Positions through triangulating

Δ1 Studio

Method of Contextualising

•Starting material: my grandmother’s changing communication, memory and language.
•Personal trigger: witnessing a person I know becoming increasingly difficult to reach through ordinary conversation.
•Early influence: Flowers for Algernon — language, cognition and the experience of loss.
•Initial question: how can design give form to experiences that are difficult to articulate?
•Contextualising shifted the project from autobiography toward language, interpretation, memory and representation.

Method of Contextualising

Use diary entries of Flowers for Algernon and trying to use this content to translate my inner experience and emotion when reading it and visualize it with the distortion of the text.

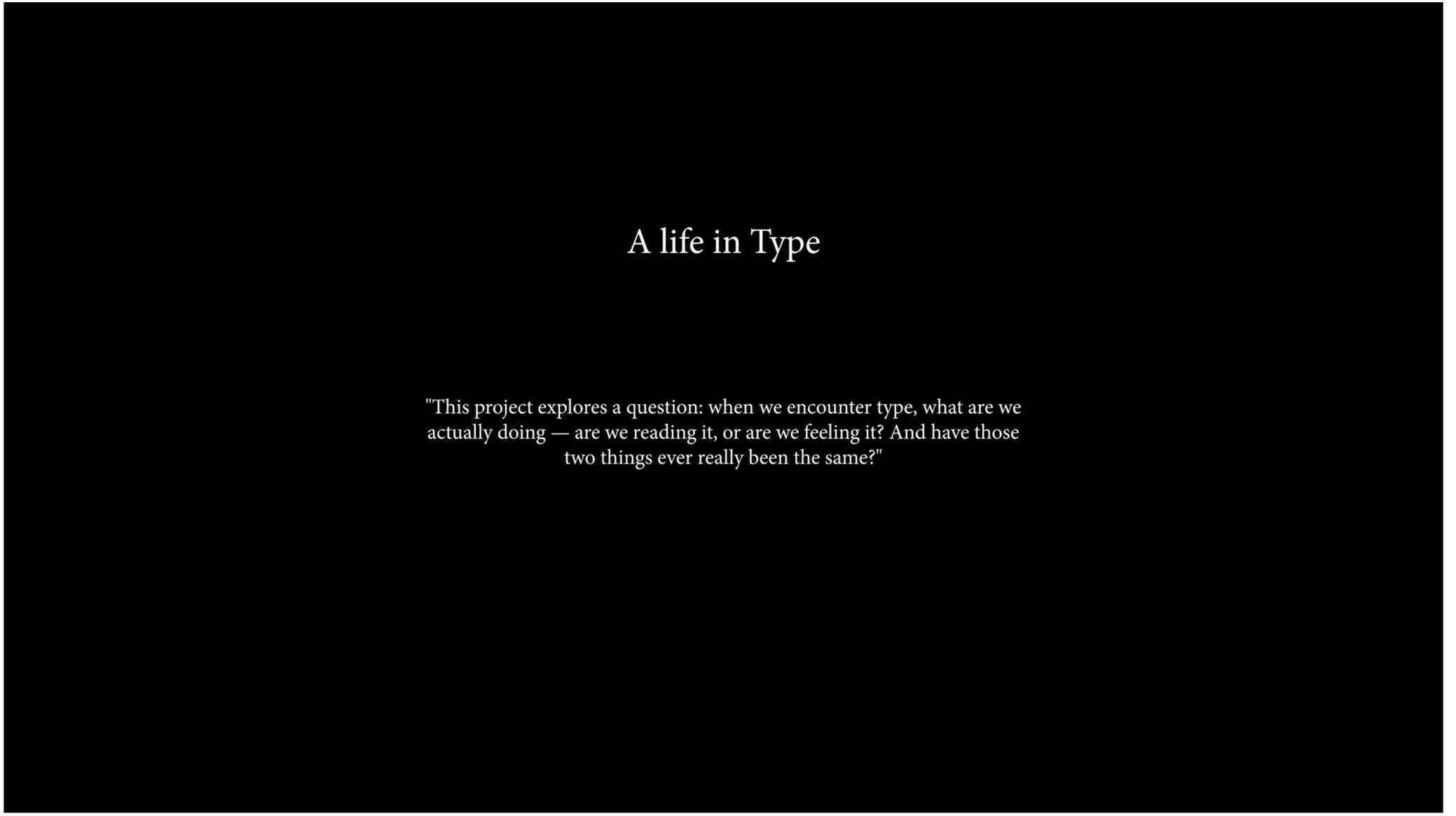
Can the felt be encoded into rules that others can read?



Understanding my own interpretation of expressive typography (without a specific rule)



The result is a system, a website and an archive where users translate their own feeling into letterforms.



Dialogue with Jay Choo

Then?

What happens after the responses are collected?

Who says that?

What assumption am I making about shared visual meaning?

What is unsaid?

The question returned the project to its personal and ethical origin.

