

1.

The process of 100 screen grabs

The project started from my focus on the tool. My intention was to test its limits and possibilities by changing one thing at a time and seeing what happens. 'What if...?' was the starting point for each step.

The inspiration, or rather the reference I used, was flock behaviour. The way I tried to resemble it was not simply by observing the movement and copying bit by bit, but rather understanding the principles behind it and recreating the movement digitally by forcing these principles on a group of points.

In artificial, non-existent coordinate system I could play with the dissected idea and use it to shape abstract forms.

'Freed from the boundaries of time and space, I co-ordinate any and all points of the universe, wherever I want them to be. My way leads towards the creation of a fresh perception of the world. Thus I explain in a new way the world unknown to you.' [1]

Feedback in the class

After recording each iteration, I had over a hundred of 30-60 seconds long videos that needed to be combined together, which forced me to squeeze them to 1 second each in the compilation, for the sake of presentation on tutorial. And the video just asked for a music in the background, so I found a song with the beat fitting exactly the rhythm of changing visuals.

This final step unintentionally gave a completely different character to the project, and was one of the focus points in the discussion. What's the relation between the sounds and visuals? Did the sound interpret the movement, or the opposite? Can they influence each other? Can I iterate the sound? How does music change the perception of the visuals? All those questions gave meaning to something purely accidental, and at the same time opened a new door, showing another direction of exploration.

Another important point was that the flip side of focusing on the tool is its incidental character, and lacks the main thought, some dominant element. That's why one of my main tasks will be probably to find this voice that would come through in the project.

Directions

There are several streams of thought emerging from the project so far that speak to me the most, and which actually don't contradict with each other, but could even possibly feed one another.

A. Replicating nature, transferring concepts

This theme goes back to my interest in transferring principles found in nature into architecture. Traditionally, buildings oppose natural forces like gravity, while they could respond to the principles behind them.

*(...) **we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.** Each evening we see the sun set. We know that the earth is turning away from it. Yet the knowledge, the explanation, never quite fits the sight. (...) **The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe.*** [1]

We don't normally pay attention and try to understand how everything around us works, but world is a complex system shaped by certain rules that can be understood, reinterpreted and reused.

There are many examples of architects exploring and experimenting with natural phenomena, and successfully drawing inspiration from them for the actual designs. This area of architecture is called form-finding, as the form is 'found' by responding to all sorts of natural factors.

*(...) the uniqueness of the original lies now in it being **the original of a reproduction.** It is no longer what its image shows that strikes one as unique; **its first meaning is no longer to be found in what it says, but in what it is.*** [1]

I think that the relation between principles in nature and architecture below shows how instantly silly fun facts become significant, powerful ideas.

B. Relation of sounds and visuals

This is the topic that emerged in the discussion, and gives my project some new potential ways to develop. Previously I only iterated the visuals and added sound at the end, while it could be strongly tied with the project. The visuals could actually respond to the sound, not just fit to its rhythm.

There are several softwares working with music visualisation, here's one that I found interesting:

Magic Music Visualiser

<https://youtu.be/tQg3-66rifk>

<https://youtu.be/V0SWRRKjeww>

It works similarly to Grasshopper that I used in 100 screen grabs - a script consisting of block components which process the input to give certain results. That's why I am wondering if and how those two softwares could be linked or used simultaneously. Or maybe if principles could be transferred from one to another, that is if I could use Grasshopper like Magic, giving it music or sound as input. Here's an example of that (with the use of form-finding):

<https://youtu.be/prUeQuvMvIU>

*In the age of pictorial reproduction the meaning of paintings is no longer attached to them; **their meaning becomes transmittable**: that is to say it becomes information of a sort, and, **like all information, it is either put to use or ignored**; information carries no special authority within itself. When a painting is put to use, **its meaning is either modified or totally changed**.*

This idea of transforming, almost translating something from one medium to another somehow relates to transferring concepts from nature to design which I touched on in the previous point. Both concepts engage with transferring, interpreting, and recreating. It could be interesting to create an animation using a twofold input - certain principles of movements reacting to certain sounds.

*The meaning of an image is **changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or what comes immediately after it**. Such authority as it retains, is distributed over the whole context in which it appears.*

The animation would be perceived differently depending on the background sounds, transitions, pace etc. Similarly, the sounds might be perceived differently with various visualisations.

Plan

I would like to use movements based on natural principles as a base for music visualiser. There are different ways I could approach it:

- Set the way the visualiser will react to sound and change the music in the background
- Set the background music and change the ways visualiser will react to it

The second option seems more interesting in terms of constantly developing the tool instead of just changing the background. Although I could choose a couple of different songs that I would use as input for each iteration of the visualiser to see if there would be a big difference.

2.

