

# Present

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Equally important to the content and medium of a message is the way that people come into contact with it. Consider how the meaning of the text of a book is shaped as much by its design and construction as it is by the mode of distribution that gets it into the hands of a reader. Was it encountered in a bookstore or in a library? Did it arrive through the letterbox in a cardboard Amazon sleeve? Was it emailed between friends as a low resolution scan? Did the reader pay for it? How much did it cost? Who owns it? Does it have an owner? How many copies were printed?

In her essay 'In Defense of the Poor Image'—required reading for this brief—Hito Steyerl discusses how the low resolution and high compression of a 'poor' image upends its value and meaning:

*The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and reedited. It transforms quality into accessibility, exhibition value into cult value, films into clips, contemplation into distraction. The image is liberated from the vaults of cinemas and archives and thrust into digital uncertainty, at the expense of its own substance. (...)*

*They testify to the violent dislocation, transferrals, and displacement of images—their acceleration and circulation within the vicious cycles of audiovisual capitalism. Poor images are dragged around the globe as commodities or their effigies, as gifts or as bounty. They spread pleasure or death threats, conspiracy theories or bootlegs, resistance or stultification. (...)*

*Their situation reveals much more than the content or appearance of the images themselves: it also reveals the conditions of their marginalization, the constellation of social forces leading to their online circulation as poor images.*

In this brief you'll experiment with the circulation and mobility of knowledge, exploring how it develops and changes through transactions with viewers, readers, users and/or participants.

Select *one* of the initial prompts from the following page. Choose quickly and intuitively based on your own interests. Then get straight on to making stuff.

## TUTORS

Max Colson  
Houman Momtazian  
Abbie Vickress

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## SCHEDULE

Nov 24–26      Presentation of progress with critical discussion and feedback

Mon, Nov 30  
14:00 GMT

Final studio project and written response submitted via Moodle as part of Unit 1 midpoint assessment submission

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## REQUIRED READINGS/REFERENCES

Hito Steyerl, 'In Defense of the Poor Image', *The Wretched of the Screen*, 2012 [[pdf](#)]  
Matthias Fritsch, *The Story of the Technoviking: Short Version*, 2015 [[Vimeo](#)]

## PRESENT

## 1 RECONFIGURING

Select some material that you find interesting—a (1) [text](#) (article, chapter, or series of excerpts), (2) [collection of images](#), (3) [video](#), or (4) [song](#)—then lift it out of its *native* format or platform and reconfigure it to circulate through a very different format or platform. For example, reconfigure a text to circulate as a video, or reconfigure a video to circulate as a book, etc.

Critically reflect on how this new mode of circulation changes your selected material. Then take this outcome and reconfigure and recirculate it *again*. For example, take your text-as-video and reconfigure it as a book, or take your video-as-book and reconfigure it as a text.

## READINGS

Alexandra Ludovico, 'Post-Digital Print: A Future Scenario' and 'Print vs. Electrons', *Post-Digital Print: The Mutation of Publishing since 1984*, 2012 [[pdf](#)]  
Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations*, [1935] 1969 [[pdf](#)]

## REFERENCES

!Mediengruppe Bitnik, [Download Finished](#)  
Eva and Franco Mattes, [Hybrids](#)  
Asger Jorn, [Modification paintings](#)  
Idris Khan, [photo illustrations of London landmarks](#)

## 2 NOTATING

Create a system of visual notation that allows an everyday action to be recorded and then reproduced in different time, place, or context without reference to the original.

Consider how music notation, traffic signs, architectural plans, shopping lists, assembly instructions, etc., are all notational systems for action. They not only make information visible, but they also make a *process* visible.

Your system should be self-explanatory and require no supporting information. Emphasize visual systems (as opposed to verbal or written description). The form of your system should arise from its native form and content.

## READINGS

Lucy Siyao Liu, "Before code, beyond speech", *The Creative Independent*, 2018 [[article](#)]  
Jason Forrest, "'Treatise': A Visual Symphony of Information Design", *Nightingale*, 2019 [[article](#)]

## REFERENCES

George Brecht, [Water Yam](#)  
Ken Friedman, Owen Smith, and Lauren Sawchyn (ed.), [Fluxus Performance Workbook](#)  
Sándor P. Fekete and Sebastian Morr, *IDEA Instructions*  
Maria McLean and Eva Webe, [Script for Basic Human...](#)  
Stefanie Posavec, [Drawing the Dictionary](#)

## 3 CATALOGUING

Select one of these sets of material: (1) [some old post-cards](#), (2) [the Debrett's etiquette guide](#), (3) [the Twitter discussion of Harper's 'Open Letter on Justice and Debate'](#), or (4) [a set of images from ImageNet](#). Then:

(a) Working through exploration and iteration, design an unexpected way of cataloguing or archiving this material either physically or digitally.

(b) Devise a set of rules or protocols that prompt 'users' to combine, add, subtract, or edit material from your catalogue/archive. Record at least three substantial interactions with 'users'.

## READINGS

Jeremy Till, 'Contingency', *Architecture Depends*, 2009 [[pdf](#)]  
Shannon Matter, 'Marginalia: Little Libraries in the Urban Margins', *Places Journal*, 2012 [[article](#)]

## REFERENCES

Sophie Calle, [Take Care of Yourself](#)  
Mitch Miller, [Dialectograms](#)  
[Story Corps](#)  
Ryder Phipps, [Alone together](#)  
Oliver Laric, [Reclining Pan](#)  
Walid Raad, [The Atlas Group](#)

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WRITTEN RESPONSE

Develop a 300–500-word piece of writing in response to the prompt outlined below. Look for ways to engage deeply and critically with writing as a medium, considering how the structure, tone, and visual qualities of your writing are implicated in the formation of knowledge. Take a creative and exploratory approach:

- 1 *Identify any item for sale in Waitrose King's Cross that you find interesting. (If it's not expensive, you might want to purchase it. Otherwise, make sure to document it thoroughly so that you can continue to study it later.)*
- 2 *Select one reading from the course reading list that you think can be brought into a productive (or counter-productive) relationship with this item.*
- 3 *In the form of a short piece of writing, use the two to interpret and interrogate one another. If you're not sure how to start, consider the following questions: In what ways does the item from Waitrose engage with or mime the methods discussed in the reading? Do the item and the reading respond to the same or different contexts? Are they contributing to the same or different conversations? How can you bring them closer together or push them further apart? Which one has more cultural value? Which one is more real?*

Submit your writing via Moodle as a Word file or PDF no larger than 20 MB.

Please also include—as a separate page of the same document—your notes from the final crit for the corresponding project brief. Important: Include your own name in the filename and also list it somewhere on the submission itself.

Please ensure that you follow academic conventions for referencing and quoting the work of others. At UAL we use a version of the Harvard style of referencing. Details and examples can be found at [citethemrightonline.com](https://citethemrightonline.com).