The multi-meaning and instability of visual language in different language and cultural contexts through gesture experiments, and questioned the universality of gestures

(Positions through iterating)

(Positions through contextualising)

(Positions through essaying)

(Positions through dialogue)

(Positions through triangulating)

Xinyu (Anari) Wang

01

In the research of the second unit, I mainly explored the multi-meaning and instability of visual language in different language and cultural contexts through gesture experiments, and questioned the universality of gestures. Does the "universality" of visual language truly exist within fixed symbols or in the continuous efforts of human beings to understand each other? I try to use a simplified and reinterpretation of way to simplify the gestures to turn it into standardized streamline visual operator (simplification/cataloging), then put it in different cultural background to attempt to explore the interference of different context for visual symbols, And the instability in the interpretation of gesture symbols (re-contexturalizing).

My preliminary conceptual probe started with the second unit, "Positions through Iterating." Here, an iteration simplified the 120 gestures and tool-holding postures, deconstructing and reconfiguring the gesture while held with an object to examine the possibility of gestures as an independent communicative medium on a plane removed from physical objects. This series of experiments revealed that gestures often depend on contextual elements from the surrounding scene and the object being held for effective understanding. Thus, isolated gestures can lead to discrepancies in public conception. Moving then into unit "Positions through contextualising," which immediately followed this, the core thread deduction was

"objects." This section investigates the specific object in the plane of this unit—a suitcase—as a mediating event for probing that which lies beyond experience in its relation to perception.

Based on the divergent thinking and experiments of the second unit as a whole, my goal is to distill my core issue into more critical and detailed ones. So I focused my attention on the gestures. Gestures are a commonly used form of communication, but what challenges have emerged in the understanding of cross-cultural audiences? During this semester's exploration, especially in Δ1, I mainly conducted visual experiments. By organizing and simplifying various gestures into visual symbols, I place them in different contexts to reveal how their meanings become fluid according to the audience's interpretation. For instance, depending on the audience's habits and background, the gesture of giving a thumbs-up can have multiple interpretations: 1) to express praise, 2) to call a taxi by the roadside... It shows inherent instability. Based on this discovery, I further attempted to have individuals from different backgrounds use the same gestures to convey information within the visual framework. I provided the audience with specific situational scenes and a set of gesture symbols, encouraging them to combine these elements to create new narratives. I also attempted to use newspapers as a non-linear medium to record this process. This fragmented reading logic reflects my project's exploration of "gestures as visual language", because the interpretation of gestures is essentially fluid and non-unidirectional. Through this visual experiment, I also found that these visual symbols lack the universality of road signs or data analysis icons. The meaning of gestures is unstable, always lingering in the midst of cultural conflicts and the fluidity of interpretation. In Δ2, I refer to Otto Neurath's *Isotype* system. His project also explores the establishment of a universal visual language across cultures and languages. However, his core objective is to make visual symbols neutral, without specific emotional connotations, and to convey information to the audience impartially. Therefore, his symbol has no potential ambiguity in the eyes of the public. Inspired by this, I realized that despite extreme simplification, my project still needs to be explained through a cultural lens. The difference in this way of processing visual symbols stems from our different contextual backgrounds: in his time, the rapid transmission of information required precise, fair and prompt media. Today, with the explosive growth of information, social media has become the main means of pure information exchange. It is precisely because of this environmental difference that universality is no longer the standard I pursue in my experimental goals. On the contrary, I am more focused on revealing the continuous interpretation of these emotionally charged gesture symbols.

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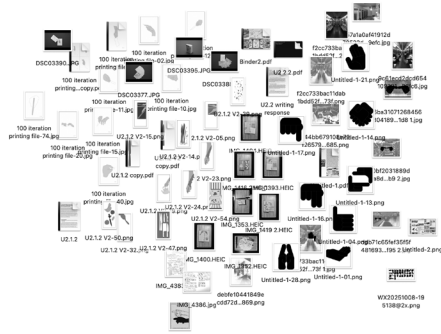
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For the entire project research, the connection with the field of visual communication lies in questioning whether the neutral and universal characteristics of visual symbols need to be met and whether similar information transmission and communication effects can be achieved in "visual symbols with flowing meanings". Next, I will elaborate on how my project has developed and how my thinking has changed.

