



Conversations through Calligraphy

Project III Report
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The Visual Communication Project III entitled

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Guide:

Chairperson:

External examiner:

Internal Examiner:

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*'For every form,
He has been the ideal,
His form, visible everywhere.'*

Rig Veda VI.47.18

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Early expression and evolution of Language



World's oldest paintings
cave art on the walls of
France's Grotte Chauvet

Urge to express

Drawings and paintings found in caves and various locations across the world, which were actually produced a million years ago are evidence enough to suggest that an urge to communicate and express has stayed with humans since a very long time. We humans are gifted with an instinct to learn to communicate. The evolution in the process of communication led to the creation of language.

Derek Bickerton has suggested that language may have evolved in two major steps.

- 1) Protolanguage of symbolic representation, verbal or gestural signs
- 2) Formal syntax - the study of the rules for the formation of grammatical sentences in a language. The study of the patterns of formation of sentences and phrases from words

A system of verbal communication emerged from proto-linguistic or non-linguistic means of communication.

System for communication - Language

A language is a system, used to communicate, comprised of a set of symbols and a set of rules (or grammar) by which the manipulation of these symbols is governed - *Wikipedia*.

Set of symbols and rules - alphabets & Grammar

Single units of sounds, combine to form words which have different meanings; words could be further clubbed into phrases and sentences in a variable structure that enables the use of these meanings in multiple ways.

Though the symbol and the meaning relationship is arbitrary, the combinations and contexts in which the same can be applied helps associating different meanings with the same finite set of symbols.

A considerable volume of work has been done in the areas of content of the written word :

- 1) its semantic structure
- 2) its linguistic interconnections
- 3) its etymology and grammar

Script and writing



Linguistics - Study of languages

Human urge to express to communicate, led to evolution of sound into speech, gave speech structure – as language, and shape – as writing.

Writing as a graphic counterpart of speech

From the point of view of linguistic evolution, spoken is prior to written language. An accumulation of wisdom necessitated its being recorded in written characters. Large collections of spoken language are difficult to create and hard to find, and are typically transcribed and written. It helps in keeping a persistent record of the spoken language. Speech appears to be a human universal, whereas there have been many cultures and speech communities that lack written communication. Language as speech is held to be an evolutionary adaptation, whereas writing is a comparatively recent invention and requires to be deliberately taught. Spoken language on the contrary is instinctively learnt.

Writing systems

Writing system is a type of symbolic system used to represent elements or statements expressible in language

The act of composing text is 'writing'

The act of interpreting this written text is 'reading'

Invention of drawing and signs developed into art of Egyptian pictograph, the Chinese ideograph and the Semitic Phoenician alphabetic signary.

Systems of writing differ vastly across time and cultures. However, the fundamental principles of the origin, the how and why of the configuration of letterforms, their intrinsic attributes, and in perceptions of their necessity and purpose, there appear uncanny cross-cultural likenesses.

Practically all cultures, particularly those of ancient origin, have held the act of writing in great, and justifiable, reverence.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

Nagarjunakonda Scribe
RAJA LEKHAYA

Wooden Scribe from Thebes
(Cairo Museum)

Assyrian Scribes
(8th Century B.C.)

God Toth
In the form of IBIS

Cuneiform Script
Royal Palace of Ebla,
2400 B. C. E



Hieroglyphic script
tomb of Horem Heb



Hieratic writing on Papyrus1285
B. C. E.



Script and writing

汉字

Logograms used for
Chinese characters

Writing systems pictures - pictograms - ideograms -

The earliest illustrations of expression were in the form of **pictures** and **drawings**.

These drawings then graduated towards a certain specific set of pictures that were assigned specific meanings. This is how '**Pictograms**' developed. They were basically illustrations that represented a concept, object, place or event. It is a picture representing a word or an idea, also called as a **Hieroglyph**. It consists of pictures that resembles the signified. It was the basis of the Cuneiform script which was one of the earliest scripts known. Enmerkar - legendary Sumerian king, ascribed invention of cuneiform c. 2300 BC according to Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta epic. Thoth - mythical Egyptian deity, ascribed invention of Egyptian hieroglyphics c. 3000 BC according to tradition.

Similarly, an '**Ideogram**' is a picture or graphic that represents an idea. In this case the picture or the illustration may not be directly representative or identical to the signified. It instead is a certain graphic which arbitrarily represents a certain word or idea. Fu Hsi - legendary Chinese king, ascribed invention of Chinese characters c. 2850 BC and Cangjie - legendary Chinese scribe, also ascribed invention of Chinese characters c. 2650 BC according to tradition.

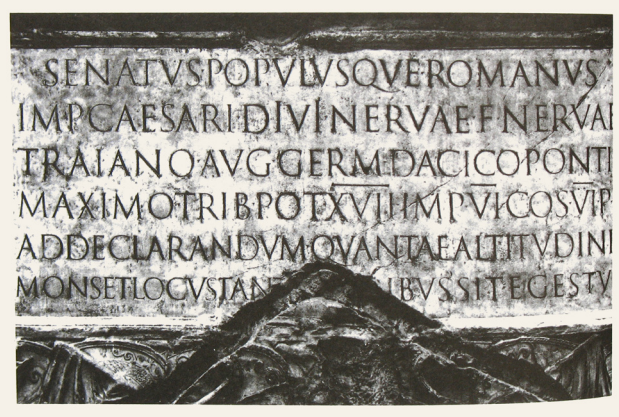
As opposed to the others, the '**Alphabetic script**' is one wherein a set of symbols represent all the possible phonemes of the spoken language. They are therefore graphemes that represent the consonants and vowels which when grouped together to form words, that have been assigned meanings. This developed in the form of Phoenician script which has been the origin of most of the alphabetic scripts of the world.

The system of Grammar lays down the structure of the compositions for the group of words in the form of phrases and sentences. Thus a limited set of alphabets can then be framed into words that have their own meanings and when put together in sentences a group of words can have certain meanings again.

The alphabetic symbols or the elements, the number of graphemes, the combination of consonants and vowels and the structure of Grammar differs from language to language.

Each script has evolved over the years. It becomes a part of the culture it exists in. It is a part of our day-to-day lives and is constantly under the influence of the changes in the community. It contributes greatly to the identity of the community as well and is generally held in high regard.

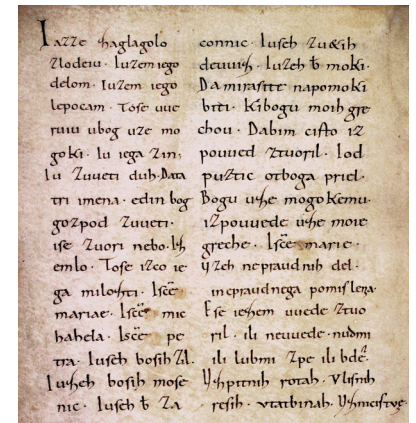
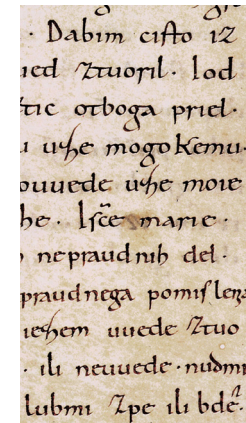
Trajan column inscription



Roman Capitals found on the Trajan Column



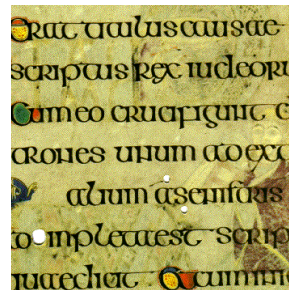
Writing through the ages



The Carolingian script



Book of Kells



Use of miniscule or small alphabets

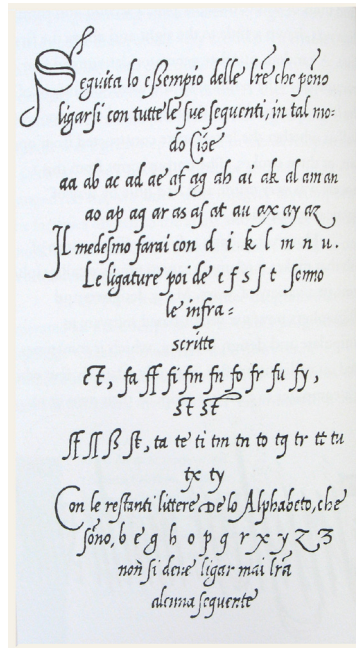
Evolution of Greek-Roman writing

Initial references of the Roman letters have been found engraved on the Trajan Column. It is the most famous example of square Roman capitals. Originally alphabets were written entirely in majuscule (capital) letters. When written quickly with a pen, these tended to rounder and much simpler forms, like uncials. It is from these that the first minuscule hands developed. One of the examples is the Book of Kells where the script is referred to as the Insular Majuscule. This further developed into the cursive hand. The insular majuscule and cursive then led to the development of the Carolingian script which has rounded letter forms, standard shapes and adequate word spaces for legibility.

Humanistic script in Latin



Arrighi one of the first scribes to define principles of good handwriting



14th century Psalter



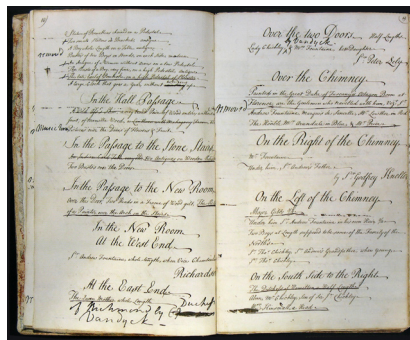
que euangelizarū et apostolorū au-
toritas promulgauit. In quibz mlt-
ta de veteri testamento legitur que i
nostris codicibus non habentur: ut
est illud. et egipto vocaui filiū meū: ⁊
quoniā nazarethus vocābitur: et vi-

Black letter

Writing through the ages



Edward Cocker - copy-book

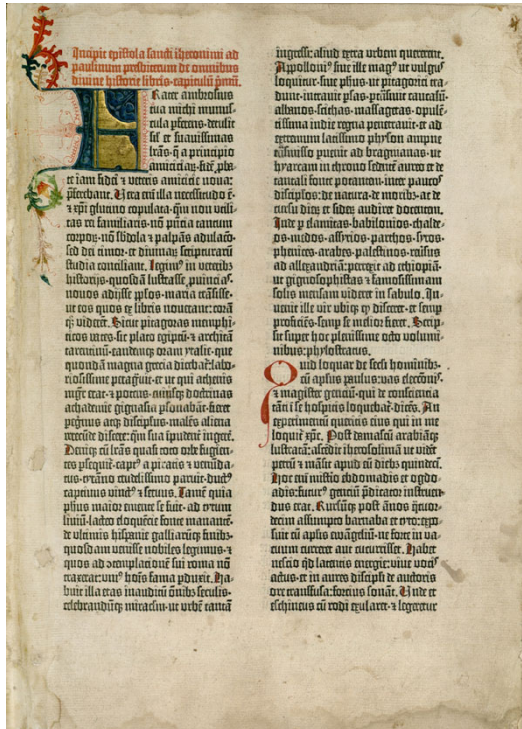


Notes of Sir Andrew Fountaine knight

Evolution of Greek-Roman writing

The Carolingian script later evolved into the Cursive script where all the alphabets in a word were joined. A lot of scribes laid the basics of good handwriting and also standardised terms like word-spacing etc. which have sustained until now. Blackletter, also known as Gothic script or Gothic minuscule, was a script used throughout Western Europe from approximately 1150 to 1500. This script was adapted further from the Carolingian and the Cursive script. Different versions of this script were widely used in different places. It was the Black letter script that was first casted for the purpose of printing. Hence the first ever printed text was in Black letter.