To answer those question I should narrow down and focus on one specific audience:

How can I translate emotion?  Whose experience am I translating?

Returning to my grandmother

- Direct interviewing became increasingly difficult because communication with her is difficult.
- This limitation changed the method: I could not simply ask her to explain herself for the project.
- The people around her were already interpreting, completing, waiting, correcting, remembering and responding to her every day.
- Their accounts became evidence of how a person is reconstructed relationally.

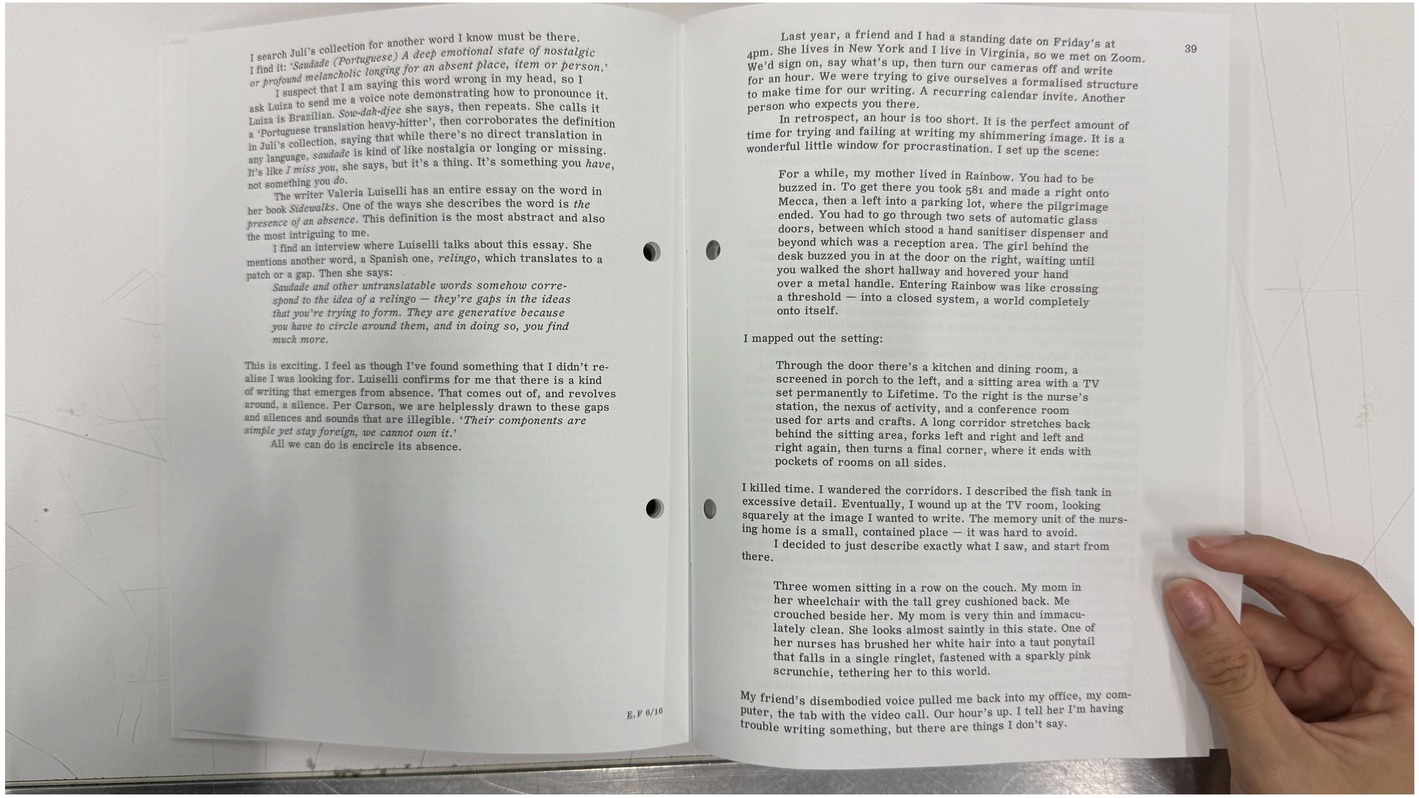
interview
the people around her

The interview is not evidence about “what Grandmother really means”. It is evidence about how meaning is reconstructed around her.

Reference

Meg Miller
What does the loss feel like?

It reflects on what happens when language becomes inaccessible through loss, translation, and memory. Rather than treating language as something that can be perfectly recovered, he describes loss as creating a gap that can only be approached indirectly. Drawing on Valeria Luiselli's idea of *relingos*—gaps or empty spaces that resist direct translation—Meg suggests that meaning can emerge through the act of circling around what cannot be fully reached.