In the first stage - Positions through iterating, I did 120 iterations of a simplified hand holding a knife, trying to interpret the position, the force of the hand, the contact area between the hand and the knife in different ways ...... This led to the realization that, regardless of the type of tool and the posture, the hand's movements are centered on its function, and that the understanding of the posture is still based on the tool's Definition. So in week two, I started thinking about how if a knife loses its function (e.g., gets dull, breaks, thins out) or doesn't stay in the same position (e.g., bread, fries ......) If stabbing a person with a knife in one hand gives a sense of danger, wouldn't holding a baguette in the hand be considered a joke rather than a danger? Based on this step of iterative exploration, I realized that the feeling the pose gives to the viewer, and the viewer's understanding of the pose can be affected by the object or tool. Eventually, I began to think further, if eventually these tools and objects disappeared in the hands and all that was left were strange hand poses, would these movements elicit a whole new interpretation from the viewer? In the beginning, the interpretation of the overall pose came from the knife, later the interpretation came from the objects in the hands, and finally when only the hands were left, the hands became an important symbol for interpretation. In the end, it was found that different poses conveyed different messages in certain scenes, but when there was no scene, it was difficult to interpret.
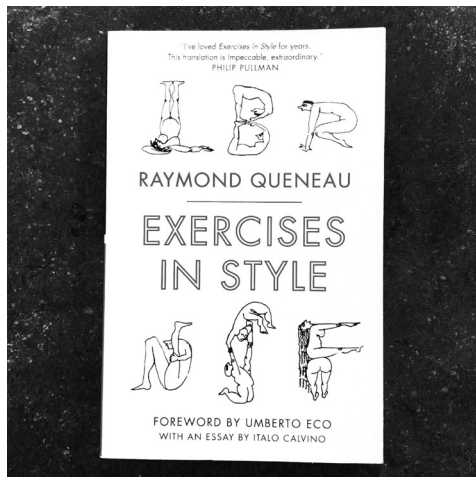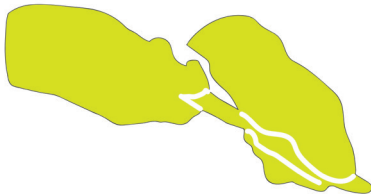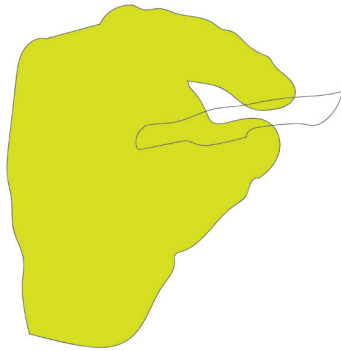
During the process of making the project, I referred to Queneau, R.'s *Exercises in Style*, and McLuhan, M. and Fiore, Q.'s *the Medium is the Massage*. It helped place my project in a broader discourse or conceptual domain. In Queneau, R.'s *Exercises in Style*, the author employs multiple writing styles to portray the same passage, reshaping the content and meaning of the text in a way that resonates with my simplified iteration. What I am exploring is a simplified iteration of different hand-held knife poses, in which I use different narrative styles as does Queneau, R. In my work I use different writing styles to depict the same passage and its meaning. In my work I simplify the images with different visual focuses to achieve different content focuses for different images, so that the viewer of my iterations can discover the hidden interpretations of the pose and the back of the knife in the different simplified modes. The author mentions that "Anybody can-and automatically does-describe different things in different ways.", which coincides with the way I simplified the image, and based on each person's different understanding of the image, the iteration can be simplified in different ways, thus allowing for a better interpretation. Based on each person's different understanding of the picture, different ways of simplification can be iterated to analyze the underlying logic of hand pose and knife interaction more comprehensively. And McLuhan in his *The Medium is the Massage* mentions that the medium is the
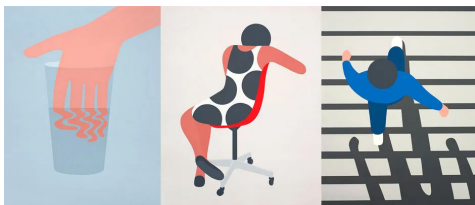
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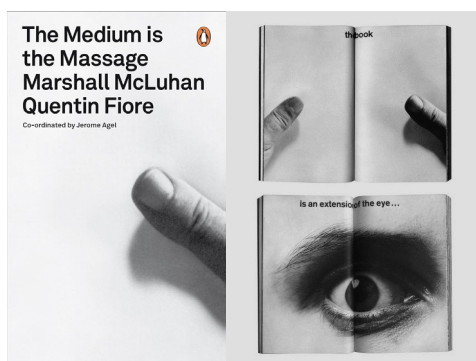
important part of every age, not the content which brings me to the "knife" object in my iteration of the project. If I think of the knife as the medium itself, does the knife send a specific signal when looking at the pose of the person holding the knife. When we analyze the image, is it mainly because of our judgment of the knife? When simplifying and analyzing this act, it is difficult to be neutral because of the background of the viewer. If I am a doctor, I will think that the knife is a life-saving tool, and if I am a murderer, the knife is a dangerous tool for committing the crime. Based on this, "The Medium is the Massage" made me reflect on whether the message would change or even lose its meaning if the hand movements remained the same and the medium, the knife, disappeared or did not meet expectations.
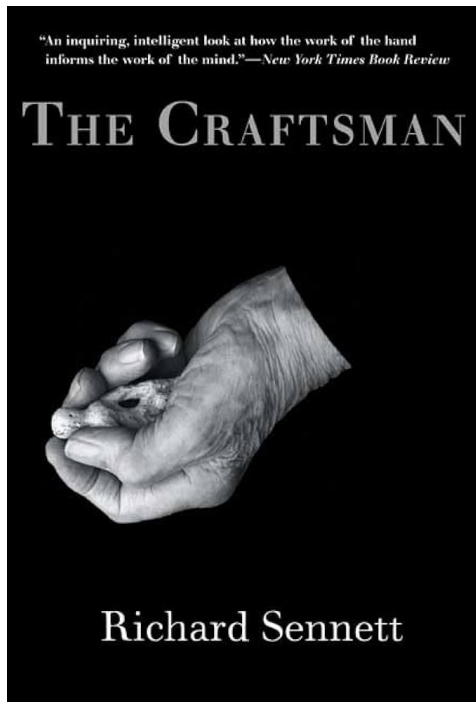
In addition, The reference to "*The Craftsman*" in Sennett, R, in relation to the hand-held knife iteration of the project, suggests that what we think of as the posture of the knife is an "invisible discipline" that has existed since the knife was made. All postures are specified, what type of knife to use and for what purpose have been designed one by one, and these designs are based on the tool-knife use, and the knife becomes a symbol. For discipline comes from use, and use comes from the tool itself. So when we ignore the meaning of the tool itself and ignore the symbol that has "meaning", is there a posture that breaks the discipline, and then is the posture out of control, and the talent is the dominant posture and not the tool. Similarly, if the use fails, does the discipline still exist, and does the signaling of the posture change completely. Using this as a starting point, I thought that I could explore the "escape from invisible discipline" posture after ignoring the use and ignoring the tool, and whether our power and mood would change at that time as well. Considering how to use the right medium to present my research, I found McFetridge, G's artwork. In the form of his artistic creation McFetridge, G's artwork uses a lot of simple lines and positive and negative Spaces so although the image looks simple, there is also a lot of information that can be gleaned from it, which inspires me to simplify it in many ways. You can try to show more dimensions in a single image, for example, the pose seems to be very dangerous, but the shadow of the pose may be an unexpected further interpretation of the pose. The overall simplicity and flat vector graphics depicting people and space is a way to consider the fluidity of movement in my projects, so that I can feel the dynamics of people and knives or objects in use when looking at a flat image.

