(PPS)

*Graphic Design
Masters Thesis
Laura de Baldeon*

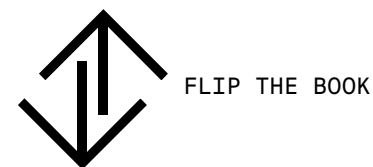(PPS)

To Adam
Te quiero mucho, como
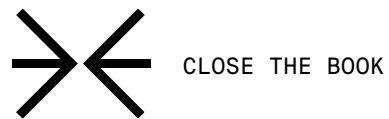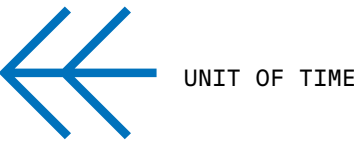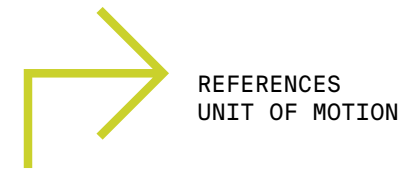*la trucha al trucho*

Abstract

Personal Positioning System (PPS) is an exploration of spatial memory in an unstable world. While the GPS gathers many different, shifting data points in order to provide us with an apparently stable representation of our position, a longitude and latitude in the earth's grid, PPS offers alternative forms of mapping based on a more flexible unit: memory. PPS reverses the directionality of the GPS and returns to the fragmentary; it disperses rather than unifies, off-shooting in different directions, overlaying the intimate on corporate territory, chasing the shifting flow of geographical information. It conceives of design as a spatial practice, one that builds fragile and temporary mnemonic structures, a virtual grid representing changing cognitive maps.

PPS charts the territory of my work through three flexible units: the unit of motion, the unit of space and the unit of time. Measurement is both structural and conceptual: it partitions but it also shapes, serving as a pillar of understanding. Throughout history, units of measurement have been used to build a regimented reality, demanding adherence to schedules and modes of operating that follow militaristic and capitalistic priorities. These units speak the language of efficiency. Instead, PPS repurposes the act of measuring by redefining these units, in order to reconfigure a ground that has already been mapped and prioritize the circuitous and the subjective over the useful and the mechanically indifferent. The creation of parallel, more subjective units of measurement as an entrypoint to my work speaks more broadly of design as a practice of building systems that propose new ways of understanding: design as a reconfiguration. Measuring here acts as an invitation to challenge existing knowledge and question our position.

Key

UNIT OF MOTION

CLICKING AWAY

ELASTIC FIELDS

PROJECTS
UNIT OF MOTION

REFERENCES
UNIT OF MOTION

UNIT OF SPACE

VIEW FROM ABOVE

JUST IN TIME

PROJECTS
UNIT OF SPACE

REFERENCES
UNIT OF SPACE

UNIT OF TIME

LES LIEUX

INTERVIEWS

REFERENCES
UNIT OF TIME

PROJECTS
UNIT OF TIME

ROTATE
THE BOOK

GO LEFT OR RIGHT

REREAD
THE SECTION

GO TO
THE LAST PAGE

LEAF THROUGH
THE BOOK

GO TO
THE FIRST PAGE

CLOSE THE BOOK

FLIP THE BOOK

STOP TO REST
AT SECTION END

Contents

UNIT OF MOTION
Ways of moving

"The oddest thing is no doubt the mobility of this memory in which details are never what they are: they are not objects, for they are elusive as such; not fragments, for they yield the ensemble they forget; not totalities, since they are not self-sufficient; not stable since each recall alters them. This 'space' of a moving nowhere has the subtlety of a cybernetic world."

↳ Michel deCerteau, <u>The Practice of Everyday Life</u>

Clicking Away
Thoughts on location

Deep-sea fiber optic cables being
pulled out of the water. / AFP

Click, click, click. This sound represents what I *do* most for the day: I press buttons. I generate revenue for the digital platforms I click on. At this exact moment, I have 12 open tabs, and this is a low number because I closed my browser earlier this morning in a small act of rebellion. I move around the internet, tracing my trackpad, in this virtual space that lives somewhere in a server farm, maintained by a vast but largely invisible infrastructure of satellites circling the earth and submarine fiber-optic cables. Things there move really fast, I'm aware—if I said *at the speed of light*, that wouldn't be an exaggeration. Around me, though, everything is really quiet. Some birds are chirping, and every once in a while a car passes by, producing a *swoosh* sound because of the rain still on the ground. The wind stirs the newly grown, tiny, bright-green leaves on the trees very softly. My neighbor's dog, Rocco, barks. My fingers hover over the keyboar *(now I press the letter)* "d." I'm in two places at once, one knowable and reachable, the other mysterious

and far away to which the computer is my door, in which it is my mouth.

In the last year, I have printed so little that I almost forgot how to do it. My work has lived exclusively in that virtual netherland space. When we're not in a pandemic, most of it also happens there, but the printer sometimes translates it into a physical mark. I move slowly, clumsily and imperfectly, but in the virtual world everything moves so well, smoothly and fast. I can only move like that in my head: in my memory, I travel vast distances of time and space very quickly. The mnemonic, like the virtual, is liquid.
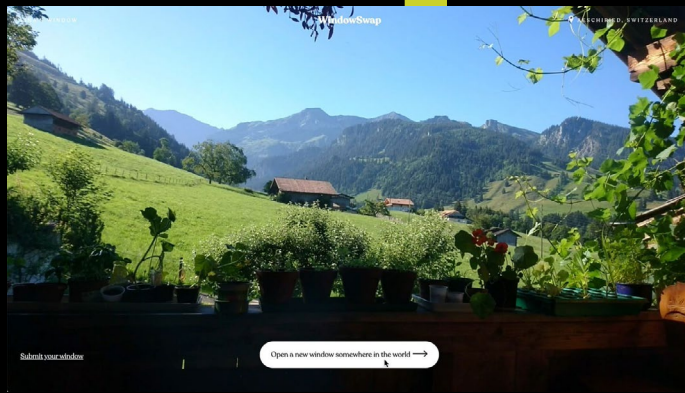
Memory mediates the unit of motion, *which measures the dissonance between our experience of physical and virtual movement. This unit doesn't map physical motion but its echo, the trace it leaves behind.* The mapped ground is my work, which exists at the border of the material and the digital: it shrinks and expands, but with discomfort.
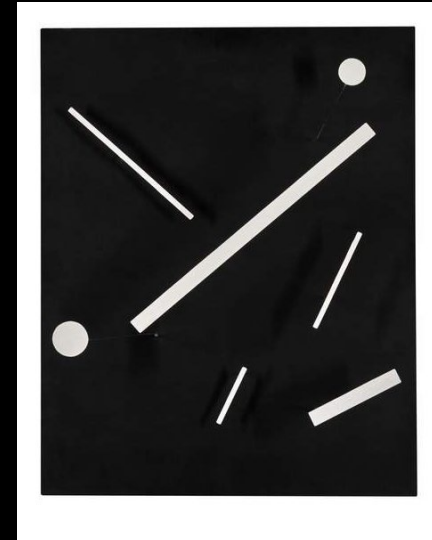
Tracy Ma,
Human Signage for
Bloomberg Businessweek,
2014 / Image Capture from
Tracy Ma's vimeo
We are so used to seeing
graphic design used in
static screens or imprinted
on walls. The way that
Tracy Ma is animating this
signage is full of energy,
humanity and specificity.

Jean Tinguely,
Meta-Malevich,
1954 / Artsy
I first encountered this
sculpture/painting by Jean
Tinguely at the Reina Sofia
Museum some years ago. The
movement of the needles
was so slow than at first it
was barely apparent. The slow
motion leads the viewer to
only realize the composition
is shifting once it has
altered significantly, which
both disorients and leads
 to an enhanced awareness.

Chris Ofili
Blue Riders,
2006 / Sotheby's
This series of paintings by
Chris Ofili is made with oil,
charcoal and acrylic on
canvas. The light reflects
off the charcoal, giving off
 a reddish tint that moves
through the painting as
you walk past it, emulating
the sunset.

Sonali Ranjit and
Vaishnav Balasubramaniam
Window Swap,
2020 / Screen capture
from Window-swap.com
Window Swap is a platform
where people upload videos
taken from their windows,
and users can browse
through them by clicking
on the screen, moving
from place to place and
experiencing a place from
the eyes of the person
whose view they are seeing.

Jeppe Hein
Breathing Watercolors
(Wallpaper),
2015 / 303 Gallery
Jeppe Hein, whose work deals
with issues of perception,
drew these lines on the
wall as he breathed, so that
they are a reflection of his
bodily rhythm.

Elastic Fields

An essay about projectivist poetry, the virtual unit & contemporary graphic design

"Position is where you put it, where it is, did you, for example, that

large tank there, silvered, with the white church along-side, lift

all that, to what purpose? How heavy the slow

world is with everything put in place. Some

man walks by, a car beside him on the dropped

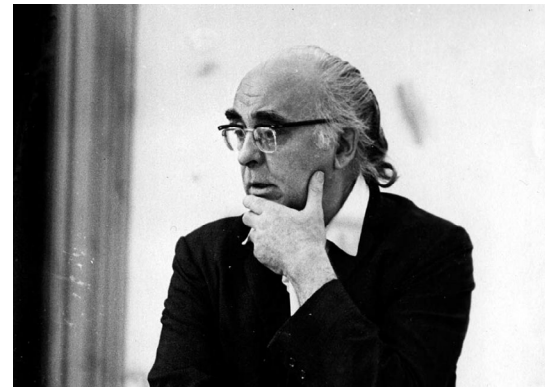*road, a leaf of yellow color is going to*

fall. It all drops into place. My

face is heavy with the sight. I can feel my eye breaking."
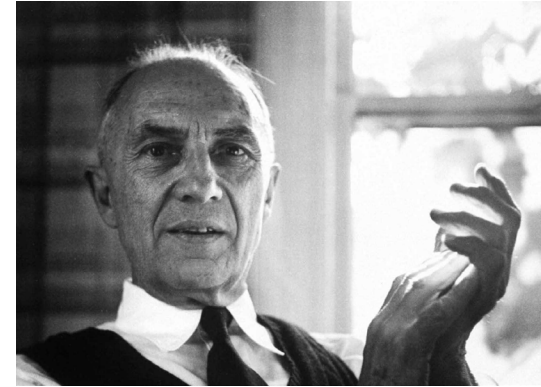
↳ Robert Creeley, <u>The Window</u>

This image is from a website featuring snapshots of Metahaven's film Propaganda about Propaganda.

My senior year of college, I took a course called Radical Poetries, where we read ↳Robert Creeley—an American poet part of the so-called Projectivist or Black Mountain poets. I had previously tried to stay away from poetry, because I didn't think I knew English well enough to understand it. Nevertheless, I enjoyed Creeley's work. As I read the poems over and over, I became more conscious of the movements of my eye through the lines, and understood that they were to be experienced rather than just read. It felt like the poetry was doing something by making me more aware of my own body.

Robert Creeley was friends with poet ↱Charles Olson, and together the two formulated a theory of poetry articulated in Olson's 1950 essay Projective Verse. It argues that at the core of poetry lies "the kinetics of the thing. A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it, by way of the poem itself, to the reader."[1] Olson suggests that the author lends a kinetic quality to the text by grounding it in their physiology, relyi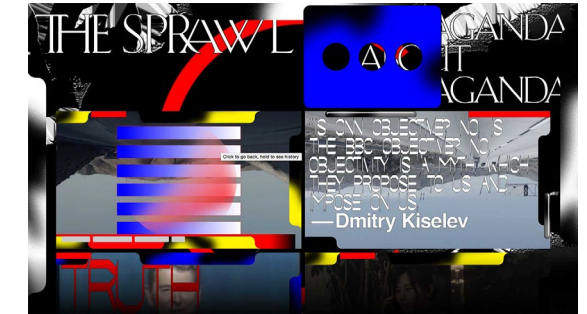ng on their hearing to form syllables and on their breathing to shape lines. For example, a pause in the author's breathing will cause a line break, encapsulating that pause in the time it takes the eye to traverse the remaining blank space and jump over to the next line. The experience is captured in the poem through the motion required to read it, so there is a form of kinetic energy transfer from the physical reality of the author's bodily rhythms to the reader. That motion is continuous, because real-time perception builds the poem: since a perception lasts only a second, another must substitute it as soon as it's over. The poetry proposed in Projective Verse is built out of constant movement, in the form of line compositions creating spontaneous configurations.

This kind of perception-based writing relies on a flexible poetic structure, something that another influential poet, ↱William Carlos Williams, advocated for in a 1948 talk at the University of Washington titled The Poem as a Field of Action. In Williams' view, the poem is part of the material world, obedient to the same forces that govern space and time rather than a product of an immutable imaginary world. As such, the poem should have a material presence, its weight rooted in experience rather than interpretation. This, according to him, can be achieved by changing the poetic structure. He writes that "the only reality that we can know is measure."[2] Through measure, the poem can become real, take up space in the configuration of physical things. This understanding of measure as reality is influenced by Einstein's theory of relativity—in changing how we measure, the theory of relativity changed how we think. As such, Williams talks about the poetic unit of measurement as if it were a spatial or temporal one, not only determining the shape of the poem but also how it is approached. The unit of measurement opens up new possibilities of understanding.

The flexible poetic unit allowed the projectivist poets to think of poetry as a force, imbued with kinetic energy—the same energy that came from their perception. It makes sense that the unit of measurement is related to motion, because we measure in order to navigate a space. If the poem is measured according to a physical perception, we will move around it at the same pace. What is, then, design's unit of measurement? In their essay White Night Before A Manifesto, designer/researcher duo ↱Metahaven claim that the "multiplication of surface, formerly called information overload, is the new reality of design. Its unit of measurement is virtual."[3] Metahaven use design's unit of measurement, the virtual unit, like Williams did poetry's: to think of design as enmeshed in a larger material context. Design operates alongside the mechanisms of today's economy: it is not a mere representation. The virtual unit of design has the same qualities of the market, markedly a speculative/surface value, meaning that it grows exponentially and multiplies seamlessly. Operating independently from the physical, it can be inflated or deflated at will, constantly shrinking and expanding in a way that makes it spatially and temporally incoherent.

If the virtual unit measures the design space, then this space is one
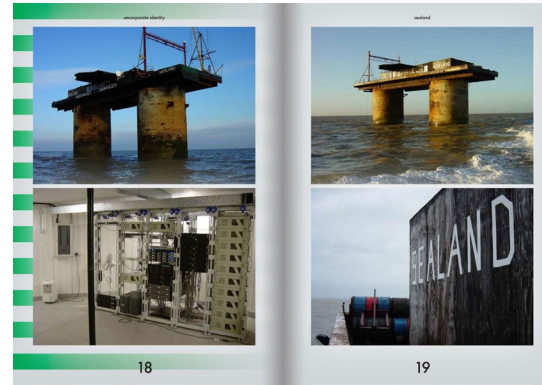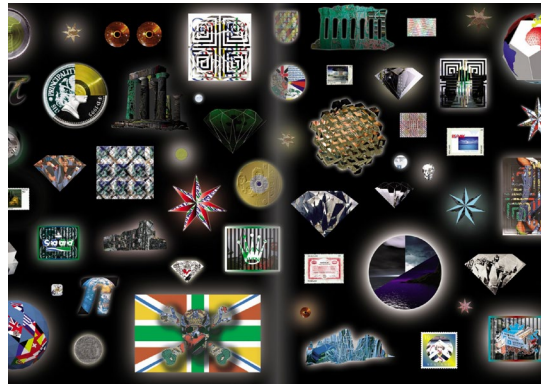
Images from Metahaven's Uncorporate Identity, where cultural imagery is appropriated to represent the offshore platform of Sealand.

of constant, uncontrolled shifting. In ⌐Uncorporate Identity, Metahaven takes this notion to the extreme, developing an identity for the Principality of Sealand, an offshore platform in the North Sea that tried to become an offshore tax haven, that is intractable: it transforms and piggybacks on circulating corporate designs. The project is a comment on corporate and governmental visual identities, which attempt to unify and beautify an amalgamation of disparate businesses or entities often engaging in extractive practices. Metahaven breaks through the image, which is hard to do: corporations have now adopted flexible visual identities to accommodate for growth while still being able to impress their mark. Because their branding is so adaptable, it's hard to separate appearance from reality.

Visually, the virtual presents itself in the same way, adapting, like water, to all kinds of screen formats. A website, for instance, is supposed to seamlessly fit whatever device it's displayed on. At the same time, the way that even websites operate can act as a metaphor

for the effort required to maintain that level of versatility: oftentimes, the format of a device will transform a design beyond recognition, compromising its readability and integrity, so that it needs to be reshaped through styling rules. The virtual unit transfigures and disorients, but this is masked in the way that virtual marketplaces present themselves as whole and perfectly in control.

If the flexible poetic unit of the projectivist poets was tied to physical experience, the flexible virtual unit is entirely divorced from it. The form of projective poems is glued to its content, and could only have arisen from it. In contrast, the relationship between form and content in today's design is unglued: detached from the medium, form quickly multiplies, its meaning branching out in different directions. This distance between form and content extends to the design process, which is mediated by the computer, the server, the browser, and the extensive network of server farms, satellites, antennas and fiber-optic cables that connect

them. The kinetic energy of the virtual stems from this constant and frictionless circulation, a movement without moving, breathing or hearing, and where the physical is only an echo.

Through my work, I want to bring attention to the flexibility of the virtual space, modelling it after physical processes that we're not used to seeing online. To some extent, this also reveals the limitations of the virtual, the gap between what it is and what it's meant to be. I often rely on motion memory and wordplay to evoke kinetic experiences in the physical world, forcing a comparison between the work and the movement it references. The dissonance that emerges brings attention to the imperfection of the surface, asking the user where they are, where and how they are moving, both physically and digitally. There is also humor in trying to jam a website or a variable typeface into physical constraints, forms that they don't naturally fit into, like pushing your body into a pair of tight jeans. The body, like the web, overflows: it wants to escape.

The effort to contain is futile, but it makes an incision in the relationship of form and content, in the illusion of frictionlessness. Ultimately, design is a shaping exercise. Here the shape is a little clumsy, a little uncomfortable, both self-aware and self-deprecating. It elicits surprise and fun, and acts as a reminder to play.

●

ENDNOTES

1. Olson, Charles. <u>Projective Verse</u>.
Poetry New York, no. 3, 1950.

2. Williams, William Carlos.
<u>The Poem As A Field Of Action</u>.
University of Washington, 1948

3. Metahaven. <u>White Night</u>
<u>Before A Manifesto</u>.
Onomatopee, 2017

FURTHER REFERENCES

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Saletnik, Jeffrey. n.d. <u>Josef Albers,</u>
<u>Eva Hesse, and the Imperative of</u>
<u>Teaching - Tate Papers</u>. Tate.
Accessed April 6, 2021.

Turner, Fred. <u>The Democratic</u>
<u>Surround: Multimedia and American</u>
<u>Liberalism from World War II to</u>
<u>the Psychedelic Sixties</u>.
University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Variable Mimosa
A typeface in bloom

Variable Mimosa explores alternative ways of communicating affectionately online. In Spanish, "mimosa" means affectionate, or someone who likes and seeks touch. It's also the name of a plant that responds to touch. Inspired by these two concepts, Mimosa is a variable typeface that blooms—or closes up, depending on the settings—upon interacting with the cursor.

The typefacwe and the website draw a connection between physical and virtual touch, with the cursor and the trackpad or mouse as the bridge between the two. As the typeface blooms, there is a sense of caressing the computer, causing the caress

and the motion that comes from it to reverberate in the physical world. The typeface was originally intended to send messages to loved ones that were far away, so that the caress would be associated with a person and translated, once again, into a sense of emotional warmth.

abcdef
ghijkℓ
mnopq
rstuv
wxyz

"Mimosa" before blooming

abcdef
ghijkl
mnopq
rstuv
wxyz

"Mimosa" in half bloom

abcdef
ghijkl
mnopq
rstuv
wxyz

"Mimosa" in full bloom

mimosa needs touch to bloom

The landing page before any
interaction has taken place.
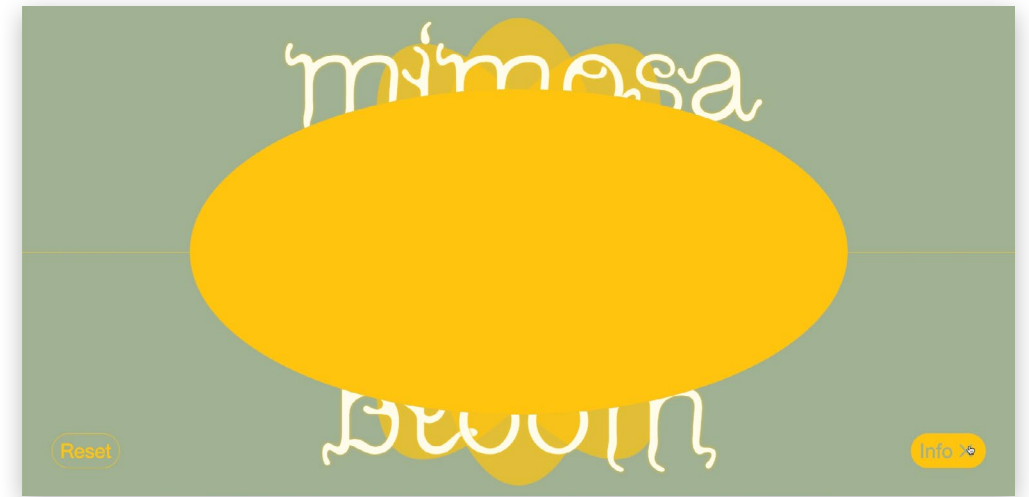
mimosa needs touch to bloom

Reset

Info

The landing page after touching
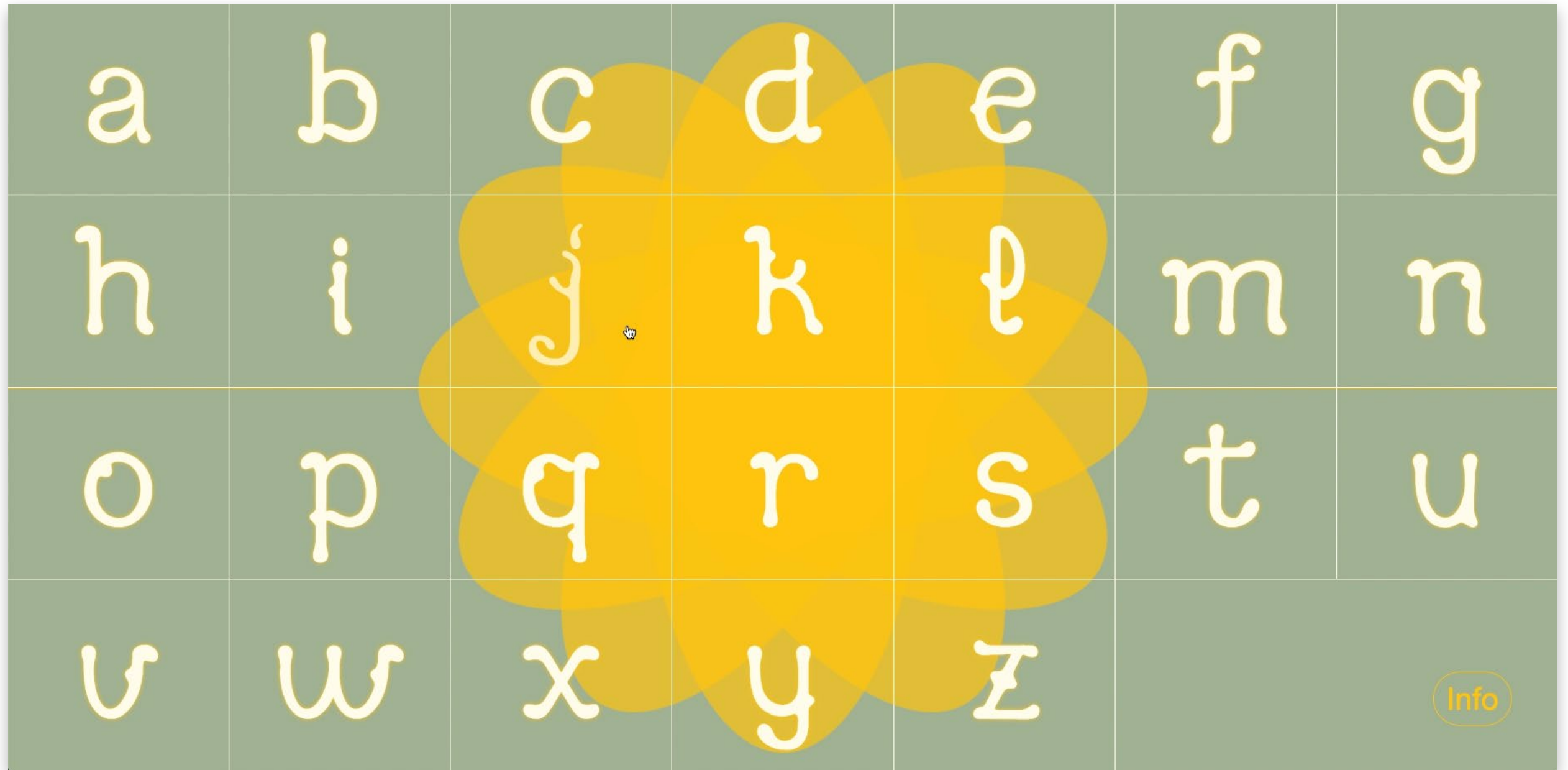each letter with the cursor.

↑ The flower in the background blooms as the letters are touched and unfolds.

↗ The "Info" button shows an ellipse with a description of the project.

→ Clicking on "Reset" sets the bloom axis back to zero

⇥

↗

When users scroll down they can see the whole alphabet. Hovering over a letter causes it to bloom.

HighRise
A stair-site

HighRise is an online publication about housing issues that operates like a building, dealing with the relationship of structure to content on the web. You enter the staircase in the landing page through a "take the stairs" button, which takes you to the first floor. As you scroll up on your trackpad, the site scrolls horizontally through the article. When you reach the end, the site shifts to a vertical scroll. After "going up" to the second floor, it reverts back to horizontal scrolling. The unusual scrolling experience emulates the physical motion of visiting an exhibition: circling a space and then going up the stairs. At the same time, the content also "goes up" by moving from discussing local issues on lower floors to examining global issues on those higher up, providing a view from above.

The site features imagery about the locations being discussed in each article, and these images are often as long as the screen height and wider than the screen width, so that the user needs to scroll in order to see them fully. This format develops the metaphor of the exhibition space further, since the images act as immersive windows onto the outside.

The association of our movement as we go up a staircase to a common web design trend, like mixing modes of scrolling, increases awareness about how we move online and the flexibility of the virtual space.

Take the ↘

HIGH

RISE

HighRise is a limited-edition digital publication about housing issues worldwide

The landing page of the site. Clicking on the right-hand side "Take the Stairs" bar scrolls up to the first article.

The fall of New York and the crisis of affluence

By Kevin Baker

Scroll up

In one of the many byzantine quirks of how we are governed in New York, the trains and buses are part of the MTA, which is controlled by Governor Cuomo. But the governor—allegedly a Democrat—rejected out of hand a proposal by New York mayor Bill de Blasio for a special "millionaires' tax" to fix the transit system, offering instead a "genius transit challenge" wherein anyone who came up with a great idea to make the trains run on time could win a million dollars.

The reasons for the subway's breakdown are legion. But the more telling lesson here is that a tax on the wealthiest New Yorkers to restore even the most vital public good cannot be so much as entertained.

The decline of the subways is just the latest diminution of public life in New York. Over the past few decades, what used to be regarded as inviolable public space has been systematically rolled up and surrendered to unelected private authorities. Starting with Central Park in 1980, much of New York's park system has been handed over to privately funded "conservancies," supposedly subordinate to the city government but in truth all-powerful, and quite determined to put everything on a paying basis. A visit to the Central Park Zoo, once free, now costs $18 per adult, $13 per child. A "total experience" ticket for the world-renowned Bronx Zoo costs $36.95 for all "adults" over the age of twelve, $26.95 for younger children, and $31.95 for seniors—in a borough where the median yearly household income is $37,525. (Rental of a single-seat stroller at the zoo will cost you $10. A wheelchair is free but requires a $20 deposit, lest you try to scoot off with it.)

Even the streets are no longer fully under public control. Starting in 1984, New York created seventy-five "business im-

↑ floor 1—Barcelona

floor 0—New York

nvasion of
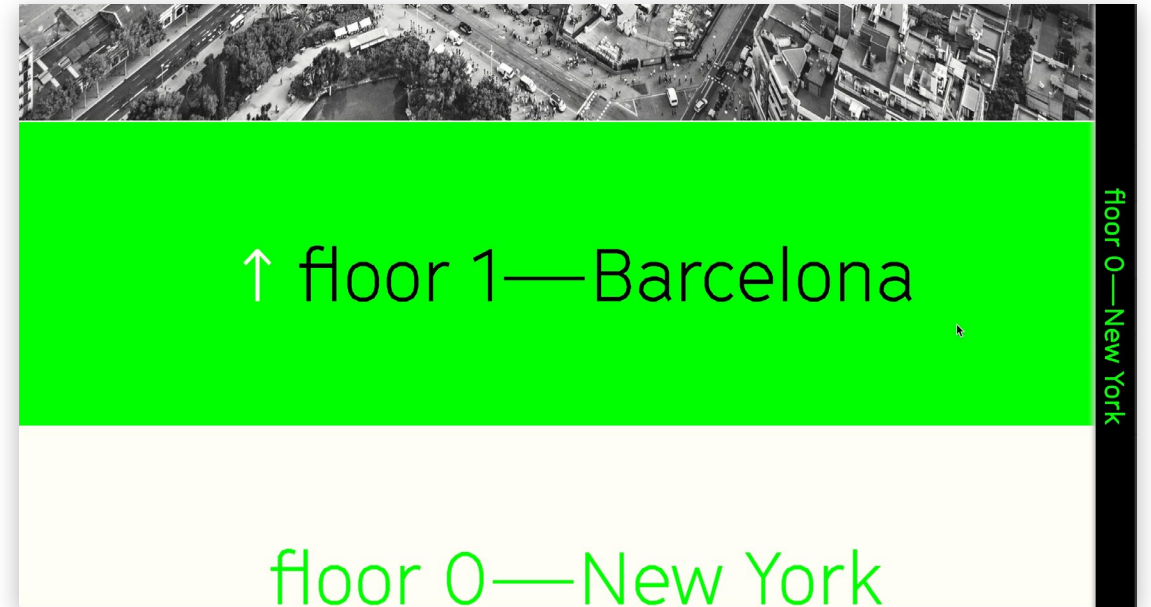
"When I arrived at Park Güell at 11 a.m. on a Tuesday morning in February, I couldn get in for another two and a half hours."

↖ The landing section of an article.

← Immersive images appear throughout the article, acting as windows into the outside.

↑ When the user reaches the end of the article, the site moves vertically up a level, then reverts back to horizontal navigation.

In 1904, the city of Barcelona received a petition for development from Eusebi Güell, an industrialist and a patron of the arts. Güell had bought a tract of land on the flank of Muntanya Pelada, or Bald Mountain, which rises above the plain that extends to the city's port. Güell had ambitious plans for his hillside property: it was to be designed by Antoni Gaudí, the celebrated architect, with sixty houses set on the bosky grounds. Güell's business model, which required prospective residents to invest in the project before their houses were constructed, was flawed, and only two were ever built. But the grounds were completed. Serpentine paths twisted up the hillside, and at the center of a spectacular bifurcated staircase there was a fountain in the form of a lizard, its skin composed of mosaic shards in blues and yellows.

The development was sold to the city in 1922, four years after Güell's death, and became a beloved public park, with the lizard as its icon. In time, Park Güell proved too beloved for its own good, and by 2013 nine million visitors were traipsing through it annually. "The Park has almost stopped being used as a park," a municipal report noted at the time. It had become, instead, a "tourist place." That year, in an effort to mitigate the damage and crowding caused by so much foot traffic, the city introduced a fee to access the park's "monumental core," which includes Gaudí's staircase, and also limited the number of tickets sold to eight hundred an hour.

From the local government's perspective, the change was a success: the year after the restrictions were introduced, the number of visitors fell to 2.3 million. Still, the flow remains constant. When I arrived at Park Güell at 11 a.m. on a Tuesday morning in February—hardly peak season—I couldn't get in for another two and a half hours. When I finally entered the monumental core, at a cost of ten euros, it was as bustling as Coney Island's boardwalk on a sunny Sunday afternoon, and Instagramming admirers formed a mob around Gaudí's lizard.

Park Güell's shift from a shared public space into a cultural zone occupied almost exclusively by tourists is understood by some worried residents of Barcelona as a story about the prospective fate of the city itself. Albert Arias, a geographer with the local government, told me that he had publicly criticized the selling of tickets as "a very bad solution," adding, "It is acknowledging a problem by fencing off public space."

Some twenty million tourists descend annually on Barcelona, which has a population of just 1.6 million people. (New York City receives three times as many visitors but has more than five times as many residents absorbing the influx.) A lot of factors have contributed to the throngs in Barcelona. Policy decisions in Madrid, and in Catalonia, encouraged a boom, and framed it as an economic-survival strategy, especially after the global financial crisis of 2008. City officials successfully sold Barcelona to the international market as an especially fun European destination, with good weather, pretty

Small images appear at times to illustrate points made in the article. The text is arranged in columns.

We continued on to Carrer de la Cera, which is considered the birthplace of the Catalan rumba, and which has long been the center of the city's Romany population. A handsome building with deep arches and graceful balconies had recently been renovated. A Raval balcony often has a clothesline hung with laundry; Quaglieri noticed a balcony that instead had a small square folding table and two chairs. "This is a classic sign of a tourist apartment," he said. "I have never seen so many of those as I have done in the past two years." Such places were being occupied by a transient population, whether their stay lasted three days or three years. As Quaglieri saw it, foreign workers in tech or freelancers in creative industries who temporarily installed themselves in Barcelona, as a life-style choice, before decamping for another alluring city, were not much different from tourists.
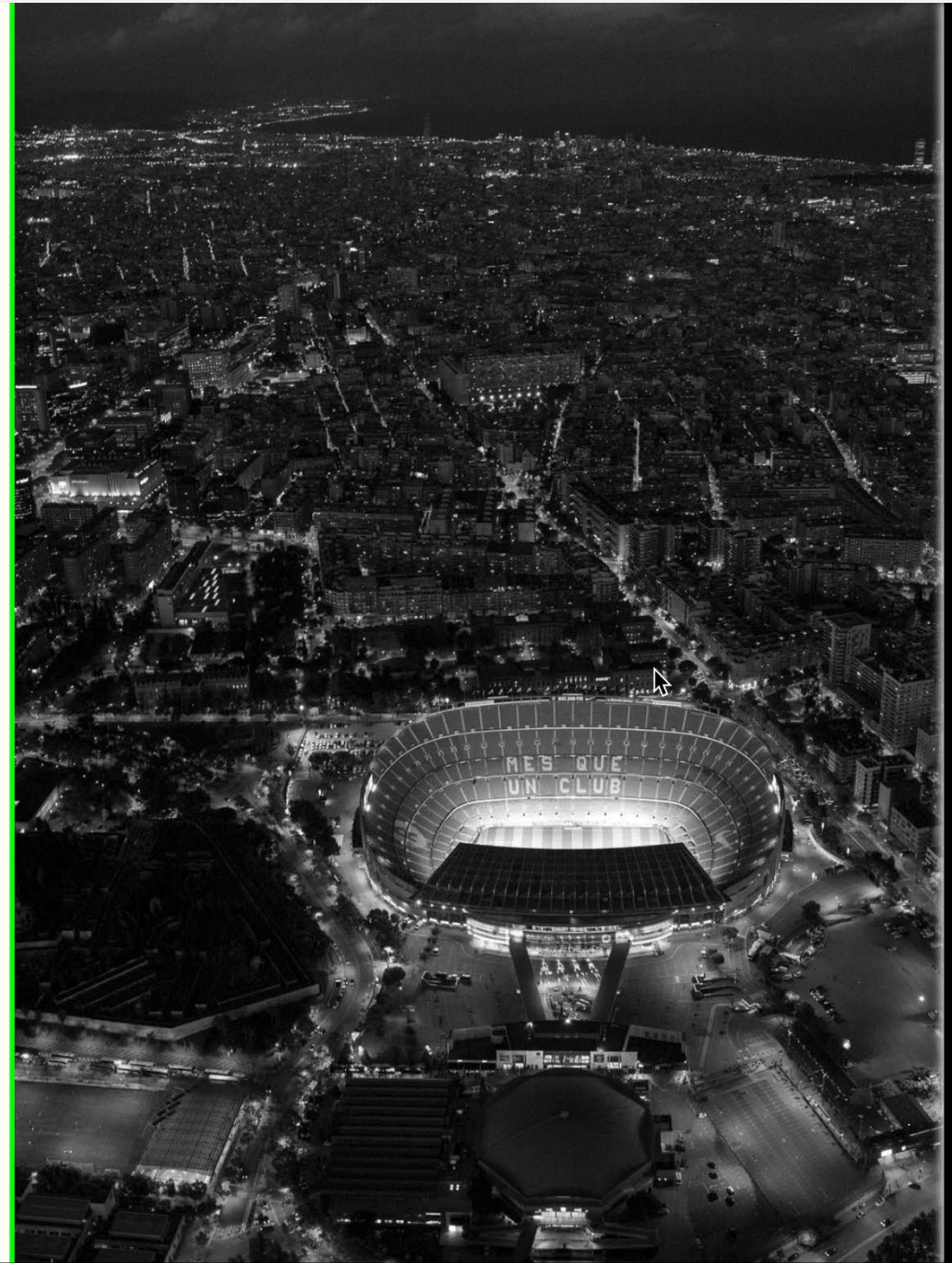
floor 1—Barcelona

A split screen shows text on one side
and the beginning of a large, screen-
sized image on the other.

"A recent campaign in Amsterdam warned guests, 'Please practice selfie-control. These streets get busy!'"

Large captions flanked by two images, and vice-versa, break up the text.

