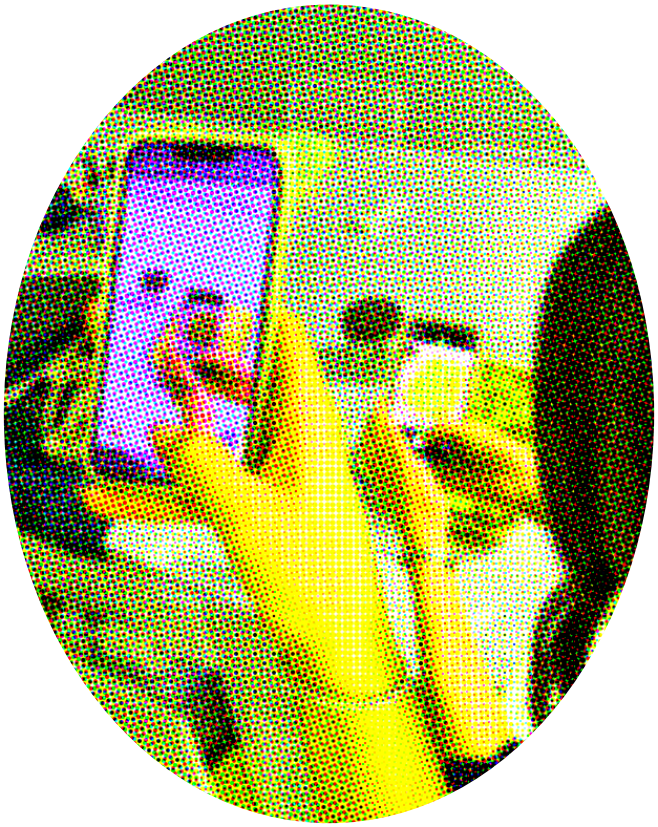
# 2025 MA GCD
# Unit 2
# Written Work



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My Unit 2 practice began exploring food rituals, followed by a reflection on what sensory experiences and emotional connections humans sacrifice when electronic devices become an integral part of ceremonies throughout East Asia. Our daily consumption reflects our attitudes towards life while also establishing and maintaining social relationships. Perhaps what we consume is never the food itself, but rather a cultural and identity-related performance through its "symbolic value". I illustrate this with a series of authentic photographs and stylised graphics.

## *Lucy Suchman – Human-Machine Reconfigurations (2007)*

*'Human–machine configurations matter not only for their central place in contemporary imaginaries but also because cultural conceptions have material effects.1 As our relations with machines elaborate and intensify, questions of the humanlike capacities of machines, and machinelike attributes of humans, arise again and again. I share with Casper (1994), moreover, the concern that the wider recognition of "nonhuman agency" within science and technology studies begs the question of "how entities are configured as human and nonhuman prior to our analyses" (ibid.: 4).'*

One of the inspirations for my research stems from a strong interest in the invisible actions that make up our daily lives, particularly the repetitive behaviours that we frequently overlook. I believe that these actions shape our identities and define our interactions with others. I found this article to be extremely interesting and relevant to my current research. According to Suchman, the boundary between humans and machines is constantly being recalibrated as a result of our interactions with technology. Her statement that "cultural conceptions have material effects" made me realise how our understanding of technology, shaped by our living environments and social networks, and our very way of thinking about machines, tangibly alters our behaviour and identity.

In my initial experiments, I consistently focused on "what constitutes identity" and "how identity can be expressed through visual means". Suchman's theory, however, inspired me to view identity as a distributed existence—jointly shaped by technology and systems. As interpersonal connections grow ever tighter, such scenarios have become commonplace in our daily lives. For instance, scrolling through phones at breakfast or substituting hand-prepared meals with algorithmically recommended takeaways—these actions are reconfiguring our relationship with food and our senses. Thus, am I actively performing this ritual, or am I being governed by it? Upon reflection, I began to question the previous methods of presenting these ideas—such as static imagery—wondering if they were inadequate for conveying the "ongoing reconfiguration between human and non-human subjects". Interactive media might better capture the vividness of this "interweaving". This posed a challenge and marked a new starting point, compelling me to consider the performative nature and collaborative relationship between humans and technology.

## *‘Gender Trouble (1990)’ by Judith Butler*

Butler's concept of "performativity" in Gender Trouble goes beyond deconstructing gender. She provides a framework for understanding any norms that have been constructed and reinforced through repeated actions. In previous explorations, I used this concept to investigate the fluidity of the designer identity. Now I'm attempting to understand the performative acts within food rituals—behaviours that reinforce who we are, how we live, and how we consume. The introduction of technology into these rituals—for example, the mobile phone becoming a new "utensil" at the table—changes not only the actions themselves, but also our attentiveness, intimacy, and certain unspoken gestures of care. As a result, Butler's theory has become a way for me to think about how the body interacts with and engages in technological devices.

Food rituals, from the seating arrangements at family banquets to the prescribed menus for specific occasions, constitute a potent system of performative choreography. Through repeated practice across generations, they shape each individual's role, cultural affiliation, and even life values. These behaviours collectively emphasise “who I am”. Thus, in my experimental work, I incorporate visual representations of performative behaviours within traditional Eastern culture to highlight the hypocritical yet authentic social mechanisms within food rituals that symbolise identity and power.

## *Sherry Turkle – Evocative Objects: Things We Think With (2007)*

*'What imposes obligation in the present received and exchanged, is the fact that the thing received is not inactive. Even when it has been abandoned by the giver, it still possesses something of him.... In all this (giving and receiving] there is a succes- sion of rights and duties to consume and reciprocate, corre- sponding to rights and duties to offer and accept. Yet this intricate mingling of symmetrical and contrary rights and du- ties ceases to appear contradictory if, above all, one grasps that mixture of spiritual ties between things that to some degree ap- pertain to the soul, and individuals, and groups that to some extent treat one another as things.'*

Turkle's observation in her article that "we do not merely use objects, but think with them" struck a deep chord with me. Every object contains emotional and social memories. As a result, in previous experiments, I used familiar items to represent our past behavioural patterns or values. A fork, a bowl, and an electric kettle can all represent evidence of human existence and interaction. This is the "spiritual bond" between things and people. Even an ordinary-looking item can be part of a silent act of kindness.

However, subsequent feedback indicated that my expression remained too abstract. This made me realise that incorporating meaning and emotion into design entails more than simply displaying the "object" - similar to "archiving". While static, ceremonial displays provide clarity, they lack the "vibrant" and "dynamic" connection. When we use these vessels, we experience not only their appearance and form, but also the family history and cultural memory that they represent. We communicate with the "culture" and "tradition" inherent in the objects themselves. How to express this "interactive" behaviour is also worth considering. I'm reconsidering how to define "technological intrusion". Electronic devices and technology are no longer disruptive or inherently negative; they have evolved into a medium for conveying emotions and memories. So what new spiritual bonds might emerge in food rituals today? On another note, Turkle's work also prompts me to reflect: the essence of modern technology's assault lies in the emotional and spiritual core of ritual.