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03

elegraphic

BUS CROWDED STOP YNGMAN LONGNECK
PLAITENCIRCLED HAT APOSTROPHISES
UNKNOWN PASSENGER UNAPPARENT
REASON STOP QUERY FINGERS FEET HURT
CONTACT HEEL ALLEGED PURPOSELY STOP
YNGMAN ABANDONS DISCUSSION PRO-
VACANT SEAT STOP 1400 HOURS PLACE
ROME YNGMAN LISTENS SARTORIAL
ADVICE FRIEND STOP MOVE BUTTON STOP
SIGNED ARCTURUS

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In the second stage, Positions through contextualizing, I mainly took my constantly changing journey in the past as the theme and used the suitcase as a connecting thread to discuss the difference between memory and perception. In the process of making this part of the project, I focused more on seeking references and trying to gain more inspiration from them.

1: *ON STYLE* - Sontag, Susan

In this article, Sontag expresses the idea that content and style go hand in hand, which got me thinking about when I want to interpret a theme and make a visual representation of it. When I work on layout and typography, or illustration, it's in the service of the theme and the content on the one hand, and on the other hand, it's in the service of aesthetics, which in this case is also represented by style. Therefore, does this decorative style, which makes the whole object beautiful but not meaningful, have an impact on the viewer's perception of the object, and is this decorative style inseparable from the content, as Sontag suggests? This has inspired me to make visual experiments where I can better integrate style into the content, so that the viewer may be able to perceive the general idea of the project from my style alone.

2: *Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together* - Bruno Latour

In the article, the author mentions the use of various visualizations in the past and expresses how such visualizations can easily and efficiently combine all the pieces of information in the world from ancient times to the present day into a communicative "map of information", which makes it easier for people to form an understanding of a specific food and to communicate about it in a positive way. This gives me a methodological inspiration for my new theme, whether I can also integrate all the information into one map, as the author says, "drawing things together", connecting all the details and trying to integrate them into one image with different recording methods, in order to perceive the whole picture. I would also like to see how the whole picture can be distilled into a new and inspiring perspective, as the author says, "drawing things together".

3: *Exercises in Style* - Queneau, R

The author of this essay mainly uses different language rhetorical devices to interpret the same content of the essay. Even though the language styles are different, the message is the same. However, this inspired me to look at these different styles of application from a reader's point of view and see how the different styles of application can create different understandings and feelings about the same story, because some of the language is exciting and some of the language is humorous, which can make me see the story in a different way. This makes me wonder if the different artistic interpretations I choose to use in interpreting my images will also distort the reader's understanding of the images. The creation of such distortions would be an interesting direction to explore.

4: *Max, Maria, Andi & Co.* - Stefan Marx

This drawing project by Stefan Marx is a collaborative illustration book with a museum, which depicts many historical scenes and tells the whole history with simple line drawings. It's interesting that the author doesn't use symbols of power in the images, so that when I read the content as a reader I tend to get a sense of the

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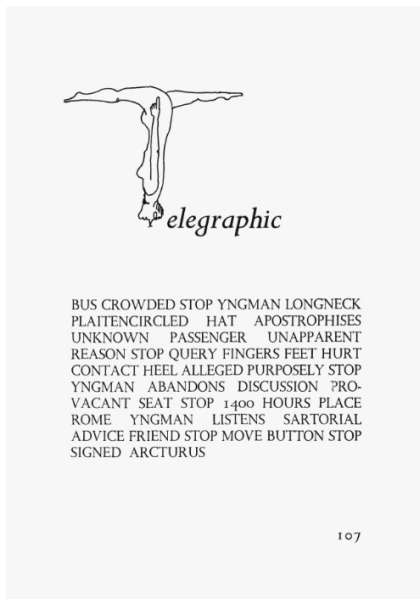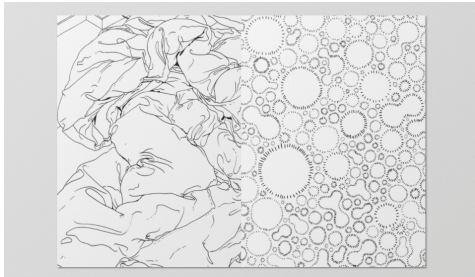
whole history through the images, without a strong sense of class. The whole thing is to turn historical stories into simple depictions that could happen in our daily lives, so that people can understand the content of the images without knowing the history. It inspired me to also make the images as simple as possible when making my project, mainly because I want the reader to be able to empathize with the experience.

