

In the first assignment, I read the Conditional Design Manifesto and drafted a personal manifesto drawing on my practical experience from the Week 2 workshop. During that workshop, I generated patterns by establishing strict, mechanized drawing rules. This process led me to complete a ten-point personal manifesto: 1. Define the core problem and conceptual logic of the design. 2. Embrace risk-taking, embrace mistakes, and learn from them, rather than avoiding risks to pursue perfect scores. 3. The design process itself is as valuable as the final outcome. 4. Commit to creating work that resonates emotionally with people, using empathy. 5. Design serves reality. 6. Design is a social act; diverse perspectives strengthen outcomes. 7. Maintain curiosity and a critical perspective. 8. Respect and pay attention to details. 9. Seize serendipitous and emergent ideas. 10. Establish clear rules that can generate rich variations. When evaluating my performance, I recognized my strength lies in transcending mere visual aesthetics to connect conditional design with design ethics. However, I also clearly recognized my shortcomings. During the actual drawing process, I attempted to tweak the rules to achieve more visually pleasing results. This fixation on outcomes actually contradicted the original intent of conditional design and inadvertently restricted the openness of exploration. Based on this reflection, in future projects, I will establish a clear system of rules to guide the design generation process, then allow content to grow organically within the defined structure.

In the second task, I analyzed the usability of smartphones, tablets, and laptops based on Don Norman's theories. By creating a comparative list, I systematically outlined the differences between the three devices. At the interpretive level, this task shifted my design perspective back to the objects themselves from a singular focus. Previously, I had prioritized the visual hierarchy of screens while overlooking how a device's weight, material, and form influence users' psychological expectations and usage patterns through physical cues. This experience revealed that design extends beyond visual guidance to encompass implicit psychological cues, with different mediums appealing to distinct human traits. When evaluating my performance, I recognize my strength lies not only in functional comparisons but also in analyzing usage scenarios—such as how a laptop's two-handed operation suggests more formal, sustained seated work. However, I also acknowledge my shortcomings: initially, I overemphasized differences at the software and application level while overlooking the inherent messages conveyed by the device itself. This revealed gaps in my perception of the physical world. Reflecting on this, future interaction design projects may involve creating simple device prototypes from foam board or cardboard. Through hands-on testing with various operations, I aim to verify ergonomic fit—ensuring designs extend beyond mere screen aesthetics.

In the third assignment, after reading Barbara Flanagan's 2000 work *Letter to My Son*, I was tasked with emulating its epistolary form to write to a future child. In my letter, I envisioned a mixed-reality future where artificial intelligence is ubiquitous and the climate crisis intensifies, offering advice to the next generation on maintaining curiosity and navigating technological ethics. From an interpretive perspective, this marked my first systematic engagement with speculative design. Unlike traditional design focused on solving present problems, speculative design reflects on contemporary values and choices by constructing future scenarios. This made me realize that the significance of predicting the future lies not in its accuracy, but in its role as a critical tool for raising awareness. Thus, my letter was less a mere fantasy of the future and more a projection of my own present anxieties. In evaluating my performance, I believe my strengths lie in enhancing the text's realism through explicit timeframes and specific technical vocabulary. Simultaneously, adopting a parental narrative perspective transformed grand societal and technological issues into emotionally resonant personal stories. However, this writing also exposed my limitations: the overall tone leaned pessimistic and conservative, with greater emphasis on technological risks than on envisioning the new social structures and positive transformations it might catalyze. This reflects my subconscious unease about the future. Guided by this reflection, in future design research, I will not only focus on users' immediate needs but also continuously explore how the world might change a decade after this design is implemented. This approach will enhance the social responsibility of my design solutions across the temporal dimension.