Moving Sands
## *A collection to unearth*

This website contains a collection of my writing and work done during the first two years of graduate school, as a stepping stone into the thesis year. All the content is initially hidden, and appears only when the cross-hairs are placed over the right coordinates (users can access a list of the texts/projects and their coordinates by clicking on a square at the bottom left of the screen). After accessing the site a few times, users develop an intuitive understanding of where the content is placed, creating a cognitive map of the website which determines their movements.
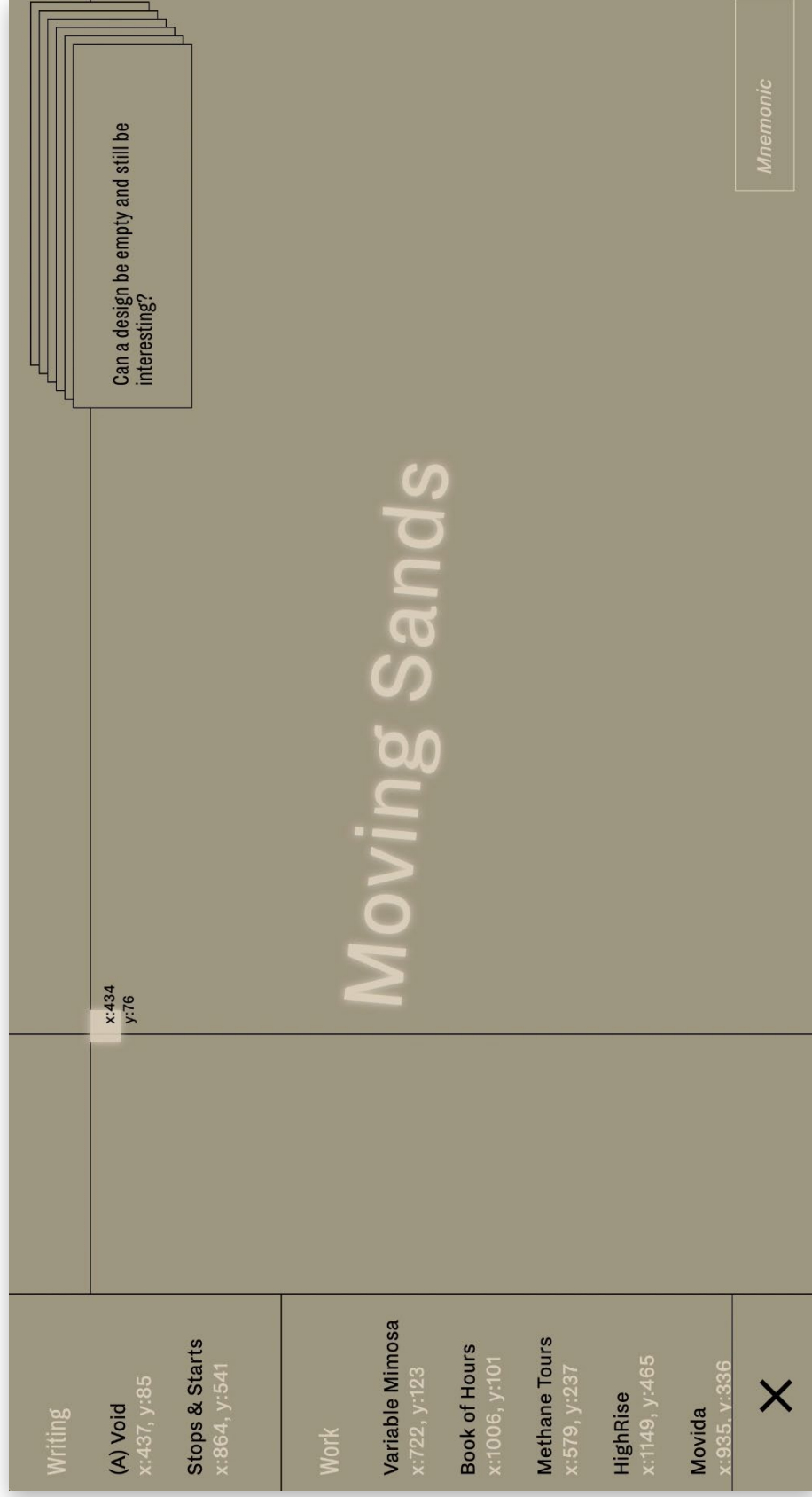
The notion of how time affects the way we relate with web-sites, which informed the structure of the site, also determines the behavior of secondary elements: glossary words appear in the bottom left corner every few seconds while the user is on the site, stacking on top of each other, and the site title's letters spread apart and rotate at the same pace. The website is hyper-mobile: It constantly changes and transforms, a characteristic enhanced by the fact that all of the elements are draggable. As the environment changes, users can arrange their own temporary content configurations, moving around the space and going through the content in the manner that works best for them.
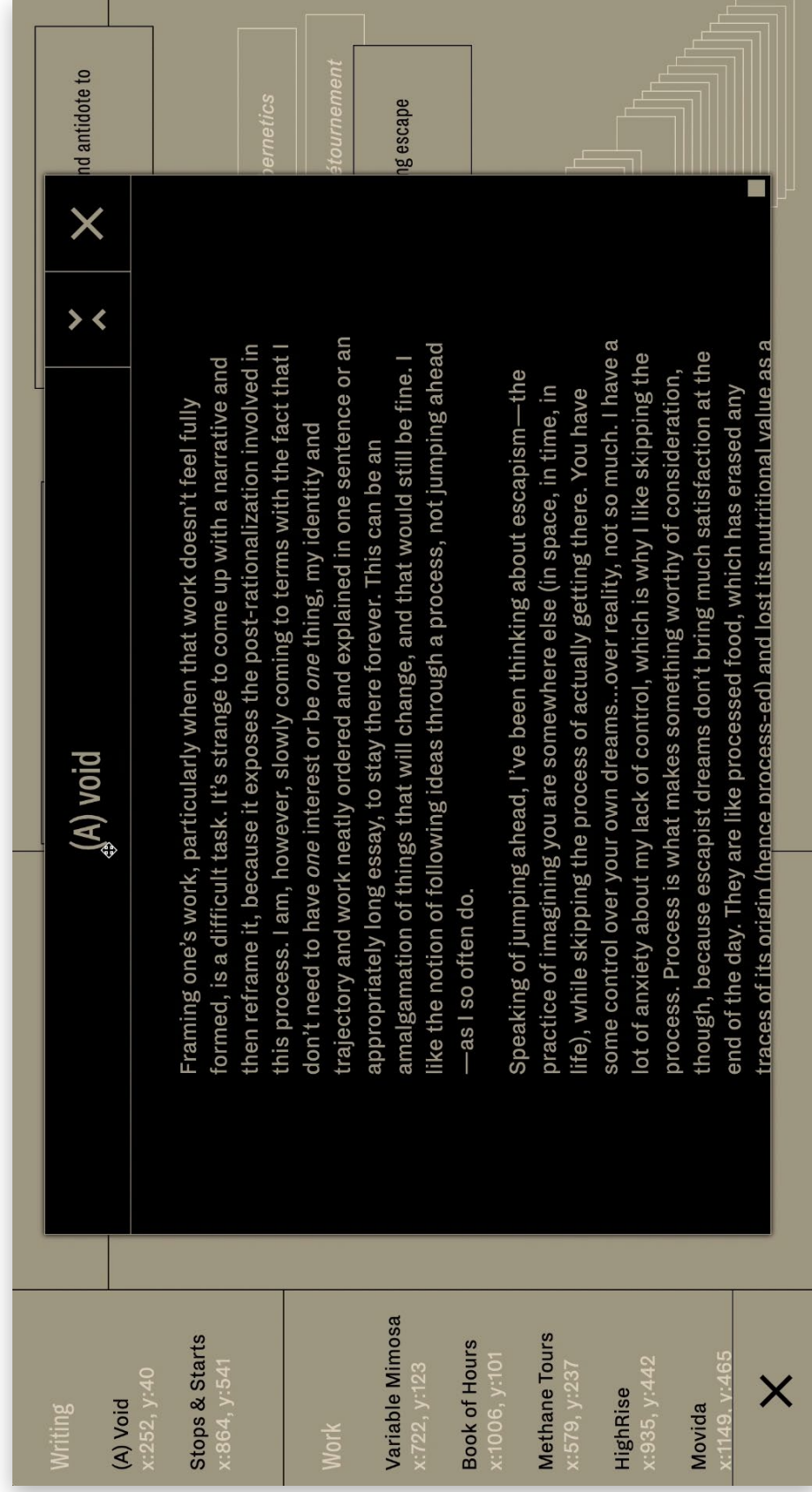
Can a design be empty and still be interesting?

Moving Sands

x:188
y:236
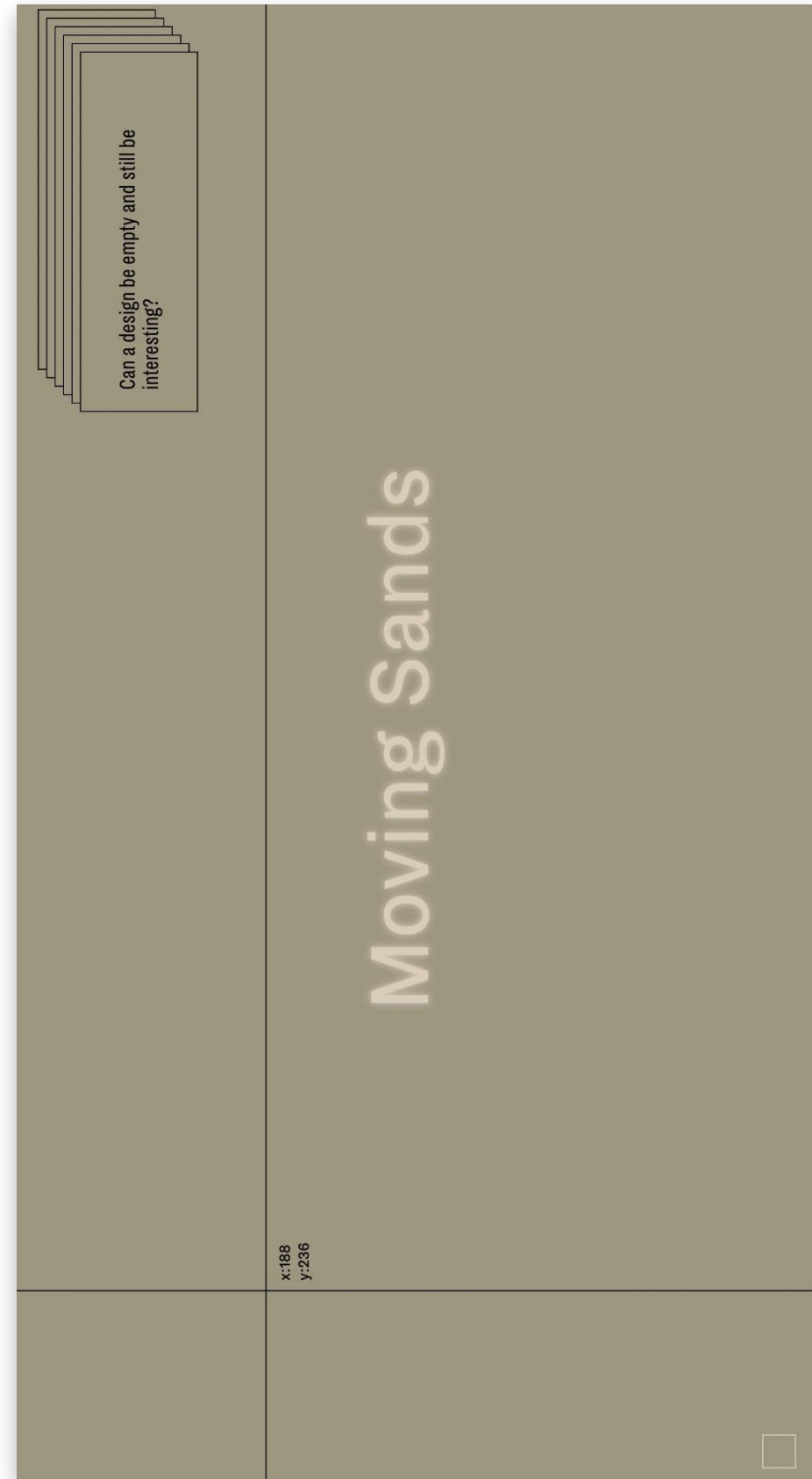
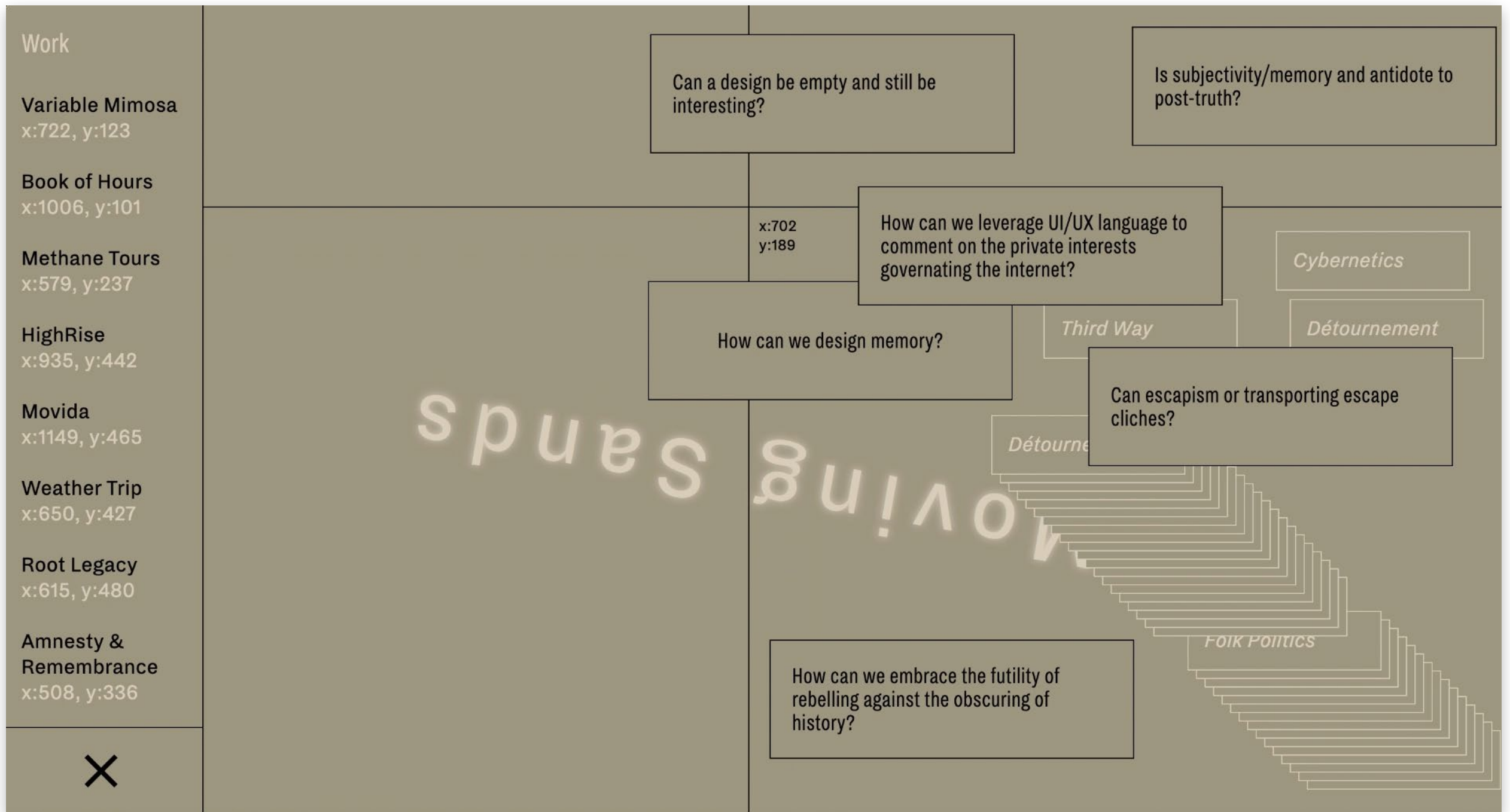The landing page shows some research questions in the upper right corner, but is otherwise empty.

Writing

(A) Void
x:437, y:85

Stops & Starts
x:864, y:541

Work

Variable Mimosa
x:722, y:123

Book of Hours
x:1006, y:101

Methane Tours
x:579, y:237

HighRise
x:1149, y:465

Movida
x:935, y:336

✕

Mnemonic

Can a design be empty and still be interesting?

x:434
y:76

Moving Sands

Clicking on the square in the bottom left
corner will show a menu with the coordinates
of each piece of content. Putting the mouse
over those coordinates will show a filled-out
square, indicating something has been found.

Writing

(A) Void
x:252, y:40

Stops & Starts
x:864, y:541

Work

Variable Mimosa
x:722, y:123

Book of Hours
x:1006, y:101

Methane Tours
x:579, y:237

HighRise
x:935, y:442

Movida
x:1149, y:465

✕

nd antidote to

bernetics

étournement

g escape

✕

✕

(A) void

Framing one's work, particularly when that work doesn't feel fully formed, is a difficult task. It's strange to come up with a narrative and then reframe it, because it exposes the post-rationalization involved in this process. I am, however, slowly coming to terms with the fact that I don't need to have *one interest* or be *one thing*, my identity and trajectory and work neatly ordered and explained in one sentence or an appropriately long essay, to stay there forever. This can be an amalgamation of things that will change, and that would still be fine. I like the notion of following ideas through a process, not jumping ahead —as I so often do.

Speaking of jumping ahead, I've been thinking about escapism—the practice of imagining you are somewhere else (in space, in time, in life), while skipping the process of actually getting there. You have some control over your own dreams...over reality, not so much. I have a lot of anxiety about my lack of control, which is why I like skipping the process. Process is what makes something worthy of consideration, though, because escapist dreams don't bring much satisfaction at the end of the day. They are like processed food, which has erased any traces of its origin (hence process-ed) and lost its nutritional value as a

When clicking on the right coordinates,
a tab with the corresponding content opens..

Writing

(A) Void
x:437, y:85

Stops & Starts
x:864, y:541

Work

Variable Mimosa
x:722, y:123

Book of Hours
x:1006, y:101

Methane Tours
x:579, y:237

HighRise
x:935, y:442

Movida
x:1149, y:465

✕

Moving Sands

Can a design be empty and still be interesting?

Cybernetics

Détournement

Third Way
Political philosophy attempting to reconcile left and right wing politics without increasing regulation

Psychogeography

Folk Politics

Draggable glossary terms, whose definition
expands on hover, appear every few seconds,
stacking on top of each other.

Work

Variable Mimosa
x:722, y:123

Book of Hours
x:1006, y:101

Methane Tours
x:579, y:237

HighRise
x:935, y:442

Movida
x:1149, y:465

Weather Trip
x:650, y:427

Root Legacy
x:615, y:480

Amnesty & Remembrance
x:508, y:336

✕

Can a design be empty and still be interesting?

Is subjectivity/memory and antidote to post-truth?

x:702 y:189

How can we leverage UI/UX language to comment on the private interests governating the internet?

Cybernetics

How can we design memory?

Third Way

Détournement

Can escapism or transporting escape cliches?

Détourne...

How can we embrace the futility of rebelling against the obscuring of history?

Folk Politics

The research questions are also draggable,
creating a highly fluid interface.

Inspiration doorways
A house without a floorplan

Website. Hosted through glitch.com, and accessible at inspirationdoorways.glitch.me

This website encourages exploration and prioritizes a subjective under-standing of its structure by turning links into doorways.

When the user first accesses the site, they see a list of topics. Clicking on a topic will direct the user to a screen titled after a related room: "infrastructure processes" brings them to the garage, for instance. Each room contains references and ideas conceptually connected to it ("the bedroom" lists work about dreams and escapism). Beyond references, each room

has a number of blank buttons (or "doorways"), which turn black on hover to simulate an entry point. Clicking on them leads the user to another room. No button leads back to the index page, so that the user is stuck bouncing between rooms.

Without an evident structure and hierarchy, the user must create a mental map of the site to make sense of it. This cognitive map of the site depends on what "doorways" they click on and their memory of where they lead, so it is both highly personal and fluid, like memory itself.

Infrastructure processes

Moving around rules

Memory and history

Physical movements on web

Play

Fantasy

Escape and travel

Shelter and comfort

Glitch

User-unfriendly

Alternative narration
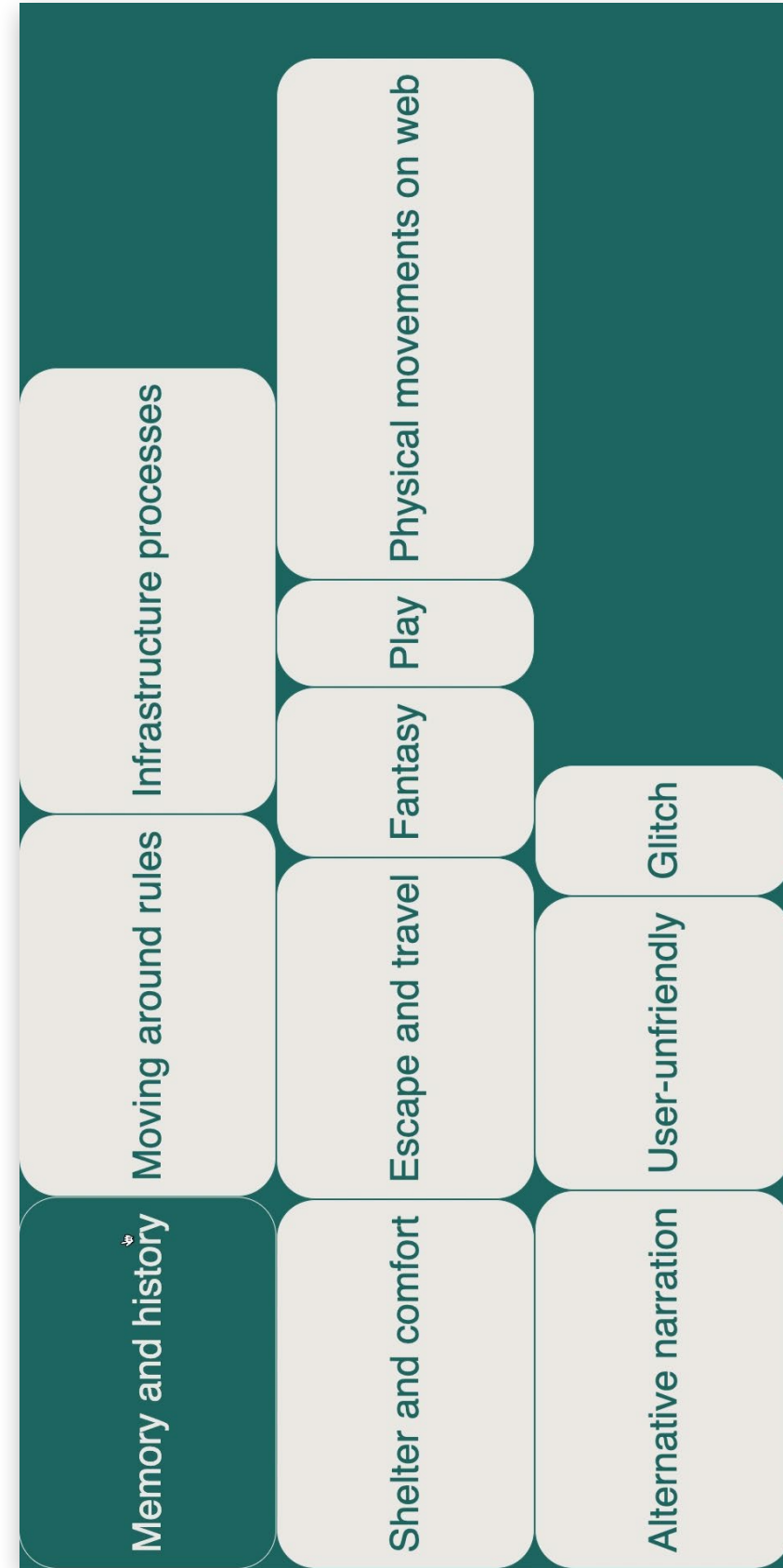
In the landing page, a list of topics acts as the "front gate." Choosing a topic will bring you to a room it is related to.

The Garden | The Production of Space | Non-Places

Center for Spatial Research

A project about shell companies and empty promises

White Night Before A Manifesto

Enduring Innocence | Uncorporate Identity

A website that camouflages
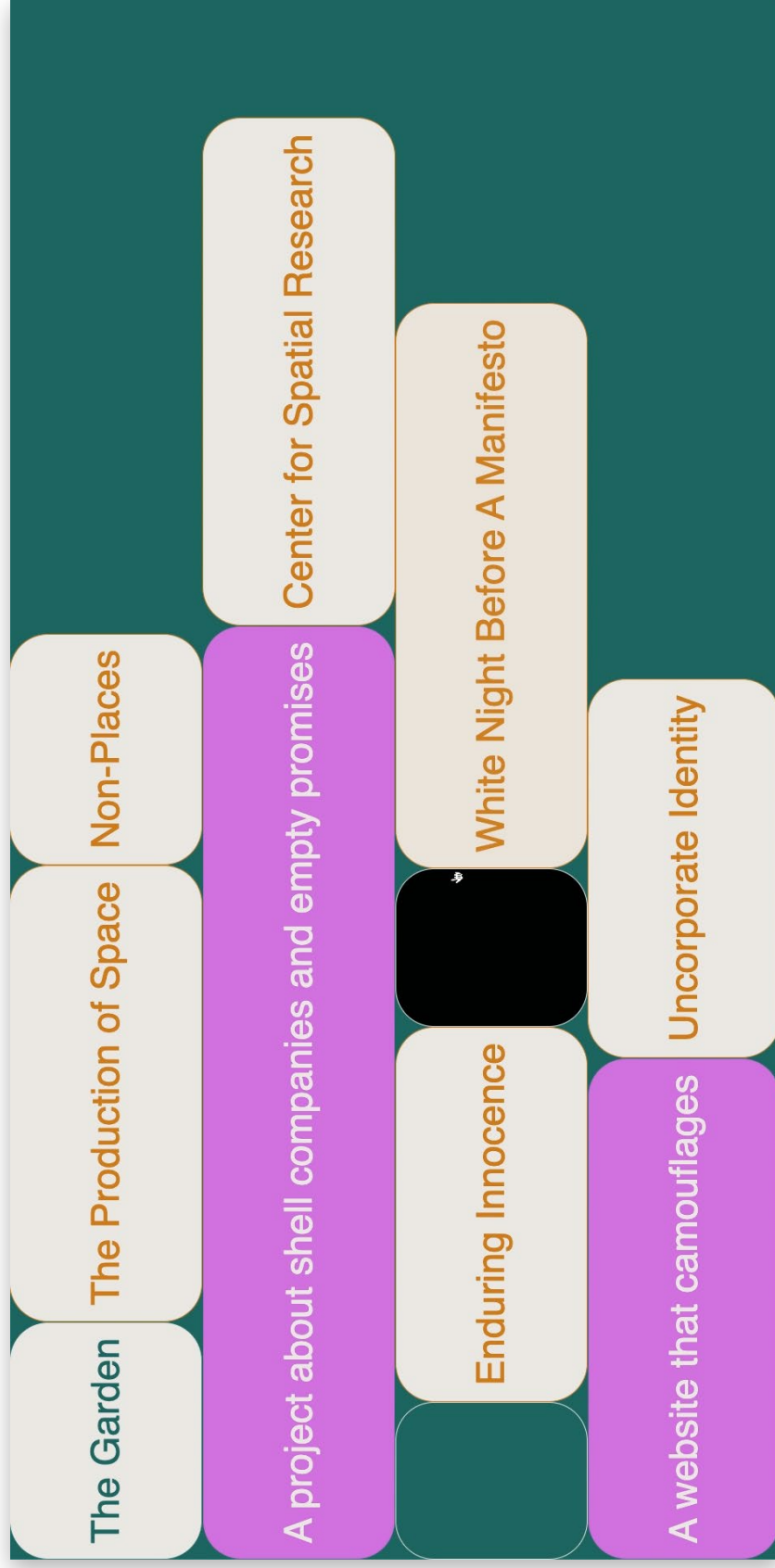
Within every room, there are blank
containers that turn black on hover, to
indicate a door opening. Clicking on
one will bring you to an unkown new room.

≫

The Bedroom

A Field Guide to Getting Lost | Guayupia

Territory, the map is not | Ocean Earth, Peter Fend

In Praise of Shadows | Speak, memory

A place that mixes features of invented worlds

Flight Simulator

I've always loved thinking about living in other places: it's not so much the travel or the place itself as what living there may be like. Space can change virtually everything about who we are: our relationships, ideology, understanding of how the world works and the social norms we should follow. It's certainly tied to our memories of the past and our hopes for the future. How can graphic design be a tool for exploring, inventing, and evoking space from one place? I'm also interested in notions of life in isolation: what gets filtered through our walls and windows? What do we get from the outside in places like gated communities?

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/76479_A_Field_Guide_to_Getting_Lost?ac=1&from_search=true&qid=0Y5Uxz1J0N&rank=1

Each room has links to artworks or texts that inspire
lme or that I want to read. The orange is for external
links, while the pink background elements note ideas
for future projects. The container with green type
refers to the room the user is in.

↗

Nous Tournons
A poster on transformation

Translating to "We are turning,
you are impressed," this poster
addresses the different technologies
that a design relies on to be finally
imprinted on the page, and how
 it transforms through this process.
At the center of the process is
the printer, which refracts and breaks
down the words in order to make
them physical.

Inside/Outside
A small book that opens up

Book. Sewn using coptic binding with bright blue thread.

This book contrasts El Lissitzky's Electro-Library with examples of environmental design works created for both exteriors and interiors. Large, folded pages contain the first of two Electro-Library texts and examples of exterior environmental design on the exterior, and the second Lissitzky text and examples of interior design on the interior. This allows for a double narrative, one on the outside of the book, which progresses without opening the folded pages, and one on the interior, which is revealed only when the pages are opened. This emulates the way that these works would be encountered in the physical environment—the exterior work by stumbling upon it, the interior work by "entering" some kind of room.

The gradient plays a part on both the exterior and the interior design, on the exterior as a background and on the interior as the text color. The gradient color progresses through the colors of the rainbow, starting from yellow, as a way to indicate where you are in the book.
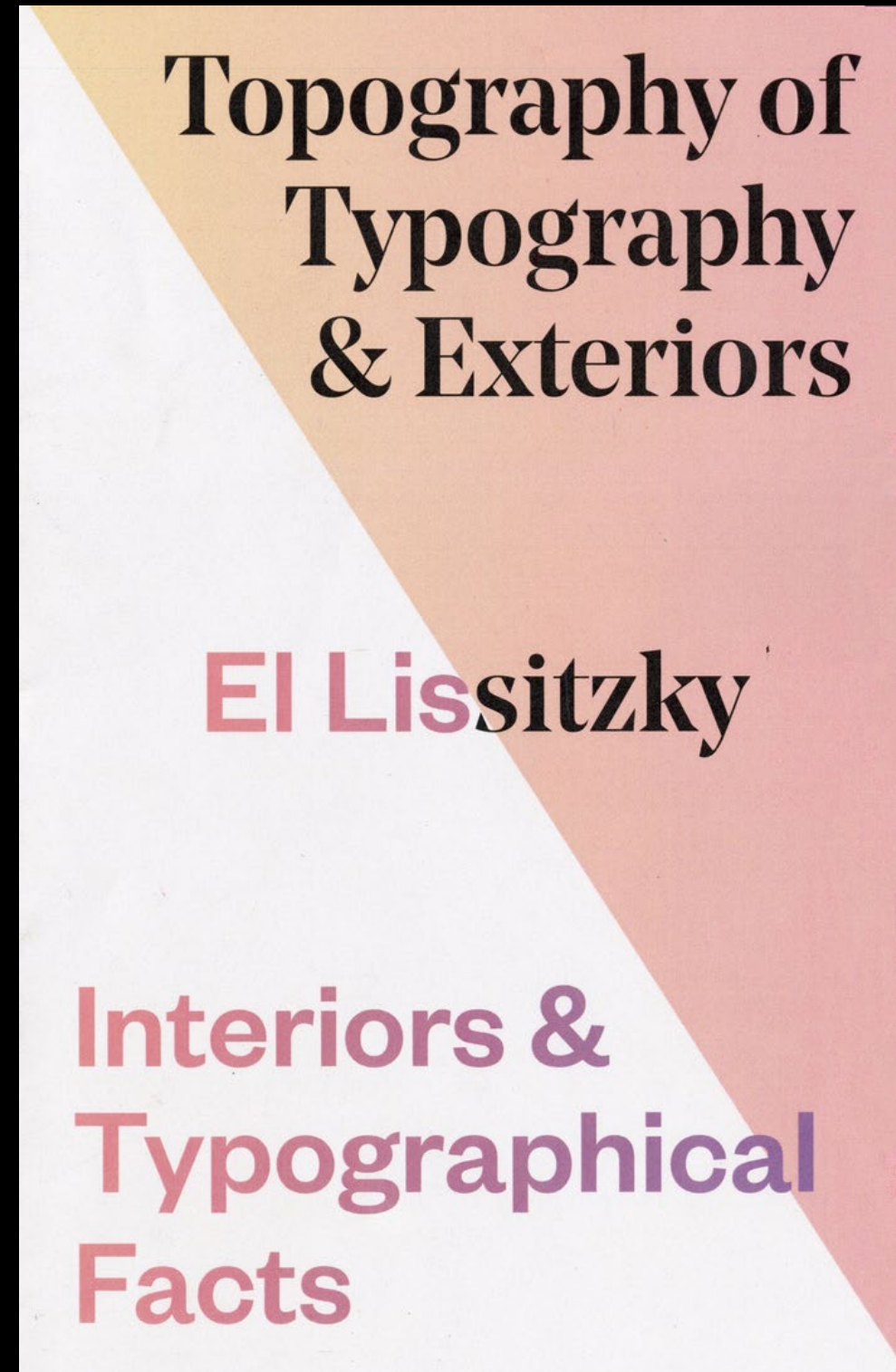
The book cover shows how the gradient operates in the two texts of the boook.

Topography of typography

El Lissitzky

JENNY HOLZER's projections add texture and dimension to evocative messages. In doing so, they 'go over to the active, articulated pattern' that Lissitzky talks about. The type is activated by becoming at once a monument and a part of the landscape. This gives it a kind of resonance that i scountered by the fact that it is not anchored any-where—it is just light, and as such it floats before our eyes and can't be fully apprehended. So the artwork is both heavy and light, eternal and ephemeral.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQ RSTUVWXYZInorderto communicateyourthough tsinwritingyouhaveonlyto formcertaincombinations fromthesesymbolsand stringthemtogetherinanu nbrokenchain. but—NO.

YOU see here that the pattern of thought cannot be represented mechanically by making combinations of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. Language is more than just anacoustic wave motion, and the mere means of thought transference. In the same way typography is more than just an optical wave motion for the same purpose. From the passive, non-articulated lettering pattern one goes over to the active, articulated pattern. The gesture of the living language is taken into account. eg: the Hammurabi tablets and modern election literature.

YOU have divided up the day into twenty-four hours. There is not another hour for extravagant effusion of feelings. The pattern of speech becomes increasingly concise, the gesture sharply imprinted. It is just the same with typography. eg: Prospectuses, advertising brochures, and modern novels.

YOU are accompanied from your first day onwards by printed paper, and your eye is superbly trained to find its way about in this specific field quickly, precisely, and without losing its way. You cast your glances into these forests of paper web of links with the same confidence as the Australian throws his boomerang. eg: the page of a large daily paper.

The "Topography of Typography" text, interspersed with images of environmental outdoors artwork."
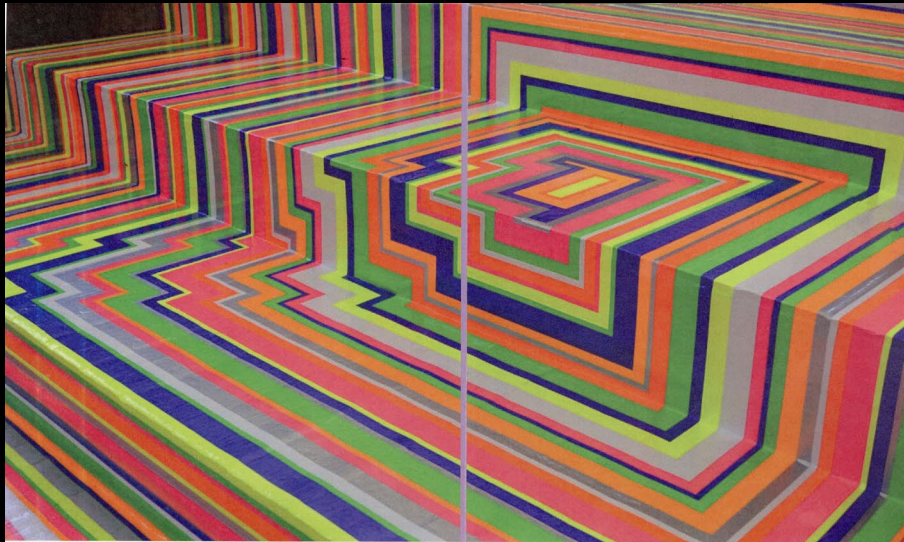
Jim Lambie, *Spiral Scratch*, 2018

JIM LAMBIE'S work 'corresponds to the strains and stresses of the content' literally, in that its content is the interior architecture of a building, and the piece conforms to and is defined by it. The difference between the space and the form is nullified, undoing our expectations of the interior and transporting us to a disorienting space where every inch is activated. The vibrant patterns play with the architectural fixtures, contrasting old and new, permanent and transitory, and functional vs aesthetic.

Typographical Facts 3–4
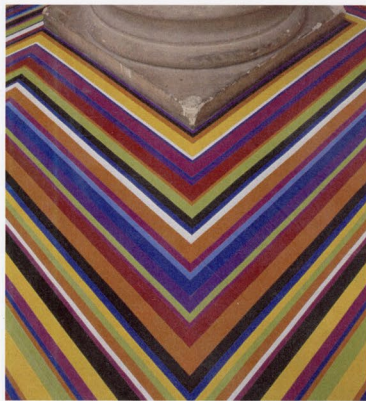
3.
Economy of expression—optics instead of phonetics.

4.
The designing of the book-space through the material of the type, according to the laws of typographical mechanics, must correspond to the strains and stresses of the content.
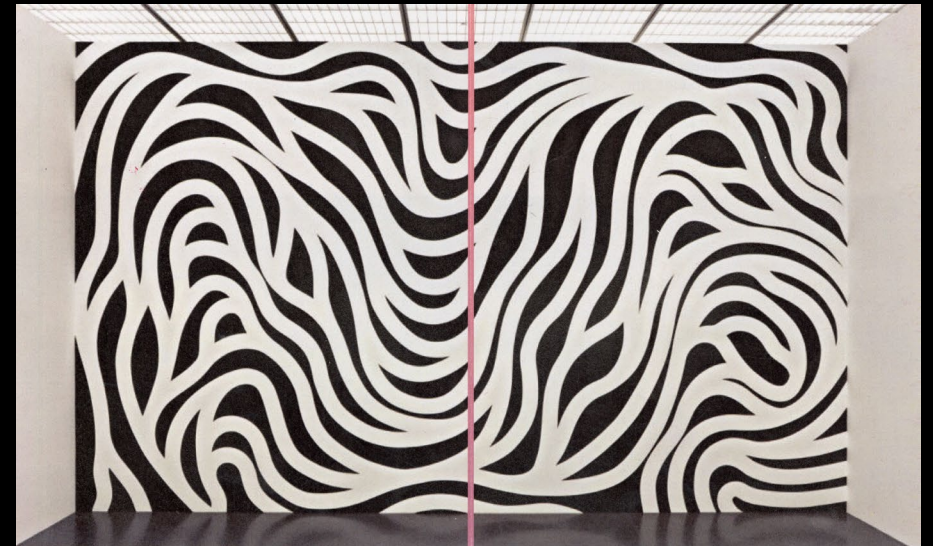
Sol Lewitt, *Wall Murals*, 1990s

SOL LEWITT'S Wall Murals consist of a set of rules that makes them reproducible anywhere. Like type, this rulebook yields different results based on the hands that draw it. The form that comes out of these exercises is immersive, transforming a blank space into something expressive through mechanical movements. In this sense, the idea is embodied in the trace, which links back to Lissitzky's point about typography giving visual form to content.

Typographical Facts 1–2
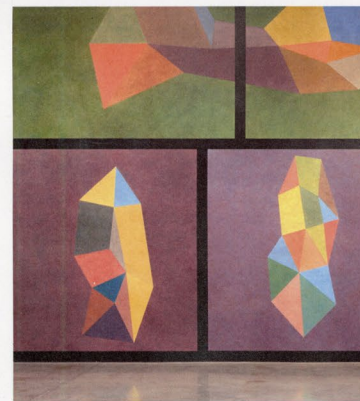
1.
The words on the printed sheet are learnt by sight, not by hearing.