## *‘Statement and Counter-Statement (2015)’ by Experimental Jetset*


Design is both a statement and a counter-statement. This book investigates and reflects on the conflict between modernism and everyday life. By combining graphic design with popular culture and politics, design can reflect and critique social ideologies and identities rather than simply solving problems. This prompts me to consider how technology is now a "statement," reshaping and regulating our behaviour. To gain more attention, we must emulate established behavioural norms, similar to social media's food filters or check-in schemes. I want to think about how to create a "counter-statement". Viewing technological intrusion as novel ideological material rather than a neutral everyday practice. When devices and algorithms dictate our food choices, do our rituals still feel personal? Design in this context requires both critical thinking and creativity. I must remain vigilant about the technologies I use in these rituals. Perhaps, like Experimental Jetset, I aspire for my practice to demonstrate the interplay between contemporary technology and behaviour while also exposing the contradictions and imbalances that exist within it.

## *‘Image, Music, Text (1977)’ by Roland Barthes*

*‘It can thus be seen that in the total system of the image the structural functions are polarized: on the one hand there is a sort of paradigmatic condensation at the level of the connotators (that is, broadly speaking, of the symbols), which are strong signs, scattered, 'reified'; on the other a syntagmatic 'flow' at the level of the denotation - it will not be forgotten that the syntagm is always very close to speech, and it is indeed the iconic 'discourse' which natural- izes its symbols. Without wishing to infer too quickly from the image to semiology in general, one can nevertheless venture that the world of total meaning is torn internally (structurally) between the system as culture and the syn- tagm as nature: the works of mass communications all combine, through diverse and diversely successful dialectics, the fascination of a nature, that of story, diegesis, syntagm, and the intelligibility of a culture, withdrawn into a few discontinuous symbols which men 'decline' in the shelter of their living speech.‘*

'Image, Music, Text' delves into a wealth of insights about how the meaning of a work is determined by the viewer's interpretation rather than the creator's intent. His explanation of the role of linguistic information in anchoring and conveying visual meaning proved extremely useful. He also identified two forces within the system of meaning: 'culture'—such as robust, structured symbolic systems—and 'nature'—such as fluid, poetic narrative structures. The audience's fascination with each work stems from its ability to weave narrative with cultural symbols. Thus, for my project, in addition to specific ritualistic symbols (tableware, gestures), I include brief cultural memories and identities that require "interpretation" alongside them. Making the symbolic imagery appear more "natural" within the ritual's narrative. To advance my work, another layer of powerful symbols, such as the "like" and "share" icons representing technology, should form a new narrative with prior cultural memories that is both harmonious and interwoven. However, Barthes' point of view compels me to reconsider: when intricate rituals and social customs are reduced to simple symbols, will audiences be forced to actively reinterpret and reconstruct past behaviours and cultural practices through these new lenses?

## *‘Designer as Author (1996)’ by Michael Rock*

Designers, according to Rock, take active positions rather than creating form in a neutral manner. Designers can and should be authors. In contemporary design, the authorial identity is frequently dispersed; designers can be instigators or performers as well as authors. He also emphasises that designers do not "speak" in isolation, but rather rearrange existing linguistic content. In my research project on technology and food rituals, I should be responsible for the perspectives on technological influence within the various cultures used, rather than simply embellishing the final form. Naturally, I have considered taking on the role of a storyteller, leaving potential perspectives to the audience. However, in practice, I found this approach inefficient. I must re-select viewpoints capable of forming logical structures and critical symbols, transforming them from easily understandable everyday scenes to ones that require the audience's imaginative participation. This is likely related to Locke's emphasis on making creative decisions through style and form. I do not give up my authorship; rather, through questioning and selection, I affirm it.

## *Le rite matinal 1977 by Sorel Cohen*

In Le rite matinal, Cohen used long-exposure photography to document his bed-making routine, transforming mundane tasks into visible, fluid dance moves. This "ritual and performance" project taught me about the design process of transforming actions into performance. Even ordinary activities can evoke memories and emotions. The actions performed in food rituals - "pressing the kettle button" and "the arc of a finger swiping through short videos" - inspire me to imagine ritualistic movements as meticulously staged performances. Could this also mean the creation of a new visual identity system? In contrast, in an age of technological intrusion, could actions like "pressing the camera shutter" or "moving plates" be incorporated into this visual behavioural system? Amplifying certain background actions, highlighting and unifying them, seems capable of redefining traditional food rituals.

## *Alan Davie Fairy Tree No. 5 (1971)*

Davie's use of intuitive mark-making and symbolic language to imply a personal mythology or spiritual system is evident in this red abstract painting. He turns the canvas into a ceremonial area where the various patterns and symbols stand for an improvised, emotional, and intuitive expression as opposed to a rational one. I am encouraged by this work to use gestures or objects that I am accustomed to seeing as having symbolic meaning, and I am able to arrange them more freely without having to glance at them. The goal is to give the audience more latitude in interpreting the ritual behaviour by being less rational and more experimental.

## *Rebels of the Dance 2002 by Fikret Atay*

This short film depicts two boys performing a traditional Turkish dance in a stairwell. The scene is rushed, but rhythmic. The boys dance for the camera, achieving a balance of personal expression and cultural resistance. Short films like this, however, imply that 'rituals' can be both popular and social, as well as private, intimate, and improvised. This differs from some of the most well-known celebratory and processional dances. This one is set in a small and intimate setting, and it is more of a daily 'ritual' that expresses one's sense of self. So, in the rituals surrounding food, every nation and every household possesses its own culturally distinct customs. My desire to study this intimate and personal practice also stems from a cherishing and reflection upon my own identity, family, and cultural heritage.

## *Russia's vodka ritual*

This article provided me with a new perspective: 'rituals' can be learnt, imitated, borrowed, and used to 'participate in' or 'become' a specific cultural climate or identity, even if you do not fully possess that identity. According to the article, a little-known ritual in Russian drinking culture is to smell black bread after drinking a glass of vodka rather than eat it. Also, the vodka should be cold, the glass small, and have a salty flavour. If you want to feel like a Russian who drinks, celebrates, and unites, try this ritual. It reminds me of a performance code, in which the ritual becomes an identity script to be learnt and imitated. Whether it's my mother listening to the news while eating breakfast or my grandparents waiting at the table for their meal, these actions are more than just family memories; they can also represent an exploration of another role or generation. So, when the "ritual as script" model is applied to modern eating rituals, can those distinct elements rooted in cultural and familial memory that once existed be replicated? This is the central contradiction.

## *‘Designer as Author (1996)’ by Michael Rock*

Rock's paper critiques the blurred boundaries between designers and their subjects, arguing that if design merely “quotes theory without integrating it into form, the result is nothing but fragmented pieces”. This is something I continually reflect upon. In my initial “Food Rituals” project, I mimicked Dalí's recipe format to chart three generations' breakfast rituals at home. This process served both as documentation and a reconfiguration of tradition. How then could I actively construct meaning through guidance rather than merely describing the breakfast sequence? Rock's insight was to treat gesture symbols or chronological timelines by age as a form of “discourse”. Different typographic treatments could represent identity performances. Taking this further, if I wish to emphasise the disappearance of modern eating rituals, might I substitute traditional food or tableware with symbols representing mobile phones or hectic lifestyles?

