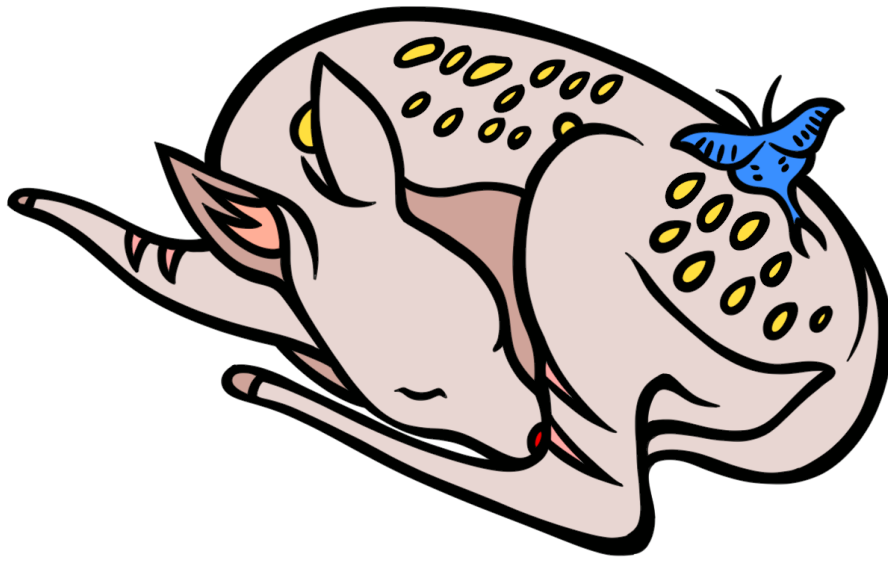


WRITTEN RESPONSE

11:03



In Michael Rock's 2009 essay, 'Fuck Content', the terms 'design', 'content', 'form' and 'style' are used repeatedly to highlight the tension between creation and manipulation in the design field. Rock critiques the designer's obsession with 'content' to achieve legitimacy akin to authorship, arguing that designers feel pressured to originate content rather than shape it. The table created for this study provides an overview of the frequency, usage, and potential synonyms for these keywords, thereby highlighting Rock's differentiation of "design as content" from conventional notions of "content."

The repeated use of terms such as "content" and "form" serves to reinforce Rock's central argument that design itself should be regarded as a distinct form of "content," independent of its representational function. Rock contests the prevailing notion that content must come before and dictate design, proposing instead that the manipulation or structuring of form can convey significance. By scrutinising the terms Rock employs and their milieu in the essay, it becomes evident that he champions design as a medium of expression that articulates through visual narration as opposed to textual accounts.

This analysis elucidates Rock's concept that "our content is, perpetually, Design itself" by demonstrating that the visual decisions made by a designer are, in themselves, a form of content. The words and their substitutes in my table illustrate this dynamic, revealing that Rock perceives design as a vessel for external content and a self-contained language capable of expressing complex, modern experiences.

FUCK CONTENT

Fuck Content / Glossary :

