

# Unit 2

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RESEARCH PAPER

What is a diagram and which are its components? How is it interpreted according to the linear and non-linear types of thinking? When a diagram becomes an illustration and how these two can coexist? Can an image be translated into a diagram that represents qualitative data?

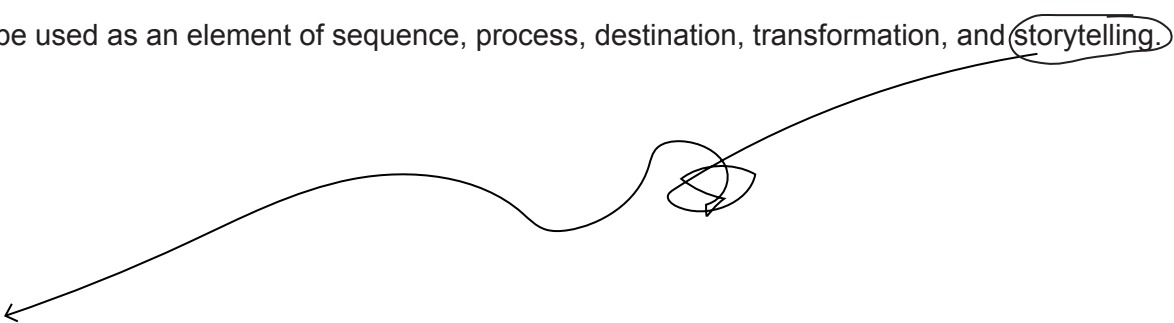
**How can a diagram be used as a graphic communication tool to tell a story?**

A chronological journey that starts with the exploratory research of one specific element that diagrams use, passing through the field of interpretation and storytelling to end up in a method that generates stories, formed out of urban photographs and diagrammatic illustrations.

It all started with the interest in exploring storytelling through diagrams. Creating narratives in a diagrammatic form that breaks the boundaries between written text and storytelling. An unusual type of narration; a different approach that uses diagrams to share a message and form a story. Observing that most of the diagrams use arrows, the question ‘**What does an arrow communicate?**’, as an isolated element or as part of a diagram, was the first enquiry that structured my research.

Investigating the arrow as a technical element, led to the various types of arrows (an arrow with a pointed/circle head, a triangle shape, etc.) and how these can affect or be affected by the surrounding elements. Therefore, the arrow can be considered as a powerful tool of storytelling, while as an individual element has its own meaning, but this meaning changes according to the elements around it.

My intention, at this point, was to keep a general approach without a specific context/content, pushing progressively to find out how far the arrow as an element of communication can go, engaging in a systematic process where the process is the output/product (Blauvelt *et al.*, 2005, p. ii). Passing through various stages of exploring the arrow in relation to other design elements (lines/shapes/text) using the diagram as a common medium, the following findings emerged; the arrow can be used as an element of sequence, process, destination, transformation, and storytelling.



Focusing on storytelling as an aspect of graphic communication design that is being interrogated, interpretation is one of the aspects that incidentally occurred, finding out that it cannot be prevented. Creating iterations consisting only of arrows and shapes (without text) at first, led to an interpretation that changes from viewer to viewer. This is probably happening because of the visual training of each viewer (ability to read shapes, symbols, etc.) and how they connect each composition to their personal beliefs/experiences. On the other hand, when experimenting by adding text to the diagrams, the interpretation becomes more straightforward, narrowing down the borders of imagination.

This is where Marshal McLuhan's (1967) theory *The Medium is the Message* relates to my work. His theory outlines the 'medium' as a medium of communication, which is more important than the meaning or content of the message. In my case, the medium is the diagram that works as a channel through which a message is transmitted. The interesting part is that each viewer can define the connection of the arrows and shapes in a different way, shaping a new story each time.

Apart from the interpretation and the various meanings that arose, the 100 iterations I have first created, intentionally exploit the form of the arrow as a technical element, exploring its function/meaning. To achieve this, each new iteration is critically reflected based on the forms that occurred in the previous one. However, Andrew Blauvelt *et al.* (2005, p. ii) mention that "the process produces formations rather than forms". A 'formation' (2021) can be defined as the manner in which a thing is formed; disposition of parts; structure.

Through this iterative process, exploring the relationship between arrows, lines, and shapes, many 'formations' occurred, consisting of a different structure each time. Most of the time, these correlative and emergent diagrams are characterized by a visual metaphor that is interconnected with the form of each diagram as well as the wide interpretation of it.

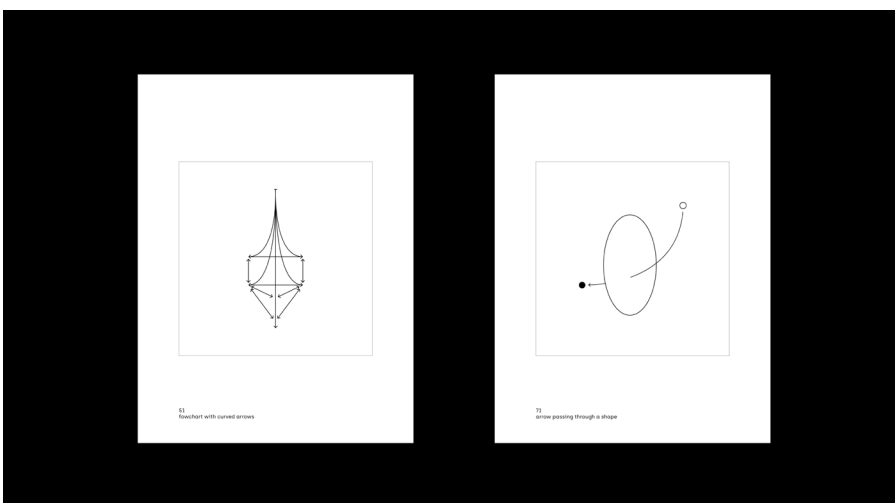


Figure 1. Iterations 51 and 71.

