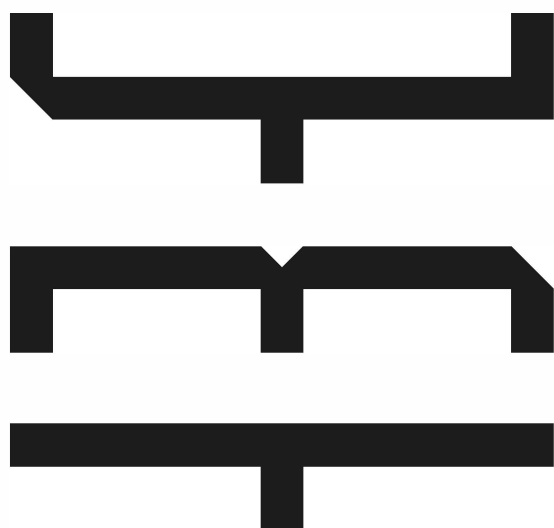


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## Thanks

Jan Edgar Hartvedt, Bodoni  
Mona Larsen  
Ashley Booth  
Bergen Art Book Fair

## Made with support from

KMD  
Jan Edgar Hardtvedt, Bodoni  
Grafill  
Papyrus

## Printing

Bodoni AS  
Edition 200

## Type

Good Sans  
Good Type Foundry

## Paper

Munken Polar Rough 300 g  
Cromatico Ca Digi 110 g  
Munken Pure Rough 100 g

Department of Design  
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[www.ymtmag.no/2020](http://www.ymtmag.no/2020)  
[www.kmd.uib.no](http://www.kmd.uib.no)

ISSN  
2535–6399, printed editions  
2535–6402, online archive

## Publisher

© 2020  
Visual communication,  
Department of Design,  
KMD, UiB





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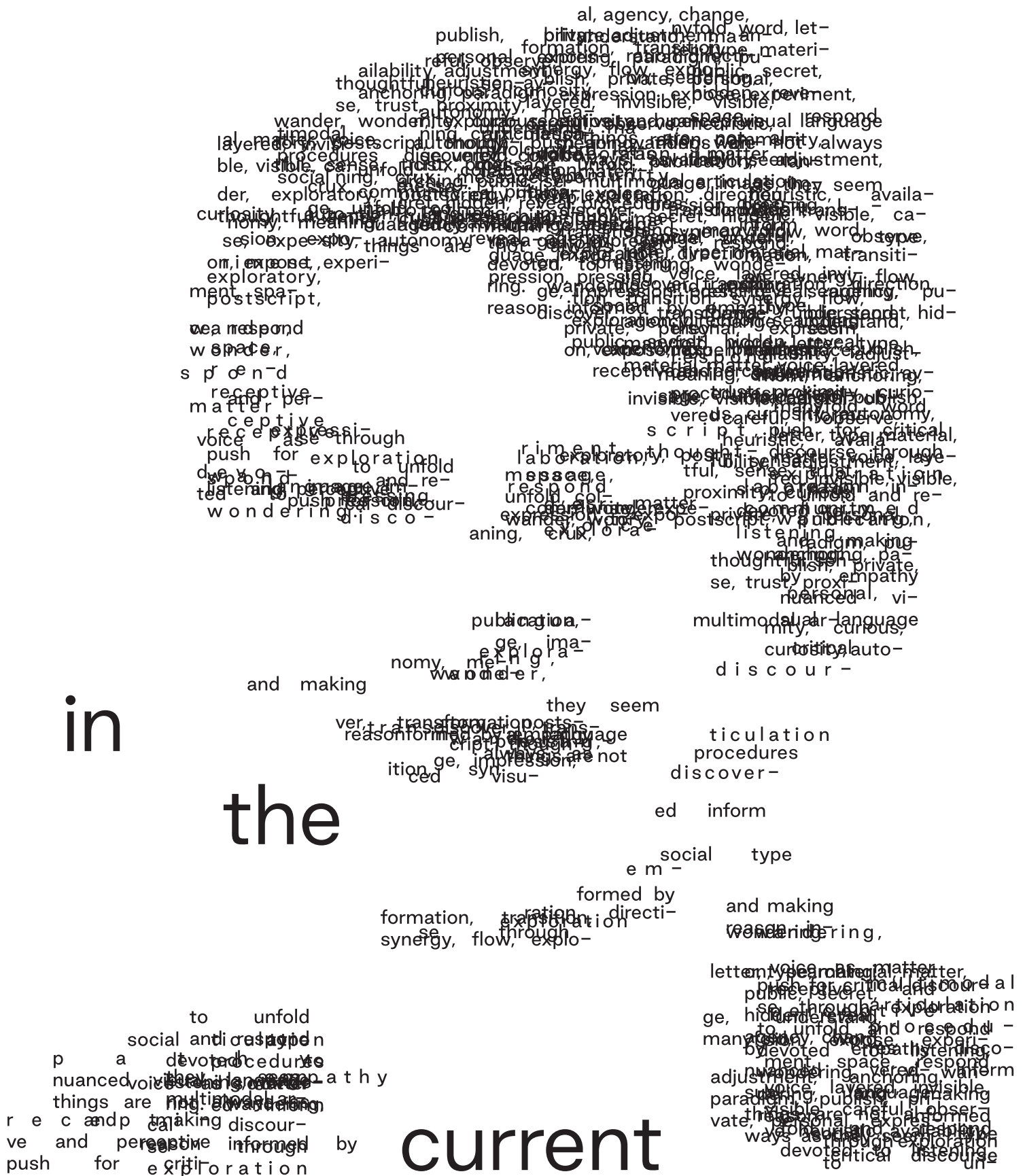
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Visual communication design is, we posit, a hands-on-down-and-dirty kind of artistic agency that admits active participation in the exposition of dominant cultural practices and aesthetic sensibilities of a given period, place, and circumstance. It becomes, collectively and through time, a visual language discourse which sheds light on cultural moods and common modes of manifesting thought. It becomes evidence as it becomes evident. Each iteration of it can be seen as a hint of the current.

The magazine you are looking at is the 2020 volume of Ymt. Ymt is a space for Visual communication discourse and expositions of the field's tacit knowledge; A space that opens up and unfolds a creative conversation about the art of conveying ideas and knowledge to others in the visual language – a consolidation of text and images that lay out meaning. Ymt is an educational method of sorts, which is to say it is created with and by students. Therefore Ymt wants to be experimental and to feel like a place that welcomes doubt and ways of thinking out loud to conjure reflection, response and reaction. Ymt is a place for testing and trying-seeing what happens in the process and, if luck holds, what can be.

*'Drop a word  
in the ocean  
of meaning,  
and concentric  
ripples form.'* <sup>[1]</sup>

Ymt literally translates as a hint and to hint at. The word's origin is 'ymta' which in Old Norse meant to talk about, and in modern Norwegian can

---

[1] Robert Bringhurst, *The Solid Form of Language*. Kentville: 2004. P 1



mean to speak out in order to solve. Ymt 1 was published in March 2019. Then it went out in the world by itself. Ymt 1 has been quite the traveller. It has met people. It has started conversations. Made the rounds. Ymt 2 is here to walk the talk where the first left off. Ymt 1 was very concerned with questions about global transformations ... climate crisis, environmental stewardship, humanity. And it queried the role Visual communication designers have in that context. This 2020 volume, Ymt 2, wants to know more about how Visual communication designers and educators see their field evolve and what the changes Ymt 1 was all about mean to the field.

The Norwegian dictionary also defines it as to 'la skinne igjennom' or let shine through. To shed light on? To make clear? Seeing through a matter allows for it to be examined and questioned. Making a matter see through can make connections and relationships publicly visible. Transparency opens up a line of sight to multiple dimensions, perspectives, angles, and layers.

The design of Ymt this year was in the capable hands of second year students, class of 2018–2021, of Visual communication here at KMD. Theirs is the honour of conceptualising and giving form to the magazine's contents. One is that KMD moves – the arts move, which is elaborated further on KMD's website, if you like. The other is the theme of this volume, which is a kind of search for unity – a common cause? – within the field of Visual communication. These two ideas are why this volume is full of questions about education and pedagogy, and why it looks at how to move and be moved. The designers of this second Ymt chose to meet the strategy to move with a response that asks whether



that which moves might require a direction that is clear to all, that might thereby be contested. And they chose to meet questions about unity, in Visual communication design education and within the whole field of knowledge, by responding with questions of their own, in the hope that there will be more questions in return. They, and Ymt's other content contributors, openly share their thoughts with you. Their contributions are hereby dropped into the great current of human thought and remain in search for more knowledge, more questions, a further unfolding.

With the letters of an alphabet you can write, make visible, and solidify your thinking in a process that demands making thoughts explicit through a combination of letters arranged into complex expression of words and sentences. These too, optimally, should make sense, but do not always. Images are the same, sometimes the visual language is reasonable and makes perfect sense, and sometimes they are the only good way to show feeling. Together, the written and visual language should not only make relative inward sense, but need not really be published unless the intent is to make outward sense as well. Published thought, written and visual, will remain sitting on paper or screen waiting for a reader, streaming forth. Coming your way. Being the current.

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Co-editor Message journal

Åse Huus,  
Associate professor, Visual  
communication,  
Co-editor Message journal





How open  
can  
a  
course  
or  
program  
in  
Visual  
communication  
be?



Does creativity have boundaries?



# Meaning making

Åse Huus

Associate Professor,  
Visual communication  
Head of Education,  
Department of Design  
Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design

Visual communication design is in the broad sense to make ideas visible, and thus imaginable and understandable to others. Communicating a specific content can be done in and customized for all media – but the design of it will always involve the designer's assessment and interpretation of the content material. At the Department of Design at KMD, we say that Visual communication is a field of study with a holistic perspective on how ideas and concepts can be disseminated through various tools, materials and media.

What is emphasized in our study plans is that the BA level is about acquiring broad knowledge and skills in several areas within the field of Visual communication, providing the students' toolkit and experiences to be as multifaced and rich as possible within the time given. Study progression forms the basis for planning and the curricula, where the idea is that complexity in concept development gradually increases throughout the studies, and that meaning-making is an important key word for the final part of the BA study.



'Designers with a bachelor's degree from the Department of Design have accumulated complex qualifications. They can develop ideas and concepts and work purposefully. Students learn to give the abstract form, to realize and materialize concrete design concepts, and to convey their works, in written, oral and visual form' [1]

Developing professional integrity is not a quick fix, and it is not just about acquiring knowledge and skills in various tools – it is just as much about building the foundation for thinking holistically, or horizontally – if you want – understand their own role and find their own approach in the design field, and be able to relate critically to all kinds of performances of what is presented as truths.

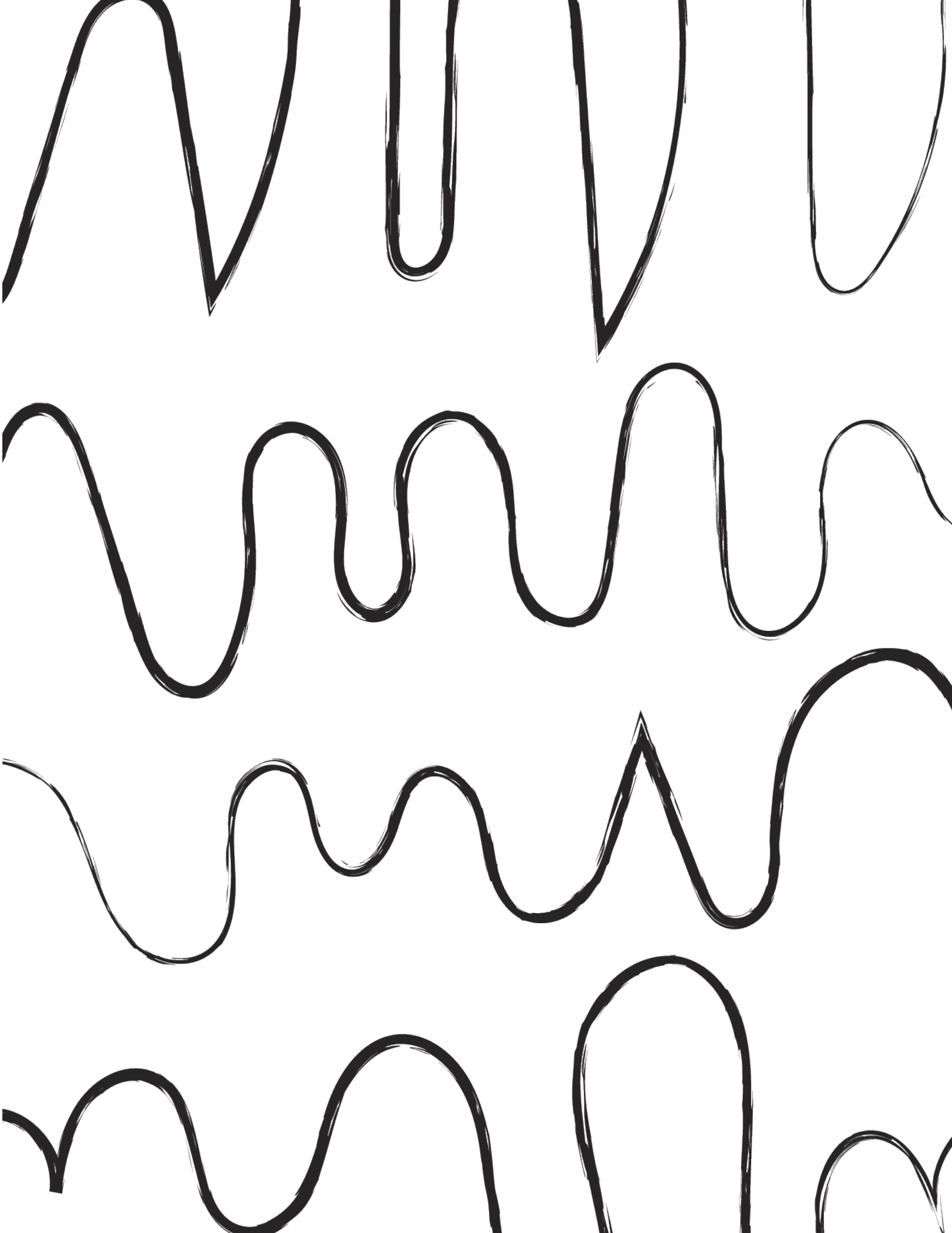
Doubt and curiosity are closely linked, and this must be encouraged and stimulated. It is important to keep in mind that the BA program is a vocational basic education, where perhaps the most important thing is to establish an overview of the field of study, stimulate meaning-making and learning as an embodied and permanent attitude to the world. To this end there are many and different approaches, the important thing is that experiential learning can initiate a dialogical movement of reflection and understanding in an interpretative process that generate criticality and new insight – and thus extension of the horizon of understanding.

---

[1] From study plan: [www.uib.no/studier/BADESIGN/plan](http://www.uib.no/studier/BADESIGN/plan)









The master's program is an opportunity for specialization with a time frame that allows for experimentation, trial and error, and change of standpoint. Each student applies to the program with a proposed project. This time perspective is special for KMD, as the individual project evolves throughout the whole period of the two years of MA-study.

Another special, and important source of academic and intellectual freedom is that students applies for MA-study with a self-initiated project, and are thus their own source and main instrument.

'Specialization involves investigating, experimenting and combining fragments and raw materials as a basis for design processes that are expressed in visions and concepts. Master's students must strike a balance between their own perspectives and others' views, general considerations and their own goals, and the world as it is today and the world to come. The master's program integrates theory and practice, with emphasis on the relationship between design as a creative practice and design as a field of ideas. [ ... ] Through creative processes, and in interactions with materials and tools, students develop sensitivity to form, expression and communication, which is essential in all forms of design.'<sup>[2]</sup>

In a study program like this, there is thus this important exception: an opportunity to propose ideas outside of the Western, neoliberal thinking<sup>[3]</sup> on which the market is normally based, an opportunity that can create a foundation and a potential for renewal, perhaps even utopian ideas. In one of the richest countries in the world, which can still be considered a democratic society, I suggest this to be considered as a commitment, something to safeguard.

This publication, Ymt, aims to increase the discourse in Visual communication design in Norway, but we also want to anchor it locally, in the region, in Norwegian politics, in a democracy where doubts can be practiced, and where discussion and ideological contradictions are addressed, in open and civilized forms of dialogue. Ymt introduces and invites students to design journalism, editorial design and authorship by learning how the nuanced visual language of text and image can be used in a field that requires multimodal articulation.

Ymt is a platform for thinking aloud, displaying work and ideas that are on the way or that have recently been compiled. It is a school publication created in a student-alumni-teacher collaboration, in an open feedback loop, one that has no real hierarchy, other than that created in the visual design, for the eyes of readers.

[2] From study plan: [www.uib.no/studier/MADESIGN/plan](http://www.uib.no/studier/MADESIGN/plan)

[3] Neoliberalism is a collective term for economic and political ideologies and theories, which have in common that they believe society should to a large extent be organized according to market economy principles: [www.snl.no/nyliberalisme](http://www.snl.no/nyliberalisme)



Current discourse within the field, rise a growing criticism to design as a field of subject, and specifically to the question on how design practice relate to the concept of the *anthropocene*. The 3rd and 4th Istanbul Design Biennale have been important arenas for many questions and debates related to the designer's role in a time of global challenges at a great scale.

The book *Are we human? Notes on archeology of Design* (2016)<sup>[4]</sup> came out, as field notes from the preparation for the 3rd Biennial Exhibition. These notes are critical reflections, and field notes like this:

'An array of constantly evolving algorithms – artificial neural networks and deep learning systems – monitor every gesture we make and continuously rebuild intricate statistic images of each one of us. Each Internet search, post, transaction, and physical movements modifies this quantified human. The very fact that you are reading this sentence may be leaving a trace. Self-design turns out to be an uncanny encounter between what we offer (in our daily production of texts, comments, statements, objects, clothing choices, gestures, facial expressions, drawings, meals, exchanges, silences) and the image of ourselves that we are offered on our little screens. The algorithm shows us what it thinks we really want to see, as if in a strange kind of mirror that has become the new space of design.'<sup>[5]</sup>

The main message is that design actually designs us, as human beings.