'Fuck Content'
Multiple Signatures: On Designers,
Authors, Readers and Users

New York: Rizzoli
[1996] [2009] 2013
pp. 46–56, 91–95

High-frequency vocabulary collation

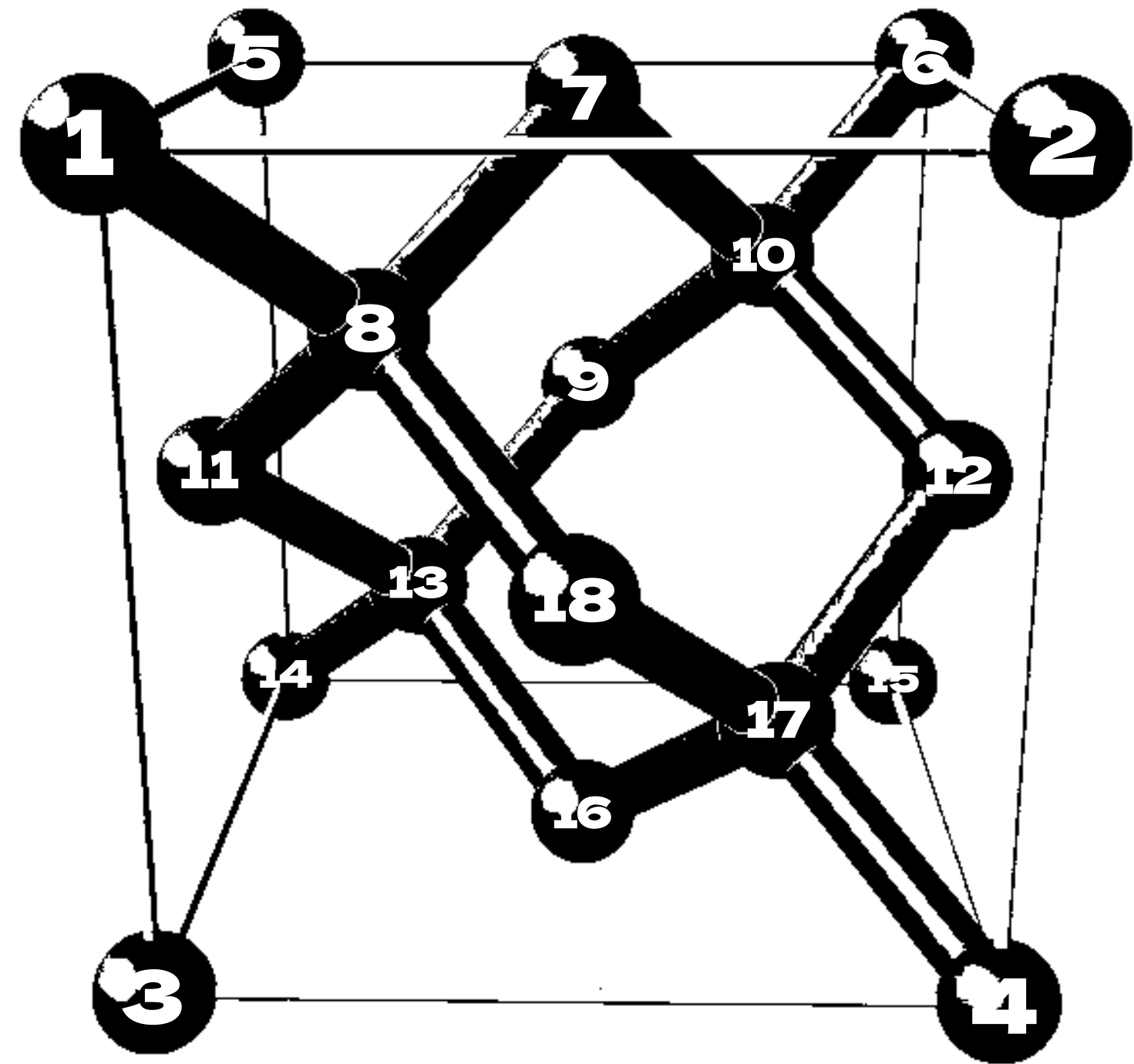
Word	Frequency	Paragraph	Part of speech	Corresponding Words	
Design	18	P1/2/3	- Noun	Layout, Blueprint, Plan	
Content	15	P1/3/5	- Noun	Substance, Material	
Form	13	P3/4/5	- Noun	Structure, Configuration	
Shape	9	P4	- Noun/Verb	Contour, Outline, Profile	
Work	9	P1/5	- Noun/Verb	Project, Task, Assignment	
Author	6	P1	- Noun	Creator, Writer, Composer	
Style	6	P3	- Noun	Aesthetic, Fashion	
Meaning	5	P3/4	- Noun	Significance	
Storytelling	5	P5	- Noun	Narrative, Description	
Graphic	5	P5	- Adjective/Noun	Visual, Illustration, Image	
Treatment	4	P5	- Noun	Approach, Handling	
Elements	4	P5	- Noun	Components, Parts	
Project	4	P5	- Noun/Verb	Initiative, Endeavor	
Relationship	4	P6	- Noun	Connection, Association	
Language	3	P2	- Noun	Vernacular, Dialect	
Narrative	3	P5	- Noun	Story, Account	
Film	3	P5	- Noun	Movie, Cinema	
Visual	2	P5	- Adjective	Image, Picture, Graphic	
Aesthetic	2	P5	- Adjective/Noun	Appearance, Look, Style	
Expression	2	P6	- Noun	Articulation	

