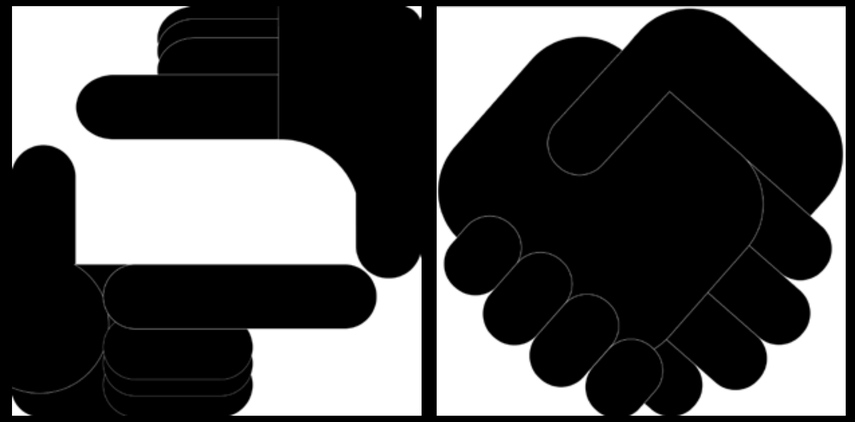


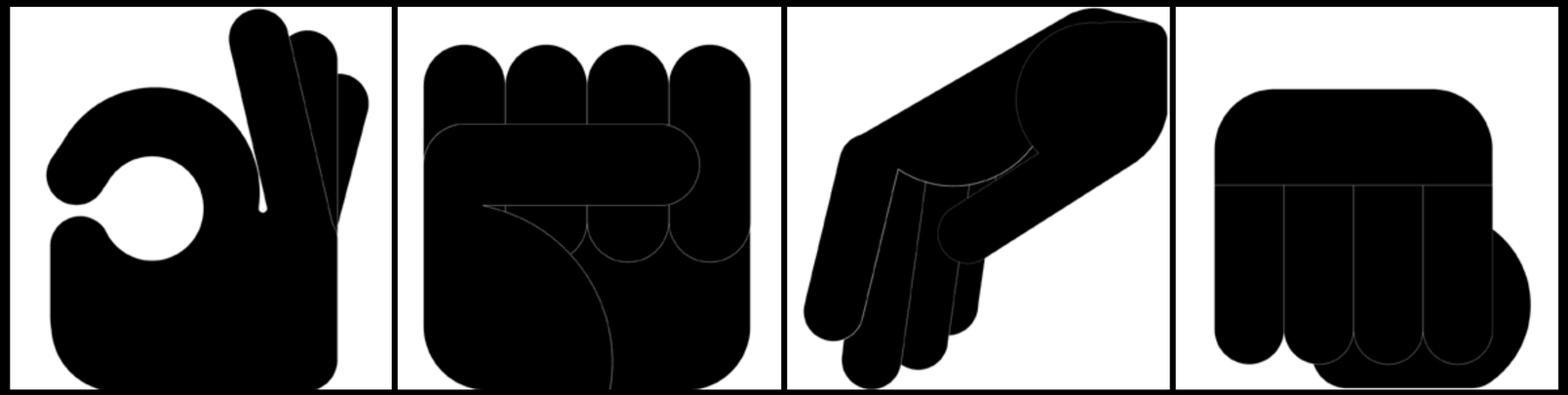
Shape + line combination

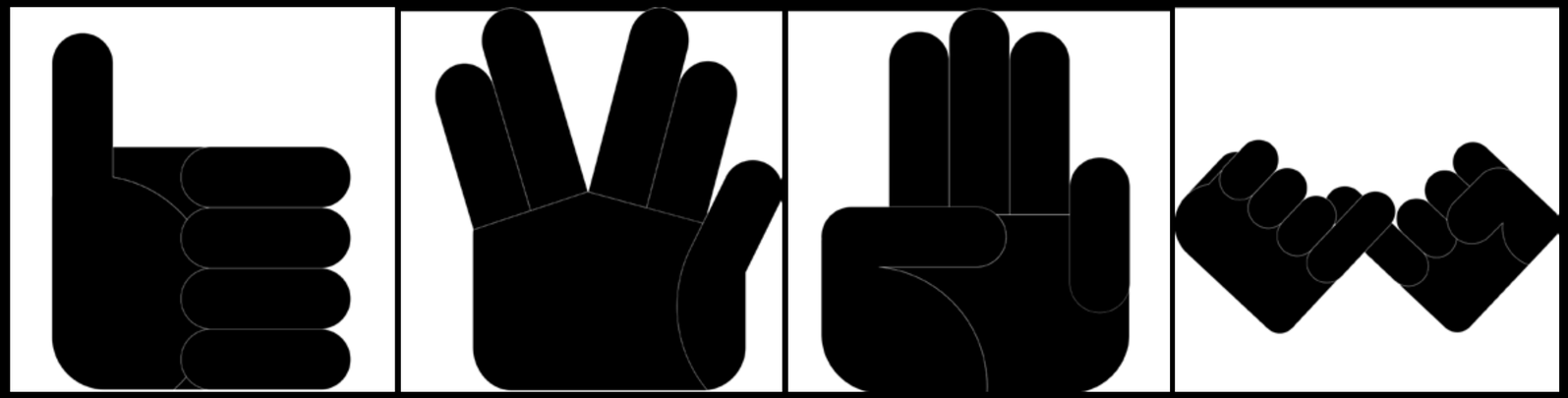
I found gestures can communicate in two ways:

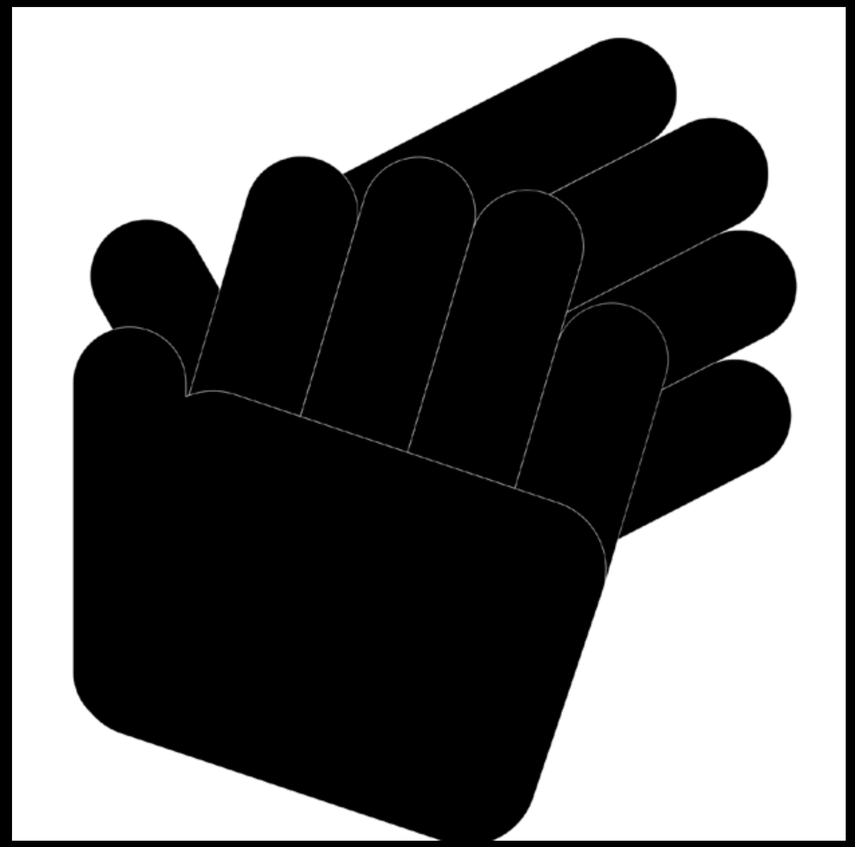
- Substitutional meaning – e.g. an outstretched hand can match a “STOP” sign.

- Cultural convention – e.g. the “OK” sign, understood socially.
Additionally, gestures can mimic physical forms—like hand shadow play.