I search Juli's collection for another word I know must be there. I find it: '*Saudade (Portuguese) A deep emotional state of nostalgic or profound melancholic longing for an absent place, item or person.*' I suspect that I am saying this word wrong in my head, so I ask Luiza to send me a voice note demonstrating how to pronounce it. Luiza is Brazilian. *Sow-dah-djee* she says, then repeats. She calls it a 'Portuguese translation heavy-hitter', then corroborates the definition in Juli's collection, saying that while there's no direct translation in any language, *saudade* is kind of like nostalgia or longing or missing. It's like *I miss you*, she says, but it's a thing. It's something you *have*, not something you *do*.

The writer Valeria Luiselli has an entire essay on the word in her book *Sidewalks*. One of the ways she describes the word is *the presence of an absence*. This definition is the most abstract and also the most intriguing to me.

I find an interview where Luiselli talks about this essay. She mentions another word, a Spanish one, *relingo*, which translates to a patch or a gap. Then she says:

> *Saudade and other untranslatable words somehow correspond to the idea of a relingo — they're gaps in the ideas that you're trying to form. They are generative because you have to circle around them, and in doing so, you find much more.*

This is exciting. I feel as though I've found something that I didn't realise I was looking for. Luiselli confirms for me that there is a kind of writing that emerges from absence. That comes out of, and revolves around, a silence. Per Carson, we are helplessly drawn to these gaps and silences and sounds that are illegible. '*Their components are simple yet stay foreign, we cannot own it.*'

All we can do is encircle its absence.

E, F 6/16

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Last year, a friend and I had a standing date on Friday's at 4pm. She lives in New York and I live in Virginia, so we met on Zoom. We'd sign on, say what's up, then turn our cameras off and write for an hour. We were trying to give ourselves a formalised structure to make time for our writing. A recurring calendar invite. Another person who expects you there.

In retrospect, an hour is too short. It is the perfect amount of time for trying and failing at writing my shimmering image. It is a wonderful little window for procrastination. I set up the scene:

> For a while, my mother lived in Rainbow. You had to be buzzed in. To get there you took 581 and made a right onto Mecca, then a left into a parking lot, where the pilgrimage ended. You had to go through two sets of automatic glass doors, between which stood a hand sanitiser dispenser and beyond which was a reception area. The girl behind the desk buzzed you in at the door on the right, waiting until you walked the short hallway and hovered your hand over a metal handle. Entering Rainbow was like crossing a threshold — into a closed system, a world completely onto itself.

I mapped out the setting:

> Through the door there's a kitchen and dining room, a screened in porch to the left, and a sitting area with a TV set permanently to Lifetime. To the right is the nurse's station, the nexus of activity, and a conference room used for arts and crafts. A long corridor stretches back behind the sitting area, forks left and right and left and right again, then turns a final corner, where it ends with pockets of rooms on all sides.

I killed time. I wandered the corridors. I described the fish tank in excessive detail. Eventually, I wound up at the TV room, looking squarely at the image I wanted to write. The memory unit of the nursing home is a small, contained place — it was hard to avoid.

I decided to just describe exactly what I saw, and start from there.

> Three women sitting in a row on the couch. My mom in her wheelchair with the tall grey cushioned back. Me crouched beside her. My mom is very thin and immaculately clean. She looks almost saintly in this state. One of her nurses has brushed her white hair into a taut ponytail that falls in a single ringlet, fastened with a sparkly pink scrunchie, tethering her to this world.

My friend's disembodied voice pulled me back into my office, my computer, the tab with the video call. Our hour's up. I tell her I'm having trouble writing something, but there are things I don't say.