## *Cookbook of the Pandemic Year 2020.8.20 - 2021.3.17*

The project captures a series of outbreak recipes, transforming everyday cooking practices into a collective archive of crisis and anxiety in intimacy. Keywords: archive and record. It transforms recipes into cultural emotion carriers, capturing not only ingredients but also a distorted sense of time and movement. It's poetic. Its resemblance to Dali's 'cookbook' gave me a new perspective: the incorporation of poetry and emotion into ritual, rather than being authoritative like a traditional cookbook. It's all filled with personal emotion, which I interpret as a deconstruction of family rituals. Combining handwritten notes with illustrations. If I continue to investigate this in a 'private' manner, could I eventually develop a 'confrontational archive'? For example, can ritual gestures reveal some unspoken kinship or intergenerational relationships? If I were to broaden the scope to discuss eating cultures across different regions, one might consider exploring the ritualistic variations that occur with a particular foodstuff (such as tea?) across different areas.

## *Everyday (video) by Noah Kalina*

Kalina's video is a temporal image work in which the artist photographs her face every day, resulting in a six-minute film made up of countless frames. The work includes expressionless faces, strict frontal compositions, and an accumulation of frames. It transforms self-documentation into a constructed reflection on time and identity. For my food ritual, this repetitive gesture is defined as a time marker rather than a mundane action. These cyclical, mechanical movements also represent the daily rotation of ritual conventions. "Everyday" shows the artist's changing hairstyle and facial ageing over time. Based on this project, I am considering incorporating a "anchor point" into my experiment, making subtle changes to it to represent shifts in the ritual.

## *Semiotics of the Kitchen 1975 by Martha Rosler*

Martha Rosler's performance piece represents radical feminism, critiquing the gendered nature of domestic labour through an exaggeratedly subversive teaching of cooking.Rosler mechanically alphabetises ('A' to 'Z') manipulates each item, representing an oppressed female role in the household. The performance contrasts the seemingly calm pedagogical demonstration with the violence behind it. The whole performance designs the kitchen as a scene of defiant, subversive 'ritual'. The most important aspect of the performance is the creation of deliberate formal contradictions. Rosler employs a strict descriptive framework (A-Z) to mock the television education of the time, which was very'monolithic' and boring, like a cage. The narrative medium is a single-camera video that does not aim for complex effects. What struck me was Rosler's use of a knife to stab 'Z' in the air at the end of the video, a powerful visual language that expresses rebellion against the family order.

Although Rosler's performance's theme (feminism) is not the same as my "food ritual," the visual language and formal power she employs speak to me deeply. Rosler employs simple household tools rather than high-tech equipment. She dictates bodily postures, movement directions, and emotional expressions throughout her presentation's choreography. The external technique becomes a structural language that governs behaviour, encapsulating the essence of entrenched gender roles and domestic responsibilities.

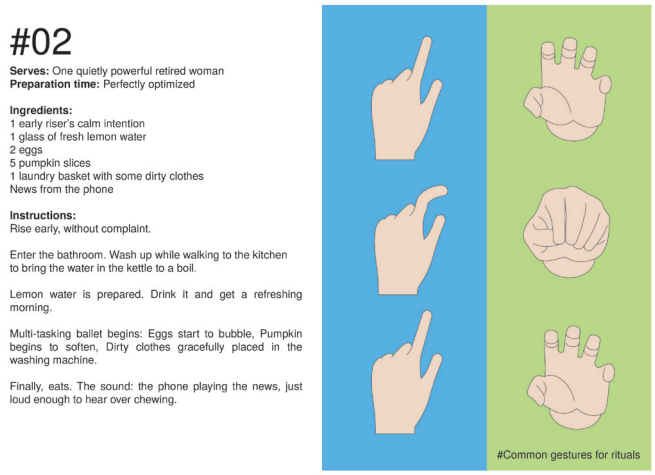
Furthermore, her use of gestures impressed me. Her violent demonstration of a "alphabet" formed with kitchen utensils evoked the mechanically repeated gestures that modern people perform in rituals, such as grasping cutlery, lifting and setting down cups, or swiping mobile phones. These gestures are also organised in a sequence. May I impose a rigid typography on them? This approach, which expands from kitchen symbols to "rituals of consumption" symbols, converts singular behavioural narratives into revelatory flow charts. I mocked Rosler's kitchenware, transforming items such as mobile phones and water glasses into specific behavioural symbols. Rosler's performance is also reminiscent of Michael Rock's formal empowerment in "Designer as Author". Whereas Rock criticises passive citation theory, Rosler turns everyday life into radical statements by directly subverting kitchen labour processes. When thinking about my project, I debated whether to elevate mundane ritualistic actions to criticise modern eating rituals replaced by mobile phones. However, I see this as a deeper layer; my current practice is similar to "cultural observation". Presenting objects like “Mother's laundry basket” and “Grandparents” medicine bottles' in isolation aims to emphasise their symbolic weight. By juxtaposing the eating rituals of three generations of my family across different locations for viewers to observe and compare, I seek to facilitate a negotiation of identity and rights. Rosler's work greatly expanded my understanding of the relationships and emotions that underpin this ritual, providing a more in-depth look at its symbolism. If I were to view Rosler's performance as a ritual, it would undoubtedly be radical, whereas my own ritual is more soothing. As a result, I used bright, slightly retro colours throughout the palette. This choice took into account the themes of "family" and "memory". In essence, Rosler's work has greatly aided my design language and narrative approach, encouraging me to boldly integrate ideology into symbolic expression and deepen understanding of established "rituals".

## *Les Diners de Gala by Salvador Dalí*

Dalí's book is actually a surrealist cookery cookbook, magnificently reimagining food as a vehicle for fetish, desire and dramatic excess. He imagines dining as a psychosexual ritual that extends to a critique of decadence, eroticism and class. The book uses food as a weapon in a similar way to Rosler's performance above. In terms of content, Dalí's design demonstrates a dismantling of norms. The book contains a large number of Baroque paintings as well as collages consisting of food and photographic images, with strong, absurd visual clashes contrasting with traditional recipes. The entire book has a luxurious feel to it, whether it's the gold lace or the heavy book dust jacket.

Firstly, Dalí regarded recipes as a form of surrealist poetry, while the book's illustrations also featured plating diagrams for each dish. This expanded the communicative boundaries of design. The whole approach was highly subjective, imbued with a strong personal style. This perspective helped me continue exploring rituals and culture. Secondly, Dalí's dishes reflected his malleable self-image, directly aligning with my focus on the theme of “identity”. My documentation of my mother's “efficient” and “abundant” breakfasts, contrasted with my own procrastinating or even “vanishing” breakfasts,

similarly performs different identities through food rituals. Yet the former exemplifies the life of a retired housewife, while the latter exposes the passivity of the digital age. Dali's exaggerated recipes prompted me to consider amplifying the contrast. Could I use certain symbols to represent the identity disparities of that era? Or emphasise how digital technology has changed the lives of two generations? This involves visual metaphor: I was able to transform ordinary objects into "Dali-esque" symbols that represented ritual and identity differences across generations. However, such abstract forms reduce audience empathy. As a result, I continue to believe that presenting objects in their ordinary, mundane forms—rather than using surreal techniques like "personification" or "distortion"—is preferable. Dalí challenged class norms by distorting culinary standards. Could my project's depiction of procrastination and anxiety during breakfast rituals represent passive resistance to an efficiency-driven society? Going deeper, it could also represent numb acceptance of technology's encroachment on daily life. This is a new perspective. Finally, Dalí's cookbook implies a form of hidden discipline. My observations of my mother's ritualistic behavior—compelled to listen to mobile news while eating—show an unspoken norm. Drawing on his provocative language describing recipe steps (surrealist prose), I added similar annotations to my "recipes" to supplement instructions and inject levity. Certain ritualistic steps have symbolic or rebellious connotations. In essence, incorporating "subversive associations" into the deconstruction of daily routines demonstrates feasibility. To highlight the constructed nature of identity, consider using symbolic gestures and intergenerational objects arranged flat on the plate. However, it should be noted that my current work contains significant amounts of "private documentation". How can the underlying meaning, like Dalí's recipes, be elevated to public value? Dalí taught me that values are not inherited, but rather "cooked" through daily rituals in various times, places, and lives.