Among others, the aspect of visual metaphor is obvious in iteration 51, where the diagram consists of many curved, straight, and diagonal arrows creating a type of information visualisation; a flowchart. Nevertheless, this can easily be interpreted as a chandelier or an ornament, illustrating a comparison between the actual elements of the diagram and what visually looks like. Additionally, iteration 71 shapes an optical illusion of a three-dimensional drawing, trying to create a feeling of movement and transformation. This is associated with the position of the elements in the composition and the relationship between the shapes and the curved arrow, creating the hallucination that the arrow passes through an object.

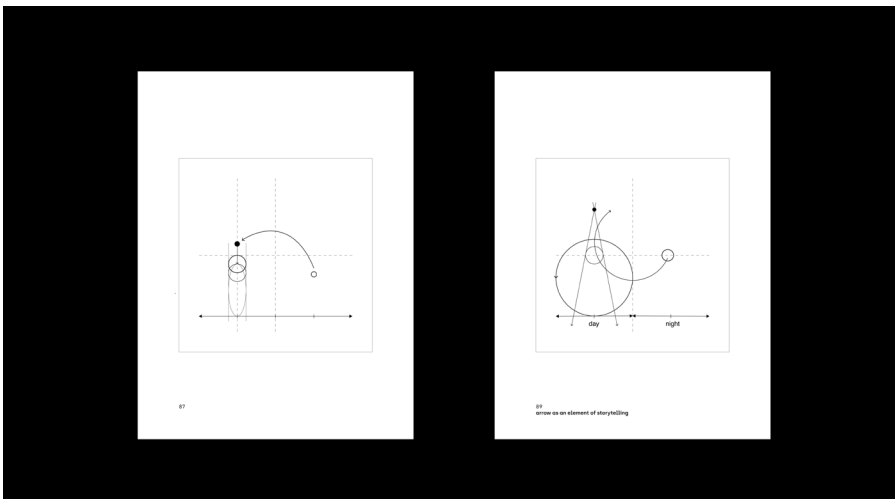


Figure 2. Iterations 87 and 89.

Regarding the form in relation to some diagrams' meaning, there are some noteworthy iterations such as 87 and 89 that instead of the technical approach followed before, they evolve in a more abstract meaning (illustrative/conceptual approach). These let the viewer form a story unless there are captions explaining the various elements or their general idea.

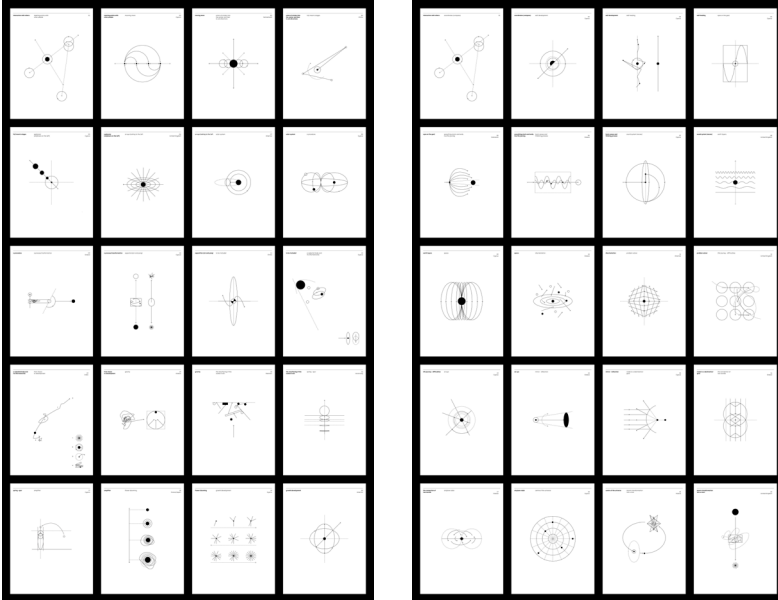
The aspect of interpretation that occurs through a diagram, will develop some of the following parts of my project and research, exploring the relationship between diagram's elements and storytelling, through experiments that will reveal how one interprets a diagram. The investigative journey through the interpretation of diagrams and storytelling begins.

As previously stated, an arrow functions not only as a technical element, but also as a powerful tool of interpretation. This happens based on the elements around it which altogether structure a diagram; a simplified illustration that represents something in graphic form. Through my work, in graphic communication design circles, the diagram is treated as a medium of communication, an alternative visual/illustrative language, a tool of storytelling that can be interpreted in any way.

My research now focuses on the relationship between the diagram's elements as facts versus interpretation, criticising what diagrams are used for. It is fascinating how a diagram consisting only of arrows, lines, and shapes can be interpreted differently by each viewer. Why and how is this happening? Defining interpretation (2021), is not only about the explanation of a diagram's meaning, but is also the way of interpreting, which is absolutely relatable to my position. The comparison between the actual elements of the diagram, the possible meanings, and what visually looks like, will structure my research.

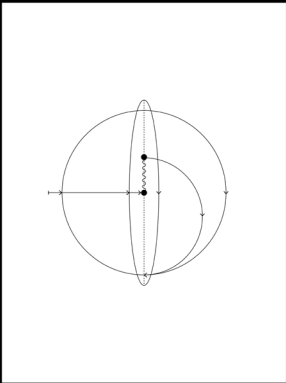
According to John Berger (2008, p. 8) whose position engages with something similar to mine, "The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe." Therefore, the way we understand an image is connected to our knowledge/lack of knowledge according to its subject. Knowledge is connected to our interests, experiences, what we see around us, etc. The constant information subconsciously sends messages, shaping one's way of approaching various topics. Additionally, the affection that beliefs have to our perception, reminds me of an intangible filter between the eye and the artwork, filtering which information will pass through the eye in order to enter the brain and form an interpretation. In short, what we see with our eyes differs from the explanation of what we are seeing.

Finding out how complex, but interesting the process behind the interpretation is, worth mentioning is also the author's argument, "we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves" (Berger, 2008, p. 9). This means that when someone is looking an image, tries to identify with it, finding ways to somehow connect themselves with its content in order to feel it and be able to interpret it. In my case, the medium I am using is the diagram, which is more abstract than a clear image. This abstraction widens, even more, the borders of imagination.



Figures 3,4. Experiment 1 (Stages 1 and 2) - Each new diagram is created based on the interpretation of the previous one.