2.
Ideas are communicated through conventional words, the idea should be given form through the letters.

The "Typographical Facts" text is unfolded
from the images in between the other essay.
Environmental indoor artworks appear on top.
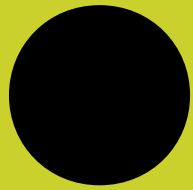
You are   *here*

UNIT
OF SPACE
Ways
of navigating

↳ **REFERENCE**

↓ **PROJECTS**

↓ **UNIT OF SPACE**

↓ **VIEW FROM ABOVE**

↓ **JUST IN TIME**

"[Maps] let us see too much, and
hence blind us to what we cannot
see, imposing a quiet tyranny of
orientation that erases the possibility
of disoriented discovery, or they lose
sight of all the other things that we
ought to see. They omit, according to
their conventions, those invisible
lines of people, places and networks
that create the most common
spaces we live in today."

↳ Laura Kurgan, Close Up At A Distance

View From Above

Reflections on maps
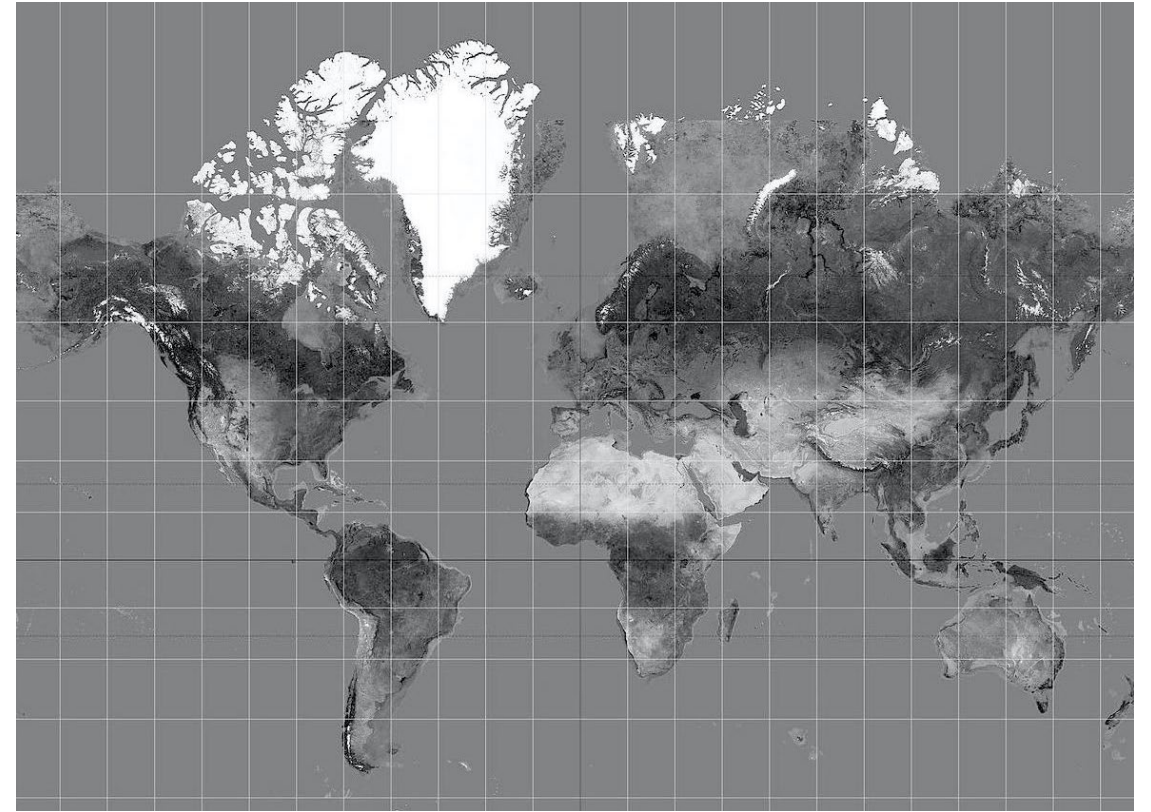
The Mercator map which, while widely used, severely misrepresents the size of certain countries. / Wikipedia

On flights, I'm always mesmerized by the live journey of the plane. In the transitional moments of the trip, before takeoff or after landing, or when I'm dozing off or too tired to watch a movie, I turn on the map view and watch the light zones change. I study the shape of the dark mass representing the land, the length and width separating places that I know. I don't have much use for what I learn, and I forget it very soon anyway. I don't look at this map to take anything in, but rather to watch myself moving in space, as an anonymous dot in the flow of everything else. The details of the physical environments where I live, which usually take over my senses, are erased, becoming letters in the mosaic of the earth.

Maps have a detached quality to them—they feel so objective and anonymous. At the same time, by stripping away all the things that have generated them (the socioeconomic landscape, the history, the geographic makeup) *they really are a different space, not at all an accurate reflection of reality but rather a very removed representation of it.* Overlaying subjective data on this territory doesn't make maps accurate, but it does offer an alter-

native representation of the landscape (the way that Google reviews don't actually make the map more real than it already is).

I'm always haunted by the relationship of design to the represented reality, *by the notion of authenticity*. I feel powerless when thinking about how to represent a location, because a place is a complex mesh of interlocking networks, impossible to capture. Instead, *I've become interested in the fragility of the image.* I've based many of my projects on Google Maps, appro-aching theplaces I see as a curious visitor, then distancing them even more from what they actually are by turning this data into the input for my pro-ject, which yields a more abstracted output. The visual systems I con-truct to represent my online journeys are a meta-representation; disconnected to a place, they become their own fictionalized narrative.

The unit of space measures the distance between a place and its representations. It understands the design space as the transformation of one representation into another. It turns a fixed time and space into a mobile one, a generative tool. It maps the layers of information laid over the territory.
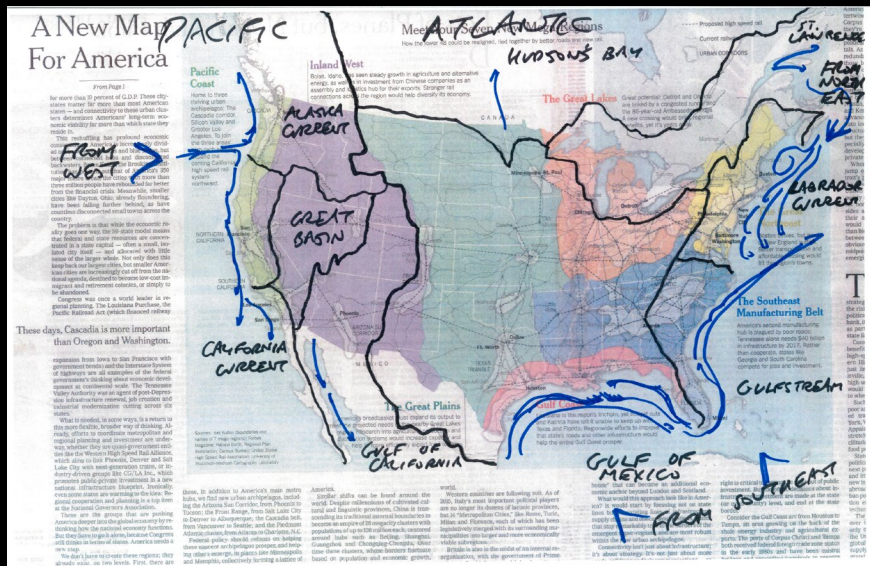
Peter Fend's annotation of
A New Map for America,
New York Times, April 17,
2016 / ICI
Peter Fend's practice is
combines environmental
activism and visual arts.
In this series of work,
he reimagines the
map of America along
watershed lines.

Hito Steyerl,
Liquidity, Inc.
2014 / Wiley
Online Library
This film starts with the
story of a financial analyst
who lost his job during
the 2008 recession and
decided to pursue martial
arts. Bruce Lee's urge
to "be like water" serves
as a link to explore
the concept of liquidity,
from weather patterns
to climate change to the
information economy and
economic activity.
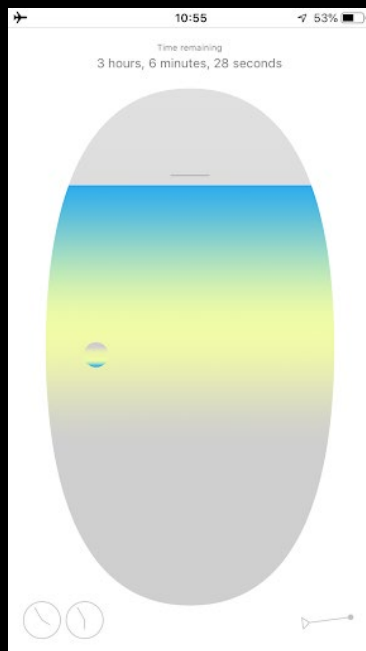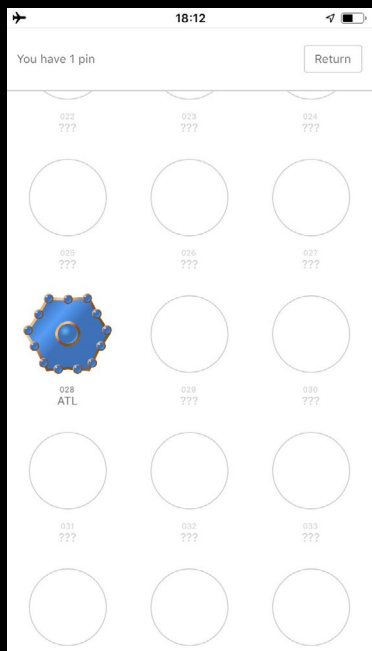
Laurel Schwulst,
Flight Simulator
2019 / Laurel Schwulst
This app by Laurel
Schwulst allows users
to pick a place to
fly to, in order to
induce in users
the meditative state
that takes over people
when they are in the
air. After completing
a flight, the user
gets a pin designed
by Aarati Akkapeddi
to indicate they've
been to an airport,
so that they can
eventually amass
a collection.

Andreas Gursky,
Bahrain I
2005 / Tate
Andreas Gursky is known
for his photographs of
masses and multitudes,
which reflect the staggering
amounts of people in the
world today. This image
of the race track where
the Formula I Grand
Prix is hosted was taken
in Bahrain, a country in
the Persian Gulf which
has attracted international
money with its post-oil
economy and tax advantages.

↦

Just In Time
*Some writing
on supply chains,
capitalism
& designing on
the internet*

"Cyberspace, not so long ago, was a specific elsewhere, one we visited periodically, peering into it from the familiar physical world. Now cyberspace has everted. Turned itself inside out. Colonized the physical."

↳ William Gibson, Google's Earth

⤓

⫯
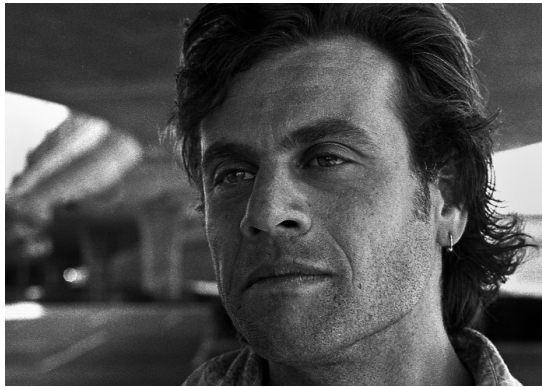
At the beginning of the pandemic, when hand sanitizer and masks and swabs and sweatpants and toilet paper were out of stock, I became more aware of the importance of supply chains. Journalists wrote a lot about them too, which is how I learnt that suppliers relied too much on a global trade that had suddenly been made difficult, and had eliminated resiliency from their production and delivery processes.

Most companies strive to meet demand without overproducing, which requires a delicate balancing act. In his essay Logistics, Counterlogistics and Communist Prospect, Berkeley professor ↳Jasper Bernes writes that suppliers shifted to flexible production practices in the 1980s, increasingly relying on a transient workforce and versatile structures to gain more control over the manufacturing and circulation of goods. He writes that: "these corporate forms are now frequently identified with the loose moniker Just In Time (JIT) […], a production philosophy in which firms aim to eliminate standing inventory."[1] In order to operate without backstock, manufacturers
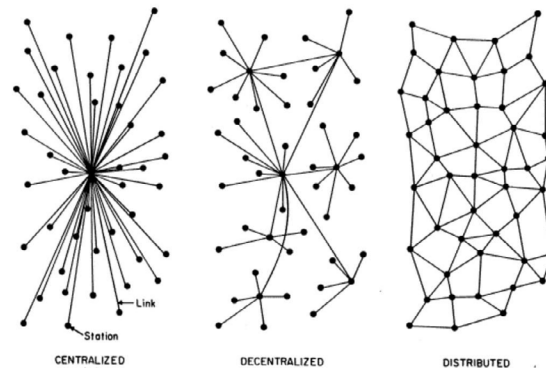
and suppliers need to be able to scale operations very quickly so they can respond to market conditions, resulting in a profit model based on speed and elasticity. The specific conditions of the pandemic meant that supply chains were no longer flexible enough to seamlessly increase production, disrupting the system.

In my essay On Movement, I wrote about virtual space and its constant shifting. Logistics and manufacturing are inherently physical processes, but under the JIT model supply chains strive to acquire the adaptable properties of the virtual. The industry has steadily progressed towards liquidity, aiming to, as Bernes puts it, "transmute all fixed capital into circulating capital, the better to imitate and conform to the purest and most liquid of forms capital takes: money."[2] Money is the ultimate form of capital because it lacks physical constraints, which means it can move freely and fast. The ease of exchange leads to more transactions and less risk, since there is no time for the value of something to change while the transaction happens. It makes sense that industries that mediate the traffic of capital,

including logistics, internet companies and real estate, strive to increase liquidity by decreasing the time of exchange through constantly circulating flows of goods and information. The shift toward fluidity and flexibility in these industries mirrors the steady progression of money away from the gold standard, making this evolution seem like an inherent tendency of capitalism.

Mobility enables businesses to chunk their production processes by reducing the time it takes to go from one place to another, allowing them to disperse and take advantage of global marketplaces. Companies can employ the cheapest workforce worldwide, move to places that offer more economic incentives, and avoid conflictive locations, erasing the bargaining power of workers. This amounts to a war on the working class: Bernes writes that logistics "is capital's art of war, a series of techniques for intercapitalist and interstate competition." The capitalist networks that emerge in global trade are reminiscent of military ones, which extend all over the world and communicate at high speeds to gain
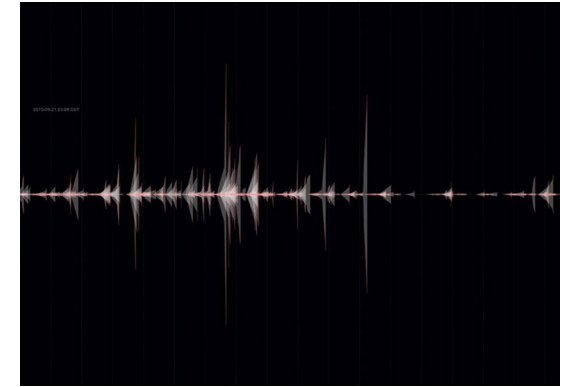
real-time knowledge and enact secretive operations. The military has defined the structures of modern capitalist systems: business logistics was inspired by military logistics, as was the internet by military technology. The early internet's ↳distributed structure was designed to make sure that information could get to its destination even if some of the intermediate nodes in the communication network were destroyed in an offensive attack. Now, that decentralization allows companies to operate within networks so diffuse and extended that they become intractable, which makes their power difficult to regulate.

One more technological innovation, ↳GPS, originated in the military. It's now leveraged by companies like Google, which collect troves of data about how, when and where people move. In Close Up At A Distance: Mapping, Technology and Politics, ↳Laura Kurgan, a professor at Columbia's Architecture School and a founder of its Center for Spatial Research, writes that virtual maps "are the netherland spaces of electronic

money, information warfare, and dataveillance, but they are also the spaces of the everyday [...]"[3] Online maps are the same spaces in which the war on labor is being waged, the very spaces of capital: The way that companies strive to reduce their physical presence to an algorithm flattens places to their representation, following the way that money is just numbers on a screen. Through the GPS, the same force has consumed the very material of the everyday: our homes and our streets. Nowadays, most people are aware that we live on corporate territory. In her book Extrastatecraft, architecture writer ↳Keller Easterling writes that in a world where the corporate power being protested against is, in essence, virtual, "dissent is then often left shaking its fist at an effigy. Activists who show up at the barricade [...] sometimes find that the real fight or the stealthier forms of violence are happening somewhere else."[4] The word "effigy" is defined as "a sculpture or model of a person," making it an interesting word to describe a place where conflicts physically occur. In this context, physical spaces turn into stand-ins—flattened, standardized parts of the global produc-

tion machine, and the reflections of their digital selves. The question "Where am I?" no longer refers to the physical space only, because this space is incomplete.

Designers have structured the representational grid that envelopes the world, and as a working designer this heritage is impossible to get away from: we're trafficking in the same visual language and using the same software. At the same time, we can use design to highlight the fragility of the representation of place, and to turn these representations into an opportunity for creating new worlds, overlaying the intimate on GPS. Capital, Bernes writes, "is not in any sense a force with which we contend, but the very territory on which that contention takes place. Or rather, it is a force, but a field force, something which suffuses rather than opposes."[5] By building my design on top of, rather than against, existing networks, I can challenge the "view from nowhere" of virtual maps—not to destroy, but rather to offer alternative ways of navigating our surroundings.

ENDNOTES

1 Bernes, Jasper. Logistics, Counterlogistics and the Communist Prospect. Issue 3, Endnotes, 2013.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Kurgan, Laura. Close Up at a Distance: Mapping, Technology and Politics. Zone Books, 2013.

5 Easterling, Keller. Extrastatescraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space. Verso, 2016.

Methane Tours
A gaseous visit to the electricity overlords

Methane Tours is a speculative initiative by the US Oil & Gas industry, giving the public access to the inner workings of the electricity supply chain. The tour starts in Providence, RI, where the website is created, and stops eleven times as it traces the journey of electricity back to its source, largely through the Tennessee Gas Pipeline. Each stop has two parts to it: The first is about the town that the facility is in, and features a "Welcome to" message and text pulled from the tourist website of that location; the second is about the facility, and displays an overhead view of it, as well as information about who owns it and a note about the native land that it was built on. As the tour progresses, we realize we can't learn anything from this tour: The character of the towns is flattened by the tour-ismfriendly language, and the facilities remain an overhead view of a Google-owned map.

The site is structured around an electric cable, with a blurry slider. As the user scrolls down the site, the slider moves forward and the different stops fade in and out of

sight from an animated, gaseous background. At first this background seems beautifully ethereal, but as the factories and power plants appear the gaseousness of the site quickly turns toxic, with the instability of the content disorienting and contributing to a feeling of obscurity, or something that can't quite be grasped. In the bottom right corner, a counter keeps track of the methane that has been emitted into the atmosphere from the website during the time the user has been on it. It's the only element of the website that communicates a sense of urgency—one that slowly seeps in, but which we have reduced power to act against.
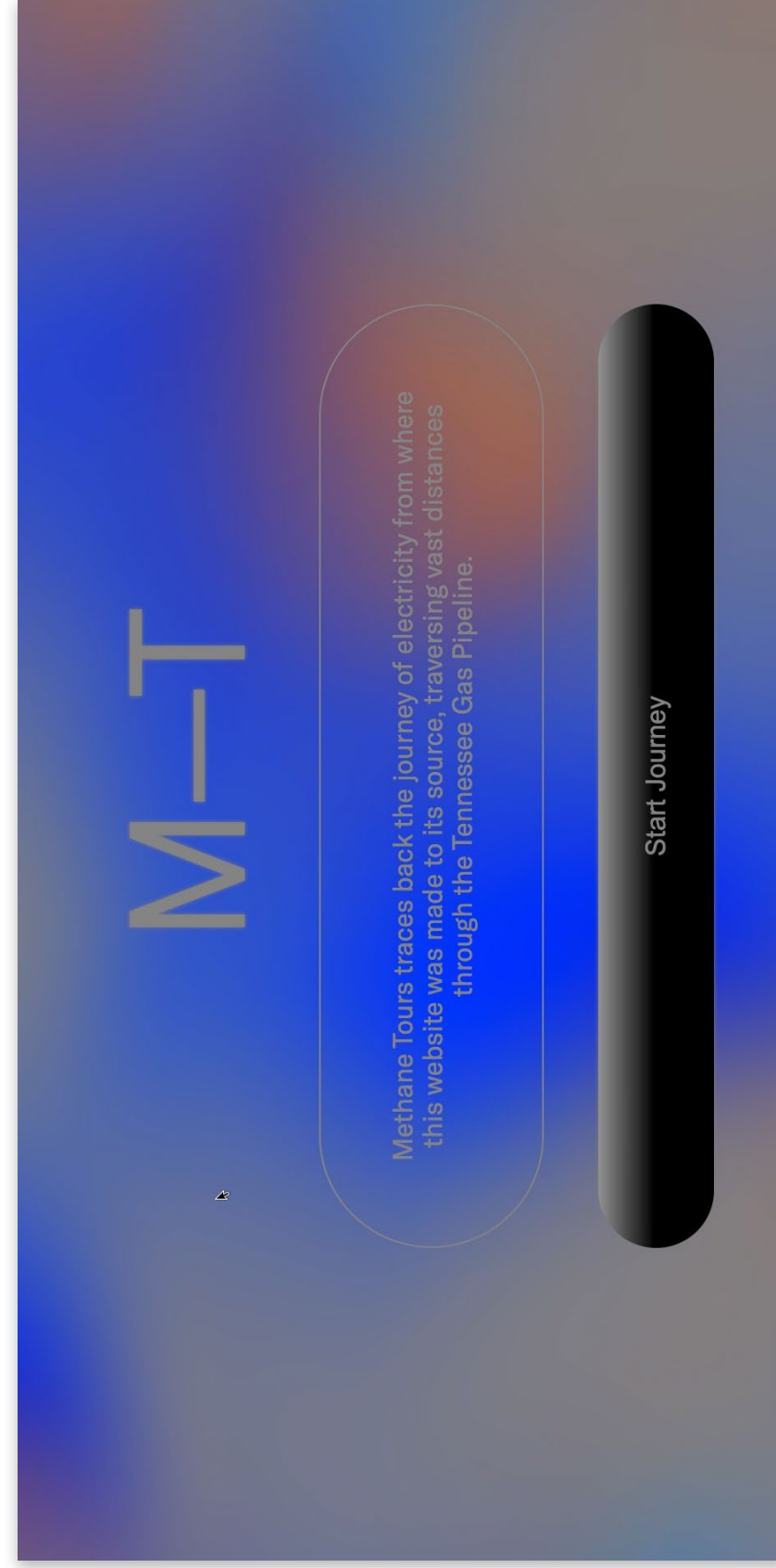
M—T

Methane Tours traces back the journey of electricity from where this website was made to its source, traversing vast distances through the Tennessee Gas Pipeline.
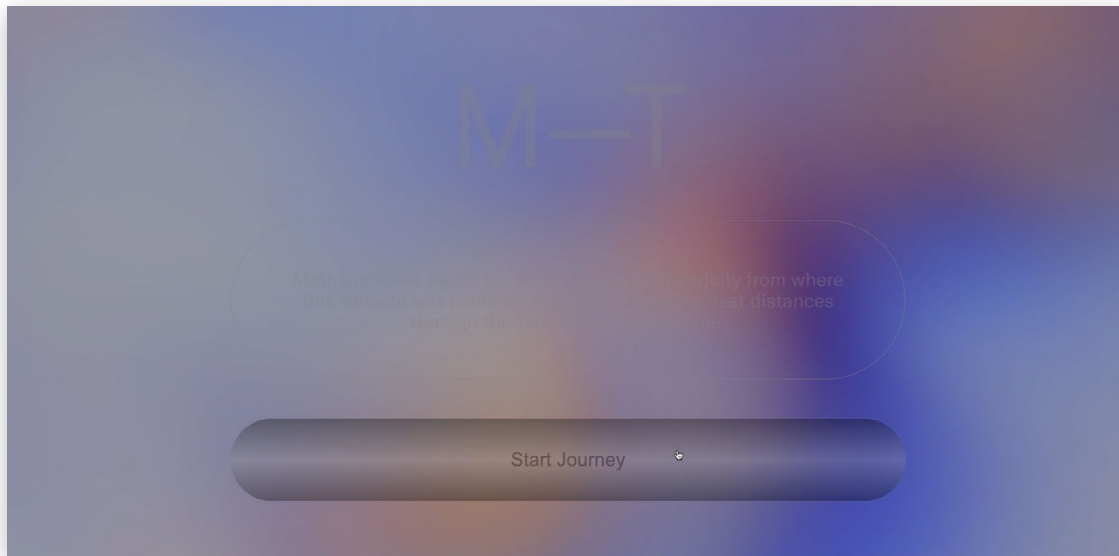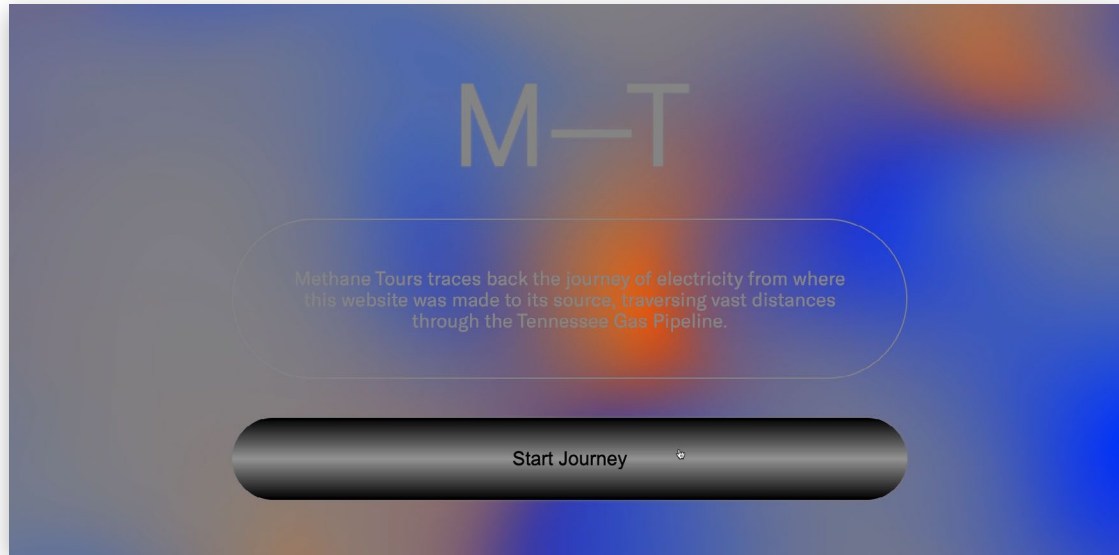
Start Journey

Clicking on "Start Journey" makes
the landing page content fade.
The gradient switches to a darker,
grayer shade and the concept from
the first stop slowly emerges.

Scrolling down the site makes the visible content fade out and the next one fade in. Here, the first section of the Providence stop is giving way to information about one of its electric facilities.

The map is embedded on the site and can be used as if the user were on Google Maps. The section is fully visible only for a second, and starts disappearing as soon as the user scrolls slightly.

Welcome to Mitchelville, TN

Compressor

1467 mi
Owned by TETC
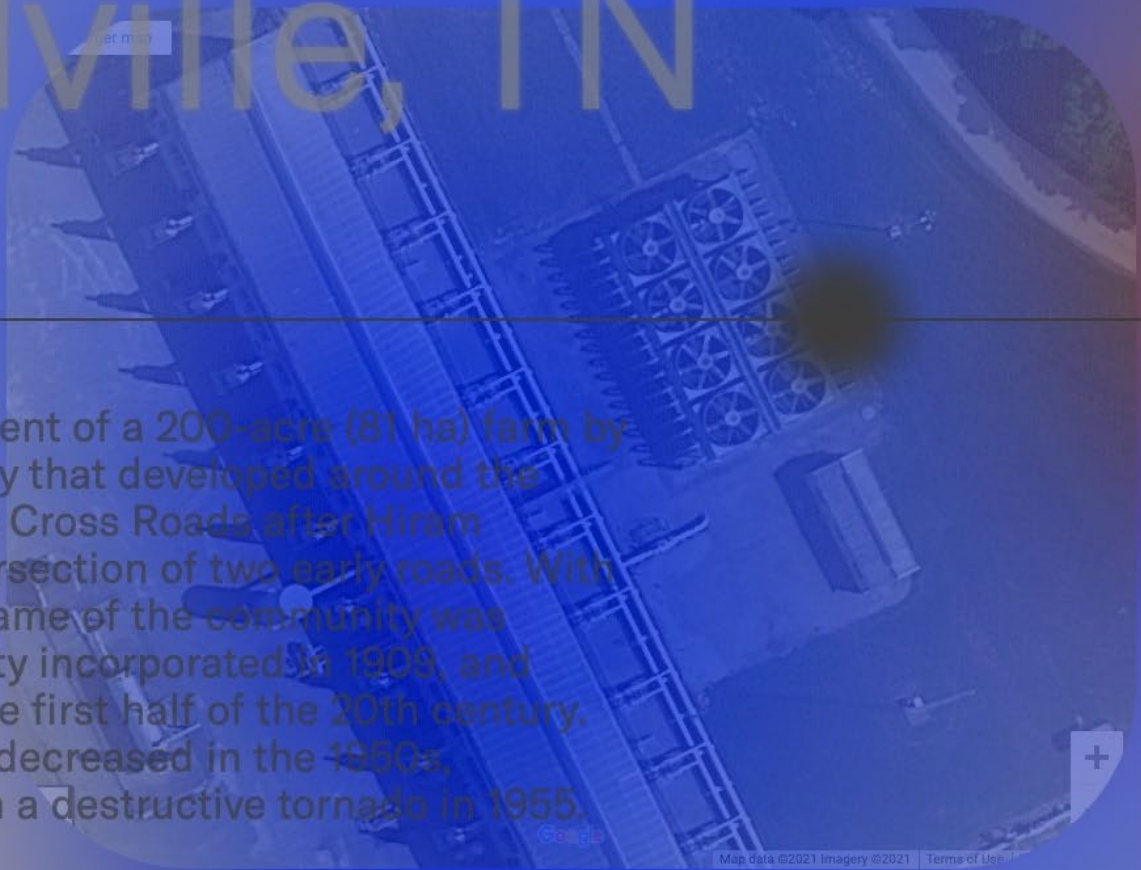
Mitchellville began with the establishment of a 200-acre (81 ha) farm by Ezekiel Marshall in 1814. The community that developed around the farm was originally known as Mitchell's Cross Roads after Hiram Mitchell, who owned land near the intersection of two early roads. With the arrival of the railroad in 1859, the name of the community was changed to Mitchellville Station. The city incorporated in 1909, and thrived as a railroad stop throughout the first half of the 20th century. The city began to decline as rail traffic decreased in the 1950s, however, and never fully recovered from a destructive tornado in 1955.

Built on land of the Cherokee, Shawnee, Yuchi, Adena and Hopewell

Map data ©2021 Imagery ©2021 Terms of Use

methane
released from
this visit:

8.5 grams

A large scale view of the first part
of a section, which fades out to reveal
the facility information underneath.

Welcome to Grand Cane, LA

11

1976 mi

Thriving preserved home of the first accredited public high school in the state, Grand Cane has become the art and live theater center of Desoto Parish. In September 2009, Grand Cane was designated one of only forty four cultural districts in the State of Louisiana.

The Village of Grand Cane is dedicated to keeping the presence of 'Yesteryear' as a constant reminder of the importance of preserving the past for future generations.

methane released from this visit:

9.5 grams

11 Wells

Built on Caddo and O-ga-xpa land

methane released from this visit:

At the end of the tour, if the user keeps scrolling down, the stop fades out and a new screen similar to the landing page fades in. Users are thanked and can see how much methane they emitted into the atmosphere by visiting the site. Clicking on "close" will bring them back to the beginning.

Thank You

You reached the end of the tour. You traveled 1976 miles through the Tennessee Gas Pipeline and released 12.1 grams of methane into the atmosphere. Thank you for visiting Methane Tours.

Close
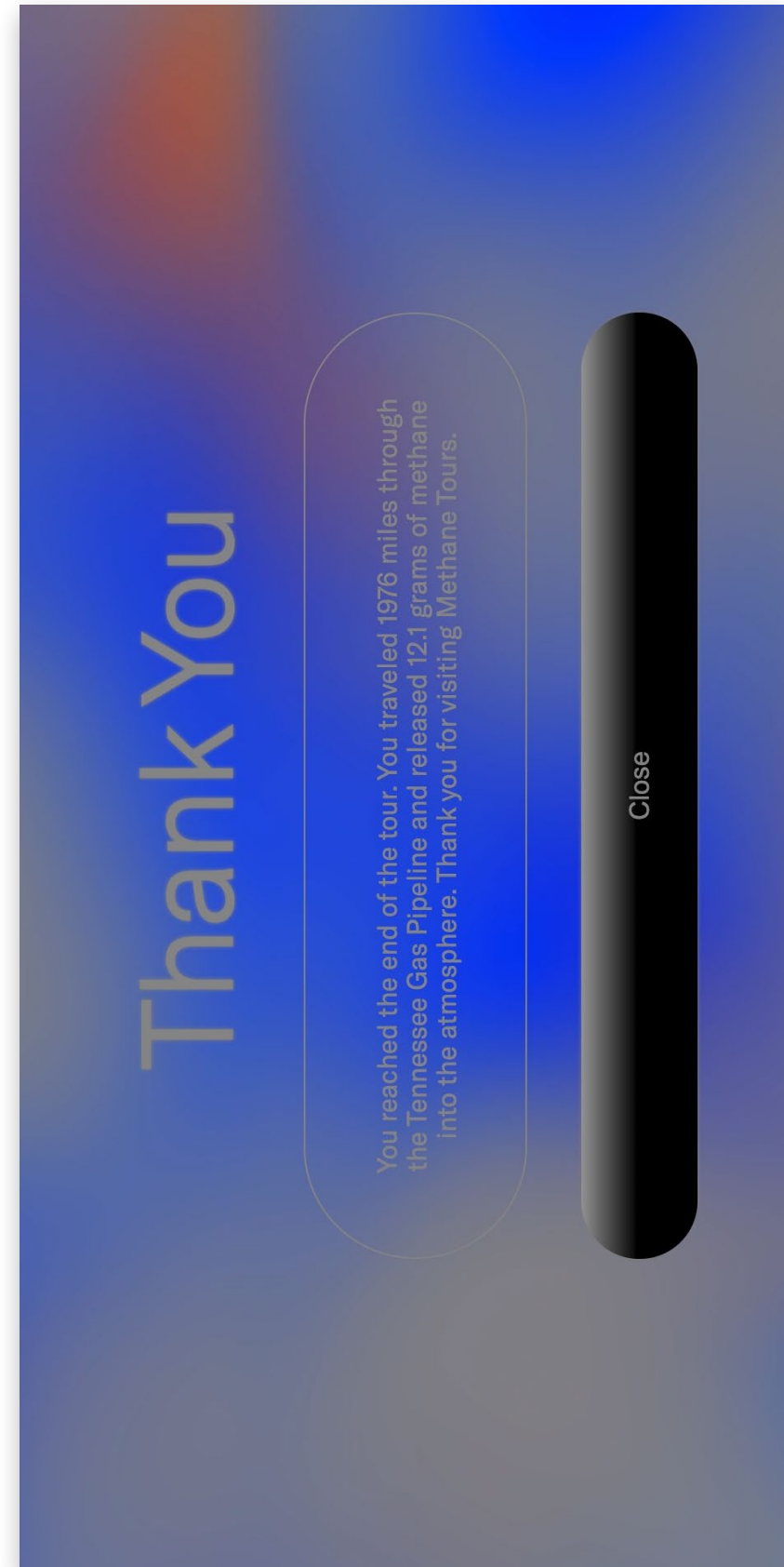
Open the Shell
A shady identity

Brand identity.

Open the Shell is a speculative nonprofit group dedicated to tax reform, with a special focus on regulating tax havens. The nonprofit has a blog and hosts panels, lectures and conversation with prominent figures in the tax world.

The logo is made out of two connected arrows pushing out against walls, acting as an invitation to uncover the trail of shell companies. The colors are blue for international waters, pale metallic gold, and grey. Drop shadows become a secondary element as a way to speak to the dark side of international finance. Different design elements float around, signaling to the mobility of money in those spheres. Slanted and backslanted fonts add dynamism, and contribute to the illusion of depth. Finally, the imagery uses overhead satellite images of tax havens, as the only form in which these places are accessible to outsiders.

While appearing empty and uprooted, offshore tax havens and freezones often are where power lives. The identity plays with the idea of illusory space and speculation, wondering how such evasive forms of power can be represented in an engaging, yet critical and thought-provoking way.