5: *Sloppy Sleep* - Ingo Giezendanner

This work was created by Ingo Giezendanner on the spot for several hours, depicting her perception of the city. During the drawing process, due to the long time, she would also fall into meditation, and thus the process of drawing also led to differences in her perception of the city. For my project, if I want to start by interpreting my personal perceptual experiences to create the project, can I also make readers have different responses by depicting different perspectives and styles of the experiences? Is it sometimes possible to resonate with me, and sometimes to have a different perception of the interpretation of my experiences?

6: *The Sensible World and the World of Expression* - Maurice Merleau-Ponty

In this literature, the author discusses the relationship between expression and perception. Perception is an interactive process with the world. During the process of obtaining information, people also participate in the world. Expression within it is a further manifestation and transmission of perception, and thus perception can be shared with more people through expression. In terms of the project, if I want to express my perception of my past experiences to the public, then this action is to create a version of my perception for the audience and share it with them. Perhaps, when I look back on my past experiences, I can consider what forms my perception of the scenes that are characteristic memories, and how these five senses can further be expressed to other audiences through my retelling, to explore whether their perception of me can resonate?

7: *Without Title [Subway Drawing] Larry Weiner* - William Anastasi

William Anastasi visualized his swaying on the subway and this journey in this subway painting project. This is a brand-new way of expression for me. I once thought that detailed content and realistic content were needed as the form of communication, and this random line and passive movement record can also have a strong impact. As an expression of emotion or rhythm, it might be more explicit in a simple way. This can also serve as a way for me to present my past perceptions in the future. Perception itself is a multi-dimensional content that emerges from the five senses, so it should be abstract rather than deliberately distorted by the concrete form of real memories to reflect perception. If that were the case, it would confuse memory and perception.

8: *The Address Book* - Sophie Calle

This article by Sophie Calle is mainly about her picking up a contact list and getting to know the owner by contacting the people in the list. The article records the information she learned from others. This way of getting to know a complete stranger through others' mouths is a new perspective for me. If I expect others to understand my past experiences and believe, would it be a more reliable way not

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to convey information from my first-person perspective? If that's the case, then would there be countless versions of my "this experience", and would others perceive my life differently? This makes me wonder if, in connection with knives and gestures, we can re-establish a tool usage rule, and if we want to know this rule, it must be obtained from others. Then, will the concept of functionality based on postures also change?

    9: *The Line* - Osvaldo Cavandoli

    This is a very simple line stop-motion animation. The picture tells the story of a person's journey. Combined with my project, stop-motion animation can better integrate the scenes in realistic memories with my perception, and perception thus becomes the existence of some decorative lines. Similarly, this form is also very suitable for the growth journey of the past that I want to explore. For this stop-motion animation mode, it also makes it clearer for me to present my story. Can this also enable the audience to better perceive the signals I convey? Using the simplest pictures to convey the most intense emotional color can better fill the pictures with the emotions perceived by me.
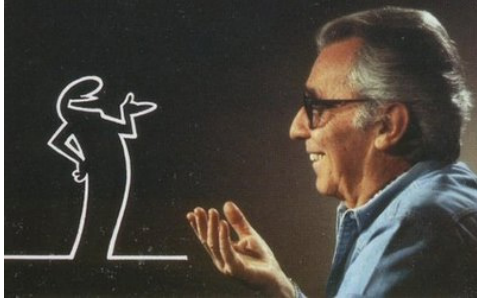
Among these references, I have selected a textual reference book that have had a significant impact on the development of my project They are Susan Sontag's article "*On Style*". Susan Sontag's article "*On Style*" discusses the author's view that style and form are elements related to the message of the content and not just decorations floating on the surface. The author uses many examples to support this view, such as Franz Kafka, whose work is itself a demonstration of this view in modern literature-content and form are interdependent and inseparable. Style plays a role in enriching the content of his works, expressing emotions and narratives. I chose this article as a reference for my project because in my project I tried to use illustration (both realistic and abstract) to show my memories of my upbringing and to try to perceive the situation from the point of view of who I am in the present. Illustration is an important form of expression in my projects and a way to show my personal style, while at the same time it becomes the content. In this project, the content is for me an image, a graphic, a composition, not just words. This style is therefore very important in the application of my work, and the article has given me a new perspective on how to use illustration as a way of integrating style and content, and the writing style of Susan Sontag shows the central thesis of the article, where all the arguments and the logic of the article are rational, and the content conveys the message and helps us to build the logical framework step by step. The content conveys information to us while helping us to build a logical framework step by step to help us better understand the concept of parallelism between style and content. Therefore, the author's style of writing already conveys the message to us, which also inspired me how to convey what I want to show - the gap between memory and perception - through the overall layout and style without focusing on the specific content of the illustration, and at the same time, her article challenges the modern graphic communication design, which needs to be accurate in conveying the message in our daily study, but the style of form is more important when it fits the theme. In everyday learning we need to convey