#02

**Serves:** One quietly powerful retired woman
**Preparation time:** Perfectly optimized

**Ingredients:**
1 early riser's calm intention
1 glass of fresh lemon water
2 eggs
5 pumpkin slices
1 laundry basket with some dirty clothes
News from the phone

**Instructions:**
Rise early, without complaint.

Enter the bathroom. Wash up while walking to the kitchen to bring the water in the kettle to a boil.

Lemon water is prepared. Drink it and get a refreshing morning.

Multi-tasking ballet begins: Eggs start to bubble, Pumpkin begins to soften, Dirty clothes gracefully placed in the washing machine.

Finally, eats. The sound: the phone playing the news, just loud enough to hear over chewing.

## *Introduction*

Breakfast is far more than just food; it's a small ritual and a subtle statement. The way we start the day often reflects how we see ourselves: are we hurried moderns, keepers of tradition, or something in between? In this video, the breakfast ritual is more of an Everyday transition performance. I explore through my hands, my mother's hands, my grandmother's hands, how the breakfast ritual reveals identity and something about disappearance, inheritance, and what still binds us across generations.

## *Part 1*

Every day at breakfast, my hands repeat the same motions, some consciously, some unconsciously.
I'm scrolling.
I'm pressing.
I'm picking up.
These quiet rituals shape my day before I even speak.
Digital habits have replaced a part of the traditional breakfast. We are woken up by its alarm, swiping through social media before we even get out of bed, and checking messages while brushing our teeth (Barman 2025). The report says that two in five adults look at their mobile phone within five minutes of waking up, and 71% say they never switch it off (Wakefield 2018). People queue at fast food restaurants in the name of 'saving time'. Part of the contemporary breakfast ritual has gone from warm ramblings by the hob to a hurried transaction between mobile phone screens and plastic packaging - we've replaced the aroma of food with data traffic and dissolved morning contemplation with the cult of efficiency.

In this case, I am constantly reflecting on what we have disappeared in our digitised mornings, where have those rituals gone that we have hastily replaced?

## *Part 2*

Influenced by Sorel Cohen's photographic work 'Le rite matinal', I tried to document the breakfast rituals of one day for three generations of my family.
In Les Diners de Gala and Cookbook of the Pandemic Year books, they both document recipes in a humorous, abstract language. It inspired me to deconstruct the ritual process in my family and turn it into a ' recipe' for a breakfast ritual. The ' recipe ' includes who to serve, preparation time, ingredients and instructions.

I also record common hand gestures used in these rituals.
'Scroll'
'Click'
'Grab'
'Poke'
'In their rituals, time doesn't feel like something that needs to be fought over. It flows naturally - through the steam rising from the bowl, through the gentle clinking of chopsticks'

'I grew up watching these hands. I didn't understand the language of it then. But now I understand: ritual is not routine, but a way of embracing others, a way of saying 'you are cared for.'

'Some postures seem to be 'inherited' but then disappear between generations. '
'Rituals morph, but don't really die.'

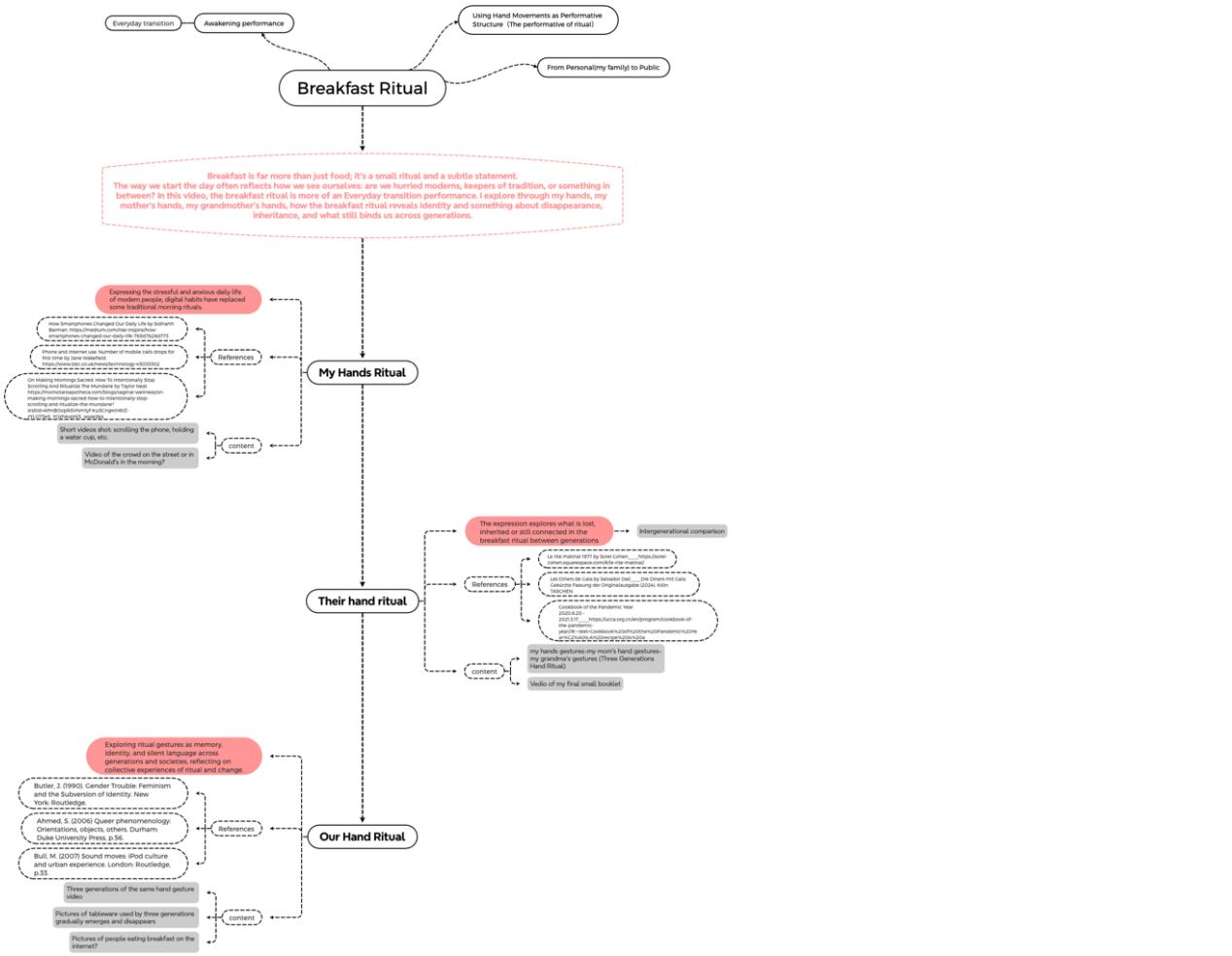
Three generations. Three hands. Three rhythms shaped by different generations.