Investigating which factors contribute to the interpretation of a diagram, led me to a series of experiments, finding out that the occupation or the origin of the viewer are not the main reasons behind an interpretation. Each viewer connects the elements of the diagram in a different way. This can also be a result of the informal structure of the diagrams I create, meaning that there is no constancy in the disposition of objects in the composition; the elements do not follow straight structure lines (Leborg, 2006, p. 22). This irregularity brings the non-linear approach to the project.



Interpretation	Origin	Categorisation	Type of thinking
Memory	France/Japan	concept	non-linear
Orbits	New York (USA)	concept	non-linear
Stopping in each place will lead to different results	China	concept	linear
Life journey of a human (passive vs active)	Greece	concept	non-linear
Eclipse	Cyprus	noun	non-linear
The structure of a light bulb	Cyprus	noun	non-linear
A surfing board (with two users on it)	Greece	noun	non-linear
Yin Yang – Happiness, sadness and balance	Cyprus	concept	non-linear
Energy flow (rotation & circulation)	Russia	concept	linear
The attraction between two planets	Greece	concept	non-linear
The incomplete cycle of life	Greece	concept	non-linear
An eye	United Kingdom	noun	non-linear
A circle, a semicircle, an oval and a line	Cyprus	elements	linear
The door of the universe	Switzerland	concept	non-linear
A watch	United Kingdom	noun	non-linear
A circle within a circle	Greece	elements	linear
A planet, an eye or a basketball	United Kingdom	noun	non-linear
Moon's stages	Cyprus	concept	linear
One can take a shorter path but with risks.	Pakistan	concept	linear
Entering an orbit when energy is sufficient	China	concept	non-linear
All our actions correspond to one another	Cyprus	concept	non-linear
The earth, the equator and the meridian	Greece	noun	non-linear
Planet's operation in the universe	China	concept	non-linear
The vulva (female genitals)	Greece	noun	non-linear
A circle within another and two points connected with a current wave	Cyprus	elements	linear
Circles and lines	Cyprus	elements	linear
All things start and end at the same point.	United Kingdom	concept	linear
The Cronus planet (rings)	Cyprus	noun	non-linear

Figures 5,6. Experiment 2 - Various interpretations based on one diagram.

Considering types of thinking, thinking style can be defined as one's mental pattern of perceiving/ understanding things. There are two general thinking styles; linear and non-linear. Linear thinking can be described as sequential, logical, and rule-based, mostly common in Western society. Contrariwise, non-linear thinking is characterised by the automatic and unconscious processing of information and involves intuition/imagination attending to internal feelings in order to form an understanding (Groves and Vance, 2015, pp. 112-113). So, how the type of thinking is connected to the interpretation of a diagram?

Diagrams are l-i-n-e-a-r,

→ mostly known for their technical → functional use. Through my work, I am interrogating and exploiting the form of the diagrams in a different way (illustrative approach), proving that they can also be powerful interpretative devices. Using linear elements, but connecting them in a non-linear way is what pushes forward the diagram, and consequently the interpretation from the viewer. This can be a noun, a concept, or just a description of the elements the diagram consists of.

In brief, the elements that the diagrams consist of, are simple technical elements that every human is aware of. Their simplicity lets the viewer interpret a diagram in any way, comparing it to anything, creating countless interpretations. A shape can be a moon/planet, an airplane, a person, a mirror, a spot,

ANYTHING!

Furthermore, the straight line functions as an element of connection/sequence, in contrast to the dashed line that functions as an impermanent element and the wavy line that shows movement/ procedure.

Extremely relatable to the diagrammatic interpretation, non-linear thinking is the most common way that viewers follow to shape a story out of my diagrams. Its experiential and unconscious processing of information (Groves and Vance, 2015, p. 113) urges the viewer to follow and understand a diagram as a whole piece. This consists of various smaller elements connected in a less direct way, leaving space for a holistic approach and interpretation. A significant example of someone else's creative practice that iteratively engages with diagrams and non-linear thinking/compositional work is Ricardo Basbaum's project *Diagrams, 1994 – ongoing*.

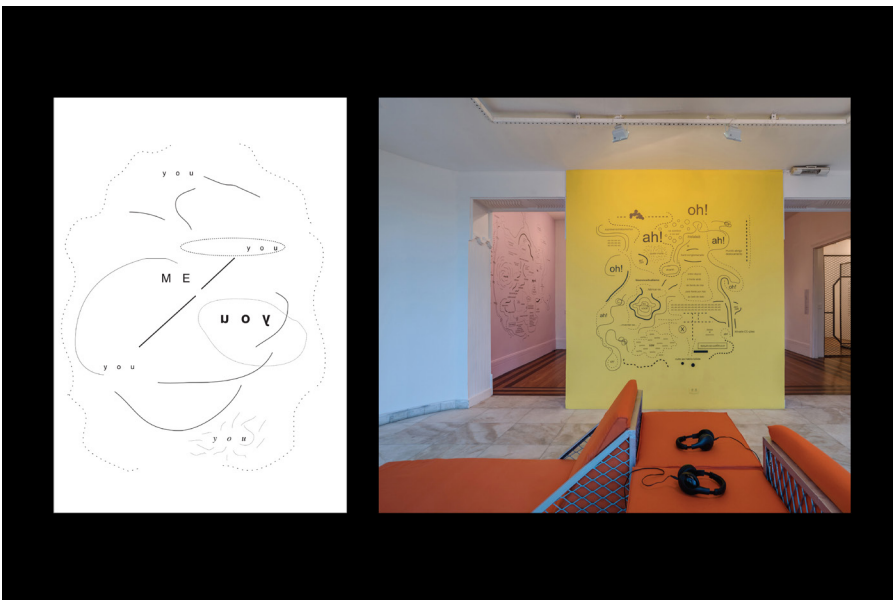


Figure 7. Basbaum, R. (2016) *Diagrams, 1994–ongoing*.