---

[4] Beatriz Colomina and Mark Wigley: *Are we human? Notes on an Archaeology of Design*. Lars Müller Publishers, Zürich, 2016

[5] Ibid, page 274



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and curiosity are

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The  
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In the spring of 2018, Swiss Design Network, hosted a Research Summit in Basel: *Beyond Change*: Questioning the role of design in times of global transformations, – a summit that was largely about how to reimagine design to be a subject which contributes with expertise and critical ideas into contemporary conditions of change. This cannot be changed without a critical view on how design is practiced, and which mechanisms that exists in the ideological systems that this practice maintain or may have the force to change.

4th Istanbul Design Biennale (2018) with the theme *A school of schools*, reached an extended audience with the publication *Design as Learning*.<sup>[6]</sup> This book is also the result of research done by the curatorial team for the biennial, a discussion of design as education in the form of essays, interviews, provocations and critical thoughts on both previous and contemporary ideas on design education. The authors discuss with critical views on instrumental use of creativity and idea development for production, the legacy of Bauhaus, bureaucratization of design education and its consequences, as well as suggestions for possible alternative models. These kinds of

---

[6] Jan Boelen: *Design as Learning: A School of Schools Reader*. Valiz. Amsterdam, 2019



discourses take place and causes both doubts and questions and puts our own education into perspective, especially these days when fake news become the normal, the climate crisis is actually acknowledged, and the flow of information make it harder for everyone to distinguish between what is important and what is not. Will our ideas be bold enough, and are we clear enough on what ideology they represent?

Another interesting source for reflection is the book *Becoming human by design* (2017)<sup>[7]</sup>, by design theorist and philosopher Tony Fry. He writes about the relationship between design, sustainability and politics. The text discuss how design, critically transformed and critically mobilized is a means for meaning-making, and reclaiming agency. As a start

we can create arenas and forums that this publication, YMT, can be an example to; a place where opinion is shared, ideas are shared and conveyed through design. New discussions and ideas can be created in and outside educational institutions, and can reach a broader audience if we choose to publish them. The publication *Design as learning* can be a good example to state. A physical object. Something gets value because we give it value. Or – in other words – we design what is valuable. In his book, Fry reminds us that it is not possible for us who live today not to be a historical subject, unaffected by what has created the conditions for how we live and what we are.

The question is rather, if we take into the account that design designs us, how we can actively engage in creating history:

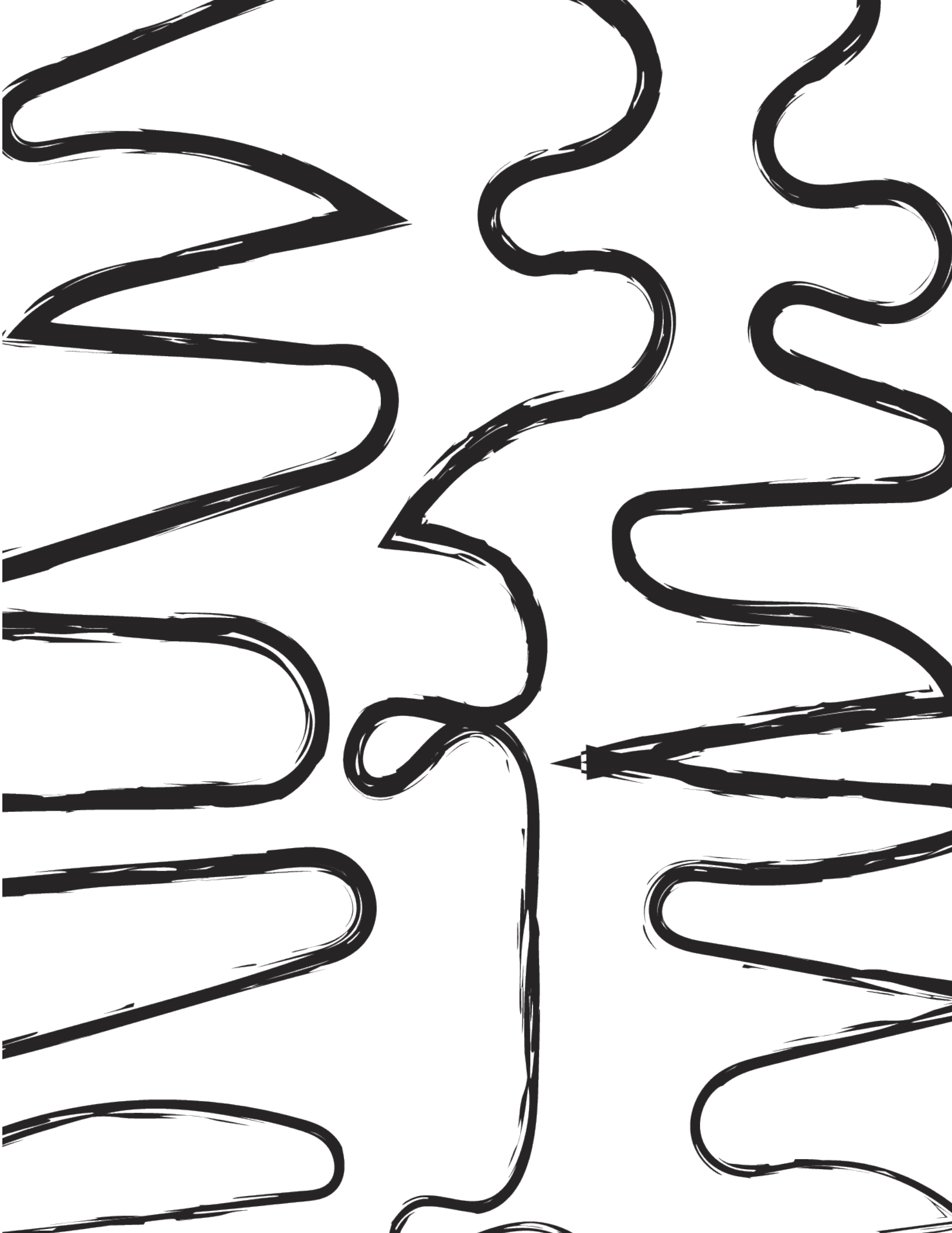
'... in so doing, creating that which ontologically designs the designing of a socio-materially fabricated world that in significant part designs what we are and can do.'<sup>[8]</sup>

With this backdrop, I would like to pose a question to all of us: What history are we instrumental in creating?

[7] Tony Fry: *Becoming Human by design*, Berg Publishers – Bloomsbury. London, 2012

[8] Ibid, page 31









How much do student  
surroundings (architecture / space) d  
define the work done and th  
e social structure [in the class room]?



How to think and  
create something  
out of the box when  
put in a box?



# Visual communication and design research

Peter Jones

Communication design designer,  
Message journal editor,  
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Norway has recently emerged to be at the forefront of Artistic Research. As a nation, it has also and continues to be at the forefront of taking a practical lead on addressing contemporary social, moral, political and ethical issues both locally, nationally, and internationally. The latter aligns not only to KMD's Design Department's core values but also to the practice and aspirations of KMD's Visual communication Design teaching, learning and research. This essay outlines the context of and challenges for Visual communication Design Artistic Research and how Visual communication Design at KMD might begin to address these.

Artistic Research has recently developed out of and as an alternative to, the Humanities and Scientific research models. This development has largely occurred because the Humanities and Scientific research models, do not readily align to what might be described as the creative, eclectic and heuristic methods employed in Art and Design practice-based research.

The *raison d'être* of Humanities and Scientific research model, is the creation, evaluation and dissemination of new knowledge and ideas. The latter is firmly rooted in the Classical Greek model where ideas and propositions were discussed and interrogated verbally in a forum of designated contributors (i.e. no women or slaves). Practical art and design activities such as architecture, sculpture, and painting were considered a lower form expression, let alone a form of intellectual enquiry. Indeed, even the adoption of the alphabet was considered a threat to this form of intellectual discourse.

'The discovery of the alphabet will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves [ ... ] You give your disciples not truth but only the semblance of truth; they will be heroes of many things, and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing' <sup>[1]</sup>

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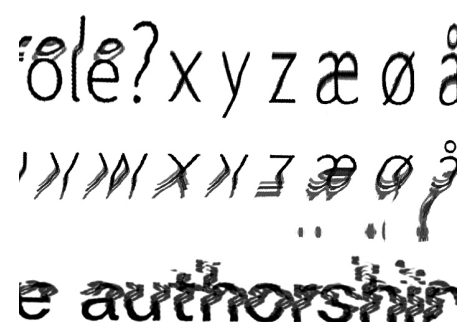
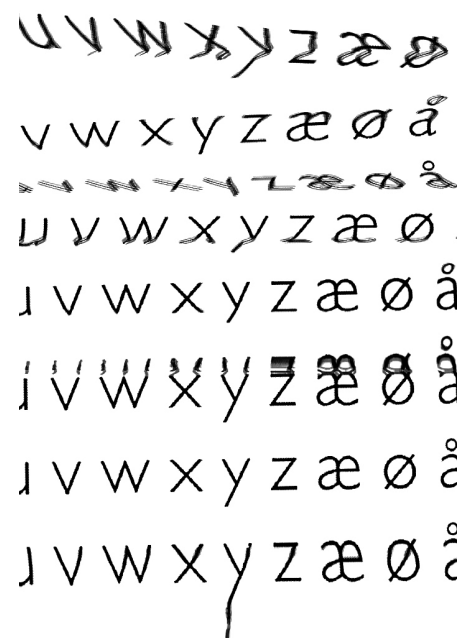
[1] Plato, 427/8 BC – 348/7 BC



However, with the Greeks adoption of an alphabetic writing and the invention of printing with movable type (circa 2,000 years later), empirical and theoretical propositions had consolidated into a written, as opposed to verbal form of peer interrogation and evaluation. This continued with the Enlightenment and the development of the Scientific Method and the publishing of scientific research that placed an emphasis on the author's peers to replicate an experimental process, in order to evaluate the efficacy of the author's methods, findings and theories.

These research methodologies still permeate and predominate within institutions of higher education today. All of the above are largely based on placing and disseminating new and esoteric knowledge into a peer informed critical domain. It then being up to the broader culture to make judgements on and address any moral, political and ethical issues raised.

As research has become funded by democratically elected governments together with the transparency this entails, other criteria and imperatives have come into play. Organisations responsible for the allocation of research funding have begun to favour projects where researchers (often from different disciplines) collaborate not only to create, communicate and place new knowledge in specialist domains, but also to make the research accessible in the public domain. The latter in particular is often expected to explain and justify the social worth and/or relevance of the research to the general public.



Whilst Visual communication Designers have the skills to make what might be complex and specialist research accessible to the public, this is often in collaboration with researchers from other disciplines. The Visual communication Designer's role is often although not exclusively, to communicate and explain the nature and relevance of a piece of academic and / or industry research. Unfortunately, it is rare that Visual communication Designers are the authors of the research.



One reason for this is that Visual communication Design and Visual communication Design education is a successful global industry and profession. The value of its graduates, creative practices and outputs, have and continue to be empirically proven in the marketplace. This educational and professional success has meant that Visual communication Design academics have tended to be slow to engage with other academic activities, particularly research. When they have engaged, it often follows the Humanities model; that is a written analysis or commentary but with greater consideration given to the visual presentation of the research in terms of layout, image selection and typography.

Another reason for this lack of engagement with academic research is that Visual communication Design practices and outputs tend not to align to or indeed gravitate against the long-established Science and Humanities *hegemonic* models of research or indeed pedagogy. Consequently, the details of the sophisticated, nuanced, intellectual, tacit, intuitive skills, knowledge and processes employed by Visual communication Designers have largely remained unevaluated or indeed under-appreciated within academia. It could be maintained that this is a result of the Science and Humanities hegemony. Alternatively, it could well be said that academia's lack of appreciation of Visual communication Design practices and research, is ultimately a failing of Visual communication Design academics.

However, it should be said that Visual communication Design, as a substantive academic discipline has only begun to emerge since art and design colleges began to be subsumed into universities. Consequently, as a comparatively new academic discipline Visual communication Design tends to lack a distinctive, established and cohesive framework of methodologies, theories and texts that can be used to under pin and interrogate its practice and outputs. Unlike for example, other established academic disciplines such as Psychology, Medicine or Physics. As a consequence, and within an academic research context, this lack of an established and cohesive framework of methodologies and theories through which Visual communication Design might distinguish itself, makes it problematic to identify the subject as a credible area of academic research.



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 m n l o p q r s t  
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 m n l o p q r s t

m What is our  
 begin to achieve

Visual communication Design often employs a rich mix of practices, theories and texts from other disciplines such as, but by no means limited to: Media and Communication, Marketing and Advertising, Photography, Film and TV, Art and Design. This eclectic mix is often made even more complex by employing or referring to practices, theories and texts that relate the specific format/context of communication such as a poster or book, interactive screen or installation. Additionally, successful Visual communication Design may often require research into the specific content and function of the message, together with some measure of not understanding, then empathy with the intended audience.

Depending upon your perspective, this eclecticism is further compounded or enhanced by many Visual communication Designers' ambition to "maintain a competitive advantage", or "stay ahead of the curve". One of the ways they achieve this, is by keeping abreast of the latest trends, ideas, practices and products relating not just directly to their own discipline, but also within the broader culture. This means that the range of practices, theories and texts employed by Visual communication Design practitioners and educators are not only more diverse and numerous than many other academic disciplines, but they also continually evolve and change at a faster pace.

So how do we maintain and develop our creative, dynamic and eclectic processes and at the same time define Visual communication Design as a distinct academic discipline, on a par with other disciplines such as Architecture, History, Geography, Psychology, Medicine or Physics? Or are we driven to ask this question because Visual communication Design has been relocated from colleges of art and design to universities? I would suggest most Visual communication Designers would vote to continue to embrace the eclectic approach to our practice and research – it is fundamental to what we do.





From a pedagogic and industry perspective, the creative, dynamic and eclectic approaches outlined above, have a very successful track record. University level Visual communication Design programmes in particular, produce well rounded and creative graduates that go on to succeed in and contribute to the development of their discipline, economy and culture.

However, Visual communication Design's primary role has and continues to be; to increase their clients' market share, sell more products and act as a prime facilitator of an unsustainable model of consumption and production.

From anecdotal and personal experience many Visual communication Designers whether in industry or academia have different interpretations of their role in our economic system. Some of them embrace the commercial and competitive nature of Visual communication Design. They enjoy and gain satisfaction from the creative manner in which they address the challenges required of them and see this as a positive contribution to the economy. They are often at the forefront of consuming and shaping new styles, fashions, products, technological innovation and modes of communication, consumption and production. However, and again from anecdotal and personal experience there are many who despite the creative satisfaction derived from their role, are dissatisfied or even disillusioned with the unsustainable socio-economic framework their work and industry underpins.





Whilst there are a range of individuals and disparate forums that contest the role and outputs of Visual communication Designers, there are few if any, substantial and more importantly ongoing forums. Ymt, is a forum where Visual communication Designers dissatisfied with the discipline's primary role in our society, can give a coherent voice to their ideals, aspirations, skills and knowledge. A forum where these may be used not only to contest the status quo, but also more importantly to propose, suggest, communicate and initiate alternatives. As an individual or as collective, on a micro or macro level.

The crux of the matter is not only to use our skills and knowledge to influence the stakeholders in our own domain, but can we change their behaviour?

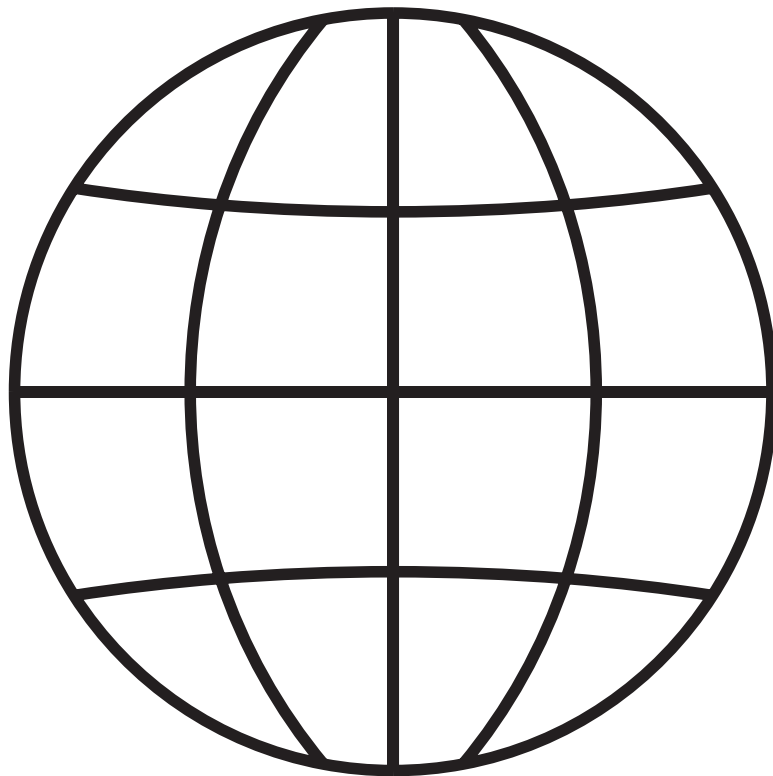
The rest will follow.



The  ?