## *Part 3*

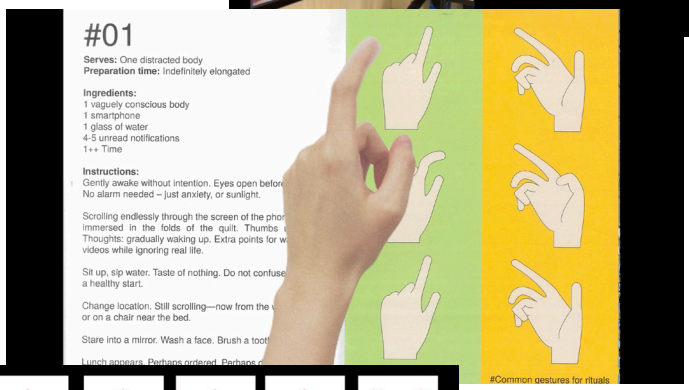
A further reaction to these ideas was a shift in the ritual processes between family members towards a broader reflection on time, identity and cultural inheritance. Judith Butler argues that identity is not innate, but 'performed' through repetitive ritual behaviours (Butler 1990).
In different spaces, our rituals were different, yet rhymed together. They carry our identities - not just individually, but collectively.

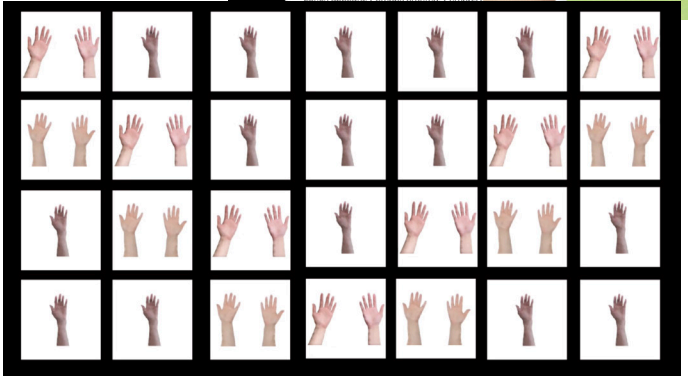
We are eating.
We are drinking.

Sara Ahmed believes that ritual, through its repetition and symbolic power, can create a sense of belonging and continuity in time and space (Ahmed 2006). Through the above I hope to allow the audience to experience the stories of others. and follow the ritual instructions to reflect on the connections between generations and identities.


Everyday transition
Awakening performance
Using Hand Movements as Performative Structure (The performative of ritual)
From Personal(my family) to Public
Breakfast Ritual
Breakfast is far more than just food; it's a small ritual and a subtle statement.
The way we start the day often reflects how we see ourselves: are we hurried moderns, keepers of tradition, or something in between? In this video, the breakfast ritual is more of an Everyday transition performance. I explore through my hands, my mother's hands, my grandmother's hands, how the breakfast ritual reveals identity and something about disappearance, inheritance, and what still binds us across generations.
Expressing the stressful and anxious daily life of modern people, digital habits have replaced some traditional morning rituals.
References
content
My Hands Ritual
Short videos shot: scrolling the phone, holding a water cup, etc.
Video of the crowd on the street or in McDonald's in the morning?
The expression explores what is lost, inherited or still connected in the breakfast ritual between generations
Intergenerational comparison
Their hand ritual
my hands gestures-my mom's hand gestures-my grandma's gestures (Three Generations Hand Ritual)
Vedio of my final small booklet
Exploring ritual gestures as memory, identity, and silent language across generations and societies, reflecting on collective experiences of ritual and change.
Our Hand Ritual
Three generations of the same hand gesture video
Pictures of tableware used by three generations gradually emerges and disappears
Pictures of people eating breakfast on the internet?


time'._


#01
Serves: One distracted body
Preparation time: Indefinitely elongated
Ingredients:
1 vaguely conscious body
1 smartphone
1 glass of water
4-5 unread notifications
1++ Time
Instructions:
#Common gestures for rituals



## *Dialogue 1 is with Deshna Mehta, a visual artist.*

In conversation with Deshna Mehta, we discussed the topic of my previous project: how intergenerational relationships and identity are expressed through food rituals and visual systems. My idea was that by using specific objects and gestures, we could gain insight into the lives, memories, and cultural shifts of three generations. This project represented a deeply personal emotional exploration. She provided an important external perspective: how to eventually organise private, abstract systems into a coherent narrative work of public significance. Deshna discussed her own project, the Kumbh Mela initiative (Studio Anugraha, 2015). She believes that documenting an event can begin with individual "fragments"—for example, the Kumbh Mela revolves around the river, highlighting the people and events across and around it: slogans, crowd noise, photographs of the space, and conversations with attendees. Following multi-layered data collection, she labels and categorises all elements. Once structured, narratives can be organised around themes. Thus, our discussion suggests that instead of "concealing" or simply displaying divergent behaviours, we should document and tag them, resulting in a visual language that reveals patterns and connections. Enter separately, then converge.

We also discussed visual style. My current visual approach leans towards the playful and bright, which may reduce the emotional weight of memories. Perhaps incorporating textures and a sense of passage via collage, photography, or a printed aesthetic would better emphasise the tender intimacy I want to convey while remaining universal. I recognise that using mixed media—photographs, handwritten fragments, abstract textures, and even overall typographic layouts—could help distinguish personal recollection from collective resonance.

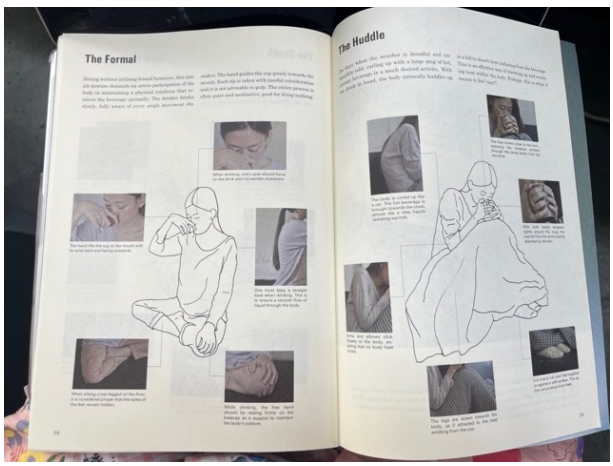
Another insight gained was the conflict between private experience and public value. Deshna reminded me that not all details require explanation. Instead, I should distinguish between what is "universal" (such as the daily experience of breakfast) and what is "specific" (such as my mother turning the kettle on). This approach preserves the personal nature of my work while making it accessible to viewers. Furthermore, because my project spans three generations, each with their own unique rhythms of life, Deshna suggested conveying these differences through stylistic transitions between generations rather than imposing a single aesthetic framework.

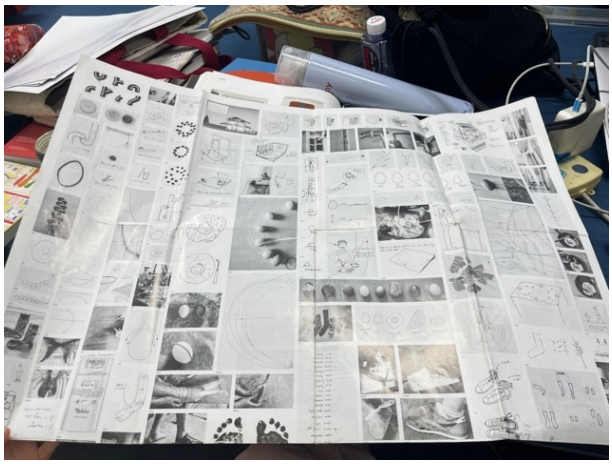
This delightful dialogue with Deshna Mehta resulted in not only practical strategies but also a change of perspective. Whether it is the collection of gestures, the creation of stylistic variations, or the development of a visual language for memory, it has provided me with an effective framework.

