

“It is the indefinable infinite that both surrounds and lies within us.”

**ANDREW JUNIPER**

WABI SABI:

THE JAPANESE ART OF IMPERMANENCE

Paulina M. Johnson

**Packet No. 1** | May 10, 2017

Hi Tasheka!

**REFLECTION/SUMMARY**

This is the first time I will not be designing a packet while at VCFA. Every other semester up to this point, and by this time, I would have already settled upon a format for my book including its corresponding grid, type systems, color palette, and so on. This month however, has been so bizarre. I spent the first week off residency in just a terrible mental place. As much as I always enjoy residency, this time around I walked away with a huge feeling of dread and confusion, to the point even that I considered (and still mildly do, taking the semester off). It seemed every opportunity which in the past provided valuable feedback, this time around did not. On the contrary, crits and “where are you going’s” all seemed to end up feeling like a blow to my ego and self-confidence, which coming into thesis, just sucked. During residency, as we discussed, I got negative feedback regarding what I thought would be the direction of my thesis. In short, others believed it was played out, uninteresting, and just plain boring. My reactionary response was then to change lanes all-together, and take up something totally different. Which I did, the day before meeting with Anne West. As you can imagine, coming into that workshop with that much unclarity created for an afternoon of more self-doubt and just plain no fun at all.

So, by week two after residency, and upon some introspection after camping in Utah for a week, I decided the new direction would be the one I’d commit to. This direction entails an inquiry of space. Let’s start off by acknowledging however that I could not have picked a term that is as much vague as it is all-encompassing, which is just difficult. But I will say that the more I read about it and consider it, the more completely fascinating it is. As we also discussed during residency, my curiosity about the notion of space arose from a book Natalia recommended last semester entitled *Abstraction and Empathy*. I found it interesting that this person, albeit more than 100 years ago, stipulated on just two forms of artistic experience whose motive and intention hinged on the artists’ interpretation of and relationship with space. I don’t necessarily agree that today there are truly only two form of artistic experience, but I do wonder how much our collective and personal notion of space informs all of the forms of artistic experience, and expression, and means. This then led me to ponder upon my own relationship to and interpretation of space, at a personal level, at a professional level, at an internal level, and so on. Here the problem lies now, in that I haven’t done much research on the topic of space at all. Sure, I’ve read tons of books I find incredibly interesting and have stipulated on ideas that could mildly relate, but this overwhelming sense of inadequacy, especially pertaining to such an enormous topic, is a bit paralyzing.

Week three after residency I resolved to get my shit together. I began to read *Wabi Sabi: The Japanese Art of Impermanence*, which I absolutely loved. I also continued to read, although I still have not finished, *Flow* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, which I have also completely loved. I began to dig deeper into the actual topic of space and found about 10 articles, which I began to compile, that approach the study of space from a psychological perspective, a physiological perspective, a philosophical perspective, a mathematical perspective, a spiritual and/or religions perspective, and finally I came upon this guy Henri Lefebvre who wrote about it from what seemed to be a holistic and all-encompassing perspective. I began to read a book he published in the 1970's entitled *The Production of Space*, which has turned out to be extremely informative although really hard to read. I'm only on page 14 of like 420, and quite frankly, I'm not sure I'll be able to stomach the whole thing. First of all, how in the world do people write such long books? I don't even get it. Second of all, if you're writing about a complex topic, about abstract and hard-to-grasp ideas, do it with kindness, and empathy, and try to make it accessible, or at least mildly interesting.

Around that time, or just prior, on April 30th to be precise, I began writing my thesis. I honestly don't even know what that means. I began to write, and it felt great. It was as though the book was somehow writing itself, tapping on important feelings and ideas, what came out was authentic and true to my experience. Then, I cross referenced it with Lefebvre's ideas. I know this was a good idea, because if I am setting on speculating anything about a topic, I need to be informed, or at least moderately cognizant, of what's come before, but it destroyed my original writing. So far, 14 pages in, what seems to be of most importance is the fact that Lefebvre stipulated that there are three types of space: physical space, mental space and social space. I, on the other hand, unknowingly and prior to reading his book, was referencing all of these spaces in a way in which, 1) I was appropriating them, 2) I was not clearly defining or distinguishing them and 3) I had no clear aim or purpose for the discussion in the first place. I've read and re-read those 3 or 4 pages that I wrote a million times. I've rewritten them, reformatted them, composing them in a way that may sound more academic, intellectual and valid. Yet, as I sit here now, I think back on my first round of writing as that which I value most, although unfortunately, it has now disappeared below my failed attempts to make it better.

So that is the state of my union, or disunion, actually, at least in terms of my topic.

In terms of making, at first I felt compelled to do only that. I took some really fun photos while camping but as my topic developed, my confidence subsided and I realized the body of work has to reflect the course of study. But since I have not completed my course of study, the making seemed unrelated. I have some initial ideas regarding the exhibition. But I've never created an exhibition. It's tough to know where to even begin. What I do know however, is that non of my pinups at VCFA have reflected my true making sensibilities because I focused on

ditching them all-together to find something new. Having come around full circle I now wish to bring those sensibilities back into my work, while incorporating everything new I've learned and tried. I'd like to continue working with natural and biodegradable materials, especially wood, thread and paper. I'd also like to incorporate a tad of typography into the work. Just a tad.