The



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# Questions of the

# in Visual communication design

Arja Karhumaa

Assistant professor, Head of Programme Visual communication Design,  
Department of Media, Aalto University School of Arts, Design & Architecture



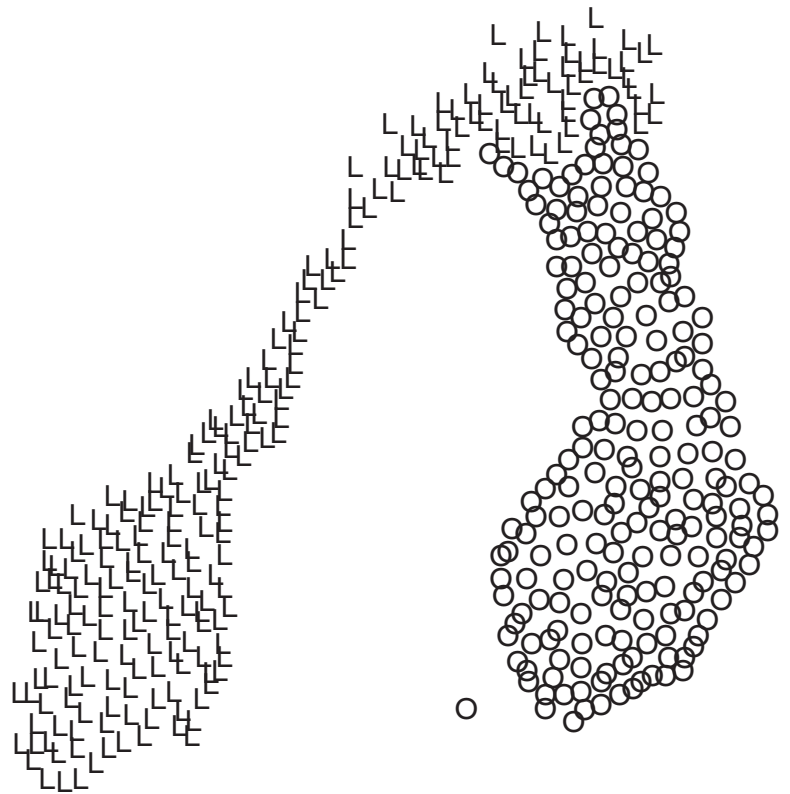
'local'



On the surprisingly hot days of 5 – 6 June 2019, a group of twenty-eight educators and scholars in the field of Graphic design and Visual communication gathered together at the Aalto University campus in Espoo, Finland. The Symposium was initiated by the Visual communication design (VCD) study programme at Aalto ARTS. This brought together study programmes at universities in the Nordic and Baltic countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, and Sweden.

This was a collegial meeting for discussion – a friendly and relaxed event, arranged however in the hope of significant academic implications. Instead of scholarly presentations, we invited colleagues to come together, to learn to know one another, and to ask questions collectively. We discussed localities, commonalities, and differences, and made attempts to frame future key concerns of our design discipline. We had dinner al fresco, us Northern dwellers, slightly amazed by this early summer opportunity so rare in our part of the hemisphere that we refer to it with its Italian name. And towards the end of the two-day event, the participants all agreed that this was an exercise and a connection worth nurturing in the future, in the form (or formlessness) of a loose professional network. In the following, as the one who sent out the invitations for the symposium, I aim to describe some of the motivations for establishing such a meeting, and such a network.

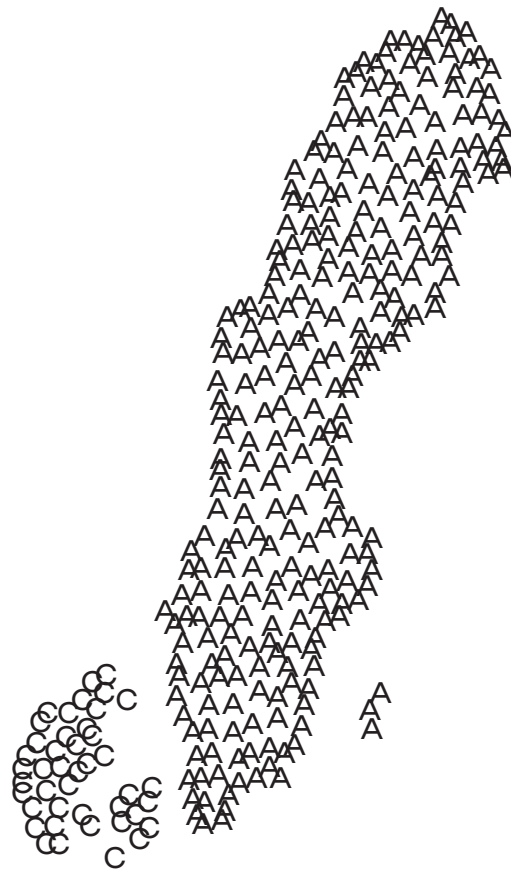
Everyday life in academic institutions is often as overwhelming as it is rewarding. As universities tend to get bigger rather than smaller, professors, lecturers, and researchers find themselves involved with a plethora of tasks and responsibilities. Academic leadership in art/design education is a powerful commitment situated in multiple domains, and working days negotiating between those domains are long and jam-packed. One might too easily lose sight of the big picture, of others around you, of the ones working next to you or outside in other schools and institutions, of the professionals in your country and beyond, of the chain of professionals all committed to the field and its particular questions.





And indeed, there are a lot of questions. Visual communication, almost by definition, is driven by its constant negotiation with contemporary conditions, because communication happens here and now, in tune with the changing times. As design practitioners, we are aware of the perennial uncertainty of dealing with emerging technologies and media. Apparently, human communication never stops seeking for the ultimate material substrate for conveying the ideas, facts, claims, stories, narratives, memes, arguments, news, numbers and experiences that we call information and/or knowledge.

So, what to teach? How to teach? And what exactly is research in Visual communication Design? Having followed both private conversations as well as more public or scholarly discussions, we at Aalto VCD found that many people and many stakeholders are asking the same kind of questions. We wanted to suggest coming together and thinking together, sharing the questions and uncertainties. We decided to start with our closest colleagues: the Nordic and Baltic countries.

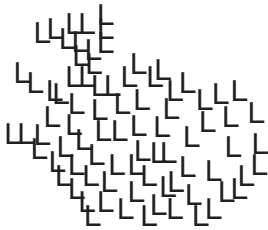


The notion of locality became crucial to our initiative. Here, however, the approaches to locality are multiple. First, it simply refers to geography. Second, it leads us to ask whether local conditions have shaped design practice and discourse: if communication is always tied to language, culture, and ways of life, to what extent are design principles universal? Third, locality might refer to the situated knowledge of a design practitioner, the kind of knowledge that is starting to emerge from practice based research in our field.

So first, let's go back to geography. Academic life and merit depend on international networks, which often require travelling near and far. In the midst of a global climate crisis, it is becoming more and more obvious that just like every other area of human endeavour, eventually academic institutions might also have to renegotiate their practices in internationalization. So as important as we think it is to connect with overseas colleagues, we thought having a closer connection with the ones close by was not only long overdue, but a timely statement.







Second, we thought it was worth discussing whether there is particular local knowledge regarding Visual communication in the North: the Nordic, Scandinavian, and Baltic countries. These countries are different, but there are attributes we do share: countries are relatively small, with equally small languages, and we all take pride in keeping our societies running even when knee-deep in snow. Certainly, we can think of further cultural commonalities as well. But what would those local traits mean for Visual communication, specifically?

Historically, it would seem graphic design in the North has largely been harmonized with the European countries which have played significant roles in the history in graphic design – such as Switzerland or the Netherlands. Much of the practice we follow and the critical writing we read also stems from the Anglo-American context. The histories of design in our own countries are still largely unwritten and, on the other hand, we have known disturbingly little about design in the Global South. In our times of global networks, is locality important, and how? What about language and how that shapes design?

I must be quick to note that we are not interested in any identity project for nation states, much less seeking for any kind of cultural (or other) purity. Instead, acknowledging how ways of life are shaped by languages and cultures might make other ways of life more understandable for us: according to the Finnish philosopher Tere Vadén, 'locality always includes our relationships to other cultures'<sup>[1]</sup>. How might we who reside in the privileged North make space for those previously silenced? If the Global South is so far under-represented in the globalized design discourse, should the North remain silent and listen, or is there a contribution left for us to make? Vadén considers locality as a site of open negotiation of meanings and values:

'Myths, the knowledge of experiential connections, thinking that takes time over several generations are all good examples of local meaning. Temporary solutions to the problem of meaning create ways of experiencing, grasping, and conceptualizing. Invigorated by these concepts local experience can shape itself towards a direction where the Western notions of utility and survival are not equated with good'

<sup>[2]</sup>



[1] Vadén 2006, 234

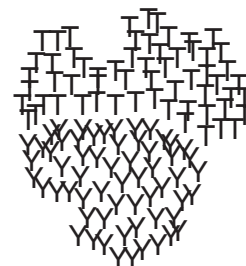
[2] Vadén 2006, 235



Third, local knowledge can also be understood ethnographically in a way that verges on epistemology. From that vantage point, it is understood that the education and professional practice of particular people shape their minds and they in turn shape the world: for 'those roles we think to occupy turn out to be minds we find ourselves to have' (Geertz 1983, 155). In my experience, practitioners of Graphic design and Visual communication share an understanding that the very thing they know, and the potential within that knowledge and skill, is not yet entirely understood by other disciplines or societal institutions.

With the recent increase of practice based research in Visual communication, what might emerge can be understood as an 'ethnography of thinking' (Geertz 1982) that will reach a better understanding of the local knowledge of designers, and make their role understandable for others. As Johanna Drucker successfully argues in her book *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production* (2014) the time has perhaps come to develop a domain of expertise focused on 'visual epistemology'. The central argument here is that visual and graphic forms not only represent knowledge, but often take a central role in knowledge production, which is not easily perceived by more established fields of research. The local, situated, embodied knowledge of a communication designer is currently being framed as a distinct way of knowing that might possibly have something to contribute to other fields of knowledge production.

With these three different takes on locality in mind, we set out to our friendly, open-ended Symposium in the early summer days in Espoo. We started off by sharing broad questions about our field: the participants were asked to define what might be the most urgent question in their study programmes right now, and to share that question with others. Afterwards, the discussion gravitated towards quite detailed practicalities. For the minutes of everyday educational practices are of course where the abstract ideals come to being. So once again: What to teach? How to teach? And what is research in Visual communication design? These were the core questions we circled around, and we shared the practices and concerns of our respective institutions and programmes.



As anticipated, posing questions created more questions, but it was also very clear that most of the institutions were troubled by similar issues. Many fruitful, engaged discussions ensued, and friends were made. The symposium ended up as the launch of a collegial network for this field in the Nordic, Scandinavian and Baltic countries, for peer discussion and collaboration.



How can

structures for critical self-reflection

be built into

Higher education departments?



How  
to reflect  
when there  
is no time  
to think  
??





# Futures of practice

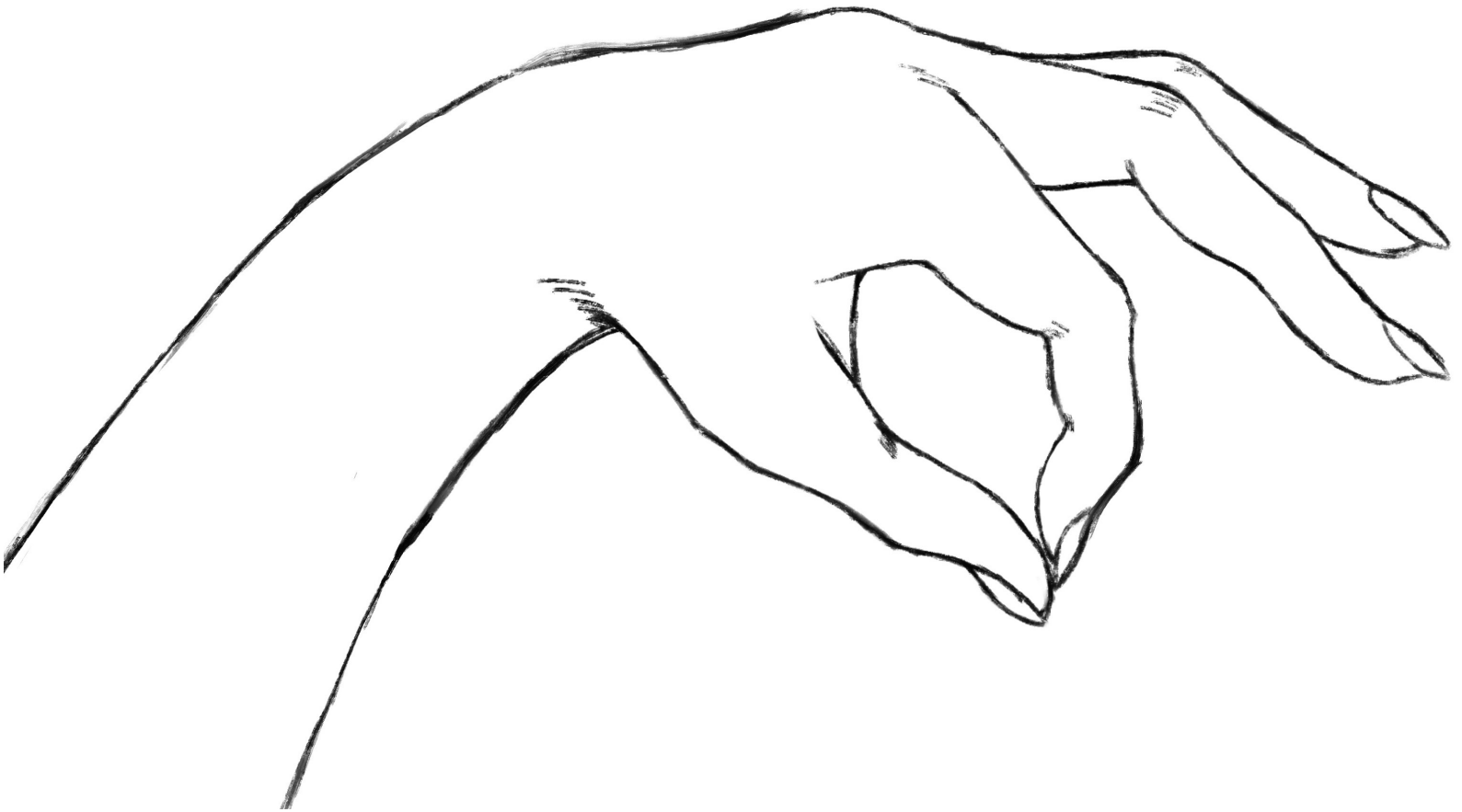
Johanna Lewengard

Professor of Graphic Design,  
Konstfack University of Arts, Craft and Design









First of all, thanks to Arja Karhumaa and colleagues at Aalto for organizing a gathering in Helsinki and for inviting us from Konstfack along with our Nordic and Baltic peers. I, together with my colleagues at Konstfack, believe a cross institutional dialogue about Visual communication, its various educational practices and joint quests for the future, is necessary and we look forward to continuing our conversation about this.

In this article, based on a short presentation made to the first symposium in Aalto, I go into questions about Visual communication research. I especially wish to address the significance of research through this practice and share how we, in the Visual communication department

*'What we cannot imagine cannot come into being.'*<sup>[1]</sup>

at Konstfack, started to create an infrastructure to better support and secure disciplines that constitute this field. In our case Graphic design and Illustration, two separate and quite different disciplines that are organized to happily co-exist at the university.

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[1] Bell Hooks, Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom Routledge, 2013



**Structure**

The structure of Visual communication at Konstfack today looks like this: While Visual communication makes one of four artistic main areas at the university (next to Fine Art, Craft and Design), Illustration together with Graphic design are the main subjects. At bachelor's level we run a three year program called Graphic design and Illustration, and at master's level we run a two year program called Visual communication. During spring 2019 we announced available for application two PhD positions in Visual communication, one of them towards Illustration and one of them towards Graphic design. These were the first PhD positions in Visual communication to be announced in Sweden ever. However, it took us six years to arrive at this point, although PhD studies were established at the university since years ago. I will continue with a quick unpacking of this process.

**Recognition**

Had you visited Konstfack in 2012, Visual communication would not have exist as a main area of study. Graphic design and Illustration were distributed, as sub-categories, to Design together with Industrial design, Interior architecture and Furniture design. As we noticed that Illustration and Graphic design had a tendency to dematerialize at advanced level by moving towards either art in general or design in general the specificity of these subjects as subjects of mass-communication got lost. Its different crafts were secondary, if not invisible, while so called design thinking and text-based knowledge was the main thing left to be recognized as advanced. Especially Illustration, and especially Illustration engaging with Children's culture or Comics, was often recognized as a temporary state of 'real art' rather than as highly advanced fields of their own.





In 2013 we applied for Visual communication to become a forth main area at the university, and it was accepted as such later on the same year. Based on our writings during the process of articulating Visual communication as an area; its historic, present and future significance – the Swedish Research Council acknowledged Visual communication as an artistic research area in its own right in 2015. In 2018 Visual communication was finally represented in the Research committee at Konstfack, which was ultimately the reason why we could

announce for PhD positions directly connected to our artistic research subject matter.

I believe this process taught us a lot about the importance of being specific when it comes to organisation, how being particular with terminology is a vital part in the process of becoming, even if we may feel that labeling and naming should be unessential. Because this is still where we are today with regard to artistic research, we are all in the process of becoming, in the sense that if we fail to recognize ourselves, no one else will do it for us.

### **The advanced practitioner**

In the process of formalizing spaces for practice-based research to take place within the academy, two tendencies have emerged in the last decade; one is that the higher in the hierarchy of education our subjects are established, the more they become busy with written knowledge. The other is that the higher in the hierarchy of education our subjects are established, the more they are expected to be interdisciplinary.

The factors leading to this state of things are multiple and faceted, but it ultimately boils down to contemporary definitions of so-called 'formal' (theory-based, codified, verbal) knowledge as of higher value and impact over 'informal' (practice-based, uncoded, oral or visual) ones, and an overall mispricing of practice-based knowledges as advanced – even by many designers and design educators themselves: The field is suffering from an inferiority complex that has slowly brought us to believe that the knowledge deriving from our practices alone can be not only insufficient but even unnecessary.

For Visual communication this is especially confusing. Partly since the different subjects of Visual communication are in themselves interdisciplinary, but mainly since they fundamentally deal with language beyond what is written to also and especially expand upon the how – no matter if the language material of communication is based on text or images or both.



To apply ready-made logics of academic research is simply not enough. Moreover, this rather literal translation makes the researcher migrate into a no-mans-land that is rarely recognizable to anyone including the researcher herself. Our still open question is: How do we create space for independent studies of advanced making, within the academic framework, that do not compromise the integrity and significance of each practice?

Keeping in mind that I speak from a reality that shifts between regions and cultures, universities and even departments the fact that it shifts should be part of our concerns when discussing research. And on that note I will end this reflection by sharing a point of view that hopefully can spark a collegial conversation between our universities.



