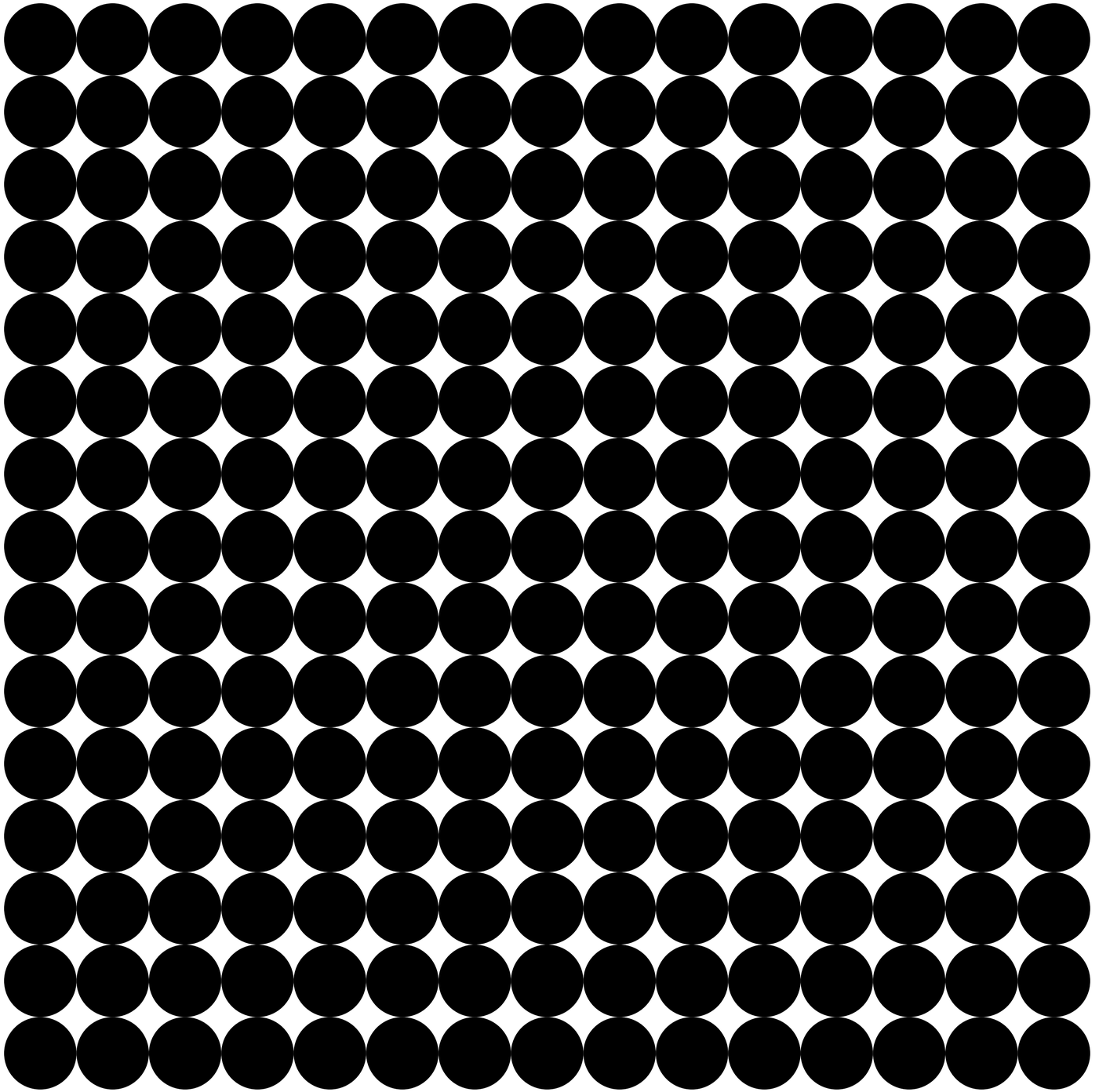
This project investigates how individuality shifts from the hand to the system in the process of writing. Through a series of visual experiments, I examine how the expressive capacity of gestures becomes reduced, and how personality is redistributed across different layers of digital input.



Context

Part1

This project is located in the cross-disciplinary context of graphic design and media theory, exploring how writing practice has transformed from a body-based gesture behavior to a system-led input process, and how this transformation has reshaped the way of expressing individuality. In the continuous iteration of writing tools, how is the personality of gestures blurred and how is it regenerated within the system?

Tim Ingold's theory of "thinking through action" provides an important foundation for this project (Ingold, 2013). He believes that the hand is not only a tool but also the place where thinking takes place. In the process of interacting with materials, thinking is generated through actions. In the context of handwriting, gestures, force, rhythm and movement directly shape the outcome of writing, and personality is embedded in body behavior. This makes me focus on the gestures, movements and interactions with materials in handwriting, thereby understanding the hand as a generator of meaning rather than a tool.

Marshall McLuhan's media theory further points out that the medium itself reshapes human behavior and perception (McLuhan and Fiore, 1967). This enables the project to expand from the hand itself to a larger system level, beginning to understand how writing tools change perception and behavior patterns. In this project, the keyboard not only replaced the pen but also altered the relationship between gestures and meanings, transferring the expression of personality from the hand to the system.

Vilem Flusser defined writing as a gesture for organizing thinking (Flusser, 2011), emphasizing that writing is not only an expression but also a structuring process. However, he also pointed out that writing is gradually moving towards mechanization and regularization, which is particularly evident in digital writing. The keyboard converts gestures into discrete input. The hand no longer directly generates meaning but executes system rules. It made me realize that gestures are not only expressions but also a kind of regularized and systematic behavior. So, the gesture becoming a command eliminating the existence of individuality became my further development direction, thereby driving me to analyze how the individuality of gestures is formed and exists in keyboard input.

These theories not only supported the project but also promoted its shift from "gesture research" to an overall exploration of "systems and mediating mechanisms".

Through visual experiments, this project compared handwriting with keyboard input and found that gestures tend to be standardized in the digital context. At the same time, through the analysis of typing rhythm and pauses, it reveals that personality is distributed in time and process. Furthermore, through gesture abstraction and dual-perspective experiments, it demonstrates how the system participates in the construction of meaning.

This project is simultaneously embedded in contemporary digital writing systems, such as keyboards, touch interfaces and predictive inputs. These systems act as structured networks, regulating behavior and reconstructing expression methods. From a design perspective, this project combines information visualization and interface design to transform invisible processes into visible forms, responding to the contemporary design trend of shifting from "content" to "systems and processes".

Ultimately, this project raises a core question: When personality is no longer entirely expressed through the body, how is it reconstructed in the system? By visualizing this transformation, this project attempts to re-understand the relationship between personality and expression in the digital context.

Mini reader

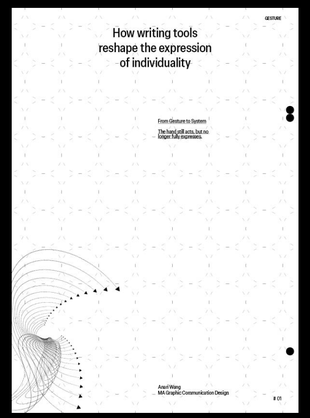
Part2

Across the three sections, the layout gradually shifts:

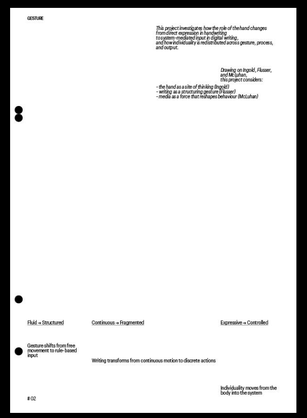
from fluid → structured
from continuous → fragmented
from expressive → controlled

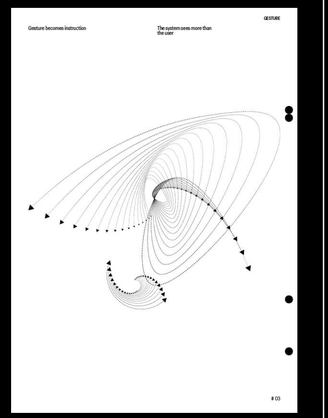
This mirrors my project, where individuality moves from the body into the system.