First nothing. No. First the space. Now a point. A group of lines. A flock. Between life and non-life. Without a will. Without a goal. But with a momentum. With a force. Moving in a direction. Down. Right. Up. Down again. Towards another point. Sliding over obstacles. Piercing through. Dancing around. Or alongside. Drawn towards. Pushed away. Responding to forces. Rules. Shapes. Context that I frame around. [1]

Me. A hypersubject. A self-proclaimed almost-god-like figure. Forcing my will. Dominion. Master.

Them. Hyposubjects. So insignificant. Single points in space-time. But together a mass. A collective numb resistance. I can't get through. A movement not fully in my control. Out of my grasp. Not just little nothings. More than the sum of its parts. An entity. An activity. A force. [2]

Me. Not the Grand Architect of the Universe. Not an all-knowing all-capable force. Me. A sculptor. A craftsman. Prometheus. Giving a shape to material. Odin. Giving the breath of life. Facing the limits of reality. Helpless. Learning. Persisting. Seeing what happens.

Them. Existing? Designed? Imagined? Programmed? Virtual? Real? Not real? Objects? Subjects? Alive? Behaving? Misbehaving? A group? A crowd? A herd? A pack? Paths? Movements? Equation? Calculation? Miscalculation?

Give a form. Give a shape. Give an obstacle. Give a direction. Guide. Missed. Misinterpreted. No matter. Guide again. Failed. Failed better. Worse. And better again. [1]

Worked. Didn't work. What if? But no. What if that? Yes. But not like imagined. Try anyway. That direction? No. Slightly different. But what if? No. A bit. Yes, but. No. Still no.

[1] Morton, T., Boyer, D., (2021) *Hyposubjects. On becoming human*, Open Humanities Press
Available at: <http://www.openhumanitiespress.org/books/titles/hyposubjects/>

[2] Beckett, S., *Worstward Ho* (1983)
Available at: http://www.samuel-beckett.net/w_ho.html

I don't really master
dominate
govern them.

I don't really have regulation
constraint
guidance
authority
control over them.

They fall over
glide
slip through my fingers
orders.

I can only impact
master
lead
influence them to some size
amount
scope
degree
extent.

I slowly make my course
track
path
way through

my inability to prescribe
boss
order around
dictate
determine what will happen.

Test and mistake.

Test and fail.

Attempt and fault.

Attempt and blunder.

Try-out and blunder.

Try-out and bummer.

Experiment and bummer.

Experiment and inaccuracy.

Experiment and fault.

Try-out and oversight.

Run and slip-up.

Trial and slip-up.

Trial and mistake.

Pilot and mistake.

Pilot and error.

Trial and error.

I give them a

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3.

Oftentimes, creatives are viewed as people working in the state of inspiration, pushed forward by impulses of new ideas, put in the category of irrational, artsy beings. Whoever believes that, clearly doesn't realise that it all comes down to 'unglamorous, disciplined labor' [1].

'Conditional Design Manifesto' offers a new approach, shifting from creating objects to creating tools and systems for creating objects. It removes designer to some extent from the equation, reshapes the process so that it sustains itself. Way to hack the system! Conditional design also draws from what is around us, gains insight from what's already there, in order to create something new, by means of logic and principles [2].

An excellent example of conditional design in action (speaking of hacking) is object-oriented programming. As Daniel Shiffman explains, within the program, one initiates an object, its functions and abilities, and leaves it to itself to happen, to function, to lead an existence in its domain within the rules put on a new, conditioned, artificial reality [3].

He illustrates that concept by writing a simple program for a human object, which data would be height, weight, gender and so on, and its functions for example sleep, wake up, eat, ride some form of transportation. To dive a bit deeper, he says that this 'structure is not a human being itself; it simply describes the idea, or the concept, behind a human being. It describes what it is to be human.' This is a human template that Shiffman calls 'class', while the 'object' would be a certain human created from that template - you, me, your neighbour, and so on [3].

This shows that you can create tools within tools (and within tools) which builds a whole lot more complex framework, but its goal remains very simple - to create things for us and function on its own.

In that way, creative endeavours shift to a mechanical process, with a limited (the smaller, the better) number of decisions on the way. Once given an input, it has its own momentum and should not be altered or distracted by uncertainties of human doubt [2].

Still, its source, its idea comes from human origin. Even though the process, once initiated, turns into a perpetuum mobile, the one who starts it and the one who decides when to stop, is a person. This is the role of a designer - to govern it, to manage it, to control it. The minor decisions throughout the process should be ideally left to the process itself, dependent on the conditions put by the designer. But those conditions, the real, major decisions, and therefore the authorship and the ownership, belong to the designer.

The process is like the universe that bursted from 'Let there be light', which makes the designer a deistic god who has the first and the last say but otherwise remains more or less indifferent and leaves the world to itself.

However, conditional design supports 'using the methods of philosophers, engineers, inventors and mystics' [2]. Following that claim, let's add 'one more choice on the methodological mix', combine the practical with the surreal, and think about what was before the Big Bang that put the process in motion.