Typography



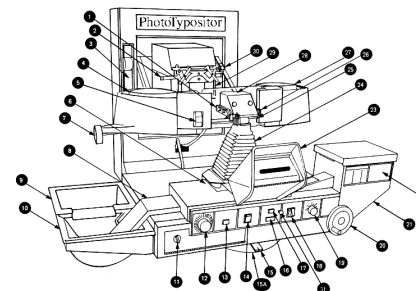
Gutenberg's first printed Bible
Metal type setting - letterpress

ingredi: aliud extra urbem querere. Apollonius fuit ille magus ut vulgus loquitur: fuit philosophus praecipua ratione: uicarius uicibus praefuit caucasi: albanos scythas: mallagras: opulenti summa indie regna perrexit: et ad septimum latissimum phylon ampne riuissio peruenit ad bragmanas: ut hysarcani in theonis federe auerere te cauasi foret peruenit: inter paucos discipulos: de uicaria: et moribus: et de ceteris diuis: et fides: audire docerunt. Inde per flumina: babilonios: thaltes: uicibus: althios: parthos: thros: pharicos: arabos: palestinos: misit ad allea uicaria: perrexit ad ethiopia: ut per greges pharicos: et lamothim am fides uicibus: uideret in fobolis: quoniam ille uir ubique per disceret: et tempore probatus: tempore uicibus: et tempore super hoc planissime: edo uolumi: uicibus: phylotocano.

Quid loquar de fedi hominibus: si aplice paulus: uas electorum: et magister gentium: qui te confirmata sunt: et te holperis: loquidat: dicit. In septuaginta quibus: tempore qui in uicibus loquitur: sic. Post temalati arabibus: hysarcani: althios: thros: thaltes: uicibus: uideret in fobolis: quoniam ille uir ubique per disceret: et tempore probatus: tempore uicibus: et tempore super hoc planissime: edo uolumi: uicibus: phylotocano.



Metal type setting



Phototypesetter



Phototype setting



Pasting

Type and its evolution

Handwriting was once upon a time the only way to document information. Hence legibility in handwriting and stress on good handwriting was prevalent. However with the invention of printing, mass production of written language took an altogether different direction.

The initial printing started with **metal cast letters** that were typeset to form compositions. **Letterpress** is used till today for certain purposes. (1954)
Followed by manual typesetting came the **Monotype** and **Linotype** machines. **Phototypesetter** allowed exposure of chosen fonts on a film strip and their reproduction in various sizes using the phototypesetter. Thus the physical metal casting process was replaced by a photochemical process. (start 1950-60, end 1975-85)
With the technological advances, **digitization of fonts** became possible and facilitated the creation of a huge variety of fonts that could be used invariably and composed on digital softwares for various purposes. These could be reproduced for different specific purposes like newspapers, advertising, packaging, web, display, etc. (stated 1983)

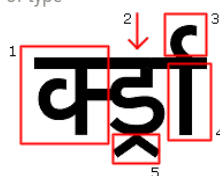
The advent of type, rid handwriting from the burden of standardisation and mass-production. This allowed handwriting to be far more expressive and it enabled breaking away from the stereotypicality of type. The writer can add life to his letters and he need not adhere to any rules set for writing. It remains organic in nature.

Type and languages

Different languages have different scripts. The structures of these scripts too vary from one another. Hence with any type related technology, there are certain aspects that require attention on account of these differences. Details in terms of the input, the composition as well as the output vary. For instance the type technology that works for the Latin scripts does not work for Devanagiri because of its structural differences. Eg. The joining of additional signs as vowels to the consonants requires syllables to be broken in three degrees. Thus making type in Devanagiri more complicated.

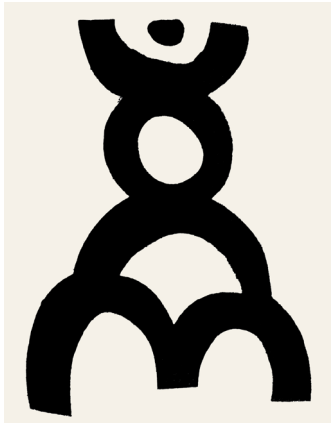


Digitization of type



Type - Indian Languages

Calligraphy



Calli-graphy

The word 'Calli' means beautiful and the word graph means 'mark'. Therefore primarily calligraphy means a beautiful mark. Calligraphy has been defined variously as the art of beautiful writing, a picture of the mind, the geometry of the soul, the kinetic art of written expression.

It is the expression of sound, idea, inspiration through form.

It begins with the urge in ones mind to articulate a thought or a feeling. This is resonated in the mind as a sound, further translated in speech by means of language. Calligraphy gives form to this language. These forms are not just some arbitrary shapes but extremely meaningful drawings and they have a life that can be felt. They are therefore an expression with an ultimate objective to manifest the 'unseen'.

Although writing evolved as a means to record information, practically all cultures hold the art of writing in great, and justifiable reverence. It is not merely taking down notes in a standard manner, but to express the impulse in an idea, thought or an inspiration.

Calligraphy establishes an identity of being the most ideal form for communicating a sound or concept.

Languages evolved into various pictographic, ideographic, syllabic, phonetic and alphabetic scripts. Written forms were used for translating spoken language into written language. They did not merely transfer the meaning from one form to the other. They held a meaning of their own within themselves as well.

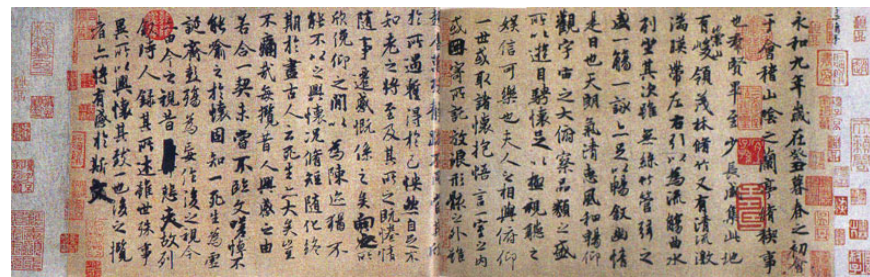
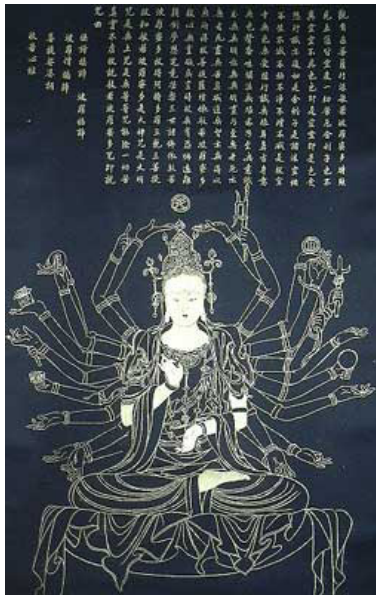
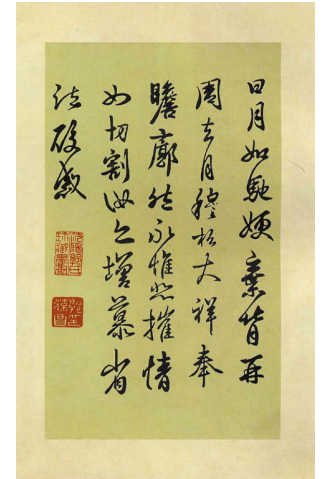
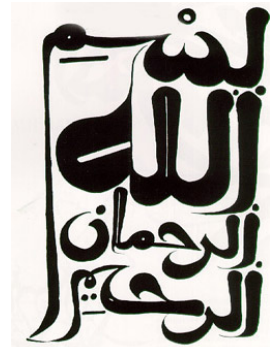
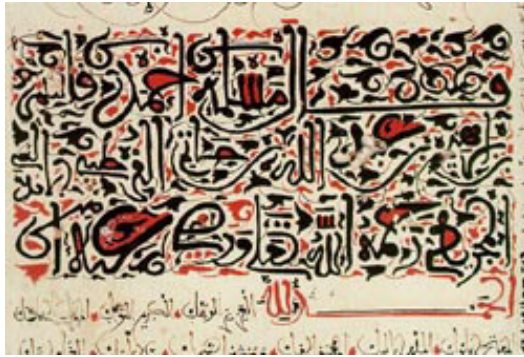
We are conditioned to see letters as arbitrary signs and hence we do not realise the potential, the life or the character of the letters due to lack of awareness and exposure. The subject is only introduced for study in certain educational programmes. As a child when taught letters, the essence of the letters is completely overlooked and we only learn to identify them as signs and not forms of expressions.

Calligraphy creates an awareness of the metaphysical (adhyatmic), aesthetic (saundarya), structural (rachana), spatial (akasha) and technical (upayojana) considerations of the aksharas (forms).

In the pursuit of expression, a calligrapher draws these forms to suggest a meaning. It emerges out of his own interpretation of the source itself. The forms are therefore no longer a group of alphabets or forms that together form arbitrary meanings. Every form emanates a meaning, every form stands by itself.

One feels completely one with the thought, the idea or an inspiration, and then with an urge to translate it, through the medium of calligraphy becomes one with its manifestation.

Calligraphy from across the world



'Forms' the world over

A great amount of work done in the direction of calligraphy is found done across various scripts across the world. The writing systems differed across time and culture. Yet fundamentally the principles of origin, configuration of letterforms, the intrinsic attributes and perceptions of their necessity and purpose, there appear quite a few likenesses across all of them.

Calligraphy and its various tools



Form is the soul of Calligraphy.
The characteristics and nature of a form to a great extent depends on the tools and the manner in which a Calligrapher uses them on a surface.

"An unerring sense of relationship is called for:
of writing tool to surface, or content to form"

An expression in Calligraphy requires the hand to produce the most appropriate form, with the perfect stroke, the right force, the right tone, right energy, visual balance and right articulation.

Relationship with the surface and the tool

The calligrapher senses the essence or the nature of the content, and tries to derive an expression of the same feeling while he writes the same with a tool on a surface. A careful choice of the tool is inevitable and is an intrinsic part of the process. It plays a great role in the entire experience.

Writing tools and surfaces affect letterforms.

It actually gives it its identity & characteristics.

Chisel on stone - austere characters

Stylus on palm leaf - curvilinear scripts

Birchbark (bhurjapatra) and etched copperplate - formal quality of writing

Paper and brush, with inks in 'five shades of black' - vital art in China and Japan.

The quill, gliding over the smooth surfaces of parchment and vellum (made of sheepskin and calfskin, respectively), - intricate patterns of the illuminated manuscripts of Europe

"It is the broad nib that gives the pen its constructive and educational value. It is essentially the letter making tool." Edward Johnston

In India surfaces used for writing were:

rocks, pillars, gold plates, silver plates, copper plates, palm leaves, birch bark and cloth.

Meeting with Prof. Kshirsagar



Calligraphy Workshop
held in IDC in September 2007

Prof. Santosh Kshirsagar,

Faculty at the Sir. J. J. Institute of Applied Art, has been an ardent follower of Typography and has been practicing Calligraphy since quite a few years.

Following are certain insights that I received from him in due course of several conversations.

Question the very fundamental aspect of letterforms tracing back to why they were formed and where have they come from. Letterform is a baby of Visual Art given to society for development.

The history of letterforms plays an important role in its development. Hence a study in this direction is inevitable. Somewhere in the pedagogical manner of teaching alphabets and letterforms, history of letterforms is completely ignored. A study and documentation of the story of letters is extremely crucial.

Earlier there was a sort of standardisation in the technique of writing. With the advent of technology, that aspect has been taken care of by Typography. Letters are now free to sing their own songs...The forms are no longer bound by the conventional rules of writing.

On account of its use everywhere in our day-to-day lives letters have become more invisible. However they will never die. It is beyond the basic need.

Calligraphy is not just a craft, but a performing art as well. It is demonstration of a thought. It gives the pleasure of unfolding like singing does.