## *Dialogue 2 is with Jian Pan, a bibliophile.*

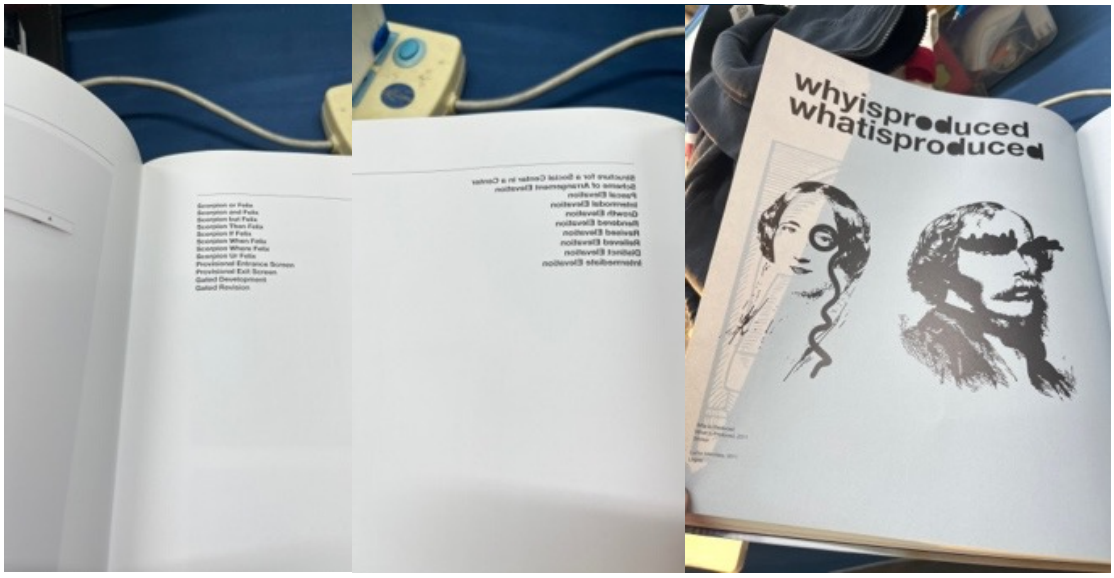
After some reflection and organisation, I engaged in a dialogue with Professor Pan Jian. Following my presentation of insights into breakfast rituals and gestures, she emphasised, with profound erudition, that "breakfast should not be regarded as the subject itself, but rather as an entry point for broader exploration of generations, cultures, and their contemporary substitutes". Indeed, following conventional wisdom, I had consistently attempted to narrow the scope of my investigation. However, during this project, I realised I had boxed myself in. The concept of "invisible breakfast rituals" that I proposed was, in her opinion, so common across all meal times that it no longer constituted a meaningful or distinctive ritual. It reflected the "convenience of technology" rather than deeper symbolic behaviour. This caused a significant shift in my subsequent focus. I realised I was more interested in investigating the "disappearing" eating rituals - perhaps supplanted by the frequency of smartphone use, or perhaps a "evolution" caused by modern humanity's erosion by technology and digital media. As a result, I should focus on how modern electronic devices influence human consumption rituals.

'You must capture points that resonate with the audience,' she explained. I understood that 'points of resonance' represented 'public value'. She suggested beginning with the most relatable visual elements: gestures and objects on a table. Although simple, these symbols have the ability to evoke shared memories and emotions. I thumbed through Atelier HOKO's Science of the Secondary, which catalogues overlooked everyday phenomena centred on objects (Atelier HOKO 2024). Consider teacups and the act of drinking tea, for example. The authors meticulously document everything, from people's postures while sipping to teacup types and grips. Overall, it's remarkably commercial but fascinating. This resonates profoundly with my aim to redefine ritual as symbolic and conceptual.



Professor Pan Jian also proposed the concept of "threads that interweave": a central narrative supported by multiple exploratory sub-threads. My primary focus may be the ritual of "eating," while secondary threads could include tracking individual items (such as coffee or hamburgers), documenting variations in gestures after being affected, or observing the rhythms of everyday life. 'Even if they appear independent,' she explains, 'these minute threads should interconnect, weaving a narrative throughout the project.' Hatje Cantz's book Liam Gillick: Half a Complex is another compelling read (Gillick 2019), demonstrating how abstract narratives can mirror complex social systems—a framework that may guide the structural organisation of my project.




Overall, we discussed many kinds of ideas, including time/space positioning and the inherent relationship between form and content. I've gained a lot of insight for the work ahead.

## *Introduction*

‘We shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us,’ Marshall McLuhan once observed (Pennings, A. 2015). A series of electronic devices has evolved from mere communication tools to co-creators in the ritual of eating. This ritual is no longer limited to the physical act of tasting; mobile phones now frame and filter our interactions and separations from food. To date, my research has focused on how the mobile phone, as a collaborator in the eating ritual, affects our processes of tasting and experiencing food. The screen has changed eating from an embodied, private act to a performative, networked gesture. In my project, the juxtaposition of visual forms contrasts the illusory beauty of digitally filtered food imagery with the harsh reality of spoilt and cold food. This is a focused exploration of the issue at hand. Electronic devices have shaped our relationship with food, converting experiences into data and becoming an essential component of our consumption habits. Emilie Baltz's Lickestra project provided another avenue for investigation: using technology to influence and modulate the senses while also reimagining this modulation as a means of connection.

## *ENQUIRY1*

## *When critiquing sensory alienation in the ritual of eating in the digital age, how might one forge meaningful connections with audiences and foster reflection through "inviting" and "experiential" design strategies?*

## *Analysis*

The core of the Lickestra project struck me as radical and straightforward, combining installation art, performance, and sensory design in its execution. The designers invited participants to lick an ice cream with sensors, which triggered different basslines and tones with each lick. The ingredient choice was particularly appropriate—ice cream naturally evokes the desire to lick. It encourages people to "play with" food instead of just "consume" it. This prompted me to think about using humour to counter the often solemn atmosphere surrounding technology and screens. In stark contrast to Lickestra, the imagery and text I used in my project leaned towards "serious parody" or "detached revelation". My aim was not to entertain audiences with parodic data, but to elicit reflection on their own -

ritualistic behaviours. However, I believe Lickestra's approach resonates with audiences because of its inviting tone. This levity does not diminish the gravity of the situation; rather, it lowers the barrier to entry, allowing for greater participation. It serves as a "experiential" critique, or playful subversion. After all, nobody wants to be "told" to reflect. While seriousness is powerful, it can also create distance.

From a narrative perspective, Lickestra's performance resembles a linear, progressive sequence—involving preparation, direction, execution, and conclusion—and is inherently non-reproducible. In contrast, my juxtaposed images capture “frozen” moments. I began contemplating how to make this narrative process more complete, as I couldn't allow the data conflicts between the pre- and post-filter food images to remain unresolved. Beyond the conventional approach of dividing it into multiple parts, is there a more potent narrative that could evoke a similar emotional arc in the audience – curiosity, experimentation, collaboration, surprise, and achievement? This leans towards a design that amplifies sensory experience.