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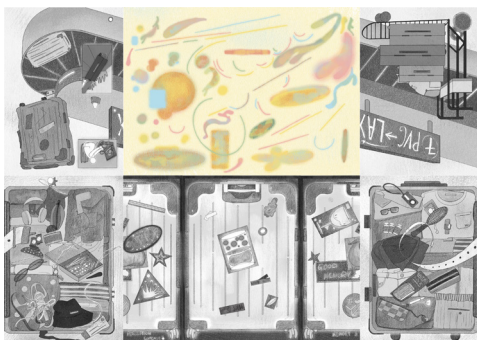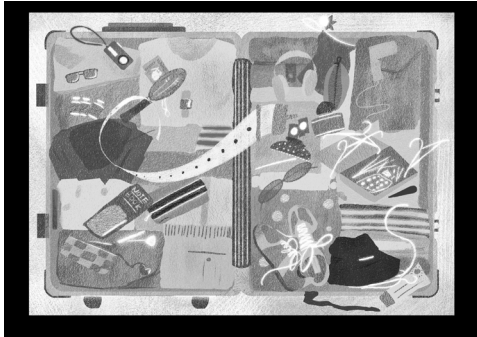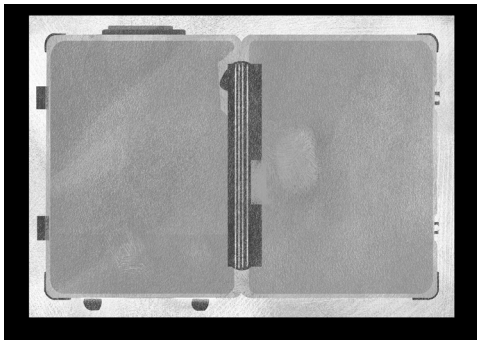
information accurately, but style and form are more aesthetically pleasing when they fit with the subject matter. In the text, the author suggests that style is not a meaningless adornment, making it clear to me that I need to consider the rationality of style when creating visual presentations, not just the aesthetic. My abstract graphic or realistic memory images are used as a way to express "memory" and "perception", and I have spent more energy thinking and trying to harmonize these two very different forms of illustration, while at the same time, better expressing My past and present mental state. Therefore, I thought that I could try to use unstable lines to express my perception. Memory may have a relatively small gap with the past, while the part of perception may change in understanding due to the passage of time, and unstable lines and structures are a way of visual presentation to reveal the emotions of the past. On the level of memory, I think I can use a more stable and realistic way to show the vague memories of the past, and use simple lines to collide with the sense of perception. Because the perception of the past that I am presenting now is a mode of delayed understanding of the mental state at that time, there is a gap between it and the memory, and this gap is also unstable. The two intertwined ways as my visual style also show my struggling inner emotions, which is also an inner phenomenon, in line with the author's idea that style and content are inextricably intertwined.


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04

The third stage is "Positions through dialogue". In this part, mainly my friends and guest speakers discussed the content I produced in the previous two stages. Through this stage of dialogue, the development direction of my later research was also laid. 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.

The two 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
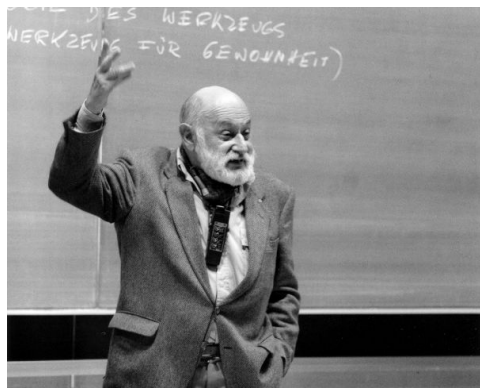
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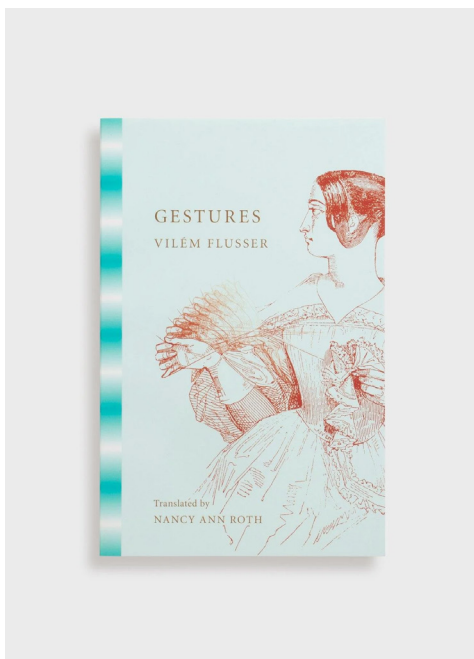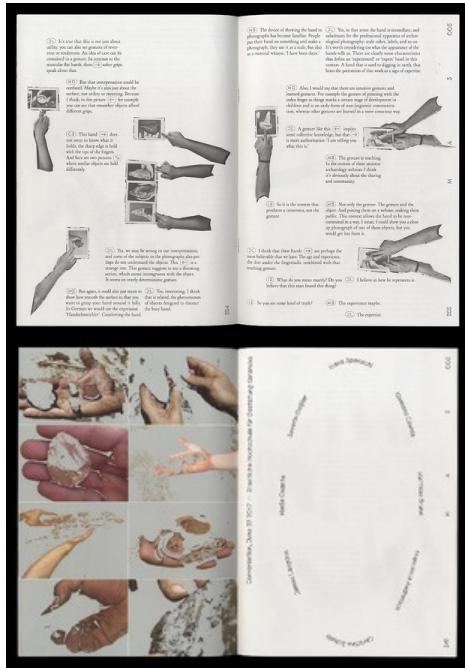
image evoke new sensations? Perhaps viewers might experience an alienation of familiar spaces: the mundane environment suddenly "gesturalized," the once-familiar space no longer stable, but forced to be reinterpreted. Following this exploration, I intend to initiate my next research by treating gestures 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.

