

Reflective Report

Introduction

Based on the DIEP (Description, Interpretation, Evaluation, Plan) reflective framework, this report systematically sorts out my learning journey and design practice in the CDU module. It is not merely an academic summary of design theories, but a true record of the transformation in my personal thinking paradigm. Through the four core projects of this module—from rule-driven Conditional Design to the research on non-human users that challenges anthropocentrism—I witnessed my evolution from an outcome-focused designer who only cared about "polished final works" to a critical practitioner who embraces uncertainty, values the research process, and fosters critical awareness.

Describe

Overall Participation

Throughout the module, I acted not only as a participant in workshops and class discussions, but also as a recorder. Unlike before, when I only opened my laptop right before the final presentation, I now tracked the flashes and fades of inspiration through blogs, random sketches, messy but authentic mind maps, and a large number of visual experiments.

At first, this approach made me extremely anxious. Influenced deeply by my past educational background, I was used to imagining the final product within the first hour of receiving a brief, then quickly working backward to make a plan. I used to think that reflection blogs were just written fillers after finishing assignments. But as the module progressed, I found this mindset gradually falling apart. When I first tried writing reflection blogs, I even felt lost for words—because I was more comfortable communicating through visual language, and words felt like a constraint to me. However, I gradually realized that words are like a scalpel, helping me precisely cut through the biases and assumptions hidden in my subconscious.

Project 1: Conditional Design

This was my first taste of the charm of "losing control". The project required us to abandon control over the final visual outcome and instead focus on designing rules.

During the group collaborative drawing sessions, we worked under strict time limits and with overlapping rules.

As the rule reviewer of the group, I noticed that the initial rules we made were too rigid—they felt more like instructions dictating how others should draw, rather than triggers for experimentation. In a heated group discussion, I suggested adding ambiguity to the rules, such as "change direction when lines meet" instead of "draw a circle here". This shift from being a "visual director" to a "rule architect" made me realize that the design conditions often hold more power than the visual design itself.



Project 2: Making the Invisible Visible

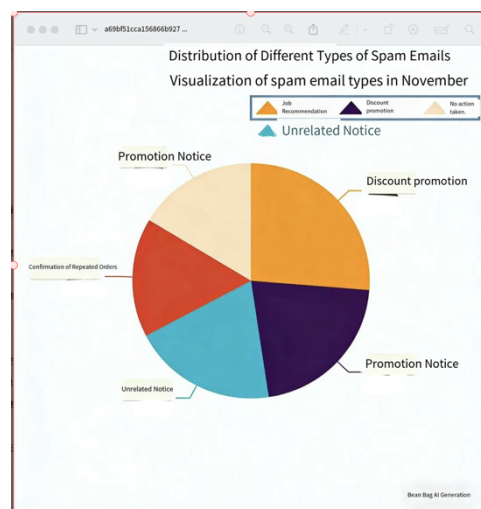


I didn't visit the famous landmarks in Winchester. Instead, I chose the ordinary route I took every day to school. After two searches, I began to figure out my direction. I started looking for the coat of arms that pedestrians always overlooked. I paid attention and took countless photos of the badges, then thought about how to simplify them. By analyzing their symmetry, repetition frequency and installation height, I suddenly realized that these ancient symbols were not just decorations - they were like silent class declarations, continuing to exert their authoritative influence in the gaps of modern cities.

Project 3: The Quantified Self

This project touched on a daily headache I faced as an international student—endless scam calls and spam emails. For an entire week, I carried a small notebook with me, recording every moment a harassment incident occurred: the time, frequency, and the tight, anxious feeling in my chest at that exact second.

When I turned this data into visual charts, the result shocked me: although spam emails were more numerous, the late-night scam calls had a far greater psychological impact on me than I expected. Data was no longer just cold



numbers—it became a barometer of my personal emotional fluctuations, helping me turn that indescribable irritation into something concrete.