In Basbaum's own words he treats the diagram as a "tool for intervention, a sort of drawing (or visual poem) that mediates the dynamic flow between words and image – discursive and non-discursive spaces – or literary and plastic spaces" (Basbaum, 2016). His iterative process and the continuous repetition of diagrams, shaped and developed his position; exploring diagrams as a collective conversation. Although he engages in a series of subjects, having sources such as music songs/choreographies, his diagrams are abstract, leaving the interpretation up to the viewer even if he uses captions as part of the composition. Experimenting by adding text/captions to my diagrams, I have noticed that the imagination behind the viewer's interpretation narrowed down, which is something I didn't want at this stage of my project.

Moreover, the way of presenting the diagrams in a huge size on the walls of a museum enables his aim of building 'spaces' to become reality. Spaces that people can interact and identify with. The sizing/presentation of the diagrams contributes to the way of interpretation and engagement with the viewer. Besides, very important is the relationship between the designers and their artwork; once left the hands of the designer it is open to interpretation and the intended message might be misunderstood. Through my project I advocate Graphic Communication Design as a means to encourage that interpretation, challenging the intended message of a diagram; there is not. My work at this point of the project is growing based only on the interpretations of the viewers. Nonetheless, Basbaum's way of approaching the diagram as a storytelling intervention challenged me to explore how a story can be built out of diagrams, and more specifically how the viewer will interpret a sequence of connected diagrams.

Quite different from my position, but using the same medium (diagram) as a tool of investigation, is Jenny Holzer's project *Diagrams 1976*. Trying to explore time and space, she precisely copied diagrams from physics textbooks along with their captions (Holzer, 1976). Holzer's approach consists of a source that functions as a foundation behind the diagrams she designs. Her repetitive process, creating hundreds of iterations by copying diagrams from a book around the same topic, shaped her position; studying the representations of larger-than-life ideas through diagrams.

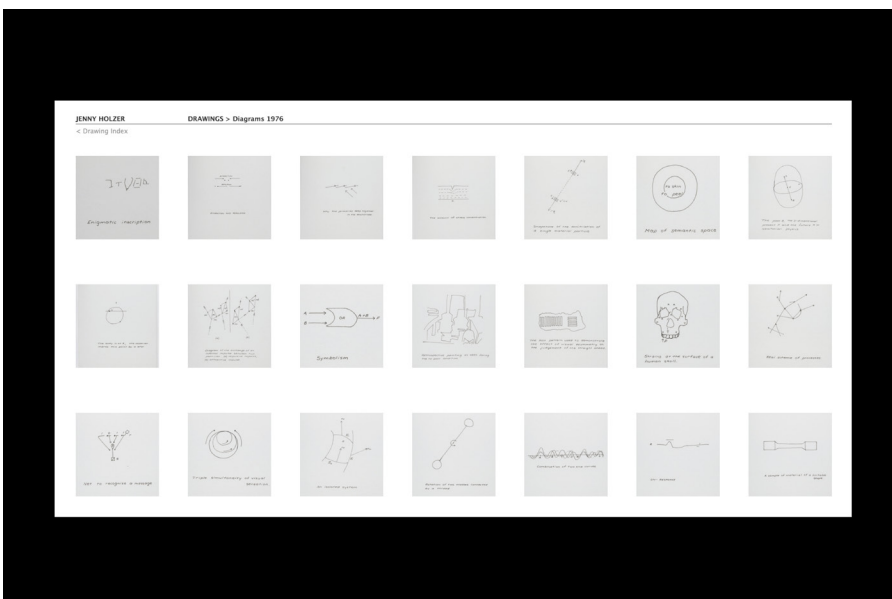


Figure 8. Holzer, J. (1976) *Diagrams 1976*.

Her way of working articulates for me that the source can be a really important tool, motivating me to try something similar at this point of the project, where I am exploring how diagrams are interpreted in a form of a sequence. I have considered finding a source without a specific context/subject, as my aim (for now) is to leave the interpretation as open as possible; building stories I am not aware of, stories that will occur based on the interpretations I will receive.

Having in mind that Jenny Holzer used something really accessible as a source (his boyfriend's physics textbook), reminded me that every day, we come across different kinds of diagrams we don't even notice; on food packages, maps, manuals, signs, etc. They are everywhere, sending a specific message, serving a specific purpose. Creating a small collection with some examples will provide enough inspiration (not copying as Jenny did in her practice) at this stage of my project, and it will be interesting to see how some of these diagrams can be used → interpreted in a different way.

The diagrammatic sequence will take the form of a one-page book (figure 9) as this is an apt solution to explore how a story can be formed through a series of connected diagrams in a non-linear way. In this way, I will be able to examine how the viewer engages with a piece of paper consisting only of shapes, lines, and arrows. The reader can unfold it, flip it, rotate it, and follow the various elements in order to form a story. A unique story that is generated out of diagrams without context. These elements are enough for the viewer to compare it with something and imagine an 'image'.

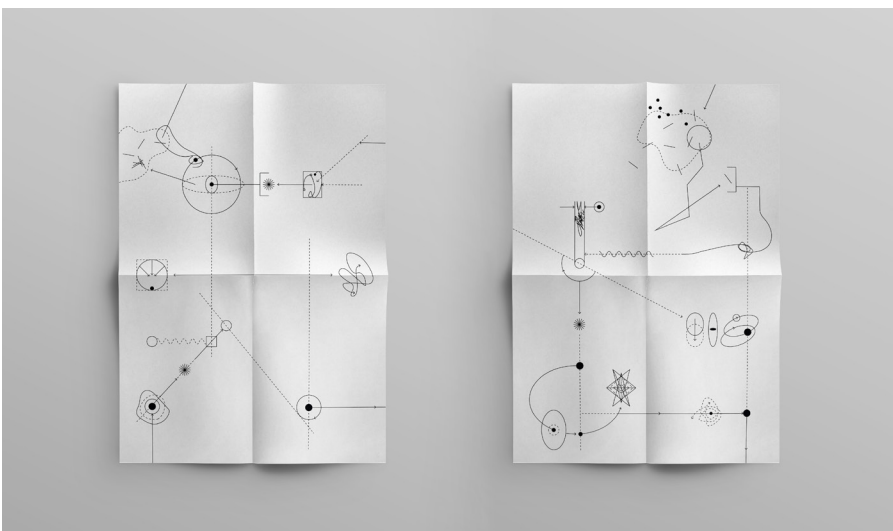


Figure 9. One-page book (A4 paper, folded two times), front and back side.