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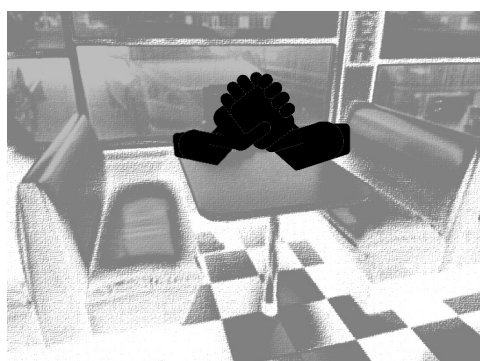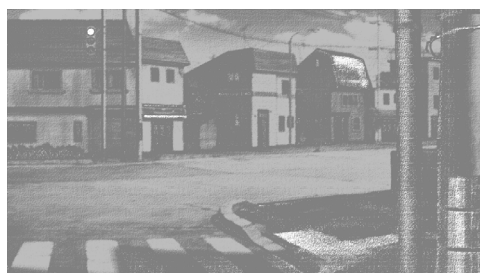
After this stage of exploration, I was led to a new and critical topic - do gestures necessarily need to be universal? The core of this semester's project is mainly to explore the multi-meaning and instability of visual language in different languages and cultural contexts through gesture experiments, and to question the universality of gestures. Gestures are often used as a form of communication and frequently appear in the daily lives of most people. Since gestures have become a form of visual communication, what challenges will there be in their cross-cultural interpretation? The research starting point of the project is based on the exploration of the previous project. Through a series of experiments on knives and gestures, it was found that gestures are a medium like language that can convey various types of information, and even express certain information themselves. For example, the thumb may represent positive emotions, and the skeuomorphic forms in hand shadow play also express objects. Therefore, taking this as the starting point, in this unit, I will spend more time exploring how the symbolic languages represented by different gestures will generate cultural differences in understanding in different contexts, thereby questioning universality. In terms of experimental methods, I attempted to use methods of translation to transform gestures into symbols with only general shapes, lacking the details of the hand. I hoped that in this way, viewers could reduce the possibility of being disturbed by the details and instead focus their attention on the overall posture of the hand structure. Further, through methods of cataloging, explore the different understandings and ideas of people from different cultural backgrounds regarding the gesture symbols placed under the agreed-upon screen. So far, I have tried to present my research results in the form of a "newspaper". I think newspapers are a non-linear reading medium because they are different from books, reports, and news. The content in newspapers is divided into sections, and the content of the sections before and after may not have a strong connection; therefore, readers can start or stop reading from any page or section, and it has a jumping reading logic. This reading logic has a mapping relationship with the research in my project on "using gestures as visual language". The interpretation of gestures is not fixed and one-way. Based on the reading population,
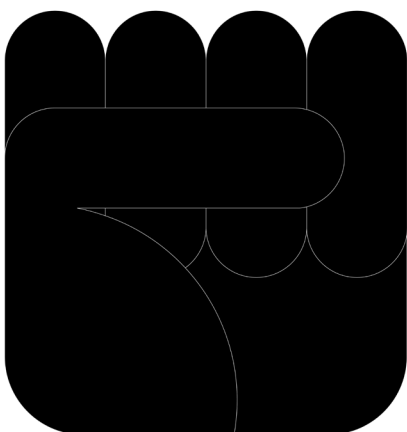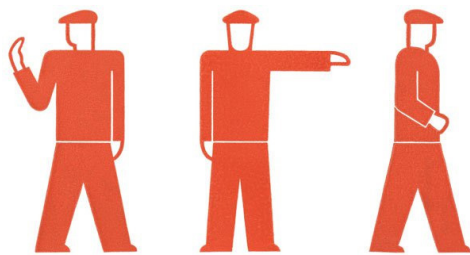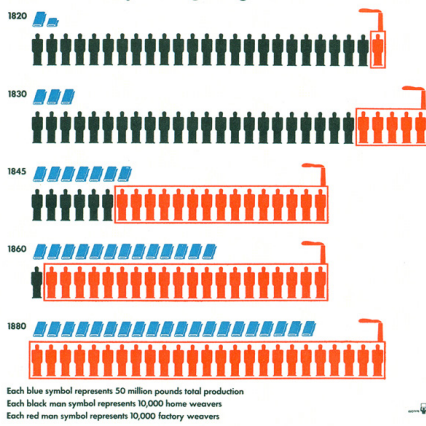
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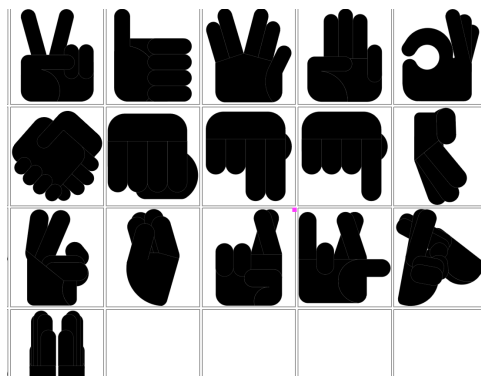
it can also be constantly reorganized and understood. The reason for choosing this approach is also that this form symbolizes the diversity and instability of cross-cultural communication, thereby inviting viewers to rethink the true meaning of "universal visual language". Here, "universal visual language" mainly refers to a kind of visual language that can be understood by people from different cultural backgrounds. Just like nodding and shaking one's head, no matter what background or educational level one comes from, everyone will understand that nodding represents affirmation and shaking one's head represents negation.
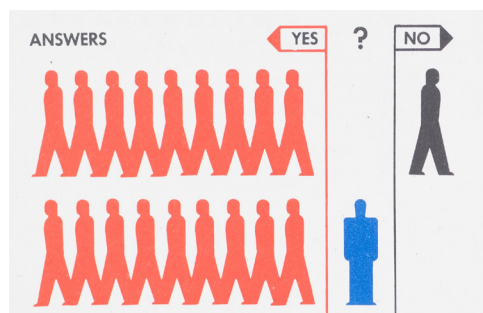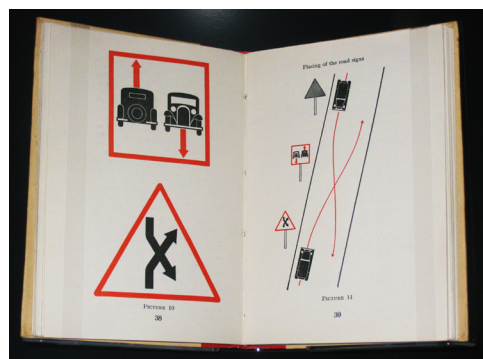
In the process of developing the project for this semester, I referred to Otto Neurath's *Isotype* system. Otto Neurath was a sociologist and philosopher of high and low status. The era he lived in coincided with the time of two world bomb bursts in Europe, an era of social unrest and rapid changes in information dissemination. He was also one of the core members of the Vienna School at that time, which advocated logical empirical attention and emphasized scientific rationality. Therefore, in Otto's view, visual symbols are a tool that can better disseminate information and educate the public in a multilingual and complex social environment. This is why he later developed Isotype in collaboration with the German designer Gerd Arntz. The proposal of Isotype originated from Otto's experience working at the Social and Economic Museum in Vienna. At that time, he attempted to explain economic data and social conditions to the public in a simple and direct way. Therefore, the core concept of Isotype also reflects this experience, mainly conveying complex information through standardized visual symbols. Thus, it has overcome the obstacles of textual language and complex backgrounds, achieving the "universal visual language" I mentioned earlier. His idea of simplifying and eliminating all prejudices and misunderstandings had a fierce collision with my thoughts a hundred years later. Although both my research and Neurath's ISOTYPE attempt to transform information into graphic symbols, thereby exploring the possibility of cross-cultural and cross-background communication through visual language. However, our goal is the opposite. Neurath pursues the standardization and universality of visual language, and it is a goal to enable people from all cultures to understand this graphic information. However, I mainly want to explore the polysemy and instability of visual language in different cultural contexts and question the universality of gestures. The starting point is the same, but the over 100-year leap of eras has led us to part ways in the direction of our research.