Cover

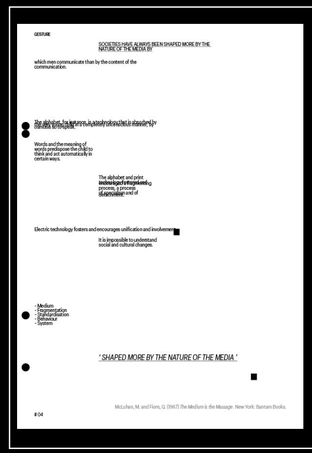


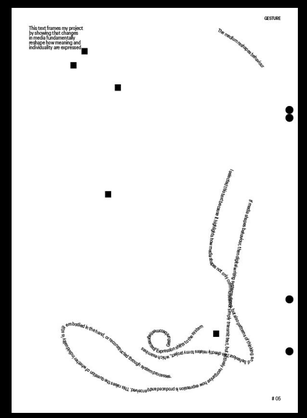
Enquiry + Intro

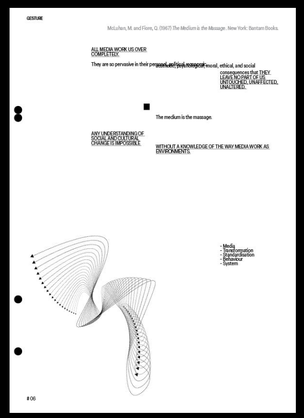


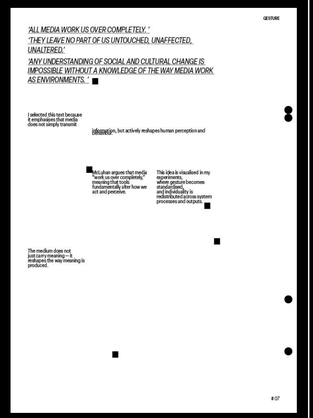


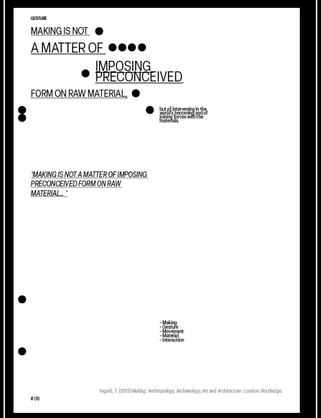
Text 1 - fluid → structured



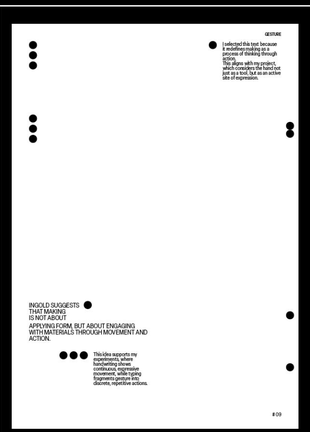


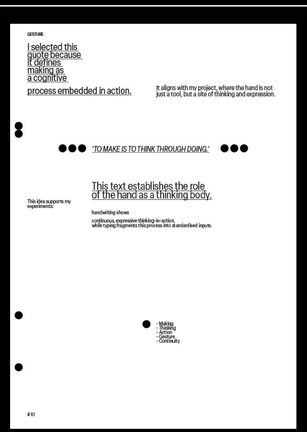


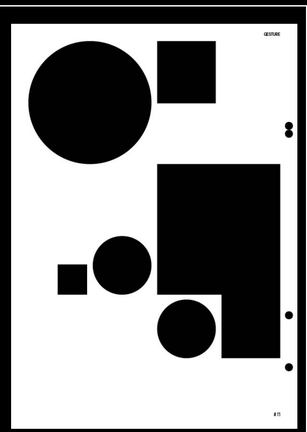




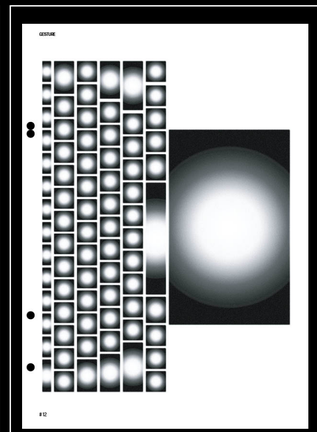
Text 2 - continuous → fragmented

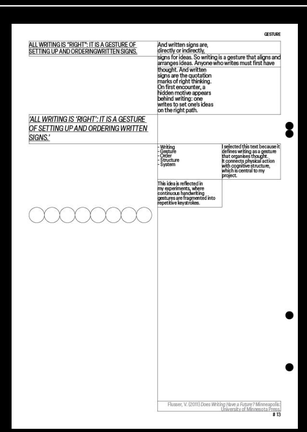


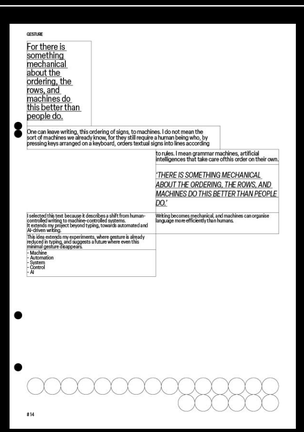


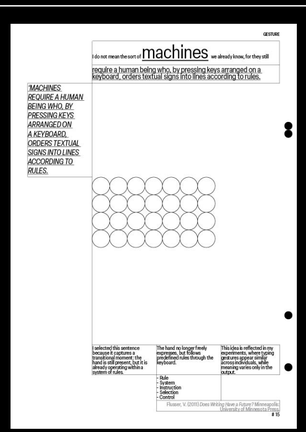


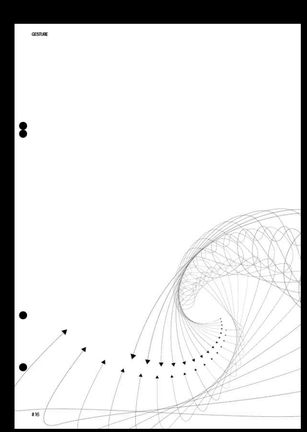
Text 3 - expressive → controlled











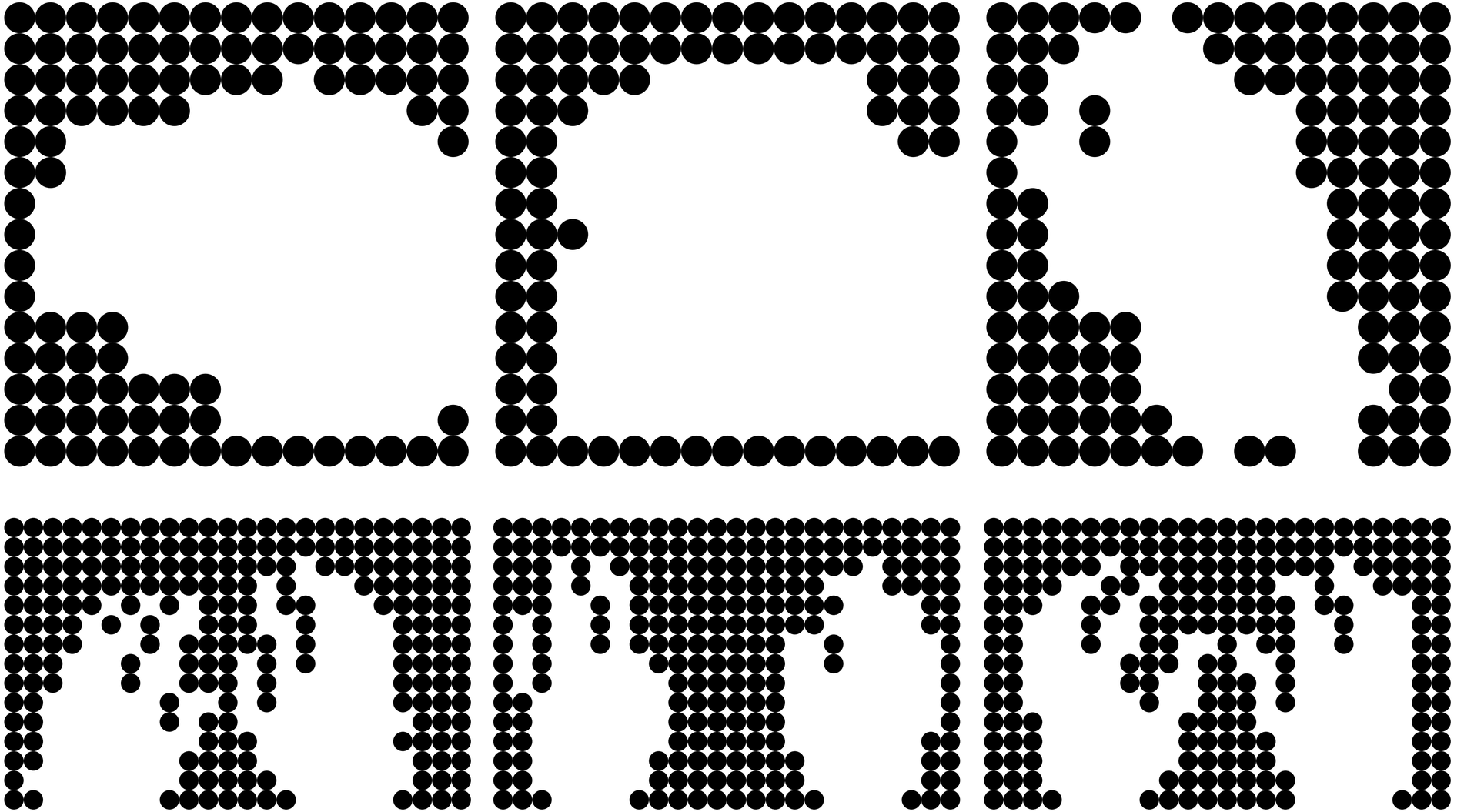
Experiments

Part3

I recorded both handwriting and typing from the same individual, focusing on three aspects:

- gesture form
- contact between hand and tool
- trace produced by writing

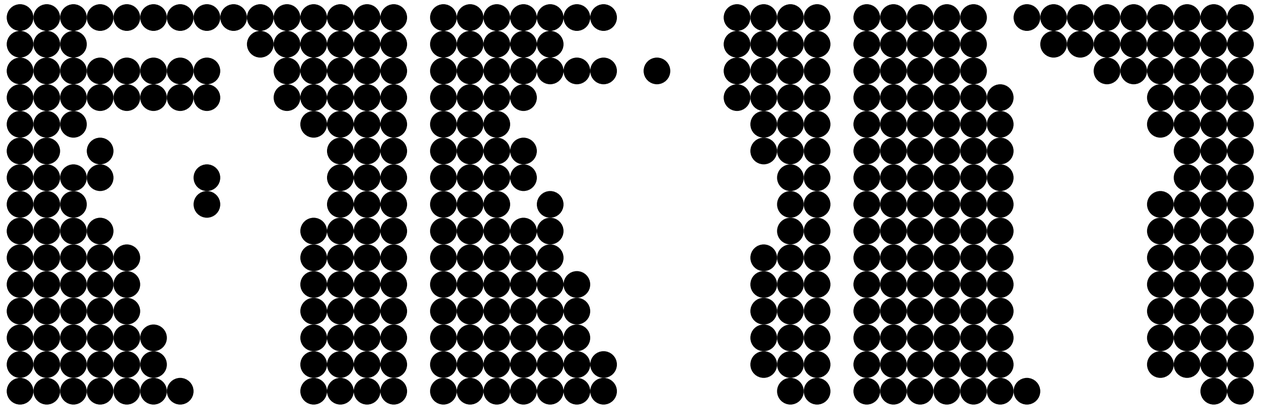
These three elements represent how meaning is traditionally carried by the hand: through movement, interaction, and trace.



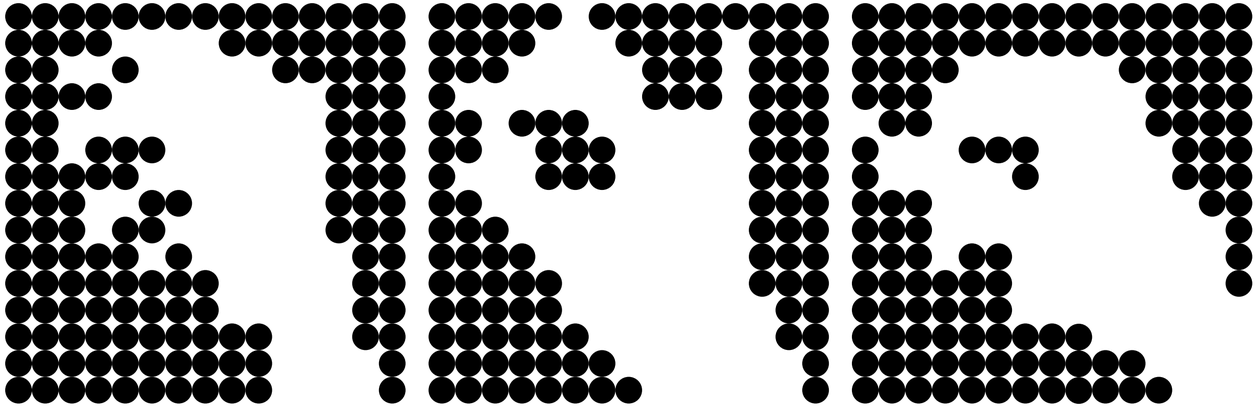
Gesture Comparison: Expression vs Standardisation

Compare handwriting and typing gestures across individuals to examine how movement carries meaning.

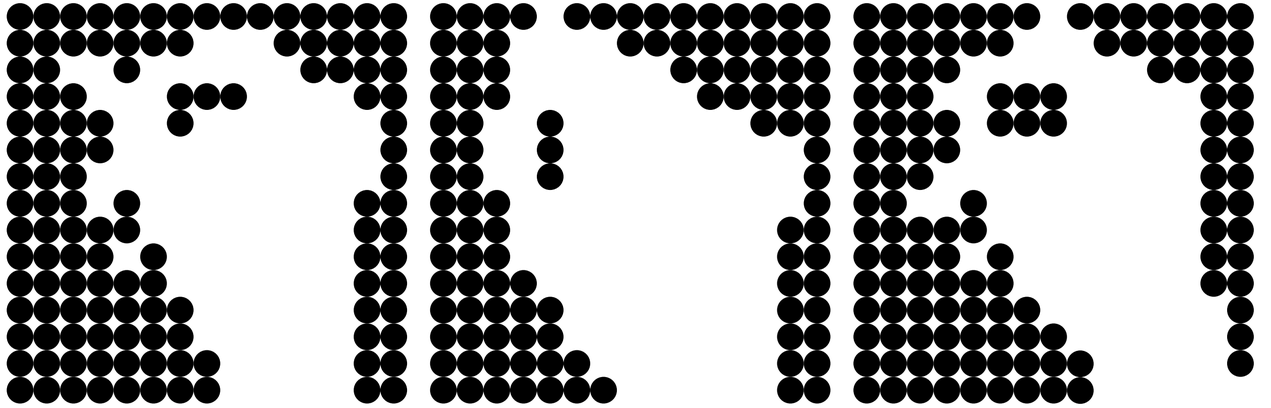
Group 1.1



Group 2.1



Group 3.1



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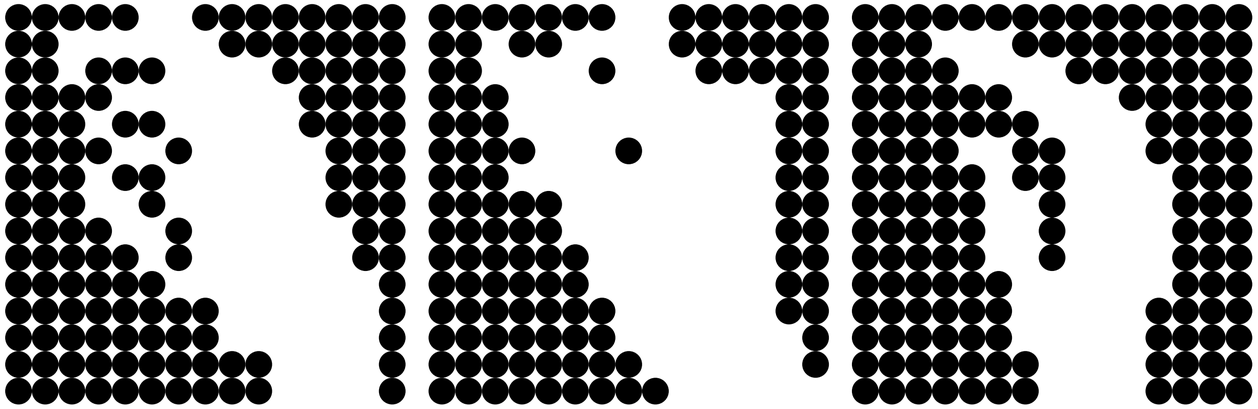