[1] We need to broaden our notion of research, recognizing that research within Visual communication has always been primarily generated through practice – although, for the most part of design history, it has not been labeled or formalized as such. Infrastructures around PhD studies should promptly work to support and acknowledge excellence of practice; from criteria of assessment and supervision to forms of evaluation and graduation, with agreements on an international scale.

[2] University teachers with proven experience of practice must set the agenda, and be responsible for shaping research programs in Visual communication, in an ongoing dialogue with the field. Such programs need to accommodate primarily modes of research-through-practice, as well as theory-based research, formulating flexible systems for supporting both.

[3] We need an honest discussion to distinguish between design practitioners and scholars, in order to recognize the relevance of knowledge that can only arrive from practice. This also requires carefully crafted models, when it comes to the appointment of academic positions, that cannot be based on formal merits alone but must take into account experience accumulated through practice.

[4] We need to rethink systems of evaluation in order to properly be in dialogue with practice-based research. We need to make room for a final result that allows for the performative aspects of practice to take form, and adequate criteria to evaluate them.

### **In conclusion**

Research is a politically motivated idea, and must be the entire field's responsibility. Institutions that support Visual communication research as a radical quest into the expansion of its crafts are in the unique position to become the spaces where futures of practice are, for the first time, imagined and given form.



What can you see or  
learn from numbers  
[American grade 6 grades]?





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# Letters – Bodies: Historical content of typography

Aušra LISAUSKIENĖ

Head of the Graphic Design Department,  
Vilnius Academy of Arts



Letters are glyphs that reside silently in books, on mobile phone and computer screens. They encode sounds but are not part of them. Even looking the same, they often mark different sounds in different languages; sometimes the opposite happens. Letters generally are not aggressive, they behave in a proper way and we do not notice them until they are needed.

Having used them, we tend to forget about their existence. It has been for some time I keep a book on my desk published in 1998 and several times republished *Typography: when, who, how* by Friedrich Friedl, Nikolous Ott, and Bernard Stein, has become a 'bible' to typographers and font designers. In this book, the authors present an abbreviated and compressed version of the whole alphabet 'culture'. The book starts with chronologically presented typographic trends and forms of multi-stylist typography which was dominant at the end of the 20th century and ends up with the samples of cuneiform used in Mesopotamian/Sumerian culture in 3000 BC. The book also presents about seven hundred typographers, font and graphic designers, calligraphers and artists working in the field with short biographies, as well as the most famous schools and institutions, teachers and theoreticians who have left prominent footprint in the typography field. More than two thousand illustrations in this book visually reveal how typography played an important role in society and, to a certain extent, can be considered a 'typographical dictionary' of the design world.

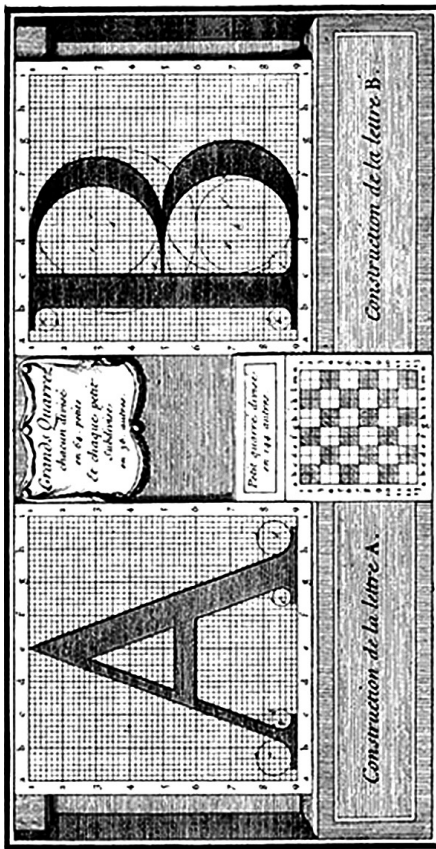


I often look through this book and I am convinced that we continue to use the same vocabulary. Sometimes unintentionally, sometimes deliberately we start using not only words but we often quote 'sentences' or even whole 'paragraphs'. The changing geopolitical, cultural and social contexts have been changing the content of the typographic message, and sometimes this deliberate quotation is justified but we must always remember to pay a tribute to the authorship, to those who first 'pronounce'

the 'words of typography'. In this article, I would like to stop at the Baroque 'typography dictionary', that we have been using since the beginning of 17th century. It was an epoch where royal patronage caused flourishing of theater, music, art, and architecture. The essential features of the Baroque style, which we can easily recognize in different genres, are described in various sources: complexity, sophistication, sensuality, impulsiveness, vividness, dynamism, drama, patience, tenderness and sense of ensemble. The great names like Rubens, van Dyck, Rembrandt, Bach, and Hendel have been fascinated by different generations for more than three hundred years. No exception is typography and font design. The radical event happened in 1692, in France when King Louis XIV placed an order to the Royal Printing House founded in 1639 by Cardinal Richelieu to create an exclusive Royal font. In 1702 a typographer Philippe Grandjean de Fouchy fulfilled the order and created the Baroque font *Romain du Roi*.



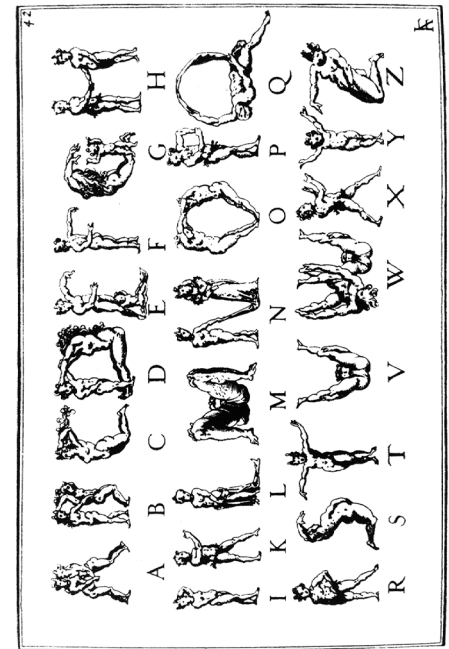




Typefont *Romain du Roi*. Letters A and B.

After the flowering of the art of writing and typography in the Renaissance, the Baroque epoch was a great step towards Classicism for that reason baroque fonts acquired the name as *Transit*. Their form, the angle of the axis, the serifs and other specific details can be described as no longer Renaissance but not Classical yet. The fonts of this period were not strictly constrained by the dogmas of typography, which allowed them to acquire unique qualities and more modern aesthetic forms. The shape of the baroque letter was no more predetermined form of metal; it was shaped by precise copper engraving, and the contrast between the thinnest and thickest lines became more pronounced. Font, individual letters and typography have become more vivid and decorative. The elegant flap of the book radiated the play of thin and thick lines and the typography was very often

combined with ornament or engraved drawings. In the formation and development of Baroque font design and typography there were three major key players: The Netherlands, England and France. Baroque liberated all the senses, the naked human body in art was depicted not only in biblical motives. The figures of people from the Initial letters used in the Roman and Gothic periods undressed and transformed themselves ... into letters. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that next to the word 'Baroque' in my *Typography Encyclopedia* on page no. 94, I found a typographical alphabet named *1596 Franco* in which the letters of the human being were constructed with the help of various movements.



Typefont *1596 Franco*.



These twenty-four naked Latin letters in typography history were quoted many times and in many forms. The female figures were used more often. Some alphabet letters, dated back in 1789 which I found out on the public access page, seemed provoking and annoying ... Indeed, it was nothing extraordinary in those letters; since the Middle Ages the human body was used to be placed into the initials letters of the ancient manuscripts, cards, satirical illustrations, etc. Subsequently, the human body was not placed in the letters; it became the letter itself. The evolution of the human body-letter in typography begins with fairly moderate illustrations of medieval warriors or monks, cheerful transformations of Harlequin or a joker figures and ends up with the female and male body acrobatics.



Alphabet Bourbonnoise.



It has become interesting to find out how the citation of those letters moved into digital media, or whether the historical transformative artifacts of the human body–letter moved to the 21st-century virtual format. I managed to find out many examples of experimental projects and font designs that have extended those traditions. And most often there were the experiments with a woman's body or parts of it. Thus, the impression is that even in font design, in its historical context, the body of a woman is usually viewed with simplicity.



Typefont *Silvester Bodies*.

The font shown in the illustration was digitized according to the historical engraving in 2003 and downloaded more than thirteen thousand times! Looking at such a digitized 'typographic quote', you realize that those clichés are not in the form of a woman, a daughter, a sister, but a woman hetera, a geisha, an erotic dancer and so on ... By the way, such examples can be found on the Internet – both historical artifacts and their digitized versions. Does the next question logically arise as to whether those human body letters were designed to visually appeal to another person's eyes for whom they are now in the digital 21st century? If they are so expressive in gender, could they be classified as gender-specific and whether they are male or female? By the way, what could female letters mean? Should they be very beautiful and aesthetic? On the Internet, I again discovered another font created by a student from Greece – Anastasia Mastrakouli six years ago. In aesthetic photos, the silhouettes letters of a young woman are projected through a textured shower enclosure. Glass texture depicts a person model that touches only part of the glass but at the same time turns into an anatomical body, an object of motion analysis. Reading, letter recognition is transformed into admiration and not a single detail gives me a prompt if there is a feminine font.



There are many questions that arise and I am looking for the answers through my artworks. Analyzing the phenomenon of typographic visuals through letters, letterheads, contexts, I always try to free them from belonging – from something that does not specify them. After all, the visual form of the letter and its sound duo-based on the infinite history of communication of humanity have always been based on cultural content. The meanings and sounds that the letters contain are not part of it, it is the legacy of the experience, culture and traditions of civilization. 'Quoting' the sentences or all the paragraphs from the 'vocabulary' described above would require a completely different approach today. It is not worth trying to identify whether a particular font is masculine or feminine and for which gender it is applicable. It is only a form that holds sounds and meanings, in this case, graphic or photographic images. If the letters become images and the images embody letters, then the following logical question arises: what about the human body? After all, the body sometimes materializes the personality; sometimes imprisons. This was vividly illustrated in the performance *TransParade: Gender (Replacement) Fashion* presented at the Akademija Gallery in 2004, which attempted to define the role of the human body in (de) constructing the multiple identity of a modern person.

The answer to this question was given by prof. Eglė Ganda Bogdaniienė and students: Luiza Achramovič, Gintarė Baranauskaitė, Marta Cernovskaya, Viktorija Eglinskaitė, Nijolė Giedrimaitė, Dovilė Gudačiauskaitė, Dovilė Trinkūnaitė, Eglė Vengalytė. Performers of the show, with the musical rhythm in the background, were changing their felt garments by dressing in 'men's' and 'women's' costumes, depicting naked bodies without fear of any sex marks: a woman's breasts, a man's genitalia, a pregnant belly, and so on. In the performance, the participants changed their 'bodies' by bravely dragging on the other sex and changing it to their own. According to art critic Laima Kreivytė, social sex is constructed in accordance with the prevailing norms of masculinity and femininity in society but ultimately his / her own (no) gender is determined by the body's owner.







*Naked-silhouette-alphabet,*  
Anastasia Mastrakouli.



This performance has served as inspiration and as a raw material for another typographic project, where the liberation of both sexes has been used to create letters without prioritizing any of them. Together with Trans-Parade author prof. Egle Ganda Bogdanienė 24 letters were constructed, in which another version of the body-letter of the human body was created provocatively. The letters made out of both male and female felt were casually placed on the sidewalk.

Thus twenty-four Latin letters, transformed into the figures of humans with the dominance of female figures that of Baroque prosperity were 'quoted' again. Brutally, not looking for elegance or aesthetics, there was an opportunity for both sexes to be transformed into letters from their felt bodies, at this time without presence of human being.



#### *Body-letters*

Ausra Lissauskiene, Eglė Ganda Bogdaniene,  
Photos by A. Lissauskiene



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# What to put into the communication designer's handbag?

Lars Hoff-Lund

Head of Communication Design,  
Design School Kolding



In an ever expanding design field, we tend to get more and more topics to choose from when considering courses and curriculum for the communication design programs. Not only is the world turning digital at high speed which inevitably affects the design field and adds new land pieces to it, but at the same time relatively new areas such as game design, world building, augmented reality, speculative design, service design, and design thinking keep pushing the boundaries for what we used to see as the framework for communication design.

If you think of the design student's skills capacity as a handbag, you might want to fill that handbag with bits and pieces for any occasion, like you would with any other handbag. That way the designer would be confident that no matter what design challenge she or he would encounter after graduating from design school, all she would have to do would be to stick her hand into that bag and drag out the design tools needed. She would never be left emptyhanded. However, like with real handbags there is a limit to what this skills handbag can contain. That goes for even the largest of them. Therefore, being responsible for the design programs, we often find ourselves between a rock and a hard place because we want our graduates to have the complete skill set of tomorrow. There is just not enough room left in the handbag or the course plan.

In fact, even when planning a design program focusing on traditional design activities such as graphic design you would likely struggle to find time for each of the courses that would help the students become really skilled. Because there's so much to teach, so many fields of interest and each of them could easily take years to master. For instance, you could spend all three years of a bachelor program studying nothing else but typography and type design, and still there would be enough to delve into afterwards to last a lifetime.

The most obvious solution to the scarcity of time would be to simply prolong the program with an extra year to make sure it provides the students with the best possible skill set. Unfortunately, the education politics tend to prioritize quantity of students at an ever, decreasing cost rate over educational quality. With no extra program year, we are left with the question of what to put in the designer's handbag during that limited period of time where we have the pleasure of the students attending our schools.



Perhaps now is then the time to take a brave new look at the design programs and to suggest solutions that are no longer about how much to fill in that handbag but rather what exactly to put into it, and what to leave out. Also, it might be about time to challenge the understanding of communication design as such since the field is a mix of so many different elements. Above all, rather than focusing on individual skills, perhaps now is the time to try to find an answer to this question.

What kind of value could the communication designer provide and  
what kind of impact could his or her design have on the world?

Looking at communication design through this new lens, we might hesitate at first when searching for an answer. No one doubts that design over the past decades has had immense importance to brands and businesses in the product development as well as in the marketing of products. But what about design as a driver of change? Design as a tool for transforming the way we live, the way we behave, and the way we treat the globe?

By tweaking how we teach design from considering the visuals as an end in itself to seeing it as a means to entice people, we could make use of the huge potential of communication design for doing good. Because is communication design not about affecting humans to do something or to act in some particular way? In other words, is it not the designer's foremost purpose, the big why, to induce some kind of reaction in the persons concerned? Maybe even to obtain some kind of behavioral change?

By looking at communication design in this perspective, you will find that the foundation for the future communication designer is a curiosity about the real problem, and not just what meets the eye. Therefore, the designer will seek a deep insight into the citizens, users, members and customers who are at the center of the problem to be solved. Similarly, the situation and the context in which the design solution is to be implemented in are examined, because only with that insight do we know the true nature of the challenge, and what motivational factors and barriers the people concerned might have, and how we as designers can target them and help inducing change.

What to put into the communication designer's handbag?



The skilled communication designer should use her knowledge, skills and competencies to challenge habits of thinking, to question the given and to create a design, functionality and narrative that triggers the emotional engagement of the recipient, because once you hit people emotionally, they will be receptive to your messages and ready to respond to them. Thus, by virtue of her investigative and inclusive methods the designer could become a catalyst for understanding and behavioral change.

This new perspective leads us back to the question about what to put in the designer's handbag. The first thing that comes to mind would be that our students should get to know about the human psychology when it comes to behaviors, habits and the natural friction or resistance to change.

By understanding this, the designer would have a far better starting point for affecting people. You might argue, that the design has always been about affecting people. True. But to a large degree the affection part has hitherto been about getting your target group's attention, delivering a message, and in the best of worlds presenting them for some kind of a call to action.

The AIDA model is right down this alley, and even though it is most often being used in the context of product sales, the same way of thinking has typically characterized campaigns aimed at changing our way of living or our behavior in certain aspects. Just think of non-smoking campaigns, don't drink and drive campaigns, organ donation campaigns, etc. A lot of money has been and is being spent on information campaigns like these. All kinds of approaches have been tried out from sheer 'you will understand when you see the facts and figures' to scary pictures of smokers' lungs. However, campaigns have mostly had no lasting effect and people still smoke, eat unhealthily, drive too fast, do not recycle, and do not sign up for organ donation.

Why is that? Well, there are probably more than one answer to that, but research has shown that behavioral change requires so much more than a repeated appeal whether based on a rational or an emotional approach. As humans, we may be receptive of a message and we may have the best intentions to act accordingly but more often than not we will fall back to doing as we used to do.





Thus, understanding human nature when it comes to habits and behavior would be essential to designing for change. Taking into consideration the psychological aspects and knowing what kind of motivators triggers what would add valuable new competences to the designer. Combining that with some of the most powerful tools we should already be putting in the handbag, namely the ability to tell stories through our design and to evoke emotional engagement in the persons concerned, we as communication designers can potentially create understanding and change in a scale never seen before. With these new skills, we might help improve the underlying systems in the public health sector and motivate patients to adopt a new lifestyle. By engaging people, we might even contribute to forming and supporting communities and movements.

Looking at design education, the above-mentioned change might require sacrificing some older techniques and crafts from the common education letting students that are dedicated to these skills take special courses alongside the main education. We will still teach most of what we do today, of course, though perhaps with a slightly different perspective. We do not want to empty the original handbag. Rather, we should see this as a new approach to make use of our creativity and design skills in ways that aim at influencing a world deeply in need of change.

With that understanding of the concept of communication design, it is obvious that the world needs us. It is also obvious that the intention to influence people to do something or change behavior makes communication design a highly interesting discipline, even from a business- and community point of view. If we choose to take the communication design education in this new direction, the designer would have one of the world's most valuable handbags.



How much of studies in Visual communication should be about

design skills, and how much about **research** and thinking?



Should a  
Visual communication  
designer have a  
**STRONG**  
theoretical knowledge?



EXCHANGE



BE LIKE

Klara Kapprell  
and Patricia Pfeiffer

Visual communication BA students,  
Department of Design,  
Fac. of Fine Arts, Music and Design.