Despite divergent research directions and aims, my work has much common ground with Otto's *Isotype* project, which has significantly inspired new perspectives and ideas about my project. In my project, I tried to reduce the complexity of gestures using color blocks and simple lines in the position of fingers to outline them. In that way, detailed observation of the particular was not required from the observer. For example, the Isotype project of Otto showed information with symbols that could be easily recognized and understood. Our projects share an interest in presenting messages with visual language through graphic symbols. That is, speaking of non-verbal communication, the two of us stand in common in that regard.
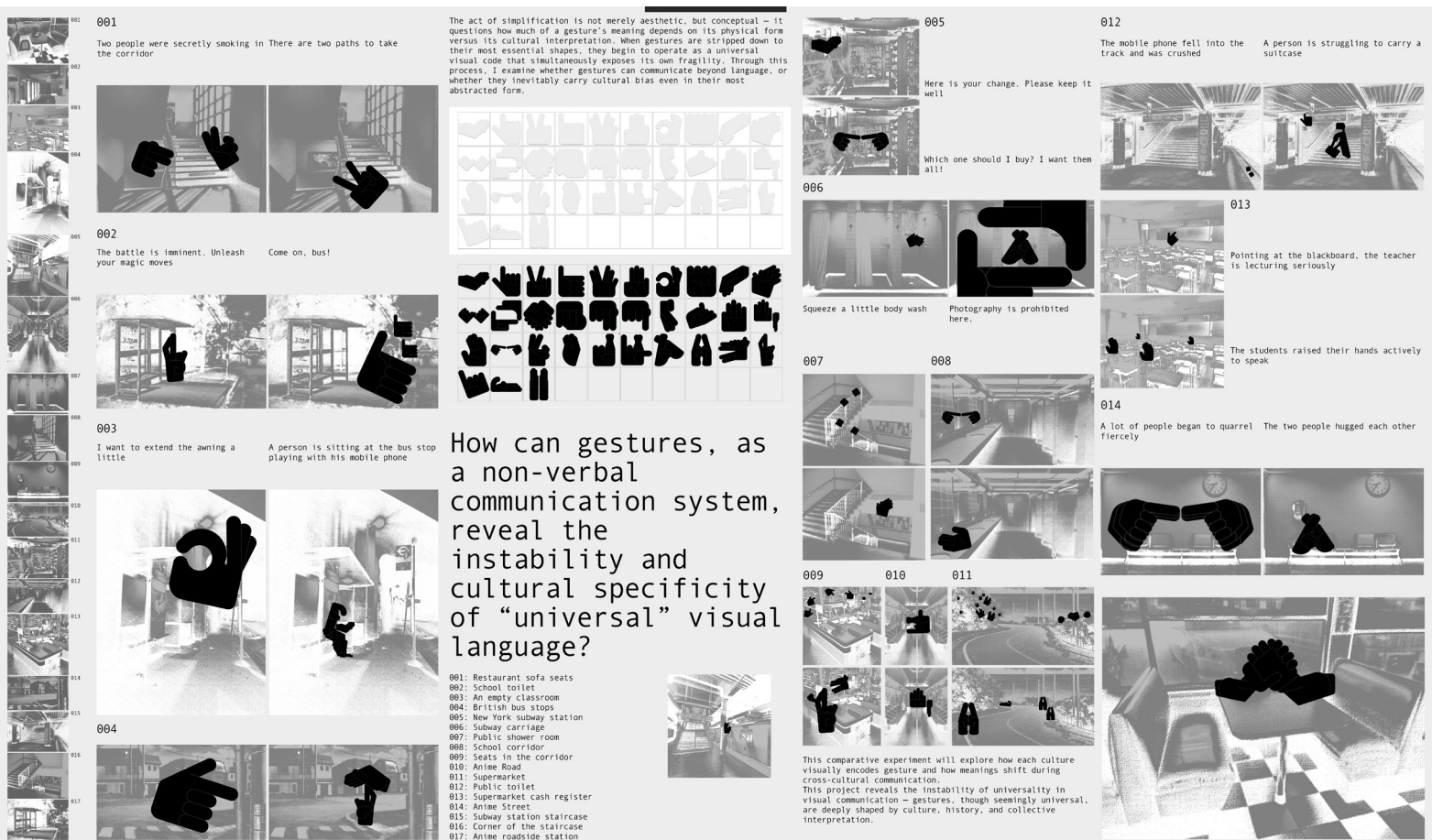
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Home and Factory Weaving in England