It is unavoidable, then, that behind each interpretation/story, shaped out of the diagrams, there is a hidden imaginative image.

**How an actual image can coexist with a diagram? Which is their relationship and how one interacts with the other? Can a diagram replace an image? What stories occur?**

When it comes to creating a diagram based on an image/photograph there is a variety of approaches that can be followed. Starting by creating diagrams using a series of photographs I have taken while I was walking in my neighbourhood, I came up with a series of visual representations, that looked more like illustrations rather than diagrams (figure 10). Following the main points and lines of the photograph, driven my work into the world of *diagrammatic illustrations*, opening new horizons in the project.

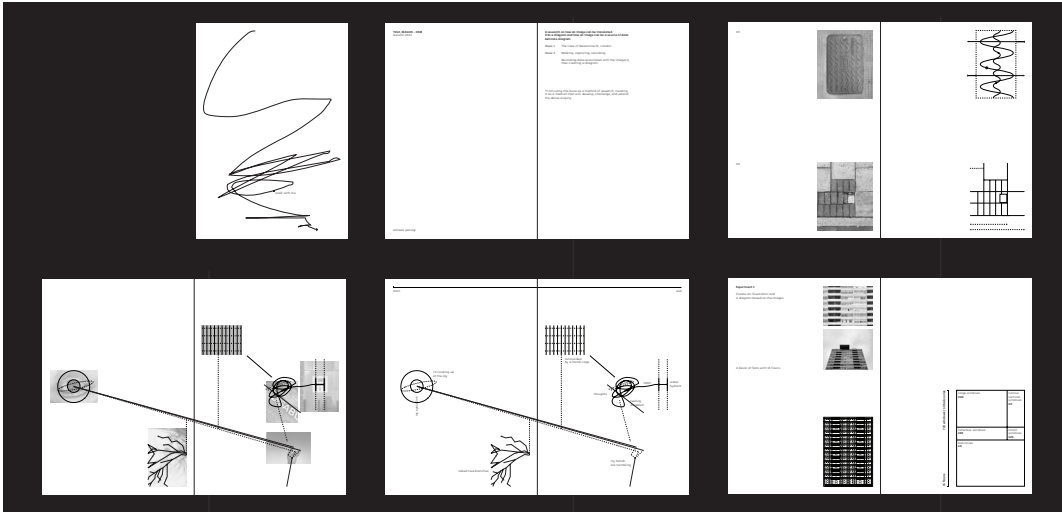
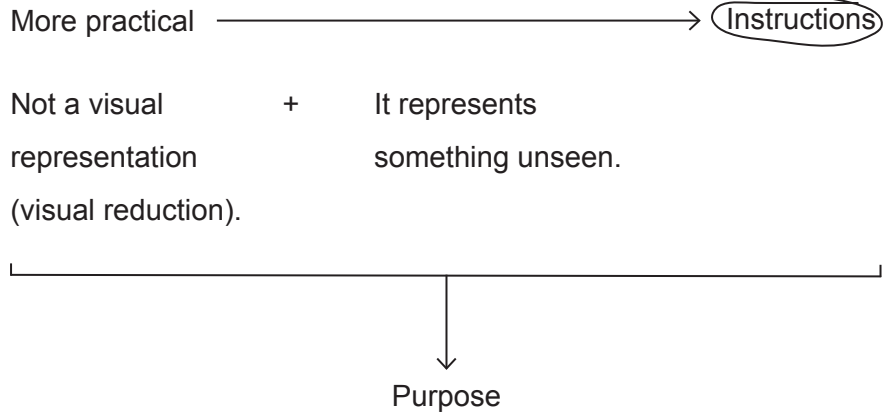


Figure 10. Spreads from my first triangulate project (52-page book, A5 size).

Reflecting on these first iterations, I have continued by clarifying the terms diagram and illustration. A diagram could easily be described as a simplified illustration that represents something in graphic form in contrast with the illustration which is a visual interpretation/explanation of something (e.g. a piece of text).

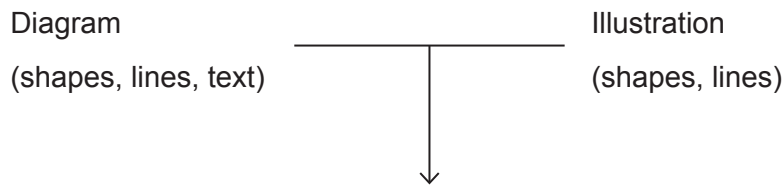
**What makes a diagram, an 'actual' diagram?**

SYSTEM - FUNCTION - DATA



**Diagrammatic Illustration.**

I have noticed in my studio work (analysing an image through diagrams) that my method includes a mixture of diagrams and illustrations; something like diagrammatic Illustrations. This approach adds another dimension to the information generated.



A representation of something, visual reduction, simplified drawings, information conveyance → storytelling.

**The role of diagramming in my work.**

In my work, I define diagramming as a method that breaks the boundaries between the classic format of diagrams and illustrations. It is something in between; a simplified design/drawing that consists only of black shapes, lines, and text, and can be interpreted either in one specific or more ways, depending on its type, its visual appearance/structure, and the information provided.

However, apart from the above, these first iterations made me observe and analyse my surroundings, bringing me a little closer to my urban setting/environment; Understanding that this area of research interests me.

**I have always been a collector of moments.**

**I remember myself always capturing things that I notice around me. Things that catch my eye or hide something behind them; a deeper meaning. I guess this is my method of recording things and memories; coming back another time of the day to think about it more and search for answers.**

**I feel that during my everyday walks here in London, this simple act became something more important. A creative act of walking, described by a series of questions coming up in my mind. Why is this placed here? What message is this sticker trying to send? Is there a meaning behind the appearance of this? I strongly believe that most of the things we come across in our everyday life have a deeper message to send that is worth exploring.**

**This collection becomes now an archive. An archive of concerns, observations, and ideas. Even if the answers I give to myself are not accurate, it is enough for me that I have formed a new story; justifying things in my brain.**

The things that surround us differ based on the way we approach them. It is fascinating how the meaning of something changes if we perceive it from a different perspective. This idea changed how I observe items/signs I come across while I walk outside, challenging me to research more about it and find ways to extend it through my position as a graphic communication designer. Walking is the time when I think and discover new things; an urban exploratory journey.

