

Design Explorations

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01

Design Intentions

01

02

“You are invisible, limpid, transparent. You no longer exist: across the passing hours, the succession of days, the procession of the seasons, the flow of time, you survive, without joy and without sadness, without a future and without a past. Just like that: simply, self-evidently, like a drop of water forming on a drinking tap on a landing.”

03

Throughout my studies of the field of experience design, I have recognised innovation as the driving force of experiential practices; however, I also believe that the simplest form of innovation is making something new out of something that is already there. This belief has been reinforced by the writing of Georges Perec, who, in his works *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* and *The Infra-Ordinary* encourages his audience to question their teaspoons (Perec, 1974), “to question that which seems to have ceased forever to astonish us” (Perec, 1973). Perec writes vividly about this continuous questioning, through looking, seeing and experiencing space (Satin, 2019:154). Much like Eliasson’s work, Perec’s writing explores spatial consciousness and experience, with an emphasis on the semantics and impact of embodiment. These elements have been exploited by the practitioners I have previously discussed in incredibly effective ways, using the materials at their disposal. This determined me to question the materials that I have at my disposal; and I quickly realised that the most frequently used one is, in fact, typography. In similar ways to Perec’s writing, whose textual space is often a detailed, experiential rendition of physical space, I wanted to explore the ways in which my use of typographic elements, and the contents they channel through to the audience, are a representation of the sensory deprived way of life that many of us experience. For this, I have decided to incorporate fragments of a quote from Perec’s *Things: A Story of the Sixties; A Man Asleep* within the concept of my Final Major Project:

“As the hours, the days, the weeks, the seasons slip by, you detach yourself from everything. You discover, with something that sometimes almost resembles exhilaration, that you are free. You find, in this life exempt from wear and tear and with no thrill in it other than these suspended moments, an almost perfect, fascinating happiness, occasionally swollen by new emotions. You are living in a blessed parenthesis, in a vacuum full of promise, from which you expect nothing. You are invisible, limpid, transparent. You no longer exist: across the passing hours, the succession of days, the procession of the seasons, the flow of time, you survive, without joy and without sadness, without a future and without a past. Just like that: simply, self-evidently, like a drop of water forming on a drinking tap on a landing.” (Perec, 1965:84)

04

“(…) Uncertainty is important to me, as it encourages people to think and sense beyond the limits within which they are accustomed to moving.”

05

All of my findings have determined me to develop a piece of design that is only truly effective when someone else is there to experience its properties, which, in effect, is what all design pieces are, but I wanted to explore making this concept more poignant. Inspired by Eliasson's use of unusual materials, and keeping Percec's rendition on embodiment in mind, I decided experimenting with employing a material that can only be generated by the participants involved: their own body heat. I have evaluated the mechanics of Accept and Proceed's installations and the organic creative development of Conditional Design's interventions. Through this research and exploration, I have developed a conceptual site-specific, print-based installation, constructed out of three layers: a large-format poster of Percec's quote; a thin acrylic sheet covered in thermochromic black ink which obstructs the text from the viewers until they interact directly with it; and the viewers' own heat-emanating hands, alongside the actions they perform when interacting with the installation. In this context, interaction and experience become a means of uncovering modern yet fundamental truths about the desensitised nature of their experience. Through the way the typographic elements are arranged within the poster, and through the touch sequence the participants choose to use, they uncover different areas of the text that expose sequences with different meanings. Upon one interaction, the poster might uncover words such as "perfect happiness", and upon another, one might find the words "You no longer exist.". My intention with my choice of the quote and placement on the poster is to create uncertainty and contradiction within my audience, elements which I then use to subvert their expectations and increase their desire to interact with my piece. This negotiation that arises within the designed piece and the audience creates the experience itself, and, as explored within *Visual Summaries 1* and *2*, has now been translated from research and contextual findings to a developed piece of design, which can generate individual, rather than contextual, findings in and of itself. The participants are intentionally distanced from the object until they physically (and cognitively) interact with; it is through this intentional disruption and the performative, spectacle element of my experiential structure (the ink transforming from pitch black to transparent upon tactile interaction) that I hope to incite a de-entrancing reaction within my audience, as well as a desire for more experiential play within the context of my installation. These interactions will be explored within the context of a small exhibition I set up specifically for this installation, which I have documented in chapters 04 & 05 of this book.