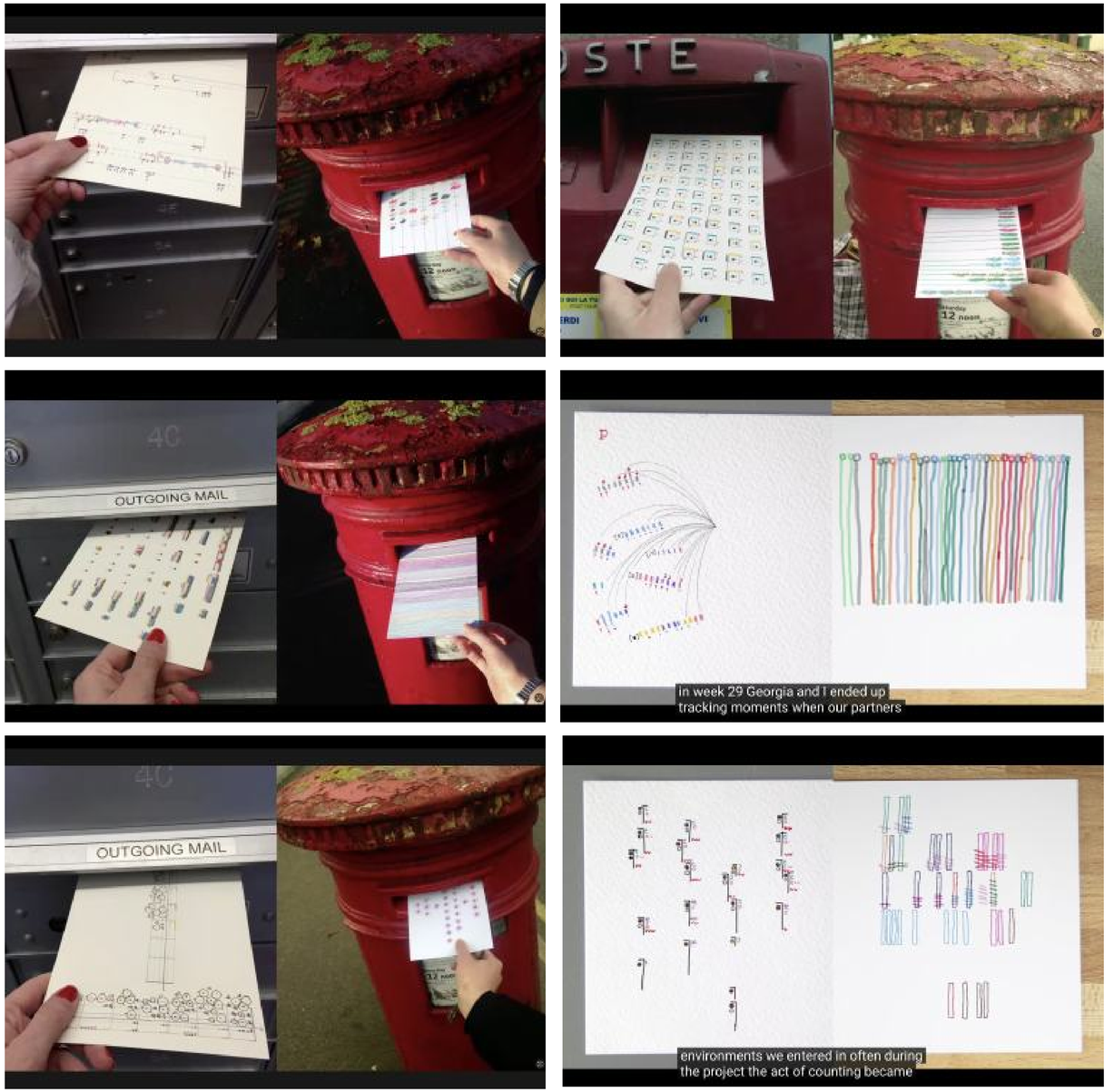
Reference

Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec.
Dear Data

Dear Data transforms everyday personal observations into rule-based visual systems. Rather than illustrating the content, each visual mark corresponds to a specific type of information, allowing patterns and relationships to emerge through the accumulation of data.

Dear Data inspired me to develop a **visual grammar derived from my interview material**, where each graphic element follows a defined rule rather than functioning as illustration.

personal material → explicit coding → visual trace



Girotondo

The project became a portrait made by circling around a centre that cannot be reduced to one definitive version.

The centre is not an absent person.
It is the absence of a definitive version of her.

RQ:

“How is a person reconstructed through the memories and interpretations of others when their own voice becomes increasingly inaccessible?”
or / and
How can graphic communication make visible the processes of memory, interpretation and mediation through which that reconstruction occurs?

Five chapters

I. Change

II. Repair

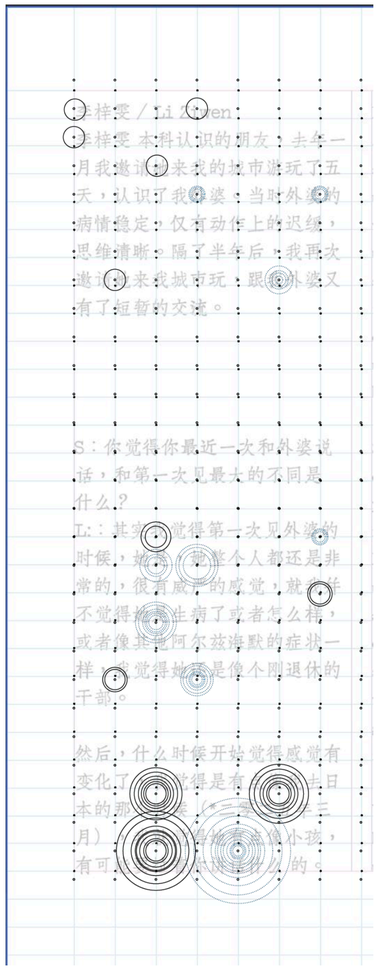
III. Distance

IV. Beyond Words

V. Uncertainty

The five chapters examine different mechanisms through which my grandmother is reconstructed. *Change* looks at how perceptions of her shift over time; *Repair* examines how others intervene when communication becomes incomplete; *Distance* explores how relationships shape understanding; *Beyond Words* considers how meaning is communicated through gesture, movement and touch; and *Uncertainty* questions whether the meanings we construct can ever be fully verified.