### **Using diagramming as a graphic communication tool/method to generate stories through the analysis of photographs captured in my urban environment.**

#### **Walking, observing, analysing, making stories.**

The idea is to observe and record things that catch my eye while I am walking. These can be plants, labels, stickers, trash; almost anything. I do not want to have something specific in my mind, being as open as possible to new perceptions; **letting the environment around me make the decisions for me.** The *Theory of the Dérive* by Guy Debord has a similar approach and purpose. Involving an awareness of psychogeographical effects, the participants are asked to let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the land/environment and what they find while they are walking. They do not have a motif in mind, they are just experiencing the city open to new perceptions; letting the surroundings absorb them, trying not to reflect on their past experiences (Debord, 1958, pp. 62-66).

What this theory made me realise, is that the environment we live in, the things we see while we are walking to work, for example, can offer us much more if we see them with another pair of eyes. This is how I started observing things around me. The stickers on the wall aim to send a message; a concern. The textures of the trees or the wall also mean something. Even the trash in the middle of the road represent a previous act. What is interesting is that such things, when analysed and put together can be the stimulus of generating new stories. Stories that, in my case, will occur through diagramming. Besides this, my own perception and thoughts are recorded, as I am the one who chooses what to observe while walking, guided by intuitive decisions and stimuli which are an important and integral part of the project. This gives an indirect personal/subjective approach to it.

**October 21**

**Arlington Way, Clerkenwell, 17:24**

The weather is really good. I can feel the sweet breeze dancing in my hair, drawing on my face. I can notice something at the end of the road, but I can barely see it. I keep walking, heading towards the Arlington Way. The streets seem to be really crowded. Horns, tires scratching the asphalt, people shouting. I guess this is London on a busy time on a normal weekday. I can almost feel that this keeps me active. It somehow makes my brain work differently; never stop thinking. There are times though that I feel lost in the urban and what surrounds me; wondering about the existence of everything.

I am standing in front of some random letters on the pavement, written using different colours of spray. Wait, probably they are not so random. Looks like a construction team was working here.

I am wondering, what these letters mean and what their placement try to say?

I can see that letter "G" stands for gas, this is written clearly. The other two letters are the "P" and "R". What do these mean? It could be something similar to gas, or something extremely opposite.

All 10 letters have a horizontal line on top of them as well as an arrow next to the word gas, showing an old plastic pipe attached to the wall. They should somehow represent what is going on under the pavement; how the gas is transmitted.

"P" could stand for power, that would make sense. But I cannot really find a word for the letter "R". I will use the word radiation.

How could the missing points be connected? This can tell a story. And if the words that represent the letters were not these, the story would be different.

The gas passes through the pipe, transmitting energy and power to something (probably to the house), creating a form of waves that represent an act of radiation. However the amount of times each letter is written can represent something as well.

*"Never mind, this reminds me of one's need for food in order to gain power/energy and be able to live.", or "Our radiance is our power."*

Data and information are most of the time not clearly seen in a photograph. However, they are there, hidden or connected to it. Consequently, the image is used as the source, the starting point from which new stories and spaces can occur through the diagrammatic analysis. A background to build on the rest of my work. This is also why the diagramming method I am developing is not the traditional way of data representation. It is characterized by an illustrative approach in combination with information analysis, metaphor, and storytelling. A mixture of images, diagrammatic illustrations, and text.

Worth mentioning is that some photographs cannot be translated into data, they all have context though. This is where the use of a diagram introduces a technical component (a series of parameters). I came across such parameters through my practice and experiments that are worth questioning. My area of research focuses more on qualitative data (quality) and not so much on quantity and numbers. This means that the research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data, such as images, to understand concepts or experiences. The most common way to analyse something visual is to first translate it into text (Gibbs, 2018, pp.3-5). This will help in gaining information or creating new information about something noticed in the street.

However, the question that arises here is what kind of image or information can be diagrammable (able to be diagrammed or represented by a diagram). Here comes the use of the text that acts as a bridge and connects the photograph's content with the diagram's visual elements. As an impact, some diagrams can be characterized by their function and some others by their meaning, which introduces another challenge; finding a way of how these two can be combined. The urban findings (photographs) and diagrams that subsequently form a story (narrative approach) are what contextualize my project, including both function and meaning.

Richard Long (1945) is a practitioner of land art, deriving inspiration from personal experiences and life in nature. He creates works that trace his physical movement through space; simple creative acts of walking, focusing on place, locality, time, distance, and measurement (Artnet, 2021). Even if his work is mainly sculpture-based, his way of thinking and working articulates for me that art can be made out of everything, even from things found in nature. Following lines in the environment, connecting what you see to form a piece of information, and building new spaces through nature are a few of the ideas that come to my mind. The act of building 'spaces' reminds me also of Ricardo Basbaum's work, with a different approach and method. As previously mentioned, Ricardo builds discursive and non-discursive spaces through his diagrams, creating dialogues and stories (Basbaum, 2016).

Data analysis and visualisation can be really interesting, but chaotic sometimes as there are many different approaches and methods that one can follow. Even if the subject or the design is complicated, the information has to be clear in order for the viewer to read and understand it. David McCandless' *Types of Information Visualization* chart, represents some of the possible methods that can be used in order to analyse a piece of information or a topic (McCandless, 2012). Nevertheless, in my case, the starting point is not a list of data/information. It is an outdoor photograph that has to be first 'decoded' (e.g. translated into text) before continuing with the design of a diagram. This can visually use and follow elements based on the image or can be something extremely different. Based on that, detailed notes along with the photograph can help with the content analysis of it, as well as, offer additional information that may help with the generation of a new story.