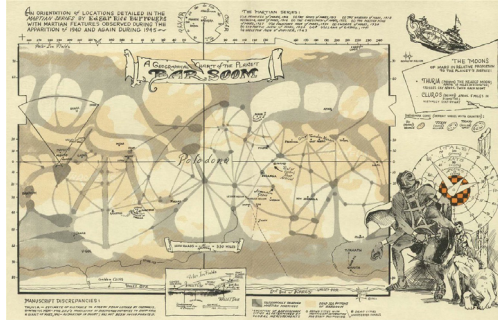
The function of script is not necessarily function of Calligraphy. Even when a script is taught, its aesthetic value is not introduced and there is no exposure in terms of form dimension of the letterforms. The basic letters - *Varna* - suggest colours of spoken sound. The vowels - *Varnamala* - suggest colours of sound in black & white in a linear structure. The reason Japanese calligraphy is primarily in black & white is because the tonal values itself allow people to see colours in them.

Mind exists in the abstract reality. It is either in the past or the future. In the present it is only the absence of mind which happens when I am doing and creation happens.

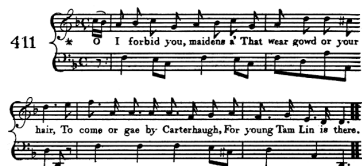
My sorrow is I can't be illiterate again.

My sorrow is my word will only reach to the limit of your vocabulary.

Cartography



Communication Design

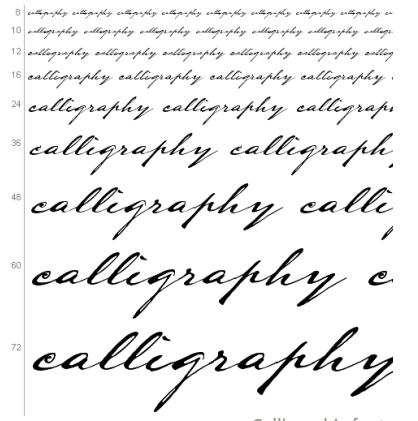


Musical Notes

Visual Poetry



Application and role today



Calligraphic fonts

Calligraphy in use

Calligraphy primarily began with the writing of important information or valuable knowledge. A lot of religious scriptures, notes, diaries, letters, notices, signboards, invitations, announcements, etc. are specimens of work done in calligraphy.

Cartography - A lot of topographic maps that were designed for reference purposes needed several names of places written on them in very tiny and fine writing.

Musical notation - Calligraphy has been an ideal medium to represent sound and hence even for the sake of recording music, the musical notes had calligraphic characteristics in them.

Visual poetry - A lot of literary work has been translated in Calligraphic compositions and expressions adding another layer of meaning to the text.

Computers - Typography has been an outcome of writing. Hence calligraphy has greatly influenced the design of many fonts and there are also certain fonts designed carefully to match the nature of authentic calligraphy.

Communication design - Even in communication design for various purposes, a typed font is very inadequate to convey the meaning or create the necessary appeal. A lot of designers choose to use handwritten text than typefaces for certain works.

Application and role today



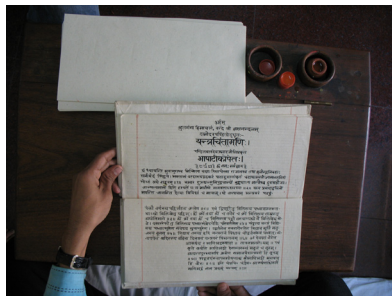
Rewriting the manuscripts

A lot of age old religious scriptures are found originally handwritten. These scriptures have lasted for centuries together and now being documented carefully again for further reference. In spite of the technology available and the several new methods of documenting it, a few people believe in the age old method and refuse to resort to computerisation of any such material. They believe if the original scriptures lasted so long that's the most trusted means available. New technology is ephemeral.

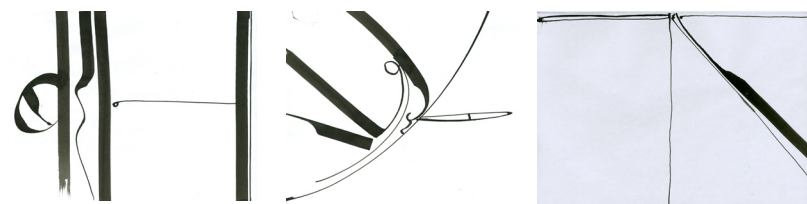
The Jain Mandir adopts the original writing method to document their holy scriptures. ShrutMandir, at Lohar Chawl, Mumbai, has many scribes that are funded by the Community for the meticulous writing of their scriptures.

Enormous care is taken in choosing original handmade paper specially made for the purpose made in Jaipur. They use traditional ink made from soot. The method of book-binding is also conventional. The loose leaves are sandwiched between two boards and tied in a cloth with a tag on it. The scribes write the text carefully from the resources and then it is proof read, embellished with other details and then wrapped into books.

The scribes are required to be dressed in special garments and they have to wear their special headgear.

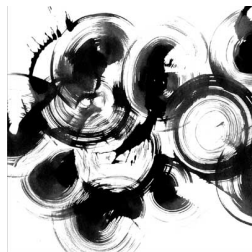


Aksharaya Calendar

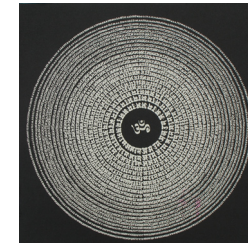
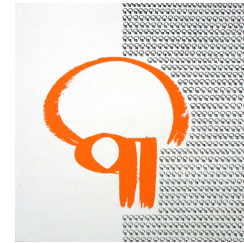


Work of Prof. Kshirsagar

Work of Achyut Palav



Contemporary Calligraphy



Work done at the Aksharyoga Seminar

Works of a few calligraphers

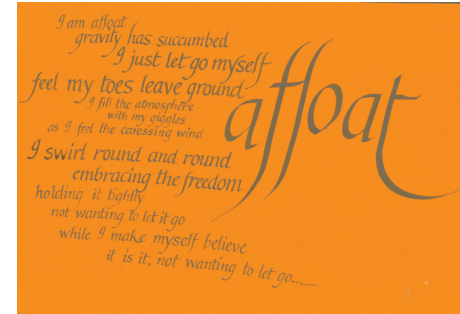
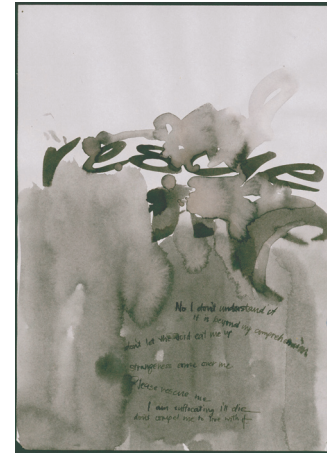
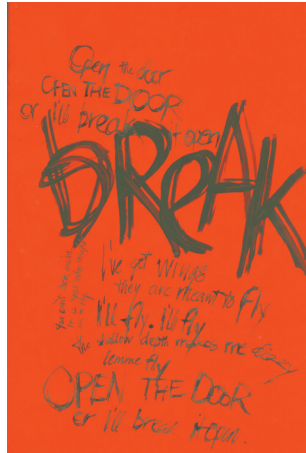
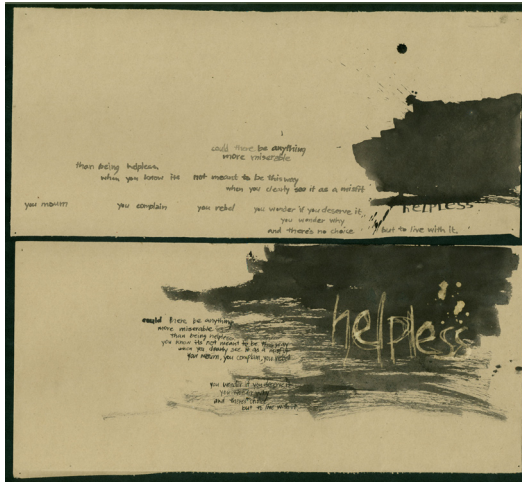
Aksharaya - is a group of people inclined with Typography and Calligraphy. They often come together, discuss the innovations in the field, their works, conduct seminars, workshops, etc. Aksharaya a calendar is a result of the work they did at a workshop.

Achyut Palav is very well known artist in the calligraphy circle, having worked with the subject for several years. An Applied Art graduate, receiver of Research Scholarship for his study in Modi script and an ex-faculty, he has a large amount of calligraphic work well representing the contemporary works in the field today.

Prof. Santosh Kshirsagar, a faculty member at the Sir. J. J. Institute of Applied Art, has been practicing calligraphy since a couple of years. He is a poet himself and has mastered the art of calligraphic expression to a great extent. In pursuit of exploring the forms of letters, he has worked with just one of them for more than 7 years and his quest for expression keeps growing.

Aksharyoga - a three day workshop in Calligraphy was held in IDC on the 3,4, 5 of February 1986. It brought together some of the finest calligraphers from India and abroad for a three day activity in Calligraphy. The workshop included demonstrations by the masters, calligraphy sessions, discussions on aspect of calligraphy and multi-lingual poetry sessions as well. Aksharyoga also led to a compilation of the works done during the session in the form of a portfolio.

Calligraphic Explorations



could there be anything more miserable
than being helpless
When you know the not moment
to be this way
When you clearly see it as a misfit
You moan, you complain, you rebel
You wonder if you deserve it
You wonder why
and there's no choice
but to live with it.



Workshop by Prof. Kshirsagar

A calligraphy workshop was conducted in IDC in September 2007, for about 3 days. The workshop began with an introduction on the basic concept of language and script. We were asked to recollect and note down the letterforms from all the scripts we are aware of. We discussed the aspects of good handwriting. An attempt an illegibility to understand the 'ness' of a particular form. A lot of explorations was done using various tools. This proceeded to expressions of our personal experiences with matter written by ourselves. It helped us understand various aspects intrinsic to calligraphy.

Calligraphic Explorations



Explorations in Arabic
 Doa-e-Aayatul Kursi

مصروف
 مصروف
 مصروف
 مصروف
 مصروف
 مصروف
 مصروف
 مصروف
 مصروف
 مصروف

اكيل
 اكيل
 اكيل
 اكيل

حرام

صبح
 كشمش
 مصروف
 مكرمچه
 انسان
 فطرت

Explorations in Urdu

Urdu and Arabic scripts

I have been taught to recite Arabi when I was a kid in Madrasa. We were also encouraged to write then. However then the writing was only for academic learning and I overlooked the beauty of the forms the script. While reading up on the history of scripts and writing, I began exploring with Urdu and Arabic script. The main intent was to get acquainted with the practice of Calligraphy and develop a sensitivity towards form. The complexity and the basic structures of the script helped me recognize the effort that must have gone in designing such a beautiful and balanced script.