In the fourth task, by watching relevant videos, I systematically learned the prototyping process from sketches to finished products. From an interpretive perspective, I previously viewed prototypes as semi-finished products that needed to resemble the final product as closely as possible, often leading me to prematurely pursue refinement and completeness. This made me realize that each prototype corresponds to a hypothesis to be validated. If a logical issue can be identified at the paper stage, it should not be left to surface in later stages. When evaluating my learning outcomes, I recognize my strength lies in clearly distinguishing functionalities across different stages—such as leveraging paper mockups for low-cost experimentation. This layered validation approach significantly reduced psychological pressure during the design process. However, I also clearly identified my shortcomings: in practice, I still tend to prematurely focus solely on the final deliverable. This habit exposes my lack of confidence and shame surrounding the sketching phase. Therefore, in my subsequent learning, I plan to rigorously enforce a draft-based trial-and-error strategy while managing design pacing and time allocation more scientifically and efficiently.

For the fifth assignment, I spent a day in Winchester documenting my experiences and gathering diverse visual materials—breakfast scenes, street views, hand-drawn sketches, and natural landscapes—which I ultimately compiled into a collage-style storyboard. This narrative, presented through photographs and hand-drawn works, forms a closed loop: transitioning from the bustle of the city to the tranquility of the riverside, then returning to everyday life. From an interpretive perspective, this assignment deepened my understanding of narrative's role in design: it serves as the vital link transforming fragmented data and experiences into coherent meaning. Photographs and drawings alone remain isolated works; only through editing, sequencing, and textual intervention can they form a complete narrative arc. Reflecting on my practice, I recognize my strength lies in successfully employing collage techniques to fuse diverse media—photographs, hand-drawn lines, and text—within a single frame. This approach yields greater emotional expressiveness than standalone photography. However, this process also revealed a weakness: during material collection, I tended to prioritize visually appealing landscapes while overlooking more narratively potent, detailed scenes. This oversight forced me to rely heavily on text to compensate for insufficient visual information in post-production. This has made me realize that visual storytelling requires capturing actions and processes rather than merely presenting static displays. Based on this reflection, I will consciously practice storyboarding in the future. This will enable me to showcase not only the final outcomes in my portfolio but also to vividly narrate the design process itself through dynamic media.

In Part Six, I created a visual note through my studies. In this note, I explicitly stated that empathy is not synonymous with sympathy. From an interpretive perspective, I realized designers are prone to falling into the trap of subjective assumptions about what users might like. True empathy is not an innate quality but a professional skill that requires continuous training through active listening and field observation. Simultaneously, the visual note format itself constituted an exercise in empathy, as I attempted to translate complex, abstract concepts into a visual language more accessible to others. In evaluating my performance, I recognize my strengths lie in the clear structure and logical flow of my notes, along with my ability to visualize abstract concepts. However, I also clearly recognize my shortcomings: my current understanding of empathy remains largely theoretical. In past projects, I rarely conducted in-depth field interviews with users, instead relying heavily on secondary sources and indirect research. This lack of direct user interaction has left me without a solid experiential foundation. Reflecting on this, my future learning will likely involve conducting more in-depth user interviews and actively listening to uncover latent needs that users have not yet clearly articulated.

In summary, my design practice underwent a significant shift from self-centeredness to an other-oriented approach. Through tasks like the Conditional Design Manifesto and Future Letters, I first systematically examined my own design values and ethical stance. Subsequently, through affordability analysis and prototyping exercises, I gradually learned to validate hypotheses through low-cost, rapid iteration, thereby reducing trial-and-error costs. Through narrative practice and empathy training, I further recognized that design's meaning often emerges from observing, organizing, and expressing authentic experiences—not merely visual presentation. The greatest takeaway across all six tasks was shifting my focus from “what I did” to “why I did it,” thereby embracing uncertainty, chaos, and failure as integral parts of the design process rather than avoiding them. Looking ahead, I will continue using the DIEP reflection model to document design decisions, strengthen my capabilities through practice, maintain a human-centered design stance, and gradually develop a communication design practice that balances logical depth with emotional care.