PROCESS

- Accept, provide, carry

- A welcoming gesture

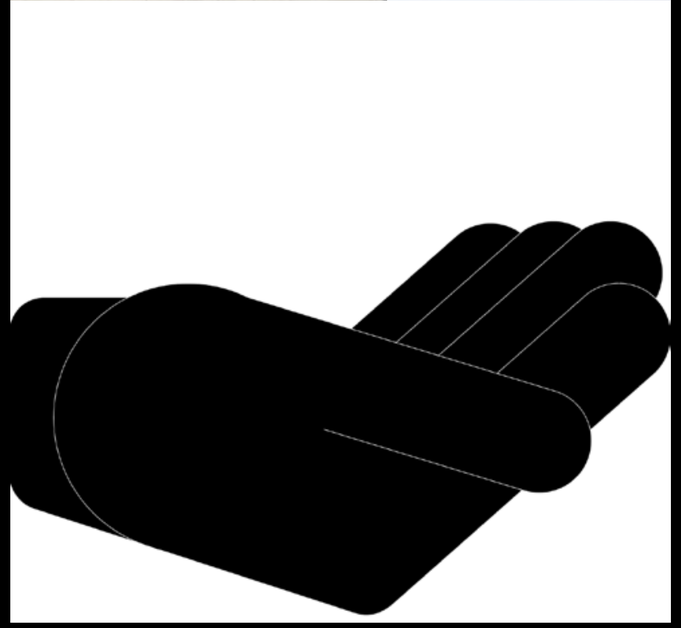
- It can also be understood as “holding” or “carrying” something

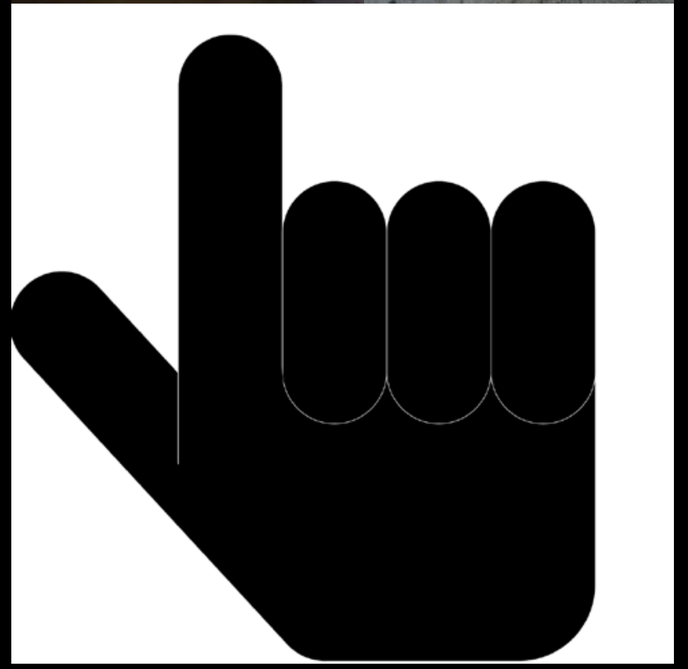
Alternative buildings/objects

Building - Square entrance/Arch (as a symbol of welcoming and opening)

Object - Bowl/Tray/Stage (Carrying function)

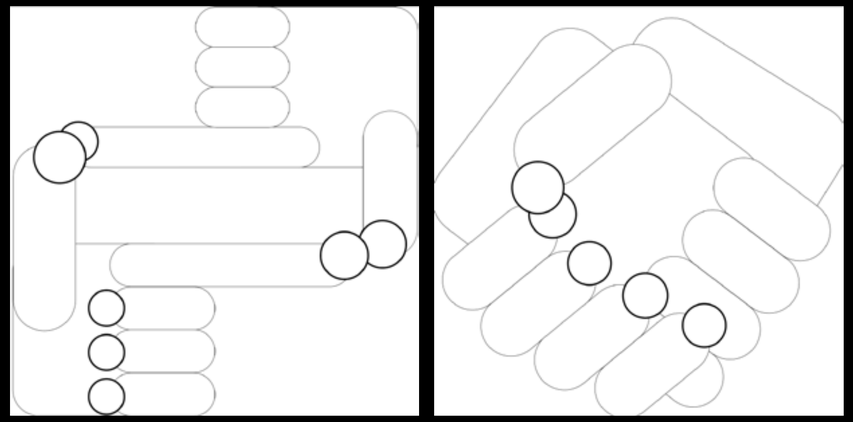
Scene meaning - “This is a space that can be entered and accepted.”