In Invisible Cities, Calvino's descriptions of each city are concise, uniform in length, and devoid of any sense of hierarchy or importance. The absence of temporal elements and characters, coupled with the lack of any discernible connection between the cities, contributes to a fragmented narrative. The 18 dialogues and reflections are equally casual, neither following a chronological sequence nor a causal logic.

However, Calvino's approach does not permit these pieces to disperse haphazardly. Instead, he meticulously organizes them according to specific rules, thereby establishing a cohesive and lucid structure. The 55 chapters thus create a perfect crystalline structure, with the title forming a large diamond shape, and each chapter commences with a different title. While the text may appear disjointed, it is, in fact, intricately arranged by the author into a clever composition.

Spatial Imagination "crystal" narrative space. The concept of "crystals" in Calvino's creative philosophy and the unique structure of the novel. Invisible Cities is notable for its minimalist approach to plot, conflict, characters, and environment, with redundant language being simplified and writing style resembling that of a fable. Calvino consolidates various considerations, experiences and hypotheses into a single image — the "crystal" — which symbolises a stable and regular surface structure. The city's image "has many facets like a crystal, each segment of text occupies one facet, with these facets connected but without causal or hierarchical relationships" (Calvino, 1988, p. 123). It is also like a web, where one can plot many different routes and arrive at numerous completely different answers, representing the contradiction between the rationality of geometric shapes and the chaotic nature of human life. At the same time, it forms a complete structure where we inevitably find "a plot, a journey, a conclusion" (Calvino, 1988, p. 123).

In light of this, the decision was taken to utilise The Internet Does Not Exist as the medium for this project, utilising its critique and depiction of the internet to reimagine 18 distinct worlds. Each world in this project is intended to represent a different facet of the internet, yet these facets are not arranged in a hierarchical structure; rather, they are uniformly aligned with the overarching theme of the internet, akin to the arrangement of facets in a crystal.



The invisible internet

- ① Illusia ② Driftland ③ Umbra ④ Stacka
- ⑤ Nebulea ⑥ Echos ⑦ Porthura ⑧ Entropia
- ⑨ Miragea ⑩ Solitaris ⑪ Voidis ⑫ Circular
- ⑬ Bargainea ⑭ Transitoria ⑮ Observela
- ⑯ Desirea ⑰ Fissura ⑱ Lostalia

1. Illusia

Illusia is a city perpetually shrouded in mist, where all buildings are made of light projections. They appear tangible yet vanish upon touch. Residents believe their city is real until someone walks through a wall and finds themselves in another illusionary space. Illusia represents the deceptive allure of the internet, blurring the lines between truth and fabric.

2. Driftland

Driftland is a floating city where buildings and streets drift with the wind. Residents can never settle in one place for long; over time, they lose all sense of direction. Driftland reflects the nonlinear and dynamic nature of the internet, where constant change leaves people unanchor.

3. Umbra

Umbra is overshadowed by a colossal black tower whose "eyes" surveil every movement. Residents are aware of the constant monitoring but cannot escape. Over time, they begin to self-regulate and conform. Umbra symbolizes the culture of surveillance on the internet, revealing how invisible control shapes behavior.