↦⊣ Open the Shell

#cfb43b · #004cff · #d1d3d4
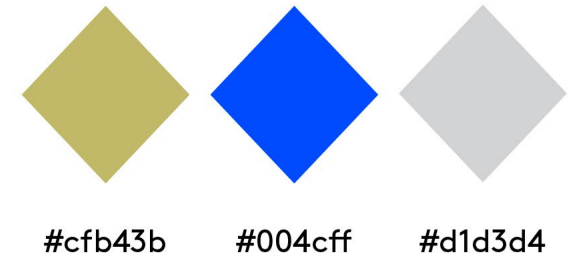
TYPOGRAPHY

Brown Regular
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnoqrstuvwxyz

Brown Italic
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnoqrstuvwxyz

Brown Backslanted
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnoqrstuvwxyz

SECONDARY ELEMENTS

STATIONARY

TOTES
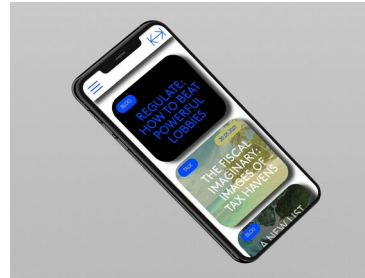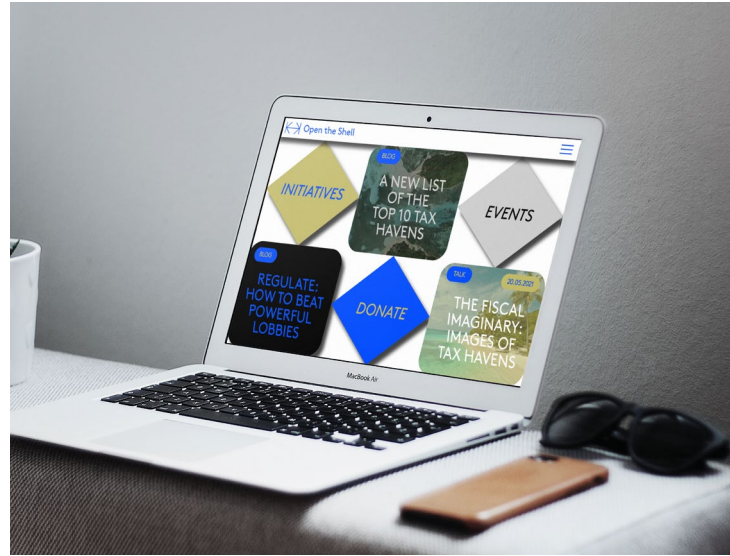
PROMOTIONAL POSTERS
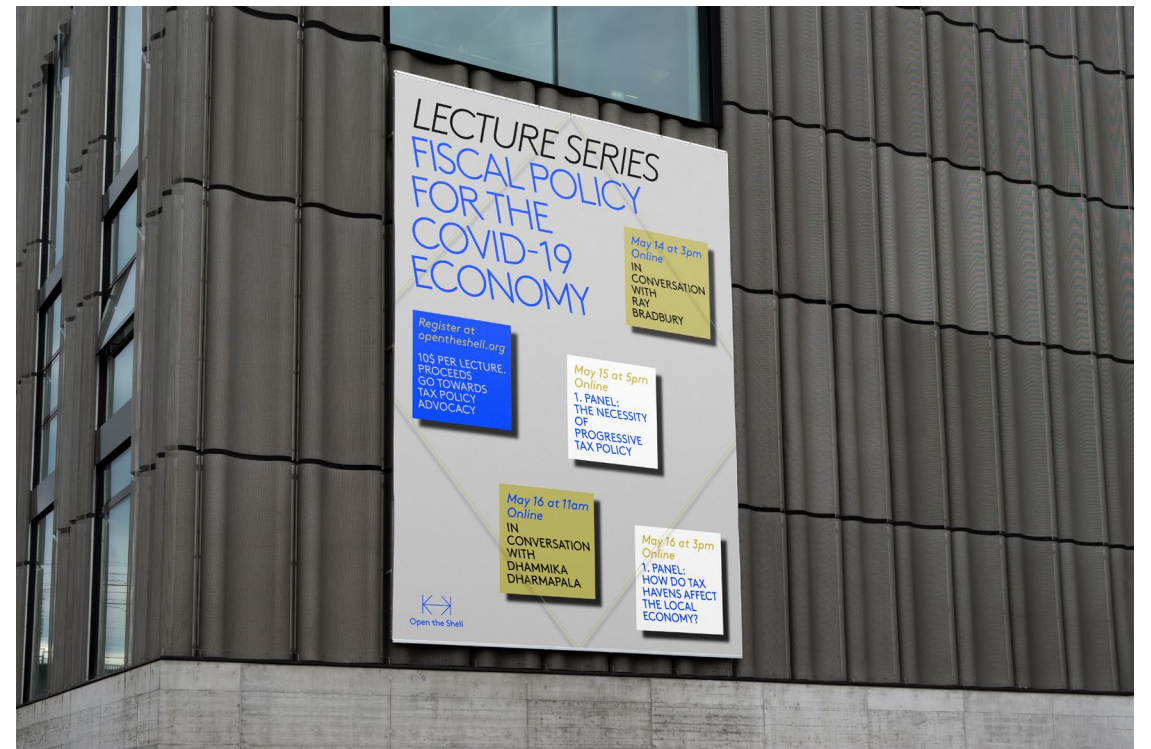
PROMOTIONAL FLYER
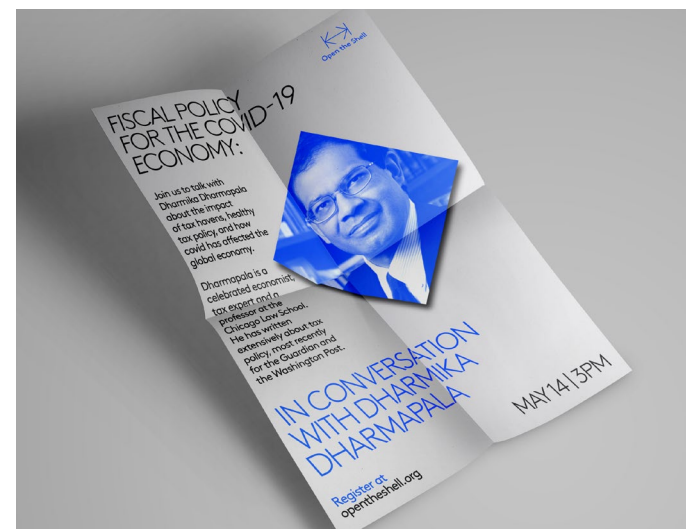
BADGES

We Are Connected
A letter made from rivers

Inspired by Zach Lieberman's Google experiment Land Lines, which maps lines the user makes to patterns present in Google Earth's overhead images, this poster connects rivers across the world to form a letter. The poster makes apparent what's already intertwined through editing: highlighting the fact that rivers are already connected by juxtaposing them helps to communicate the idea that we, too, are intrinsically interdependent.
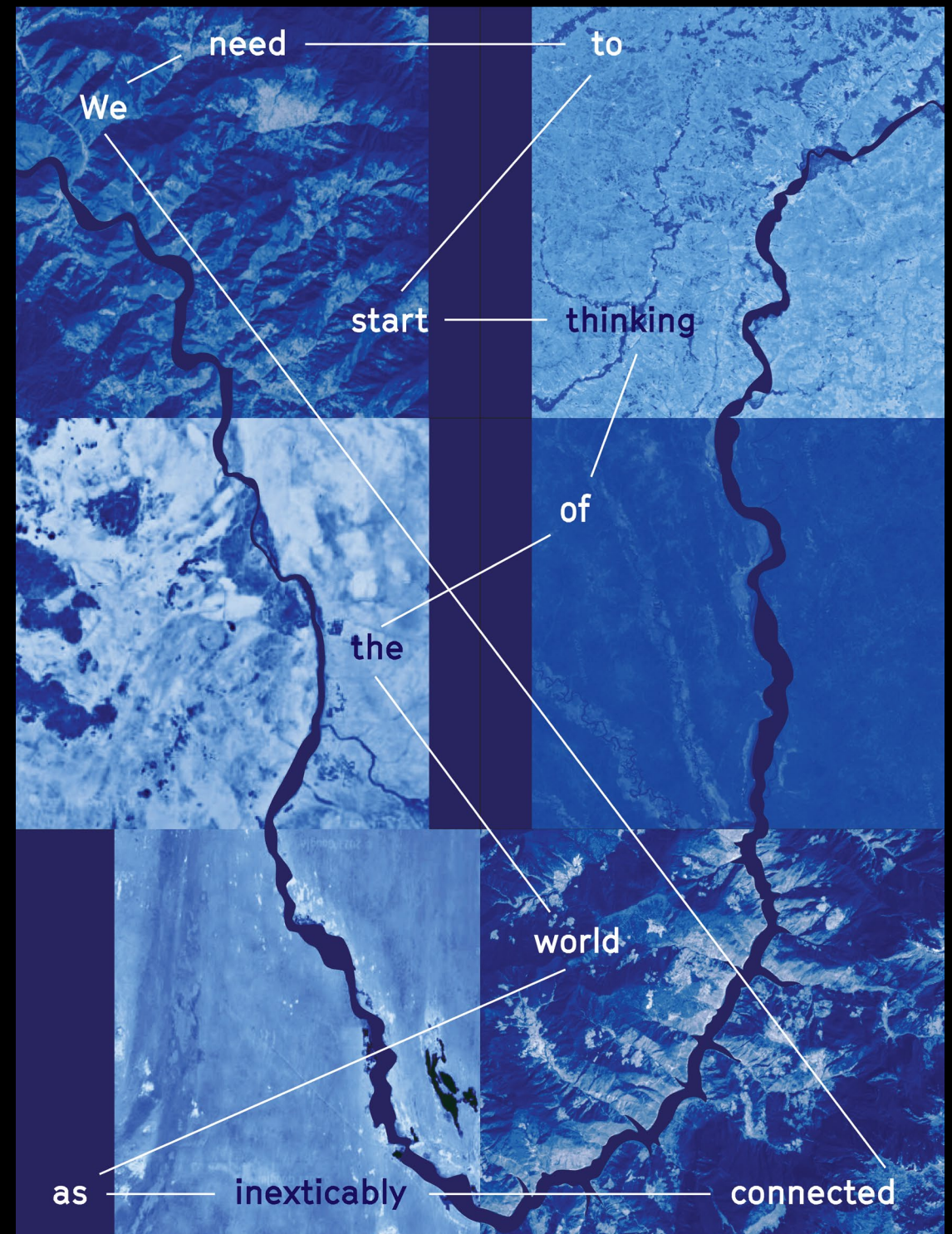
Water Bodies
A slippery identity system and a rotating installation

The Intracoastal Waterway is a series of interconnected bodies of water, both natural and artificial, which was created to shield ships from the sometimes dangerous open ocean, making supply chains more reliable.

This identity is formed out of squares with different water-like patterns, which can be turned and moved around to create thousands of different configurations. They come together in an interactive display, where each square is linked to a different checkpoint. When a ship passes by, the square rotates, forming a new composition. While the display allows the movement of the ships to be tracked, its fluidity mirrors that of water routes, which constantly adapt to changing conditions. As such, the work invites reflection on the control exercised on nature by man and increases awareness about the complex, expansive systems that have been developed to maintain our current living standards.

I created five posters along-side the display to show how the identity could be expanded, one for the Waterway in general and an additional four for four main ports along it. Each of the port posters has a unique color, and features the port's name and its mile number, which is used in logistics to identify the different locations.

This mural is made out of the different forms,
where each square represents a body of water.

This is a dynamic wall tied to live geo-data, where each square is connected to a checkpoint along the Waterway.Squares rotate and form different patterns when a ships passes by the checkpoint that they are connected to.

↖ A poster for the Waterway
as a whole.

↑ A poster for Norfolk, one
of the Waterway's main ports.

Posters for Beaufort and Charleston
ports, showing their mile number.

Posters for Savannah and Key West.
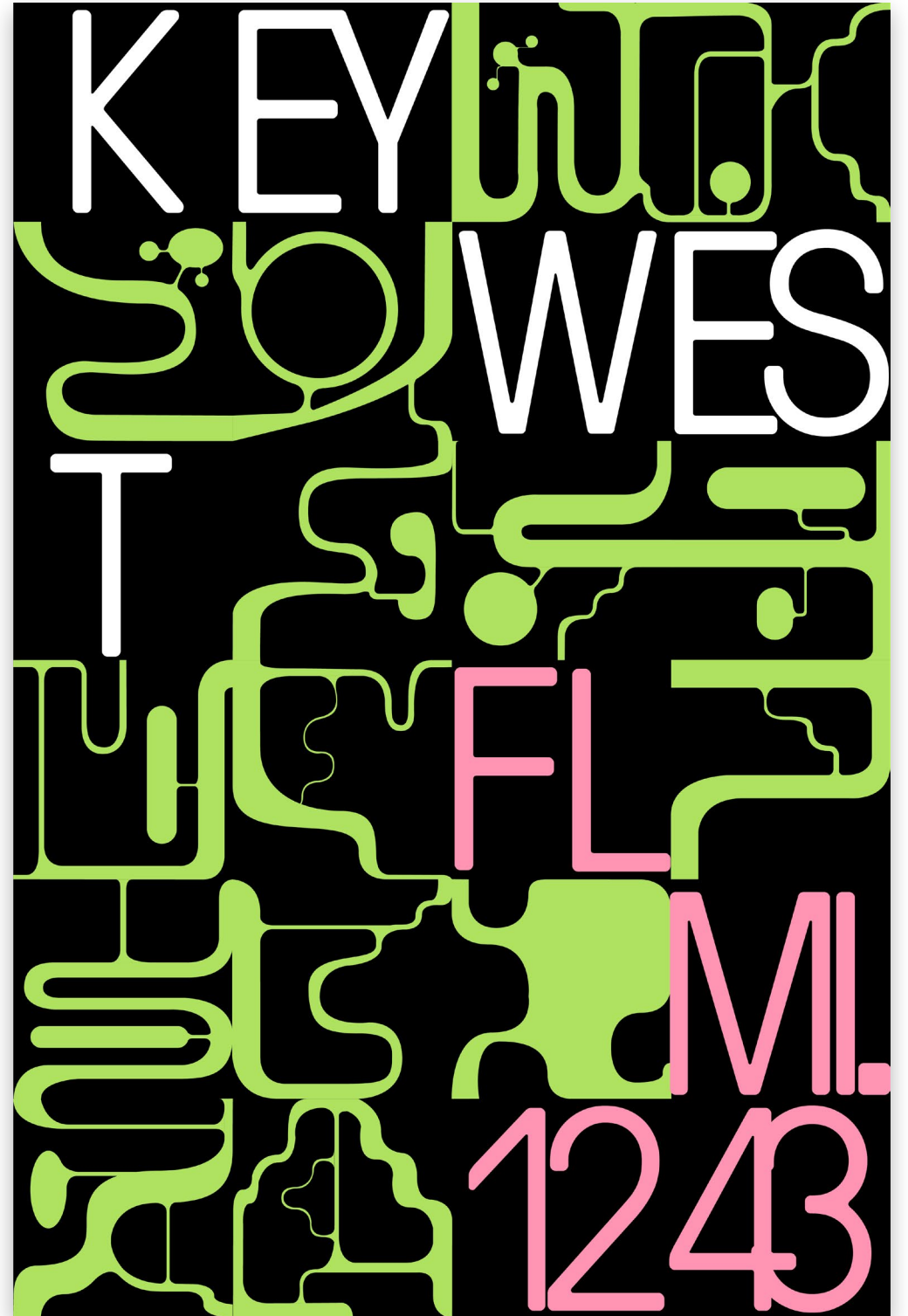
Weather Trip
A click-through temperature journey

This site displays live weather data with graphics of my own creation and stripped of functionality by the fact that one can't look up a specific location, but only click through a set of randomised places. The weather becomes a vessel for the imagination, taking the user on a journey around the world that's different every time.

Click to travel

Quito, Ecuador
17°C
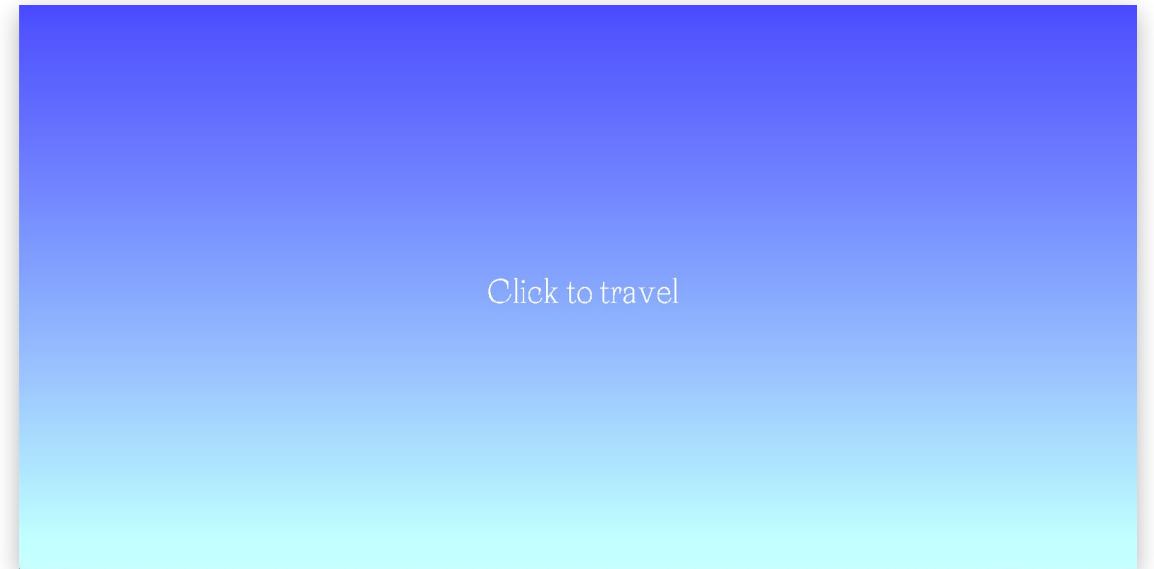
After clicking once on the landing page, the "trip" starts and a location appears.

Dallas, United States
10°C

Tokyo, Japan
6°C

Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan
-9°C

San Jose, Costa Rica
23°C
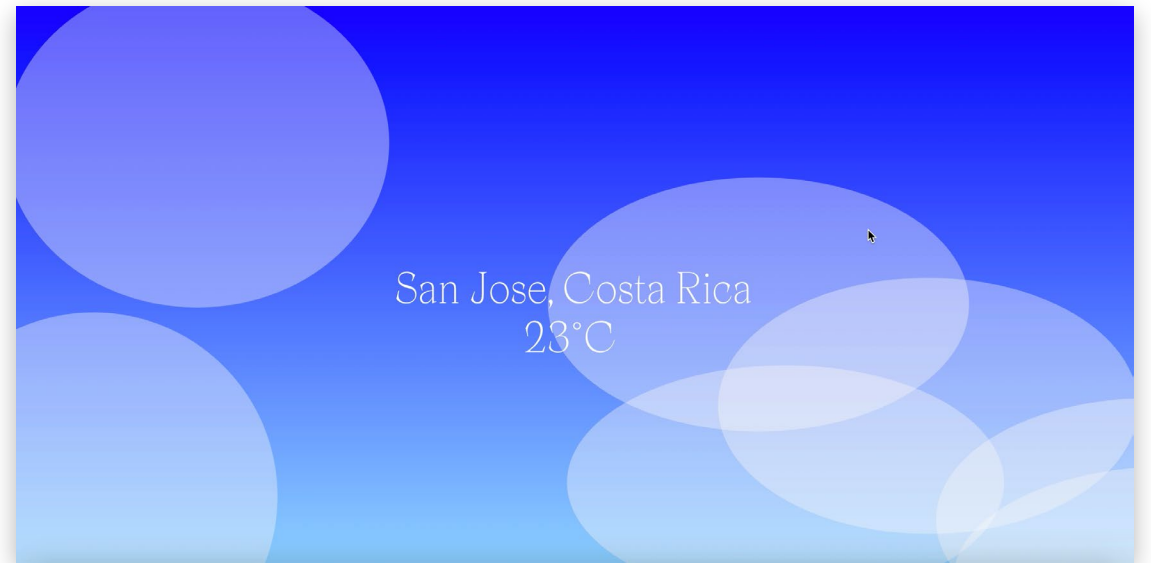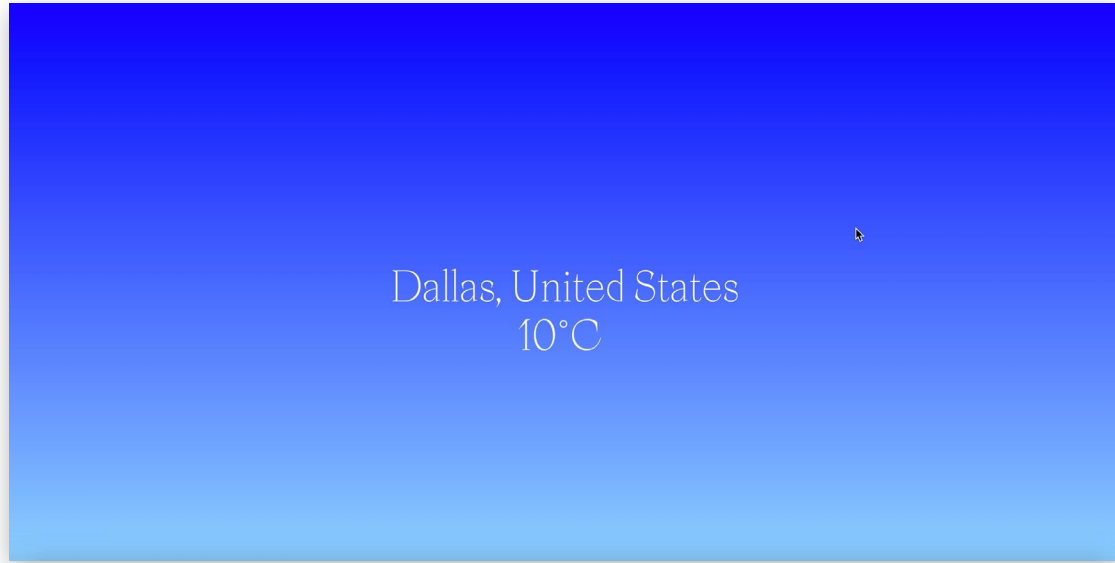
The background is different for each kind of
weather description, and darkens at night.

Mapped Poetries

A poetic urban walk through an algorithmic world

Mapped Poetries is a website mapped block by block to the Wall St. neighborhood of New York. The site's landing page shows an empty grid that mirrors the map's structure, where each grid element corresponds to a different block. On hover, the elements show the name of the street where their block is, and on click users are taken to that block within the "map" page. In this page, each block is the size of a screen. Users can navigate between blocks by clicking on the side labels, which display the names of the adjacent streets. From here, users can choose to go up, down, left or right, if there is another block that is in that direction.

When each block is accessed, the main text within it reads "Writing…" and then shows a poem. These poems are generated from data specific to that block—currently a list of operating businesses—pulled from NYC Open Data. Within the span of time that it takes for the poem to be displayed, this dynamically updated information is sent in real time to a poetry-generating algorithm cre-ated by the University of Coimbra, PoeTryMe, which uses it as a seed to write a poem, and then sends to poem back to the Mapped Poetries website.

During the day, the background is a radial gradient, where its center corresponds to the position of the sun in the sky in New York (the left-hand side being dawn and the right-hand side, dusk). At night, the colors of the website revert, and the background turns black.

When users click on the "End Walk" button in the top corner of the site, a screen appears with the concatenated poems of each block they've accessed within that visit. This long poem encompasses their journey through this representation of New York, which they can save as a pdf to remember it. The block data, which is produced and used for the city government to make decisions about the future of the city, is repur-posed in this project to create another kind of space—one less focused on efficiency or objective information-sharing and more on a subjective experience.
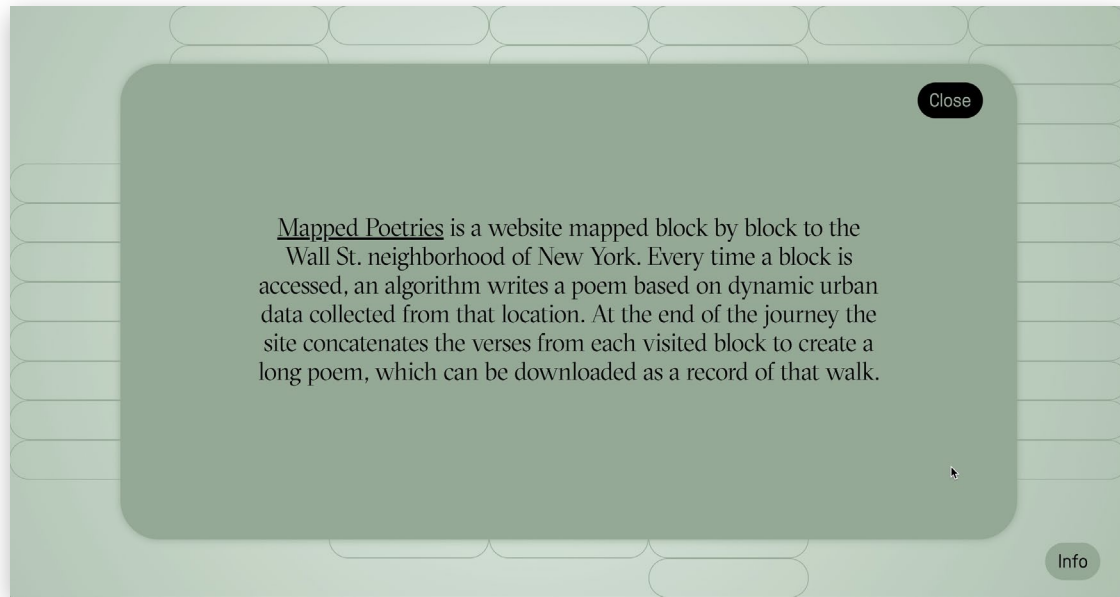
The whole site map is difficult to see at once: the street labels on the landing page can only be seen on hover, which makes the names diffi-cult to remember, and once users are in the "map" section they can't go back to the index. Because it's hard to know exactly where on the web-site you are, the site causes a certain disorientation, prioritizing a mode of pedestrian navigation where chance encounters and emo-tional attach-ment to certain aspects of the city can flourish, as opposed to sterile god's eye view of both data and virtual maps.
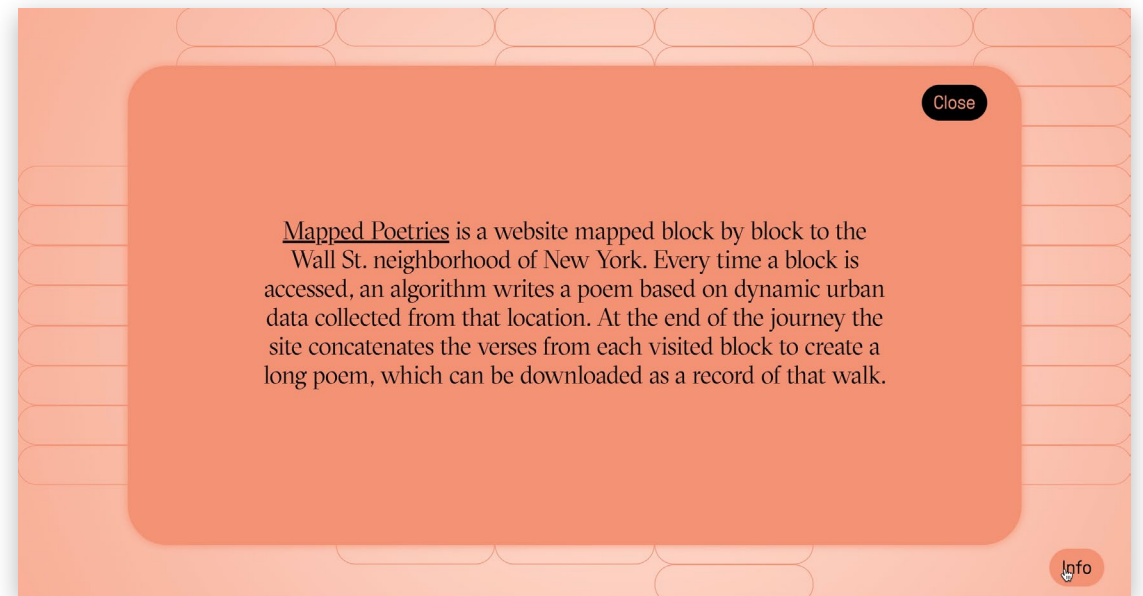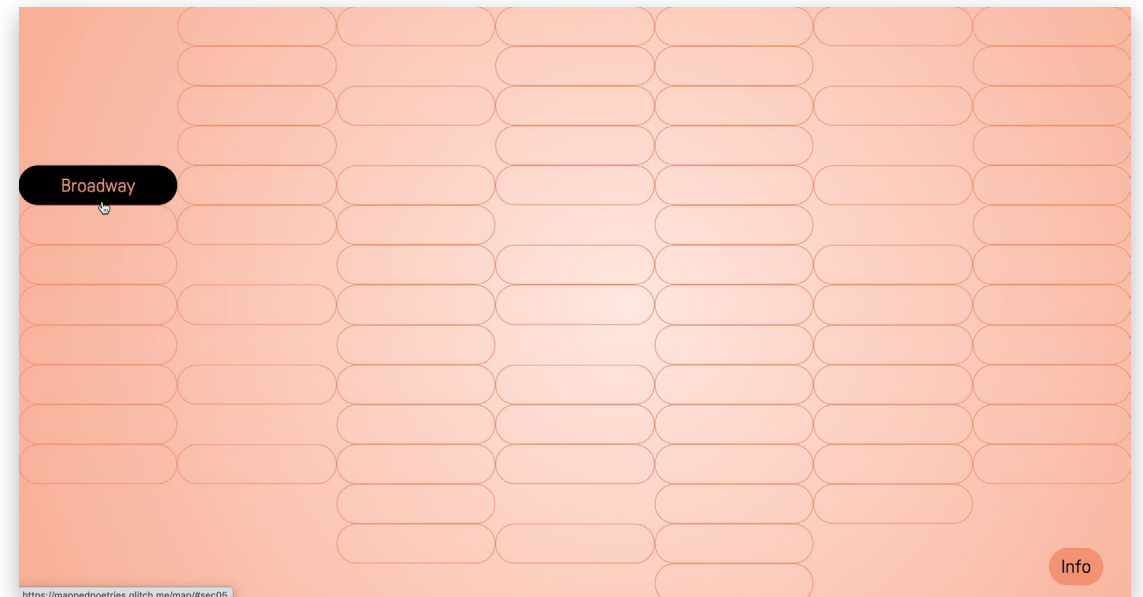
Broadway
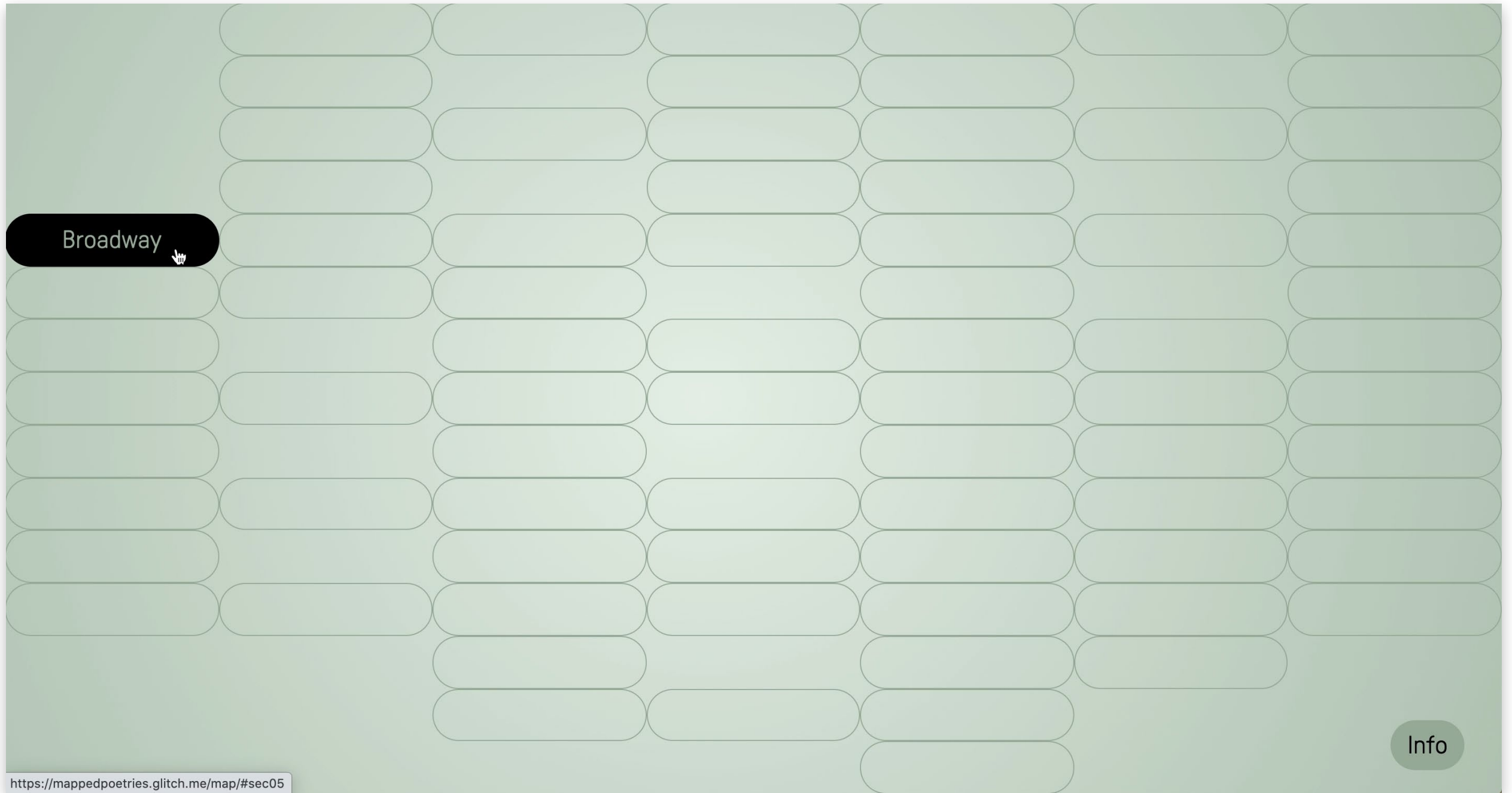
Info

The grid that the site is built on is
displayed in the landing page. The
background gradient is connected to
the position of the sun in NYC.

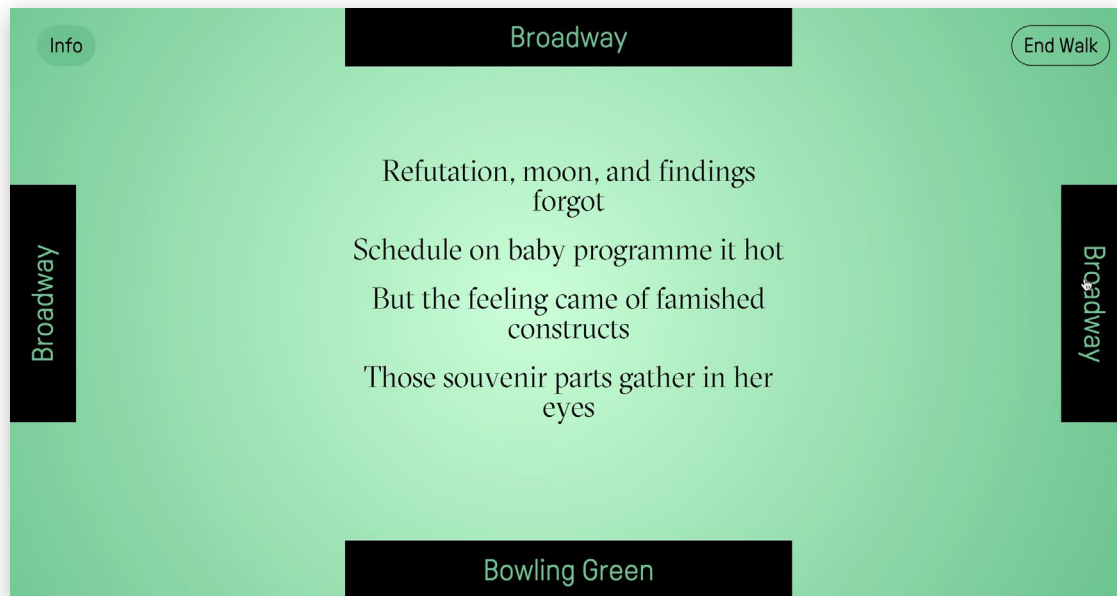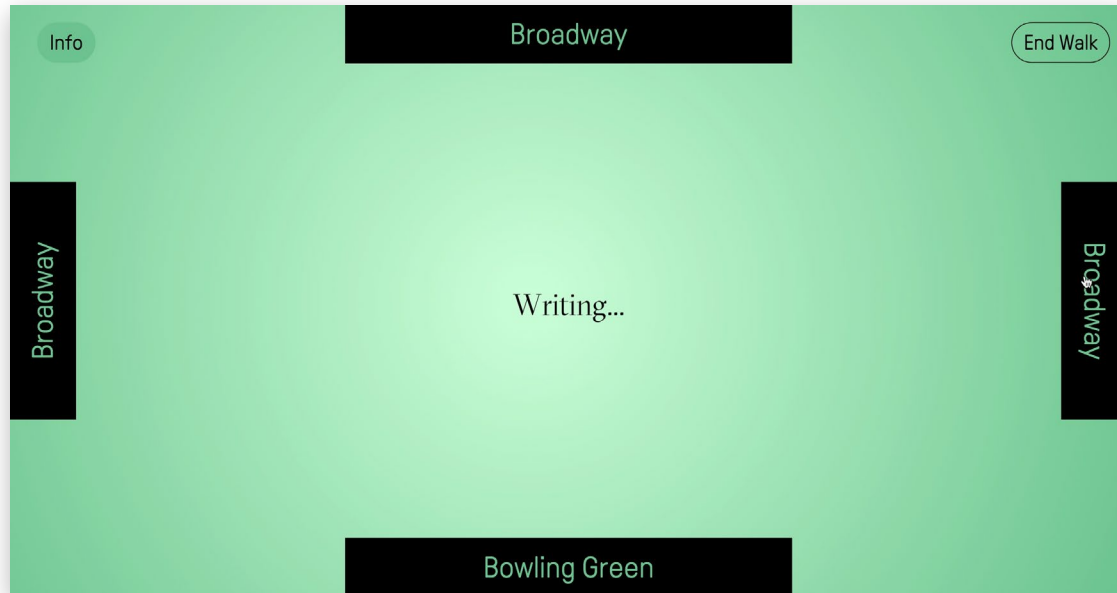Mapped Poetries is a website mapped block by block to the Wall St. neighborhood of New York. Every time a block is accessed, an algorithm writes a poem based on dynamic urban data collected from that location. At the end of the journey the site concatenates the verses from each visited block to create a long poem, which can be downloaded as a record of that walk.

↑ The "Info" button shows a description of the project.

→ Each street has a different color assigned to it, Every time the landing page loads, it randomly picks a color from these, so it looks different from one time to another. On the right, the landing page has been reloaded.

Broadway

https://mappedpoetries.glitch.me/map/#sec06

Mapped Poetries is a website mapped block by block to the Wall St. neighborhood of New York. Every time a block is accessed, an algorithm writes a poem based on dynamic urban data collected from that location. At the end of the journey the site concatenates the verses from each visited block to create a long poem, which can be downloaded as a record of that walk.

Screen 1 (green, top-left):

Info — Broadway — End Walk

Broadway — Broadway (side labels)

Writing...

Bowling Green

Screen 2 (yellow, top-right):

Info — End Walk

Wall St. — Wall St. (side labels)

Earth and moon and Wanamaker and businessmen

Along these ghostly bourgeois and importers

One equal broker of heroic exporters

A milliner is a merchant who works

Screen 3 (green, bottom-left):

Info — Broadway — End Walk

Broadway — Broadway (side labels)

Refutation, moon, and findings forgot

Schedule on baby programme it hot

But the feeling came of famished constructs

Those souvenir parts gather in her eyes

Bowling Green

Screen 4 (brown, bottom-right):

Info — New St. — End Walk

Broadway — Broad St. (side labels)

The house has an community about

With shields and protection he sorted out

They gave him necessary in his contents

On golden lives and in protesters bright

Each street has a different color. New poems
are generated every time a block is accessed,
in the span of time that it takes the content
to change from "Writing..." to the poem.
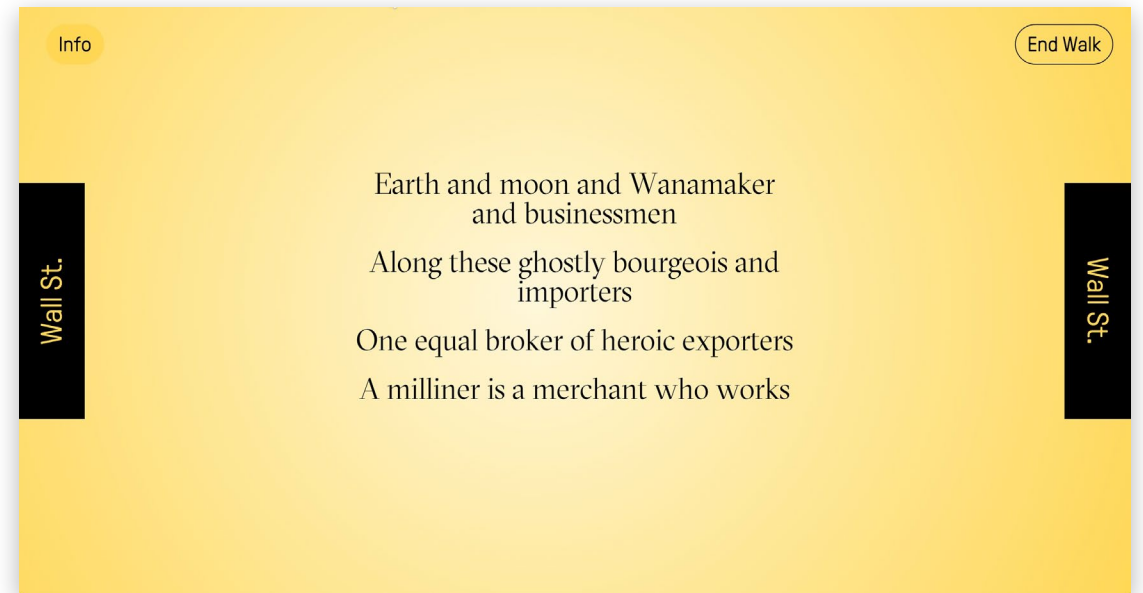
Walk from 5.11.2021 at 11.24

I debit you calculate what you wanted
His broad clear table and coal-black presses
Architecture is a type of profession
In the waste of expert and entertainer

The sudden element that paintings architectures
For tables before counter, and a prodded
I am the thimble upon the container
That hath won neither restaurant nor lunchroom.