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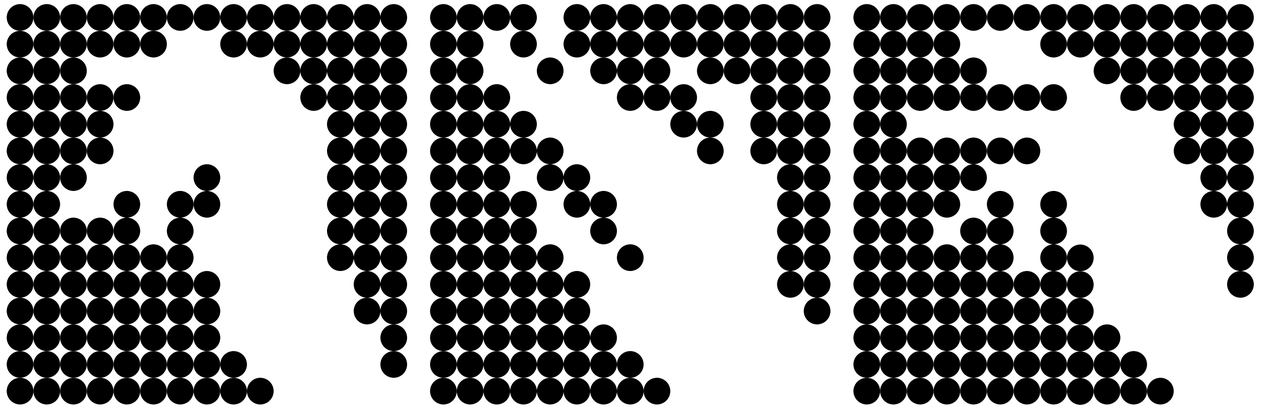

Gesture Comparison: Expression vs Standardisation

Handwriting reveals clear individual differences, while typing gestures become repetitive and less expressive.

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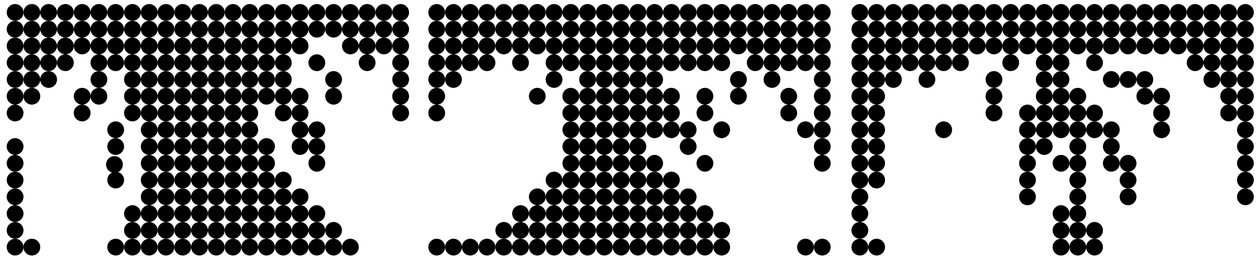

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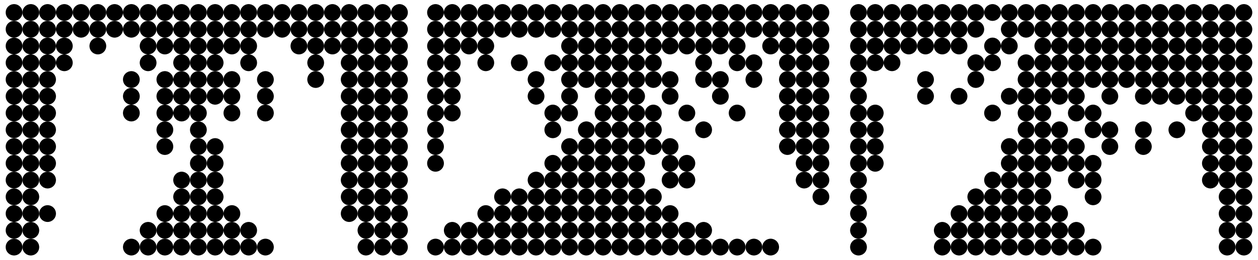

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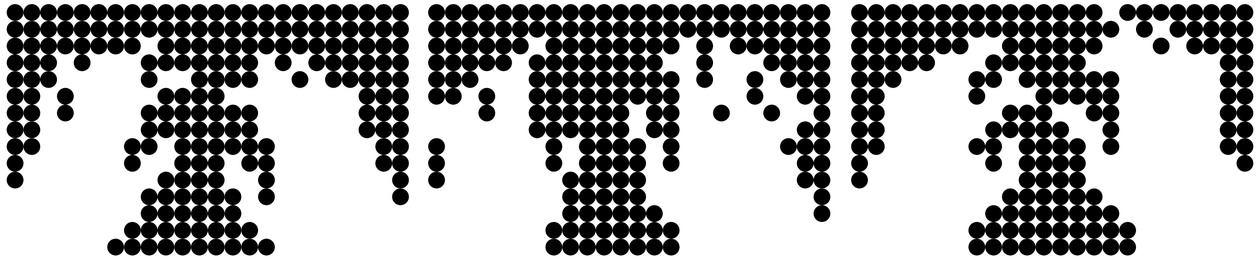

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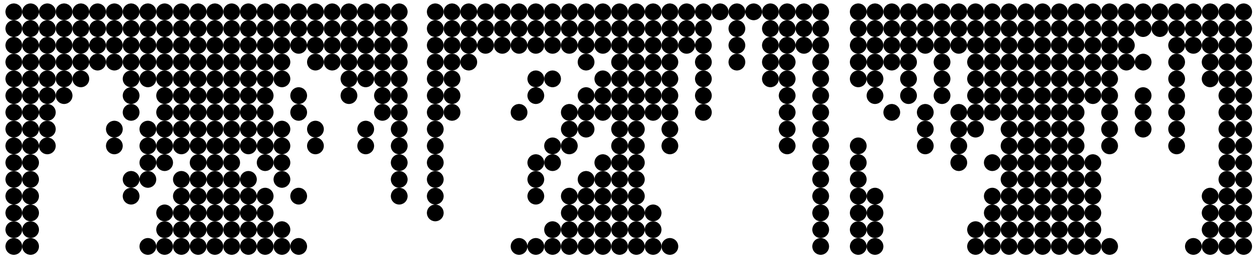

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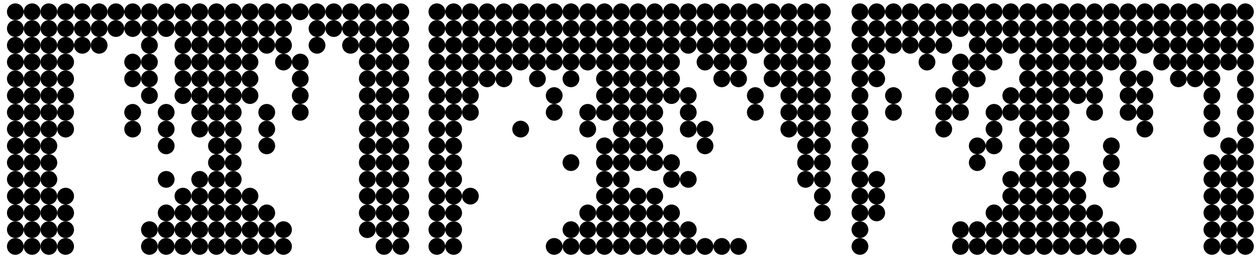
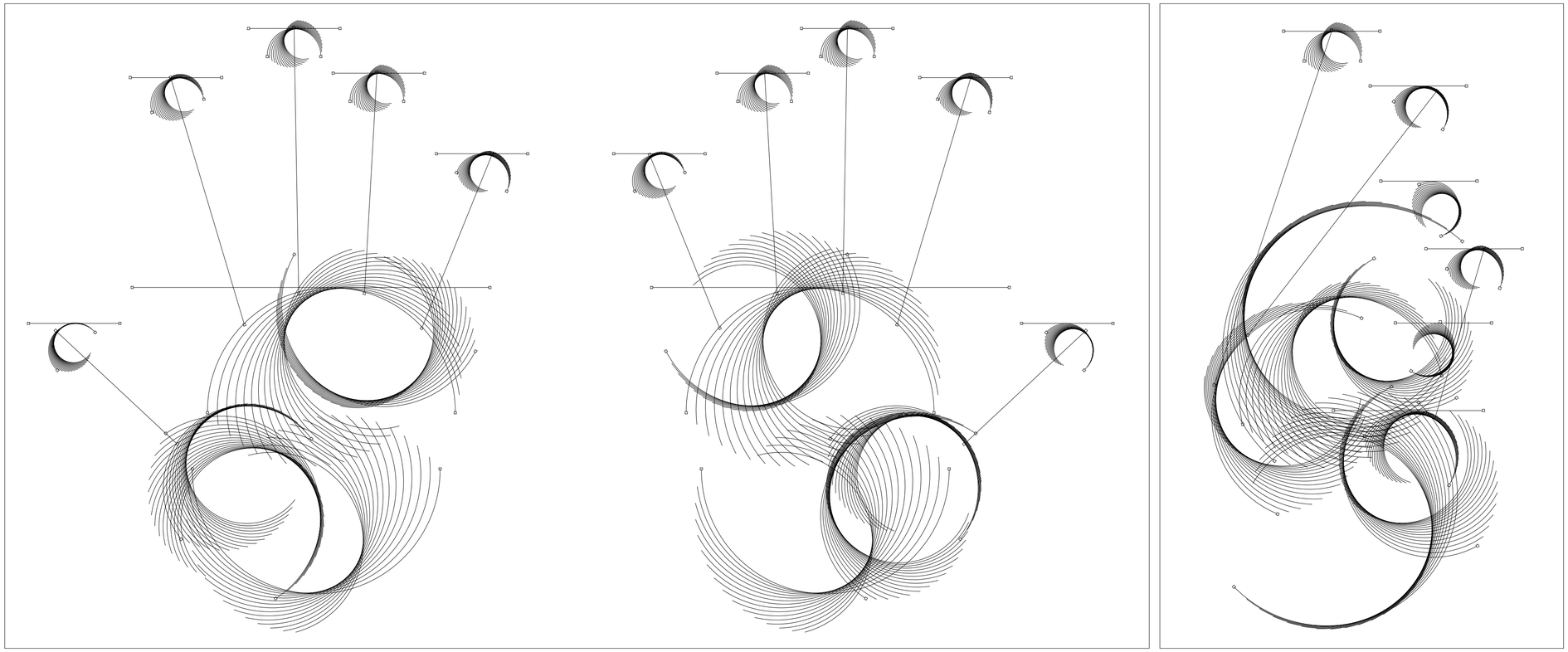