BE LIKE





**HAVE YOU FOUND  
ANY CULTURAL  
DIFFERENCES?**

### Exchange students at KMD

We are Klara and Patricia. Both Visual communication students from Germany. Klara from HBK Braunschweig, Patricia from FH Gestaltung, Würzburg. We are very grateful to be able to study at KMD in Bergen, because the university offers many opportunities for further development, we get to meet a lot of very nice people and we are also happy to gather experience while doing a semester abroad in this beautiful country of Norway. The institution definitely stands out comparing to other design universities.

### Klara

Even though I came here without speaking any Norwegian, there are three words that got really stuck in my head during my first weeks at KMD: Bærekraftig, Spørsmål and Presentasjon.

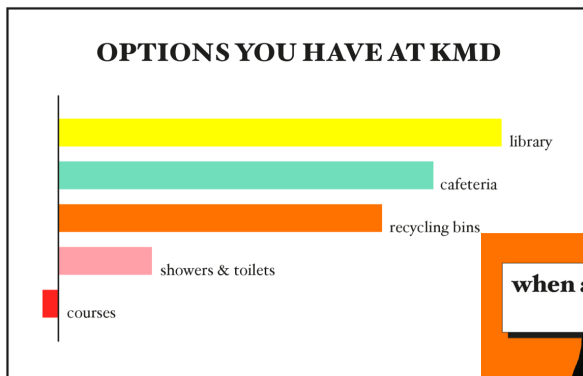
I think KMD has a special focus on how to make sustainable design, research and how to make a bigger impact. My study program back home is really open and based on the individual development of every student, therefore we don't have such a specific focus field. I found it really interesting to look at design in another context – related to current environmental problems. It's a really important aspect which I want to include in my further work. I like the environment and atmosphere at KMD – it's a great place to study and make new experiences. Tusen takk to all students, teachers and workshop leaders who have made my stay as easy and welcoming.

**OH GREAT,  
THIS LECTURE  
IS ACTUALLY  
IN NORWEGIAN.**

### Patricia

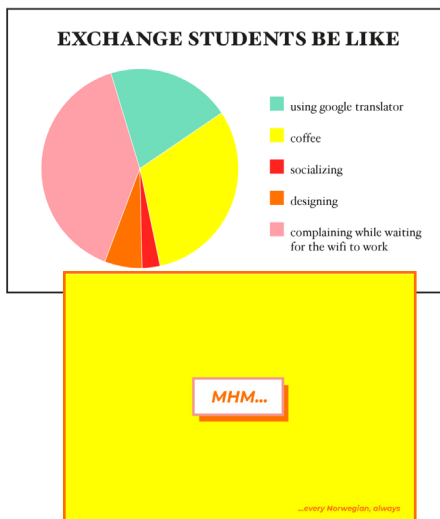
For my part, I find the offer of the workshops overwhelming. My faculty at home is rather small and therefore we only offer workshops in wood. I also think that the small that is strengthened by working together in our own work area. If I could give KMD a tip for the future, then it would certainly be to give the students more freedom occasionally and to throw strict guidelines over board. You'd be amazed what's going on in the minds of students who don't have to stick to bumpers. Love goes out to everyone who has made this stay so wonderful for me, all fellow students and the teachers and workshop coordinators who give so much for the students every day. I have learned a lot and will definitely recommend KMD to the next generations.





### Differences

Our studies at home are about trying something new, reaching your own limits, questioning them and reshaping them. It's about finding out where your strengths and interests lie and in which area you want to expand your skills. At our universities we decide for ourselves which courses we take part in. In this context, we can largely determine the medium, thus creating symbioses of different media and fields of design that are relevant to a certain topic and communicate and visualize it in the best possible way. Over time, we noticed that at KMD the idea of personal development as a designer is seen more as a didactic process.



**Brain:** „Do u got your keycard?“  
**Me:** „I think so.“  
**Also me:**



Due to the partly 'short' time span of the courses, there is not always the possibility to intensively experiment with topics and techniques which is a pity, because through explorations the creativity can be driven on the next level. On the other hand the concept of the linear schedule has great potential since its easier to concentrate on one course at a time and to follow it with focus and a quick end result. We have described our impressions from our own perspective and how we experience the KMD in our everyday life as an exchange student. No matter at which university or in which country you study there are always advantages and disadvantages that you should question critically. Differences can teach you a lot and qualities that you see as disadvantages can change into benefits in a different context.

The German and Norwegian teaching systems differ in many aspects, but in the end we are all educated to be designers, sent to the same world. So it doesn't primarily matter in which country or at which university you study, but what you want to achieve with your own studies and how you deal with your skills and responsibility as a designer in the future.

**DO U LIKE IT HERE?**

- ☐ yes.
- ☐ no.
- ☐ I like the chairs in the library.



How important is it for  
male **students** to better  
approach feminism?



How important is it for  
male **teachers** to better  
approach feminism?





# The design student's favourite question

Vilde Helene Takla

Visual communication BA student,  
Department of Design,  
Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design



Graphic design

Editorial design

Wayfinding

Interaction design

Interactive design

Form

Illustration

Visual identity

Handwriting

Animation

Web design

Design theory

Photography

Infographics

Medium

Media

Book making

Printing

Branding

Movable type

Lettering

Coding

Schools of typography

Speculative design

Kinetic typography

Colour theory

Cultural semiotics

Typography

Generative design

Illumination

Drawing

Unicode

Storytelling

Programming

Critical design

Comics

Writing



'Designer.' A word that almost sings and may seem magical to those who perhaps have thought much about designers or what they do for a living. Especially since a designer is often referred to as a creator, idea machine, workaholic, planner, and even a kind of engineer in some contexts.

Have you – if you are one of us who study design – found it challenging to describe your field to others? Do you – if you are one who doesn't have an education as a designer and do not think of yourself as a creative – feel you have an understanding of what design is? Well, the answer is for both a design student and a layman, that you are not alone in being unsure of how to explain design. Even educated and experienced designers struggle to define design, because though the term has a definite meaning, there are countless variations on how to be a designer.

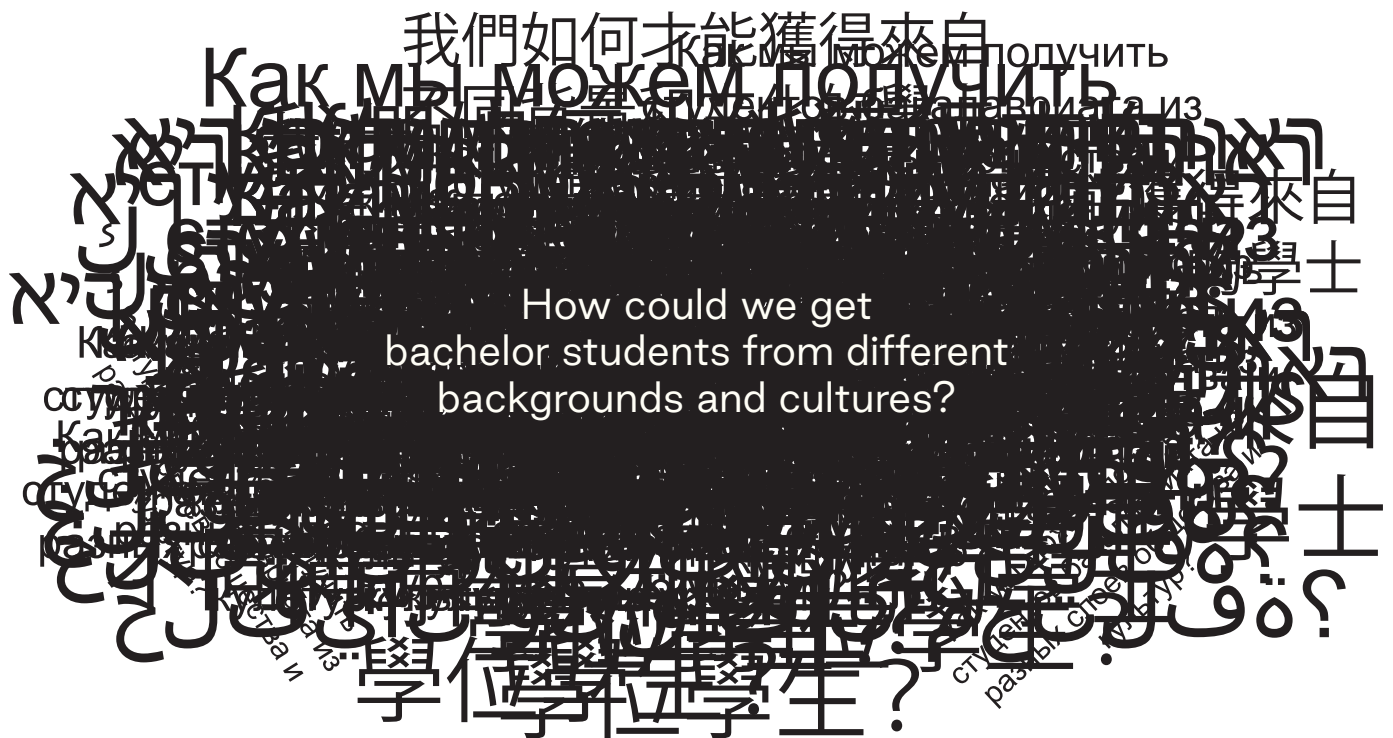
Like a word or a name does not really tell you about a person's character, the term designer is one, we who are young and wide-eyed design students, try to live up to and define ourselves through it. A well-known expression among us is 'new learning, new opportunities'. We say it if a semester did not go quite as planned, and we still try to hold on to the courage to continue and strive for new opportunities. We say it on a hectic day where we are asked to make the world a better place, while being asked to perform graphic miracles on the one hand and on the other to attend multiple seminars and workshops. Juggling chores and roles soon becomes one of our many new talents.

Perhaps multitasking should become a learning goal as well if it's about being versatile and resilient in a designers way. Well, we learn that one has to indeed be dedicated and willing to learn – fast. Everything happens very fast. Possibly too fast for some. The speed is partly due to tremendously rapid development in technology and innovation. So being a designer means to a large extent to keep up with technical development, because one can quickly fall behind. There is always a lot to take in. Thankfully, being a designer comes in many different forms, and one can specialize in the different design fields, but then they can cross over and cross between. For many, this can make it extra difficult to convey an understanding of the design profession to some curious souls.

We have all been there: You are at a social gathering, just having a good time. You talk to a stranger or casual acquaintance and they often ask the notorious question: 'So what do you study?'. If you happen to study medicine, history, or plumbing then you get away easy, you likely have a clear and simple answer. You can probably continue having fun without having to explain much further, while those of us in the creative industry need to go into lengthy explanations about what roles we have when, where, and why. We have to practice our answers before socializing! Having to answer this question is perhaps what we are most concerned with as students. And it gets even worse when you study Visual communication and want to be some sort of Visual communication designer. When it comes to explaining what we are actually working on, even though there are quite few other studies that are as flexible and variable as design, few terms are as opaque as Visual communication design.

The term is just the tip of the iceberg.









We could start by saying hi!



# Affluenza — Center for overconsumption

Sammy Hemerik,  
Julian Schlicht,  
Bo Knoblauch,  
and Jamile Faller

Design MA students,  
Department of Design,  
Fac. of Fine Arts, Music and Design



Affluenza is a project made as part of the MA program at KMD in the course From Growth to Balance in spring 2019, by MAD1 students Julian Schlicht, Jamile Faller, Bo Knoblauch and Sammy Hemerik.

[affluenza.myportfolio.com](http://affluenza.myportfolio.com)

'Overconsumption  
is an epidemic.'





### Introduction

The Affluenza center for overconsumption is an interactive design exhibition that examines individual consumer behavior. Through research and observations, we have identified individual overconsumption as a significant influence to the climate crisis. Our research indicates that a large

part of the Norwegian population continues to ignore climate issues due to a lack of personal responsibility.

To challenge this consumer attitude, our exhibition utilizes the human body as a vehicle for addressing overconsumption and its impacts on the environment.

We declare overconsumption to be an epidemic. To cure the sickness, immediate action is required. You cannot leave your sick body, the same way there is no Planet B. By presenting this analogy, visitors must confront their personal responsibility for climate change.





**Design process**

The first step in our process was to identify overconsumption as one of the most significant factors to the climate crisis. Rather than focusing on the corporate level, we decided to focus on overconsumption on the individual level. It is here, we concluded that we can make an impact with our project.

Given all the information about the climate crisis that was already available to the public, we decided in a second step that the outcome of our project should be an interactive experience. Through this experience, the individual is confronted with her or his consumption habits and personal responsibility for the climate crisis, eliminating the possibility to ignore or escape the facts.

In order to make the experience as personal and consequential as possible, we decided to use an analogy to convey the message to the participants. We cannot

escape the planet just as we cannot escape our body. Hence, we need to treat the planet just like we would treat ourselves when we are sick. That is why we declared overconsumption to be an epidemic. In order to manifest this idea, we decided to create a doctors office which treats each individual's consumption habits as a condition of the mind. The participants would take a test in the waiting room, be confronted with the result by a doctor, and receive an explanation as well as a treatment plan in the pharmacy. Each room was also designed to trigger specific emotions like anxiety, remorse and a motivation for change.













**Design results**

By designing an interactive experience, our team established a space for participants to evaluate their own consumer behavior through a sequence of guided tasks. To collect immediate results, we produced a system for communicating an individual level of urgency to match each participant.

To support our message that overconsumption is an epidemic, we created an aesthetic that references temporary emergency facilities. All our design choices were guided by this principle.

The exhibition began in the waiting room, where participants filled out a survey to calculate a personal score out of 30 possible points. The resulting scores represented the severity of their personal consumption habits. In the examination room, each score corresponded with a numbered brain scan that presented participants with the consequence of their lifestyle choices.







Upon reflection, participants entered the pharmacy. Customized prescriptions were given to suggest simple changes for reducing individual carbon footprints. Over the course of two exhibitions, our team collected 187 scores from a wide spectrum of demographics which included students, teachers, oil-rig workers, climate researchers, and more.

The survey was designed with a reference score of 12 to identify overconsumption in participants. This benchmark was created from the sum of answers to six different questions within three categories: Transport, diet and products. Of the 187 scores, the most common score was 13 out of 30.







### Effect and conclusion

The Affluenza center for overconsumption aims to be an agent of change in the climate crisis through a process of examination and evaluation that results in an improvement on individual consumption behavior.

Our project's values lay in the environmental and social contexts. Through a change in individual actions collective demands are constructed. We witnessed that the participants began to reflect upon their consumption behaviors as soon as they engaged in the experience.



Afterwards, they stayed to discuss their results and felt inspired to change their consumption habits.

However, our focus on personal responsibility does not acquit governments and corporations from their obligations of implementing measures that will cease to be harmful to the environment.

We simply approached the problem from the perspective of people being the main component of power structures. If there is a shift in consumer behavior, businesses and state policies will have to adapt.



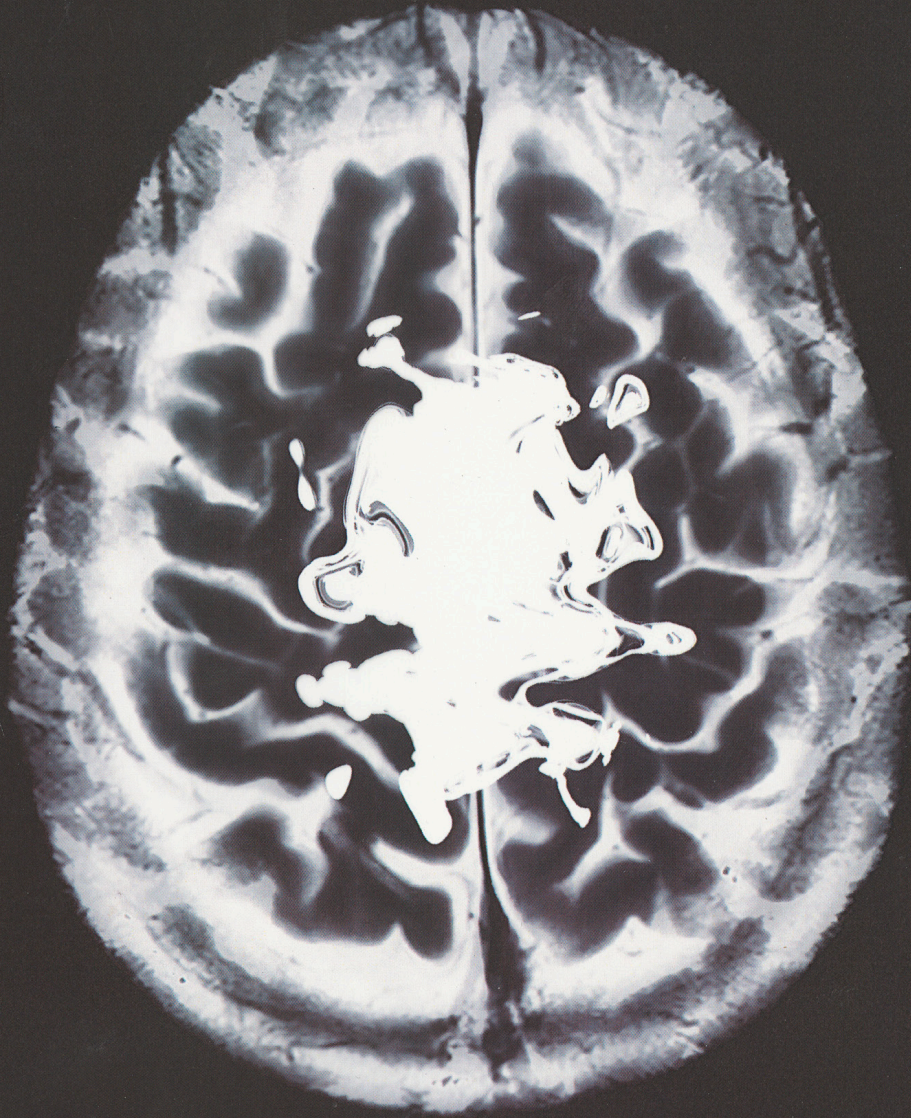
The most valuable element this project has to offer is a change of mentality and attitude concerning how we, as a world society, chose to engage in consumption practices. This ideological and behavioral rehabilitation has the potential to lead us to a healthier planet, a better environment for other living beings and a less frightening tomorrow







Severe damage. Most of the mind is infected by the overconsumption virus. The patient is strongly advised to seek treatment as soon as possible.