4. Stacka

Stacka is a city of towering layers, each storing the memories and data of its residents. Over time, the lower layers decay, forcing residents to climb to newer levels, leaving the past to be forgotten. Stacka reflects the infinite accumulation of data on the internet, raising the question: who owns and controls these records?

5. Nebulea

Nebulea floats on massive clouds where all knowledge and resources are stored. Residents can access these clouds at will, but unseen masters control the clouds. When the clouds dissipate, the city's foundation collapses. Nebulea critiques the dependence on "cloud computing" and the vulnerabilities of centralized digital infrastructure.

6. Echos

Echos is a city filled with reverberations of past conversations. Residents hear their own words repeated days or years later but altered and out of context. The more these echoes overlap, the less intelligible they become. Echos represents the distortion of information through online repetition and the erosion of meaning over time.

7. Porthura

Porthura is a city with countless gates, each leading to different possibilities. Residents can step through any gate but can never return. They endlessly pursue the promise of something better, never appreciating the ground beneath them. Porthura symbolizes the infinite choices of the internet and how they lead to perpetual dissatisfaction.

8. Entropia

Entropia is a crumbling city, its streets and buildings disintegrating like grains of sand. Residents rebuild each day, only to watch their work fall apart again. Entropia embodies the chaotic nature of the internet, where information overload leads to fragmentation and decay.

9. Miragea

Miragea is a city of light and reflections, appearing vibrant and bustling. Yet, as residents approach, the buildings and streets dissolve into nothingness. Eventually, they accept these illusions, making the pursuit of mirages their way of life. Miragea reflects the ephemeral and illusory nature of virtual identities and connections online.

10. Solitaris

Solitaris is a city teeming with people, but residents only interact through screens. Algorithmic recommendations govern their lives, and relationships are reduced to likes and comments. Despite being surrounded by activity, they feel deeply alone. Solitaris critiques the performative and isolating aspects of social networks.

11. Voidis

At the heart of Voidis lies a bottomless abyss, pulling in anyone who ventures too close. While the abyss terrifies residents, it also fascinates them, compelling them to gaze into it. Voidis represents the infinite consumption of internet content and the existential void it often leaves behind.

12. Circular

Circula's streets loop endlessly; no matter where residents go, they always return to the same starting point. Every action is recorded and replayed in perfect sequence, trapping them in a predictable cycle. Circular reflects internet algorithms' circular nature, where data-driven feedback loops shape and confine human behavior.

13. Bargainea

In Bargainer, residents trade their time and privacy for convenience. The city's central marketplace facilitates these transactions, offering shiny goods at the cost of their autonomy. Over time, residents acquire more possessions but lose their sense of self. Bargain critiques the internet's commodification of personal data and its hidden costs.

14. Transitoria

Transistor is a fleeting city where streets and buildings shift daily, constantly erasing and redrawing themselves. Residents struggle to remember its form, but nothing ever lasts. Transitory symbolizes the transience of digital spaces, where permanence is increasingly rare.

15. Observela

Observela's streets are lined with giant, unblinking eyes that monitor every action. Initially, residents resist, but eventually, they embrace the attention, turning their lives into performances. Observela reflects the surveillance culture and attention economy of the internet, where being watched becomes a form of validation.

16. Desirea

Desirea is an unfinished city where residents constantly tear down old structures to build taller, more elaborate towers. None are ever completed, and the cycle repeats endlessly. Desirea symbolizes the internet's endless stimulation of desires and the algorithms that perpetuate insatiable consumption.

17. Fissura

Fissura is crisscrossed by deep cracks in the earth, each promising to reveal hidden truths. However, residents who explore them find only emptiness. These fissures divide the city and its people. Fissura represents the fragmentation of trust in the internet and the risks lurking beneath its surface.