During our Skype meeting I'd like to discuss:

1. How to narrow down my topic and find a more feasible and specific focus.
2. How to find my authorial voice
3. What my priorities should look like through this process.
4. The actual logistics of putting an exhibition together. The more detail, the better.
5. Writing resources, specifically on how to create something with girth that is cohesive.
6. Creating a semester plan. I don't even know where to start, where I should be, and when the right time to freak out will be.
7. Anything else that you think might help, given my state of total disarray.

***Following are my two failed attempts at writing. Note they are now all jumbled up and totally repetitive.***

WRITING  
VERSION 1, 4/17

### Positive Space: A Syncretic Exploration

Every day, all day long, I am deeply affected by the space that surrounds me. This 'space', what is in essence my own little bubble of understanding, is difficult to perceive, or even define. It's elusive and incredibly malleable, a silent and ever-present companion. It expands and it contracts, seemingly out of its own accord. It is flexible, it is fierce, it is impressionable, and at times, utterly impenetrable. Sometimes my space feels incredibly large, hollow, almost borderless, as if part of a vast and limitless greater 'space'. Other times it feels very small and narrow, like a protective shield from an unknown outer-space. My 'space' serves not only as a surrounding metaphorical aether to my body, but also as a filter to the outside world. Like a sponge, it selectively absorbs or rejects that which occurs within and out, and as such, can become unbearably dense, or conversely, exquisitely light. As I move through each minute of each day, my space remains in motion. It is continually restructured in response to that which surrounds me. I call this thing my 'space' because at first glance it seems as though it is, in fact, uniquely mine. Yet, despite the kindred feeling of ownership, and its illusory defined perimeter, it is actually not unique, nor exclusively mine. All of us exist within the mental and physical space we create for ourselves. All of us live within an expanding and contracting invisible volume, filled with the content of our choosing. All of us share in the need for inclusion or exclusion, as our seemingly unique spaces inevitably overlap, clash, or meld together, every day.

I will confess that it was not until recently that I realized I have this thing I can call my 'space'. I lived an entire childhood, adolescence and even a good portion of adulthood without realizing it was there. It's not something many people talk about, at least not fully, or in these terms. When I think of the word space, many definitions come to mind. I can think of space, for example, as an unoccupied area, an emptiness, nothingness, or perhaps just an in-betweenness that exists between people or things at any given time. I often wonder if it's that constant emptiness, in-between, that separates us into individuals. Or if, on the other hand, it's that in-betweenness that in fact unites or defines our physical form. Space can also be thought of as something we feel and perhaps are able to own. If, for instance, you and I met up some day, maybe we'd talk. Our bodies would face each other, maybe sitting, maybe standing, and there would be this space, in-between us, that would buffer and enable our interaction. Whether we stood in one part of the world, or another, our specific cultural conditioning would dictate what the proper and comfortable distance, or lapse of space between us would be. This is what we call our personal space. Most of the time I hardly notice when my space overlaps that of others, but I do believe that is exactly what happens every time an interaction takes place. Sometimes this overlap is completely neutral and unnoticeable, sometimes it's soothing, sometimes totally uncomfortable. To this day I don't know exactly what triggers this change, but it's a telling feeling of space I trust wholeheartedly. Because our spaces meld, clash and overlap with others' all day long, at one point or another, all of us feel the need to retreat into our own 'space'. What that space means, or what it entails, is always different and unique to our experience. Some of us need to retreat into our space more often than others. Maybe it's our inherent tendency towards introversion or extroversion, which is directly linked to our threshold for sensory stimulation. Maybe it's just a simple need for unsolicited, isolation. Sometimes it's easy to immerse into that space. Sometimes it's difficult to find solace. Regardless, I believe it is in these moments that we find insight into what our 'space' needs and what it provides.

Linguistically, or at least in the two languages I speak, we also use the word space to designate function. Across the street I see my car in its parking space. Within my shared studio space I sit at my workspace. At the library one can find reading space. There's also space for meditation at the yoga center and loads of designated public spaces downtown. We systematically allocate areas that are designed for a specific purpose and to which rules we strive to abide. These designated spaces help us gauge and monitor our behavior in order to create a sense of harmony, in a social sense. We share space with others, in both a general and a personal sense, every day, and it is in this sharing that we find the essence of our substance and the ways in which we contribute to or influence others' space.

Space can be defined in many other ways as well, ways that quite frankly I don't completely understand. Space can relate directly to distance, volume, or the lapse of time. According to

Einstein's theory of special relativity, space and time are dependent on an observer and so are never independent from each other. Space-time embodies one entity that describes one thing at a particular time in its constant motion. That's my best crack at that. I've been in the midst of reading Stephen Hawking's "A Briefer History of Time" for about a year now, second time around. While these ideas fascinates me, like paint, they take a few thick coats to soak into my realm of comprehension.