Hand–Object Relation

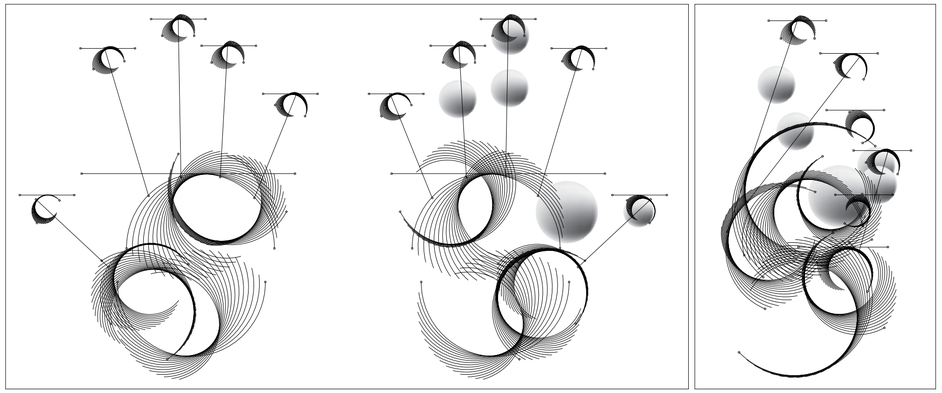
Map how the hand physically interacts with different writing tools.



Hand–Object Relation

Handwriting allows flexible interaction,
while typing reduces contact to fixed, minimal points.

Group 1.1



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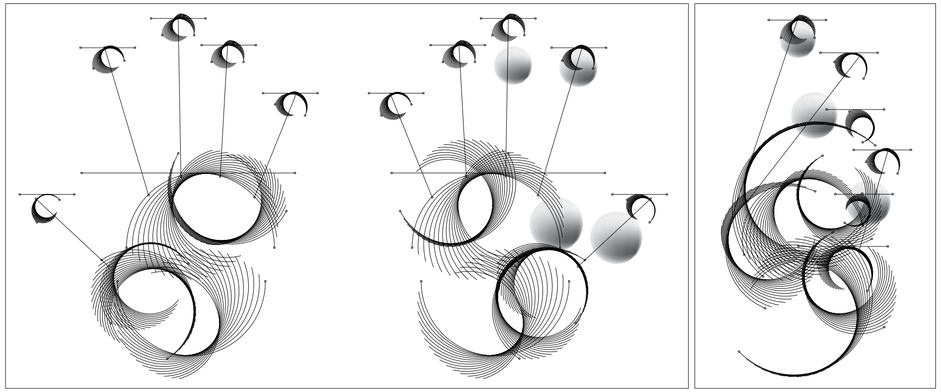

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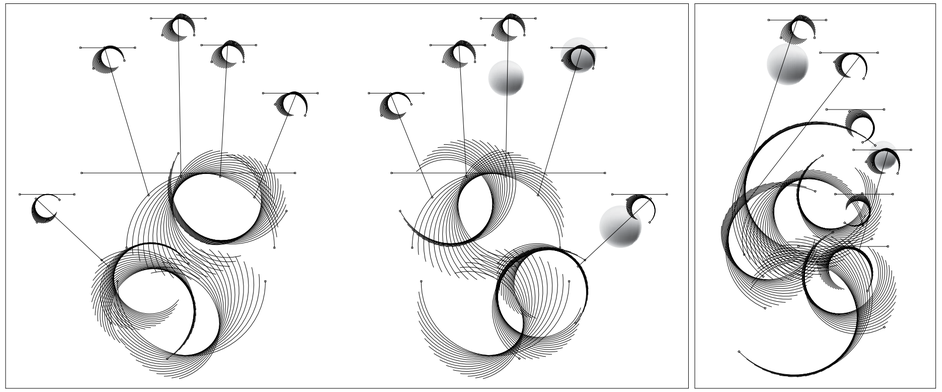

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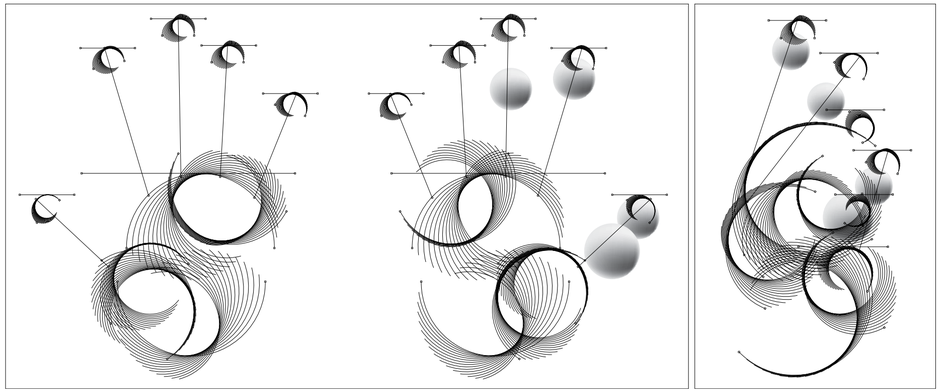

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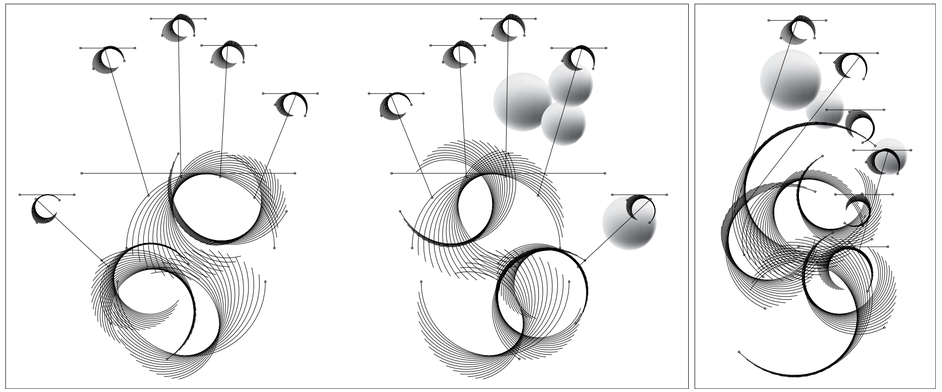
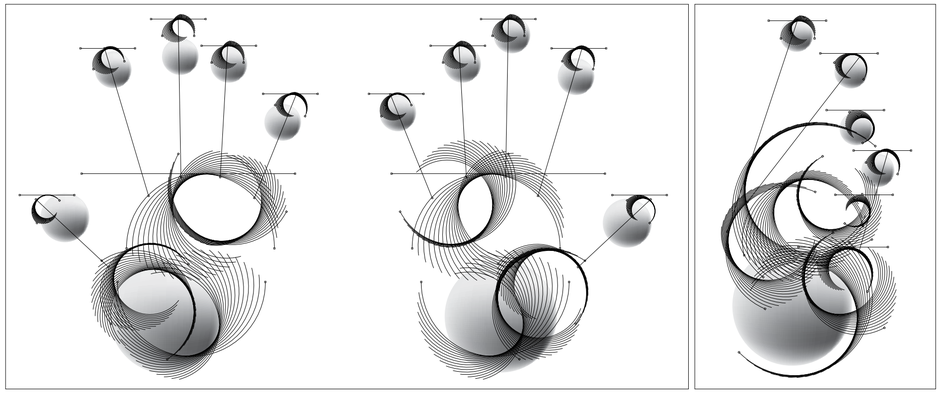