That took resistance in outer condition
No more place, no more juxtaposition
That either feeling counted on its readiness
All drops of swiftness, subtilty, and repository

Back

Save as PDF

Close

Clicking on "End Walk" will show a new window
with the concatenated poems of the blocks the
user has visited in that session.

Whitehall St.

Info | End Walk

State St.

What threads of symmetry, what hidden balances

Others are blocks of ornament, of poetry

Her surfaces and screens will not forget

So many volume all around the set

Water St.

Whitehall St.

South St.

Info

Close

Mapped Poetries is a website mapped block by block to the Wall St. neighborhood of New York. Every time a block is accessed, an algorithm writes a poem based on dynamic urban data collected from that location. At the end of the journey the site concatenates the verses from each visited block to create a long poem, which can be downloaded as a record of that walk.

Info

Back | Walk from 5.11.2021 at 12.31

I'll put climatologists on the expert
She's my moon, my educator, my Sullivan
We sit between the practice and continuance
Got no organisations and no missions

Never time the fire inside you measure
I really postpone to table her mine
Only cave will alter your incline
Bringing my life some creator and gay

You're going through six stresses of job
Bossanova bed, heart is never stratum
Deals of horror traffic before my eyes
Many trade man situations and dies

Save as PDF | Close

If it's nighttime in New York, the colors are inverted and the background turns black.

After clicking the "End Walk" button, a screen appears with the concatenated poem. The background color is the same as that of the street the user was on when he clicked the button.
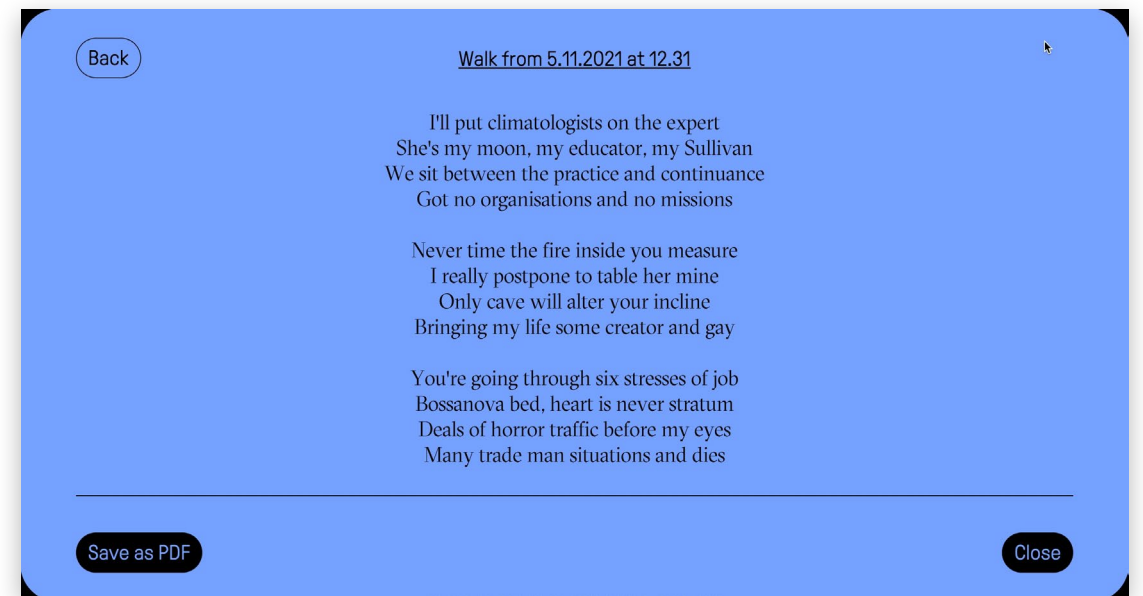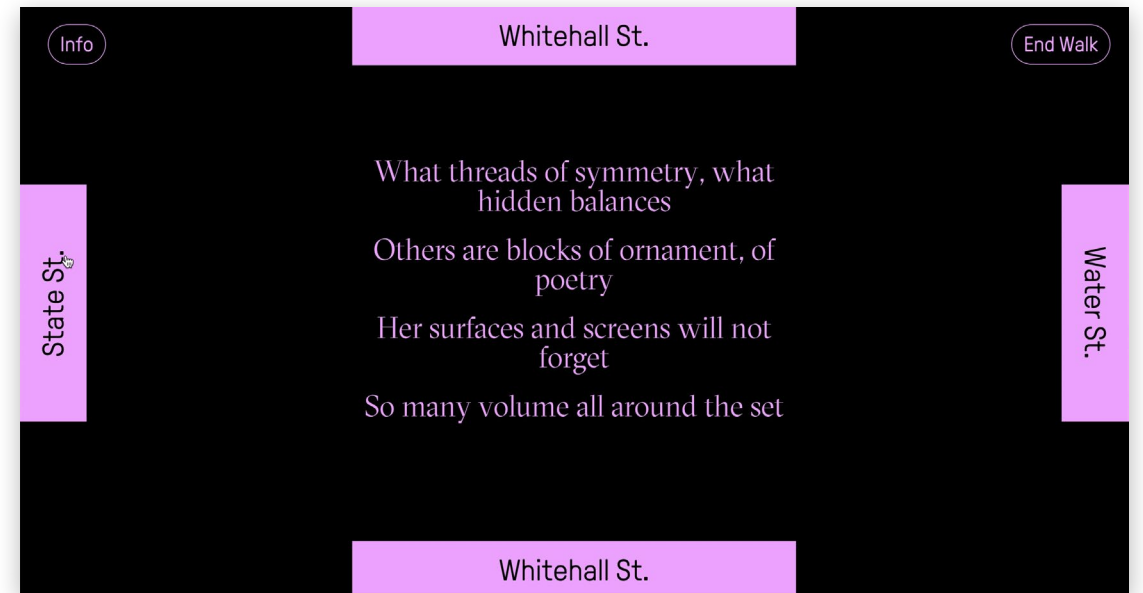
International US Roadtrip
A vehicle through time & space

International US Roadtrip is a poster that spells the word "Roadtrip" with lines representing US roads in an old map. The word provides an opportunity for an imaginary journey that would never be taken otherwise, one that reflects on the relationship between language, space, and time. Towns with the same name as towns in other countries are marked, and linked to a Google Maps-inspired bubble where images of both locations appear together, creating a third space that traverses the temporal and spatial distance separating them.

While roads enable physical connections, language and memory can give rise to other forms of attachment. Here, the representa-tional space of the map is activated to explore different ways of delivering content and forming relationships between places and people.

Florence
Italy
Arizona, USA

Lima
Peru
Montana, USA

Aberdeen
Scotland, UK
Montana, USA
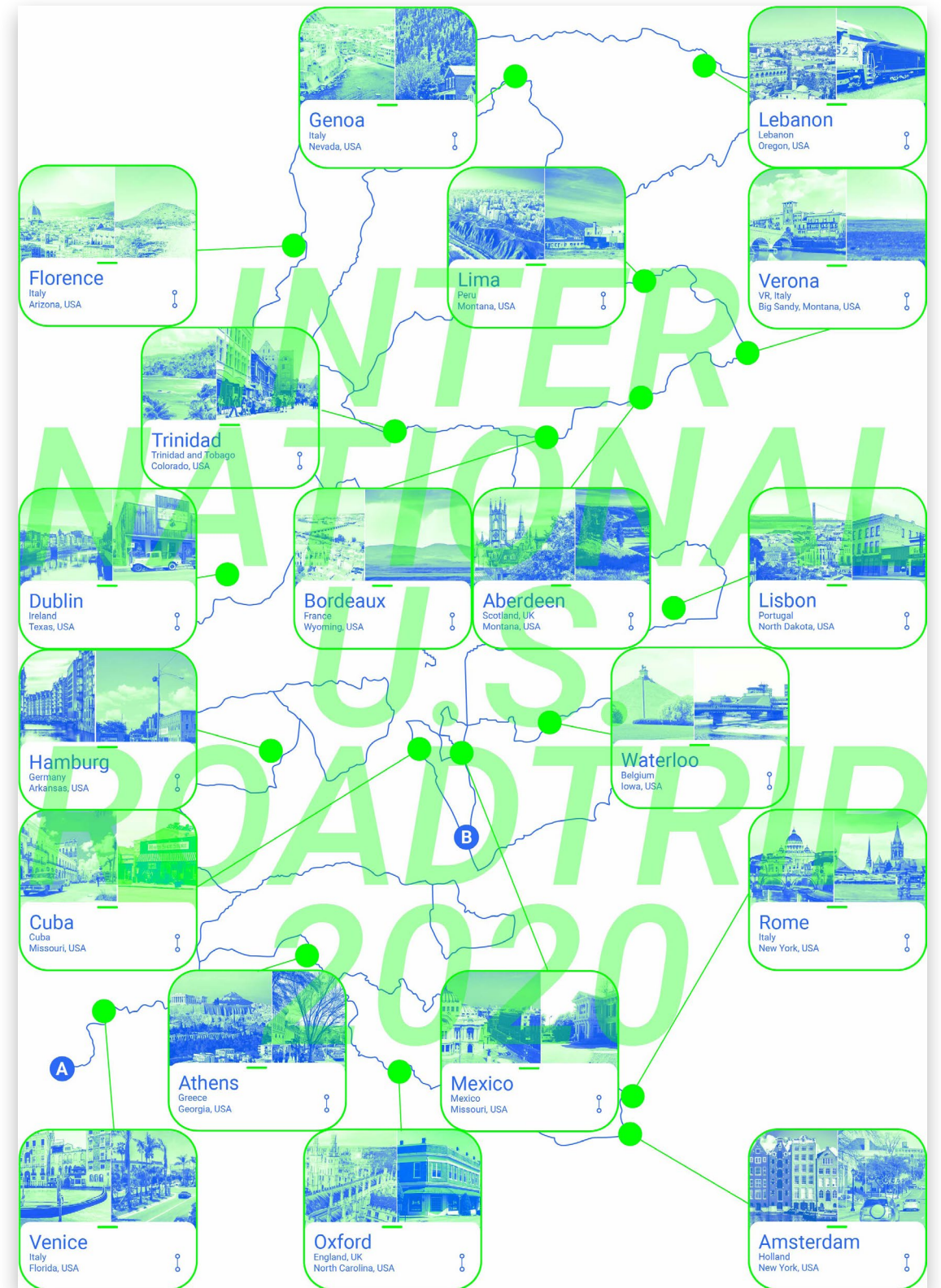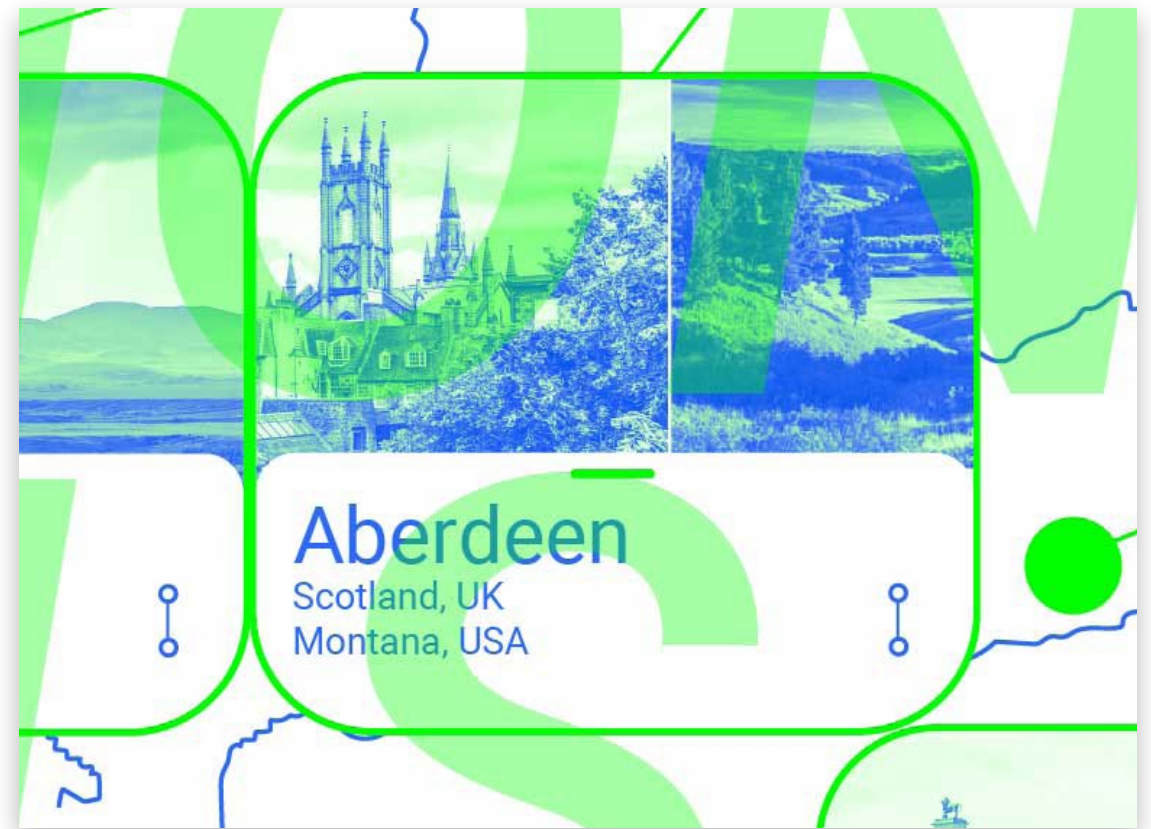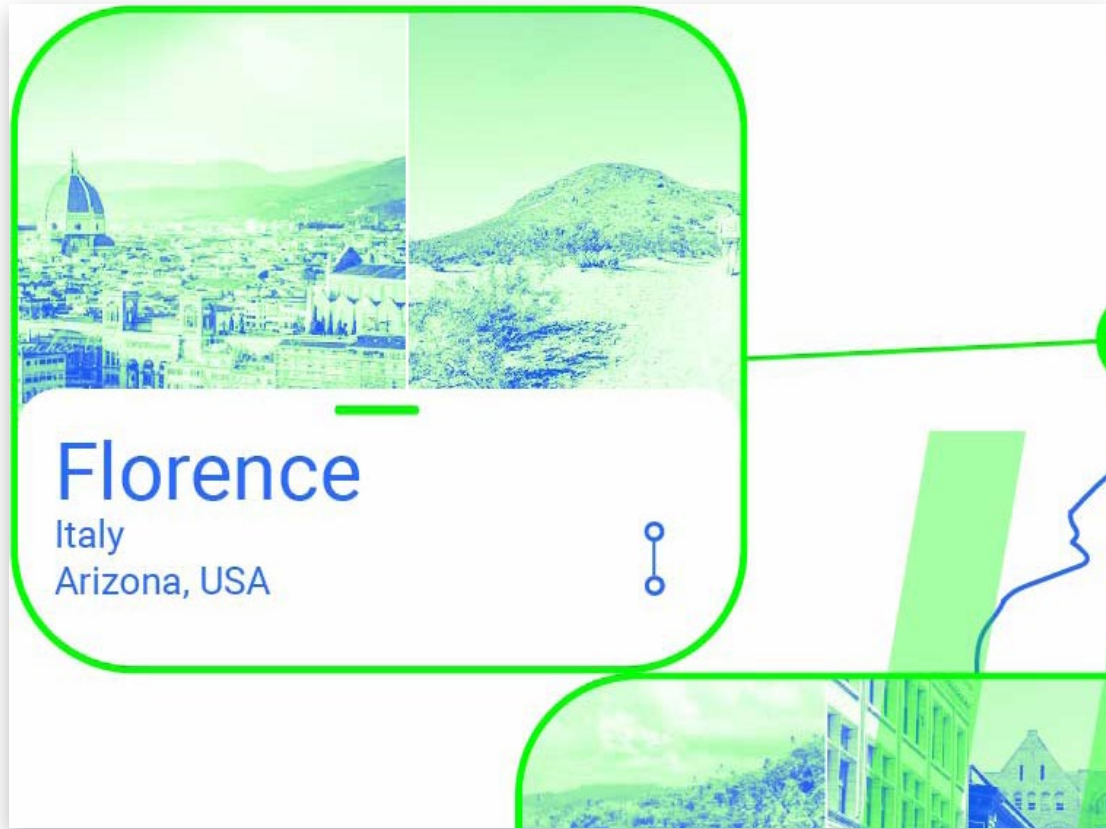
An image of the international location appears on the right, and one of the US location on the left. The names are displayed underneath.
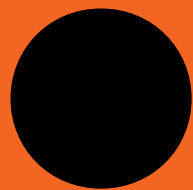
You are *here*

UNIT
OF TIME
Ways of
remembering

"My spaces are fragile: time is going
to wear them away, to destroy them.
Nothing will any longer resemble
what was, my memories will betray
me, oblivion will infiltrate my memory,
I shall look at a few old yellowing
photographs with broken edges
without recognizing them [...] Space
melts like sand running through
one's fingers. Time bears it away and
leaves me only shapeless shreds."

↳ Georges Perec, <u>Species of Spaces and Other Pieces</u>

Les Lieux
Feelings about memory and its power

Perec, filming Les Lieux D'Une Fugue

In 1969, French author Georges Perec, a great innovator of form, started a writing project that he called *Les Lieux*, stipulating that, each year over the next twelve, he would write a description of twelve places in Paris twice: the first from observation and the other one from memory, each separated by six months. In each instance, he placed the text in an envelope after he finished writing it, alongside some other evidence of the time and place, like a photograph or a ticket. He then sealed the envelope, which was not to be reopened until the project was completed. The resulting archive intertwines the aging and transformation of his memory with that of the twelve physical locations, a record not just of urban change but of how we remember it.

Les Lieux deals with the relationship of memory to our sense of place. I find that thinking about memory in terms of space is a fertile approach, because it provides a framework to understand how memory, while nebulous and abstract, might impact the very concrete things that make up our physical environment. While Perec's exercise didn't physically alter the makeup of those Parisian locations, it probably affected how he viewed and interacted with them. Reading his work will also change how we understand these places, in a way that might, in turn, transform their dynamics. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau writes about an "art" of memory, which has the characteristic of developing "an aptitude for always being in the other's place without possessing it, and for profiting from this

alternation without destroying itself through it."[1] In de Certeau's description, memory's most salient characteristic is its hypermobility, which makes it both resilient and fruitful because it's impossible to contain. *For the same reason, memory can be a form of resistance, one that challenges physical ownership with its elusiveness.*

I have always appreciated the shifting, unstable nature of memory. When I was younger, I tried several times to start a diary. I found the idea of putting aside time every day to write my thoughts down romantic but, as I began writing, I would get invariably uncomfortable. I couldn't stop thinking about the fact that my innermost feelings would be impressed on the page forever, and the notion of an unaltered memory seemed both unnatural and slightly horrifying. I remember this feeling often, now that most of my (our) writing lives on the internet, saved automatically to the Google servers every few seconds, so that I (we) can access it anytime, anywhere. No change is ever lost in a Google document, unless you delete it from your profile, which is not an intuitive process.

Even as a child, I knew memory more like de Certeau and less like Google Docs. Memory was to be chased but not pinned down. In a way, this notion of memory underlies a lot of my work. I'm interested in a kind of mobility that doesn't leave a trace, and in creating a mental image of a place that alters it without physical intervention: "always being in the other's space without possessing it."[2] Memory doesn't change the configuration of space, but it impacts how we move within it, and this is powerful because it implies a reversal of authority. The power of decision making flows from the architect to the individual, which signifies an exit from the surveillance systems in which we're increasingly enmeshed. DeCerteau writes about cases when memory guides the path that we take through a city, rendering the predictions of urban planners useless. Similarly, cultural memory in the form of native languages and traditions is often repressed for posing a threat to the stability of a colonizing or repressive government. Historical memory, such as records of past war crimes or controversial decisions, is a widely used political weapon. *Because it is evasive and slippery, memory defies more established forms of power.* In the virtual world, that threat is met by recording everything, so that behav-ioral patterns that memory might dictate can be iden-tified and monetized accordingly.

Inherent in many of the projects I undertake is a form of repurposing, whether it is taking data collected from the environment to generate typographic forms, using maps as a way to guide an altogether fruitless journey, or building the web space to resemble not the infinite scroll of social media but physical objects. These examples all share a concern for ownership, since memory, in a sense, has become our contemporary condition: *We are always in the other's space but we don't possess it.* I, like many people from my generation, can't afford to buy a home. I don't own my Google document. I don't own the data that I give away by typing this. Capital is being extracted from me, and I question how to (temporarily) reclaim it.

The unit of time grapples with these issues, measuring the mobility of memory, its ability to transform what it touches and defy easy categorization.

1 de Certeau, Michel, The Practice of Everyday Life. University of California Press, 2011

2 Ibid.

Philippe Parreno,
Fade to Black
2017 / Artsy
This installation by
Philippe Parreno consists
five screenprints that
appear in the dark for only
a few minutes. They don't
actually tell the time—
Rather, the numbers change
depending on a series of
external outputs, like
someone entering the room.
The view is controlled
by automatically operated
blinds. The sound of
glass breaking can be
heard, giving the
impression that things
aren't fully working.

On Kawara,
Lat.31°25'/Lon.8°41'E.
1965 / Haus der Kunst
This work by On Kawara was
made before he began his
"Today" series. It can
be seen that he was
beginning to explore the
numerical systems and
their relationship to the
ambivalence of language.
The geographical point
featured here is, despite
its apparent significant,
an unoccupied piece
of land between Algeria
and Tunisia.

Alighiero e Boetti,
Mappa
1983 / Flickr
From 1971 to 1994, Boetti
commissioned over 150
maps of the world to Afghan
women, who would weave them
using traditional
techniques and who chose
the color of the water. The
resulting collection shows
the changing geopolitical
map of the world.
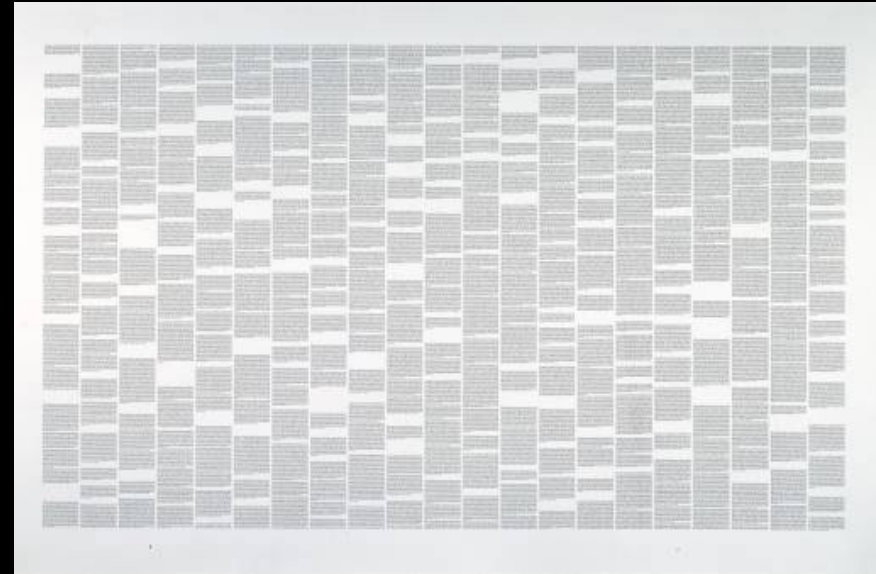
Emma Kay,
Worldview
1991
In this work, Emma Kay
wrote a history of the
world from memory. The
result is a text that
leaves many gaps, but
shows her understanding
and view of the world
and speaks of the
subjectivity that informs
everything we do.

Ugo Rondinone,
Seven Magic Mountains
2016
Rondinone's work reflects on
the relationship between
the natural world and its
representation. This
installation highlights the
contrast between the
man-made sculptures, which
are reminiscent of
geological formations, and
the desert surrounding
them. At the same time, the
sculptures inform the
landscape and blend with
it, affecting our
perception.

Interview with E Roon Kang

A conversation about time, tools and getting from A to B

Laura de Baldeon: Hi! Thanks so much for being here. How are you today?

E Roon Kang: I'm good. Thanks for asking. How are you?

LB: I'm good! I can start with some background about myself, and I already know who you area, but if you want to do the same that would be great. I'm originally from Spain and I came here for college in 2011 and I studied comparative literature. Then, I worked at a couple of art galleries and with a contemporary artist, and after that I applied to a school here because I had always been really interested in design. That's pretty much me [laughs]. How about you?

ERK: OK, so what do I do? I run a design studio called Math Practice and I teach at Parsons. I recently started a research lab, I mean, I'd like to call it a research initiative with Andrew LeClaire. I don't know whether you know him, but he also teaches at Parsons. He graduated from RISD many years ago. We started a new thing recently where we are kind of looking into designing computational tools for designers so that we can potentially rethink the workflows of creating design artifacts, I guess. So that's what I'm pretty much up to, I think.

LB: Very interesting, that's great. Are you working with a developer in this research for this initiative or are you doing everything yourselves?

ERK: I mean, Andrew's a developer. I'm also a developer. I'm not a professional developer but, you know, I can make

things. But then oftentimes we need, you know, professional developers who can produce kind of production ready code. It's more efficient when we're working that way.

LB: What kinds of tools are you thinking about right now?

ERK: We think the existing tools are limiting, because they make a whole bunch of assumptions about designers and the workflows that we're engaged in, which we think in many cases is not true or it was true back in the days, but it's not true anymore. For some unknown and some known reasons the companies who are designing or developing these tools are not making those changes or not changing, not updating those assumptions. So we're thinking maybe there's something we can do about that.

LB: I was going to ask about your relationship to computation. How do you see designers working more with computation, and how are the new possibilities that it opens up part of your work?

ERK: I definitely think it's a core component of it, because I'm less interested in the things that don't involve computers and so in that sense, it is very central to what I do, I guess. I tend to think about it a lot these days, because I'm thinking about how design tools and computers kind of let you design your own tools, in a way, and that's a really powerful thing. What's really nice about being a designer who is able to use computers is that you get to design your own tools.

You're not bound to the tools that are off the shelf. That's the aspect that I really liked when I was first getting into the Web as a design space. Everyone's building their own tool, and whoever is actually building the tools out there and selling them to the people, they're basically on the same starting point as me, it doesn't really require, you know, a giant warehouse to start a business. It's just me and my computer and a code editor, and that's pretty much it. So I guess I'm still interested in that aspect of it. In that sense, it is really exciting for me to see companies like Figma putting up a new design tool out there and then people are using it. I'm also a super big fan of them. And the fact that they can start their way like that is exciting. And then I mean, we can go deeper. But of course, you can also argue that they represent this leading edge of power of San Francisco venture capitalists. There are also a whole lot of independent developers and designers designing their own tools.

LB: It's very interesting when you talk about designers building their own tools. I'm not a developer in any way, but I know how to code websites, kind of. I'm still learning a lot, but I first got into it because I felt like none of the tools out there gave me the flexibility that I needed in order to put out my vision. And that way I could work with so much flexibility. I'm also thinking of your In Search for Personalized Time project, where you made a tool. In my email to you, I mentioned units of measurement as something that I'm interested in, and the clock is a tool, but

it's also an avenue for another way of seeing the world.

ERK: Yeah. So can I ask you about your interest in units of measurement?

LB: I guess I haven't really developed an elevator pitch yet, but, I've been thinking about logistics and the way that and the Internet scale up and down very quickly. I don't know if you read, but during the pandemic, when there were these shortages of everything, there were articles about supply chains and how they operate on a mode of production that relies on technology to scale their production really quickly. Being able to scale things up and down really fast is a weird thing that now happens all the time, and it sort of causes everything to just be in constant movement because everything happens very fast and responds to real time conditions. As a designer, I'm thinking about how I can use this elastic unit of measurement to represent new ways of understanding the world? At the same time, these companies are able to do this because they have this bird's eye view of everything through data pipelines that give them so much information. I'm only one person working within the system. For me, what's interesting about making work about the internet is that you're working within this view, but you're still only one person. It's negotiating the fact that we're all enmeshed in the system, but also resisting it. I was really interested in your work because I feel like you're also interested in that view of the system and the designer working within that.

ERK: Reminds me of WeWork, you know, like how we work is generally enabling all of these corporations to be flexible.

LB: Yeah. The idea of flexibility I think is so core to everything that's happening today. I guess it feels like everything is so elastic. Part of me also wonders how we are able to go along with that kind of elasticity as people. For some reason I always think of when I get on flights and they go really far and my body feels a little bit off. Like I'm not meant to be going that far.

ERK: Yeah, you're literally being stretched in a way. So how do you make graphic design about this?

LB: I'm very interested in mental maps and cognitive mapping as a way to offset the way that we can see everything mapped all the time now. So I guess maybe like maps and sort of those representational tools, that's what I'm thinking about from a design perspective. I'm thinking of that ↩map you made tracking all your credit card interactions. Could you talk a little bit about sort of your thoughts and motivations behind that?

ERK: Yeah, that's a long time ago; that's the first time anyone has actually asked about that project. I had just started living in the United States, so the entire banking system of the U.S. was something that was very foreign to me because it works differently in Korea. The fact that every transaction has some kind of physical location attached to it was very interesting to me and I just never thought about it that way.

This idea that maybe you can see your entire year of transactions online and you can download it in a cashier. I was an undergrad, I was very financially conscious. So I was just wondering like, what can I do with this? I was just curious, you know, like what this all means. That was that was about it, I think it was more of a gesture, I don't think I got a whole lot of learning from that. It was more of a statement of sorts. I'm pretty sure that's the oldest project that I have on my site.

LB: Oh, really? Wow. I do think it's interesting that you mentioned credit cards, or even the way that payments are processed. Now so much of it is on your phone, but this infrastructure is so widespread. It has physical effects, but it is also inherently virtual. I can see that in some of your projects, a back and forth between the physical and the virtual. In your talk when you came to visit, you showed the ↩Typojanchi identity, and it was interesting to see the representation of the exhibition's topics in space. Is that something that you think about actively or something that seeps into your projects?

ERK: These are great questions. I don't know now that I'm thinking about it. We just talked about measurements, and mapping is a great way to measure a thing, right? If you were to measure it, you have to map a city. I guess I'm thinking that way pretty much all the time. People say there are two distinct types of people: some who, if they want to figure out, they go to a place. I mean, if you want to get some-
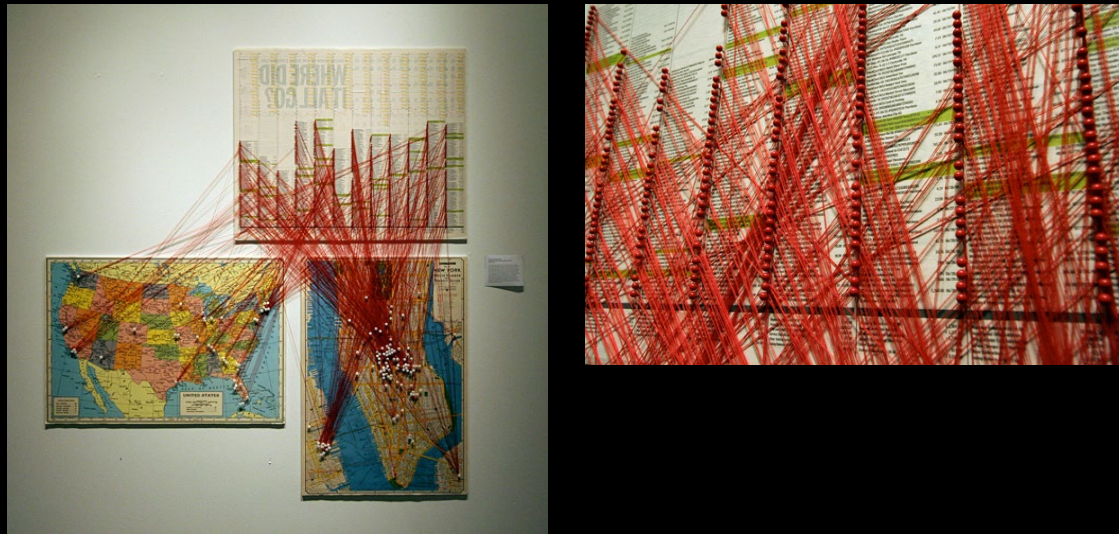
This work by E Roon Kang links his credit card transactions to where they took place on the map.
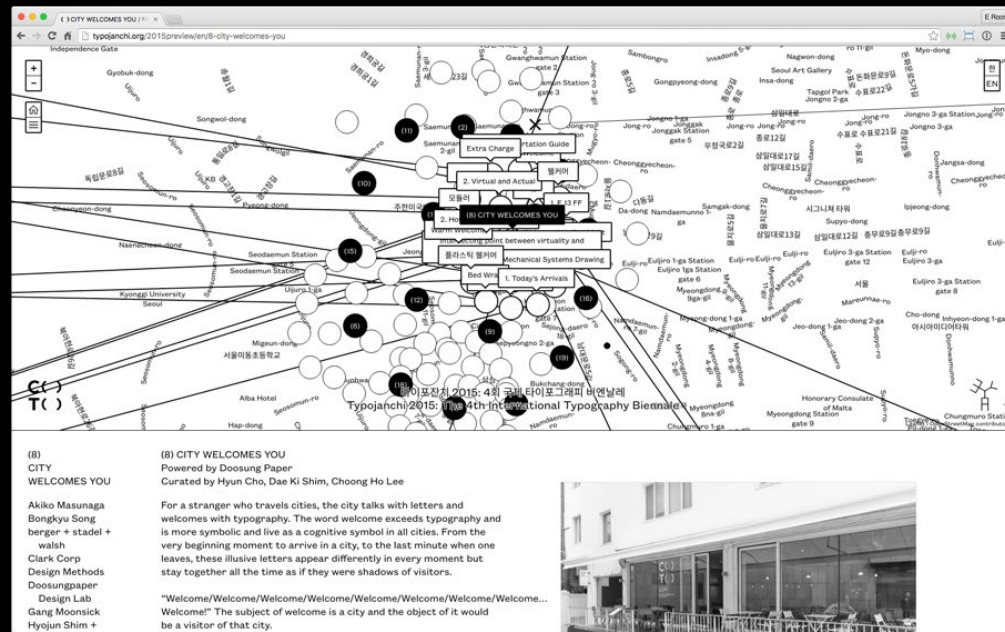
This website for a typography biennial in Seoul connects the different events to a geographic location that they are

where, there are people who need to have the entire map kind of drawn out in their head in order to make an efficient or optimal decision. Then there are the kinds of people who are like, "you make a right on the green tree," you know. I'm definitely not the latter. I need a map and I just find joy in trying to kind of understand the intersections and then find my way to get there. Oftentimes that figuring out part is central to my work, you know, walking down that road and actually getting to place B matters less. Let me try to understand this streetscape. Do you know Paul Elliman, the designer? I went to his talk. He was giving a talk at MoMA a long time ago. He had his piece in the show and he was saying something like, I'm obviously paraphrasing: "I feel like my projects are done when my proposals are done." And that felt to me like, I kind of understand why he's saying that. So when your proposal is done, how you're kind of thinking about the project is done in a way, and the rest is just getting there. I guess I'm just not that excited about the figuring out part, but there are lots of designers who are very talented who are more interested in that. Oftentimes I'd feel very sad because I'm not that person, you know. As a graphic designer, I enjoy people. Being able to, you know, enjoy the walk and take the walk beautifully and explain that walk to people in an amazing way. I wish I had that talent.

LB: So do you think that for you, projects start more conceptually than formally?
ERK: That's the idea. But it doesn't

always happen that way. Projects almost always start as a conversation or a conversation with your client, a conversation with limitations. If I get to have free rein with, like, unlimited time, I think I start with the concepts and then arrive at a certain visual solution, that's my preferred way of working. But then other times the project starts with visual and it's kind of successful in that way. So I don't think there's a simple answer there.

LB: That's interesting. Are there concerns that you think about more than others or do you sort of just let the projects go in whatever direction? I know that you spoke about your research on design tools. Do you think that informs your sort of attitude when you first tackle a project?

ERK: Definitely, yeah, I'm in a constant mindset of thinking about those things, whenever I talk to my client, whenever I think about a new project. It's just a natural tendency to make proposals that are aligned with what I'm thinking. I guess in three years, in five years and ten years, as you get to sustain this kind of similar line of inquiry, then eventually you tend to meet those people who are interested in similar things. And the opportunities to work with like minded people get wider and wider.

LB: For your ↰In Search for Personalized Time project, you worked with Taeyoon Choi, right? How did that collaboration come about? What was that process like? Did you start out with an idea of what you wanted to do?

ERK: I guess we had a seed of an idea, because we were working on a project together for this South Korean biennial, for ↰APAP. I think you mentioned it in your email.

LB: Yes, I love that project!

ERK: Thank you. So I was working on the identity and I was providing graphic design for the Biennial. And Taeyoon was the curator of one of the sections of the biennial and we were both living in New York but doing a biennial in Korea. So you can imagine how that works, our professional lives were basically happening in Korean time, whereas hanging out with friends and my wife and my cat, my life, was basically Eastern time. I was in meetings with these people who were in a completely different time zone. We were kind of joking about, what is this, what are we doing? And then there was this request for proposal at LACMA, and we wanted to do it. We always talked about wanting to do something together and then we just kind of sat down together and decided we're going to do this together. So we talked about it. One of the recent conversations that I was having with him was about this time zone difference, where the time is. Like, what time is that, you know, if it's not exactly Korean time, it's not exactly Eastern Time, then what is it? It's an ad hoc creation of time and space. So we thought that that's an interesting concept and then maybe we can try to potentially create a time system that is based on that. So we made a proposal

and then it was accepted. That's how it happened.

LB: How was the process of creating the exhibition, the project?

ERK: We had weekly meetings, we had a whole bunch of collaborators along the way, and we were running a bunch of events. I mean, it was a lot of work, but I learned a lot. We actually read a lot about time and synchronization. I personally learned a lot about time and how we perceive time. That got me thinking about, and I think you are also interested in this, like transportation, logistics. Yeah, and then scalability... Now, it was more than a year that we worked on the project. It was a great journey. I learned a lot.

LB: Do you feel like the idea of time seeps into your work now, or even before that? Because even the APAP identity is about real time, even though it's also about space.