Last, but certainly not least, space can be something we discuss or consider in the world of art & design. In large part, compositions hinge on the designer's use and understanding of space, positive and negative. The same thing can also be called form and counterform, they work jointly to depict the grander idea at the center of the design.

We often talk about feelings and emotions, for example, and the power these exert over our beliefs and our decisions. But from my perspective, although emotions do have a direct line to our morphing 'space', they do not comprise it entirely. Our feelings may influence its invisible color, or may chisel at its undetectable texture. They may trigger its size and function forging resilience or allowing a peaceful surrender to vulnerability. Emotions may fill our space, or may empty it, but are only one of the many factors that affect it.

Energy is another term oftentimes referenced when we talk about our space. Energy is invisible to the eye but perceptible to the senses. There is positive energy, there is negative energy, there is propelling energy, spiritual energy, potential energy and kinetic energy, and if you're really into it, there are energy nodes with codified colors embedded within specific locations of the body from which energy flows, emotions arise, and where well-being is ultimately rooted. I find the idea of flowing energy incredibly beautiful, poetic, and in a large way, reassuring. It may well be how our common spaces propel towards each other, repel or connect. It may be how they communicate in silence. But again, although an important component of 'space', energy does not define it.

Beyond emotions and flowing cosmic energy, Big Brains stipulate on Reality, the Mind and an intriguing platform they call Consciousness. In their terms, we are the direct product of our perception, which is informed by our sensory interpretation of the world. In essence, they believe we construct our reality as we go through life, by creating generalized assumptions and beliefs, shortcuts in a sense, to be able to navigate the world and interact with people more easily. My space certainly operates within this construct. It is prey to innate, automatic and default reactionary beliefs, most which were created and instilled in early childhood. Then again, all of us are. It's how we're wired. It's how we are built to think, and consequently rarely stop to question if those long-standing beliefs and assumptions, about anything, stand true in our later years. Big Brains believe that while there may be something called Reality out there, we are physically incapable of ever truly knowing it. It's too

large, it's too dense, so we pick and choose, and go with it. We fabricate the landscape of our reality in response to our experiences. We bet every dollar we have that what we 'know' is the real deal, to the very last detail, often forgetting we've actually pieced it together and then made it all up. This false certainty is problematic, especially when we lack the insight to recognize that what informs our space is a very limited version of what's really happening out there. Everything we think we know, that ultimately informs how our space forms and behaves, is a lot more volatile than we may think. Which is great. This grants us the freedom to reframe our knowledge, redefine our space, whenever we choose to do so. Whatever we believe to be true, is, but is always up for reconsideration, and if we choose to focus all our energy on reframing our beliefs as possibilities, our space can be vastly infinite and probably a lot more comfortable to be in.

**Point of Departure:** *This is an inquiry aimed at exploring varying interpretations and concepts of space, with a focus on how they relate to my understanding of the self and inform my interaction with, and interpretation of, the world.*

### The Beginnings of an Outline

*Introduction*

*How is space defined?*

*Physical Space*

*Mental Space*

*Social Space*

*Syncretic Space*

*How is space assembled?*

*Empirical Knowledge*

*Conceptual Interpretation*

*How is space portrayed?*

*How does our interpretation of space affect our understanding of the world?*

*How does our interpretation of space affect our making?*

*What does art & design have to do with space? / What does space have to do with art & design?*

**syncretism** | siNGkr tiz m|

Noun

- » the amalgamation or attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought.
- » Linguistics the merging of different inflectional varieties of a word during the development of a language.

## Space for Syncretism

### Introduction

Every day, all day long, I am deeply affected by the space that surrounds me. This space, what essentially comprises my own little bubble of understanding, is difficult to perceive, and almost impossible to define. At first glance, space is simple, endless, an elusive void of possibility, inextricably intertwined with the notions of form, thought and time. Upon closer inspection, however, space is much more concrete and endlessly complex; a vital presence which confines our existence, enables our interactions, illustrates our awareness, and facilitates our unique ability to know. All my life I have been keenly aware of space in both a personal and a general sense. It has served as both a vehicle to navigate through life, as well as a shelter to retreat from it. Space has provided a place of rest and belonging and has evolved into an ever-present and multi-faceted entity that surrounds me. Space has also provided a platform for me to express the whole of my understanding and communicate with the world at large. This is an inquiry aimed at exploring these varying interpretations and concepts of space, with a focus on how they relate to my understanding of the self and inform my interaction with, and interpretation of, the world.

That my graduate school thesis would end up being an inquiry into space is, retrospectively, not surprising. I was born in Mexico City, a large metropolis where spaces consist of endless rising structures, brimming colors, poignant smells, and the constant movement inherent to the dense richness of humanity. The physical space of my childhood was relentlessly filled and vibrantly occupied, which gave rise to the creation of a separate mental space into which I could retreat in order to find stillness and silence. This is how my concept of space first split into two. I realized there was a space, out there, which I could neither predict nor completely control. It was a space I had to learn how to navigate through and which provided constant feedback, input, and stimulus to react to, or learn from. My mental space has since been ever-changing. It houses my core personal values and draws from all of my accumulated beliefs and assumptions about the world. It is home to all that I know to be true; a platform for the narrative that has become my life. I call this my space, because it seems as though it is in fact uniquely mine; an invisible surrounding entity with a defined volume. Yet, despite the kindred feeling of ownership, and its illusory perimeter, this space is actually not unique, nor exclusively mine. All of us exist within the mental and physical space we create for ourselves, sharing in the experience within varying common social spaces. Social spaces can be physical or virtual, often manipulated, compartmentalized and shaped to fulfill specific functions. They can be privately owned or publicly managed. They create a context for congregation, exchange and interaction, which I believe injects value and relevance to the physical spaces they occupy.