Initial thoughts

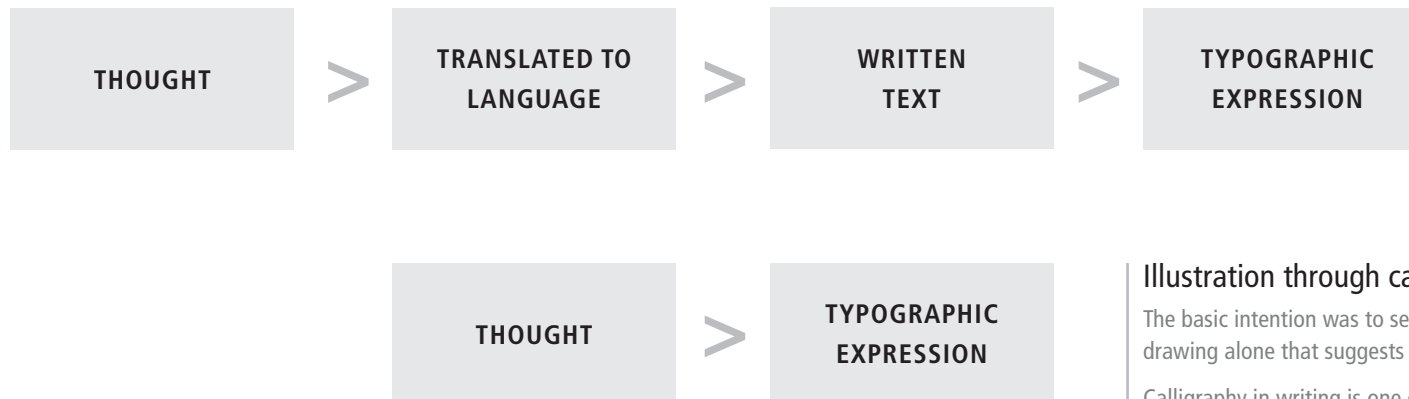


Illustration through calligraphy

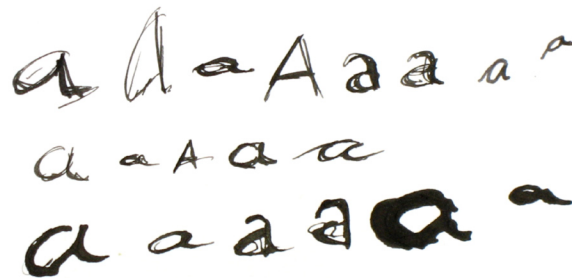
The basic intention was to see calligraphy as an image than as a text. To perceive it as drawing alone that suggests meanings and character.

Calligraphy in writing is one of the most common application where the written text is given a visual identity through expressive forms. However my concern was to give emphasis on text as an image and not just alphabets i.e. expression using the forms of the alphabets itself than relying on the meaning they suggest.

An attempt wherein the visual communicates by depending on its graphic nature alone. The graphic however is constituted of letterforms which have an added layer of meaning when read.

A thought when usually articulated depends heavily on the meanings of the words and the structure of language to put them together. This text therefore to a certain extent attempts at communicating the intended meaning. This however happens within its own finite extent. To add to the expression further the well defined text is carried forward in the form of a typographic expression. How can thought be directly reflected in a typographic expression instead of relying on a structured understandable or legible text? Can calligraphy be independent of language?

Initial concepts



A graphic novel

A story involving the experiences and circumstances of certain characters. The characters as well as the environment and circumstances would be represented in calligraphy. Hence the story may not be a linear text but a few selected words representative enough of the elements and the state of minds of the characters, the experience of the environment and the reactions would be expressed in Calligraphy. It would thereby be a graphic novel where the text would be treated as the graphics.

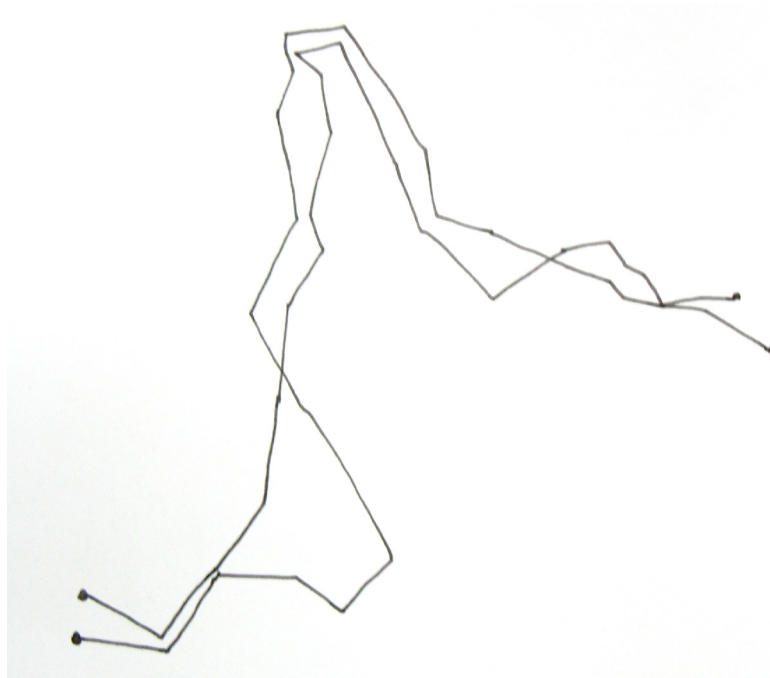
Fictional stories on each alphabet (for children)

When taught to read or write alphabets, kids are conditioned to perceive them only as signs and they simply arbitrarily learn them. The formal qualities and aesthetics of forms are simply overlooked. The letters appear to be dead signs. An attempt at therefore adding life to the characters was thought so that the kids see the alphabets as forms that have characters and can express. It led to the conception of a set of stories based on each alphabet as a character. How it behaves in different situations.

Story of letters

Since we have letters all around us they have become so much a part of our lives that they have become invisible to us. In the process we have grown unaware of the evolution of the letters. How they were born, where all did they travel and how did they evolve into various forms. This idea involved a documentation of the same.

Initial concepts



Nature of Conversations

An attempt at translating spoken language into written language. How colourful conversations are in their structure and pattern depending on the participants and the context or the subject of the conversation. What are the varying tonal values that appear & disappear. Tone of voice and its visual expression. The direction in which a conversation grows. Its temporal nature and dynamism.

Conversations at different places

Depiction of kinds of conversation that are peculiar to a place. How do they contribute to the identity of the place? How different individual conversations happening at the same time contribute to the experience of a place.

Identities of people

Speaking patterns become representative of characters. The tone of voice, the manner of speaking becomes the identity of the person. How does one depict this personality in voice through visual expression? A lot of day-to-day activities or roles we play also contribute greatly to the voices, the rhythms, the attitudes or tones. For instance people with different professions adhere to certain patterns. For eg. teachers, policemen, salesmen, milkmen, postmen, executives, call centre personnel, etc. The idea was to attempt at identifying and representing these patterns.

Evolved concepts



Representations of conversations through calligraphy

Conversations is nothing but sharing of thought between two or more people over a subject they can relate to. It is an attempt at getting a thought, feeling or an idea across by means of spoken language in a manner that will be understood by the receiver. The listener then participates by seconding or rejecting an opinion or by adding his own opinion over the subject. These conversations are driven by various aspects - sometimes the people, sometimes the environment, the situation, the place, the context, and most importantly the time. The following kinds of conversations were considered for exploration.

Natural conversation between different people at different places and situations.

Conversation between a same set of people. In this case the characters participating remain the same while the time, place and situation may keep changing. The participants however should not be aware of the recordings.

Expression of opinion over a particular concern by different people. In this case the subject of the conversations remain common. This however required deliberately stimulating such conversations which appeared to be external and forceful.

Routine conversation between the same set of people who meet up at a same place, time regularly and talk.

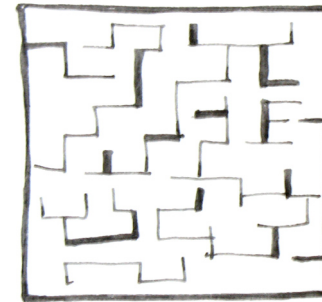
Conversations of one person throughout a day. In this case one of the participants remains common. The same person would converse differently with different people, at different places, at different situations and time. Although one participant is common, how does his contribution change depending on the above factors.

Conversations that take place at a particular place. A space when brings people together also facilitates for conversation between them provided the people relate with each other or with the subject they talk about. Does the place influence the conversation? Also as a space allows for juxtaposition, it would allow for conversations to overlap over each other. The commonality between these conversations would be they are all happening at the same place at the same time.

Conversations that take place between a certain distance. When crossing a certain physical distance one might witness parts or whole of conversations that happen during the time of travel. If this experience of arbidly overhearing these conversations is portrayed, would it be able to represent the experience of travelling the given distance?

All of the above cases, actually involve literal overhearing of conversations and then their translation into faithful visual representations. Anonymity of the subjects would therefore be extremely important. Also if the people are ones I don't know, their conversations will be free from bias when interpreted.

Perceptions of Space



In order to attempt the representation of any space, it is obviously important to understand the perceptions of space. How does perception of the existence of space come to you? How do we acknowledge the space?

Whether space exists as a separate element altogether, or is it an abstract dimension across which we can place or measure other elements based on proportions? Concrete perceptions in terms of figures, directions, positions, magnitude, direction make a space tangible or measurable. These units are made absolute for common reference.

Sensation of particular line and angles that may result into the perception of boundaries is also what defines a space.

It is primarily an identification of whereness to thereness.

“Neither space nor time are conceived as substances, but rather both are elements of a systematic framework we use to structure our experiences”

Kant

“Space is the condition of the possibility of juxtapositions”

Schopenhauer, in ‘On the will in nature’

Is space real or is it just a conceptual framework?

What makes any given space different from the other?

Even if it is a void, it is still a space as a whole.

The spaces are divided and sub-divided for various reasons.

On the whole there is a space within a space within a space.

The boundaries of these spaces are governed by different factors both consciously and unconsciously. We keep noticing and overlooking these boundaries based on our interaction with the space.

We tend to have associations with a certain place based on our experiences with them. Is it the mental associations or the physical positioning that gives it identity? So can a given place situated at a given location, be recreated somewhere else physically? This would involve identifying the factors that create that space and then recreating or building them somewhere else.

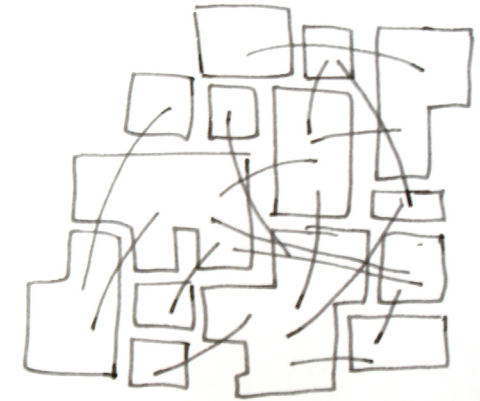
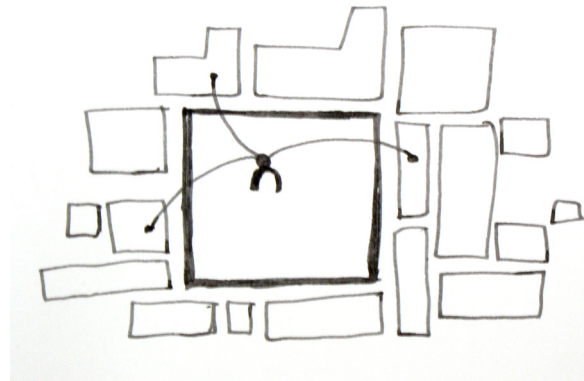
Spaces identified for common interest are demarcated using physical boundaries.

For facilitating further reference, they are arbitrarily assigned a NAME.

NAME - is therefore itself a textual association with the abstract space.

The demarcated physical space becomes a container of all the stationary and dynamic elements it holds. It encloses all the visible and invisible, tangible and intangible elements that exist at that time in that space. They are a part of the entire experience. Conversations are one of them.

Interactions in a Space



The function of a space could be consciously created, or created unintentionally wherein it is evolved on its own. The functional associations of a space maybe different for people as whole and different for every individual.

There are therefore multiple perceptions of the same space.

A space when shared also allows for interaction.

It takes place when a place facilitates it, people perceive it and act on it.

If the interaction takes place in that space, it is a part of the space.

How much room does a place allow for what kind of interaction is an individual's prerogative.

Are certain kind of conversations associated to a place? This can be possible when the activity carried out in that space induces people to interact. Common patterns could then be deciphered.

Will the layer of intrapersonal or intragroup interactions alone be able to represent that place?