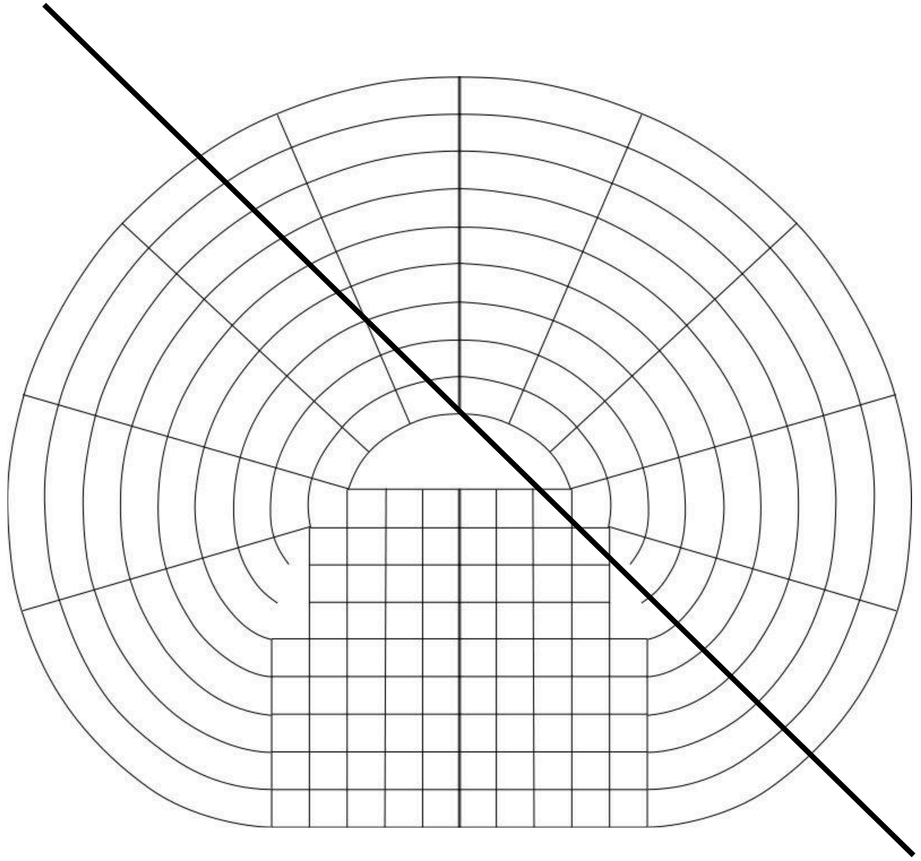
1. Change

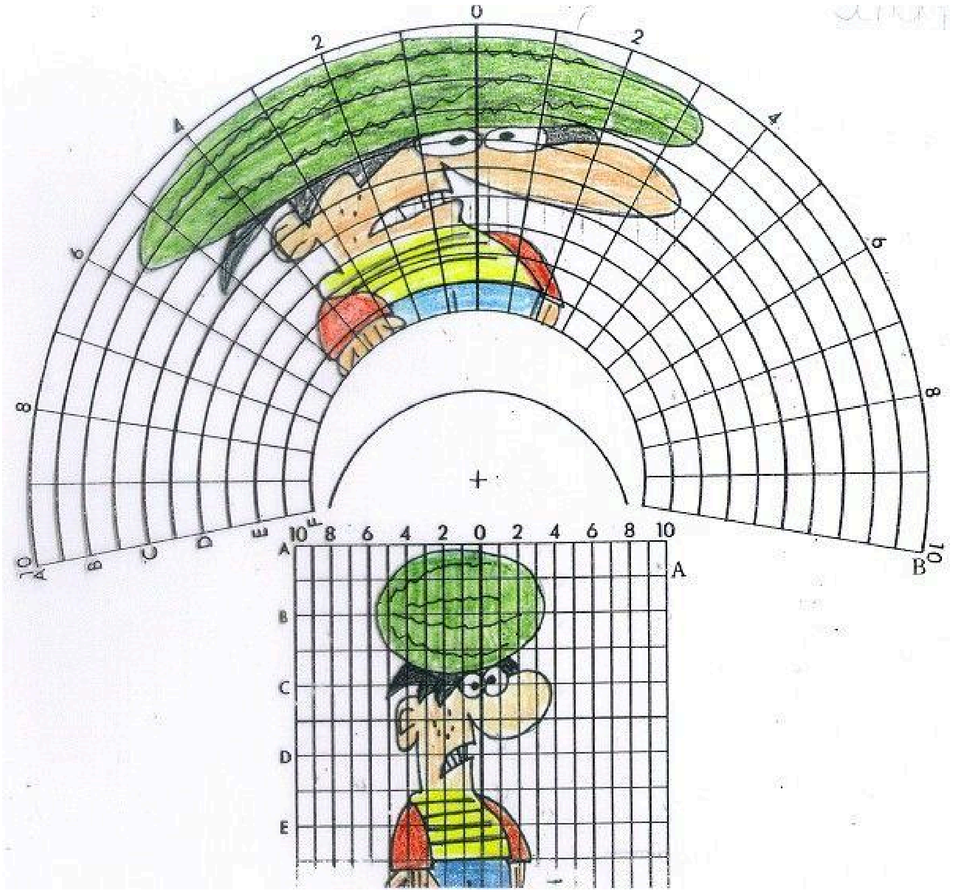


Layer	Variable	Visual Rule	Meaning
Blue: Observed Grandmother	Number of Rings	1 / 2 / 3... rings	Different stages in time; more rings indicate a later state
	Solid Line	Complete solid circle	The state continues / is retained
	Dashed Line	Dashed circle	The state has changed / become unstable
Black: Interviewee's Interpretation	Number of Rings	1 ring	Direct observation
		2 rings	Interpretation of observed behaviour
		3 rings	Speculation about a state that cannot be directly confirmed
	Solid Line	Complete solid circle	The interviewee expresses relative certainty
	Dashed Line	Dashed / broken circle	The interviewee expresses uncertainty
Position	7 × 14 Grid	Corresponds to the position in the original Chinese transcript	Each graphic mark retains the position of the source phrase that triggered it
Blank Space	No Graphic Mark	No mark is generated	No information related to "Change" occurs in this section