06

02

Installation Concept

07

08

As the hours, the days, the weeks, the seasons slip by, you detach yourself from everything. You discover, with something that sometimes almost resembles exhilaration, that you are free. You find, in this life exempt from wear and tear and with no thrill in it other than these suspended moments, an almost perfect, fascinating happiness, occasionally swollen by new emotions. You are living in a blessed parenthesis, in a vacuum full of promise, from which you expect nothing. You are invisible, limpid, transparent. You no longer exist: across the passing hours, the succession of days, the procession of the seasons, the flow of time, you survive, without joy and without sadness, without a future and without a past. Just like that: simply, self-evidently, like a drop of water forming on a drinking tap on a landing.

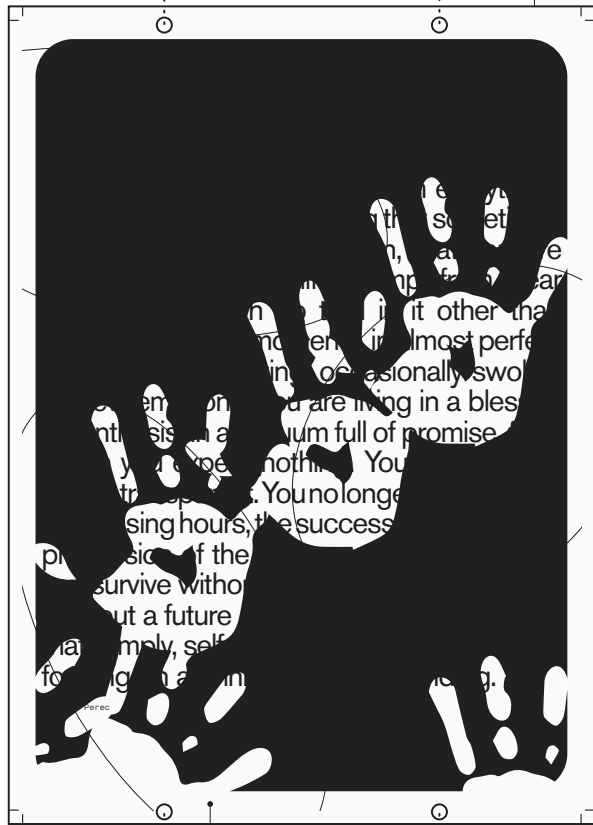
Georges Perec

A2 typographic poster (420 x 594 mm).

420 x 594 mm and 2mm thick clear acrylic layer, with ink area marked on it.

Layer of thermochromic ink; transforms from black to transparent when touched (28° C).

The participants' body heat.



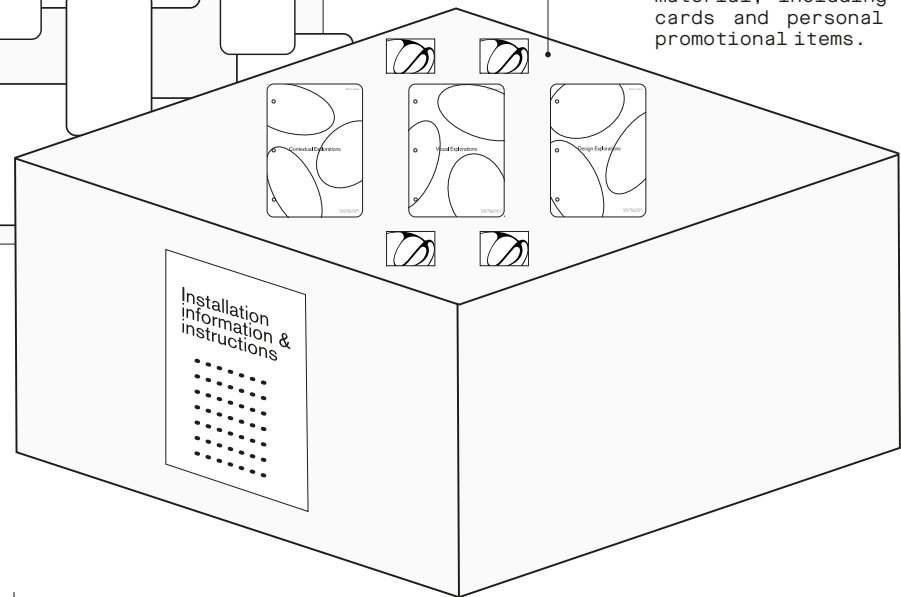
Interactive installation:
a print-based thermochromic installation; final outcome of this project.


Shaping perception. Shifting perspectives.