Conversations is the verbalisation of concepts involving abstractions and concrete objects which make up the reality in which we reside - *Wikipedia*

In other words it is communication between two or more people on a particular topic taking place at a given time in a given space.

Conversations happen at a particular time in a particular space. They are hence temporal and cannot be captured. They keep morphing and changing constantly and hence they are never stationery but dynamic.

They are invisible. They are sounds that are travelling in thin air.

The space contains people that are connected to many other spaces at other times. People's connection or relationship with other contexts and spaces may surface in their conversations.

These narratives in a conversation that take place at one place connects it to other places thereby making the current space only a part of a larger interconnected space

Narratives of different places therefore converge and diverge through the means of conversations that take place in them. A narrative of one place thereby becomes a part of the other and vice versa.

Place chosen

The pictures of the place are purposely not featured as it was the sound and the conversations that was paid attention to. The visual characteristic of the place was deliberately overlooked.

Choosing a place began with identifying the broad category of places where people get together and interact.

1. Places where people come together, sit, chat and especially catch up for a conversation.

In such places conversations are probably a lot less related to the space itself. They allow room for different kinds of conversations.

Cafeterias, parks, restaurants, Marine Drive, Staff Canteen

2. Places where people come together for a particular activity.

In such places conversations are more or less related to the activity or the function of the place. However depending on the nature of the space, it may allow room for conversations on other subjects too.

Places that allow activities like travelling, shopping, worshipping, posting

Conversations were initially captured from the following places :

Crawford Market's stationery bazaar

Dhobi talao's roadside sellers

Ladies compartments inside a train

The first two places involved conversations mainly based on activity the place facilitated and hence they were more transactional in nature. The stationery market involved conversations of sale-purchase at dealer level and the Dhobi Talao market involved consumer level bargains over small buys.

The other alternative however in spite of being a place meant for a very domestic purpose, allowed space for conversations diverse in nature. The place therefore allowed a good mix of predictable and unpredictable conversations.

Ladies compartment in a train

The space itself being a moving space releases itself from its association with a static space. It therefore actually becomes a part of many places at different times.

The space is moving with respect to the other stationery spaces. However once inside it, it becomes static. While people are constantly involved in the activity of travelling, they are also doing nothing in particular after boarding until they alight. They come in alone or in groups of people and strike into various conversations either on account of the common activity or on account of company of a known person or on relating with someone on a subject. The variety in people, their contexts, natures, mindsets, backgrounds, attachments, concerns, conceptions, priorities and thoughts leads to a variety of interesting conversations. These people enter and leave at different places. Hence narratives in this space get connected with a lot of other places and the space constantly travels swell with plenty of dynamic narratives in itself.

Representation of a Space



1

Label / Name

Arbitrarily defined space which has been assigned a name for reference



2

One plane

longshot view of all elements, all activities, all its layers, multiplied together on a flat canvas



3

Physical

structure artefacts & objects navigation division



4

Activities

Multiple activities that are co-ordinated and take place simultaneously



5

People as mob

as a whole involved in certain activities



6

Individuals

as individuals with different backgrounds, different contexts, and different mindsets. People with different lives, priorities, natures and associations



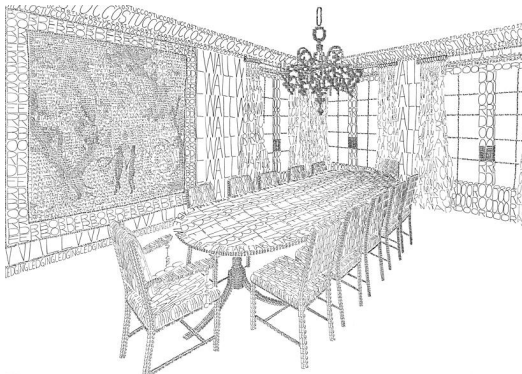
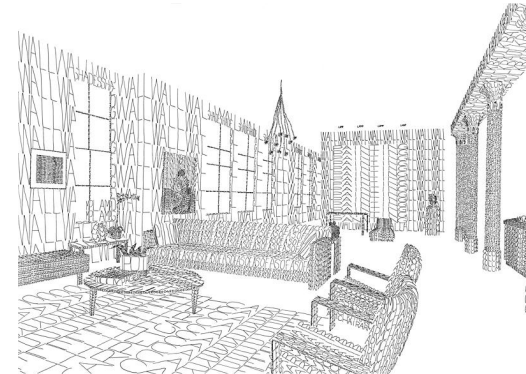
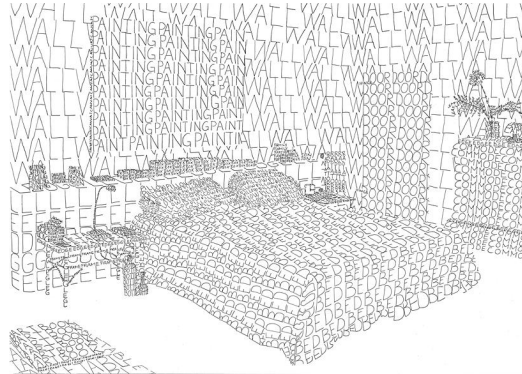
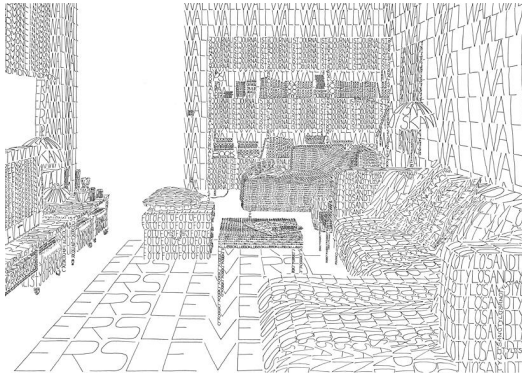
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Narratives

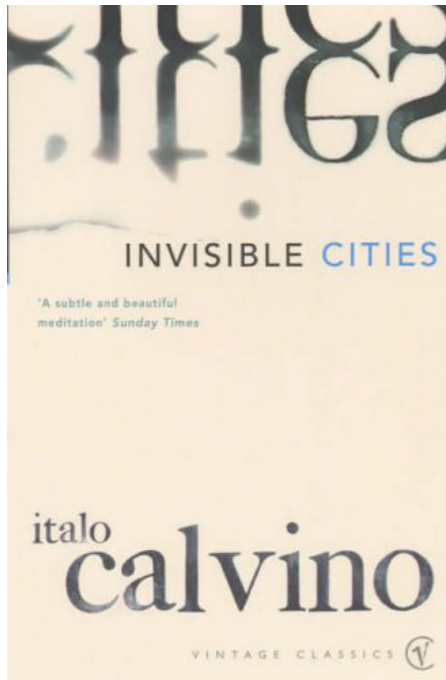
Convergence and divergence of various micro narratives that connect the place with many other places and many other places with this one

Any place is made up of several layers. One can experience the space at any of these levels. From a distance all these layers are multiplied over each other and they become complete one entity. It is only when one wishes to take a closer look that you start identifying the underlying layers one by one. A person might interact with the space at the first level; someone might keep looking at the inner details to any extent. The decision for the same depends on the onlooker and his perception of the space.

Examples of representation of spaces



The visual space around us is actually just one multiplied image of several objects put together. We gradually learn to perceive these things individually one by one and then make the whole image out of it. While doing so we have identified everything with names. The illustrated example is a fine representation of the same where language is associated with almost everything physically decipherable in our surrounding.



Invisible Cities
Italo Calvino



Palestine
Joe Sacco

Examples of representation of places

In the book 'Invisible Cities' the author Italo Calvino has tried to describe the perceptions of cities that are beyond the external face that a city wears. The myths, intrinsic relationships, underlying narratives, complexities, the inner beauty or ugliness, beliefs, faiths, mindsets, which cannot be manifested by the physical appearance of the city are actually described within the structures of the cities that he talks about. The place is therefore represented by another fictional space, the description of which metaphorically suggests the true nature or his honest perception of the place.

In the graphic novel 'Palestine' by Joe Sacco, the author shares his personal account on the problems faced by Palestinians in Israel. In his illustrations he has very interestingly featured the experiences of people in their day-to-day activities and the issues they have on their minds.

In both these examples the authors have tried representing a space, by not conforming to its physical appearances, but by tapping on to its invisible intrinsic characteristics.

Representation of space through conversations



Just as a place becomes characteristic on account of its visual appearance, there are also a lot of invisible factors that contribute to the experience of the place. People with their mindsets, their backgrounds, contexts and stories have a lot to share with a place. These narratives become a part of the space and contribute heavily to its identity. These narratives take place as conversations between people.

Conversations are dynamic and are difficult to hold or capture. They travel in time and thereby travel across a distance.

Several conversations when take place in a space they are all entangled and layered one on top of the other. They are all travelling differently, at different magnitudes, in different directions, organically changing, all in a given space. Individually every conversation has its own subject, context and participants. It is multicoloured as it is tinted with the voices of the speakers has their tones, moods and attitudes.

When put together, there emerges a web of conversations. There might develop overlaps and interconnections between them. They may not be linearly perceived as one might witness many conversations at one time simultaneously. Paying attention to one, then requires consciously ignoring the rest. Hence a conversation becomes sharp or blur depending on the preferences of the person who wishes to overhear.

By representing conversations visually I try and attempt to recreate that layer of a certain space in another space physically. The attempt comprises of translating spoken language into written language by means of Calligraphy. From the original space the conversations are recorded, and I have represented them in Calligraphy on the basis of my own interpretations. My representations will then be overheard visually by the onlookers and will facilitate another sub layer of interpretation. The perception of space will have lots of dimensions to it just as it has even otherwise.

Explorations of Conversations in Calligraphy

क्या कहेंगे? क्या कहेंगे? English

विचार करना श्रेय का?

आइए इसे एक winding को (C) कहें ना? winding?
 सिं योजन, कविशैली - मुद्राएं एवं उनके शिखरेला संन्यासे लिहिता कसम-ता एवं

आज कलें क्या नुं आंहे।
 तुम इसमें जेलते ना कहीं भेजना है।
 वो भेज देगे। address दे ने उज्जो।

१२ पारा आडे
 ब्रेटवर्ष आडे

हैं पर काम कके आगे क
 है जो नमकनी पर से नां?
 है पेटे कन-पन पर आडे नां?
 है जमेत तो, ए लामगना के
 है पेटे उं उं उं उं उं? ओंनिकली

साया English पर चांगला है आइए आइए। कसं कळणार आता पण चांगला?
 हैं पर काम कके आगे क

ते मुर्वाका training पण देवात winding का केमात
 पा वाया त्याका पेलन वकवकता मुकमा पाडिजे Main कांत

हैं पर काम कके आगे क

full-time साठी साजि

हैं पर काम कके आगे क
 है जो नमकनी पर से नां?
 है पेटे कन-पन पर आडे नां?
 है जमेत तो, ए लामगना के
 है पेटे उं उं उं उं उं? ओंनिकली

Computer Computer कर

Computer कर कयायचं आडेन का

है जो नमकनी पर से नां?

है पेटे कन-पन पर आडे नां?