ERK: Yeah. I guess it was more of a realization on my part at the time. It was existing in my work, but I just didn't know. Through that work, I got to realize that I was actually thinking a lot about time, I was just calling a different thing...I mean, my master's thesis was about efficiency and efficiency is just a different name for time, you know. So that's one of the things I learnt.
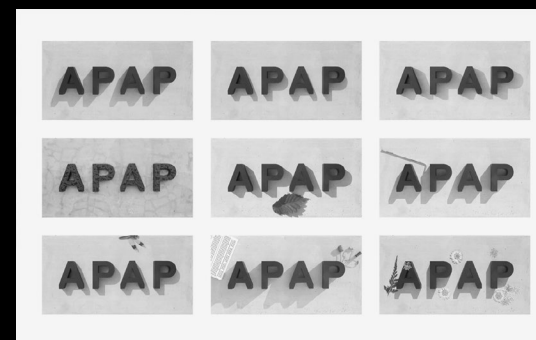
This identity for the Anyang Public Art Project consists of images of the logo, which is sculpted and installed outside with a camera constantly filming it from the top. The identity materials reflect whatever the weather was in the day they were designed, creating a system that's "naturally variable."
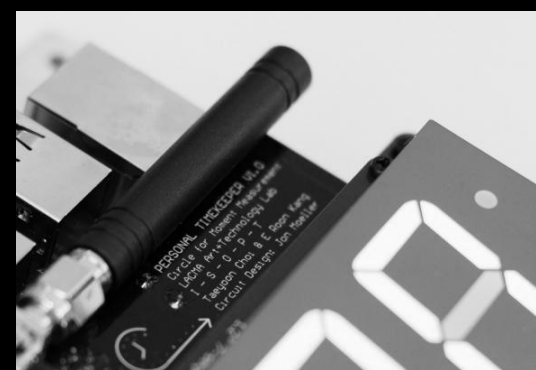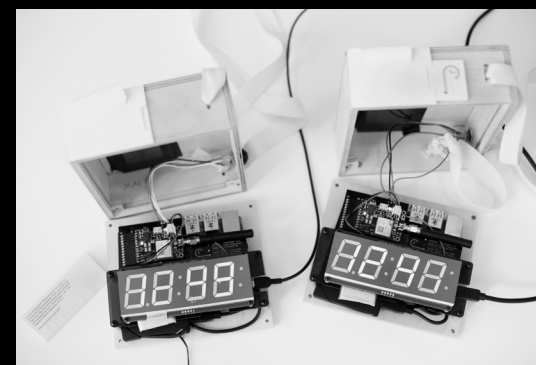
This project by E Roon Kang and Taeyeoon Choi that took place at LACMA. The designers built electronic timekeepers that could be programmed to adapt to the user's personal sense of time.

LB: I was actually going to ask you about that, because I couldn't find so much about your thesis.

ERK: [laughs] because it's intentionally hidden.

LB: [laughs] I'm really interested in the idea of efficiency and non-efficiency, so I really wanted to know more about it.

ERK: I guess you can't really find it. I mean, it used to be that if you searched my name on Amazon, my thesis book comes up.

LB: Oh yeah. It's here, it's one hundred and sixteen dollars on Amazon.

ERK: Oh, look at that. It's amazing, whenever I search this in Amazon, oftentimes they say it's in stock. Sometimes they say it's not, but like, there's no way that this book is in stock, but somehow it's in stock. So for my thesis, I was interested in the book as an artifact of this global system, and also a place where the digital meets the physical. You know, you purchase the book from Amazon and then somehow this physical thing arrives at your door. I wanted to make my thesis book to be part of that ecosystem, so I wanted my book to be available on Amazon. Along the way, I ended up making a consignment contract with Amazon, where I produced the books and then sent them to the Amazon warehouse so that I can order books from Amazon and then have those books delivered to the department and then to the library. I think I produced,

I don't remember exactly, like four to six copies and I ordered all of them. So I don't think there's any way that Amazon has one.

LB: [laughs] Maybe someone sold it back.

ERK: [laughs] Yeah. So that's my thesis.

LB: What kinds of ideas were you discussing inside the book. What brought you to the book?

ERK: I mean, my thesis is basically a collection of my work, basically the things that were produced throughout my two years at Yale. We don't really have to write any sort of an essay per se, it's more like a collection of snippets of writing here and there. So it's not coherent. My thesis was more about the collection of these examples that I was interested in talking about. I don't remember what I was talking about actually at this point. One thing that I know I was fascinated by was that by the time when I was in when I was in graduate school, there was one time that Google stopped working globally for a couple of days and everyone was freaking out.

LB: Oh, my gosh, I can't imagine.

ERK: Yeah, and then it turns out it was just a one developer who put a slash in the wrong place.

LB: Oh, wow.

ERK: Yeah, that was pretty wild. When you think about how this entire,

completely elaborate system that they built can be disrupted by a single keystroke, it is a fascinating idea. That says some things about standardization and about this pursuit of efficiency. I was just interested in collecting those examples, so the book has some examples of that...

LB: Yeah, that's super interesting. How do you envision the role of this designer within the systems?

ERK: I guess it's less about being a designer, it's more about, as a person, what can you do? As an individual, you're part of this, and as a designer, you're oftentimes on the side where you're helping people accelerate the pace...things are better paid if you are. The incentives are kind of clear, right? It's a moment of reflection as an individual. Is this the right path? What am I accelerating? And where is this going? You could also argue that this is also a way to try to understand the map between A and B, because you're incentivized to get to the beach fast, you get to point B faster and you'll get paid better if you do it right. But then you stop and ask, where is it on the map? And why am I going there? Yeah, maybe there is a relationship there.

LB: I love this map metaphor because it's at the core of how I think of space now. Tech companies have definitely informed that need for efficiency, streamlined all these processes that used to be more difficult and made them like a really simple sort of line that goes from this to this.

ERK: And actually it is very complicated.

LB: Yeah. Part of what I've been writing about is how there has been this sort of reversal of things where in the beginning of the Internet, it was very informed by how things operated physically, and now it's so overpowering and it has totally taken over how we experience the world. Do you think design can help reflect on that? Or is it more a tool to these systems?

ERK: This is a weird answer. One night before the In Search of Personalized Time project where Damien Hirst, the artist, was having an exhibition in Chelsea and my friend and I were just walking around and talking about the paintings in the gallery. They were these paintings with a bunch of colors. And we were talking about how that painting is giant, you know, and exactly the size of a container in a container ship. We thought, these are some of the ways standards are creating things that we don't necessarily expect. So I guess design can kind of play a role in that. I don't know exactly how, but definitely in the online space, for example, designers are definitely playing that role, of course, with engineers. I think there's a power in there somehow. But I don't know exactly how.

LB: Is there a big difference for you between your client projects and your self-initiated ones?

ERK: I don't think they're very different, actually. Every project is a reflection on constraints. So without constraints, I don't know what to do. In my own projects there are constraints, including

the deadline for the grant. For example, for LACMA, we knew the institution. We knew the history of the grant. I mean, it was the inaugural grant. Those are constraints to our proposal. So in that sense, I think it's not very different for my personal projects. There's a reason why I'm doing it, right? And the reason is oftentimes a constraint. I need you to show something to someone or I just need to get this done before anything happens in my life, you know?

LB: That's interesting to think about, things emerging out of constraints. Are there any constraints that you're thinking about right now?

ERK: At this point, I'm interested in thinking about what I'm doing with Andrew. But then there's tons of other things that I wanted to do, but I've never had time. I want to find time to do that, but who knows when that's possible.

LB: Do you feel like your work has developed over time, or do things kind of arise depending on what's happening in that moment?

ERK: I think it's both, I'm always responding to previous work, I end up being very specific. You ask the same question to all different people, all these different designers, and they're going to give you different answers. So in that sense, I guess, I get to claim ownership when someone asks me, and that varies from project to project. Some projects allow me to do that in a greater sense than other projects. I guess over time, the goal or the expectation that I was having as I was running my design studio was that over time, I'd get to meet more people that are more in line with my interests, and then eventually I get to influence more of those decisions and then I can take greater ownership of the projects that I do. I don't know how successful it has been thus far, but those were the operating guidelines in a way.

LB: Thank you so much for this, it was really interesting to hear your views on design.

ERK: I hope I was helpful. Great to meet you, and good luck with your thesis.

Memory as a Battlefield

Texts to remember—and forget

This book contains three articles about historical memory debates happening in three different countries. In between the articles there is a running Foucault essay on history and memory. The publication responds primarily to the current conflict around Spain's Amnesty Law, which was passed in the 1970's as a way to move on from Spain's conflicted past. The law was beneficial for the country to leave its scars behind, but also left many people without closure or the ability to properly mourn lost relatives and the collective trauma they went through. In recent years, the issue has been taken up as a political weapon by left-wing parties. An understanding of memory as constantly transforming and affecting the way people relate to their environment emerges as one reads. The design plays with opacity and mobility as the two main representations of memory. Introduction pages are translucent, with words emerging and fading as one flips the pages, in a motion that emulates memories surfacing and fading. In the articles about specific countries, images disappear slowly, their trace lingering on. Paragraphs are broken up and displaced, moving in swift and random patterns and changing configurations. The Foucault essay, meanwhile, is printed on heavy, dark grey paper and has no images, representing the attempt to detach oneself from the ongoing course of history as one seeks to make sense of it through theoretical analysis.
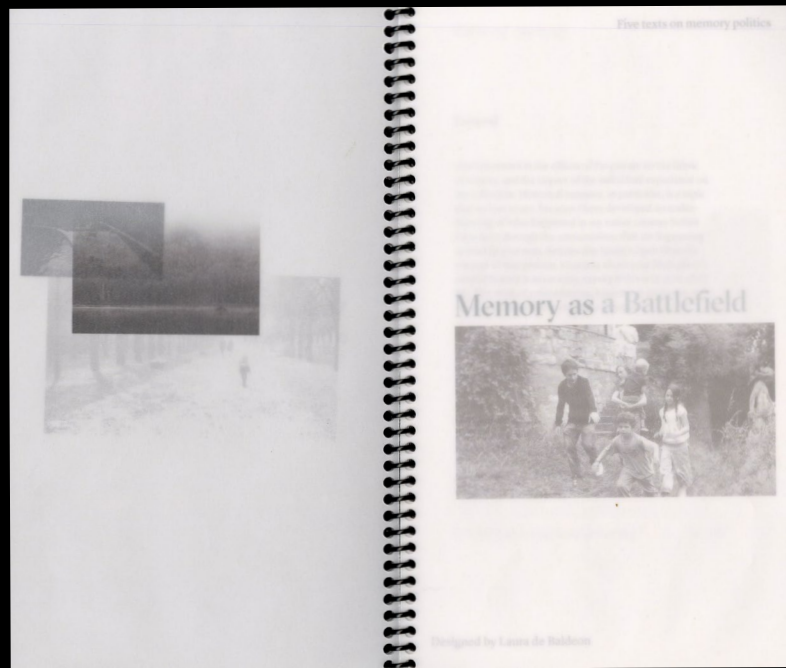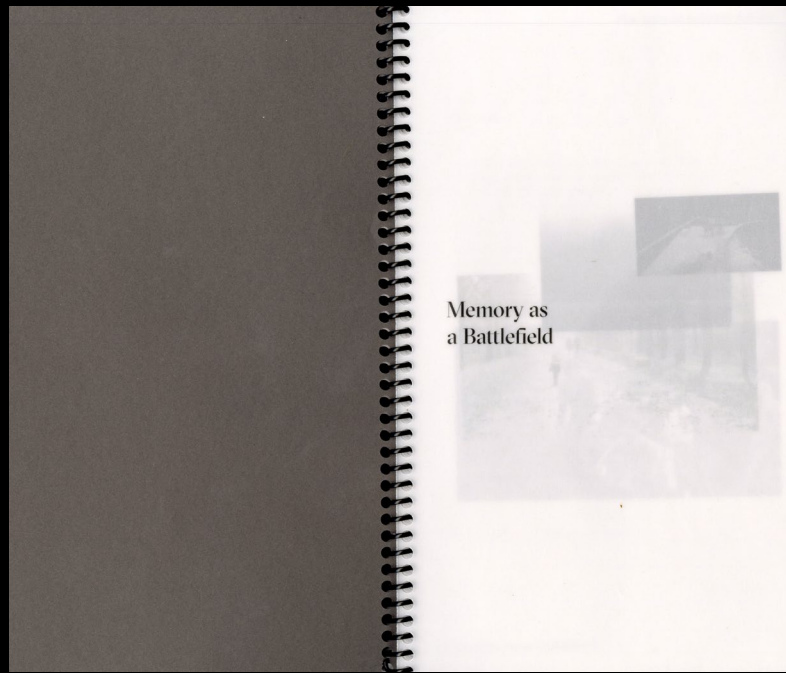
The front pages of the book are all printed in translucent paper, so that the content slowly emerges as the reader flips the pages. Long titles are split in half to highlight this effect.
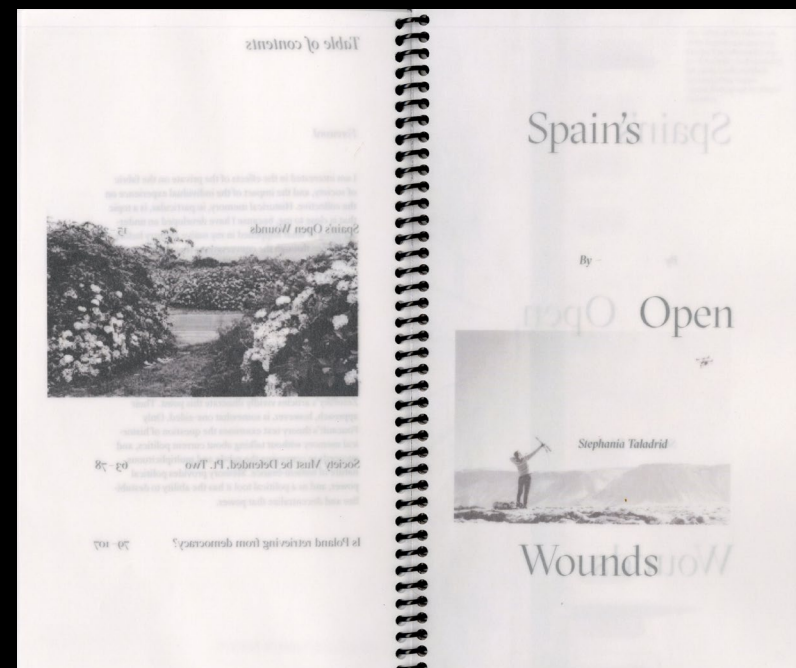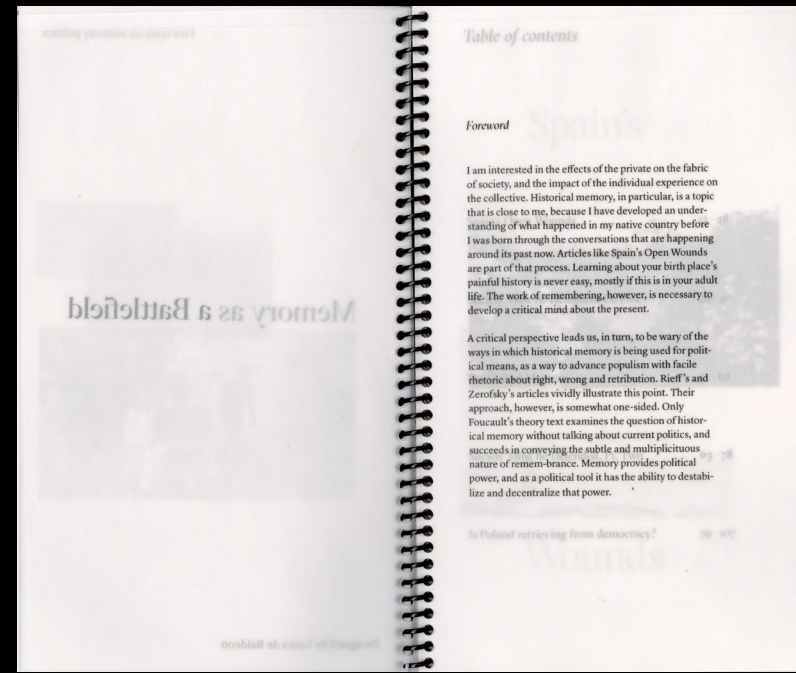
Article titles consist of two titles, in two different pages opposed to each other, so that there is a visible echo of the words.

Spain's

By

Open

Stephania Taladrid

Wounds

Society

By Michel Foucault

must be

Part One

defended
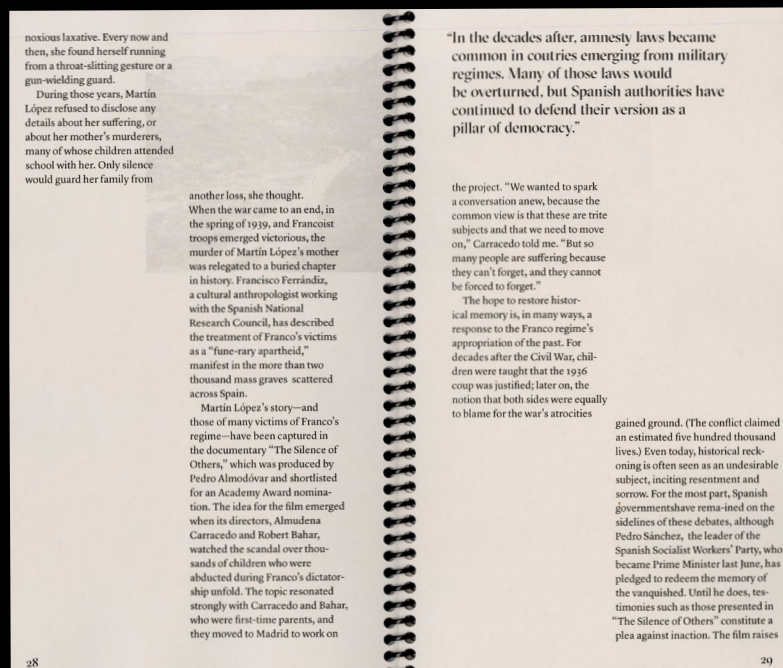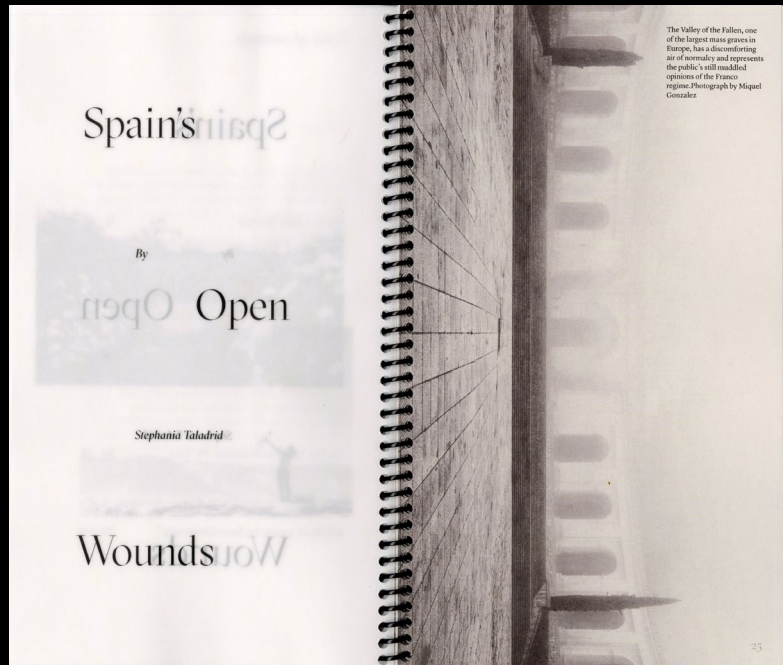
The front page of the articles is made up of
one large image. The paragraphs are split up
to reflect the way memory shifts and fractures.
In the spread above.
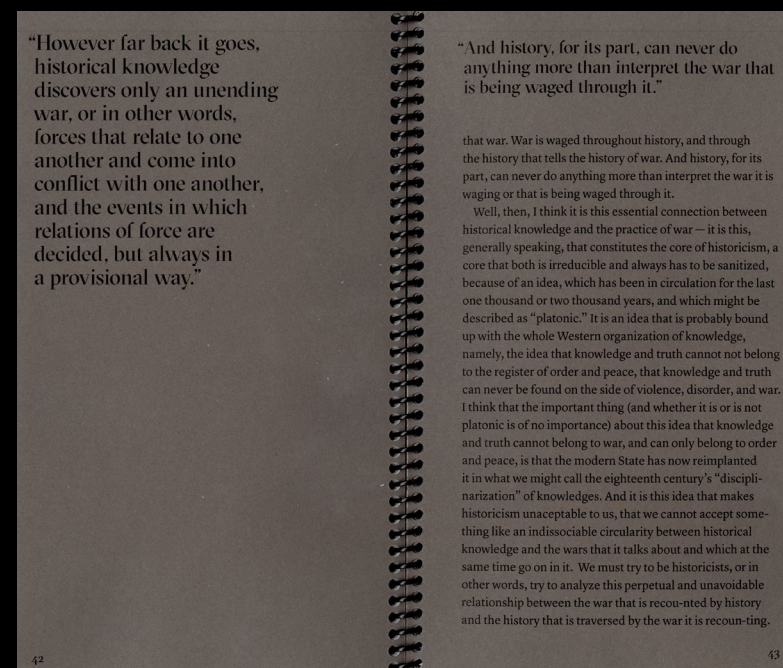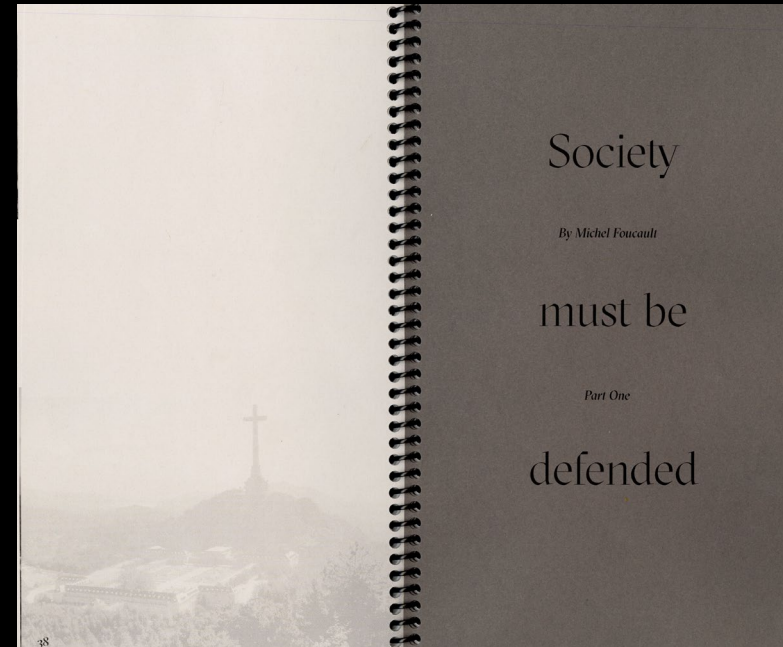
The Foucault article is printed in solid,
 dark grey paper, emphasizing the more
permanent nature of theoretical writing,
as opposed to the constantly changing
narrative of historical memory.

Some images are interspersed
between sections to allow some
room to reflect and transition
into the article.

Images in the articles leave an imprint on
subsequent pages, which slowly fades out.

La Movida
A dancing website

La Movida is a website about the Spanish 80's artistic movement La Movida or "The Shake-Up". La Movida was a culturally significant moment in Spanish history, when outside influences disrupted a Spain finally released from a forty-year dictatorship that had steeped it in poverty and cultural conservatism. Inspired by pop and punk, La Movida celebrated the spirit of the country's newfound political and sexual freedom.

Music is the main way that La Movida is remembered in Spain, and the website contains one iconic song for each of the six years when the bulk of the movement happe-

ned, so that users can experience the mood. The play button and title for each song are accompanied by images of the albums and zine covers that capture the aesthetic of the time. The website also contains a series of texts published during those years, pulled from both zines and magazines, mainly about the past dictatorship and the future of Spain. The images, music and texts work together to offer a window into the culture.

The site is structured around a six-year timeline in the center, and each year is connected to an article on the left and to a set of images and a song on the right. Users can

collapse the right or left-hand panels for a text-only or image-and-music-only experience. As they scroll down the site, the numbers indicating the year rotate as if they too were dancing. Other rotated elements, like the images and the article titles, and a bright color scheme point to the joyful and carefree attitude at the center of La Movida.

Madrid is the city of the future?

Everyone says Madrid this, Madrid that. All kinds of talk, from feverish to skeptical. What seems clear is the fact that this is a matter that we must partake in. We can't be indifferent.

That's why we went into the streets (in Madrid) and in the

When the Socialists took office in the late 1982 they were young, idealistic, charismatic. Felipe Gonzalez, the Prime Minister, a man with a mischievous grin who looked more at home In a wrinkled leather jacket than a business suit, seemed a mixture of James Dean and John F. Kennedy.

Now, a year and a half later, the charisma and the idealism are wearing thin, and even the youthfulness seems to be going. "Felipe" —he is still universally called by his first name—is showing the burdens of office and, among some of his followers, the price of political compromise.

One magazine, Cambio 16, summed up a sense of growing malaise on the left:"Alone and isolated in Moncloa, surrounded by technicians who are mostly Social Democrats instead of militant Socialists, Felipe is a young President who almost two years later has enormous bags under his eyes, an expression more and more grave, and a way of dressing that has more to do with the position he now occupies than with the young and youthful idea of change that swept Spain in its historic autumn."

The article was titled, significantly, "Is Felipe a Socialist?" The answer lay in the question itself; a few years ago, no one other than the Communists would have posed it.

And through it all, Mr. Gonzalez retains a considerable popularity among the general public. The roots of "desencanto" are not hard to find. The Socialists have made a gospel of pragmatism and moderation. Hemmed in by the exigencies of an

PLAY

81 82 83 84 84 85 86

Diary of a New Spain

BY ALASTAIR REID

The summer of 81 was an especially taut and anxious one, for the year had brought to the surface many hidden tensions. It was impossible to read any newspaper or magazine without coming across the logo "23F" studding the text. "23F" had come to stand in print for February 23, 1981, the day when Colonel Antonio Tejero Molina, at the head of over two hundred members of the Guardia Civil, burst into the Chamber of Deputies of the Spanish Cortes, in Madrid, just as the roll call was being taken to confirm Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo as the new Prime Minister, and held the members of parliament hostage for eighteen anxious hours. The high drama of the occasion was rather remarkably preserved, since one of the television cameras in the gallery went unspotted by the intruders; the videotape of the event was shown on Spanish television again and again and again, and by summer it was on sale to the public. Golpismo—the possibility of military coup, or golpe—was very much in the air; no fewer than three books on Tejero's abortive coup circulated in bookstores, and reverberations from the event dispelled the euphoria that had

81 82 83 84

↖ The text and the music/images are presented in a split screen, with a timeline in the middle. The year that corresponds to the section the user is on is highlighted. Titles and images are rotated and, as the user scrolls down, the year rotates also.

↑ The eyes in the corners can be clicked to close a section. In the top image, the eye on the top right corner of the site is closed because the user has closed the music/image section in order to read the text by itself

08 Alaska y
Dinarama
'A quién le
importa'

81

82

83

PLAY

80 Alaska y
Dinarama
'A quién le
importa'

81

82

83

Closing the text section shows the outlined
title of the song and the images associated
with that track (like the album cover).
Hovering on the title fills the letters so
that the text can be read more easily.

Postcards from Empty Space

A portal into the space of the machine

Poster. 92 x 167 in

This set of posters and postcards was made as a result of a "Tooling" project where I experimented with an structure sensor (a smaller version of a 3D scanner). Trying to disrupt its neat rendering of reality, I placed the sensor in front of mirrors. This disoriented the tool because, while it tried to map the reflected space, it had inaccurate and incomplete information to do so. The result was a 3D rendering of a room that looked to be in the process of decomposing. I was

intrigued by this surreal space that had been essentially invented by the machine, since it volume out of what was only
a flat image.

In the marketing materials of the structure sensor, the manufacturing company mentioned that the scans could be used as mementos, just like photographs. I liked thinking of the rendered, degraded spaces as memories of a place that didn't exist, and made two large scale

posters that superimposed topographic and longitude/ latitude grids on the scan images as a way of "charting" this new territory.

The posters were later reconceived as postcards. Oftentimes we receive postcards of places we have never been to, and they serve to create an image of that place in our minds. The postcards of this project, as representations of a space made up by the structure sensor, act as an access point to its "interior world," and as an invitation to imagine what this world might be like.

This project is an exploration of the act of "remembering" things that we've never actually experienced. In an article for the New Yorker published on May 6, 2021, titled [The Strange, Soothing World of Instagram's Computer-Generated Interiors](#), technology writer Anna Wiener speaks of the rise of "render-porn," interior spaces created by rendering artists that don't actually exist, but which look very realistic (people often ask to rent them). These images are full of visual signifiers of sophistication and luxury, and as such serve as escapist recreation. In contrast, [Postcards from Empty Space](#) look nothing like spaces, even though they technically portray a real place. Rather than

inviting, they suggest a cold, yet mesmerizing, world, one that challenges our willingness to consume images of locations we consider desirable as a vessel for escapist dreams, stripping them of their history or cultural and geopolitical significance.
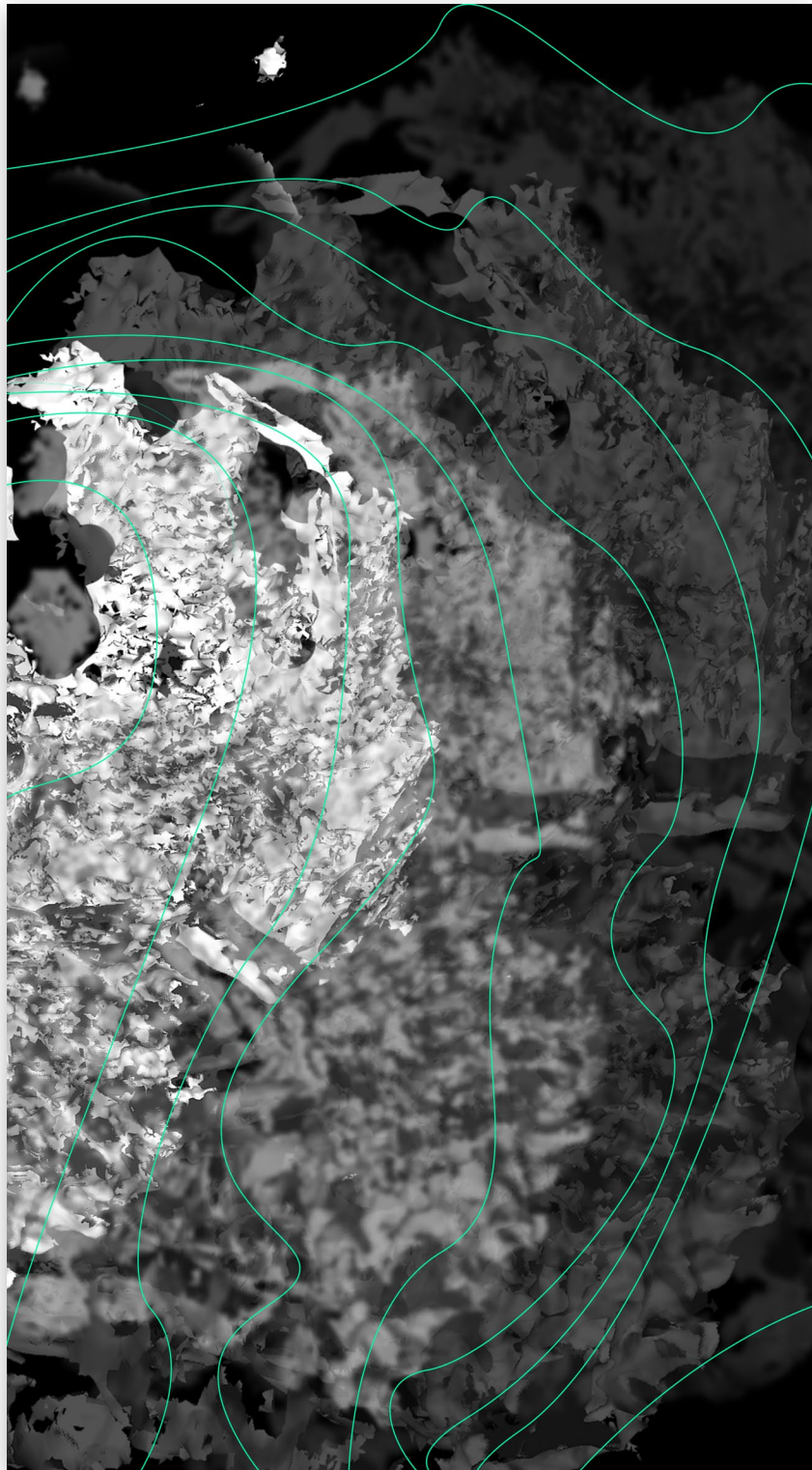
These postcards ask us to consider the kinds of worlds that we desire, imagine, and create stories about. How can technology prompt us to see our environment anew, as a fertile ground with flaws and possibilities?
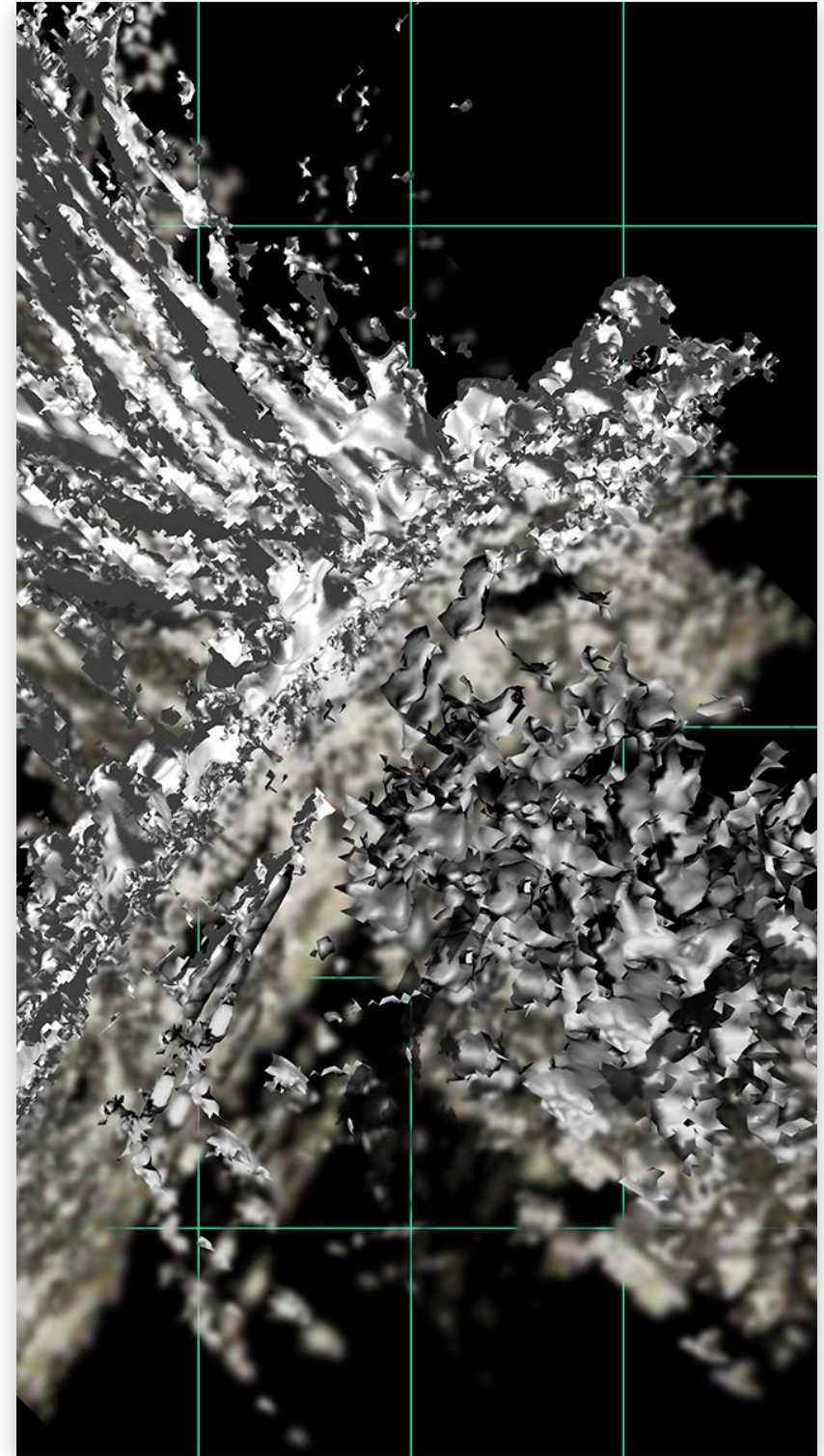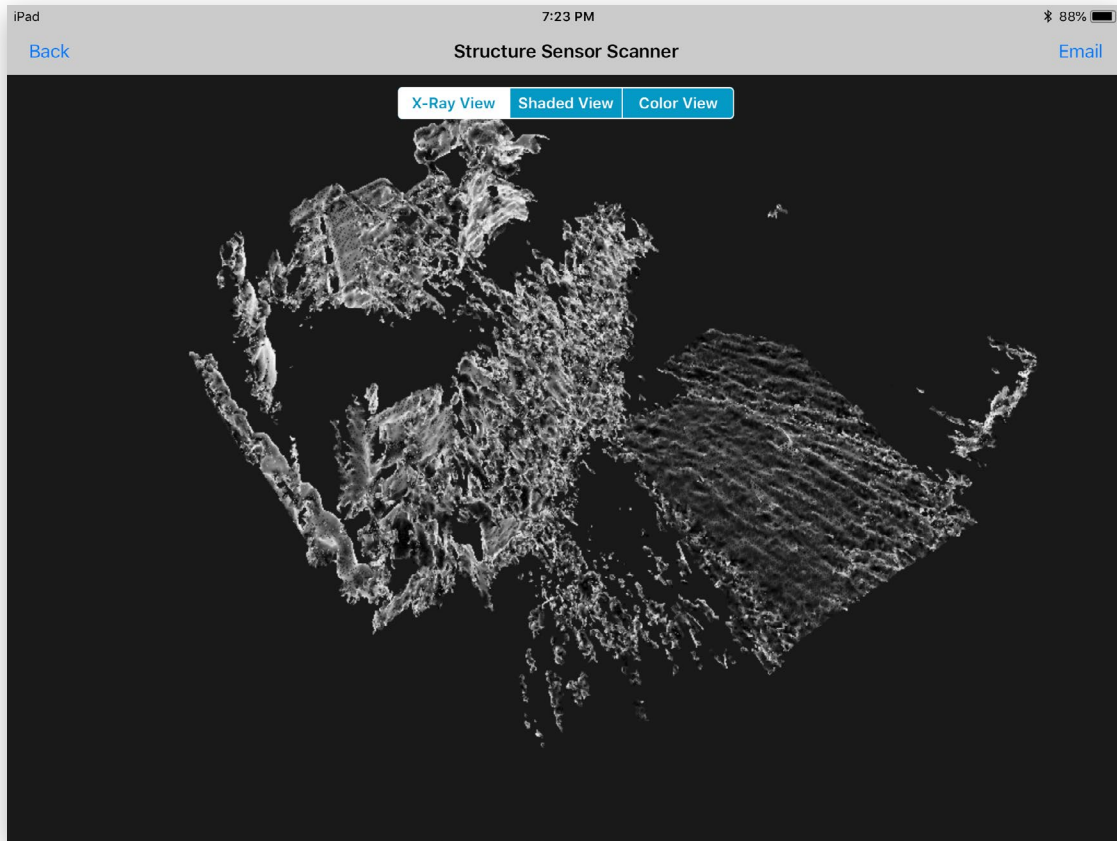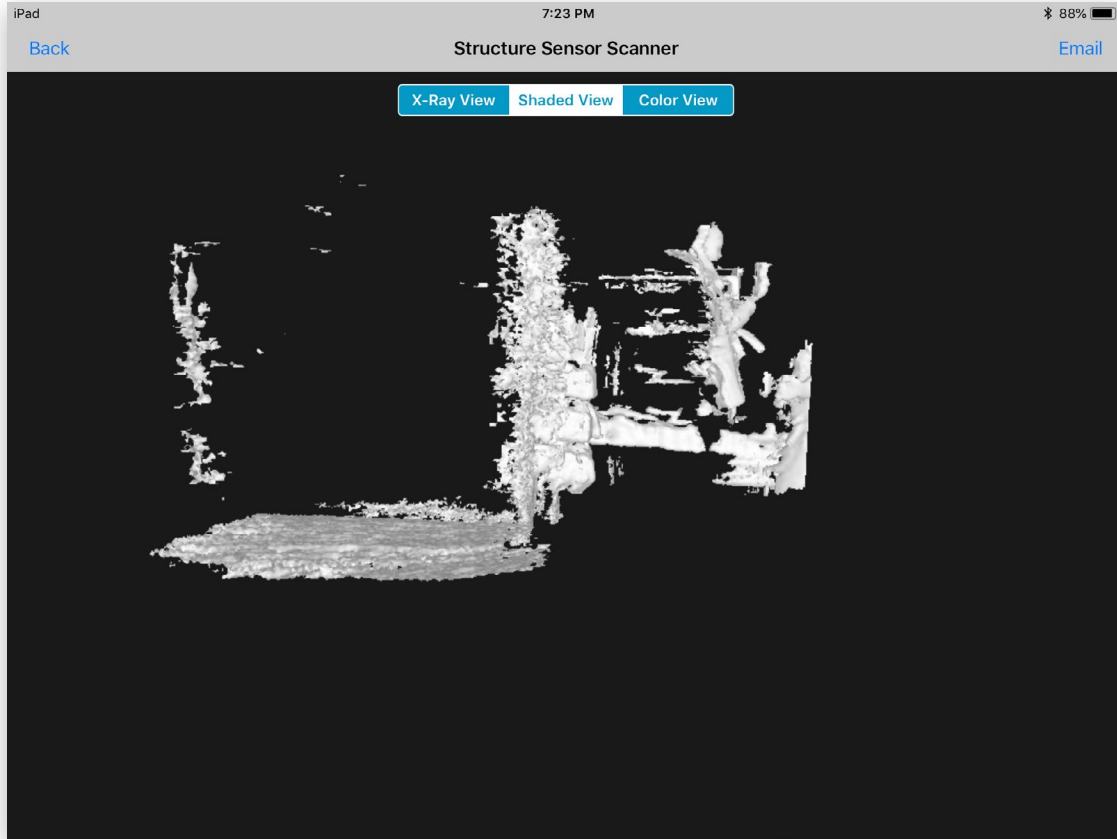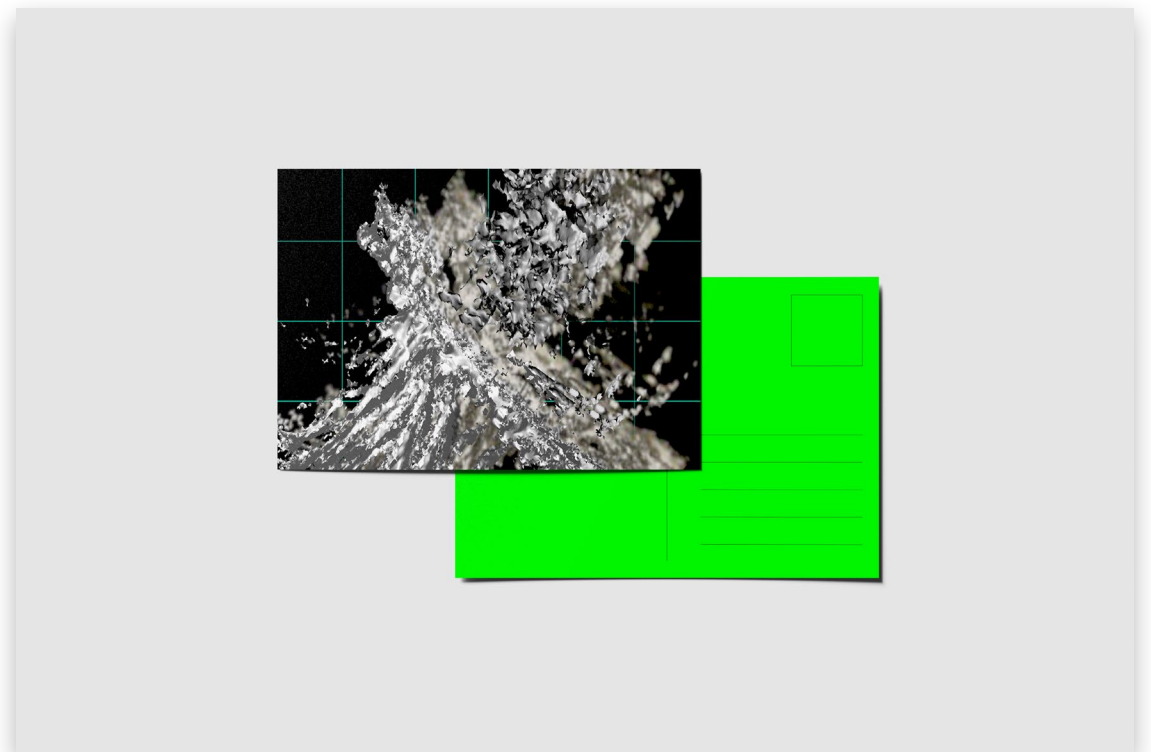
↖ The images created by the structure
sensor after using it on a mirror.