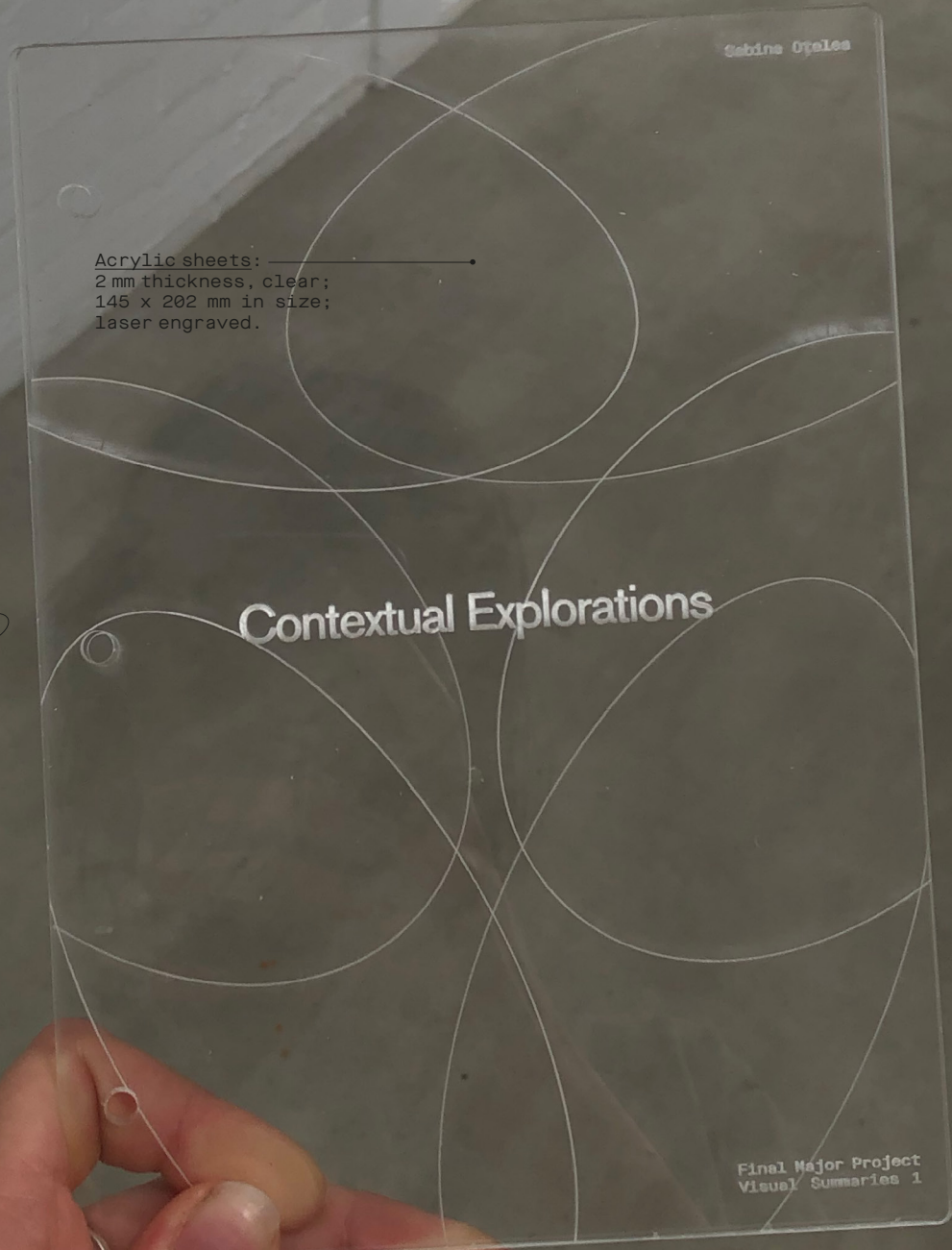
Research board:
a collection of visual and contextual research that went into the development of the project.

Supporting material:
a display option for the research books associated with this project, and promotional material, including business cards and personal branding promotional items.

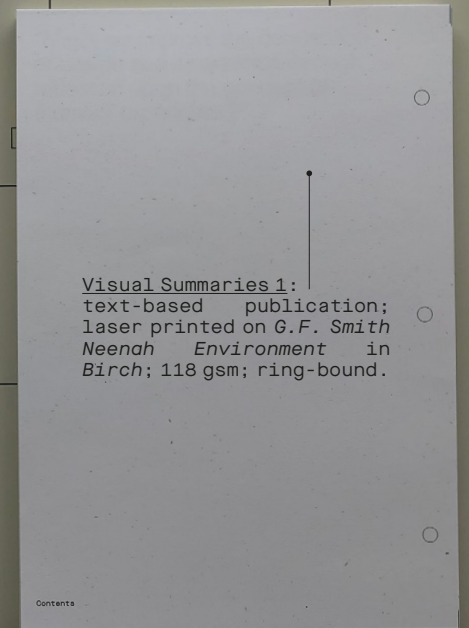
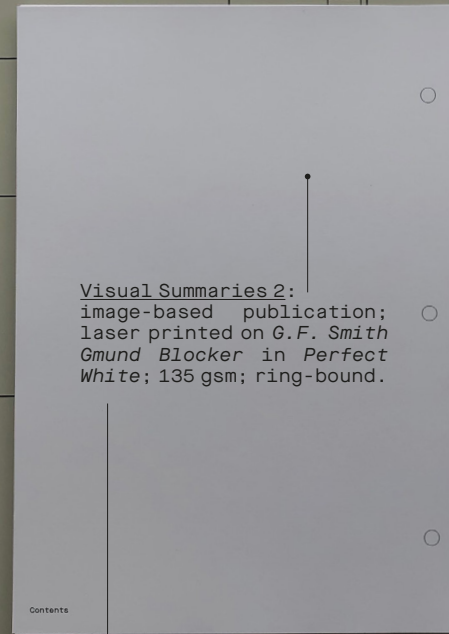