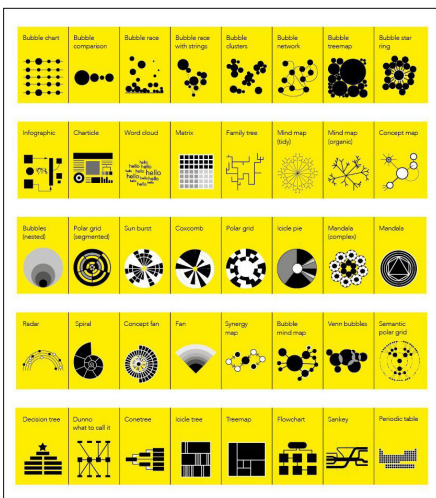
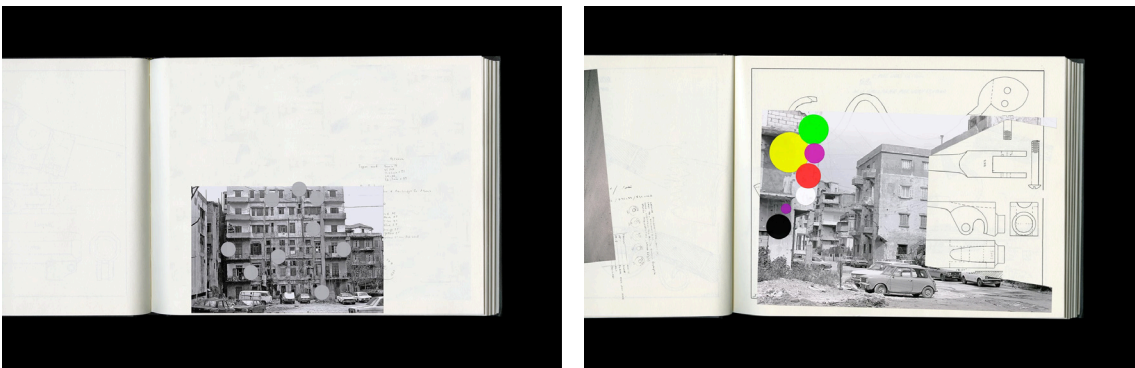


Figure 11. McCandless, D (2012) *Types of Information Visualization*.

Concerning the book as the format I am using while working on my studio practice, this embraces the storytelling feature of my work. Having a layout, and one page following the other creates a sequence both in the story that occurs through the photographs and diagrams but also in the whole project in general. I treat this book as a method of research; a medium that will help me explore my enquiry. Apart from this, the black and white colours I am using is another restriction I have set, limiting my choices of analysing data. The use of colour in diagrams is a factor that helps in separating information or visuals into categories, concepts, etc. Constraining myself to explore something/send a message, etc. using only the black colour, leaves the imagination more open. Keeping it neutral does not add extra meaning, letting the actual elements of the diagrams form the story.

Moreover, the use of specific elements to create the diagrams (shapes/lines/text) forms a system, a sequence, and a connection between them even if they are formed based on different photographs that have been taken and studied.

Evidence of sequence in the research can be easily observed in Walid Raad's project *Let's be honest, the weather helped*. The artist followed a really interesting way of recording the location and number of bullets he found on walls, cars, and trees in Beirut in the late 1970s, after the war (The Atlas Group, 1998). Capturing every site of his findings, and keeping detailed notes, he used dots to cover the holes in the photographs based on the bullet's diameter and manufacturer (size and colour of the dot). Here, the same shape of the hole (circle) is used both for the investigation and recording of the bullets (dots), helping in 'covering' all those holes after the war; an act of humanity.



Figures 12,13. Raad, W (1998) *Let's be honest, the weather helped*.

His way of analysing data using photographs, offers a method of diagramming that helps in recording and counting; coming up with results that can be used for further research of a certain topic. Therefore, he follows a quantitative approach to count the number of bullets, but also qualitative, to categorise data based on their characteristics (size and manufacturer of the bullet). Contrariwise, the approach I follow in my studio work is more qualitative, investigative, and open-ended; producing information that helps in developing hypotheses/understandings, and interpretations. Both approaches can construct narratives, however, more easily the qualitative ones. The narrative, that the artist develops above, is quite different from mine, as he uses the images as a canvas to work on, in contrast with the way I treat the photographs to gain information, observe forms, functions, etc. in order to create a story using diagrams.

**Diagramming  
my thoughts.**

The story that occurs is the walk itself. Guided by what I see, based on my intuition, what catches my eye.

**Decision making.**

Taking photographs is the way to record things, in order to then analyse them using diagrammatic illustrations → come up with a story.

Purpose?

How the city influences my walk/experience.

+  
Tracking how the urban environment speaks to me.

Cataloguing my walks in a diagrammatic/narrative way.

Certain kind of images, or a variety of images?  
(for each walk).

What patterns occur?

What stories occur?

Audience

→ Designers and individuals who are interested in exploring an urban story through a different perspective.

**Diagrammatic plan of my work.**

Using a certain kind of photographs taken in each walk, letting different kinds of stories unfold each time.

My walk is influenced based on things I

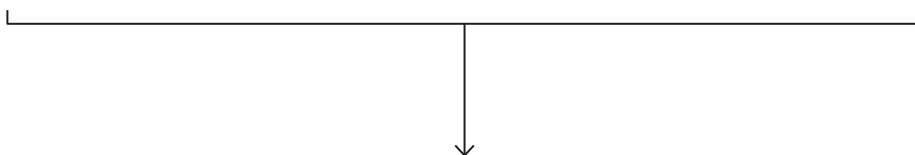
see,

or find

while I am walking. The s—e—q—u—e—n—c—e of things I come across and their classification in categories is important as well, as they form the story. Each new 'thing' captured is somehow connected to the previous one; having something in mind, trying to connect it with the next one.

~~And this is how a story is formed.~~ Actually, not!

What is in between, is the diagrammatic illustration approach I am using, that changes parts of the story, adds context, etc.



The process of observing and diagramming each photograph from my urban journey is what gives meaning to it.

The root of meaning can be either the ----- appearance/form of something, or its ----- purpose/intention.

This depends on each photograph/object and how the story will arise. The form of an item found in the street can possibly describe its purpose and intention. However, focusing only on the form can lead to a different meaning; changing the development of the story, which is an option. On the other hand, focusing only on the purpose can be easier to be filtered through a diagram, as the purpose can be translated into text first.