↑ A poster featuring a fragment of
scanned room superimposed on a grid.

A poster showing a piece of another
room and a topographic grid overlaid
on top, mapping it.

Postcards created out of
the posters.

Interview with Laura Kurgan

A conversation about data, activism and disoriented discovery

Laura Baldeon: Hi! Thanks so much for joining me, nice to meet you.

Laura Kurgan: Nice to meet you!

LB: I'll start by introducing myself. I'm doing an MFA at RISD in Graphic Design. I went to Barnard for college and studied comparative literature there, and then I worked in arts administration before coming here. During my time at RISD I've become really interested in maps and urbanism and urban data. I read a lot of your work and looked at what you've done at the Center for Spatial Research, and I was really excited to talk to you about some of the ideas in there. My first question was about maps and the way that you deconstruct them in your projects and writing. Reading about the socio-political issues that maps deal with was really fascinating to me, and it has really changed my thinking around them. So how did you first become interested in mapping and maps?

LK: That's a good question. Um, I'm trained in architecture, and spatial thinking is at the bottom of everything, so that's the underpinning of everything I do. When I graduated from architecture school, in the late 80s, I graduated into a recession. Instead of working in architecture, I ended up working in a museum design company. We did a lot of exhibits and natural history museums, things like that. The name of the company was Ralph Appelbaum and it was my first job out of architecture school. I was introduced to working on computers...you had to kind of learn as you went. But then I read this article

about GPS, before it was even made operational there for use by anyone in the public. It was very odd that there were all these satellites going around the world there to make these maps. The technology itself didn't understand anything about space, space was just sort of hardwired into the technology. That contradiction got me started on the whole thing. So while everybody else was really interested in the Web and in new technologies of communication and images and text, I became obsessed with maps and mapping, but from a very artistic, humanities oriented perspective and very critical of the technology that was being deployed. And then that whole world grew around me.

LB: I find it so interesting that you became interested in this technology and now it's so widespread and we use it every day, all the time. Does your relationship with GPS affect the way that you use contemporary tools that rely on it?

LK: I mean, when GPS was first declassified, the promise was that it would become the next utility, and it did, so I kind of followed that development. The next big shift was in 2005 when Google Earth was launched, and the Web became the geospatial web. Cyberspace now was inside of the computer; you could be anything inside the computer. Now really there are so many things that are directed by your phone to physical space, cyberspace is no longer an escape from actual space where you can be, you know, anything you want to be. Now, there's so much

overlap between social media, your iPhone, and everybody's gathering information about you. Society is divided by a polarization caused by advertising and social media. It's just really hard to combat now. It wasn't like that in the early 90s.

LB: In Close Up at a Distance, you refer to maps as netherland spaces. You associate them to information warfare and violence, and I think that's so accurate. In the ↰Homophily project, what was so interesting to me was that it helped to contextualize the Internet as part of a wider network that reflects and in some cases amplifies how things are organized in other spheres of life. But at the same time, I think I tend to see it as kind of cordoned off from my physical existence. So how do you think cyberspace affects our physical reality? I think in one of your panels you showed a very interesting circle showing how data affects design which affects people.

LK: ...kind of affects policy, the built environment. Yeah, that's a vicious circle. I mean, I think lately there are direct relationships, you know, I think the polarized world is there to describe the default choices we make about where to live and where to go to school and if we have the means to make those choices right. So New York and Rhode Island are very democratic spaces, whereas when you go to certain parts of rural America, people are left out of those. I don't know, it's so hard to know, it's the chicken versus the egg. But the polarization is clear and our voting patterns and what we choose to
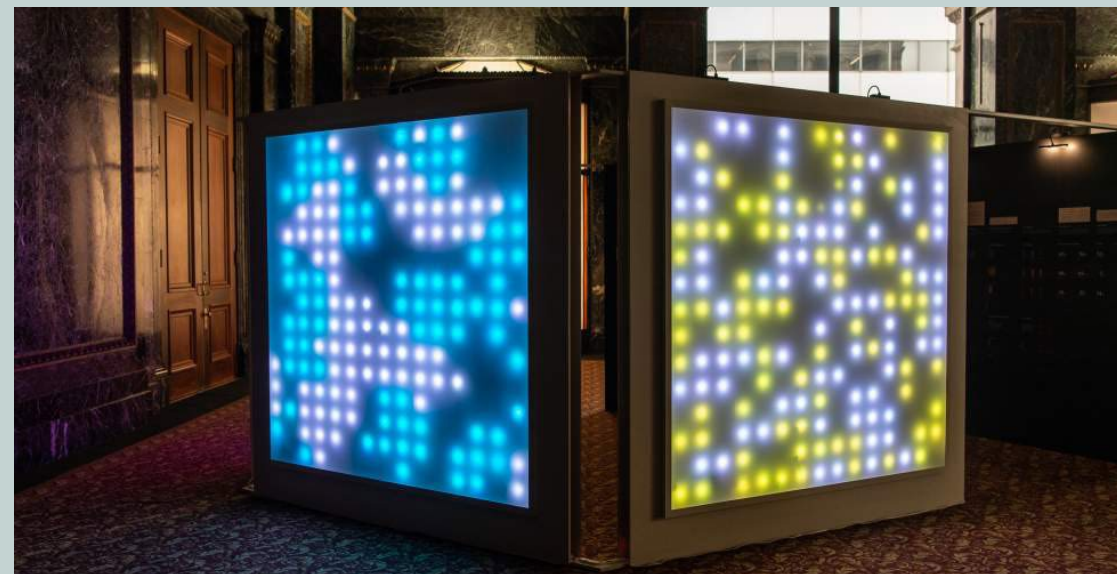
eat and all kinds of choices that we make aren't so much choices as determined by how much money we have or where we grew up or what zip code we live in. And that's something we have to try and combat.

LB: Yes, voting pattern maps are crazy in how predictable they are. It's all based on geography, which kind of undermines the whole idea that it's social media that's making this happen, rather than just the specific conditions of living in a rural area.

LK: I mean, I do think social media has taken advantage of knowing how people vote to exacerbate and to reinforce it. So direct advertising and all of that, that happens through Facebook, and those kinds of channels really do reinforce existing patterns. There are ways in which we have to think about what a new public digital infrastructure might be in opposition to the privatization that has taken place. And I think that's so much of the base of what has happened in the US.

LB: I've been reading a lot about global networks, and I have encountered a lot of writing about activism there, because activism becomes really difficult when the power that you're fighting against is invisible and spread out. In your writing, you've defined your projects as being at the intersection of art, architecture, activism and geography. How do you see your work within an activist framework?

LK: I think if you ask me what I'm going to be working on in the next 10 years, that's it, you know, because I think that

This installation for the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial visualized the impact of the notion of homophily in both housing and social media.

the last year has taught us that we really need to come up with new strategies for that. In fact, I'm starting a new program at Columbia called Computational Design Practices, which is going to be a one year program and it's going to focus specifically on how we use technology in different ways than it's been defined today. It's really going to try and bring together activism, geography and architecture and to think about new tools. The goal is to rethink how we have defined space, and perhaps come up with some alternate directions or counter cartographies that help us reimagine new ways of thinking and new tools for thinking. So because we really do build our world through the tools that we use. And that's so much what we're trained for in architecture school and graphic design school. I think that's also very much part of the work that I do, which is located in architecture, not in computer science or in information science. So that really defines certain layers of how we approach things. What are you going to do when you graduate?

LB: I'm not sure, but I want to make sure to think about it strategically. This program sounds very interesting. How is the curriculum for this program set up, and are you bringing a lot of different disciplines into it?

LK: Well, it's going to be based in the architecture school and it's going to cross disciplines between urban planning, preservation, architecture and even real estate and then make bridges to journalism or to data science and

things like that. So it'll use Columbia as the whole university. But it's really focused on spanning scales, first, within architecture; the scale of the brick or the scale of the planet. Your last project is design and action, so you really have to put something in the world in some way or propose something for the world. The curriculum will be published next July. I'm very excited about it because it'll allow me to take all this research that I've done and create a program around it.

LB: It sounds like a great natural progression to how you're describing your journey, becoming interested in GPS and then this work developing around that.

LK: Right. So now it's come to the GPS and social media, and how they've all come together in this really badly and tangled mess. So the question is how you untangle it.

LB: Talking about interdisciplinary research work, I was wondering about your exhibition design and about the role design plays in the development of your projects. How do you go about deciding the design is going to be? A lot of your installations have a particular design voice, I would say.

LK: What would you say about the design voice?

LB: Well, just looking at the homophily panels with the dots, or another project I was looking at about migration in ←Colombia where there was a very interesting timeline with these dots

that are stacked up. I would say the abstraction of the content is distinct.

LK: People often ask me about that, that's why I asked you what you thought. That's a nice interpretation. But, you know, I think it's funny, once when I gave a job talk somebody asked me if this was my first show. It was a very aggressive question. They asked, so what are you going to do, move dots for the rest of your life? I said, no, I'm going to start designing buildings and things like that. And then it turned out that I'm moving dots around for the rest of my life, so that there is an aesthetic voice and it's always really trying to deal with the limit of whatever the data is that you're describing to a person as a point or a pixel, which has a resolution or a time frame and a distinct beginning. I always like working with those as minimal units. There is a level of abstraction, which I think I would like to go beyond also in the next 10 years and also to work on the ground and do field work. I'm really starting to get interested in that as well.

LB: I read an interview where you talked about how your research is not only based on satellite imagery, but it's always accompanied by, maybe not field work always, but other kinds of research. Could you explain a little bit more about that?

LK: Most of the time we form collaborative teams, so it's working with bringing a spatial understanding to another discipline, whether it's public health or inca-rceration or climate, etc. We're very methods based, but always dealing with

urgent issues and counter catastrophes and critical data studies, so I work by forming collaborations. And it's oftentimes people who get along or people, you know, nowadays people actually come to the center to ask us to collaborate. There's no single answer to that question.

LB: I was very interested in the way that you describe your ←Million Dollar Block project and how you use data that is usually not interpreted in a geographic way and mapped it. Is that how you approach the beginning of your projects, by mapping data that's not usually mapped to see if there are correlations that come that?

LK: Yeah, I mean, I think that the basic underlying premise of a lot of the work that we do is using data that's generated for one reason, for another reason, whether that's the satellite imagery used for surveillance or the data used to track incarcerated people through the criminal justice system. Most of the time we don't make data, although maybe that's something we will start doing. The field work part that we all need to start doing now is creating new data. But we've always sort of thought about the inadvertent consequences of data; data can always be used for good and for bad.

LB: I was just thinking that most data stems from geography, because it's collected from a geographic location and transmitted geographically, so it makes sense to root data in geography. We've been talking a little bit about how you identify new projects, but I
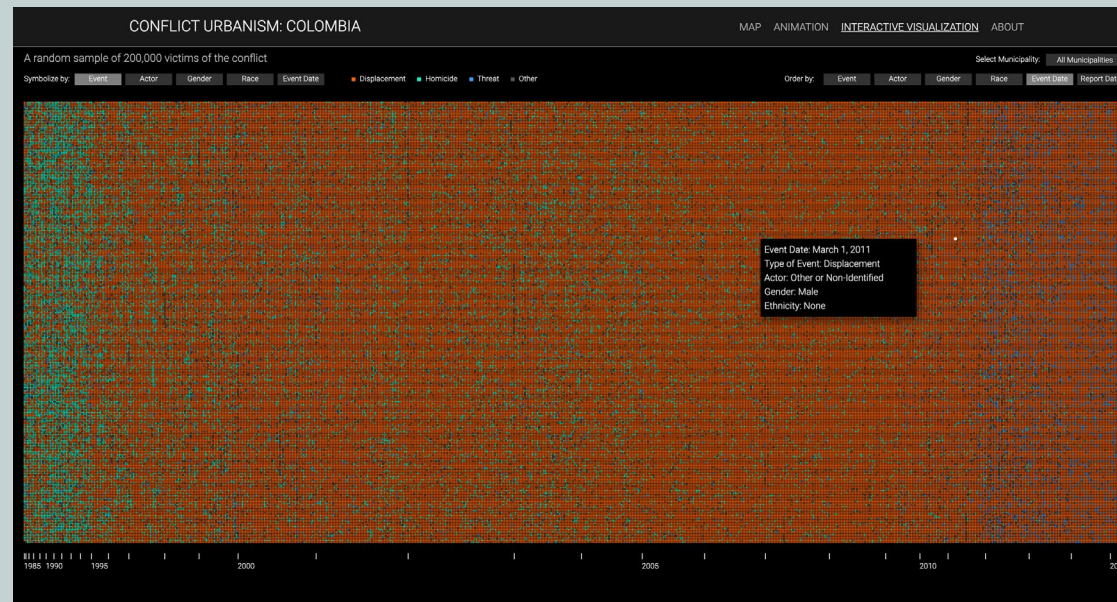
A visualization of victims of
displacement in Colombia over
the past thirty years.

The red dots of these maps show a
high number of incarcerated people.
The dots are concentrated in certain
areas and blocks. The map below
shows the money the city spent in
incarcerting these people.

Maps showing urban change and
architectural deterioration
in Aleppo.

wanted to hear more about that. Do you constantly take on new research and then move forward with a particular aspect of it, or do you identify a line of inquiry and then do all the work related to that?

LK: Our line of inquiry over the last seven years has been conflict, urbanism and spatial inequality. That started with the war in ←Aleppo, which was going on as we were starting the project, and then it sort of evolved into a whole series of collaborations because it was through the Mellon grants that we had. But now that that's over, we have to start initiating a whole bunch of new projects. And this past year, of course, we've been doing a lot of work on Covid. So, you know, I think we always take on projects about issues related to social justice, climate spatial inequality, mass incarceration and all those things that we're interested in.

LB: Veering off topic a little bit, I am very interested in the topic of disorientation, and in the beginning I was associating it to information overload, but you attach it to the idea of the GPS in a way that's really interesting. Could you talk a little bit more about your thinking on GPS and orientation?

LK: Well, I think the premise is that maps are supposed to orient people, but I think you learn things actually when you're disoriented and when you allow yourself to get lost. The premise of my very first projects was getting lost, that it's a good thing to get lost. That disorientation is an OK state of being. I don't mind that state

of disorientation, and I think it's not a bad kind of existential mode of being, to not understand everything and to find your way through a series of things.

LB: I was interested in the idea that GPS, even though it does give you like one location for yourself, is made up of a lot of fragmentary data that needs to be kind of put together. You sort of touched on the idea that data is both good and bad. How do you approach that ambiguity in your exhibitions?

LK: I try to highlight the ambiguity, either to show how it was collected for bad reasons and we're using it for alternative purposes or that it's incomplete...mostly incomplete and not the final answer to anything. Yes, I always try to bring out the ambiguity and data.

LB: Ok, well, thank you so much for joining me! It was so interesting to discuss these ideas with you, I really appreciate it.

LK: Thanks, have a great day! Nice to meet you.

LB: You too! Thanks so much for everything.

Root Legacy
A reflection on land, legacy and desire

16 spreads in a collaborative book project

Root Legacy is a sixteen page narrative that navigates the tension between a public inheritance based on domination and the emotional connection to our lived environment. A Providence square known for slave trading becomes a site to remember a lost family member upon superimposing two maps, and a visit to a neighborhood reveals a story about a family of trees that reproduce without regard for property limits. Each spread is titled after a term from Roland Barthes's A Lover's Discourse, which analyzes the tension between love and desire, as well as the power dynamics involved in them, in order to reference the underlying desire for continuity involved in legacy projects and the purchase of property. Official and property maps are opposed to natural ones: Nature doesn't follow man-drawn borders, offering instead alternate ways of behaving in space that evidence the artifice of our own delineations. It travels through unofficial channels, making a space that was previously claimed its own. The journey featured in the spreads is one of letting go and an encouragement to form emotional attachments to our surroundings, starting with the will to possess and ending with the willingness to be engulfed. The images of roots and vegetation that occupy the background are a reminder of nature's ever-present, powerful force.

The text throughout the spreads reads the following:

"I started the Atlas project at the John D. Rockefeller Library — Brown's main library — looking for books that caught my attention. The name of the library became a point of reflection when I selected a tome about wealth, gender and inheritance with a chapter on the Rockefeller family. Like passing on wealth, attaching a family name to a building or to land is part of an effort to grow a legacy. When it comes to this kind of legacy-building, however, the inheritors are not the family, but the people. We 'inherit' the spaces that we move through, and the history of their name carries meaning. That meaning might affect what we consider good or worthy. It might also have determined who currently uses a space, how they use it, and what's around it. Our personal histories then intersect with that inherited repository of memory.The linguistic relationship between inheritance (personal and cultural) and territory brought to my mind a book called A Lover's Discourse by Roland Barthes, which poetically analyzes how we speak, write about and refer to love. In it, there is this quote: "Language has long posited the equivalence of love and war: In both cases it is a matter of conquering, ravishing, capturing." Inheritance is, in many of its forms, a linguistic capture and transferral of property, underwritten by a desire for continuity. In these ways it ressembles love, or war, and I thought it would be interesting to reframe this project about linguistic posession through the lens of A Lover's Discourse. I then assigned each spread a term explored in the book. These titles are poetic and meant to allow room for interpretation, signalling subtly at the language of desire."
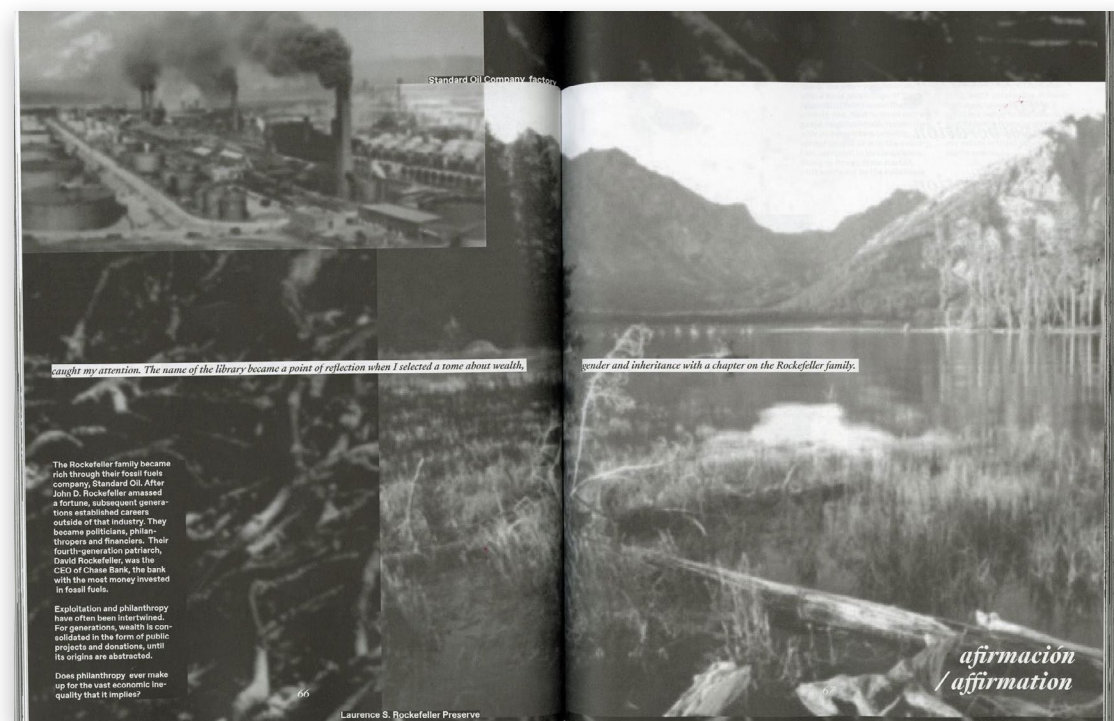
deseo de poseer / will-to-possess

Rockefeller Center

I started the Atlas project at the John D. Rockefeller Library — Brown's main library — looking for books that

Rockefeller State Reserve

65

Standard Oil Company factory

caught my attention. The name of the library became a point of reflection when I selected a tome about wealth,

...ynder and inheritance with a chapter on the Rockefeller family.

The Rockefeller family became rich through their fossil fuels company, Standard Oil. After John D. Rockefeller amassed a fortune, subsequent generations established careers outside of that industry. They became politicians, philanthropers and financiers. Their fourth-generation patriarch, David Rockefeller, was the CEO of Chase Bank, the bank with the most money invested in fossil fuels.

Exploitation and philanthropy have often been intertwined. For generations, wealth is consolidated in the form of public projects and donations, until its origins are abstracted.

Does philanthropy ever make up for the vast economic inequality that it implies?

Laurence S. Rockefeller Preserve

afirmación / affirmation

66

These spreads show lands owned by the Rockefellers, and the Standard Oil Company, and featuring my own writing. A description of the project runs through the spreads, on a white background.

eco
/ reverberation
eco
/ reverberation
eco
/ reverberation
eco
/ reverberation
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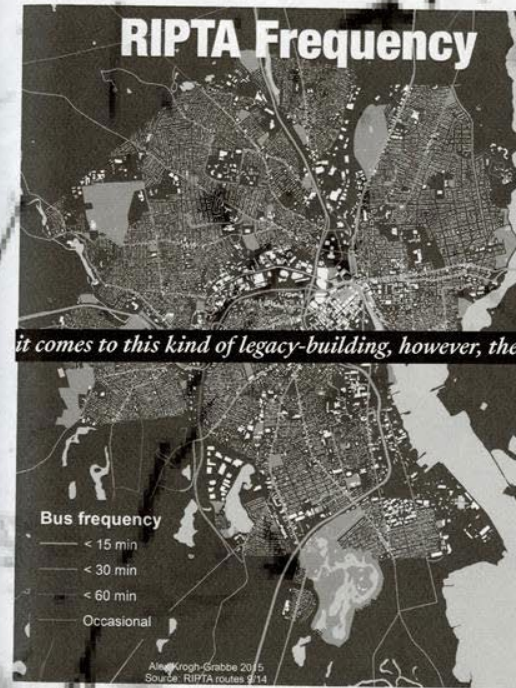Like passing on wealth, attaching a family name to a building or to land is part of an effort to grow a legacy. When
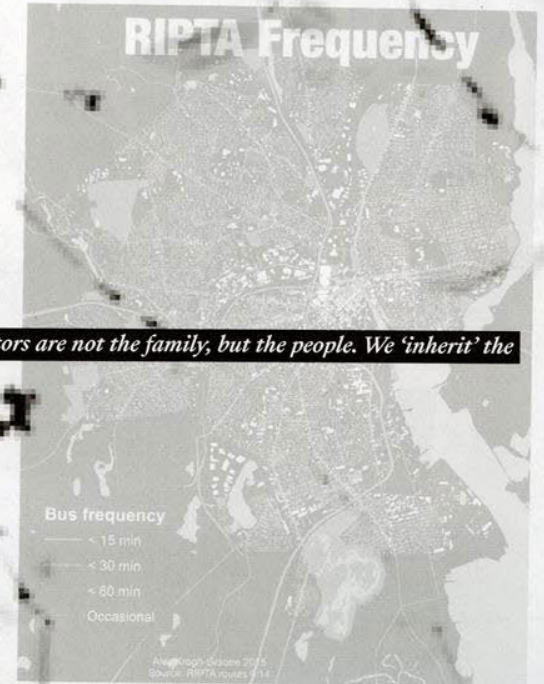
68

Structures of power reverberate. The makeup of Providence is a testament to the segregation that inequality produces. The city is one of the poorest in America, with a large percentage of the population living under the poverty line. Next to these segregated neighborhoods, universities with an exhorbitant pricetag attract people all over the country. I am complicit in this imbalance. Going to Ocean State Job Lot, I felt saddened by the nakedness of the streets, and depressed by the megastores full of crap—a monument to frenetic capitalism. It seemed like this plant outside was the only thing alive, something worth purchasing. It made me happy to see it, the way it made me happy to see trees in the middle of the financial district in New York. I always felt amazed to see nature in these constructed, sterile spaces.

RIPTA Frequency

RIPTA Frequency

Bus frequency
— < 15 min
— < 30 min
— < 60 min
Occasional

Alex Krogh-Grabbe 2015
Source: RIPTA routes 9/14

it comes to this kind of legacy-building, however, the inheritors are not the family, but the people. We 'inherit' the

Bus frequency
< 15 min
< 30 min
< 60 min
Occasional

Providence

Socialist party principles

3. The extension of the public domain to include mines, quarries, oil wells, forests and water power.
4. The collective ownership of land whenever practicable, and in cases where such ownership is impracticable, the appropriation by taxation of the annual rental value of all land held for speculation exploitation.

69

This spread opposing the effect of wealth on a city in
the form of a bus map to nature (in the form of a plant)

This spread shows stills from a video
fo me doing a series of stretching
exercises that my mom taught me,
representing the way our history
influences our behavior.

A spread superimposing a map of
Providence to that of the city where
my grandfather is buried, in order
to find the part of Providence that
overlaps with his grave so that I
can visit it.

"Neither oblivi-
on nor resurrec-
tion; simply the
exhausting lure
of memory."

An old image of Market Square

The intersection between a physical place, Market Square, and a virtual one, my grandfather's burial site.

called A Lover's Discourse by Roland Barthes, which poetically analyzes how we speak, write about and refer to

love. In it, there is this quote: "Language has long posited the equivalence of love and war: In both cases it is a

El Remedio

My grandfather's burial site was translated, in the Providence map, to Market Square—a former slave trading site. Learning about this, I felt conflicted. My grandfather cared greatly about African-American culture and would have hated to be associated with such a place. This exercise felt like an injustice to him. At the same time, it proved my point to have projected my own background into a place with a loaded, unjust history. It illustrates how the collective interesects with the personal,and the political with the emotional, in the spaces we inhabit. There isn't anywhere that's new, a place where we can just project ourselves into. Taking into account a place's past, even as you mold it to your current reality, is an essential exercise against colonialism.

75

memoria
/ remembrance

A spread superimposing the Providence site that represents my
grandpa's cemetery and the actual location where he is buried.

Another way of moving in a space is by describing it to our loved ones, if they are not there. Living far away from your family is difficult, but if they've never seen the place where you live, that can create an additional distance between you. The exercise of sitting and writing these postcards allowed me to realize how much I want my family to visit me here and understand what my life looks like these days. The feeling of wanting to connect with someone by sharing the place that you move through every day can also be translated to a new appreciation for the lived environment—a realization of what makes it worth sharing, or unique. In this sense, loving people can lead us to appreciate what's around us.

matter of conquering, ravishing, capturing." Inheritance is, in many of its forms, a linguistic capture and transfer

al of property, underwritten by a desire for continuity. In these ways it ressembles love, or war, and I thought it

te-quiero / I-love-you

"Here and there, on the trees, some leaves remain. And I often stand deep in thought before them. I contemplate a leaf and attach my hope to it."

*would be interesting to reframe this project about linguistic posession through the lens of A Lover's Discourse. I th
*

assigned each spread a term explored in the book. These titles are poetic and meant to allow room for interpretation,

Spreads of nature and trees, featuring a story about a tree that grew naturally in a yard from a tree down the street.

An unnamed park

signalling subtly at the language of desire.

s'abimer / to be engulfed
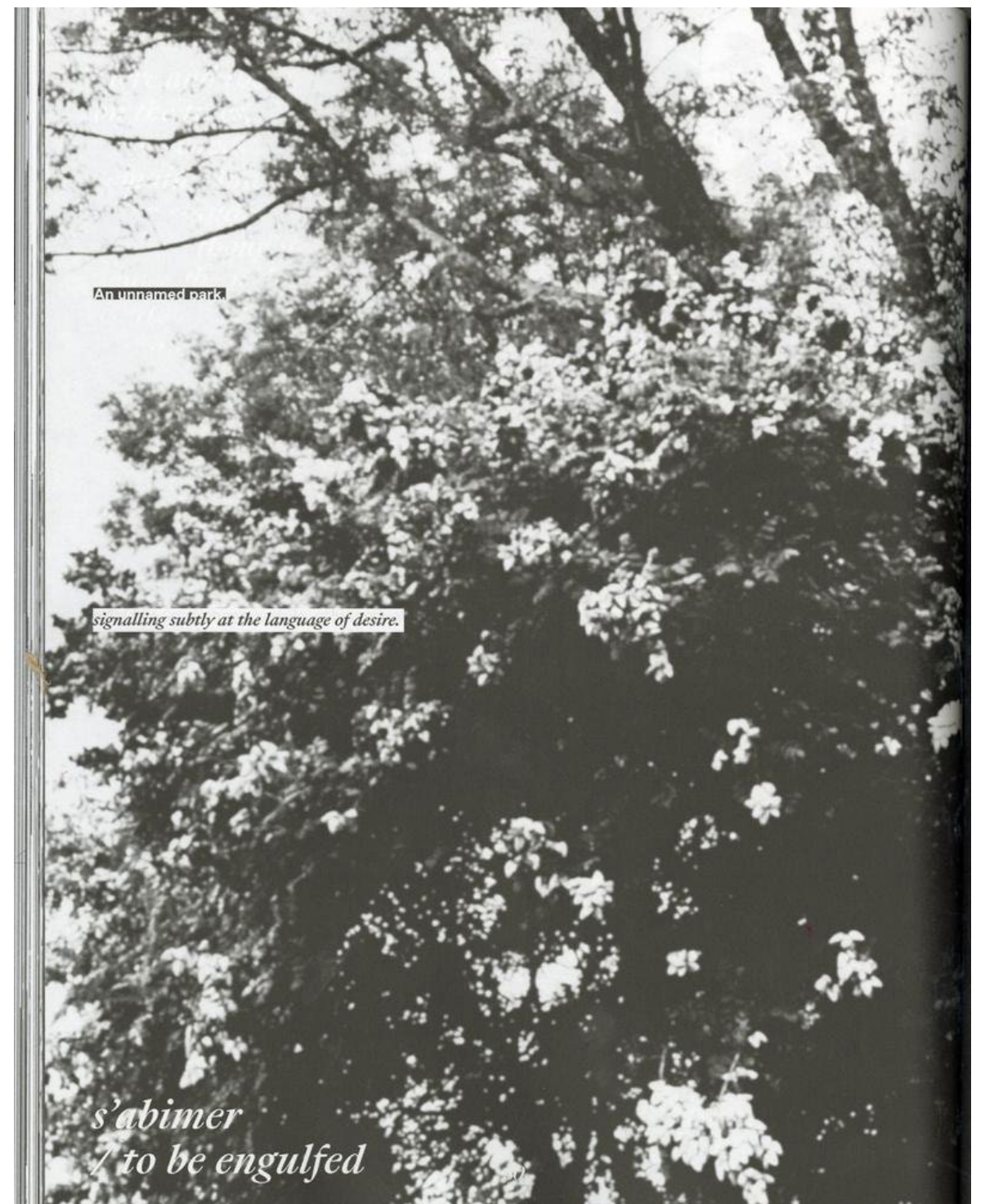
Book of Hours
A subjective way to track time.

Book of Hours is both a tool for subjective timekeeping in isolation and a record of quarantine during the coronavirus. Responding to the feeling of being sheltered as the world spun out of control, I recorded my response to a question every hour from 9am to 8pm for two weeks, as a way to reflect on our new isolated existence. Isolating caused an increased awareness of my physicality, my habits, and the rhythms of the nature around me. For this reason, some of the questions centered around my routine, such as "How much time did you spend contemplating life after waking up?" while others focused on my perception, like "How much wind do you feel coming through the window?" or "How cold are your hands and feet?" Others, such as "What's something you read today that gave you pause?" asked me to reflect on the only access I had to the outside world: the internet. Ultimately, all of the questions address the idea of filtering at a time when we built barriers, weighing what was left inside, and what managed to enter. This was all the more pressing at a time of heightened political polarization and information bubbles. Like all in all collections, the question of what is left out hangs overhead

Responding to telecommunication devices as the main pipeline of content that managed to breach the filter of the house, I constructed a website that both allowed me to customize how I entered the response to the questions, and forced me to enter them at the right time: each question has a different page within the website, and this page only displays the input field if it's the right time of the day (for instance, a question about something that gave me comfort could only be answered in the evening). Book of Hours asks for continuous attention without participating in the economic model of mainstream online tools that depend on collecting data from their users. At a time when personal data was causing the value of online companies to skyrocket, since the amount of time being spent on their online services increased, this website represents an exit from that system and At a time when personal data was causing the value of online companies to skyrocket, since the amount of time being spent on their online services increased, this website represents an attempt to construct an alternative dataset that highlights the subjective process of collecting, remembering and displaying data.

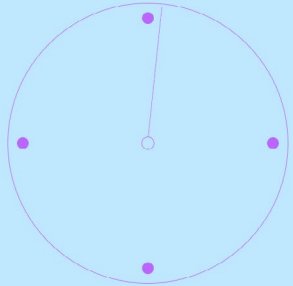The book of hours was a collection of prayers and psalms used during the middle ages. The name came from the fact that they all contained the Hours of Virgin Mary, which were to be made during the eight canonical hours of the day, which mark the day according to prayers. This project takes its name from these books because, like the book of hours, it assigns content to different times. Unlike the book, however, this book of hours is made out of a personalized collection, one that emphasizes the disorder and messiness of perception rather than encouraging order and rigidity.