Project 4: Interactions with a Non-Human User: Horse

This was the most transformative challenge among all. Our task was to design something for horses. By creating user profiles for horses and conducting PACT analysis, I had to let go of my arrogant human-centered attitude. However, when working on the project, I was hesitant and couldn't make a decision on the final output. Through more investigation and analysis of training horses, I determined the final work.



The final work I designed - "The Bridge of Empathy between Horses and Humans" - is not intended for large-scale production - it is more like a provocative art installation. It raises a fundamental question: When we think we are caring for animals, are we actually just reinforcing our control over other creatures in an implicit form?

Interpretation

Looking back on the entire process, the most profound change in my inner self occurred at the fundamental logic level of my thinking. In the past, I was extremely afraid of uncertainty, believing that not knowing what would happen next meant that I lacked ability.

Project 1 served as a wake-up call for me. It forced me to let go of my obsession with "author control" and accept the chaos of the creative process. When I finally stopped worrying about "whether the work looks good" and instead focused on "what interesting changes the rules would bring about", I felt an unprecedented sense of freedom.

Project 2 shattered my fantasy that the visual environment was "neutral". I used to think that design was merely about beautifying things or solving functional problems, but Winchester's coat of arms made me realize that design can function as a tool of power in an intangible way.

Project 3 made me pay more attention to the things around me in daily life, to think and research. Based on my own experience and materials to create.

Project 4 completely changed my design ethics. When designing an interactive system for horses, I realized that most human-centered designs are essentially colonial in nature.

This realization prompted me to start thinking about the responsibility of designers: Are we really solving problems, or are we creating more hidden forms of exploitation?

Evaluate

In this learning experiment, I demonstrated a high level of engagement and depth of reflection. My strength lies in my ability to quickly extract design insights from messy data and research, and transform these abstract ideas into compelling visual narratives.

However, I also clearly see my limitations. I am a chronic overthinker. In the early stages of projects, I often hesitated to start experimenting because I was afraid of taking the wrong first step. I always wanted to map out the entire process in my head before putting pen to paper, which directly caused delays in the rapid iteration phase.

In addition, I still feel a sense of shame about my unfinished works. I always want to present even my rough drafts in a polished way when showing them to my tutor, which in turn closes off many opportunities to get valuable feedback. In group collaborations, I often unconsciously take on the role of a "firefighter" to fix all problems—while this improves efficiency, it sometimes deprives team members of the chance to explore different paths.

Plan

Based on the above reflections, I have set four specific goals for my growth:

- Embrace low-risk experimentation: In future projects, I will force myself to create "quick and dirty" prototypes in the first week. I will ignore aesthetics and focus solely on thinking through making, to overcome the psychological barrier of self-censorship.
- Synchronize thinking and doing: I will change my old "think first, act later" model and adopt a strict phased plan, ensuring that thinking and doing alternate naturally, just like breathing.
- Show vulnerability: I will take the initiative to share my "failed" drafts with peers, treating feedback as raw material for design rather than a judgment of my personal ability.
- Sustain critical questioning: No matter how commercial future design tasks may be, I will always keep a "non-human" or "power structure" perspective, and question the moral costs behind design decisions.

In my future career as a designer, I will consciously cultivate my "vulnerability". I will break away from the arrogance that only "perfect solutions" are worthy of sharing, and actively present those "failed" sketches, because there often lie the most genuine insights. I hope that my design process can flow naturally between "thinking" and "acting", alternating seamlessly without striving for a stagnant perfection. Instead, I aim for a continuous, morally sensitive, and critical exploration.

Conclusion

This module was a significant turning point in my design career. It transformed me from a student who always relied on "aesthetic solutions" to cover up my shortcomings, to a seeker who was willing to confront complex problems and self-examine. Through the DIEP framework, I not only organized my portfolio but also clarified my values as a designer.

The road ahead may be full of uncertainties, but I have now learned how to move forward in the fog - and have transformed this uncertainty into nourishment that inspires my creativity, driving me to become a better designer.



Webpage: <https://2026.macd.work/hl1n25/index.html>