18. Lostalia

Lostalia is a city submerged in an encroaching sea. Every night, the waves wash away its structures, forcing residents to rebuild from scratch. They work tirelessly, yet nothing remains. Lostalia symbolizes the erasure of history on the internet and the relentless pursuit of novelty.



About Invisible Cities

The book has no definitive ending

Kublai Khan has conquered the world despite possessing the entire world

But he has never truly seen it

Kublai Khan needs Marco Polo to describe what the world he owns is like

Marco Polo tells him about dozens of cities

But these cities are fictional

Creations of Calvino's own ideology and imagination

Kublai Khan says to Marco Polo

"You've told me about every city in the world "

"But except for one that you never speak of."

Marco Polo: "Which city have I not spoken of?"

Kublai Khan: "You've never spoken about your hometown-Venice."

Marco Polo: "You're mistaken. "

"Every city I've told you about has been Venice."

The book does not have a clear conclusion.

Kublai Khan, despite ruling over an empire vast enough to encompass the world, remains blind to its essence.

He relies on Marco Polo to give him a vision of what he possesses.

Marco Polo speaks of countless cities, each one unique, yet none of them real.

They exist only in the realm of imagination—crafted by Calvino's poetic vision.

At one point, Kublai Khan turns to Marco Polo and remarks:

"You have described every city to me."

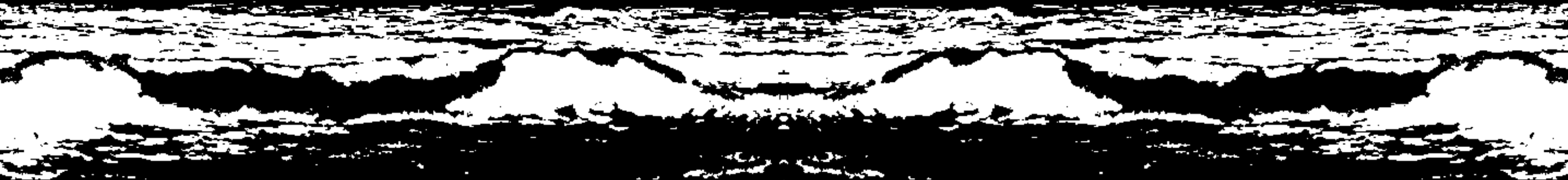
"Except for one—the city you never speak of."

Marco Polo asks, "Which city have I not spoken of?"

Kublai Khan replies, "Your own city—Venice."

To this, Marco Polo responds, "You are mistaken."

"Every city I have described has been Venice."



WRITTEN RESPONSE-Methods of iterating — Ken / Feb 07, 2025

During the three weeks of iterative learning, the learner assimilated knowledge regarding design evolution in terms of visual, formal, and interactive aspects. This evolution is not perceived as a means to an end, but rather as a process that culminates in enigmatic, distant and potentially nonexistent outcomes. In the initial week, the learner elected to emulate and experiment with the works of artists. The works of James Turrel were selected for their unique exploration of light construction, leading to the adoption of Blender for detailed experimentation with light angle, construction, colour, and material. In the course of this exploration, I undertook the restoration of one of James Turrell's works exhibited at the Guggenheim. Rather than focusing on the external structure of the work, I embarked on a meticulous examination of its internal structure, encompassing how light is oriented and the methods employed to achieve a series of effects. In the process of imitation, I perceived the emergence of a 'language' of my own, gradually taking form. In this process of imitation, I felt a 'language' of my emerging, a 'language' that led me to delve deeper into the intricacies of the Blender software and prepare myself for the prospect of 'hacking' it.