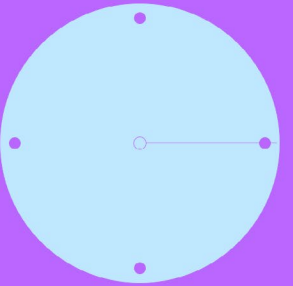|	
9:00	Contemplation
10:00	Interpretation
11:00	Anxiety
12:00	Creativity
13:00	Vitality
14:00	Orientation
15:00	Nourishment
16:00	Comfort
17:00	Focus
18:00	Projection
19:00	Tranquility
20:00	Escape

Book
of
Hours

11:47:39
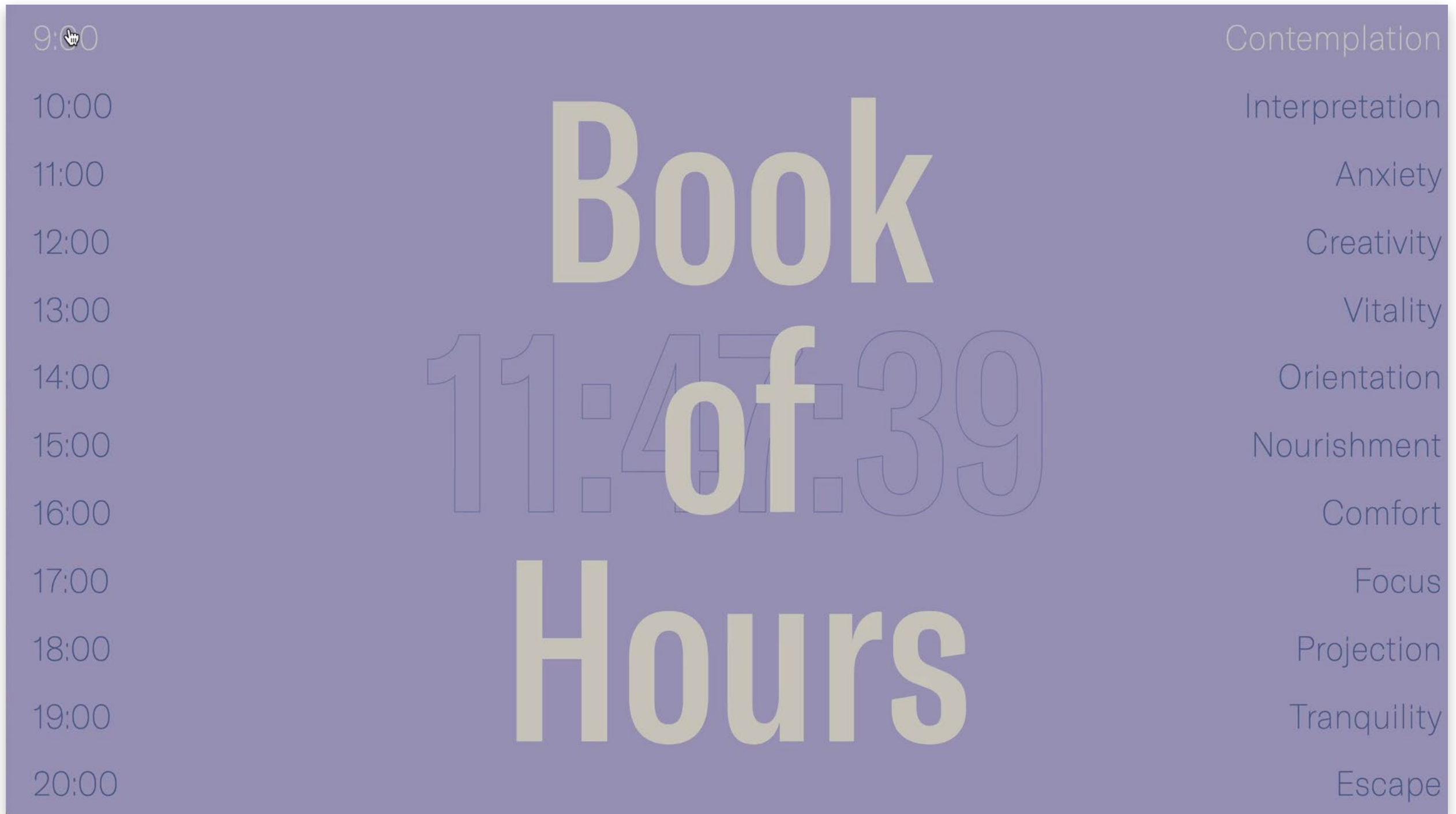
The landing page of the website, which connects
each hour to a term connected with the question
associated with that time. The 9:00 AM
question, about time contemplating life after
waking up, is associated to "Contemplation."
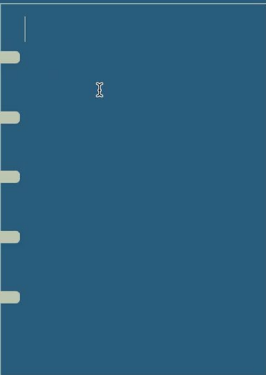
Minutes spent contemplating life after waking up

INPUT

ENTRIES

May 2

A shape you see in the clouds

11:47:53

A dog with a long leg

A top hat

INPUT

RECORD

May 3

A piece of news that gave you pause

11:47:57

After two hours in free fall, the pilot entered the hadal zone, named for the Greek god of the underworld. It is made up of trenches—geological scars at the edges of the earth's tectonic plates—and, although it composes only a tiny fraction of the ocean floor, it accounts for nearly fifty per cent of the depth.

INPUT

RECORD

May 9
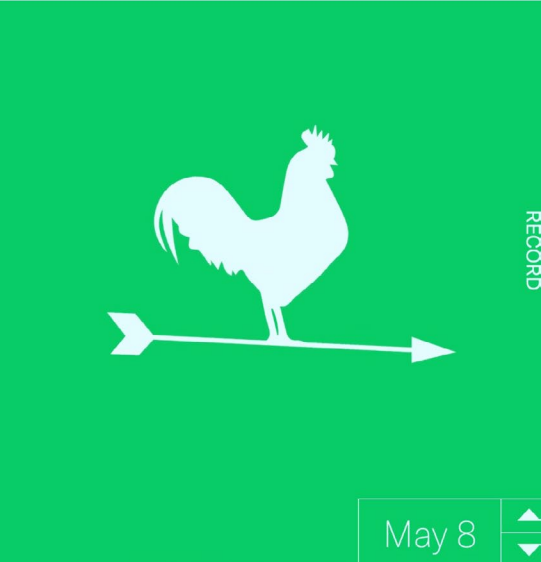
Amount of wind coming through the window

11:48:06

INPUT

RECORD

May 8

Spreads showing the pages for the different hours at the time I'm supposed to answer them. The input field is visible and the question is on top. A record of previous answers can be seen on the right-hand side, and the time acts as a reminder of how long I still have to answer.

INPUT

RECORD

✓

INPUT

RECORD

Cold

Hot

Cold

Hot

✓

May 7

+

INPUT

ENTRIES

✓

April 29
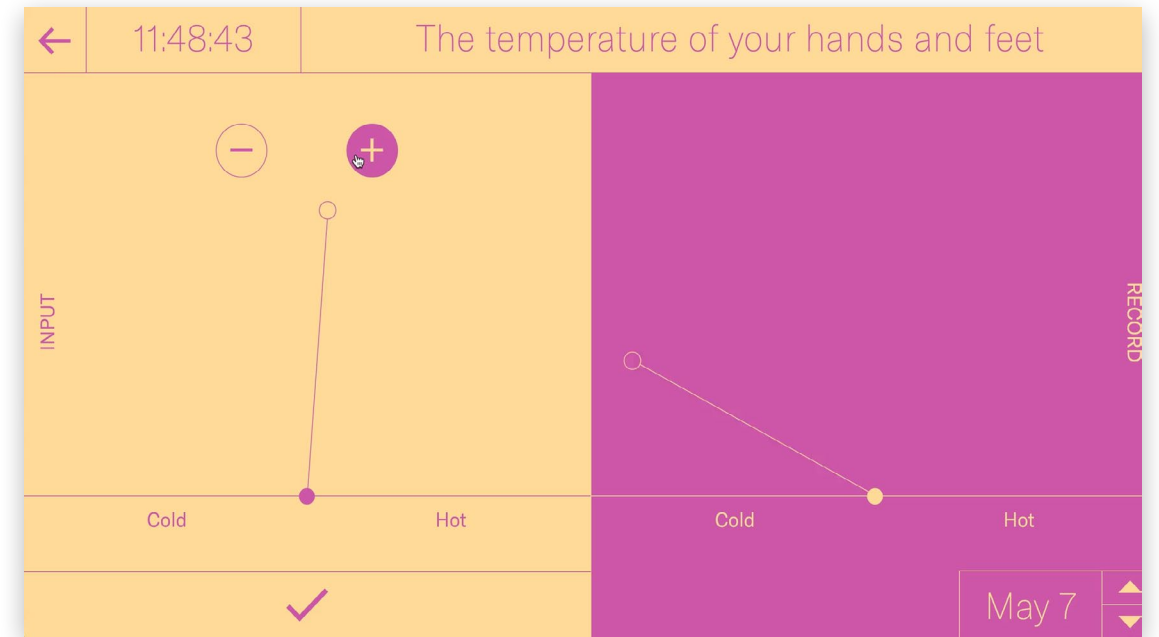
Spreads for "Orientation,"
"Creativity" and "Comfort." Each input
field is customized to fit
the format of the question: For
instance, "Orientation" asks me to
input where I've settled to work
and the input shows a floorplan
of my house, so that I just click
on the room to enter my response.

Each page has a different set
of colors, differencing them
from each other.

Polluted Wishes

A website that disperses desire on contaminated air

Polluted Wishes is a website based on Pollution, a variable typeface with three axes (air quality, air pressure, and wind). On the website, the typeface is connected to live environmental data. The landing page prompts users to enter a city and a hope or wish for the day. After they enter both, a new screen appears with the daily forecast for the city, and the wish typeset in Pollution. The typeface takes the data from the daily forecast and adjusts its axes accordingly, so that it looks different with every city that's entered. The letters move in correspondence to the wind speed in that location.

Users are asked to blow on the computer to make the typeface disappear. This idea came from the design, which is made out of particles reminiscent of the particulate matter that floats in the air. The particles dispersing reminded me of the act of blowing on dandelions to make a wish come true: as people blow on the computer, the letters slowly fade out. Users can momentarily make use, and re-appropriate, the air that has been polluted by corporations.
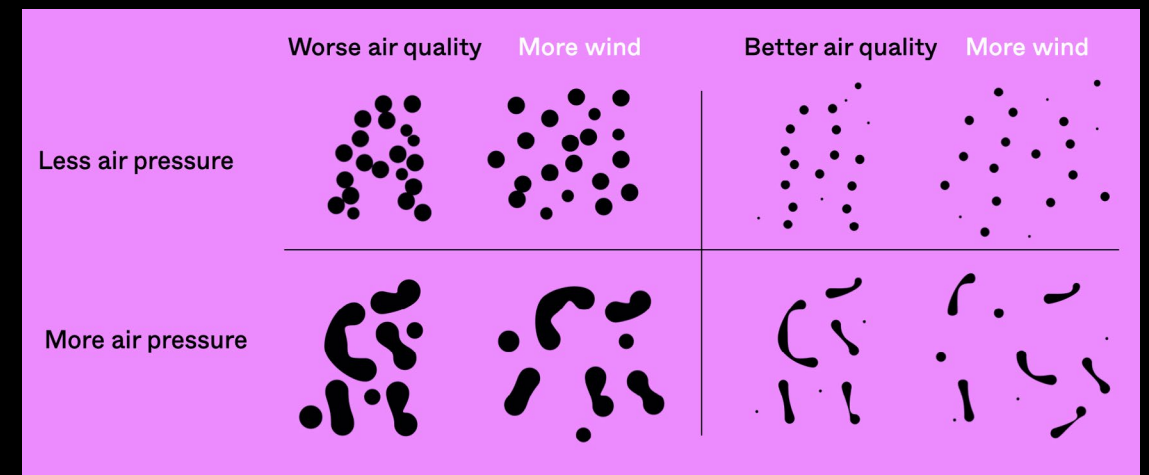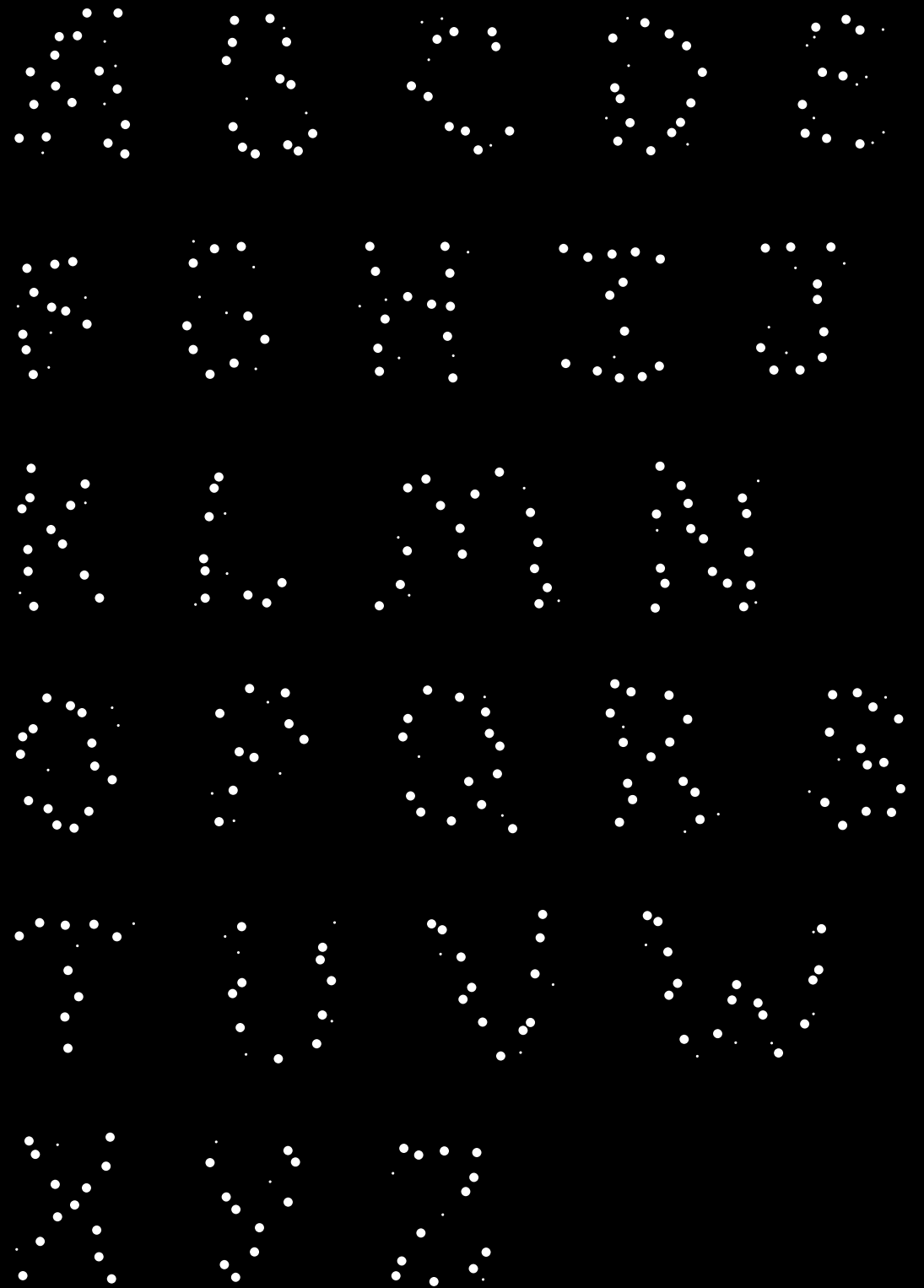

A diagram of the typeface's axes.
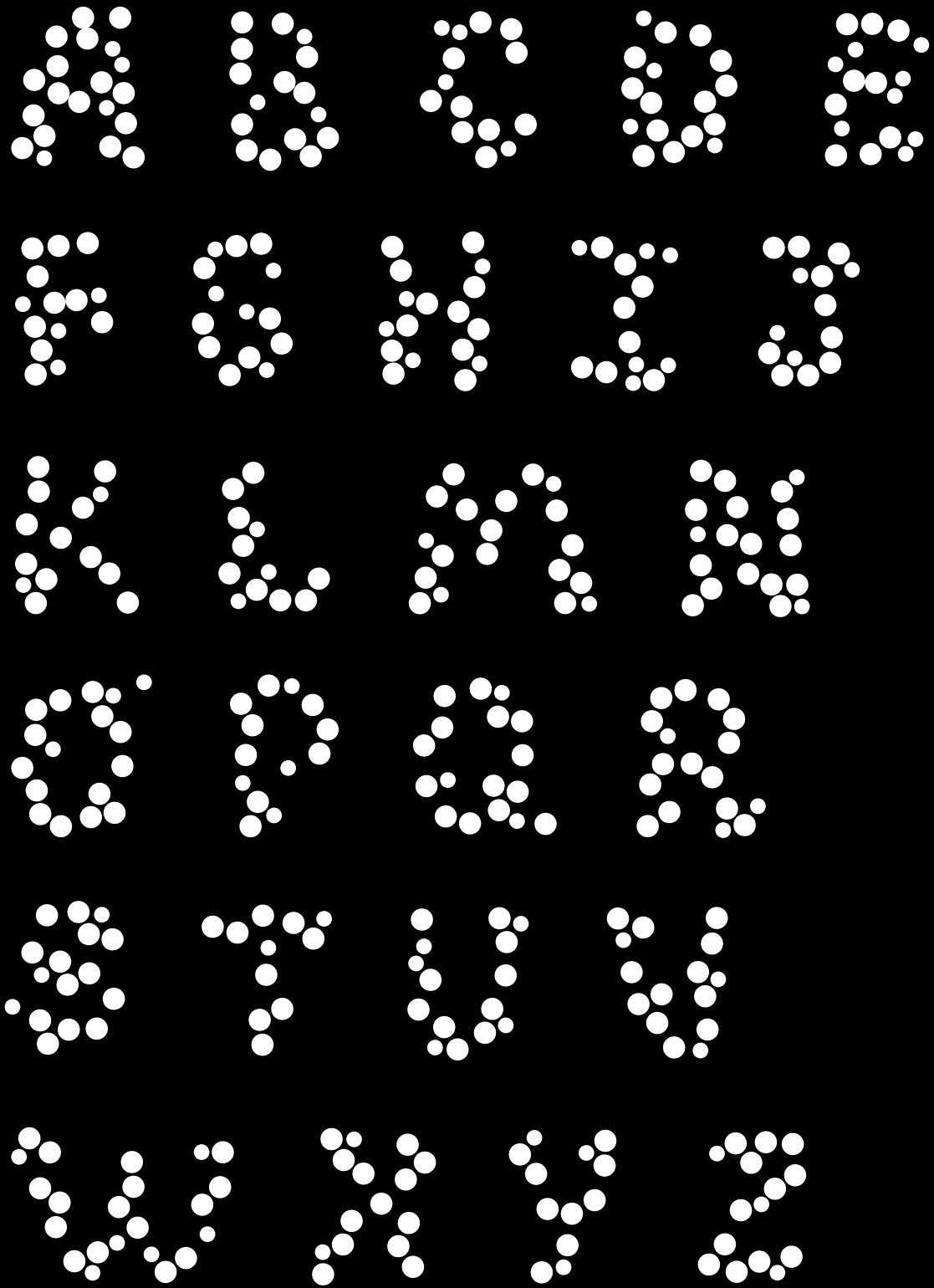
Pollution at worst air quality, no
wind, and lowest air pressure.

Pollution at best air quality, no
wind, and lowest air pressure.

Pollution at worst air quality, no
wind, and highest air pressure.

Pollution at best air quality, no
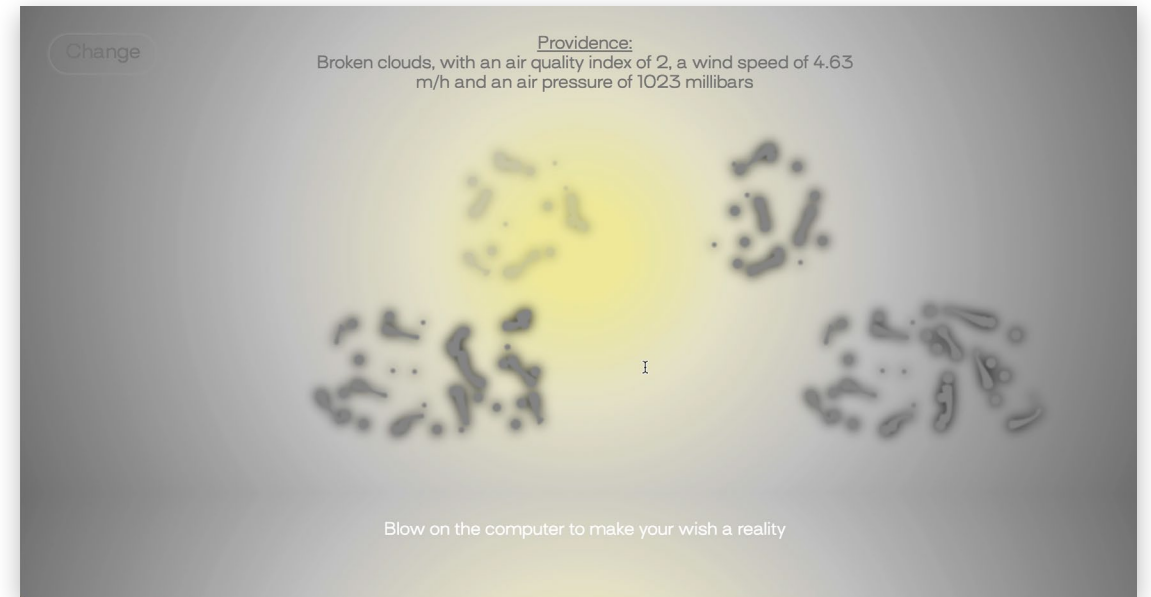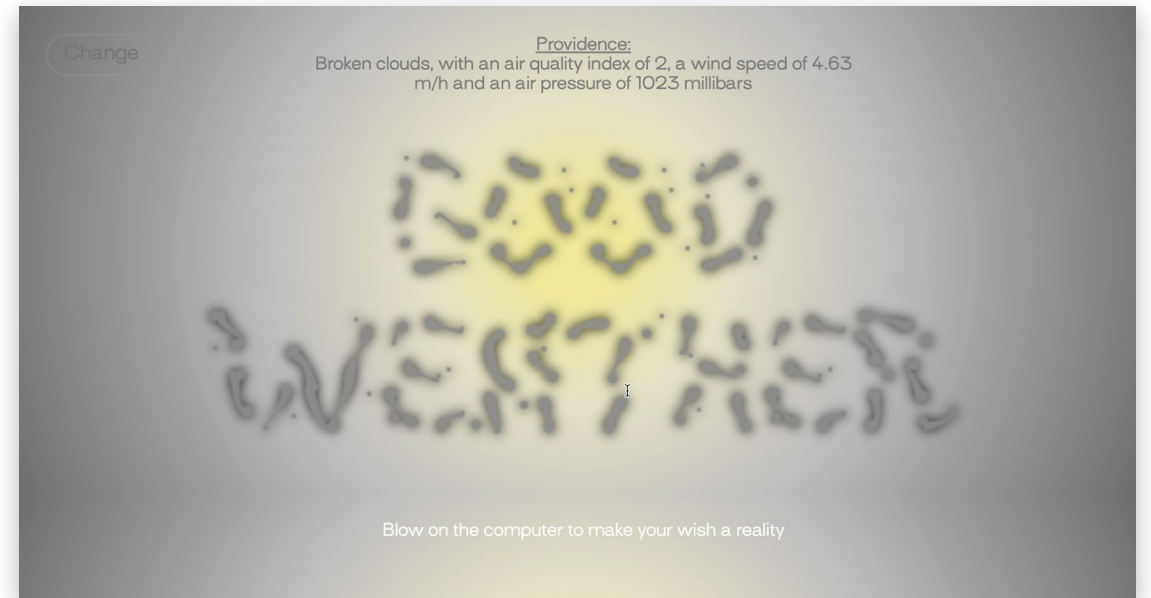wind, and highest air pressure.
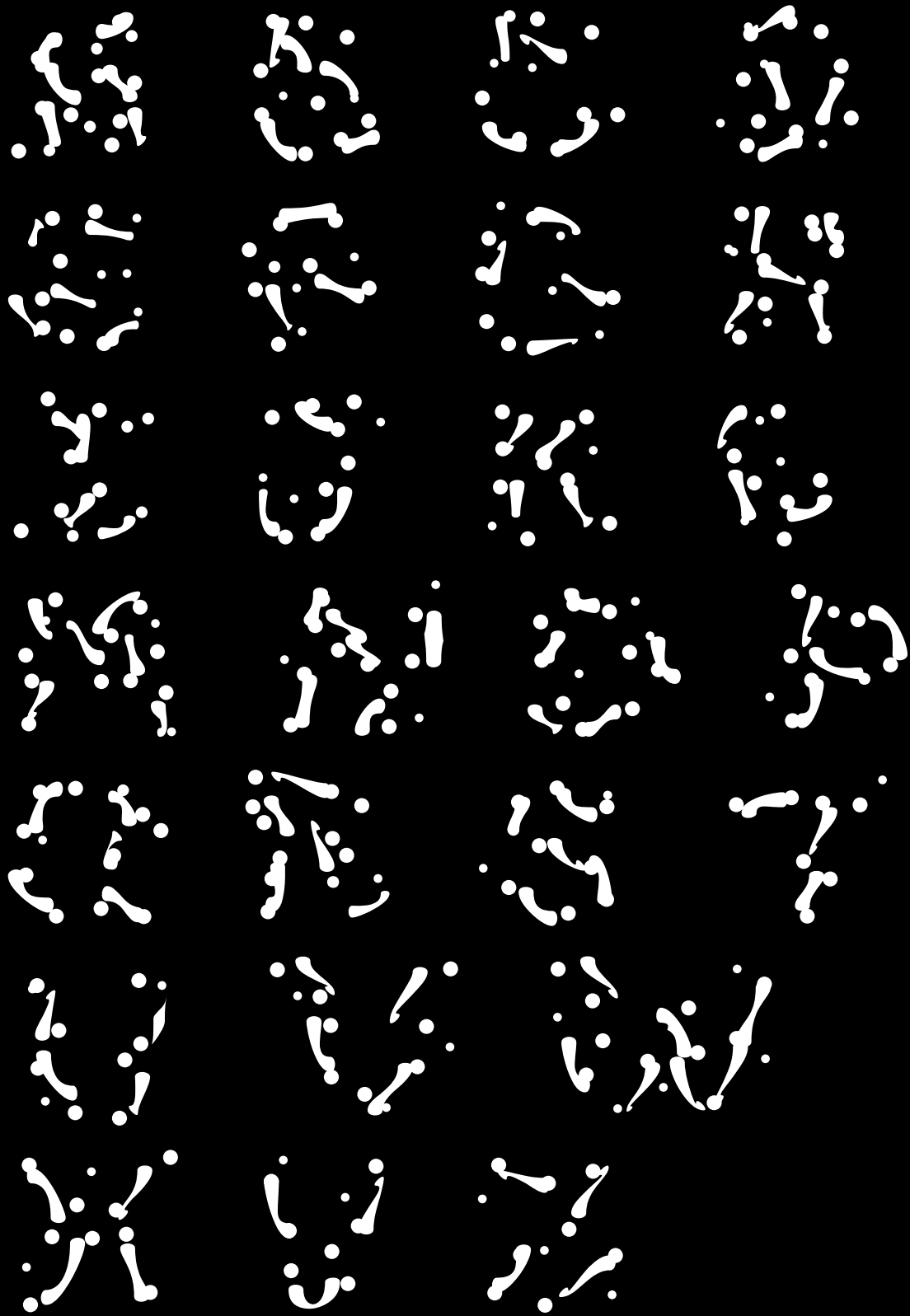
Pollution at medium air quality,
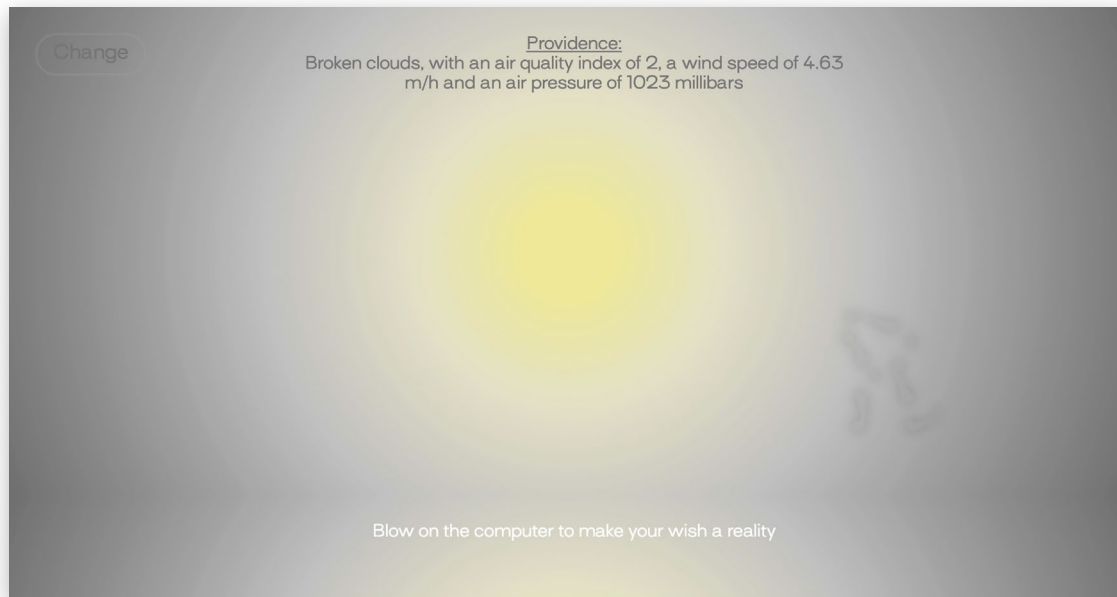high wind, and highest air pressure.
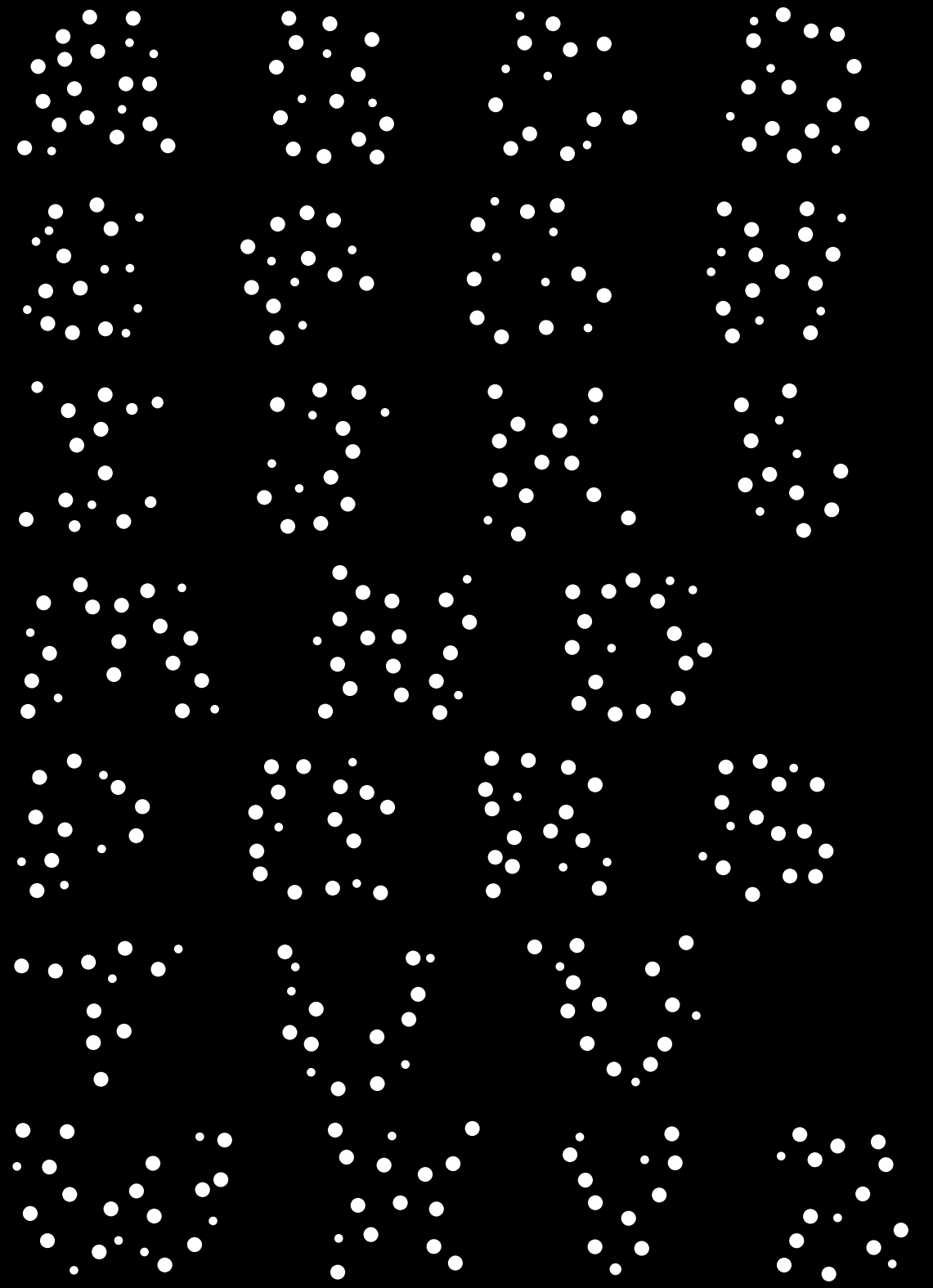
Pollution at medium air quality,
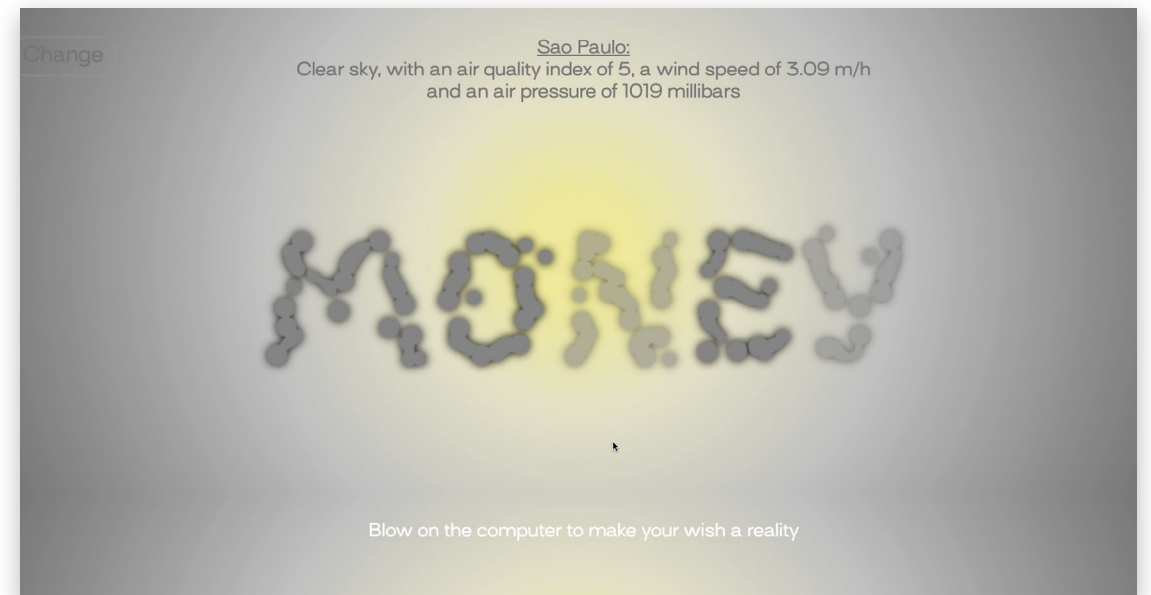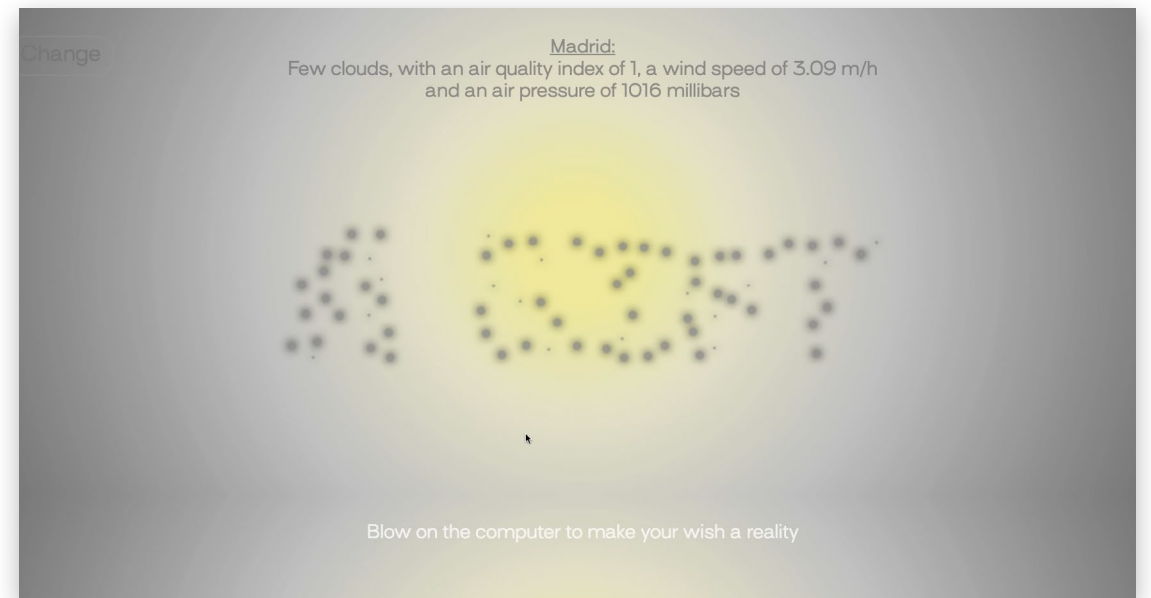high wind, and lowest air pressure.

The landing page asks users to enter a city and
something they wish for that day. Clicking on
the arrow brings them to the next screen.

The wish appears set in Pollution, modified
according to live weather data from that city,
As the user blows on the computer, the letters
start disappearing.

Providence:
Broken clouds, with an air quality index of 2, a wind speed of 4.63 m/h and an air pressure of 1023 millibars

Blow on the computer to make your wish a reality

After blowing all the letters
away, the screen is left blank.

Madrid:
Few clouds, with an air quality index of 1, a wind speed of 3.09 m/h and an air pressure of 1016 millibars

Blow on the computer to make your wish a reality

Sao Paulo:
Clear sky, with an air quality index of 5, a wind speed of 3.09 m/h and an air pressure of 1019 millibars

Blow on the computer to make your wish a reality

Above, the typeface set according to
Madrid's weather conditions (top) and
Sao Paulo's (bottom).
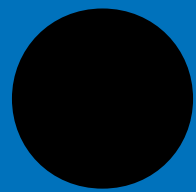
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PERSONAL POSITIONING SYSTEM (PPS)

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Rhode Island School of Design 2021