Cognizance of these three spaces has undoubtedly enriched my sense of self awareness and paved a solid path towards greater self knowledge. Yet, I find of most interest the possibility of an even more abstract notion of space in which the empirical knowledge we assimilate from the physical realm and the conceptual understanding we arrive at from our mental space, overlap. I should note here that I lack interest in defining or describing ideas if not to challenge the parameters set forth by those very definitions. Everything, in my opinion, overlaps. Nothing lives in isolation and unrelated from the whole. As my inquiry builds upon an examination of their definitions, I wonder, what lies between physical, mental and social spaces? Is there a way in which we address and reference this overlap in our lives? What is the space between space like and what is its value and function? I realize nuance is difficult to allocate in a world where descriptions are plotted by reference points or separated by defined dualities. Yet, insight from nuance is precisely that which I seek.

### Physical Space

When I think of the word space, many definitions come to mind. I can think of space, for example, as an unoccupied area, an emptiness, nothingness, or perhaps just an in-betweenness that exists between people and things, all the time. This apparent constant void has propelled great minds to ponder if it is that empty space, which defines the very essence of life. Alchemists once called it first matter, while physicists have referenced it as absolute space, or aether. Physical space frames our perspective and is identified by sensory experience. It defines form and instills the concept of location to life's events. As such, these physical spaces become essential components of memory, they inherit emotion and appropriate meaning.

Mathematically, space can reference distance, volume, dimension, creation, or an inclusion of time. This identification of space, purely geometric and empirical, was once appropriated by mathematicians who preoccupied themselves with defining and classifying what they saw as absolute, concrete, and real space, i.e. curved spaces, x-dimensional spaces, Euclidean spaces, and so on. Scientific propulsion has hinged largely on this mathematical understanding of space and thus knowledge. Its abstract nature has teetered between the sciences and the humanities through time.

According to Einstein's Theory of Special Relativity however, physical space does not exist as a separate entity from, or independent of, time. Together, they are one object called spacetime. In order to briefly explain this, say you wanted to describe the exact location of your phone within the room you sit in now. You could specify its distance in inches from the wall behind you, its distance from the wall on your right, and how far it sits above the ground. This is how three-dimensional space is addressed and defined, based on the description of three corresponding coordinates in common units of measurement.

If, however we take into consideration that everything is in constant motion, a fourth dimension must necessarily be introduced for a more true and accurate description. You, sitting where you are now, are moving at about 67,000 miles/hour. So, the physical location of your phone now... as opposed to now... is different, because of the time that elapsed and the distance you and your phone inadvertently traveled through space. In this sense, spatial description requires a direct reference to the time it was measured.

Most of us, however, do not think in these terms, and for this particular inquiry of space, the brief mention will suffice. What's important here is to note that there is an actual physical space within which we all operate and which we must all navigate in our daily physical lives.

Linguistically, we utilize the word space to designate function. Across the street I see my car in its parking space. Within my shared studio space I sit at my workspace. At the library one can find reading space while at the yoga center there is meditation space. There are entire professions dedicated to the design and construction of public spaces, addressing our inherent social need to share physical space. Automatically and systematically we allocate areas that are designed for specific purposes and to which rules we strive to abide by. These designated spaces help us gauge and monitor our behavior in order to create a sense of harmony and peaceful coexistence, in a social sense.

#### Mental Space

Space can also be thought of as something much more meaningful and profound beyond the scope of absolute mathematics. Many great thinkers and philosophers throughout history have pondered on the nature and function of knowledge, especially as it relates to our perception of space. In this manner, space becomes an abstract concept of the mental realm, it becomes space within consciousness.

People talk about their space all the time, but that conversation often seems to be rooted in only one, or a few, of the many strands that become our web of understanding. We often talk about our feelings and emotions, for example, and the power these exert over our decisions and our beliefs. From my perspective, although emotions do have a direct line to our mental space, they do not comprise it entirely. Feelings may influence its invisible color, or may chisel at its undetectable texture. They may trigger its size and tone, forging resilience or allowing for a peaceful surrender to vulnerability. Emotions may fill our space, or they may empty it, but are only one of the many factors that affect it.

Energy is another term oftentimes used when referencing mental space. Energy is invisible to the eye but perceptible to the senses. There is positive energy, there is negative energy, there is propelling energy, spiritual energy, cosmic energy, potential energy and kinetic

energy, and if you're really into it, there are energy nodes with codified colors embedded within specific locations of the body from which energy flows, emotions arise, and where well-being is ultimately rooted. I find the idea of flowing energy incredibly beautiful, poetic, and in a large way, reassuring. It may well be how our common spaces propel towards each other, repel against each other, or find a way to seamlessly connect. Exchanging energy may be how our spaces communicate in silence. But again, although an incredibly important component of 'my space', energy does not solely define it.