है जमेत तो, ए लामगना के

है पेटे उं उं उं उं उं? ओंनिकली

हैं पर काम कके आगे क
 है जो नमकनी पर से नां?
 है पेटे कन-पन पर आडे नां?
 है जमेत तो, ए लामगना के
 है पेटे उं उं उं उं उं? ओंनिकली

Computer नाम हीरोमिन्ड कयायचं आडे

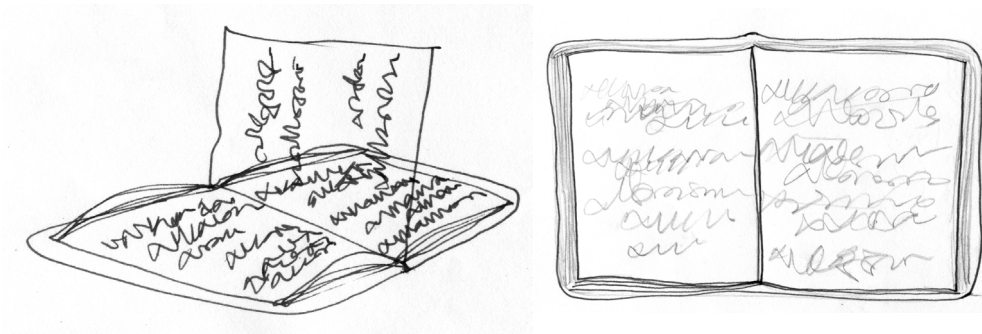
मोठी आहित का कं?
 मोठी मोठी मोठी मोठी

है winding को आहित ना?
 १२ वीच केरी संघी. त्या अंतर नरसं अल्ल
 ७५% म्हणजे तो फुटा हे होता
 ७५% म्हणजे तो डाका फुटा हे होता

Initially the explorations were done without keeping the final appearance in mind as complete attention was paid on the calligraphic language. After hearing a conversation a several times and writing in down literally, I would then go through it again while doing my calligraphy. The objective was to represent the conversation as close to my perception of it. I being the external person who simply overheard the conversation can only try and make sense of it in my own way also considering it is in the language I am conversant with. The rest just remains noise. As for every conversation, there is a different context altogether, involves different points of view and perspectives.

In calligraphy the content is reflected in the manner in which spoken words are written. How well do they represent the subject, the voice of the speakers, their volumes, their tones, attitudes, clarity, variations, overlaps, tempo and pauses depend upon how I visualise them. I restricted myself to plain paper and black ink so that the weightage is completely on the calligraphic forms alone.

Compositions in the given space

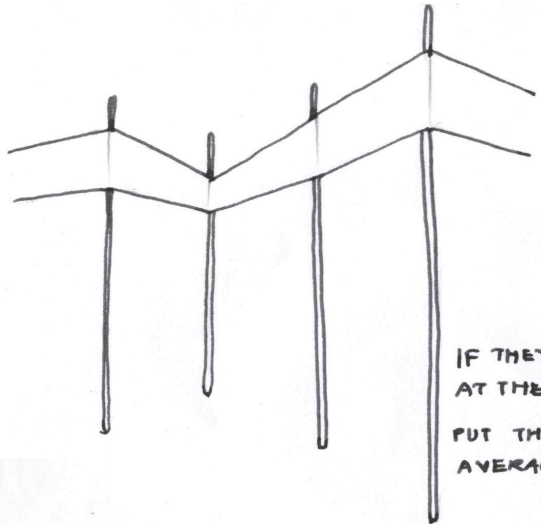
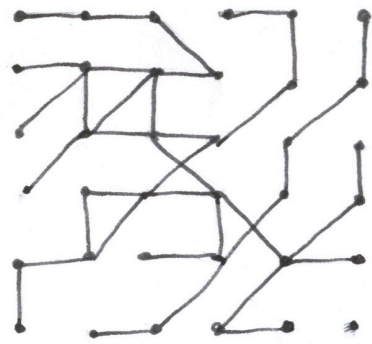


One of the most representative ideas of my perception of conversations in a given space is that of conversations that are written down as and when they occur in a diary with transparent pages. So eventually the thick book, is full of conversations that would overlap one over the other. Wherever the book is open, both the faces will allow you to see through al the other conversations happening simultaneously underneath.

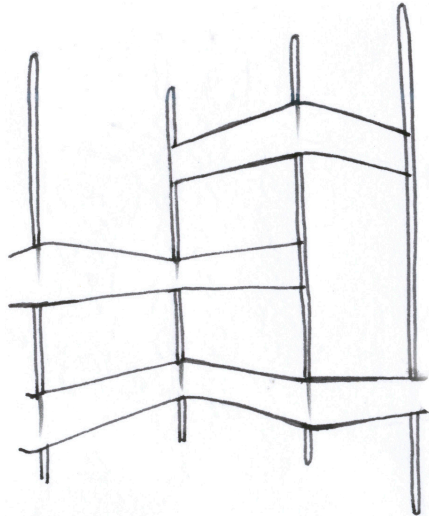
The only way one can read a particular conversation is by lifting the leaf and reading it. However as it is a part of a bound book it also cannot be separated completely as it is a part of the bigger narrative.

The book is like a trunk full of dynamic conversations captured and enclosed between the pages.

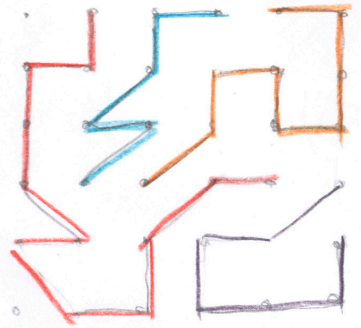
Compositions in the given space



IF THEY ARE ALL AT THE SAME LEVEL, PUT THEM ABOVE AVERAGE HEIGHTS



OR. MAKE PEOPLE WALK OVER AND UNDER IT.

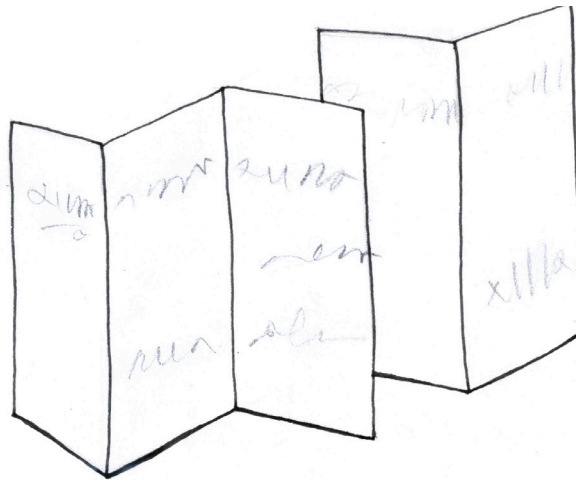
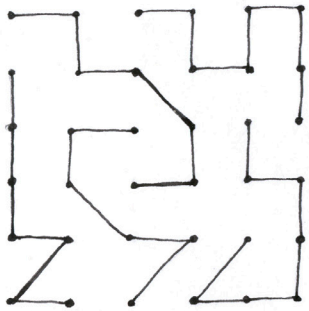


OR FIGURE OUT THE NAVIGATIONS BETWEEN THEM SO THAT IT COULD BE AT AN EYELEVEL

MAKE SPACES FOR NAVIGATION EXTREMELY CRAMPED. OR LIMITED.

The space available here was thought of being divided in a grid across which horizontal panels containing individual conversations would be suspended at varying heights in case the grid allows one to walk through it and above average height in case it has too many cross overs ,overlaps and intersections.
The other alternative was to deliberately facilitate walking over and under certain conversations. Here one actually is required to go out of his way in order to overhear.

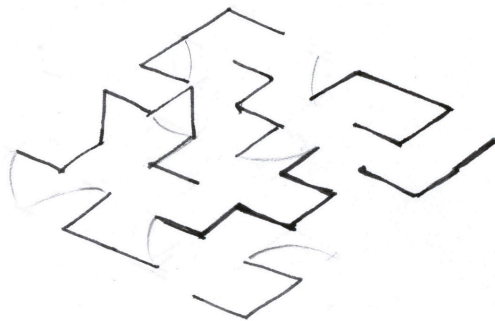
Compositions in the given space



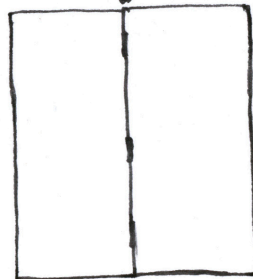
TRANSPARENT
ACRYLIC/GLASS
PANELS.

SCREEN PRINT,
VINYL STICKER,
PRINT ON TRANSPARENT
PAPER.

- MAYBE THE PANELS
ARE MADE OF
TRANSLUCENT PAPER.
(GATEWAY).



HINGED PANELS.

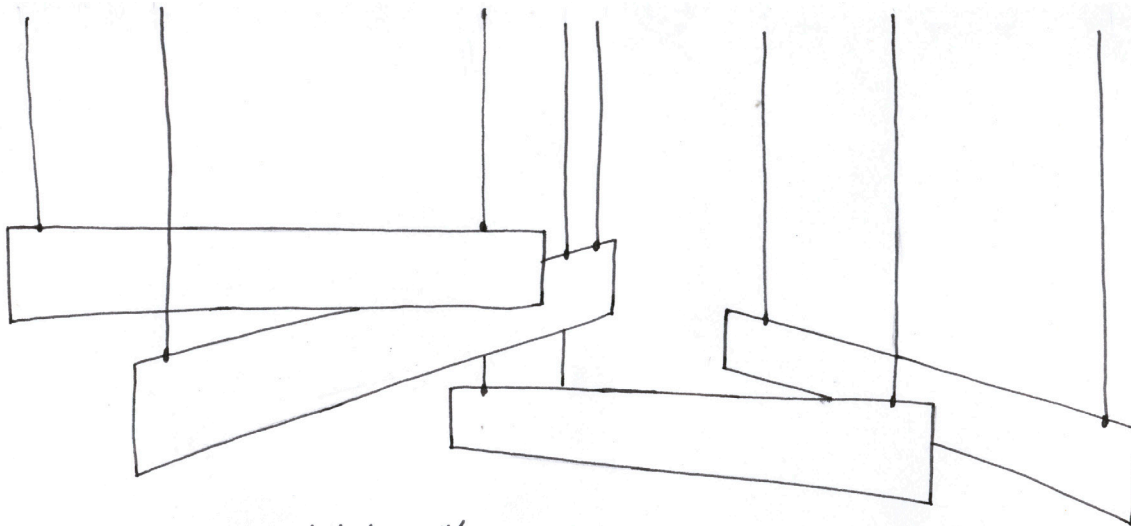


- Have conversations printed in white so that it becomes further invisible.
- and requires some background for reading. (a dark paper or something).

Similar to the previous one this one also comprises of panels laid in the space on a grid through which one can move around. However in this example instead of horizontal panels the partitions were planned to be about door length touching the floor.

A variation was to allow the panels to be hinged together so that they can actually be moved and they could be further interconnected with other panels.