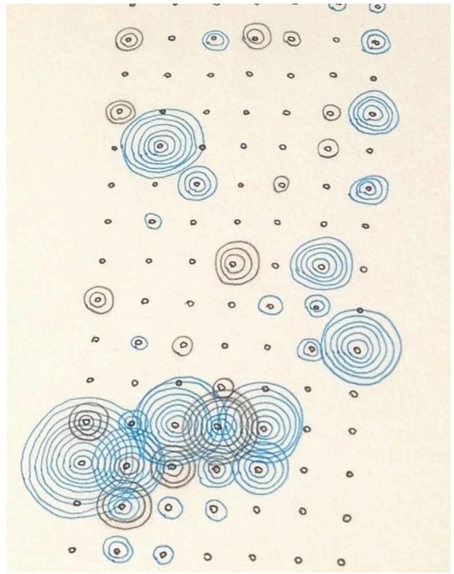
From transcript grid to Girotondo field

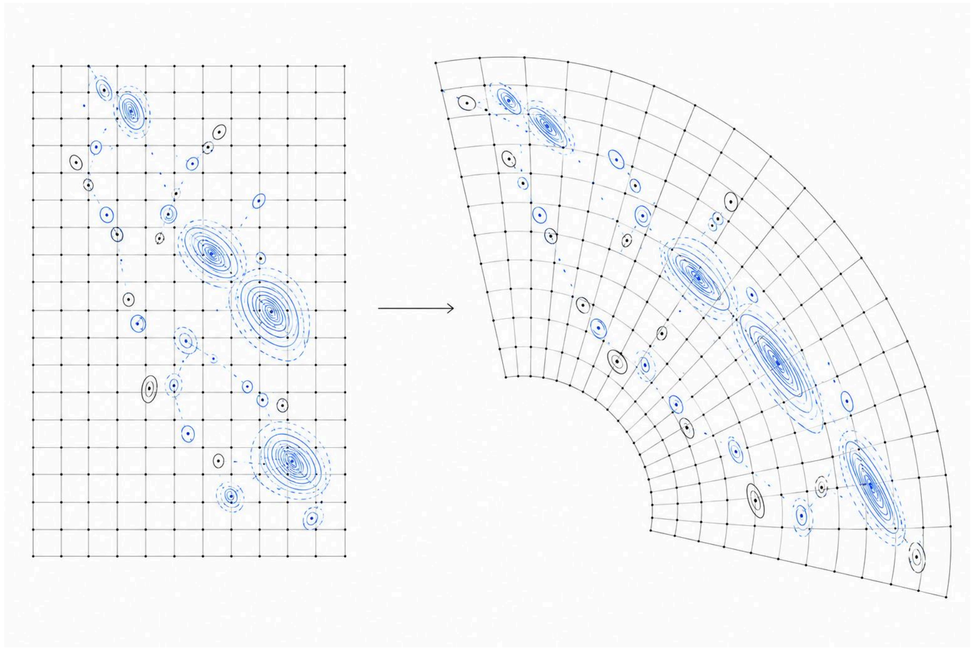
Cartesian-to-semicircular polar mapping



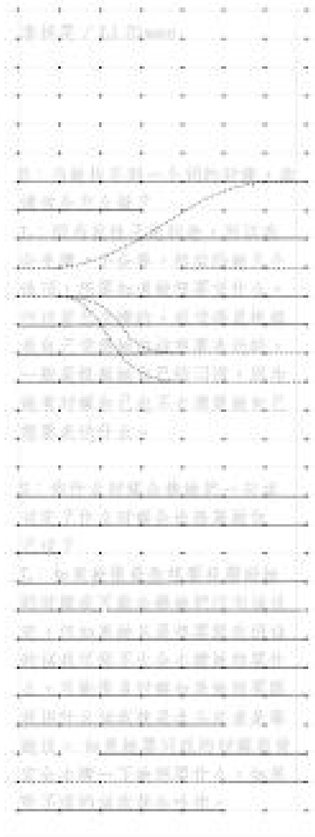


1. Change

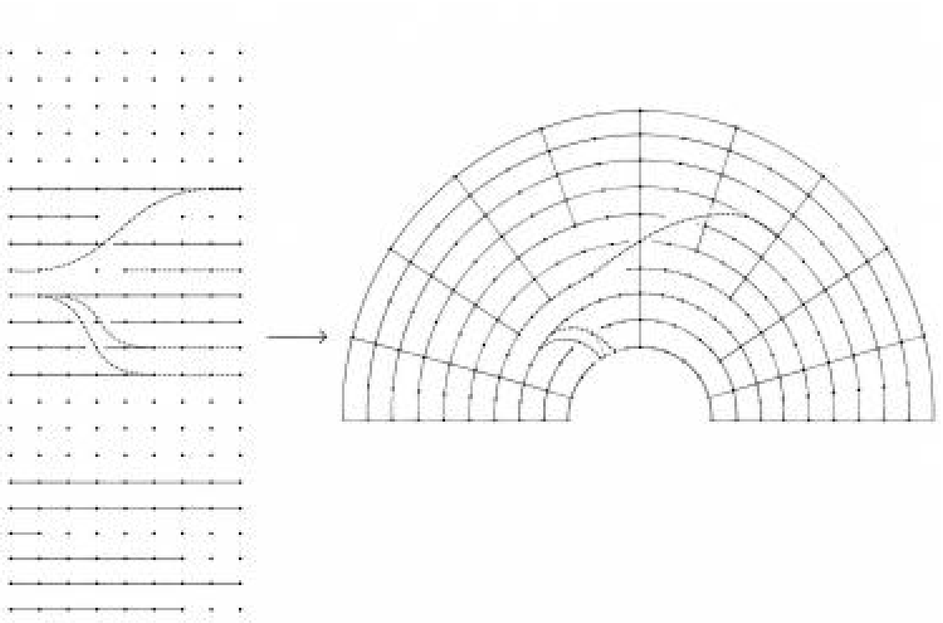




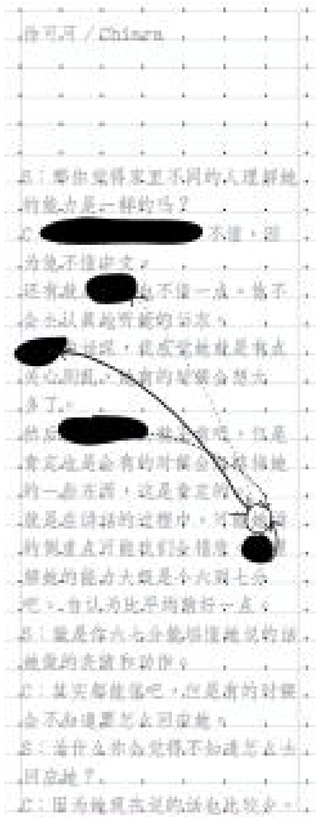
2. Repair



Information	Visual Rule
Normal Transcript	Continuous solid black line
Gap	The line breaks, leaving an empty space
Guess	A dashed line extends into the gap without reaching the other side
Options	The dashed line branches into 2–3 possible paths
Wait	Dots occupy the gap, representing time passing without intervention