Beyond emotions and flowing energy, others stipulate on Reality, the Mind and an intriguing platform they call Consciousness. In their terms, we are the direct product of our interpreted perception, which is informed by our sensory experience of the world. In essence, they believe we construct our reality as we go through life, by creating generalized assumptions and beliefs, shortcuts in a sense, to be able to navigate the world and interact with people more easily. My space certainly operates within this construct. It is prey to innate, automatic and default reactionary beliefs, most which were created and instilled in early childhood. Then again, all of us are. It's how we're wired. It's how we are built to think, and consequently rarely stop to question if those long-standing beliefs and assumptions, about anything, stand true in our later years. Those who examine consciousness and the mind believe that while there may be something called Reality out there, we are physically incapable of ever truly knowing and understanding it. It's too large, it's too dense, so we systematically pick and choose, and go with it. We fabricate the landscape of our reality in response to our experiences. We bet every dollar we have that what we 'know' is the real deal, to the very last detail, forgetting we've actually pieced it together and then made it all up. This false certainty is problematic, especially when we lack the insight to recognize that what informs our knowledge is a very limited version of what's really happening out there, in Real space. Everything we think we know, that ultimately informs how our space forms and behaves, is a lot more volatile than we may think. Which is great. This grants us the freedom to reframe our knowledge, redefine our space, realign our understanding, whenever we choose to do so. Whatever we believe to be true, is. This belief however, is always up for reconsideration, and if we choose to focus on reframing our beliefs as possibilities, our space can be vastly infinite and probably a lot more comfortable to be in.

All of these factors brought together, my emotions, my energy, my perceived intellectual assumptions, my spiritual beliefs and default physical habits, frame what ultimately becomes my inner space of understanding. These dictate how it functions and comprise what I can access within it. These inform my tendencies, preferences... **The End.**

**Self Critique:**

After writing and rewriting the two versions above, I just can't wrap my head around them at all any more, which is probably a sign I need to just scrap them altogether and start from scratch. In this kind of format (the packet format), I feel like I could literally write for days without hesitation or problem. The way in which I approached my writing for those two pieces however (thinking I was writing a book), was somehow more poetic, which I didn't intentionally really mean, and it lends itself to very quick finality. It's like I'm trying to say everything I mean in just one go. That's why I don't know how to elaborate or extend my thoughts more clearly. Plus, writing a book sounds incredibly daunting.

**Topic Take-Away**

I'm not really interested in defining at great length what physical, mental and social space is. What I'm a lot more interested in doing is highlighting the fact that we all exist within an amalgamation of the three and that this amalgamation results in a new concept of 'space' unique to our own individual experience. By navigating all three of those spaces we create our own. This space could also be called reality, but that just sounds too deep. I'm also interested in studying how these spaces intersect in our work. As graphic designers we utilize elements and cues from the physical world to depict ideas two-dimensionally. This work is then used to influence the viewers' mental space, usually within a social space. Should a designer not be cognizant of this dynamic, a huge opportunity is lost. Plus, it also means the work is being created from a place of ignorance, which as social influencers, is not a good thing.

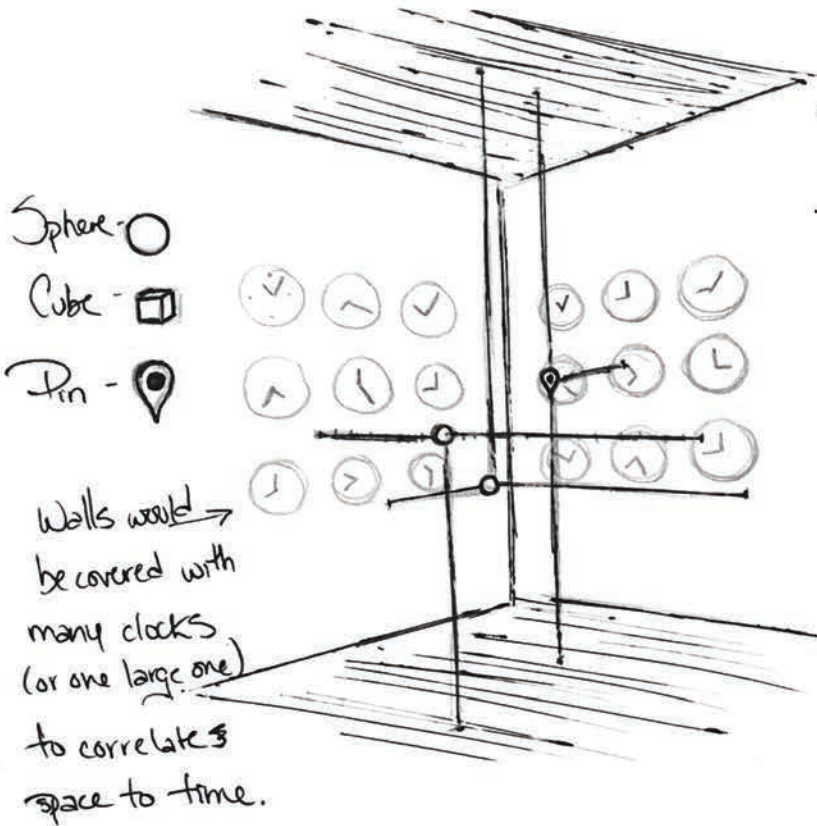
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Following are some initial ideas for my thesis exhibition. All of these deal, in one way or another, with our general interpretation and perception of space: *physical, social or mental*. But I've never done this before. I have no idea if this is the right approach or if the writing should precede and then inform the making. Where does the development of visual work fall into the process of creating a thesis? Is it the most important part or is it second in line?