A close-up photograph of a human hand, palm facing up, against a black background. The hand is overlaid with a thermal or heat map visualization. The colors range from dark blue (cooler) to bright yellow and white (warmer). The palm and fingers show a mix of colors, with the palm being predominantly blue and purple. The thumb and the side of the hand are significantly warmer, appearing in shades of yellow, orange, and white. A thin white line with a small dot at the end points from the text on the left towards the palm area.

Body heat:
probably the most important
element of the installation;
the participants' engagement
is crucial for revealing the
intended outcomes of the
interactive installation .



19



A4

20





21

Thermochromic ink:
50% thermochromic pigment;
50% binding medium; changes
from black to transparent at
28°C+; 100ml.



22

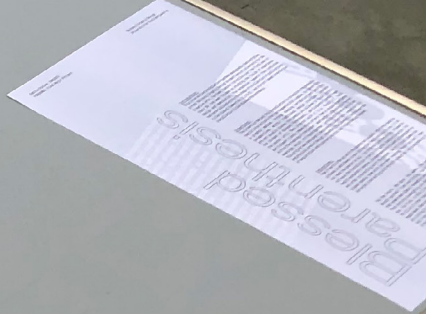
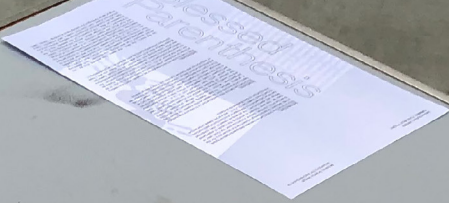
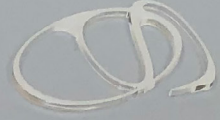
Acrylic sheet:
420 x 594 mm and 2mm thick
clear acrylic layer, with
ink active area laser
engraved onto it.

Active interaction area: —————•
392 x 554 mm in size, with
laser engraved delimitations;
effect presented at 30°C.