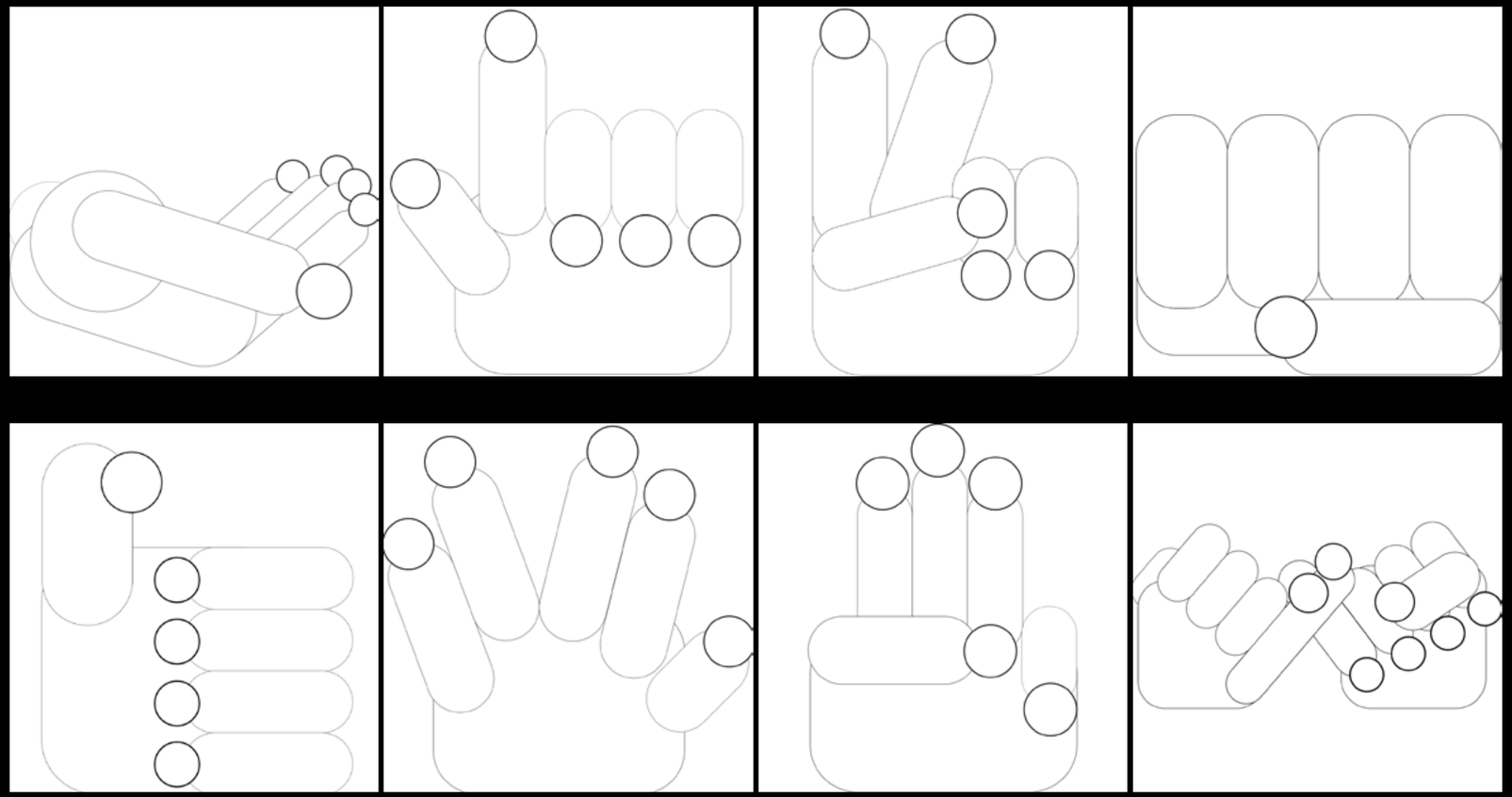


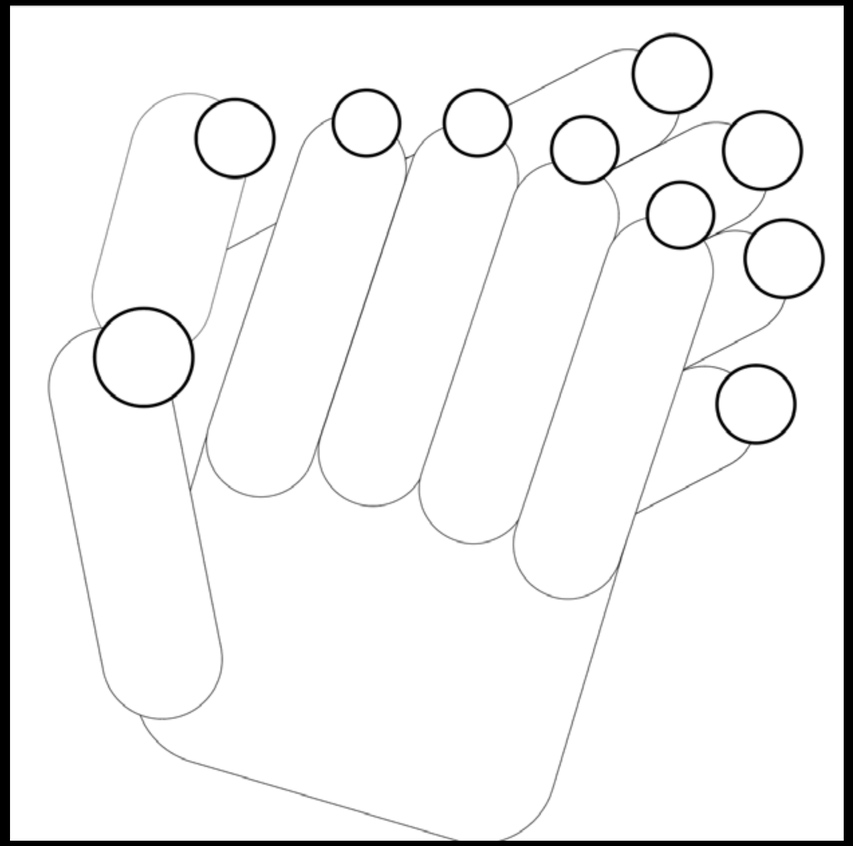


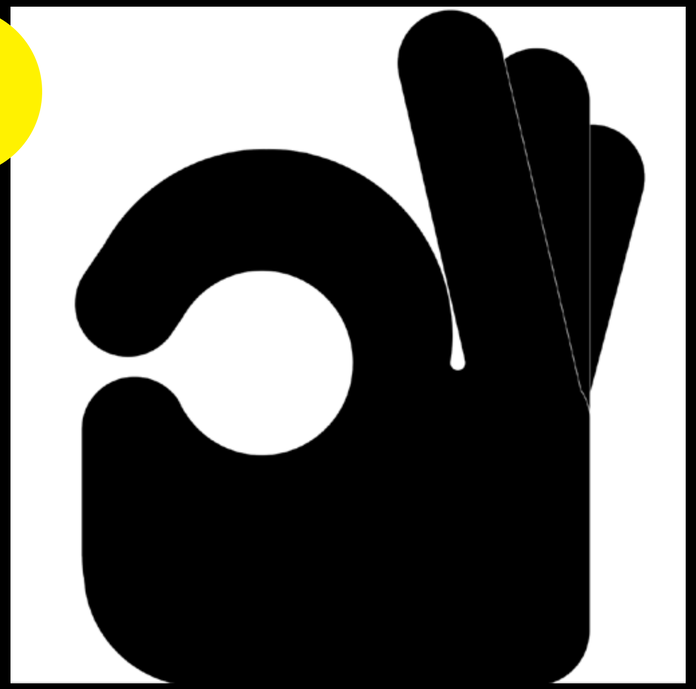
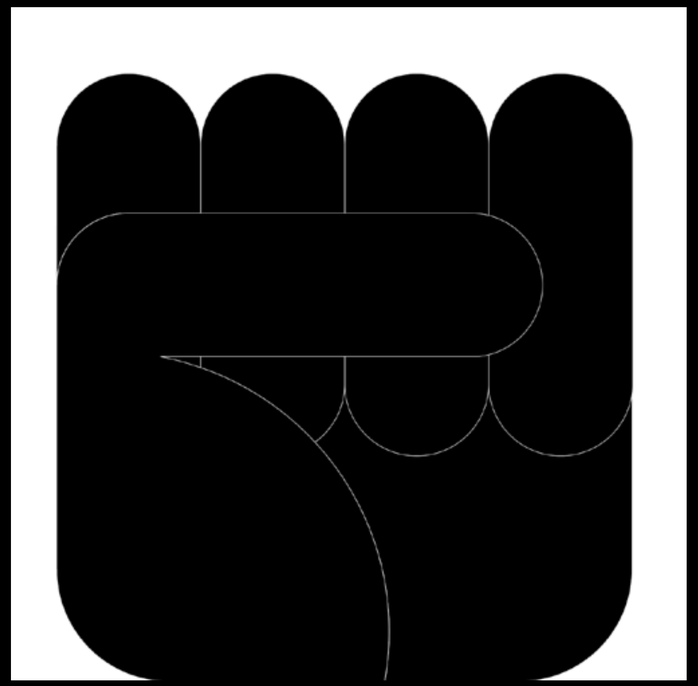