Hand–Object Relation

In handwriting, contact is flexible and varied

In typing, contact is minimal and fixed Interaction becomes more restricted

Group 1.1



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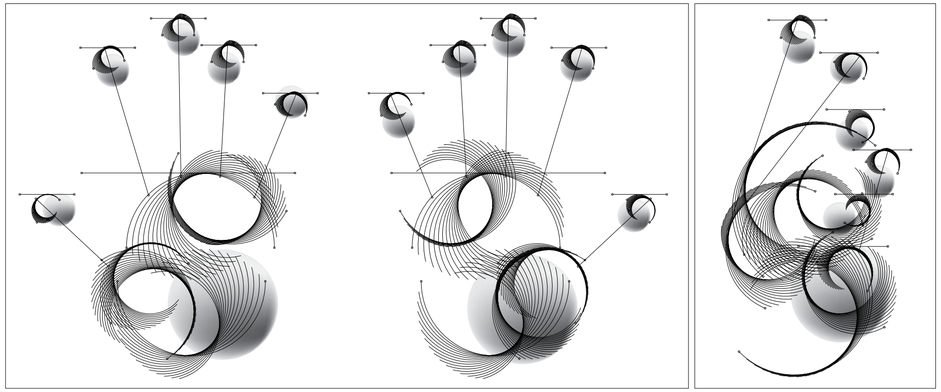

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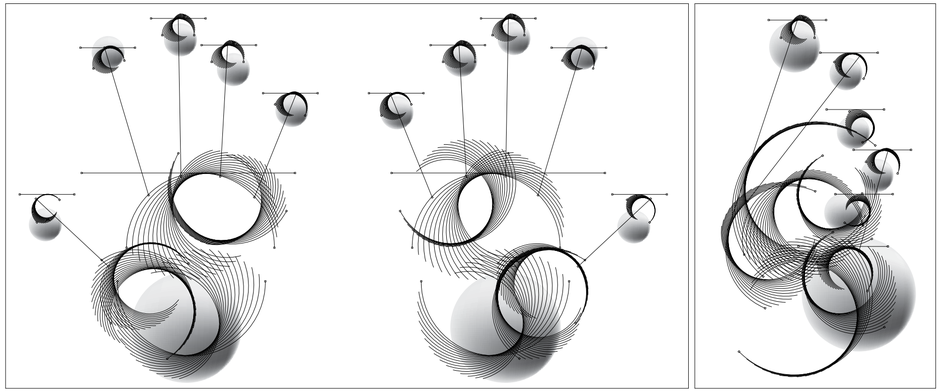

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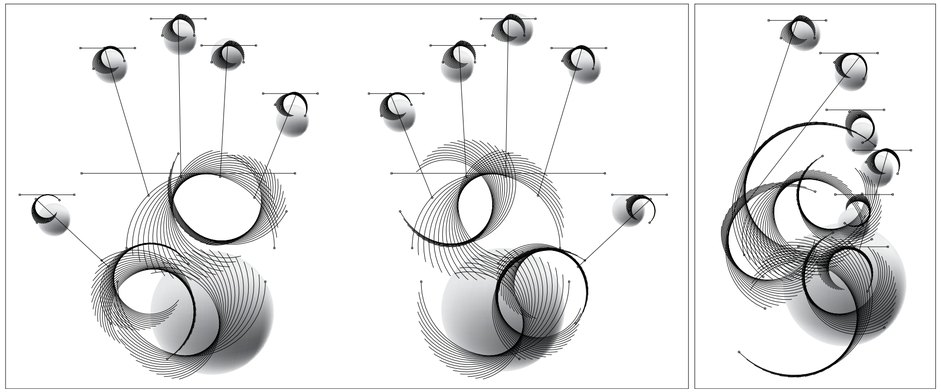

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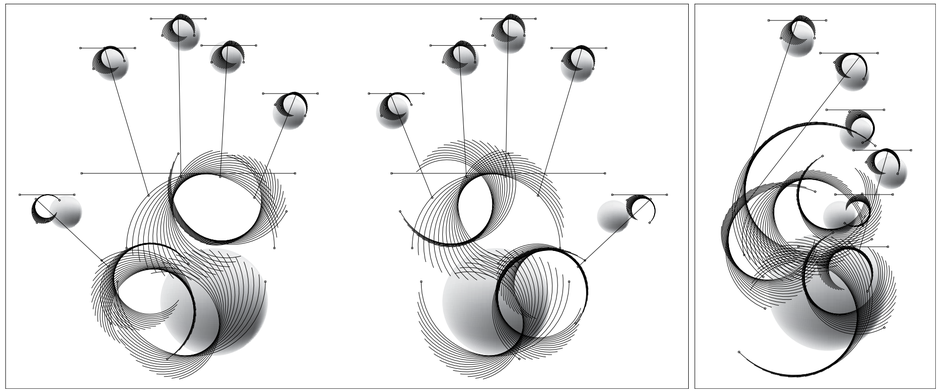
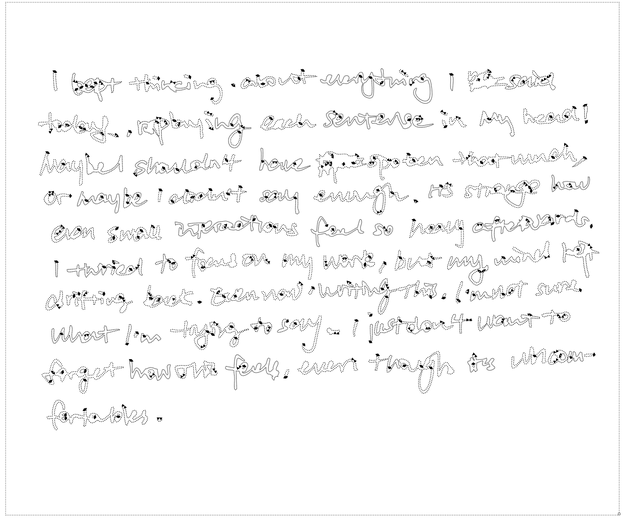


Trace Comparison

Compare the visible traces produced by handwriting and typing.

Handwriting directly reflects gesture, while typing produces uniform, standardised outputs.

Group 1.1



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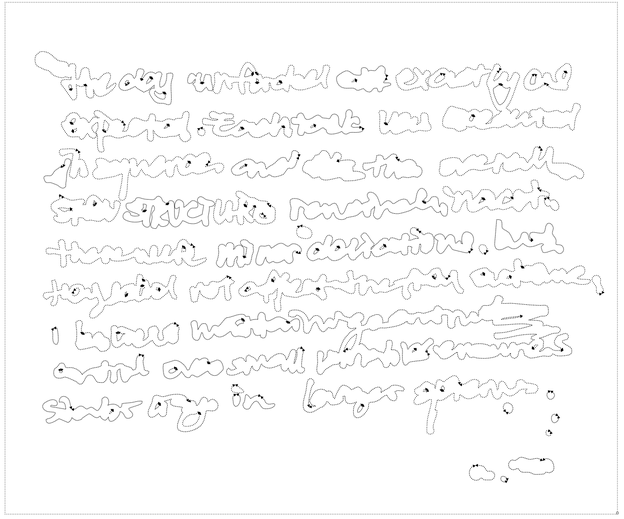