AFFLUENZA

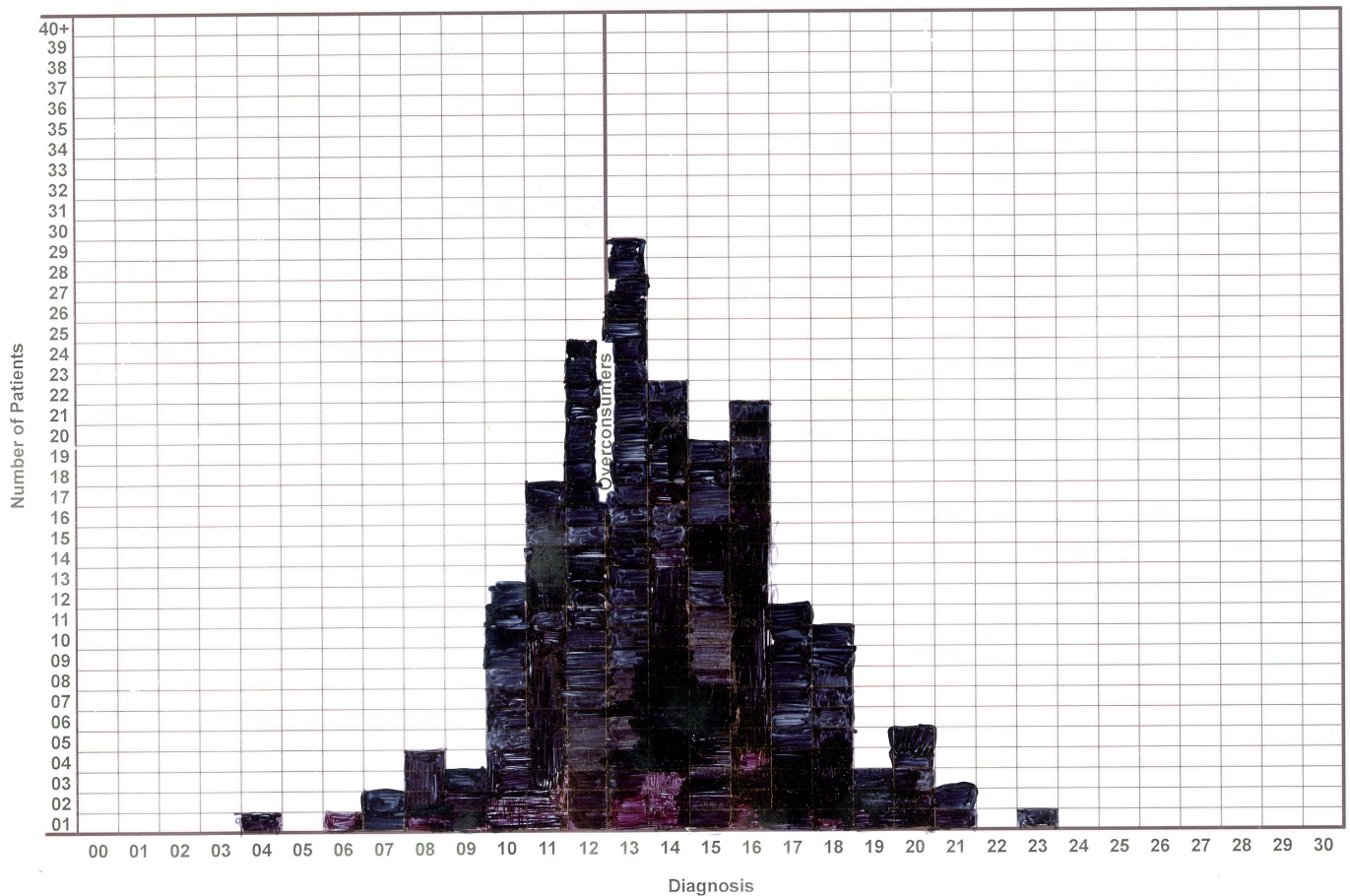
Head to the pharmacy to get your recovery plan.

Center for Overconsumption





Very thought provoking and important  
topic. Clear exhibition.  
Nice personal guiding by the  
students



Awesome idea, I hope  
this gets bigger and you help  
more people realize it.



How important is it for  
white students to better  
approach decolonialism?





How important is it for  
**white teachers** to better  
approach decolonialism?



# Scenes from a stream

Sunniva Storlykken Helland

PhD candidate,  
Department of Design,  
Fac. of Fine Art, Music and Design



It's hard to relate to that moment when I recklessly rode my bike downhill amidst roaring traffic with no intention of using the breaks and certainly not stopping until I had reached the local post office. It was just a few minutes left before shipping, and I was in desperate need to get a date stamp before send-off. The initial admission test for Visual communication at the Bergen Academy of Art and Design (KMD 1) was due, and I rushed to get that stamp as if my life depended on it. Back then, we handed everything in physically and needed a stamp to prove that admissions were on the right side of the deadline. No emails were used at that time, just postal packages with the actual submissions, plus a USB stick or a CD (my own tech savvy choice) holding whatever would be uploaded as attachments at present time.

If you who are reading this is, or have been, a KMD Visual communication student too, then I'm sure you're left with some narratives from the admission tests. Perhaps vivid memories of a few blown-up details come to mind. Perhaps even a sort of conundrum as to which place you held in the order of the acceptance list. For me it was trying to not be too intimidated by other's work, making a bad collage of Finn Graff's illustrations, and the absolute horror of coming back late from a break influenced by the person who later became my best friend. And then the wait. We had to wait for the mail to come bearing good or bad news the following weeks. Back then, receiving a thick A4 envelope by mail, clearly holding more than one sheet, meant that you were admitted. It felt like the most important thing. In many ways it was, but you could always have another go. The three-day admission test in Bergen stays with me, but something I cannot relate to anymore. The difference might be that the obstacles then was immediate and right in front of us. Now it's the long lines and long-term issues that burns.



Fast forward five years to when I was a soon to be MA design graduate in 2011, waiting for the examination committee to call me in. I was terrified of having to return to the closed room of fellow MA students. It would be a reality TV style walk of shame to fetch our jackets if we failed. I did return to the room without having failed, but I remember that I thought I was lucky with the assessment committee, and that I could just as easily have failed if a traditional graphic designer was to judge my work. I had a co-design project where I emphasised design methods and chose to let the participants visual work dominate. The MA project could have failed if I were to be assessed based on only colour choices, layout, type, display, you name it.

Doing risky work with (perhaps too high) a degree of participatory design can challenge the field and shed light on the broad disciplinary spectrum that we work within, I thought. I was lucky to have worked with 14-year-olds at a high school, and I am still proud of the site-specific temporary art work they did, and the MA project I did. The project was made with them, for them, and was placed in their own surroundings at junior high. The pupils visited the MA exhibition at what now is called Kode, and took a lot of photos where they posed in front of their contributions displayed for everyone to see, I recall.

I remember one of the pupils in particular. He had trouble sitting still in class, and said that he disliked drawing, was no good, and was not keen to participate. I think it was kind of his role in class, giving up without trying, seemingly not caring, but perhaps it was a role he just fell into, had trouble leaving behind, and just kept at it. In his project group, we worked with expressive typography, and he excelled. He chose the words to express himself, and threw ink towards the paper, painted in large, confident strokes, and minded the details carefully, making beautiful type. At the final exhibition he shouted: 'Look, there is my work! And here is my work! And there! I'm all over the place.' From the way he said it, I could tell that he was part taken aback, part proud. There were no regrets on my part, and I took the role of a design facilitator with pleasure. Undoubtedly I would showcase the best of the project: the participants' work.

We exhibited our MA projects twice. First it was to show the project, emphasising process and documentation for the assessment committee. Then there was the public and final exhibition at Kode, which demanded another kind of display of our work. And with that arose some issues that are still very much present in my artistic research today, eight years later. Process was not as important to show one of a sudden, and visual results were to be conveyed in an exhibition context. There was a whole new part of the project that I had not accounted for, and that was how to communicate the results in a way that both showed the visual voice of the designer, and how the project with its results could stand on its own, without me standing there explaining or having extensive explanatory texts on display.





What if the ppl assessing my work  
 during the latter half of the PhD  
 and at the very end evaluation the work  
 base on traditional or even old school  
 view of ~~what~~ what ~~design~~ design or  
 visual communication is?

Are there visual <sup>visu</sup>  
 linking the visual  
 certain types

Are design projects emphasising  
 participatory, adversarial, speculative  
 service, critical or social design  
 too far away on the spectrum  
 of where visual communication <sup>t</sup> is?

WHO or WHAT  
 decides the  
 trajectory



What I did then and what I still do now, is working with users of a system or a service. This time around, it is people within the Norwegian Correctional Service. My favourite groups of users by far. I am in the middle of a PhD in artistic research, and I am troubleshooting and sweet spotting at the moment, trying to figure out why it is hard for offenders to get into work after prison even with a solid education and working activity system in place. The methods for harvesting insights are drenched in design strategies although so far not very visual. Not in a **traditional** graphic design or Visual communication sense, yet. I have planned for and know the importance of communicating artistic results and research findings in an accessible way which also display a high level of visual and artistic work, but lately I have been going back to that episode where I waited for my exam results with the fear of failing.

What if the people assessing my work during the latter half of the PhD and at the very end evaluate the work based on a traditional or even old school view of what design or Visual communication is? Are design projects emphasising participatory, adversarial, speculative, service, critical or social design too far away on the spectrum of where Visual communication at KMD is today? Are there visual constraints linking the work to certain types of formats? Who or what decides the trajectory?

In my opinion, the going through five years of the Visual communication programme at KMD was something of which I will be forever grateful. Some of the teachers and courses challenged what I found to be the most interesting and important, and made me change my direction more than once. I applied to the school wanting to be an illustrator for children's books. I then wanted to work with typography and editorial design. Then the master programme opened for a **far wider perspective** on what design is and could be, which brought me into the more user oriented and interdisciplinary path on which I am on to day. I would still argue that the very best part of KMD and the biggest resource available to students, are in fact the students. Students that affect and teach each other, students that form a **bubble-like** society amongst themselves and work as catalyst for the development of the field.

Research fellows or PhD-students are in-betweeners. We are staff and we are students, attending research school in recruiting positions. A fair share of us were students from KMD and therefore products of KMD, to various extents. There has to be value in that type of long-term first-hand experience. Going from being students (a driving force), to working with artistic research and being part of staff, to teach and shape our specific disciplinary areas of which it is our job to become experts. Perhaps having had the different roles could facilitate closer collaboration and contact within and across departments, faculties and institutions. **We are a part of the stream**, the constant movement and fluidity that characterises design as we know it.

There is no universal definition of design, and although there will always be attempts to find and coin one, the criteria will always continue to evolve as the disciplines are constantly developing and changing. (One can only hope that) the same goes for Visual communication on an institutional level, and that the people, students and staff, are not easily contained by framework and expectations set by a few voices, so they can continue to grow and keep challenging the field.



students bring to  
What do the table?



pot-luck

Wasn't it a  dinner?





All I have to do and  
(almost) everything  
I have done (so far)

Ingrid Rundberg

PhD candidate,  
Department of Design,  
Fac. of Fine Arts, Music and Design.



Becoming a research fellow in artistic research is maybe the best job you can have. You'll be given a studio, mine is big, has a long wall (seven meters) on one side and a window to a churchyard – an old and beautiful one – on the other. You'll be given a budget, or not exactly given, you will have to defend and discuss it (50), but there will be money to do your project. In addition to this you'll be assigned not only one but two supervisors and get access to great colleagues that – just like yourself – thinks that discussing artistic research is the best thing you can do.

So, now that you have understood that all the prerequisites are available for creating the most innovative and creative design project ever seen, what do you do? This question has a close relationship to the question parents and friends kindly asks you every once in a while; what is it actually that you do at work? – I am learning how to become a researcher in Visual communication, you answer. And that is true, you are trying. Really, really hard. – Yes, your family and friends says, but what do you actually do?

In this text I would like to show some of the visual clues that has shaped the project so far, and that hopefully will guide me forward.



### About the project

This specific project is called 'Things that might be true'. The theme for the project is how you create your personal political opinions. The research question (1) is under development but is right now formulated something like this; How can design be used as means to investigate and uncover how the individual creates her personal political opinions? Discussing personal political opinions is nothing new. We can read about it in the news, listen to it on the radio and get familiar with the theme through the mediation of journalists, in philosophy, media science, psychology and political science. But when it comes to using Visual communication within artistic research to investigate this topic, not much work has been done. I cannot find it. I have to do it myself.

### The Practical Investigations

#### The Pilot

To start the project, I facilitated a series of lectures at the Public Library in Bergen, before the Norwegian election in August and September 2019. These talks were created to find new ways of looking into political elections for everybody with the right to vote in Norway, as well as getting an overview of some of the perspectives that affects how you vote. During the lecture series certain questions were asked and also answered:

#### Why can't I understand what

they say? (2) – answered by Ida Andersen, research fellow, media science at the University of Bergen.

What is true? (3) – answered by Bente Kalsnes (1), associate professor at Kristiania University College.

Why are people different? (4) – answered by Thomas H. Kleppestø, research fellow in psychology at the University of Oslo.

### The Publication

To figure out of things in your research project, you have to interact with people (Q). You will have to talk to strangers, ask questions – kindly – ask if they want to participate in your work (5), and then take good care of and document (6) their thoughts and contribution. The first practical investigation in this project will be a publication where people are invited to answer the question – where do you find your voice/how do you find out how to vote?[1] (7) The answer can be mediated through any form that is printable, such as poetry, drawing, photography, comics, text, collage or other technique that could suit the personal content.

[1] In Norwegian the question "hvordan finner du din stemme?" were used, where the word stemme can mean both voice and to vote.

All I have to do and (almost) everything I have done (so far): first 6 months



### The Exhibition

In your artistic research there will be presentations, evaluations, publications and exhibitions (P) of different kinds. I think a lot about exhibitions, the format of the exhibition is smart because of its variability. It can be everything, consist of all types of materials (52), media, resources, differ in size and scale and also transform from one media to another. I keep images from two of my favourites, so far; Diether and Björn Roth – The Garden Sculpture (8) and Michael Beutler's Moby Dick (2015) (9).

### The Demonstration

During the artistic research project, you will have to be brave. I am planning to arrange A Demonstration for the Insecure. This scares me a lot, but in my opinion the idea is too good to let go of (49).

### The Reading

Reading is one part of what I do at work. Sometimes we have reading groups. This group gives you space to actually discuss and digest what you've read. Discussing literature and text helps a lot to connect the dots and place your work within a design context.

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### The Compulsory

Sometimes, actually quite often, you will travel to research school. On five occasions through the four years (10–14) you'll meet your peer research fellows and discuss different aspects of your projects such as ethics, documentation and dissemination. In addition to this you will produce texts, (N, G) apply to conferences (17,18), send in abstracts (21) and make a lot of PDF's and presentations. The conferences will differ in themes, some will be on artistic research (17–19) (A) other will have themes connected to your topic (20) or profession.

Half-way through (15) the all-in-all four years (16) of education, you will do your mid-way evaluation (M). Now your project, through a presentation, meets an evaluation committee, staff, students, collaborators, experts and other parts that might be interested (parents). Applying for money (22, 23) is something you will have to do constantly throughout your project period.

What's causing your need for increased funding is probably your expanding ideas. This might be a sign of development, but can also be confused with hubris.

As a research fellow you will have to do teaching-related duties that fills up 25 % of your working hours. The teaching-related duties could be all kinds of tasks at the department, e.g. teaching (24), arranging seminars (25), be a board member in one of the many boards and committees and/or being a tutor.

Everything that you think (26–27), wonder about (28, 42, 44–45, 51, 55), do (41, 46) or plan to do (43, 48, 56), read (see reading list), discuss, find (30–33) (D,F), design (29), discover (47, 60) or that inspires you (34–35, 53–54, 57–58) (C, K, R) should be documented (36). The documentation could be mediated through a web platform e.g. Research Catalogue (38), your own website (39), a blog (40) or through organized samples (37).

### Network

Your project might be filled with people. In my case it is already really stuffed with experts (5–6, 61–62), philosophers (63) (H, S), authors (see reading list) and inspiring designers (e.g. 34–35, but there are so many more). Arranging a lecture series or a seminar (25) will give you the opportunity to invite all the clever and interesting people you would like to talk to and learn from (34–35, 64). Please be aware of the amount of mail correspondence the task will generate and that several applications for funding has to be written in time for deadlines.

One more thing that you actually do is off course to write. You will have to write for different purposes; project plans, applications, papers, abstracts, mails, manuscripts and articles like this one. Writing articles like this will help you a lot, not only to understand what you are doing, see patterns in your work and find new connections, it will also help you a lot the next time you'll get the question about what you actually do at work and what you've been up to the last six months.