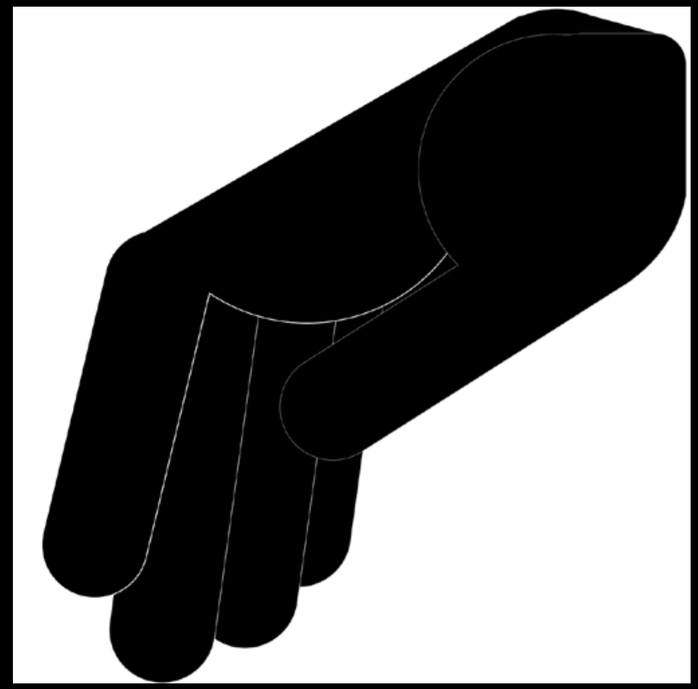
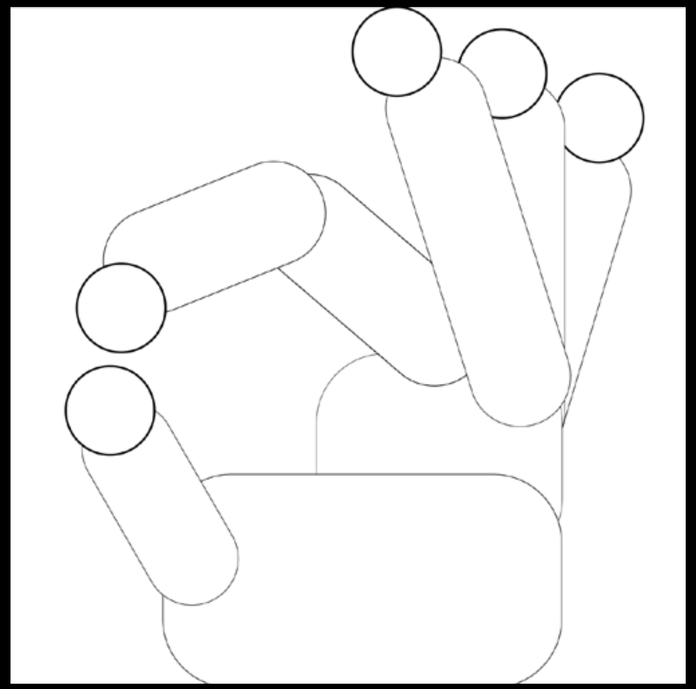
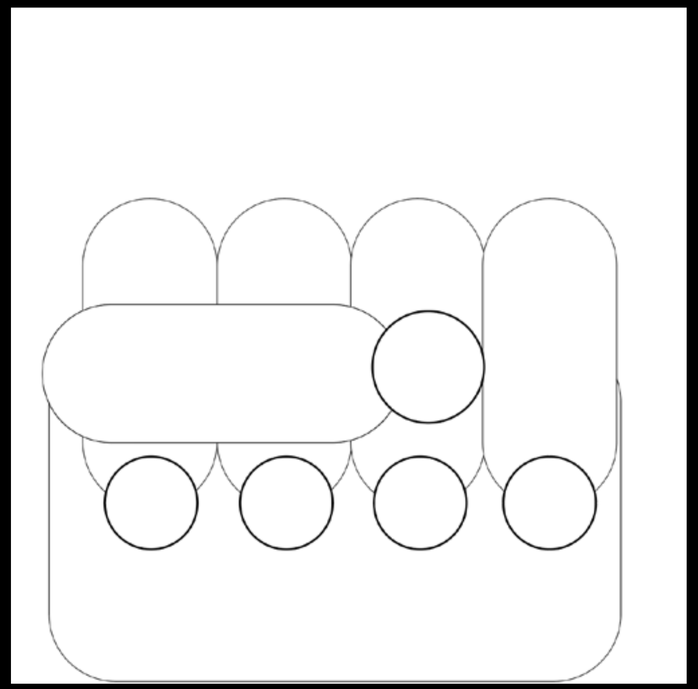
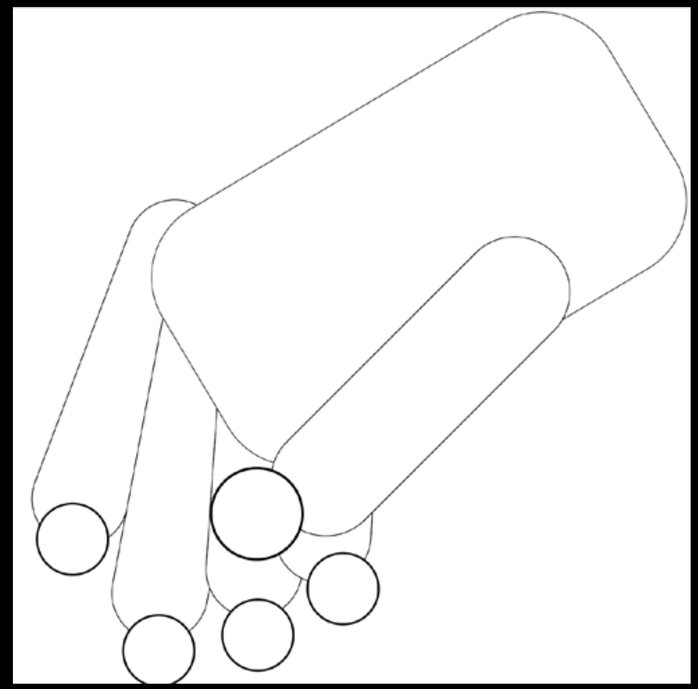
Line-based simplification