Elisabeth Gilbert shares her utterly magical theory on creativity based on the belief that among various living beings in this world, there are also ideas, intangible life-forms striving to be manifested, and the only way to achieve it is through 'collaboration with a human partner'. She even finds argument in ancient Greek concept of *eudaemonia*, the highest form of happiness, which literally translated to English would mean 'well-deamoned', that is 'taken care of by some external divine creative spirit guide', followed by the Roman concept of a *genius*, a guardian spirit. Which in context of creativity means that they 'didn't believe that an exceptionally gifted person was a genius; they believed that an exceptionally gifted person *had* a genius' [1].

This sounds like a game changer - the ideas do not originate from humans, but influence them. They want humans to bring them to life, or rather to the physical realm. What does it make of humans then?

We are the ones who get the work done, the facilitators, the mediators between the mystical and the material. By no means are we slaves, rather hard workers that *make things happen*. I wouldn't necessarily call it a function or destiny, but maybe a power or capacity. We have the innate ability to sense ideas, and we can choose to dedicate to working with them (or not). But we do *not own* them. There is no hierarchy, no inferiority, no dependency. Instead, there is coexistence and collaboration. Just another example of symbiosis between different living beings in the ecosystem.

In that sense, we're not conducted or managed, but guided and supported. In the course of creative struggles something has our back. This is our service to the world, the way of showing gratitude to whatever made *us* happen. Going further, the process does not need any goal or reason. It's an act of worship in itself. To create means to be a creation that gives thanks back to its creator by means of creative act [4].

But the really interesting things start to emerge when we combine and overlap those concepts. Given that the designer resembles a god-like figure to the new created realm, and given that this world was created too, could our reality be then an act of worship as well, but on a higher level?

And if the tool or system for creating objects is in a sense a small artificial universe or a program based on simplified principles taken from the context of the creator, just how far does it go? How many levels of realms, universes or programs could there be?

And drawing again from Shiffman's example of writing a template for a human being - could our ability to connect with ideas and make things happen be just another function defined by a human template? Could the god's power to create new worlds be just one on the list of a god template?

[1] Gilbert, E. (2015) *Big Magic*, New York: Riverhead Books

[2] Blauvelt, A., Maurer L. (2013) *Conditional Design Workbook*, Valiz

[3] Shiffman, D. (2008) *Learning Processing*, Elsevier Inc.

[4] *The Artist's Way*

4.

1. How has your original position changed as a result of your further work?

My position definitely changed as I kept working on the project.

I started from the idea of dissecting some principles from nature and re-contextualising them in a tool for sound visualisation. And that was pretty much it. There was no aim or goal, so I found it hard to put my position into words at first but eventually admitted that my driver was pure curiosity and the will to learn a new tool.

Technically, all the visuals are some form of representation of movement paths drawn by a group of points chasing another point. It would be an understatement to say that I had little control over them. At first I could barely get any reaction to sounds that would be visible or would make sense. I felt like a leader of disobedient, capricious herd. It awoke in me unintentional animism, and gave them some sense of aliveness in my eyes.

In that way, exactly from those limitations and my view on the conflict of control and helplessness of a creator, arose the idea of bringing some creatures into life, and therefore building a small, simple, artificial reality for them to live in. The idea gradually emerged from overlap of different texts about design, processing, philosophy, spirituality and creativity. Writing definitely helped me bring together those ideas floating separately in my mind.

As I kept writing, my position slowly drew away from my personal opinion and became a stylistic choice, a play with 'what ifs', an add on of layers of complexities on a simple, repetitive act.

2. Where have holes or gaps appeared in your research, and how do you expect to fill them in future work?

I think the project is not self-explanatory without reading the written components, especially the third one. Or rather, I'm afraid that my ideas in the text became so unrealistic that they might not come through when read out loud in the movie. It's quite understandable that my words at the same time shape the lines and inform on them, but I'm afraid that what I read in the background gradually draws too far away from them.

This project developed in leaps. Once I found a momentum and came up with something that made sense to me and naturally drew me forward, at some point I was stuck again, questioning my way of thinking, and worried that I went too far.

Even though reading the text out loud to interact with the software helped in iterations - because of a more apparent contrast between sound and silence - the content of the written components did not really transform the way I worked. True, the written components emerged from the studio work, but then grew in their own direction, without a big influence on the project itself.

I am also quite stuck with the video essay itself. Since I discovered an interesting tension between Iterate and Position by combining the two in the video essay, the iterations are not anymore a free flow of trials and errors. Now I see them as parts of the video essay, meant to create a build-up, and I might be too focused on the final product instead of exploration.

I guess in the future I will have to remind myself regularly to keep an eye on the full picture instead of nerding separate aspects and then trying to make them work together.