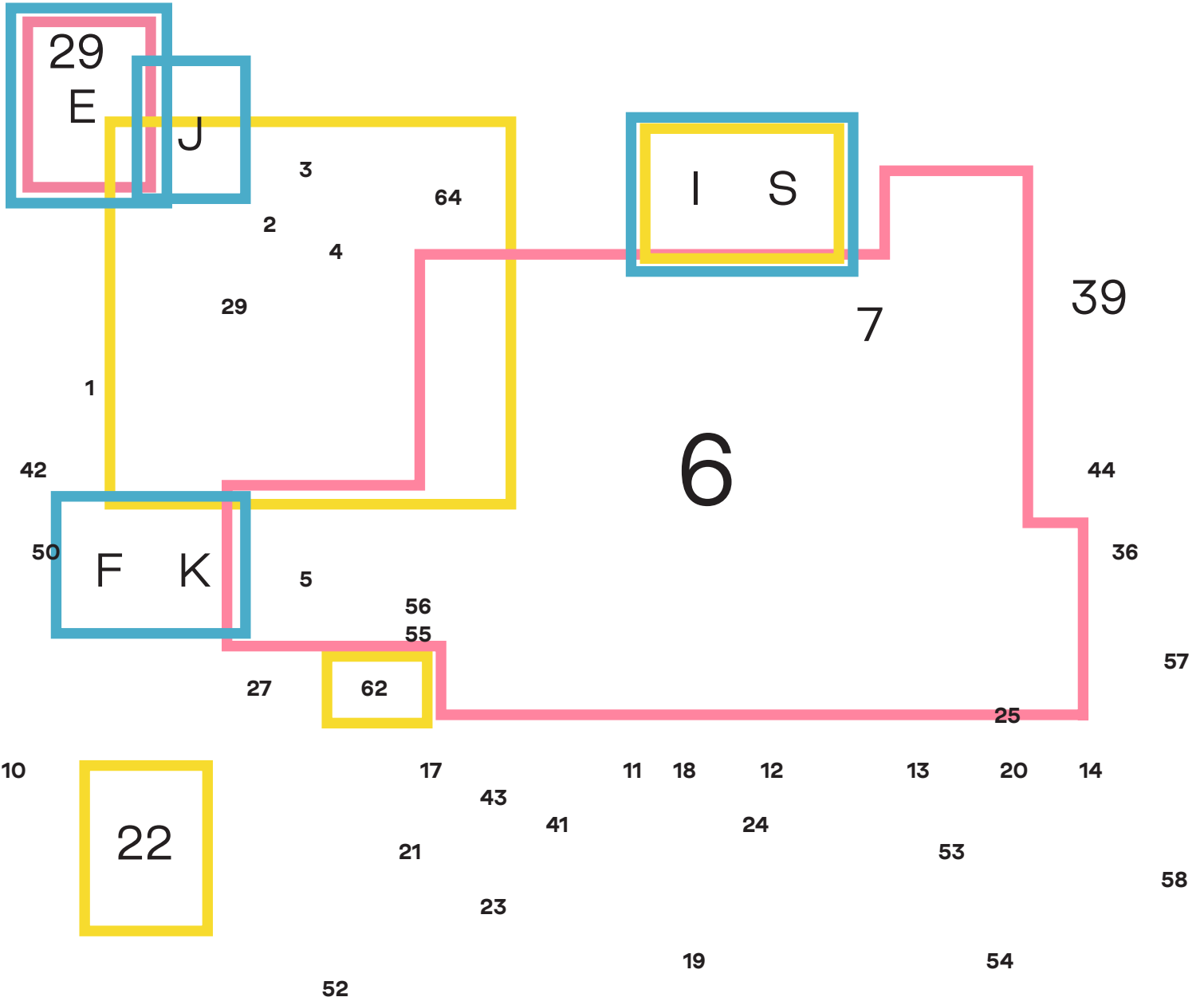
All I have to do and (almost) everything I have done (so far): first 6 months

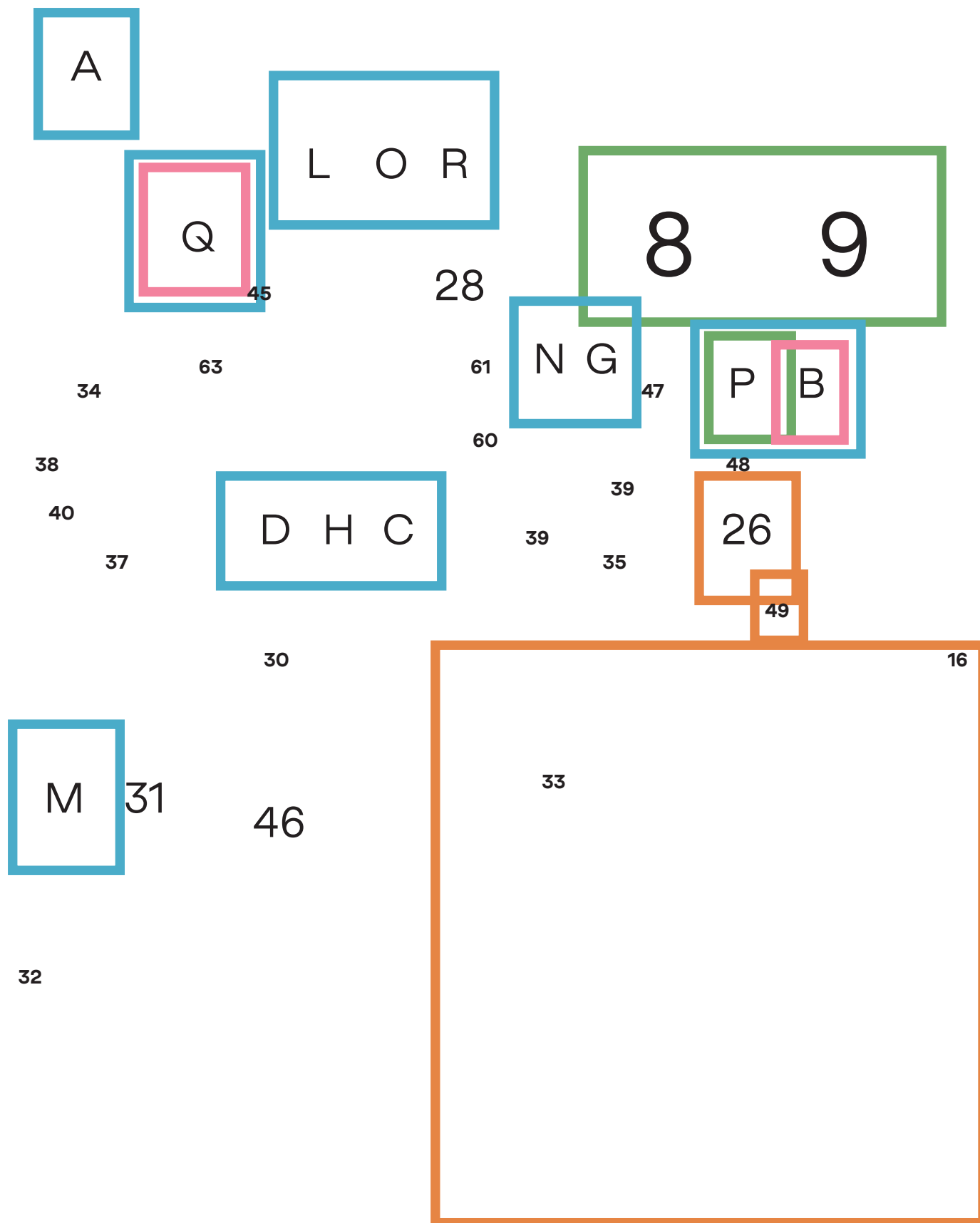












All I have to do and (almost) everything I have done (so far): first 6 months









# DOES EVERYTHING HAVE TO LOOK THE SAME IN THE DIGITAL ERA?



Have you wiped your glasses lately?



# Inside the narrative

Gustav Kvaal

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### Virtual reality

Only mentioning the term can create a trembling expectation. A **portal** into a new and exciting digital world. However, this is no new technology. The 50s are considered the beginning of the development of VR. It is only in recent years that this technology has become available to the public in various forms. Large companies like Sony, Samsung, Google and Facebook to mention a few, are investing big money into the development of XR technology (extended reality) that we find in various formats like AR mobile apps, 360 videos on Youtube and the already iconic VR **goggles** that is being developed as screen technology for both VR, AR and Mixed Reality. Although VR technology has undergone rapid development, it has not yet become a mainstream media alternative. The use of VR technology and experiences is to a greater extent found in fields such as architecture, product design, medical innovation and the gaming industry. Despite all the activity around VR, the technology's relationship with **storytelling** is in a premature phase. How this 'new' medium will affect the way we tell and develop stories is not yet clear. To create narrative experiences in VR, we must learn to tell stories differently than we are used to from film and literature.



In books, films, comic books, theater, it is often important to capture viewers or readers in such a way that they are in a way locked into the **world** of fiction. This immersion into the narrative world is staged in the different media forms through numerous measures adapted to each medium. The ability to immerse audiences into a world of fiction is VR technology's most prominent feature. The immersion we are talking about here is not based on our own imagination but on the technology's ability to stimulate **the senses** in a direct way that automatically incorporates the audience into a potentially narrative universe. One of the major issues faced in relation to storytelling in VR is the relationship with the audience, as they now find themselves on the inside of the story.

Vicky Dobbs Beck executive in charge at ILMxLAB is at a lecture series at Siggraph 2019 stating their goal, in **VR**, to go from storytelling to the idea of story-living. She is underlining the importance in VR, that you as the viewer are actually in the world—and that you matter. The audience's presence and actions can move the story forward. This could conceivably mean that you as an observer has a role to play and possibly not just as a fly on the wall? In the same lecture series at Siggraph 2019, Donald Mustard, director of the game Fortnite, at Epic Games, talks about how they in the ongoing production of the game avoids seizing the player's freedom and agency in the Fortnite world. The **freedom** of the players and their agency is to the core of their thinking.

In terms of storytelling in VR, the idea of the player's or audience's possible roles on the inside of the story can be related to the intentions in the

production of the game Fortnite and to Dobbs' emphasis on the viewer's importance in the story within VR. Mustard also describes another key storytelling element that relates to the real-time dimension that is also part of VR as a digital online medium. This is the ability and opportunity of the game creator to provide relevant or surprising feedback to the players along the way. He explains this by the term 'The campfire theory' where the storytelling is formed in the meeting between the audience and the narrator, in the same way as sitting around the **campfire** at night. In Fortnite, this is used in the development of the course of action as a result of players actions and reactions. This **mindset** and thinking may perhaps be translated into VR experiences. The idea of feedback in relation to its audience is also found in the theater's feedback loop, describing the same phenomenon, only related to another form of media. Here it is the actors' meeting with their audience that forms the possibility of the story's transformation. When it comes to the audience's possible participation and role in a VR story, the reference to interactive theater may be relevant.

The research project, Inside the Narrative, derives its name and focus from the narrative point of view of the VR media. The project has its academic position in Visual communication at the Faculty of Art, Music and Design at the University of Bergen. The project's connection to professional fields such as illustration, animation and graphic design gives us a unique opportunity to help bring forth new **perspectives** and voices in VR storytelling that may differ from, for example, the engineering field, the computer games industry, journalism, medicine or the film industry.



Knowledge from subject areas related to picture books, animation, editorial design, typography, or interaction design are examples of possible inputs into the exploration of VR technology's potential for these fields.

At an eight-day multidisciplinary VR storytelling workshop at Hafjell near Lillehammer in 2019, called Off-Piste Virtual Reality Storytelling Lab, the storytelling itself was put into **focus**. 'No Matter Where' is the title of an experimental prototype of a VR documentary where you get to meet with various characters and their personal stories in a VR space. The project explores how to obtain, process and present documentary material in the VR format. With this prototype, we wanted to find out what it would be like to be face-to-face with someone who openly shared their **life experiences**? We meet three different characters within this VR installation. The thematic focus of what is being told is the various individuals relationship to **places** and how these have had an impact on memories and their lives.

Wearing VR goggles with headphones in this prototype immerses the viewer into a misty and snowy **landscape**. The sound of a gentle breeze enhances the experience of the place's presence. The attention of the audience is directed towards a person sitting in the landscape, by means of an enticing sound. As you focus your attention on the person, the person stands up and begins to tell a story. While the person is talking, the audience can move around the space to look at the interview subject from different angles. You can also choose to look away. When you get close to the figure talking, you see in this prototype that the human figure is just a kind of 3-dimensional hollow shell that lacks the back side. This deficiency is related to the volumetric filming technique used to generate the 3-dimensional figure in the VR space. After about 3 minutes, the person ends the monologue and sits down in a waiting position. With the help of another enticing sound, the audience is led on to a new

story told by another character in the same space. This time it's the sound of a radio we hear. When you turn around, another character in the landscape is appearing, which in this case is given a kitchen environment that is located in the middle of the **misty** landscape. As you approach, this person gets up and starts a monologue in the same manner as the first one. In this prototype, each of the stories and sounds that lead the attention is triggered by keystrokes from a technician in the room who observes the progress and course of action of the VR experience. The use of a technician in this project is a possible way to run an event course in a VR experience.





The advantage of this solution is that the experience here is personalized to each viewer based on the viewer's body language and **attention**. This could also be automated to make production less resource intensive and more easily divisible.

As an approach towards documentary content in this project, we mainly wanted to relate to the real world and **photorealism** as a starting point for the visual expression. Environmental descriptive elements were therefore gathered with photographic techniques which were later processed into 3D elements and assembled in the game engine called Unity. The snowy and misty landscape backdrop was created by a 360 degree panorama so that we could fill the whole world around the audience. This could just as well have been a 360 video recording if that had been desirable. To create the ground and the place where you stand and where the interview subjects are located, a technique called photogrammetry was used. This technique creates digital 3-dimensional objects by allowing a software to analyze depth ratios in the images based on a plethora of photographs taken systematically of a **place** or object. This way, one can quickly capture and integrate photorealistic objects into a 3D program without necessarily being a 3D specialist.

To give the audience the opportunity to feel that they were in the same room as the interview subjects, we wanted them to be able to move with some freedom in the VR space. Therefore, this prototype does not use classic 360 video or similar to create a VR environment. With 360 film you get a photographic visual

expression, but without being able to move around in a 3-dimensional environment. One is locked to a point in the universe. Instead, the audience are offered an area of 16 m2 where they can move **freely** and look around both in front and behind the various objects in the space.

To film the interview subjects that we later encounter in the VR experience, we use a technique called volumetric capture. This is done by using a Kinect camera and a software called Holo Cap that combines a video recording with 3D data read by an infrared camera. In this way we could capture a 3-dimensional figure in the space and not only a regular flat 2D video image. It is only from a partially frontal perspective that it works visually from the point of view of the audience. Still, it is not flat as a video recording, so that the figure's body shape becomes visible in space, making it possible to integrate the figure with other 3-dimensional elements in the space.

The sound recordings used in the VR experience were organized digitally in different virtual places in the VR space in the same way as you would distribute 3D objects. In this way you can organize sound in the game engine Unity (alternatively the game engine Unreal Engine) so that you experience the sound coming from different directions and at different distances.

Through working with the prototype, we engaged in processes and techniques that are largely about creating virtual places with different opportunities for experiences and actions. The audience's role in this particular VR experience was as a kind of mobile observer without so much opportunity to **influence** the **environment**. Still the audience's meeting with the interviewed subjects and their personal story inside the VR space seemed to be one of apparent emotional impact. The choice of controlling the experience by the use of a technician tell us that VR not only needs to be a lonely digital experience but can also be conceived as a type of performance where the experience is shaped through a feedback loop like in theater. After working with this VR-prototype, the overall experience is that focusing on the quality of the story itself still remains important also from the inside of the narrative.



Is there a  
change going  
on towards  
making by  
hand?



Aren't we always using our hands?



# Drawing by number

Käte–Elin Madsen

Visual artist and Lector, Visual communication,  
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'As scientific understanding has grown, our world has become dehumanized. Man feels isolated in the cosmos, because it is no longer part of nature and has lost his emotional "unconscious identity" with natural phenomena. These have slowly lost their symbolic implications. The thunder is no longer the voice of an angry god and lightning is no longer his revenge ray. No river holds a spirit, no tree is a human principle of life, no worm is the embodiment of wisdom, no mountain cave home to a great demon. No voices speak to man anymore from stones, plants and animals, nor do they speak to them in the belief that they belong. Its contact with nature has disappeared and with it the deep emotional energy provided by this symbolic connection has been lost.'<sup>[1]</sup>

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[1] C.G. Jung : Symbolene og det ubevisste, symbolenes rolle,  
Gyldendal 2000 ISBN 8205271062





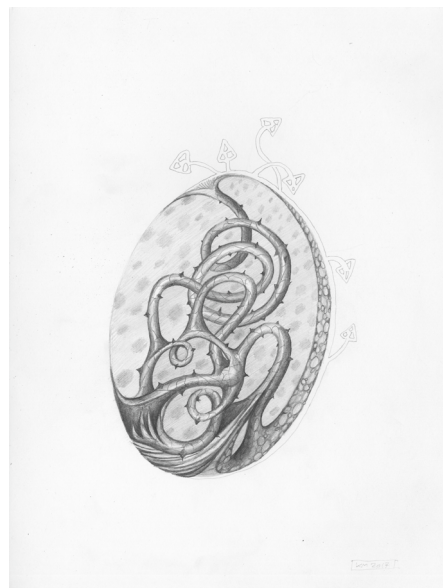




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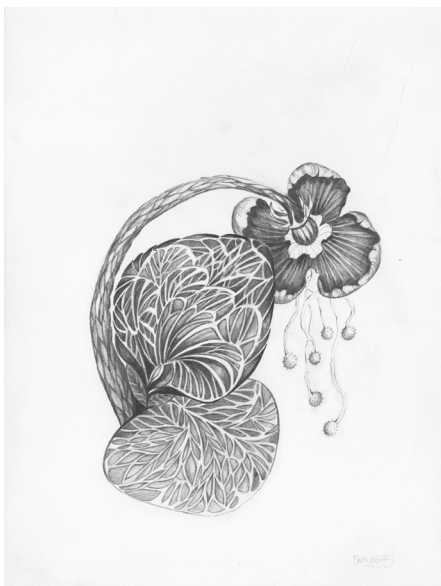
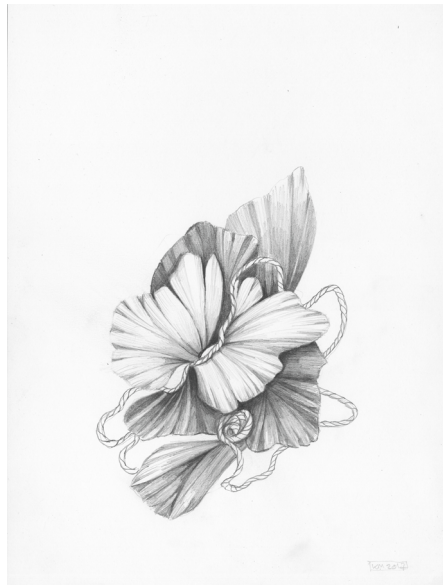
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by

number





To work with the drawings is like a developing process in a dark room. The expression becomes the result of an examination, a search in details after something I do not know what is... These (drawn) manifestations are located not in an outer physical space — they have solely an inner space. They are something by their own virtue. The forms are organic and spacious as the physical world, they are to a certain degree recognizable and

resemble a physical reality. The forms are organic and spatial like the physical world, they are to some degree recognizable and can resemble a physical reality. But they have no affiliation with a physical place. They are intuitive and mental visualizations. The composition in the picture space is inferior and relates only to the shape itself. To an inner logic. Independent objects without a narrative history.