Disassemble the hand structure and mark the contact points of the fingers at the same time







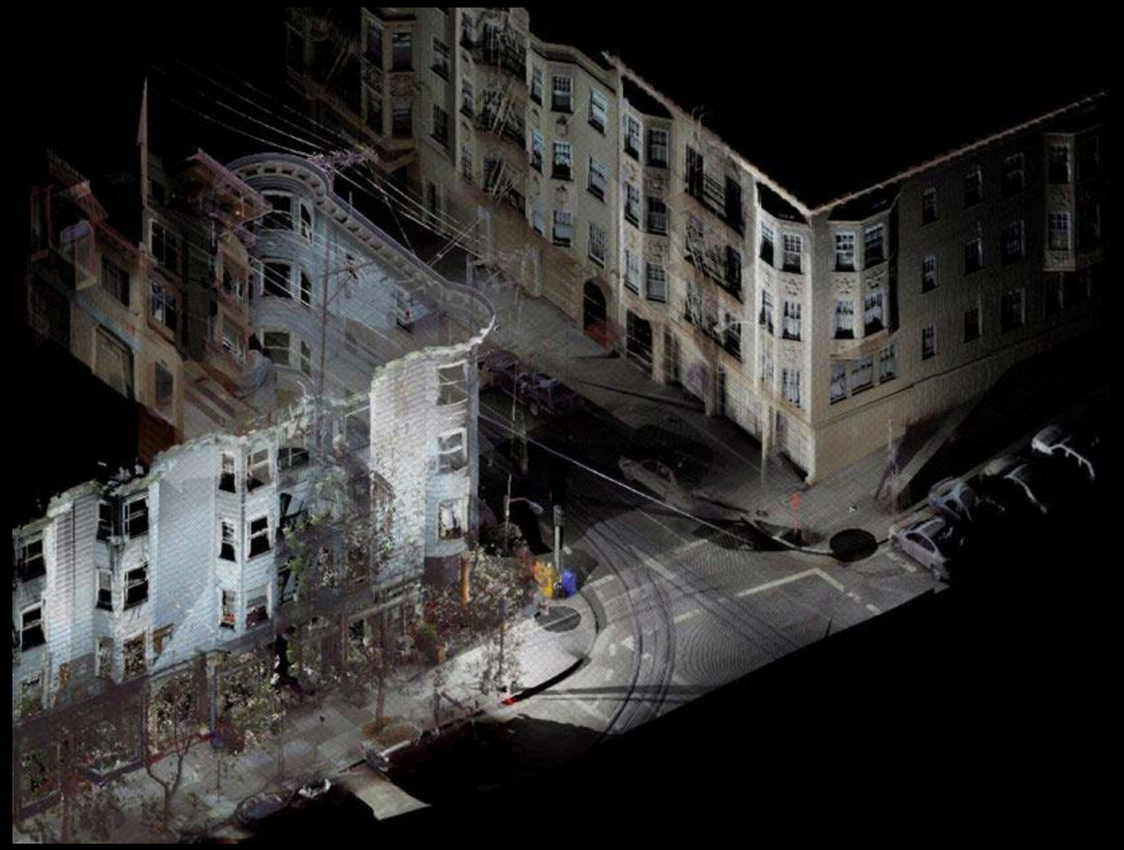







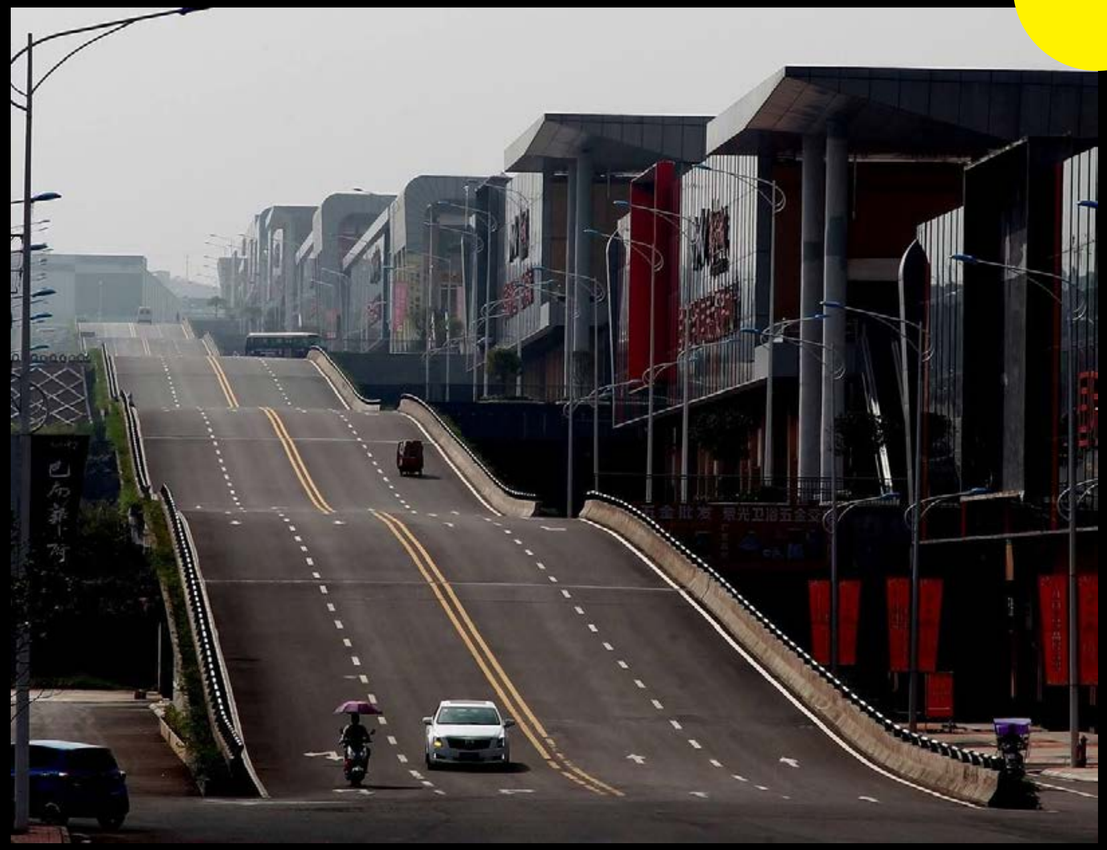
WHY PHOTOGRAPHY + PHOTOSHOP

3D scanning

Photography + Photoshop

I chose the second, because photography captures realistic and detailed contexts that allow stronger contrast with flat gestures. Photoshop provides the flexibility to replace, overlay, or conceal objects, making it easier to experiment with substitution.





Four Options

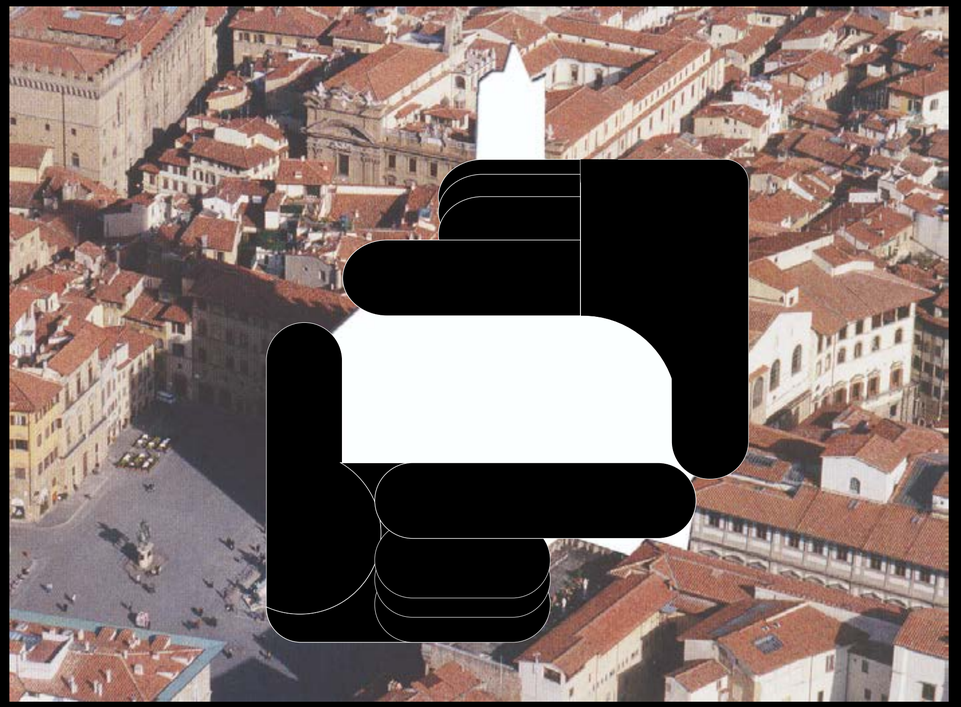
I defined four options to hide and replace objects with gestures:

1: Blur

2: Pixelation

3: White-out shape

4: Direct overlay



NEXT..

While some gestures carry strong personal or emotional meanings, they often become too private to be understood once placed in public scenes. To move forward, I need to explore how to select gestures that are more universally recognizable or culturally specific, so that audiences can effectively read the message within a given context.

Criteria for gestures

- Is it universal? Can it be understood intuitively across different groups of people?

- Does it fit the scene logic? For instance, when an “open hand” is placed at the entrance, the audience will naturally think of “welcome”.

- Can it convey emotions/actions/functions? (Alternative items, can gestures fulfill their symbolic functions?

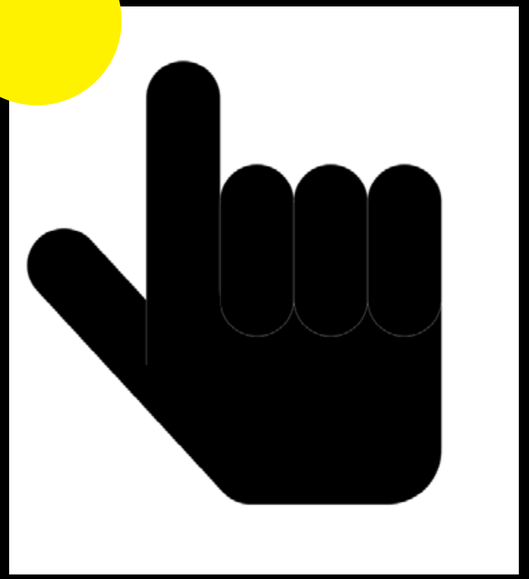
POSITIONS THROUGH TRIANGULATING

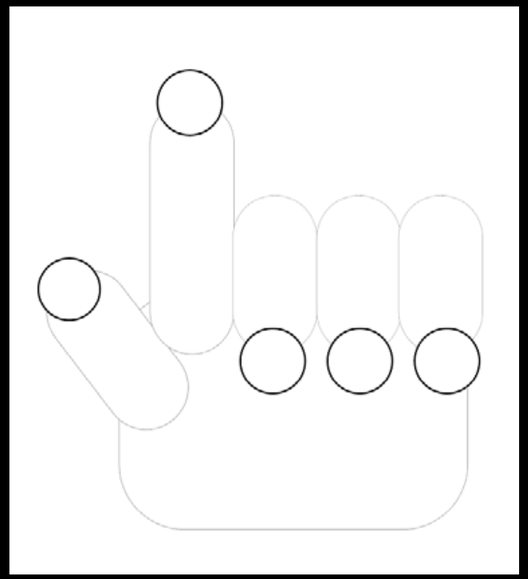
§ PART I - STUDIO

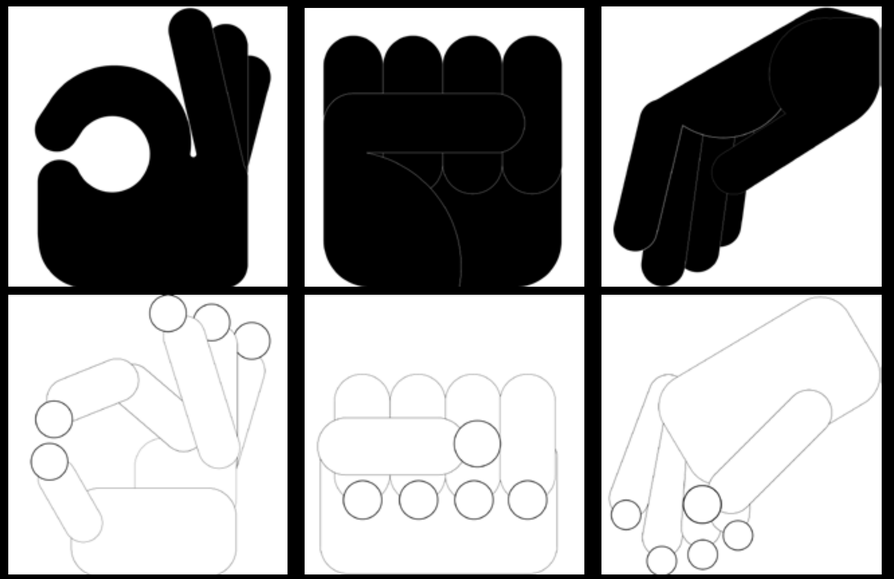
This project reveals the instability of universality in visual communication — gestures, though seemingly universal, are deeply shaped by culture, history, and collective interpretation.