1820

1830

1845

1860

1880

Each blue symbol represents 50 million pounds total production
Each black man symbol represents 10,000 home weavers
Each red man symbol represents 10,000 factory weavers

One starts from similar points: Otto created this universal visual language during a socially troubled time. He created this as an idea of barrier-free communicating across many languages and contexts, adaptable to diverse settings. Over a century later, I firmly believe that visual languages based on gesture are less communicationally costly than various spoken languages. One really does not have to learn the same language to begin communicating. This indicates that Otto and I are not entirely differently placed in our interpretation of visual languages. On the other hand, Neurath's ISOTYPE was meant to be an international, one-world, visual languages project. Neurath wanted to achieve that through extreme simplification of graphics symbols to get clear and equal information transfer through all variable cultural backgrounds to the people, with no subjective interpretation and optical misunderstanding whatsoever. In this sense, symbols have been used in this manner to testify about the actual situation, devoid of all emotive content. For instance, most of the pictorial graphics he made up were all neutral. That is, they testify only to quantitative facts-not emotive charge attached to them. My use here is that gestures play the role of icons. Although much simplified, these cannot but have cultural meaning in different bodies. To take one example among many, hailed a cab by hand is different from country to country. What is meant by a "wave" in China carries an entirely different meaning in the United States or Japan. Beyond the cultural parameters, gesture meaning depends on the personal emotional associations evoked in the person whose gesture it is. Therefore, gestures are not empty vessels; they are imbued with life and emotionality; thus, their meaning will always involve personal feelings in the interpreter's perception.Based on the historical context of Otto Neurath, he rationally designed a series of graphic symbols and reorganized them in different contexts for cross-disciplinary communication. This makes me rethink my methodology. Unlike Neurath's neutral approach, I want to emphasize the openness and fluidity of my visual archive. I move away from the idea of seeking standardized gesture symbols and move from a presentation of "universality" to one of "diversity." I would like to view this experimental project as a dynamic, fluid information space for cultural exchange with an audience. To build this dynamic space, each gesture will be a fluid node of many cultural contexts rather than a single, definite sign. In such a context, the same gesture will have different meanings in different areas of China, the UK, and the US, and ideas will continue to flow. Judging from the audience's interaction, it is a very open space where viewers can continue to supplement their interpretations. This archive will be constantly updated, disassembled, and reassembled, becoming a node for cultural flow.

My research suggests that the meaning of visual symbols is not fixed: like gestures or patterns, they are endlessly reinterpreted by different groups into unrelated content and exist continually in the flow of collision and reinterpretation. This leads me to ask whether the "universality" of visual language lies in fixed signs or in mankind's endless striving for mutual understanding. Further experimentation with gestures will be done, allowing them to exist as a fluid, living language within a given framework of norms.

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Therefore, in my subsequent exploration, I aim to create a "fluid" public archive. This archive invites viewers to collectively participate in constructing and interpreting the meanings of gestures within it, embodying and documenting the exchange between different cultures. Moving forward, I will further refine this "fluid archive" to investigate whether the "universality" of visual language truly resides in fixed symbols or in humanity's ongoing efforts to understand one another.

001
Two people were secretly smoking in There are two paths to take the corridor

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

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