# Installation Ideas

## Metaphors for Space / Physical Space-time



• Space as something that is measured and quantified

Suspended from three measured points or coordinates, in a corner of a room, spheres, location pins or boxes would hold an emotion.

- Could they light up inside?
- Made out of abaca?
- Held in place by wood/string

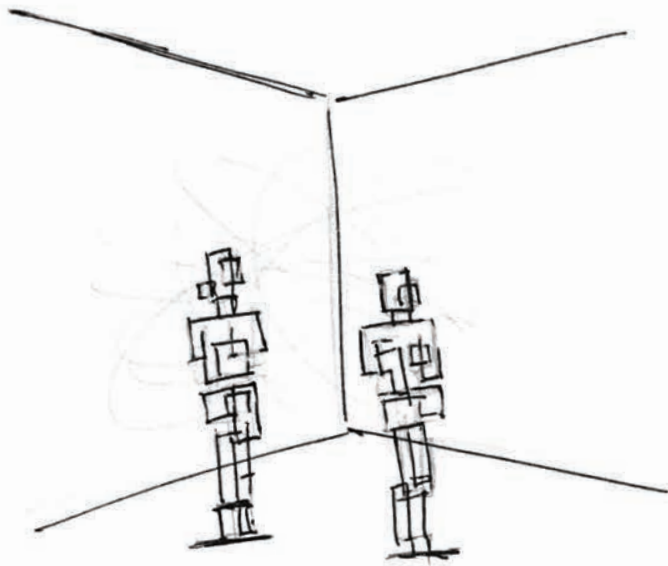
## Documenting my physical spaces [maybe like 100?]

Photo to Illustration

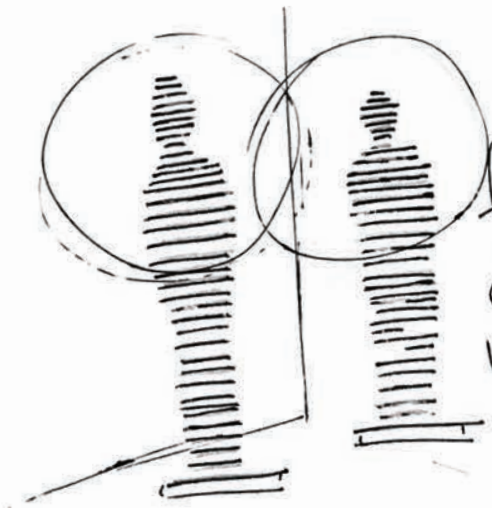


By first photographing and then hand-sketching my immediate physical spaces, I could catalog the spaces that surround me. By sketching them I'd be reinterpreting them. Maybe it's a transition from photograph to hand sketch to illustrate <sup>the</sup> process of mental interpretation of space.

# Metaphors for Space / Mental Space



Inspired by the abstract human figures of Antony Gormley, I'd create life-size human figures made out of thread or paper and then represent the overlapping mental spaces of their interactions w/ wire/wood/thread



figures could also be cross-sections cut out of paper. Not sure how I'd hold them together though.

I'd also like to work with shadows...

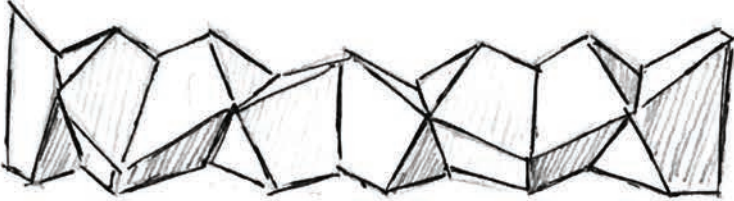
What if the paper was adhered to the wall so that its shadow would be the silhouette of a human figure?



two facing each other?  
threads in between?

# Deconstruction of perceived physical space

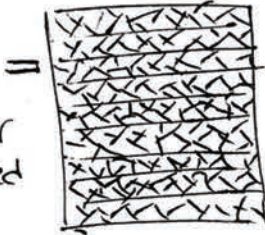
Fragmented space



Inspired by Paul Jackson's 'Folding Techniques for Designers', I'd like to deconstruct photographs within the panels of the folds.