At this point, I would like to introduce *Changing Everything* project made by Stephen Willats in the North Peckham Estate in 1998. The aim of this installation was the symbolism of the planned determinism between Peckham North and the other five Estates and how this is visible in contemporary life. A number of residents were asked to accompany the artist on a specific walk through the North Peckham Estate, taking photographs of signs, objects, textures, etc., that may have another meaning or a new association with their life on the Estate; showing their personal perception (Willats, 1998).

The mosaics that were displayed in the gallery reflect a series of questions/concerns. The viewer is anonymously asked to answer how life on the Estate could become better; showing the diversity of people's social insights and creative imagination (Willats, 1998).



Figures 14,15. Willats, S. (1998) *Changing Everything*. South London Gallery.

What is similar to my approach, is the act of observing/finding meaning in items while walking in an area. However, the images that are part of the mosaics here can work individually, or in a different order as the aim is to raise questions/concerns about the area. Contrariwise, my position focuses on storytelling through the diagrammatic analysis of a series of photographs, meaning that the order of the images is very important to the development of the narrative. The use of different images (different subjects) like above, in my project, can lead to a confusing story. Nevertheless, this challenges me to set a series of restrictions in my work that will help structure the meaning of each story (walk), as well as, the purpose and rationale of the whole project in general.

As each walk recorded around my area (Clerkenwell/North London) is one story, the restrictions I have introduced to my work are:

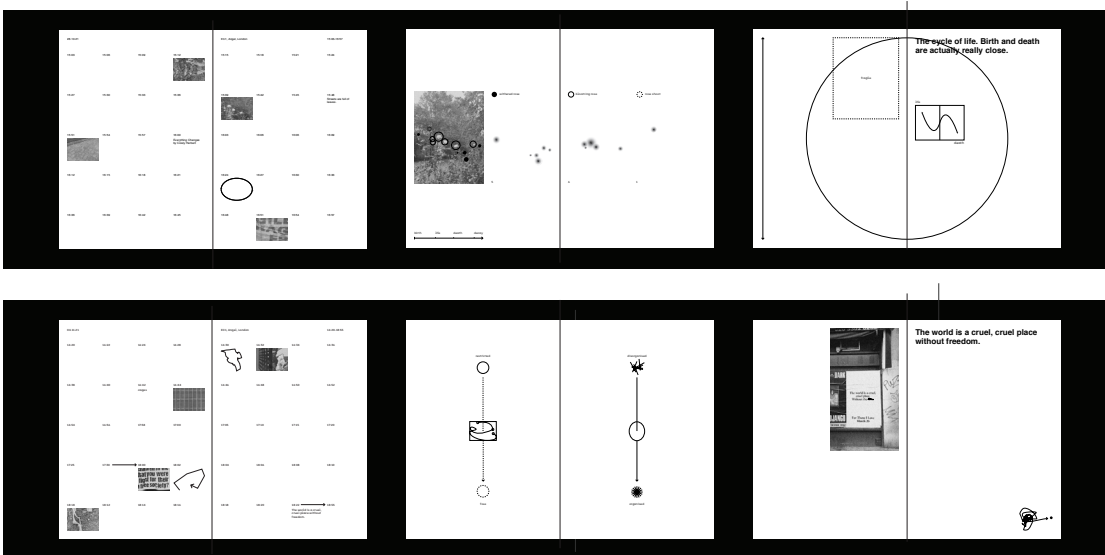
- A series of short stories that are all part of a book, or a series of short books/stories. Each story uses a certain kind of photographs (e.g. nature, stickers), or a series of photographs that have common points.
- The system, as well as, the technical design elements (black and white, same typeface, use of the same elements, same line weight, etc.) stays the same for all the stories.
- Keeping the length of each book/story short will be easier for the reader to understand the story and get the meaning. + Each story can be read individually.

Regarding the use of a certain kind of photographs for each story, this doesn't mean that all the photographs of trees, for example, taken during a walk have to be strictly actual photographs of trees. It could be something else that is associated; has something in common (visually or contextually). This makes the story more meaningful/coherent, but challenging as well, in the way of observing and recording specific things in my urban surroundings. This also allows a bigger 'concept/subject' to be indirectly revealed.

In her book *Design is Storytelling*, Ellen Lupton explores the idea that design is not only visual problem solving, claiming that behind each project there is feeling, and interpretation as well. All these are factors that prove how interconnected design with storytelling is, since designers use stories to record emotions, illustrate facts, and share opinions. (Lupton, 2017, pp. 9-13). My practice is definitely not aiming to solve a problem, but is really associated with the above claim. It is focused on the diagrammatic analysis of photographs/items. A procedure by which a series of stories occur; stirring emotions, sharing concerns. In my case, this happens intuitively and is based on my personal approach and way of perceiving. However, what cannot be predicted with certainty, is how the reader will approach and interpret each story.

Worth mentioning, then, is that each person has their own way of going through the books/stories, meaning that the narrative can be perceived slightly differently from each reader. This is part of the project and takes us back to John's Berger reference *Ways of Seeing* which has been studied earlier. The interpretation is not as open as it was during the early experiments of this whole project, however letting the perception of the reader take part in the stories is an element that still applies.

Therefore, each story has its own meaning/sends a message, but there is not a strict plan in its structure or in the way of reading. The form is following and visualises the content of the photographs, and the use of the layout, typography, line, and scale reinforce this. All these can be constituted as major devices of storytelling; contributing to the structure and cohesion of each story (Rock, 2013). Moreover, the length and the variety of the stories allow going through them at any time of the day. Looking at something, reading a piece of information, thinking a little bit. This is how this project should be treated.



Figures 16,17. Spreads of two stories that occurred through the diagrammatic analysis of photographs captured during my walks (work in progress).

In conclusion, what is left is the moment, the stimulus, the memory. Me exploring/playing around a huge urban canvas, making stories through diagrams and illustrations out of random items that surround me. Items that most of the time pass unnoticed. This journey is open-ended. The end is not the purpose. The purpose is the journey itself; the world around us that is constantly trying to share stories, even through the most useless thing. I still believe that most of the things we come across in our urban environment have a deeper message to send that is worth exploring.

Our surroundings speak to us.

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