04

Final Outcome

29



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32



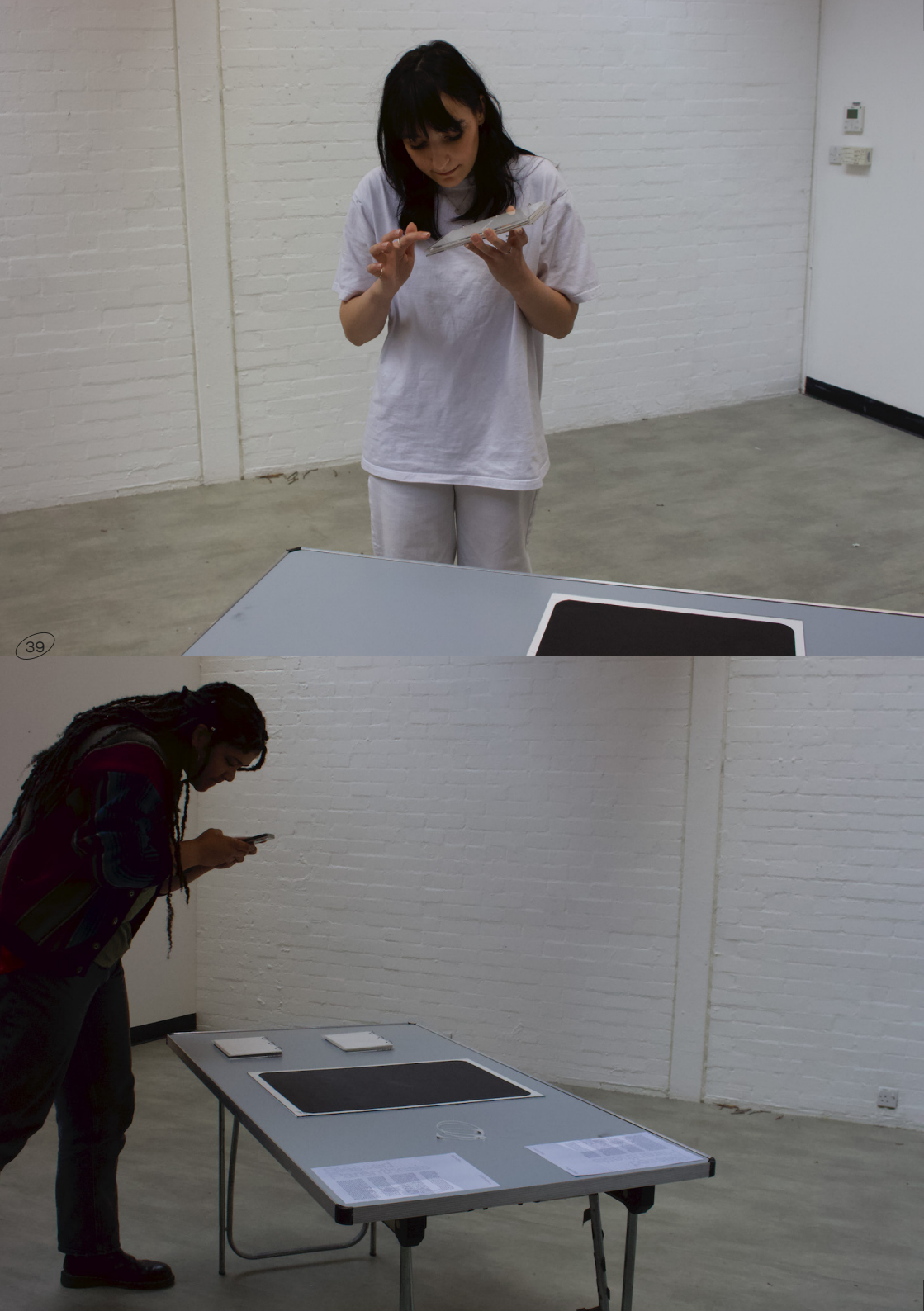
"Might we improve the
of design and the
reflections and the
through..."





37

38



“Whole new worlds are imagined by writers, film-makers, and artists. Could this approach be integrated into design education so design schools could become a source of alternative ideas and counter narratives, materialised through design, that provoke thought and further imagining about the kind of worlds people wish to live in rather than prescribing any one particular future or communicating a vision of how things will, or should be?”

The most fitting word I can assign to this project is “challenging”. Through reflecting critically on my work and the processes employed, I realised that most of the time spent on developing this project was dedicated to troubleshooting the various components that make up the experience of the installation designed: the possible interactions that the materials used allow; developing typographic structures that are confined to the natural rules and order of reading, but whose content subverts the ways in which people gather meaning from the experience; and exploring different materials and techniques. I believe that this project is completely defined by the research which supports it, which I have aimed to explore as comprehensively as possible, primarily within the form of sketchbook-keeping. The most prominent downfall of my Final Major Project is its lack of exploration within the context of my final outcomes. Had I had more time within the overarching timeline of the project, I would have experimented with my chosen materials more, and I would have done many more tests beforehand, to ensure the proper functioning of the materials. However, I believe that the ample time for exploration allocated to the contextual research and documentation areas of my project make up for its lack of practical exploration, as I have gathered a plethora of knowledge which I will definitely be using within future projects of the same nature, as well as for personal exploratory endeavours. One of the most effective elements of my primary research process was my participation within designed experiences; taking part within these designed environments as a participant helped me understand what was needed in order to create them, and through internalising that knowledge I was capable of applying some of the findings within my own process. All of this personal reflection has been translated within the design process of the final deliverables created. The *Visual Summaries* collection, as well as the *Blessed Parenthesis* installation, have been created in unison, connected together through the research conducted and the intentions I have set in place since the beginning of the project. Whilst the installation itself is without a doubt imperfect and can definitely be refined, I believe that these imperfections added to the challenge of both designing and making it, and enhanced my own relationship with my Final Major Project. The impact the installation had on my audience is not something I can measure, but something for the audience to decide. Despite that uncertainty (one of the driving forces of this entire process), I believe that my Final Major Project granted me the opportunity to create something truly exploratory and experimental, to question and challenge the materials I had at my disposal, and to collaborate with people who are masters of their craft. *Blessed Parenthesis* was my way of simultaneously finishing my undergraduate studies and opening up an entirely new realm of professional and academic development, which I am incredibly excited to continue exploring.

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