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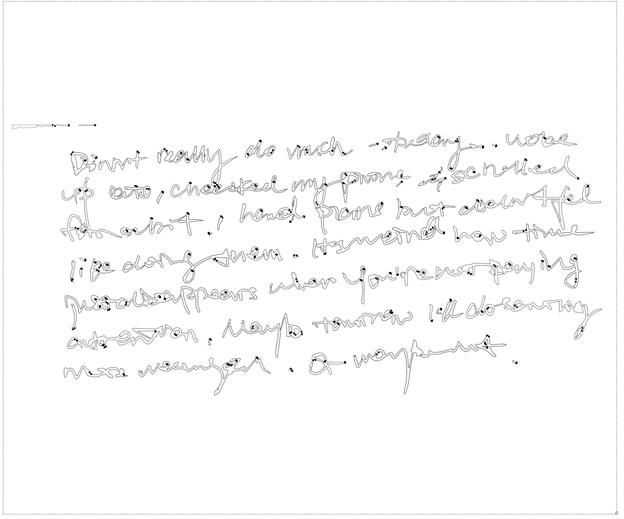

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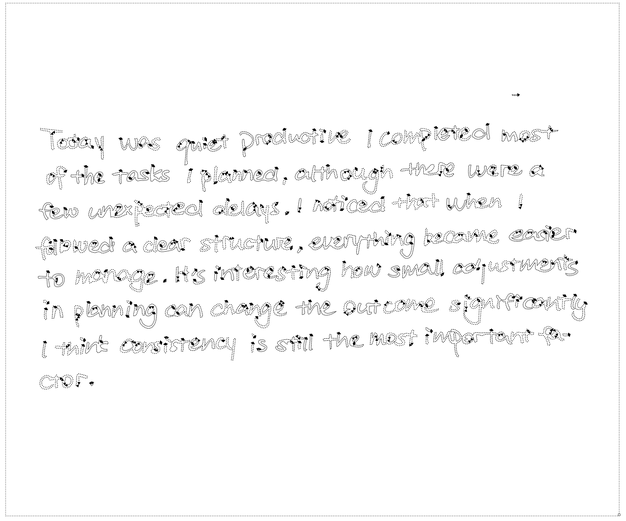

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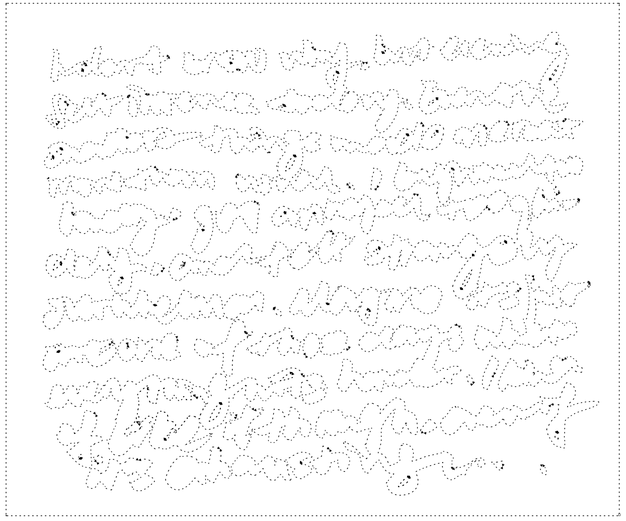
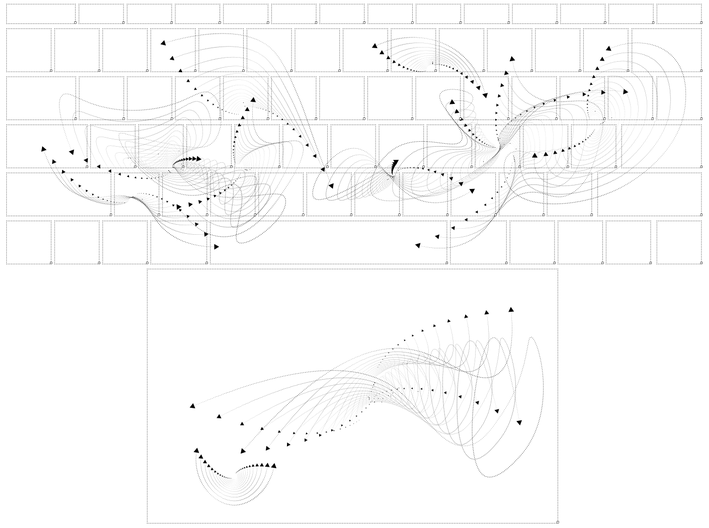


Group 1.1



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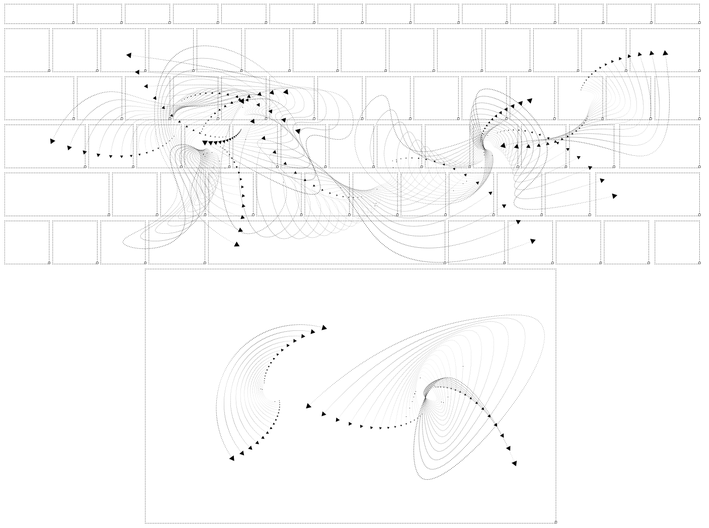

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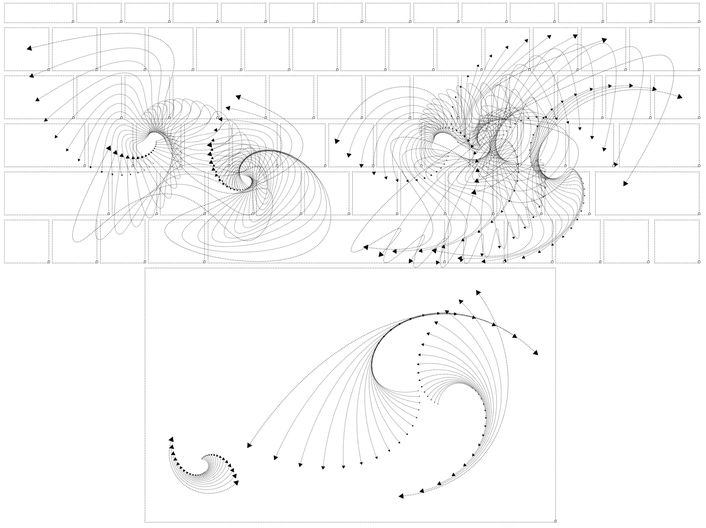

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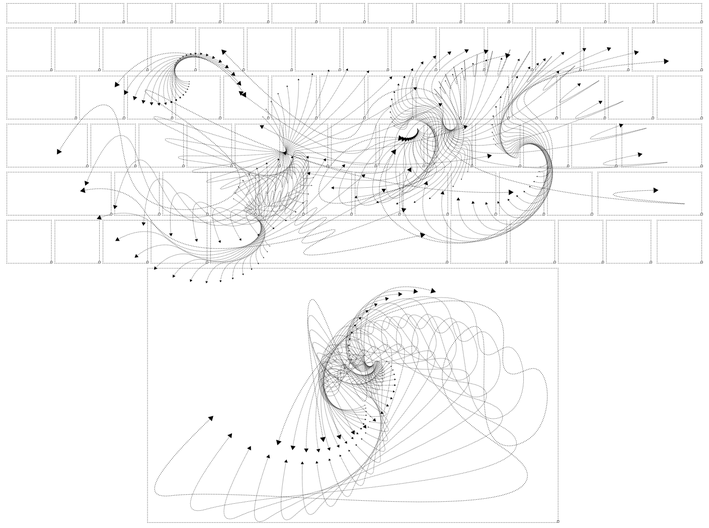
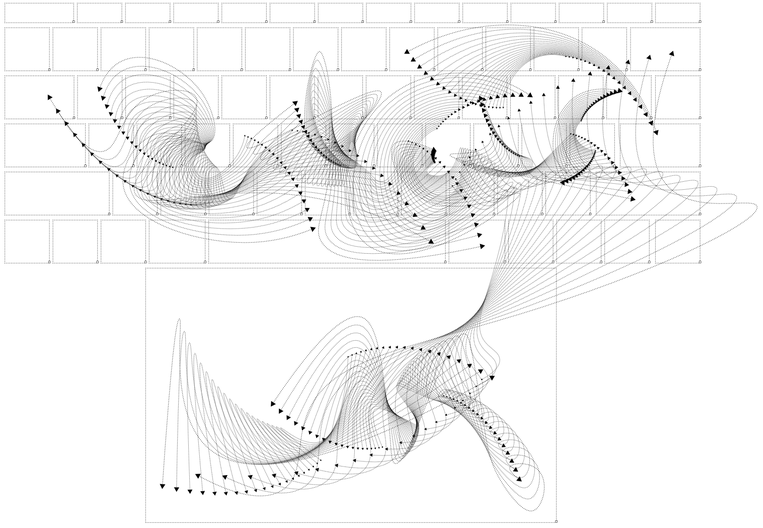