[Interaction between physical/mental space]

Either  
butting  
together  
or spaced  
out



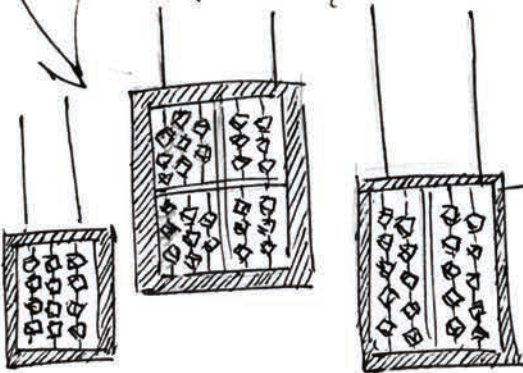
for scale only

Panels could end up  
being very large / or smaller



Installation of windows (space separators)

Maybe the fragmented paper photographs could live within them.



Windows could be  
made out of paper too.  
or cardboard  
or recycled paper waste

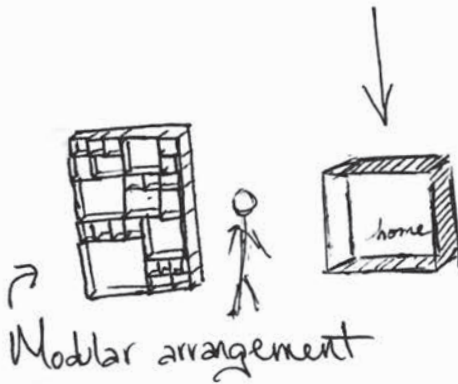
[how do we frame our reality?]



# Mental Space meditation



Handmade paper w/ white thread in between two sheets of paper. word written w/ thread in between. Only visible as a shadow.

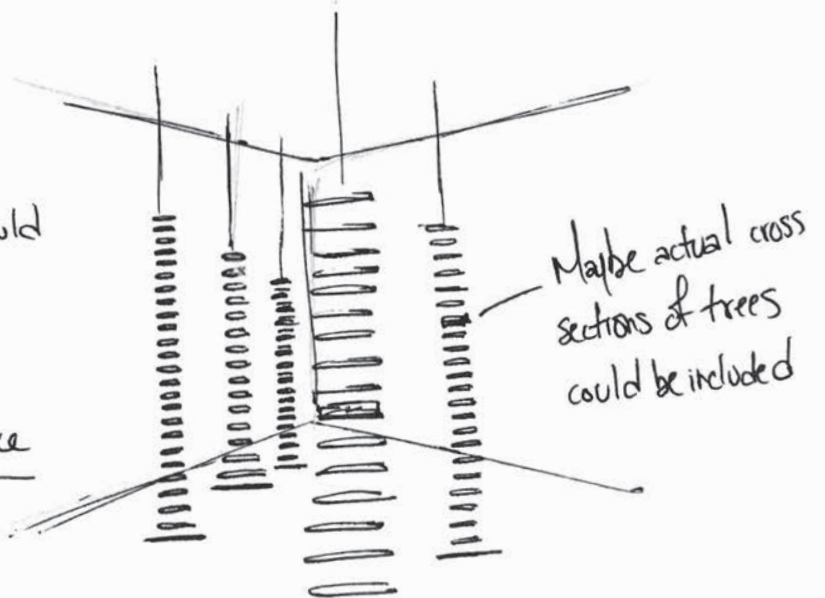


these could also be boxes representing physical spaces



What if I create a forest of paper cross-sections of aspen trees. Each panel could also contain words within.

Deconstructing physical space



In the disparate hours and spaces in between (ha!), I did play a bit with material. I began to work with the photos I took while camping in Utah, of which I really liked those of close-up textures within rocks and trees. Then, I decided to deconstruct them by injecting interrupting space. Following are a couple of my experiments. I will say folding paper is something I continue to enjoy, not quite as much however, as putting small pieces together while considering composition and form.