RECAP

flat simplified forms to collide with realistic scenes, creating tension. Just as gestures are not usually used for information transmission, but in this project, they confront conventional systems of meaning.







Use photos of real scenes, eliminate the presence of some important buildings or objects, and replace them with gestures to demonstrate the effect of gestures in conveying information.

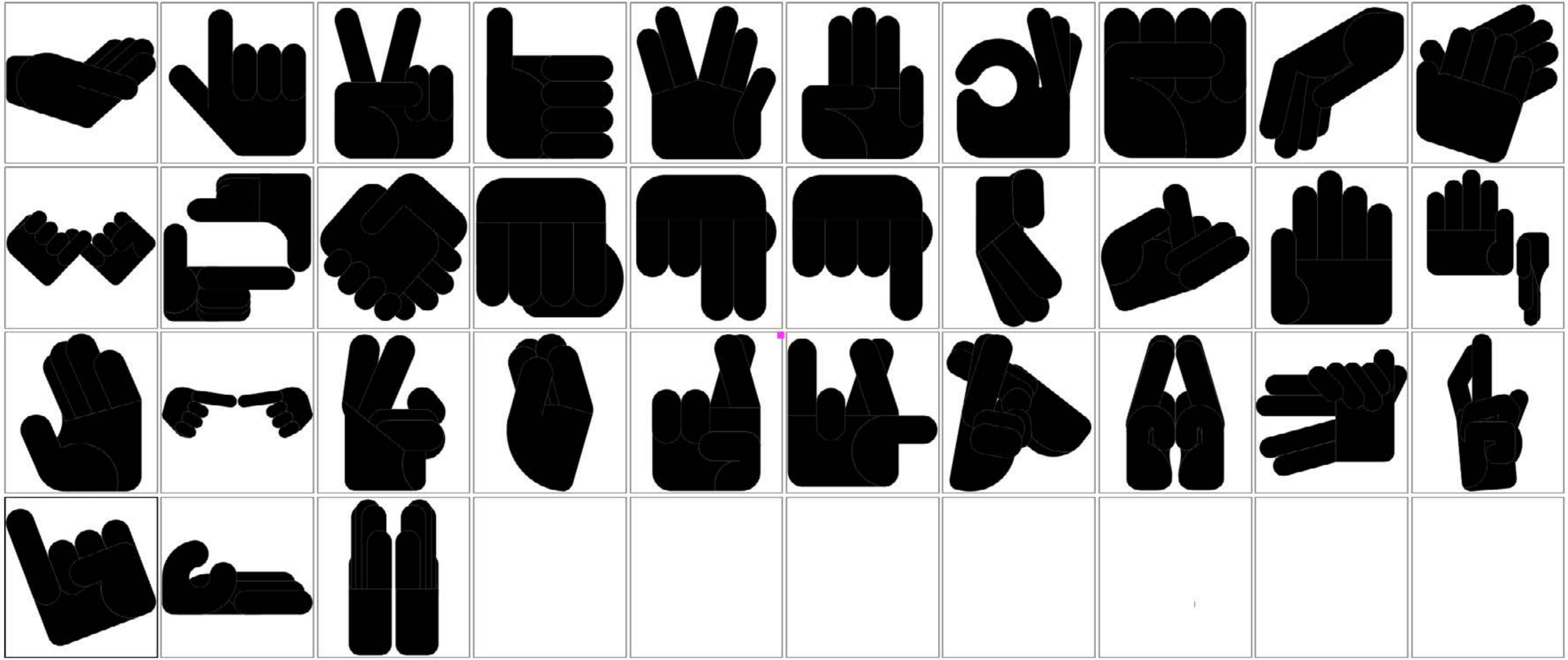
NEW QUESTION?

I realized that the “gesture-as-object” experiment had strong potential but lacked a clear context for interpretation.

However, rather than seeking a universal language, I am interested in how these signs fail — how they are misread or reinterpreted across different cultural contexts. Therefore, my inquiry has shifted toward exploring how gestures, when removed from their original bodily and cultural contexts, reveal the instability of so-called “universal” visual communication.

How can gestures, as a non-verbal communication system, reveal the instability and cultural specificity of “universal” visual language?

I selected hand gestures from different contexts — including Italy, Japan, China, and animated films — to create a diverse visual vocabulary.