Compositions in the given space

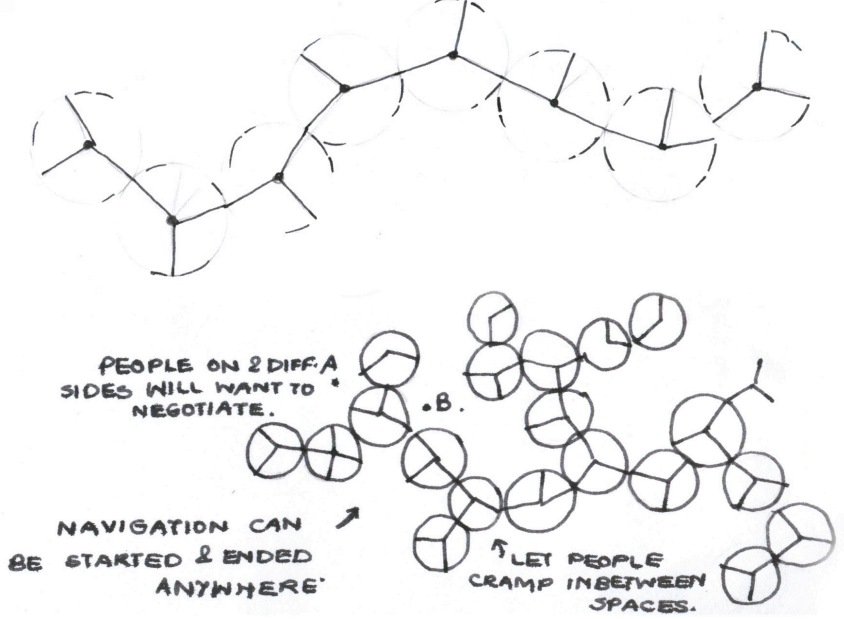
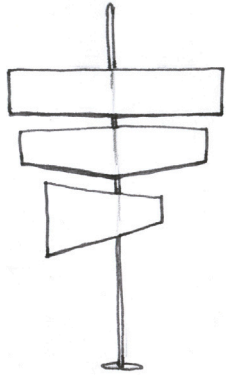
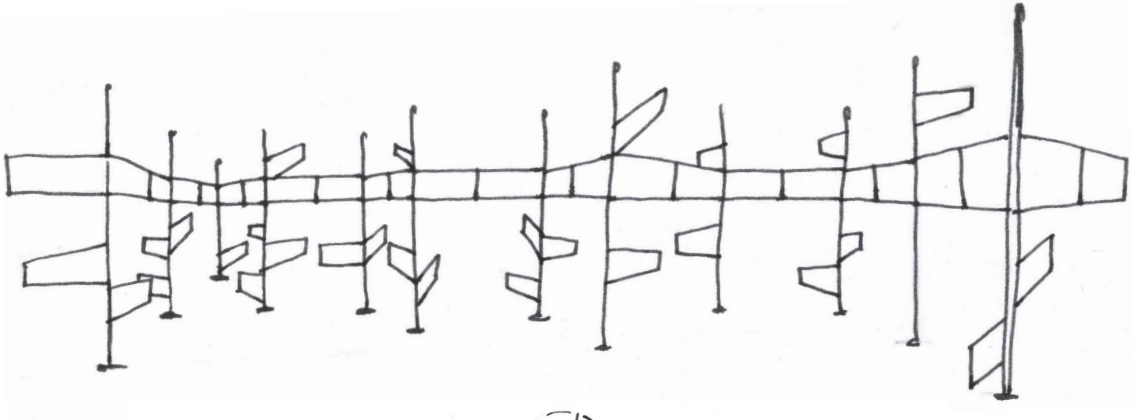


Panels (paper) suspended from the ceiling at different heights or maybe at an average eyelevel.

(when at eyelevel and produced on transparent paper) translucent paper, it would also suggest people, that would add as backgrounds to the panel.

Here the conversations were perceived to be hung from the ceiling so that they will hover over the people and reinforce the illusion of them floating around in thin air. They would be oriented in random directions and suspended at varying heights to resemble an actual web of conversations visually.

Compositions in the given space



The written conversations are split in fragments that are mounted on rotating pipes. These pipes are then aligned next to each other to form a path. The pipes need to be rotated and oriented such that all the pieces of one conversation join to form a single stretch.

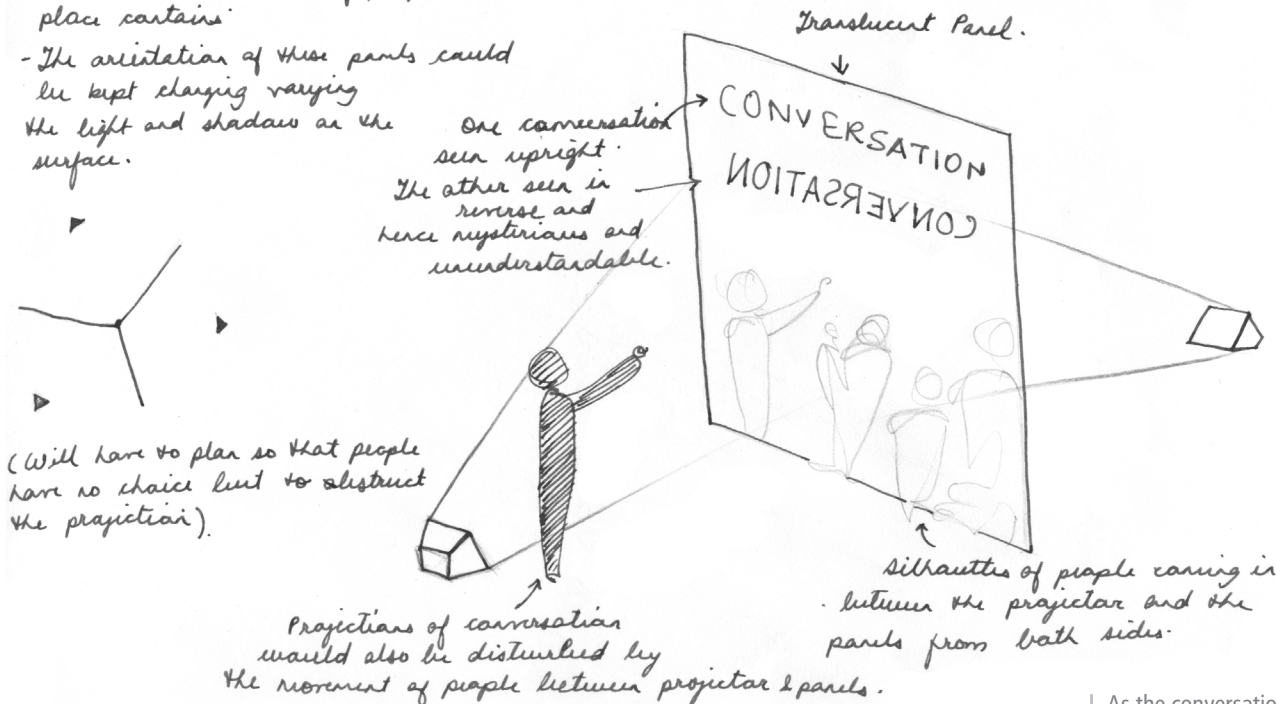
Every pipe holds more than one conversation. When overhearing one, the other conversations would be lost as their alignment would be different from each other.

Compositions in the given space

PROJECTIONS:

- Panels placed at various distances maybe at different orientations as well.
- Projections of conversations float on these translucent surfaces with the silhouettes of people the place contains.
- The orientation of these panels could be kept changing varying the light and shadows on the surface.

- The conversations could move / pan horizontally.
- Pauses could be represented both in time and space.

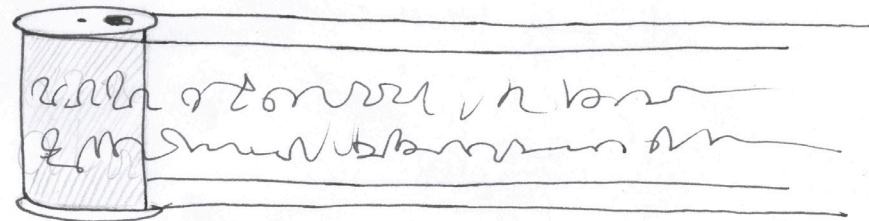


As the conversation is represented through the digital medium, here a lot of dynamism could be added to every conversation. Also when different conversations are projected from different directions on a translucent material, they would add to the chaos on all sides. So from one side one will be able to decipher only certain conversations. The rest of them will be inversed.

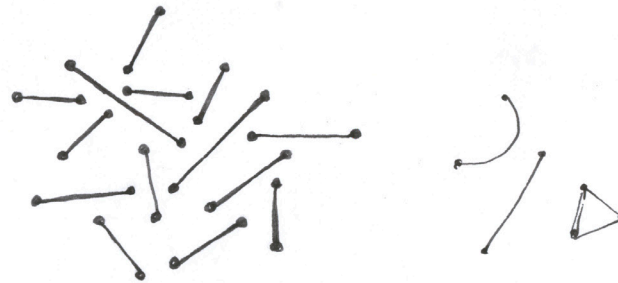
It will also cast shadows of people in the space as they would obstruct the projection.

Compositions in the given space

WHITE PRINTING / VINYL CUT NEGATIVES



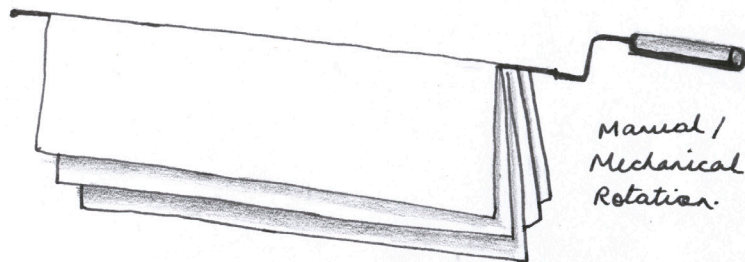
ends of a conversation
printed in white.
The distance between the end
lengths would depend on
the length of the conversation.
These conversations are then
randomly placed.



Here to enhance the invisibility of the conversations they are either printed in white on a transparent strip or they are cut out from a white vinyl strip. These strips would be wound around dark coloured cylinders at two ends. The conversation in order to be read would have to be wound along the strips. It would allow one to grasp only a small portion of a conversation at a point of time.

These sets of individual conversations would then be put together in the given space.

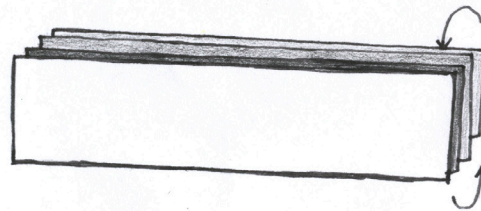
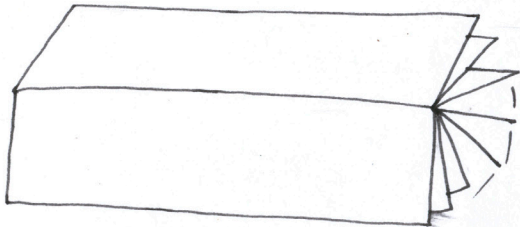
Compositions in the given space



Manual /
Mechanical
Rotation.

wherein dialogues
flip one after the other
- one could begin
overhearing anywhere.

- several conversations
like these will be
flipping simultaneously
at varying speeds.



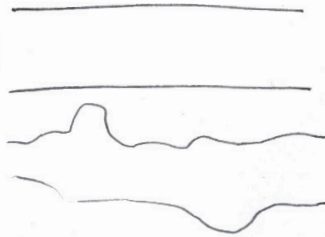
Instead of proceeding horizontally as in most of the previous cases, this representation was thought of as an alternative where the conversation appears in parts and is replaced by the successive parts in a sequence.

Here the transition from one part to the other could be manually facilitated or also mechanised where the speed is decided before hand and the reader has no control over it, just as in the case of conversations.

Compositions in the given space



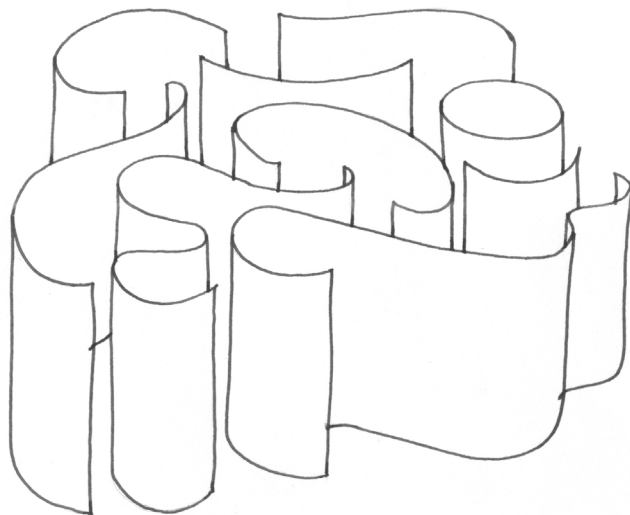
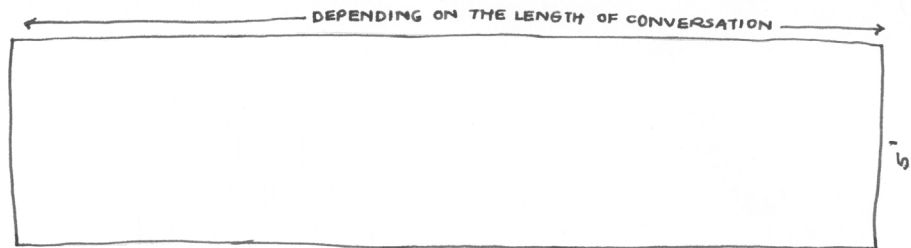
INSTEAD OF
STANDARD CROPPED CANVAS,
HAVE THE CONVERSATIONS
ON ORGANICALLY SHAPED
BACKGROUNDS THAT
WOULD DEPEND AGAIN ON
THE NATURE OF THE
CONVERSATIONS.