In fact, we both see eating as a ritual. She criticises the individualisation of dining and the growing numbness of the senses, whereas I criticise its alienation from digital media tools. Yet, fundamentally, her work appears to fully embrace the coexistence of the sensory and physical, with technology serving as a tool to amplify this experience. However, I see electronic devices as an intrusive, intervening force that disrupts the relationship between person and food, distorting certain "fantasies" about sustenance. Here are some of the differences. Naturally, Baltz's work provides me with a fresh perspective: a call to rethink design as a participatory, sensual, and critically pleasurable experience.

## *Moving forward with my work*

In my context, electronic devices are: controlling, mediating, distancing, symbolic, and obscuring.

When placed within my research context, Lickestra serves as an ideal-type counterpoint, revealing technology's role in improving sensory experience. However, this precisely exemplifies the more universal contradiction at the heart of my research: electronic devices are primarily treated as sensory "intermediaries" or "substitutes" rather than amplifiers.

Both Lickestra's and my work are based on observations of behavioural patterns. Lickestra uses sound to amplify these systems, whether literal or metaphorical, and make them externally manifest. In contrast, I am more interested in how these same systems influence and shape our five senses. This gives me a new perspective: could I turn "digital interference" into a perceptible experience? Maybe turn "like counts" into a repetitive, jarring noise, or "screen editing time" into an unsettling texture? Baltz transformed ritual into a meticulously planned framework. This makes me wonder: could I go beyond simply criticising this alienated ritual and actively design a "counter-ritual" to resist or repair the phenomenon?

Our works both explore ritual and repetition. However, previous feedback indicated that the numerous sets of repetitive images I created were not entirely "essential". I now understand this point of view, because in works such as Baltz's, the repetition of the act of licking creates an experience that is both performative and cumulative. My goal, however, was to highlight a "argument". Once the viewer understands my logic, the subsequent sets simply reinforce the previous viewpoint rather than providing new experiences. I should incorporate multiple concepts I want to express rather than simply "stacking" examples. After all, excessive repetition reduces impact. Obviously, if I were to shift the subsequent development to a sociological study or archival-style work, multiple sets would be justified. The difficulty lies in creating new meaning (the argument). As a result, repetition loses its emphasis and becomes "surveying" and "categorising". This, too, offers an intriguing direction.

***ENQUIRY2***
***In East Asia's digital-age dining rituals, as food's "use value" gives way to its "symbolic value," what authentic sensory and social connections have we sacrificed? As graphic communication designers, how can we use visual practice to highlight this shift in value and cost?***

## *Extension*

Although my observations are primarily from bustling, technologically saturated environments such as cities, I am aware that the relationship between dietary habits and technology varies significantly across cultures and regions. Rural areas may have more traditional food cultures that actively resist technology. As a result, I have deliberately limited my scope to the urban context profoundly shaped by digital capitalism and internet culture, focussing my in-depth investigation on this specific phenomenon. Naturally, I find this phenomenon to be quite common in East Asian cultural contexts. As a result, the digital incursion into East Asian urban environments will serve as a base for my future experiments.

In The Consumer Society, philosopher Jean Baudrillard posits that an item's “use value” is increasingly supplanted by its “symbolic value” (Baudrillard 1998). This appears to underscore precisely my point: the taste and nutritional value of food recede into secondary importance, while garnering social media attention becomes the primary objective—a direct manifestation of this symbolisation. Yet some argue such theories are somewhat extreme, contending that symbolic value is not the sole motivator of consumption (Kyle 2020). As a result, I do not see digital interference solely as a negative factor, but rather as a specific cultural condition that allows new relationships, forms of control, and emotional expressions to emerge over time. I consider myself to be taking a more neutral stance on this issue, acknowledging both the sense of detachment and the pleasure gained from the ritual of consumption mediated by technology.

In East Asia's digital-age dining rituals, as food's "use value" gives way to its "symbolic value," we lose the "sense of togetherness" that is deeply embedded in Eastern Asian relationships. At traditional Chinese communal round tables, seating arrangement, cutlery placement, chopstick lifting and lowering, and food sharing all combine to form a complete social ritual. However, the intervention of digital devices systematically undermines all of this. Screens cut off nonverbal glances and pauses, and the "pot aroma" and "freshness" of food appear to vanish as well. Some ramen shops in Japan have embraced the "loneliness economy" by introducing cubicle-style designs for solo diners. While providing privacy and allowing people to eat alone without shame, critics argue that it fails to address fundamental issues such as community well-being and interpersonal relationships (OECD 2025). While providing sanctuary, these spaces also encapsulate the individual, transforming "loneliness" from a one-time occurrence to an institutionalised, default experience. When the ritual of eating moves from communal tables to cubicles, we lose the opportunity to build and sustain community through food. This model reflects the logic of social media and -

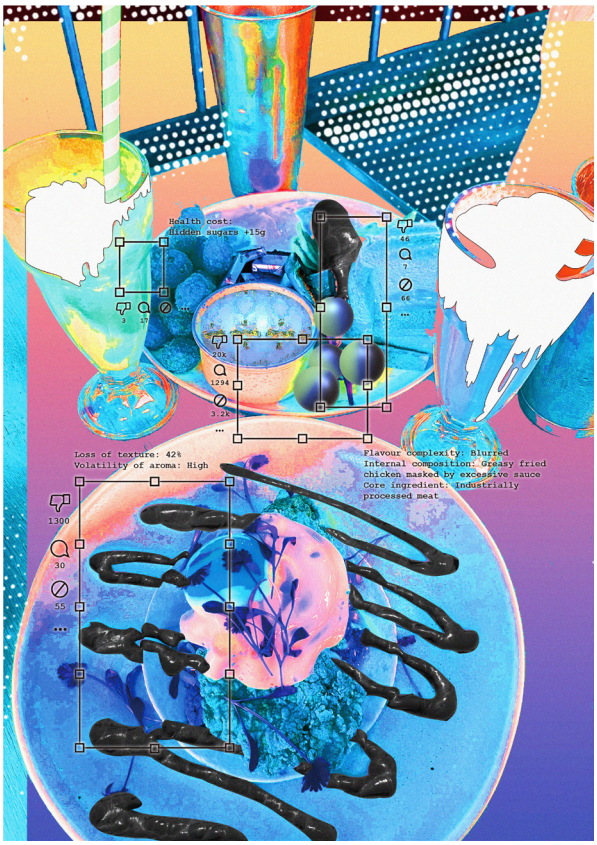
electronic devices, which connect people online while increasing offline alienation. Both replace direct connection with symbolic, mediated gratification.

Billie Muraben gave me an intriguing example: TV dinners. These were pre-packaged, frozen, single-serving meals popular in the West during the 1950s and 1960s, intended for easy heating and consumption, usually while watching TV. Their invention appeared to transform family dining habits, moving meals from the dining table to the sofa. This case provided a historical foundation for my research. In comparison to Emilie Baltz's Lickestra, the introduction of TV dinners sets a stark precedent: it was designed not to improve the dining experience, but rather to prioritise "entertainment" and "efficiency"—conditionally sacrificing the social dimension of meals. This made me realise that one of the issues I want to address in my research is the critique of technology's logic, which detaches people from authentic experiences and forces them to submit to an external system. I believe I can no longer analyse it in isolation, but rather show how this experience perpetuates, opposes, or transforms.