During the second week, the focus shifted to the conceptualisation of a methodology for the exploitation of Blender. Within the Blender framework, the emphasis is on the construction of three-dimensional graphics to optimise the software's functionality. However, two-dimensional graphics receive significantly less attention. Consequently, the decision was made to employ a specific three-dimensional software, namely Blender, in combination with James Turquoise. The integration of Blender with James Turrell's light processing technology enabled the creation of 2D graphics, which, in addition to subverting conventional notions of artistic expression, ushered in a paradigm shift in the conceptualisation of visual language. The process involved the translation of 3D designs into 2D through the utilisation of a static camera, with multiple 3D shapes positioned in front to generate a series of shapes that, from the perspective of the camera, visually approximated graphic design.

During the third and final week of the study, it was concluded that no matter how many iterations, trials or attempts were made, there was never an ultimate answer, only a trace of the process along the way. A reflection was then initiated on whether there was a point to all that had been done, and this was found to be the case. Each iteration gave rise to a new process, and the process continued to point to the outcome, which, though distant and mysterious, was an attempt to arrive at the so-called ideal shore through continuous iteration.

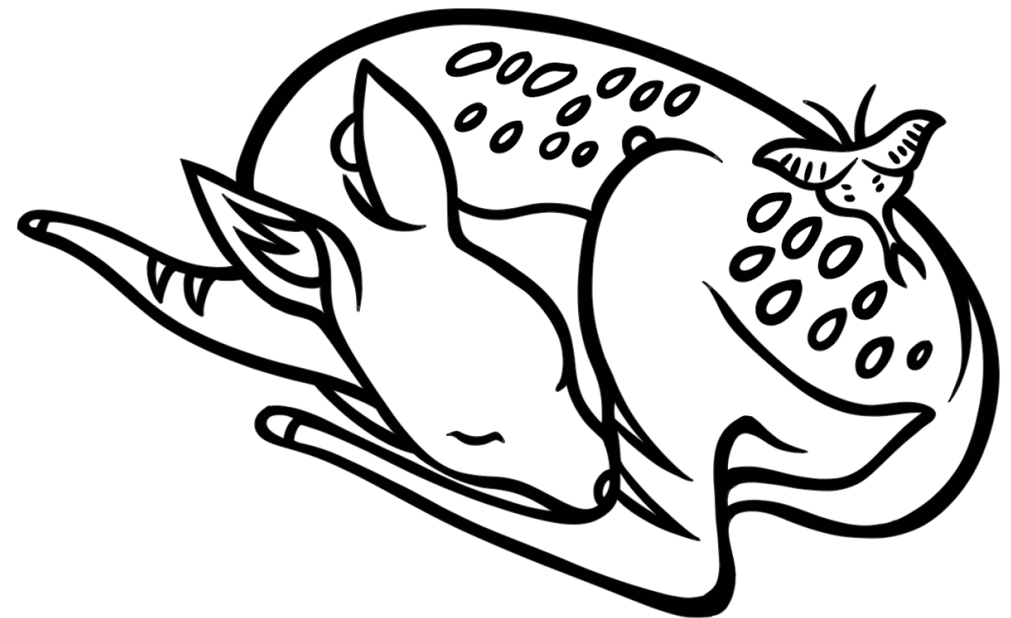
Reference

James Turrell Hardcover – 14 Oct. 2013
by Carmen Giménez (Author), Nat Trotman (Author)

Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver, Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation, [1972] 2013

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

MAGCD Iterate lecture, 2020 [video]



In the course of the three-week study, the position of the design practitioner was reflected upon, and the complex relationship between design and climate justice was deepened. Starting with the complex and difficult to understand documents within the school, the group attempted to reveal how the unequal distribution of resources, especially for students with disabilities, and the bureaucratic texts inherited from capitalism and colonialism, can become invisible barriers. However, by the conclusion of the project, it became evident that a 'solution' had not been found, but rather a profound realisation of the deeply entrenched nature of the problems themselves. This prompted the following reflection: if design is unable to provide 'balance' or 'fairness', can it attract more attention by amplifying, deepening, or even satirising the issues? This may be considered a methodology of design itself.