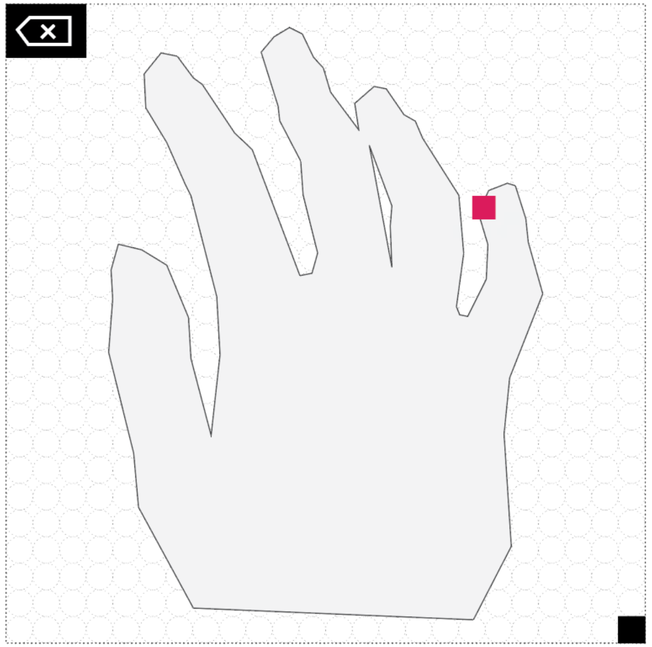


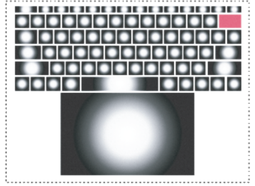
Experiments

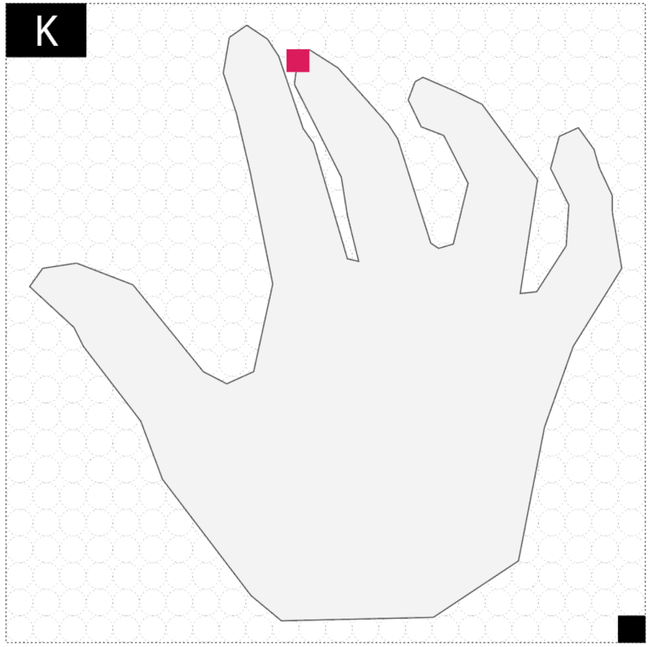
Part4 Gesture System (Keyboard Abstraction)

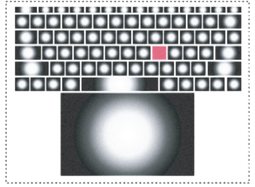
Translate each key into a gesture unit and reconstruct text using gesture icons.

Gestures alone are insufficient to convey meaning without system interpretation.









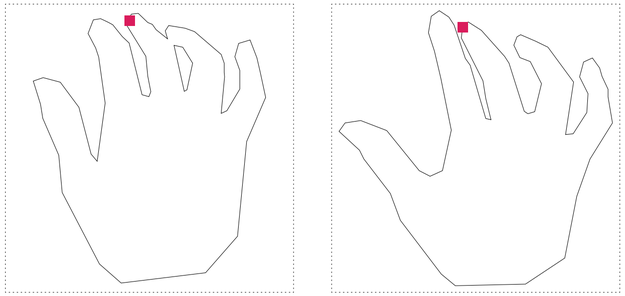
Experiments

Part5

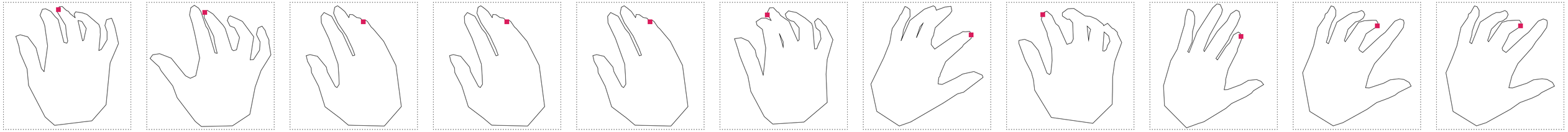
gesture → meaningless system

“Can you understand this from gesture alone?”

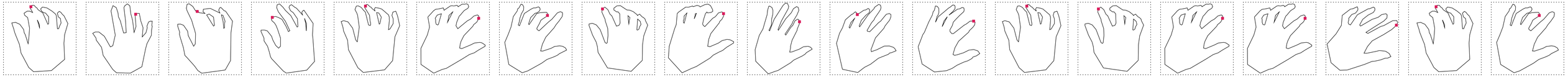
ok



ok… I guess



I’m not sure about this



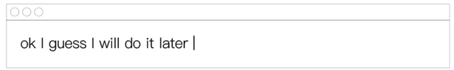
Experiments

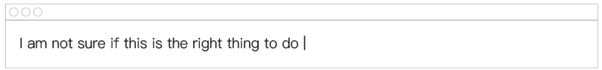
Part6

Layered System Breakdown

The top layer represents the final output on the screen.
The middle layer visualises the temporal structure of typing.
The bottom layer represents the physical gestures of typing.

1. ok
2. ok ok ok
3. ok…
4. ok I'll do it
5. ok I guess I'll do it later
6. maybe I shouldn't do this
7. I am not sure if this is right
8. actually no, let me think again





Experiments

Part7

Dual Perspective (User vs System)

User view vs. System view

This experiment introduces two perspectives: the user and the system.

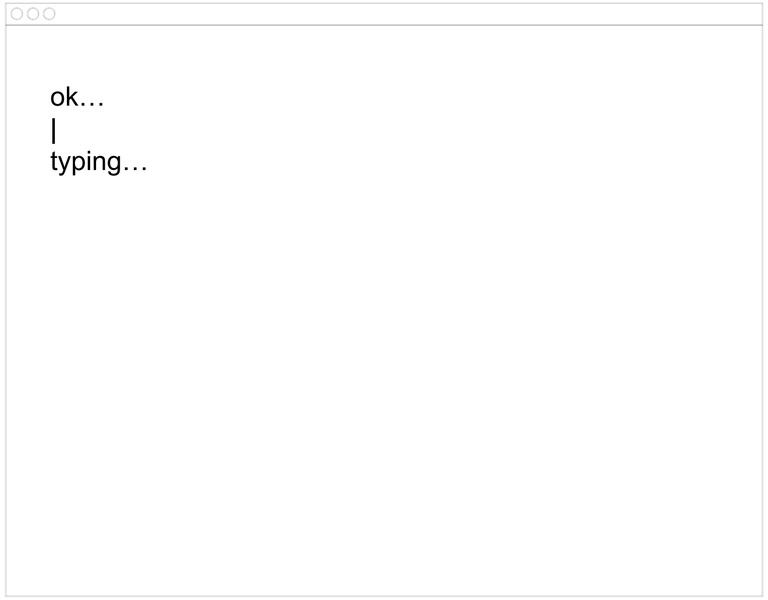
From the user's perspective, typing is mostly invisible — we only see the final text or a "typing…" indicator. However, from the system's perspective, every action during typing is recorded and visible.

I visualise this contrast by showing the same typing process in two parallel views:

- user view (minimal, result-based)
- system view (detailed, process-based)

This reveals that individuality is not lost, but hidden within the process and made visible only to the system.

User view



System view