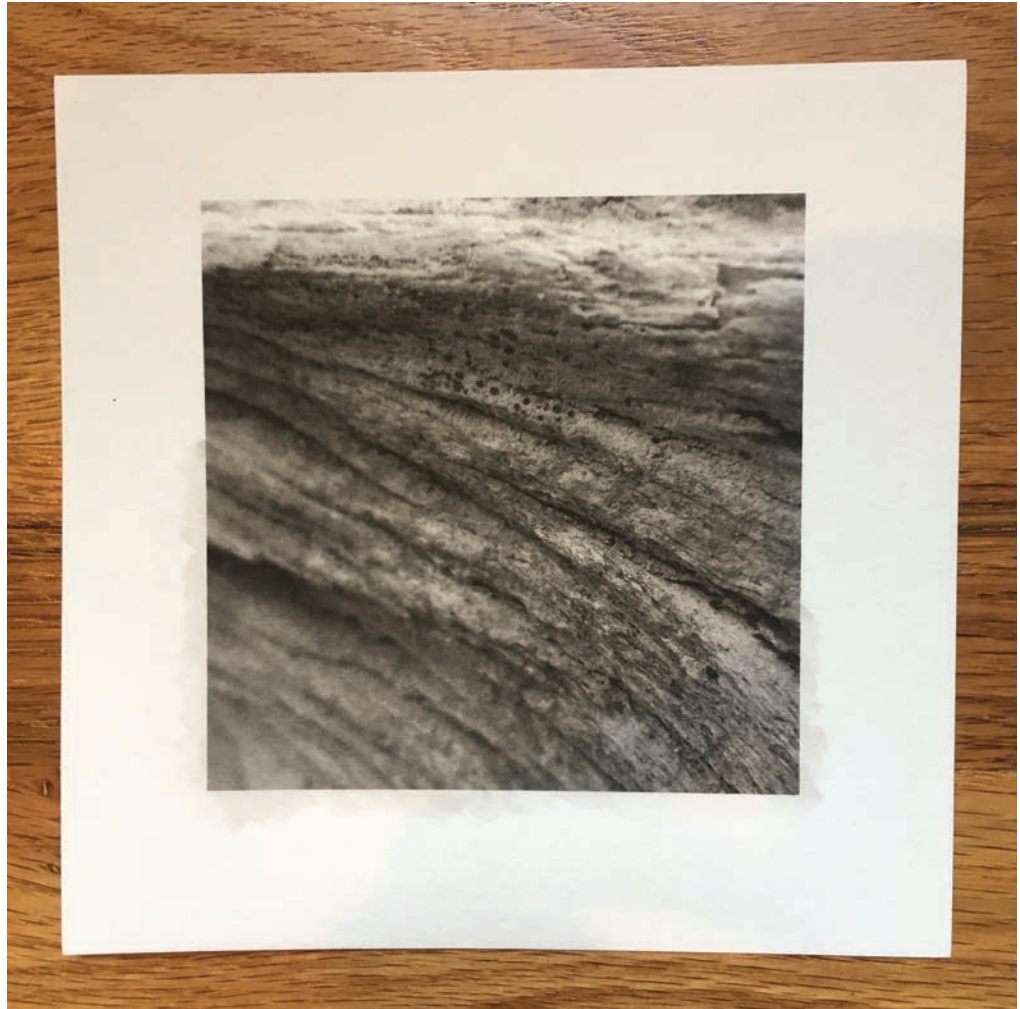


IMAGE BROKEN UP  
INTO SEPARATE PANELS









I printed all of these on watercolor paper. I absolutely love the texture and the depth the image takes on. This could begin to form a study of line as it describes depth in 2-dimensional space.





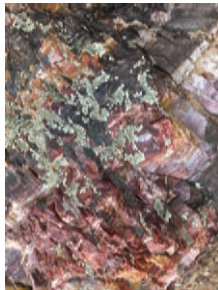
FOLDING TEST



FOLDING OF ABSTRACT TEXTURE



OTHER IMAGES



Some time after I decided to change my thesis topic, and me actually looking into the concept of space from varying and diverse angles, I began this book. I did so purely on instinct and absolutely loved it. I will admit to the fact that I intended to read the wabi sabi book for artists, designers, poets and philosophers, but since this version was more readily available on iBooks, I began there. I will say I am really surprised I had not been nudged to read about wabi sabi, especially with my keen interest in everything Taoist. Below, a collection of thoughts I found most interesting and a brief synopsis of what I took away.

“Zen believes words are a fundamental obstacle to clear understanding.” This week especially, as I struggled to articulate my ideas about ‘space’, I concur. Additionally, and according to a number of philosophers such as Alan Watts, words are indeed a source of misunderstanding, not only regarding the actual topic of conversation, but more importantly the very notion of knowledge as fragmented pieces to be assembled. According to Watts, our misconception about the nature of our being, as separate individuals, is rooted in systems such as writing which depend on collections and assemblages of parts.

“The term *wabi sabi* suggests qualities as impermanence, humility, asymmetry, and imperfection. These underlying principles are diametrically opposed to their Western counterparts...” which is so awesome. I’m tired of those Western counterparts. I think I have been craving an alternate option, although frankly departing from my Western design habits has been really, really hard. I’d like to arrive at a style of design which conveys the wabi sabi aesthetic while embracing that which has informed my practice up until now as well. I’m especially interested in surpassing the notions of perfection and permanence in my work. It’s really interesting to note that aside from these tenets, it is believed that the Japanese were the ‘masters of space’, stressing the importance of ‘nothingness’ “as a juxtaposition to things that presently exist.” Philosophically, it seems their interpretation of space as an opposing entity to presence or existence was used just as expressively and considered with as much intent. Wabi sabi takes keen interest in the unconventional, not for its own sake, but as a means to stimulate different ways of perceiving art. It values the processes and rhythms of nature while creating symbiotically along with it. It also advocates for a nondualistic perception of life, where the unmovable truth lies away from materiality and the intellect altogether. The aesthetic takes interest in the modest and mundane, in essence the visual & physical manifestations of core Zen beliefs.

“In Zen philosophy, the mind should be a window, rather than a mirror, so that the world is seen directly and not through filters of the intellect.”

While my goal for this thesis is not to focus on the wabi sabi notion of space, it is something that will certainly be included and which I hope comes through aesthetically.

Thank you!