As Danah Abdulla (2022) emphasises in *On the Contradictions of Sustainability*, design is often rife with contradictions in terms of sustainability and social equity, functioning both as a problem-maker and a problem-challenger. She highlights the necessity for designers to recognise the socio-economic framework in which they operate and to critically intervene within it. The present endeavour was a direct response to systemic injustices, undertaken by amplifying and prolonging the bureaucratic text of the school, rendering it more arduous to read. This approach served to satirise its irrationality and to evoke a realization among the populace that these documents are not genuinely inclusive, but rather engender new exclusions. This approach prompted a re-evaluation of the boundaries of design, leading to the conclusion that its role is not solely limited to enhancing aesthetics or improving the user experience. Instead, design can function as a critical instrument that directly challenges unjust power structures.

Concurrently, *Ecofeminist Toolkit* (2023) proffers an intersectional environmental justice perspective that accentuates the robust connections between ecology, gender, race, and social structures. This perspective has led to the realisation that resource inequality within educational institutions is not merely a failure of individual policies, but rather a deep-seated systemic problem. The *Ecofeminist Toolkit* advocates for community-oriented, decentralised solutions, and our project is in part an experiment in this thinking. We did not attempt to design a single solution with a single solution in mind. Rather than attempting to rectify the issue with a solitary design solution, we seek to accentuate and critique the problem by rendering it more conspicuous, thereby prompting individuals to contemplate the rationality of the entire system. This design strategy finds resonance with the ecofeminist notion that design can serve as a medium for challenging power structures and amplifying marginalised voices in circumstances where prevailing systems are inadequate in ensuring equity. This series of explorations has prompted a re-evaluation of the designer's role.

The objective of design may not be to identify a 'perfect solution', but rather to encourage authentic social discourse by accentuating issues.

Reference

Danah Abdulla (2022), *On the Contradictions of Sustainability*, Futuress.org, lecture via Futuress

Amira Chandni, Jarre Hamilton, Dr. Meg Perret, Diandra Marizet, and Kia Nakazemi (2023), *Ecofeminist Toolkit*, PDF via *Intersectional Environmentalist*

Ahmed, S. (2012). *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham: Duke University Press.

The present volume explores issues of institutionalised diversity and inclusion, with a particular focus on how institutions such as universities shape and sustain structures of exclusion. Ahmed argues that official 'diversity policies' are often only a formal commitment and can serve as a tool for masking systemic inequalities. This aligns closely with the research direction of our group, particularly in the analysis of complex policy documents within universities that purportedly promote inclusivity but may, in reality, impede access to resources for specific groups. Ahmed's critical analysis assists in comprehending that design encompasses not only the enhancement of readability and intuitiveness, but also the exposure and critique of power structures.

Spade, D. (2020). *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next)*. London: Verso.

The book's discourse on 'mutual aid' underscores the significance of establishing decentralised, autonomous networks of mutual aid, as opposed to placing reliance on systemic change. Spade's advocacy for 'direct action' over 'solutions outside the system' has exerted a substantial influence on the team's project, as it has become evident that attaining fairness within the system is frequently futile. This theoretical framework has had substantial implications for the team's project, as it has been found that attempting to achieve fairness within the system is often an exercise in futility. Consequently, the design experiments undertaken by the team, which involved amplifying and satirising bureaucratic documents, can be considered a form of 'direct action', aimed at raising awareness about the absurdity of the system itself. Spade's theoretical framework offers a novel approach to design, emphasising not just the adjustment of existing rules, but also the fundamental challenge to these rules themselves.