To give something a certain form, a volume, a texture, a surface .

Visual constructions with visual significance.

For me drawing is the experience of developing dimensionality from a flat sheet of paper.

Like inviting a stranger into the room.

This mental state causes the compositions to unfold in an organic and not always structured way.

It is imperfect, slightly crooked and just proposing something else.

A world that only exists in the mind.

To see if I may recognize or understand what is shown to me by the drawing.

Yet everything is known.



Everything is recognizable.

Just leave some traces on the paper without interpretation.

Like an extension of the known and visible world.

The magic forest with all the archetypes, with all possibilities.

Traces of the imprecise movements of the hand and the wandering of the mind form a visual image formerly not known and not seen.

The drawing process itself does not involve sketching—yet there is a kind of thinking and listening throughout the working process.

I often pursue a form or a kind of expression in several drawings.

It is fascinating to use such a simple tool as the pencil to create a diverse world.

There are no known external references.



# My nature

Käte–Elin Madsen

Visual artist and Lector, Visual communication,  
Department of Design,  
Fac. of Fine Art, Music and Design.



Nature is my source of inspiration – like many artists before me. My working process could be like that of a scientific process, but as an examination through an artistic approach.

I work with a kind of system that contain several single formats put together to form a larger drawing. The drawings contains a large number of copies of the same photographic image which is interpreted through drawing. The modules are a photographic image taken from a tree – in one of the system – is the bark, in other it

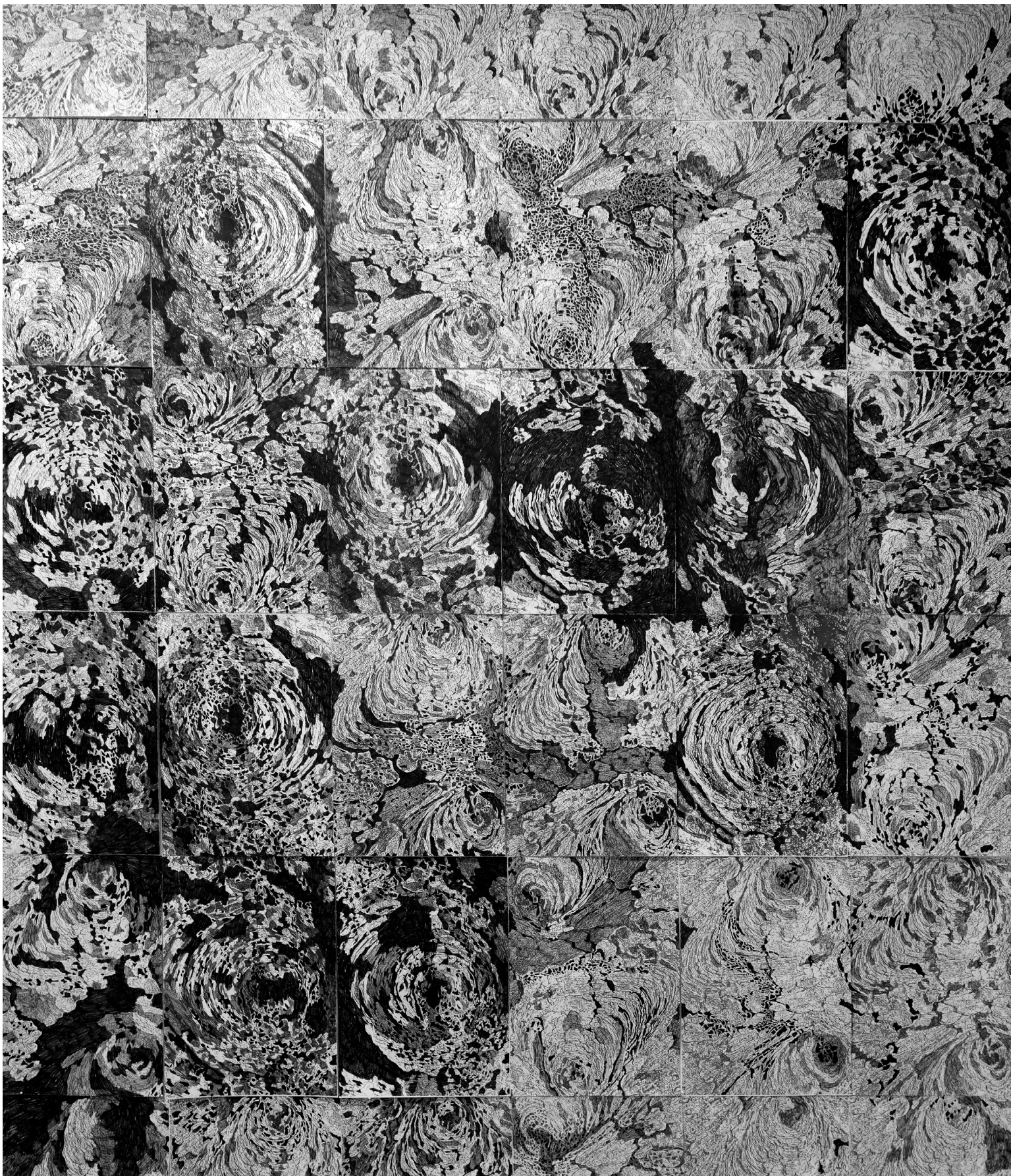
is the roots and the third thing is forms that grows out of the surface. The photographic image is transfered via a risograph onto a surface that is suitable for drawing. The visual interpretation happens in the organic structure, in the space between, in the rhythms and in the lines. Throughout the process the drawings are compositioned,

arranged and rearranged, with the intention to form a new image still unknown and unseen – while some of the underlying and known image is still visible like fragments and fractals of the wholeness. In all the drawings is used soft pencils B–B9, all the works are from 2018.





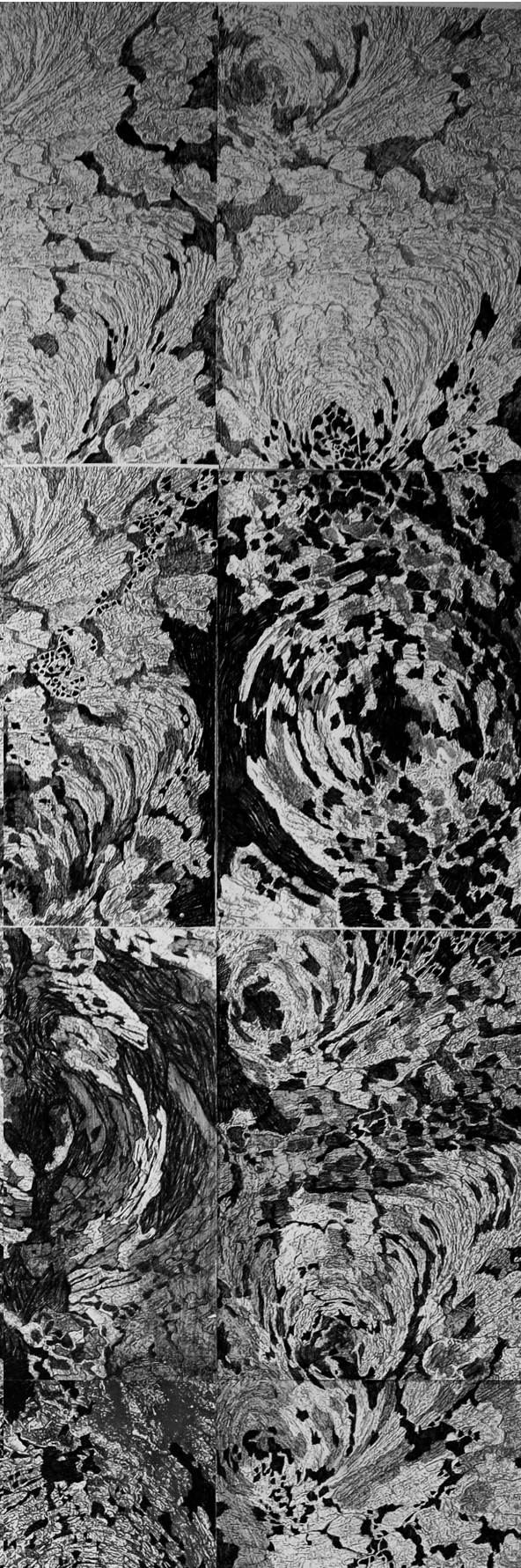




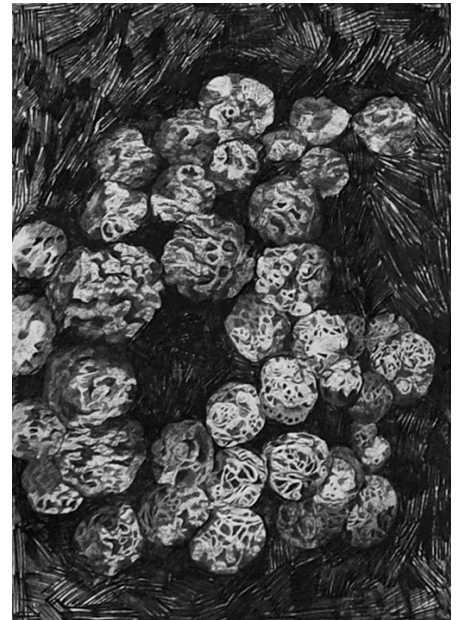








Roots, 195 x 162cm









Details

Each module is the size of A3. These are details of the modules of the forms that grow out of the tree. Pencil drawing with soft pencil on risograph printed surface.

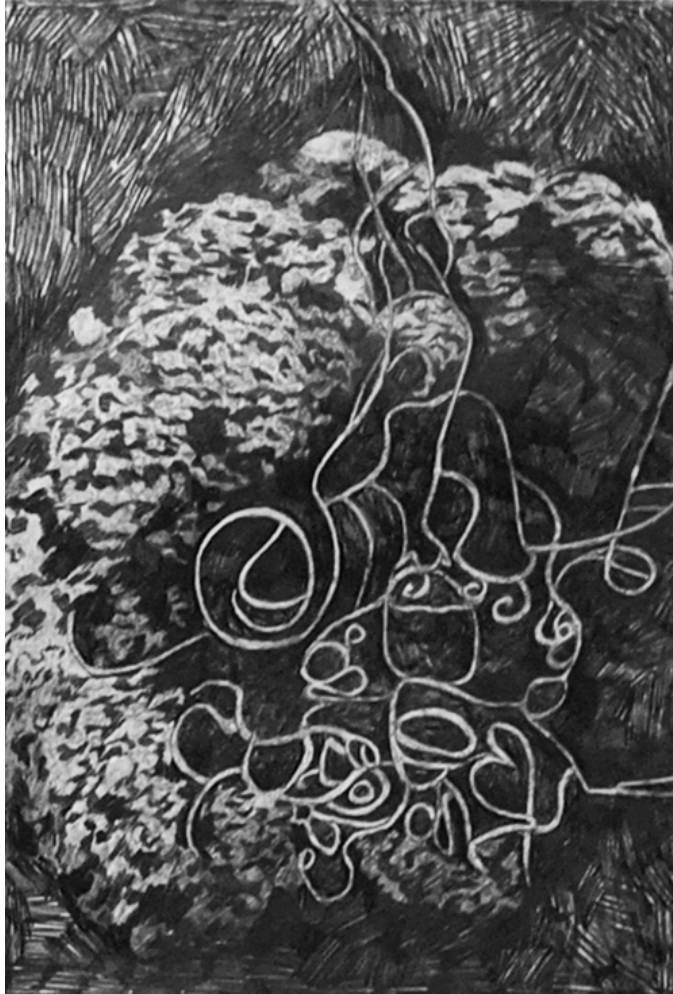
























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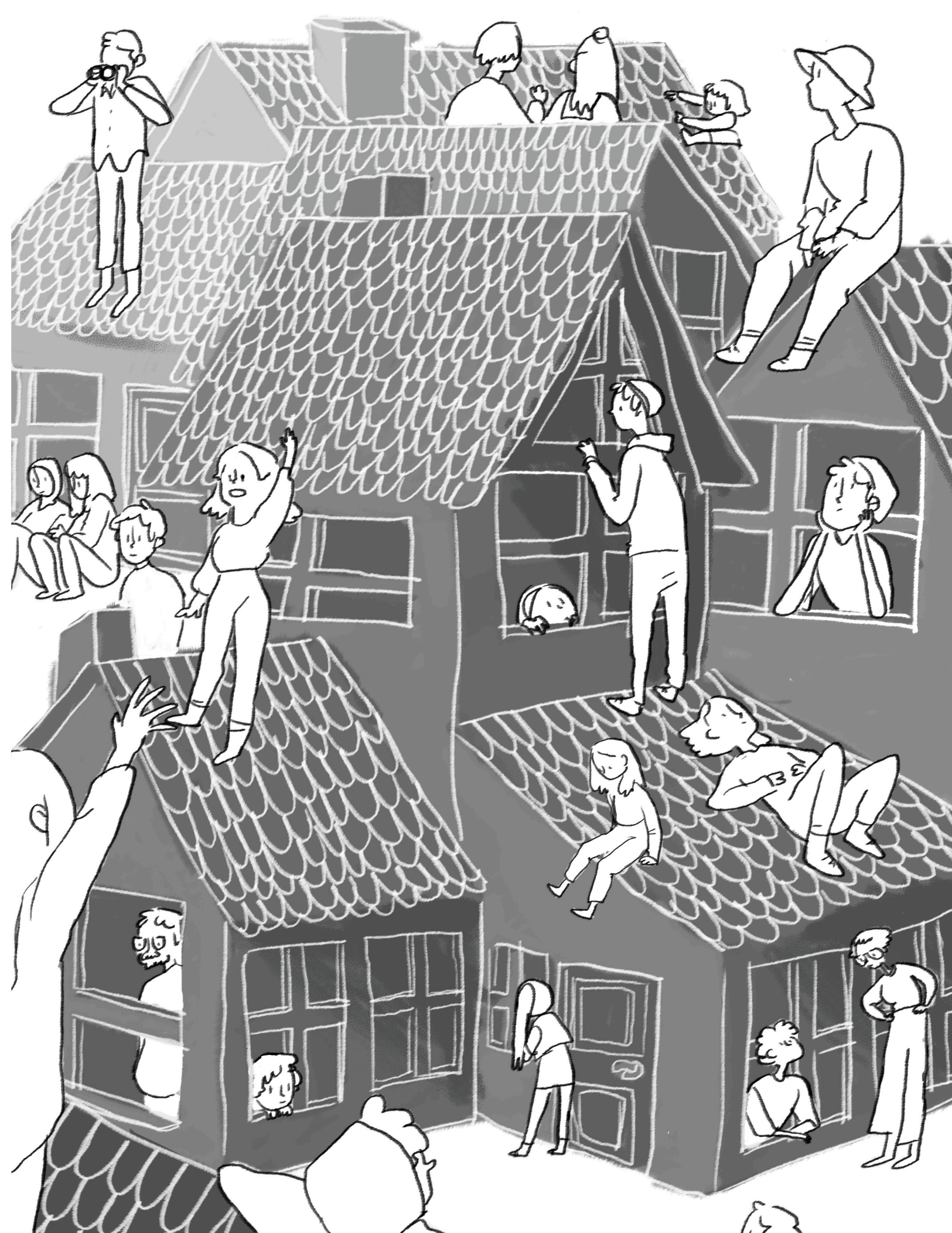
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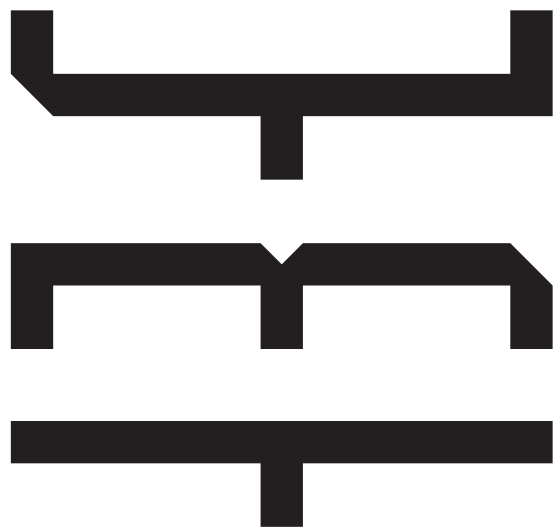
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f u t u r e s o v e r c o n s u m p t i o n i  
o f p r a c t i c e y m t  
h o w m u c h m u l t i f u n c t i o n a  
t s d r a w i n g b y n u m  
s l e a r n e r t a n g n u s  
h y u t y p e s o f c e l l e y q u e s  
o a m b k i d d i n y m t p m o f t h  
w w t s i s c e n e s f r o m a s t r e a m  
c h h i u n v b o d i e s u t  
a e e s s s s o i d o r a l y  
n r b t e d l u l b a i f e r n a m  
w e o h m e o d l e a d i n g f o r t h  
e i o e p t s e t w i t h o u t  
b s k r a t i e a i d e s i g n f  
e m ? e t e g i n o w h e r e  
n y a h r n n g o u t y m t m a g n  
e v l y å s e w h a t t o p u t i n t h e  
f o o y b t h e c o m m u n i c a t i o n  
i i c m o d e s i g n e r s h a n d b a g  
t c c a t d c g n f o r t h e w h  
f e l p i a n n y m o v i n g m o v e m e n  
r ? i a e r i n t w a y  
o w n t r s o a n d s t r u c t u r e t t h  
m i v r a l h o w m u c h o f s t u d i e s i  
s l i i i d b e a b o u t d e s i g n s k i  
t l s c o n t h e f i e l d o f v i s u a l c  
u i u i l e o r r e s e a r c h ? c d r a w i  
d e k a r i j e a w i t h l  
e v f l n a h l y m c i h a n i s i t b  
n e i c e m t i y m i e w m y s t r  
t r n o s l t l e w  
y o u c o u l d s t a r t b y s a y i n g h i