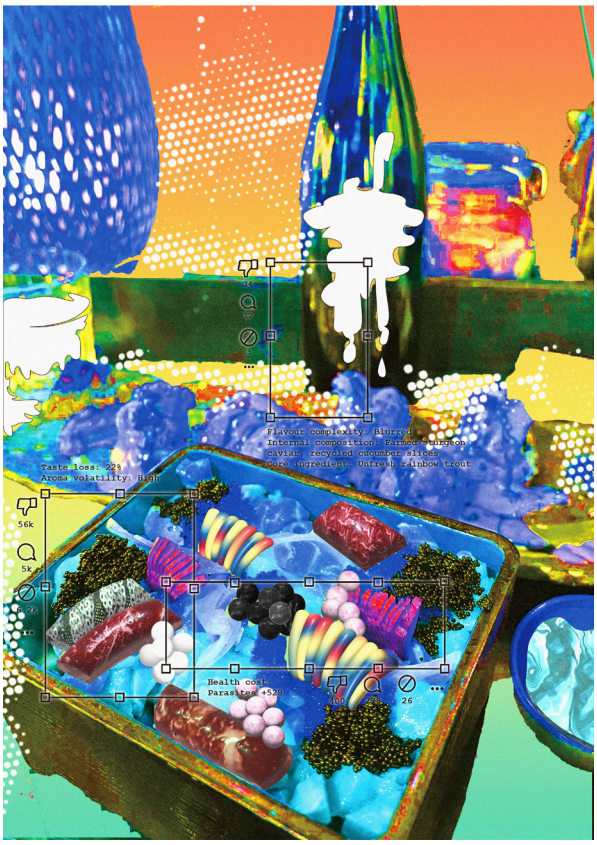

## *Summary*

Emilie Baltz's Lickestra represents a design style that combines critique and performance, intimacy and interface. It opens up new possibilities for my research. What I'm now talking about is our pursuit of social capital and symbolic value in the digital realm at the expense of the sensory attributes and immediate gustatory pleasures of food in real life. Finally, it prompts me to consider a more fundamental question: When our daily rituals are choreographed by interfaces and algorithms, what natural, primal connections are fading away? What symbolic elements are emerging? Design may involve less critique and reflection and more diagnosis, remediation, and revelation.


Post processing time: 3 mins
Editing steps: Exposure +20,
Vibrance +8, Saturation +20,
Colour temperature -10
Equipment details: iPhone 14
Emotional appeal: Aiming to
convey refinement and happiness
Shooting duration: 40 s
Number of shots taken: 5


Health cost:
Hidden sugars +15g
Loss of texture: 42%
Volatility of aroma: High
Flavour complexity: Blurred
Internal composition: Greasy fried
chicken masked by excessive sauce
Core ingredient: Industrially
processed meat


Shooting duration: 2 mins
Number of shots taken: 9
Equipment details: iPhone 17 pro
Emotional appeal: Aiming to
convey elegance and affluence


Flavour complexity: Blurred
Internal composition: Farmed sturgeon
caviar, recycled cucumber slices
Core ingredient: Untrack rainbow trout
Taste loss: 22%
Aroma volatility: High
Health cost:
Parasites +528

In the subsequent study following Unit 2, I began by investigating how electronic devices disrupt the unease inherent in dining rituals. From "TV dinners" in the past to "mobile phones first" today, technology seeks to cut off our sensory engagement and disrupt the rhythm of eating. However, through triangulation, I realised that my work does not seek to completely eliminate technology's influence on us. Rather, this new “cultural condition” has re-orchestrated our sensory experience within the ritual of eating. Within the urban context profoundly shaped by digital capitalism and internet culture, this model perpetuates the inherent “performative” and “social” dimensions of human rituals. It changes the weighting of sensory experiences, the length of rituals, and the intimacy between people. The natural, primal connection to food is fading as symbolic meanings and virtual intimacy emerge... The question I'm currently investigating is this: in the ritual of eating in East Asia's digital age, as food's "use value" is increasingly replaced by its "symbolic value," what genuine sensory and social connections are we losing? As a graphic communication designer, how can visual practice reveal this shift in value and cost?

First of all, The process of triangular positioning was critical in clarifying my position. I located my coordinates between "sensory amplification" and "sensory deprivation" by cross-referencing Emilie Baltz's Lickestra with "TV dinners". On the one hand, Lickestra demonstrated technology's potential as an ideal sensory amplifier, prompting me to question why mainstream applications tend to prioritise "control" and "deprivation" over "connection" and "amplification". This is due to underlying socioeconomic and capitalist structures. On the other hand, the historical case of "TV dinners" reflects an era in which authentic social interaction and sensory substance were sacrificed in favour of efficiency and entertainment. In my upcoming studio practice, I believe the goal should be to make technological changes more visible rather than to remove technology from the ritual of eating. So, how can people, food imagery, and interactive experiences become tangible? Previously, in my pursuit of visual universality and legibility, I risked removing those warm, unquantifiable dining experiences from my designs. In retrospect, my design tools became "numb and detached" instruments—a mistake. I must reconsider defining pleasure and humour as my primary design principles. Overall, this is an effective strategy that has helped me understand how to connect with audiences and lead them to reflect.

Second, in his book Consumption in Asia: Lifestyles and Identities, Beng-Huat Chua contends that within rapidly changing modern Asian cities, the inherent factors that once defined identity - such as family, class, and place of birth - are becoming increasingly blurred. Instead, people are turning to consumption to choose, construct, and declare "who I am". Whether it's "food photography," "face culture," or "check-ins," these behaviours all contribute to a carefully crafted personal brand -

that communicates taste, class, and lifestyle. Food gains "symbolic value" in digital culture because it carries the cultural impetus of identity construction. Thus, what we consume is never the food itself; rather, we engage in a performance about our self-identity through its "symbolic value". To articulate my position, I should demonstrate the shift in value from "shared eating" to "shared viewing" by anchoring the "cost" to a specific sense of cultural loss.

## *Explorations in my work*

I found Henry Franks' three rules for creating humour in objects in his project "Humour in Design" particularly intriguing: 1. Being in an unusual location. 2. Acting in an unusual way 3. Being the wrong size (Franks, H. 2015). Through displacement, incongruity, and exaggeration, we can reconsider the "misplaced" relationship of technology encroaching on the dining table. In my practice, I used multiple juxtapositions to present digitally enhanced food imagery, which served as a symbol of social capital. I also used overlooked physical realities to express the loss of utilitarian value. To highlight the unique East Asian urban cultural context, Chapter Two delves into banquet ritual protocols and emotional exchanges, demonstrating how electronic devices are reshaping traditional "face" culture and relational networks. Finally, I created an inviting interactive segment using deliberate "abnormality" and "displacement". An AR scanning experience allows audiences to see how technology is reshaping food rituals.

In short, while electronic devices have led us to place a higher value on the "symbolic significance" of food rituals over certain sensory experiences, it is undeniable that they have reshaped contemporary urban eating practices across East Asia, ushering in a new identity-forming mechanism. This reconfiguration preserves the East Asian cultural essence of social interaction through dining while also instilling contemporary identity with new meaning through entirely new mediating forms.

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