Considering the amorphous nature of conversations and the invisibility of the platform that it lingers on, the use of a stable, rigid, cropped background was questioned. Hence the form of the background or the surface was thought of being influenced by the variations in a conversations or by visualising the silence that contains them.

This however was getting redundant with the expression that is tried to be achieved by calligraphy itself.

Compositions in the given space



→ THE PANELS ARE ORGANICALLY ARRANGED AFTER ALL THE INDIVIDUAL CONVERSATIONS ARE READY. AS THEY ARE 5' TALL THEY WOULD ACT AS PARTITIONS AND ONE COULD MOVE AROUND BETWEEN THEM. THEY DO NOT FOLLOW A PARTICULAR GRID. THE APPEARANCE OR THE FINAL STRUCTURE WOULD EMERGE AND NOT BE PRE-PLANNED.

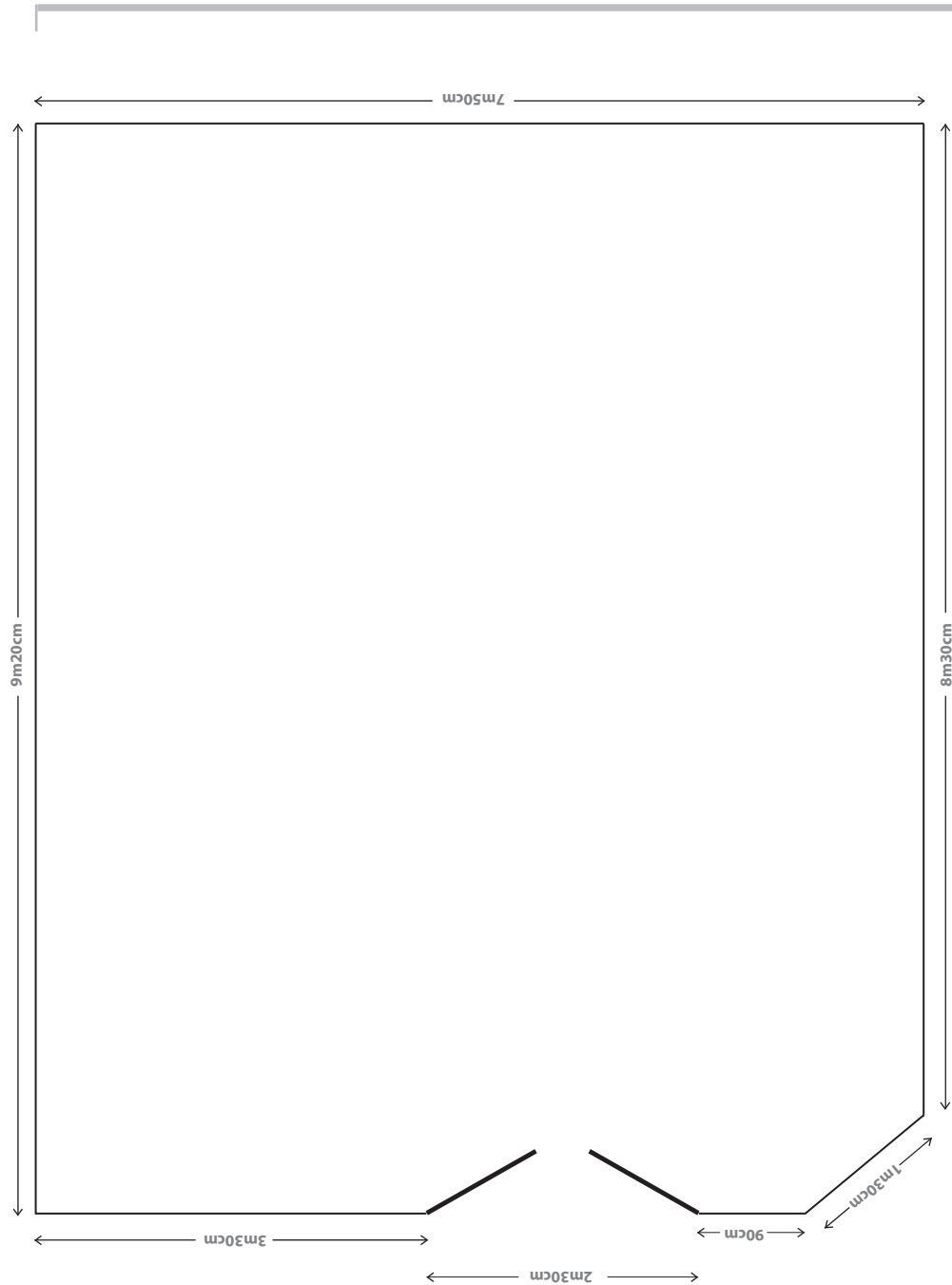
After considering the implications of the previously mentioned alternatives this solution was resolved upon. As the expression of individual conversation is intended to be dependent on calligraphy alone, its canvas has to be made as invisible as possible. That is done by taking a huge format of paper measuring 5' in height and having a non defined continuous length. These dimensions would give an illusion of it having no start or conclusion. Different conversations begin and end at various places on this canvas. While overhearing a conversation, the listener would actually need to move around the space as the conversation is stretched linearly across the length. A lot of conversations would occur simultaneously beginning and ending at different points.

The level of interaction that a listener has with a conversation would completely depend on his interest and ability to not get distracted by the other ones occurring alongside. Every listener would experience it in his own ways and may or may not choose to interpret them in his own ways too.

The final form



Conversations started taking form on the chosen canvas. All of them rendered in black ink. They stretch across the long length of the paper. They intersect and overlap independently. Each tells its own story. The final form cannot be perceived while it is being done. It would eventually take an appearance that would have emerged. Emerged by the juxtaposition of several of conversations all happening in one space.



Exhibition Space

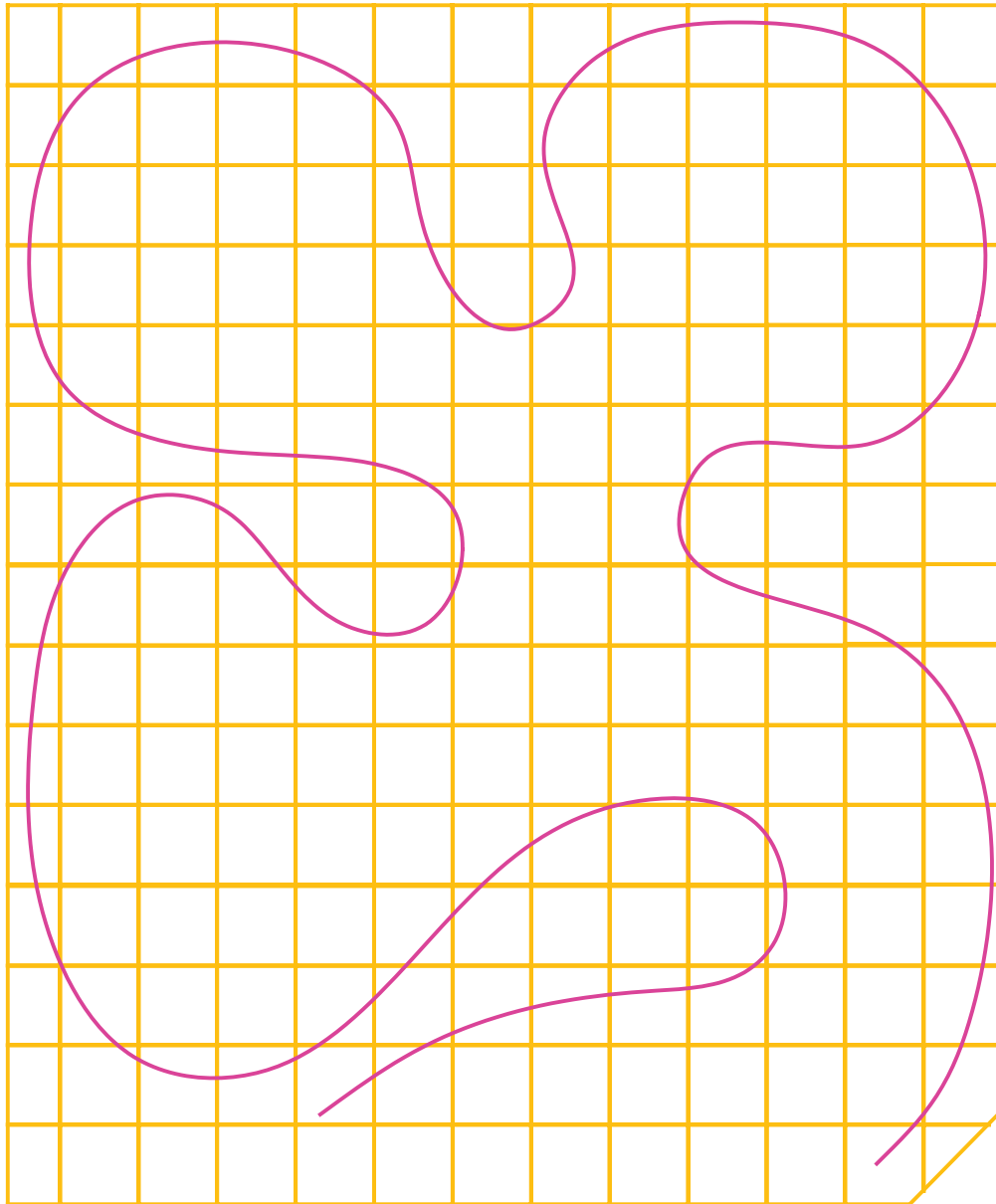


The exhibition space on the ground floor at IDC was to be used for the installation. The space with windows on two sides and glass panels on the other two allowed a lot of direct as well as difused light to enter in varying proportions making it lit dynamically by daylight itself. The enclosures in the space also suggested their own boundaries. It had resemblances to a railway compartment with closed walls and an entrance syntactically.

Exhibition Space



The suspension of the canvas from the ceiling was to be done on a preplanned path considering the division of space, navigation, counter forms, partitions and experience of the railway compartment. The space is not replicated exactly physically in terms of structure i.e. it doesn't visually look like a railway compartment. Yet the design was done keeping in mind the experience of entering, spending time in the compartment and then getting off.



Exhibition Space



Aluminium wire was turned in the required shape that was plotted in the actual space. At the pivot points, hooks were drilled in the ceiling. The entire aluminium wire was suspended at a constant height from the ceiling. The entire paper roll was then hung clinging to the wire with a cloth strip that was attached to the top edge. The paper took the curves on its own and the space got created.



Conclusion

Taking up a project that deals with language, scripts, writing helped me look at it right from its origin. To see where all it has been taken and how has it got here the way it is with us is very fascinating. To be able to contribute to its evolution in a small way has been my goal. However the potential is unimaginable. I believe we play an important role in carrying it forward. It is only for us to set our limits.
I have barely begun. Long live thoughts. Long live letterforms.

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N Manoj – Poetry Made concrete
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