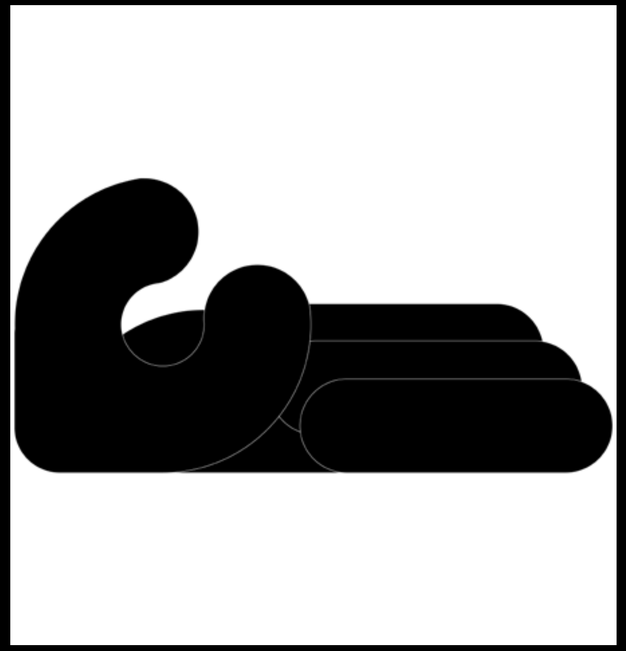


UNDERSTANDING FOR EACH GESTURE IN DIFF BG

Japan

Money

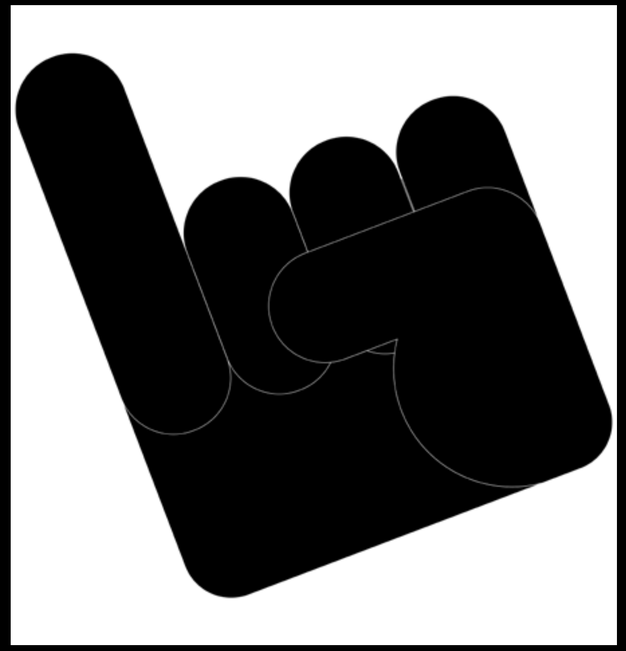
A: The gesture of Guanyin



Japan

Girlfriend / Female

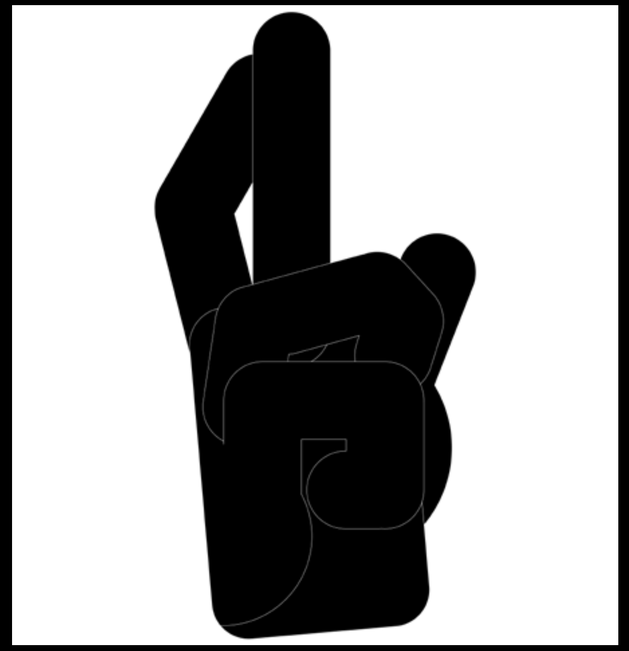
A: Contempt, rude gestures



Animation

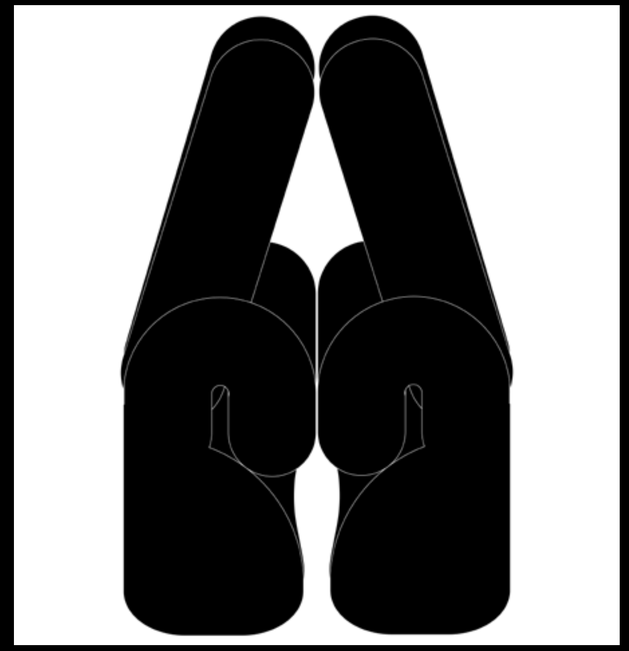
Magic spell

A: A pardon at the time of swearing



Animation

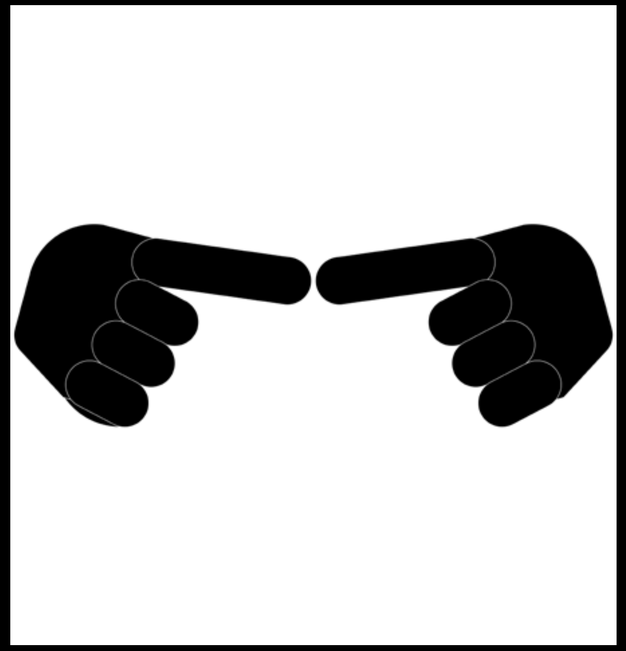
Magic spell



Italy

Opposite / Compare

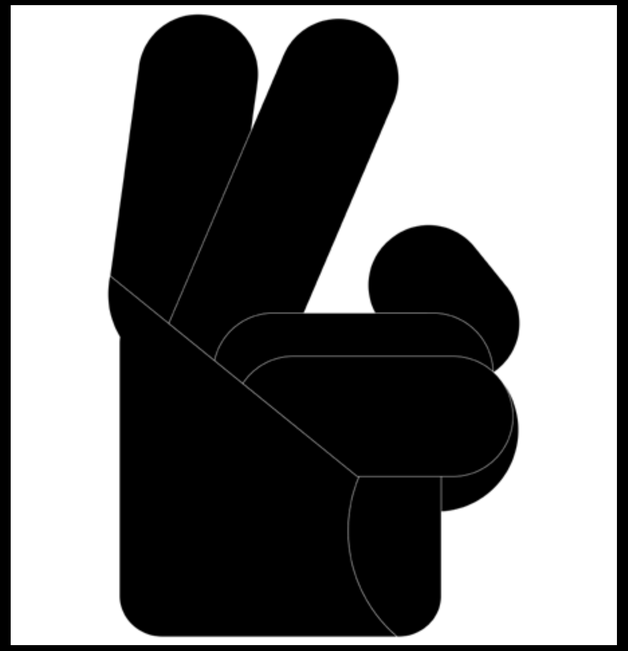
A: Shame



Italy

Could you give me a cigarette?

A: Smoke

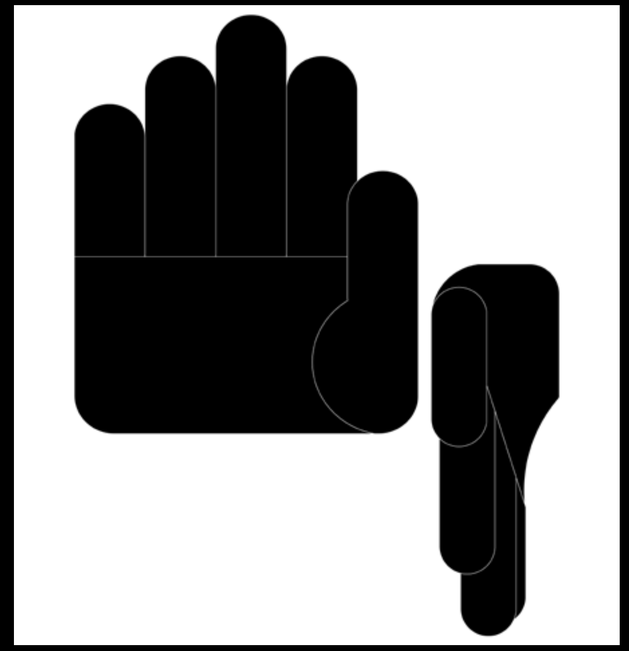


China

Fortune-telling

China

Left turn signal



SCENE PROCESSING

To eliminate emotional and contextual bias, I used black-and-white blurred background images of real and imagined environments.
Inviting participants from different cultural backgrounds to insert gestures into these empty scenes.

Restaurant sofa seats
School toilet
An empty classroom
British bus stops
New York subway station
Subway carriage
Public shower room
School corridor

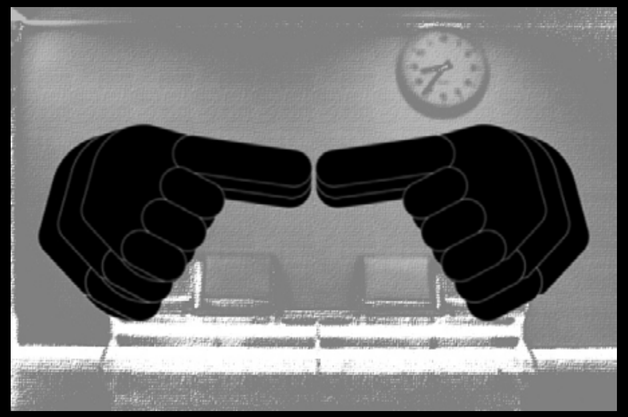
Seats in the corridor
Anime Road
Supermarket
Public toilet
Supermarket cash register
Anime Street
Subway station staircase
Corner of the staircase
Anime roadside station

PROGRESS

Each participant used gestures as signals in very different ways — what one person saw as a friendly greeting, another interpreted as a warning or even aggression.