Metahaven – “Can Jokes Bring Down Governments?” (2013)

Metahaven, a Dutch design research group operating within the fields of graphic design, political research and art, has been instrumental in the examination of the potential of humour and satire to act as a counteragent to established power structures. Their project, entitled "Can Jokes Bring Down Governments?", has sought to explore how information is disseminated in the digital age, whilst also investigating the capacity of humour and satire to serve as a means of resistance. This project has direct implications for our design strategy, as we employ satire to highlight systemic injustices by extending and elaborating upon the school's policy documents, thereby fostering social discourse through the utilisation of 'humour by design'. Metahaven's approach demonstrates that design does not merely 'solve' problems, but rather serves to provoke dialogue through the reconstruction of information.

Forensic Architecture – *Investigative Aesthetics*

Forensic Architecture is an experimental team that combines architecture, media and legal research, focusing on the use of visual and spatial analyses to expose human rights abuses and State violence (Forensic Architecture, n.d.). Their research methodology uses design as a tool of evidence rather than 'aesthetic optimisation' in the traditional sense (ibid.). The present project employs a deconstruction and reorganisation of texts in an attempt to reveal the inequality of resources within the university system. Forensic Architecture has made it clear that design can be used as a means of investigation, not just to inform, but to challenge existing power structures.

Ahmed, S. (2012). *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham: Duke University Press

Spade, D. (2020). *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next)*. London: Verso.

Metahaven – “Can Jokes Bring Down Governments?” (2013)

Forensic Architecture – *Investigative Aesthetics*

Highgate Cemetery: Investigating Space Through Design and Memory

Highgate Cemetery: An Exploration of Space, Design and Memory Highgate Cemetery, with its overgrown ivy, weathered tombstones, and gothic architecture, is a site of significant historical and cultural importance. As a designer investigating this location, I was drawn to its contradictions: a place of stillness and silence, yet constantly shifting under the weight of nature and time. The central question that emerged from this investigation was: How do the material properties and spatial design of a cemetery influence our understanding of memory and absence?

Georges Perec's *Species of Spaces and Other Places* (1974) offers a theoretical framework for analysing Highgate Cemetery not only as a physical location but also as a system of signs. Perec's meticulous observation of details in describing spaces resonates with my method of documenting Highgate. Inspired by this technique, the present author began mapping the cemetery's fragmented architecture: the cracks in headstones, the way ivy reclaims monuments, and the contrast between carefully maintained graves and those left to nature. This process revealed an underlying narrative: memory is constantly in flux, shaped by both human intention and organic decay.

This investigation is also consistent with Forensic Architecture's method of spatial analysis, which involves the reconstruction of sites of conflict to uncover hidden histories. This suggests that architecture itself can be considered as evidence. Applying this lens, the present study approached Highgate Cemetery as a site where power and history intersect. The arrangement of graves reflects social hierarchy, with grand mausoleums for the elite and modest headstones for others. This reflects broader themes in urban planning, namely who is remembered, and how. This spatial inequality is not merely a vestige of the past; it persists in the contemporary context, manifesting in the allocation, maintenance, and monetisation of cemeteries.

Agnès Varda's *The Gleaners and I* (2000) further informed my perspective. Varda's focus on overlooked objects and discarded materials connects to my exploration of Highgate's forgotten corners – the graves no longer visited, the inscriptions fading into illegibility. Varda's focus on overlooked objects and discarded materials connects to my exploration of Highgate's forgotten corners—the graves no longer visited, the inscriptions fading into illegibility. By documenting these neglected spaces through photography and sketching, I engaged in a form of visual archaeology, preserving traces of lives that history might otherwise erase. This project reaffirmed that design is not just about creation but also excavation—unearthing meaning in overlooked details. The erosion and overgrowth present at Highgate Cemetery demonstrate that design and memory are not static; they are living processes shaped by time, nature, and the act of looking itself.

This undertaking has reinforced the notion that design encompasses not only the act of creation but also the process of excavation, unearthing significance in overlooked intricacies. The deterioration and overgrowth that characterise Highgate Cemetery serve as a poignant reminder that design and memory are not static entities; rather, they are dynamic processes influenced by the passage of time, natural forces, and the act of observing.