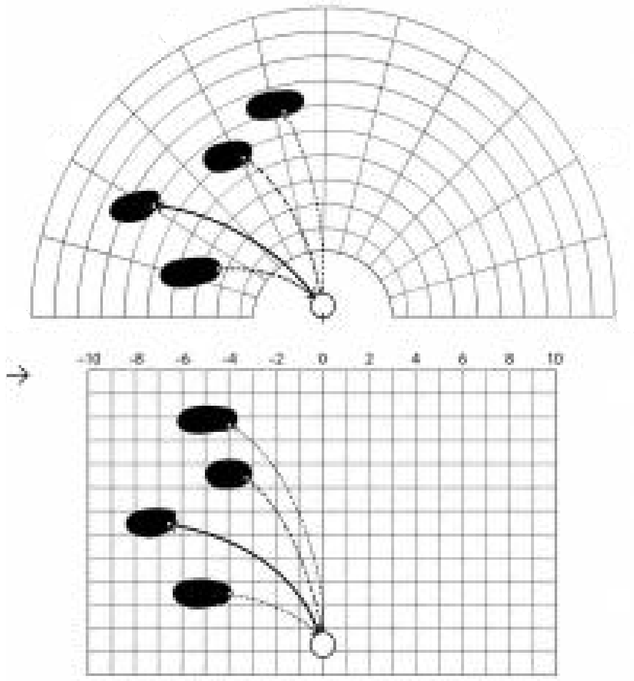


3. Distance



Chapter III — Distance: Visual Rules

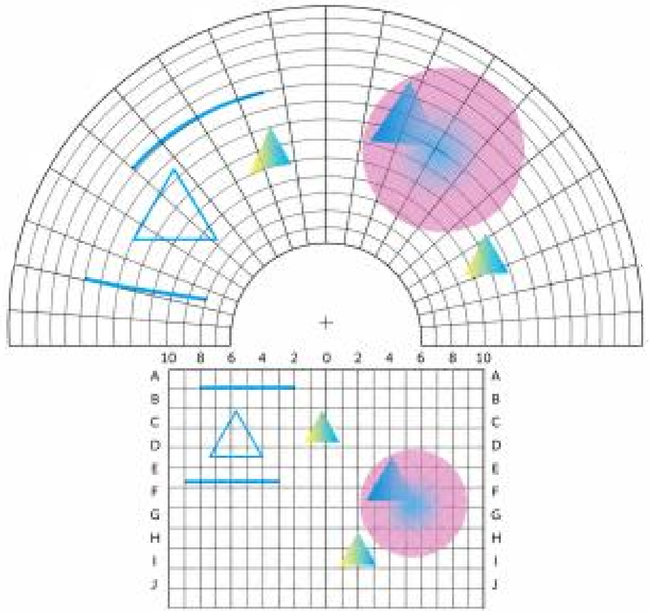
Information	Visual Rule	Meaning
Subject / Person	Solid black shape	The person whose relationship with Grandmother is being described
Grandmother	White outlined circle	The shared reference point
0% Understanding	No connection	No perceived understanding
25% Understanding	Dashed arrow	Very limited / fragmented understanding
50% Understanding	Thin solid arrow	Partial understanding
75% Understanding	Medium solid arrow	Strong but incomplete understanding
100% Understanding	Thick solid arrow	Full / near-complete understanding
Person → Grandmother	Arrow points towards Grandmother	The person's understanding of Grandmother
Grandmother → Person	Arrow points towards the person	Grandmother's understanding of / response to the person
Mutual Understanding	Arrows in both directions	Understanding is described in both directions



4. Beyond the words



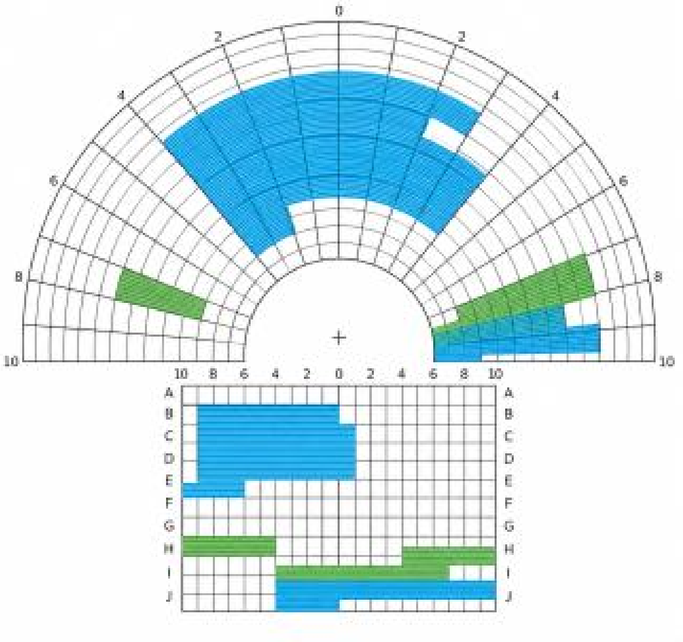
Visual Variable	Encodes
—	Language
△	Gesture
□	Facial Expression
○	Body / Movement
×	Touch
Shape	Communication channel
Colour	Person
Gradient direction	Direction of communication
Two colours blending	Interaction between two people



4. Uncertainty



Blue	Grandmother's expressed meaning
Green	Listener's interpretation
Purple	Memory / contextual inference
Pink / Red	Alternative interpretation
White / absence of colour	Unknown / unverifiable



Outcome

The project has moved from representing the ineffable to exposing the construction of meaning.

•A book structured in five chapters: Change / Repair / Distance / Beyond Words / Uncertainty.
•original transcript (mainly chinese) remains the primary source; English provides access for readers who cannot read original language.
•Each chapter applies one repeatable visual programme to selected transcript material.
•Graphic systems are generated from the source rather than used as illustrations.
•The chapters accumulate into a portrait of Grandmother that remains multiple, relational and unresolved.

Where is meaning being produced,
by Grandmother, by the listener, and by me as the designer?