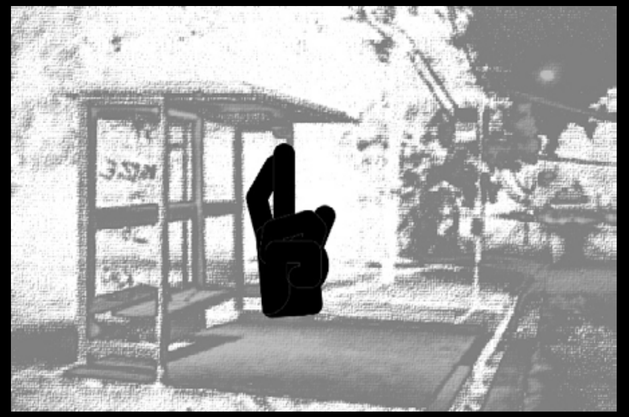
This revealed how gestures, often assumed to be universal, are in fact deeply shaped by personal experience, culture, and context. A single hand movement can shift meaning entirely depending on who performs it, and who is watching.

A heated argument breaks out among the crowd



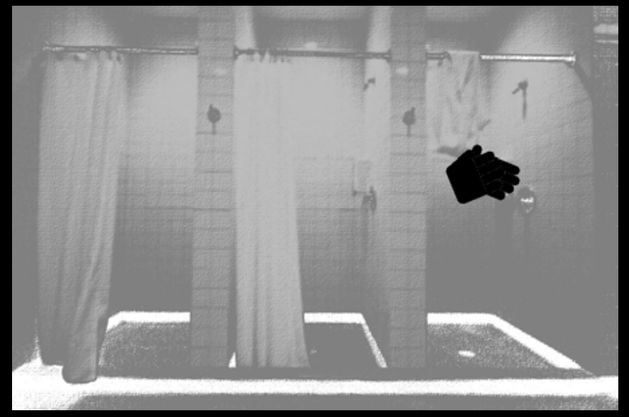
No photography allowed here.

The battle is about to begin — gestures unfold like a spell.

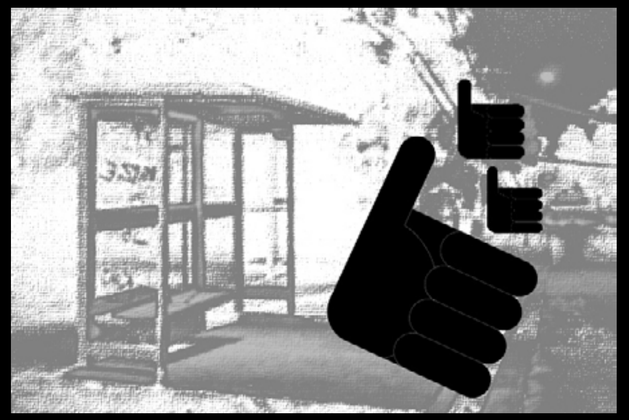


Two people hold each other in a gentle embrace.

Squeezing a small drop of shower gel into the palm.



Come on, bus — hurry up!



001

Two people were secretly smoking in the corridor

There are two paths to take

002

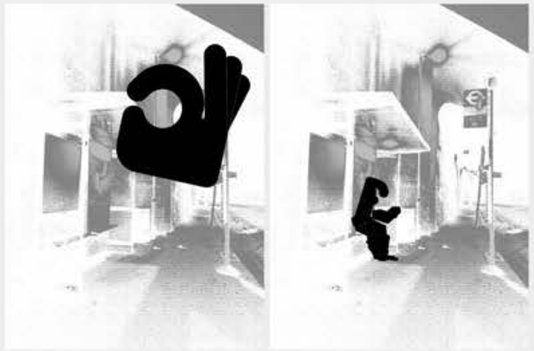
The battle is imminent. Unleash your magic moves

Come on, bus!

003

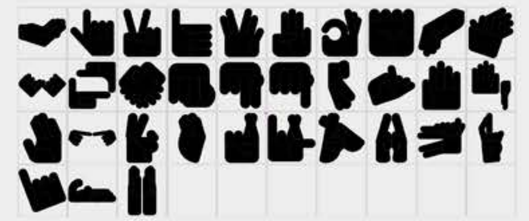
I want to extend the awning a little

A person is sitting at the bus stop playing with his mobile phone



004

The act of simplification is not merely aesthetic, but conceptual — it questions how much of a gesture's meaning depends on its physical form versus its cultural interpretation. When gestures are stripped down to their most essential shapes, they begin to operate as a universal visual code that simultaneously exposes its own fragility. Through this process, I examine whether gestures can communicate beyond language, or whether they inevitably carry cultural bias even in their most abstracted form.



How can gestures, as a non-verbal communication system, reveal the instability and cultural specificity of “universal” visual language?

001: Restaurant sofa seats
002: School toilet
003: An empty classroom
004: British bus stops
005: New York subway station
006: Subway carriage
007: Public shower room
008: School corridor
009: Seats in the corridor
010: Anime Road
011: Supermarket
012: Public toilet
013: Supermarket cash register
014: Anime Street
015: Subway station staircase
016: Corner of the staircase
017: Anime roadside station

005

Here is your change. Please keep it well

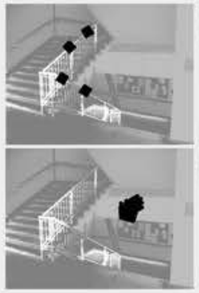
Which one should I buy? I want them all!

006

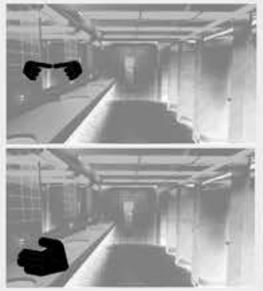
Squeeze a little body wash

Photography is prohibited here.

007

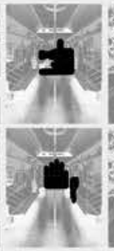


008

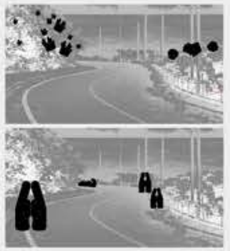


009

010



011



This comparative experiment will explore how each culture visually encodes gesture and how meanings shift during cross-cultural communication.
This project reveals the instability of universality in visual communication — gestures, though seemingly universal, are deeply shaped by culture, history, and collective interpretation.

012

The mobile phone fell into the track and was crushed

A person is struggling to carry a suitcase

013

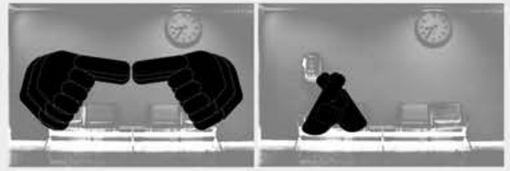
Pointing at the blackboard, the teacher is lecturing seriously

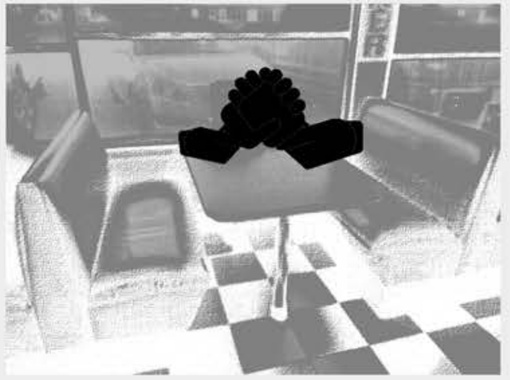
The students raised their hands actively to speak

014

A lot of people began to quarrel fiercely

The two people hugged each other fiercely





FINDING

- Each participant interpreted gestures differently — cultural background shaped their visual reading.

- The same gesture produced different emotional or narrative meanings in each scene.

- The experiment revealed that gestures are not universal symbols, but context-dependent languages.

- Misinterpretation and reinterpretation became part of the visual dialogue.

NEXT..

I plan to develop a “Hyper-specific Gestural Signage System” — a series of signs that only make sense within certain cultural or social contexts.

For example, designing three sets of hand gesture traffic signs for the UK, China, and Japan.

This comparative experiment will explore how each culture visually encodes gesture and how meanings shift during cross-cultural communication.