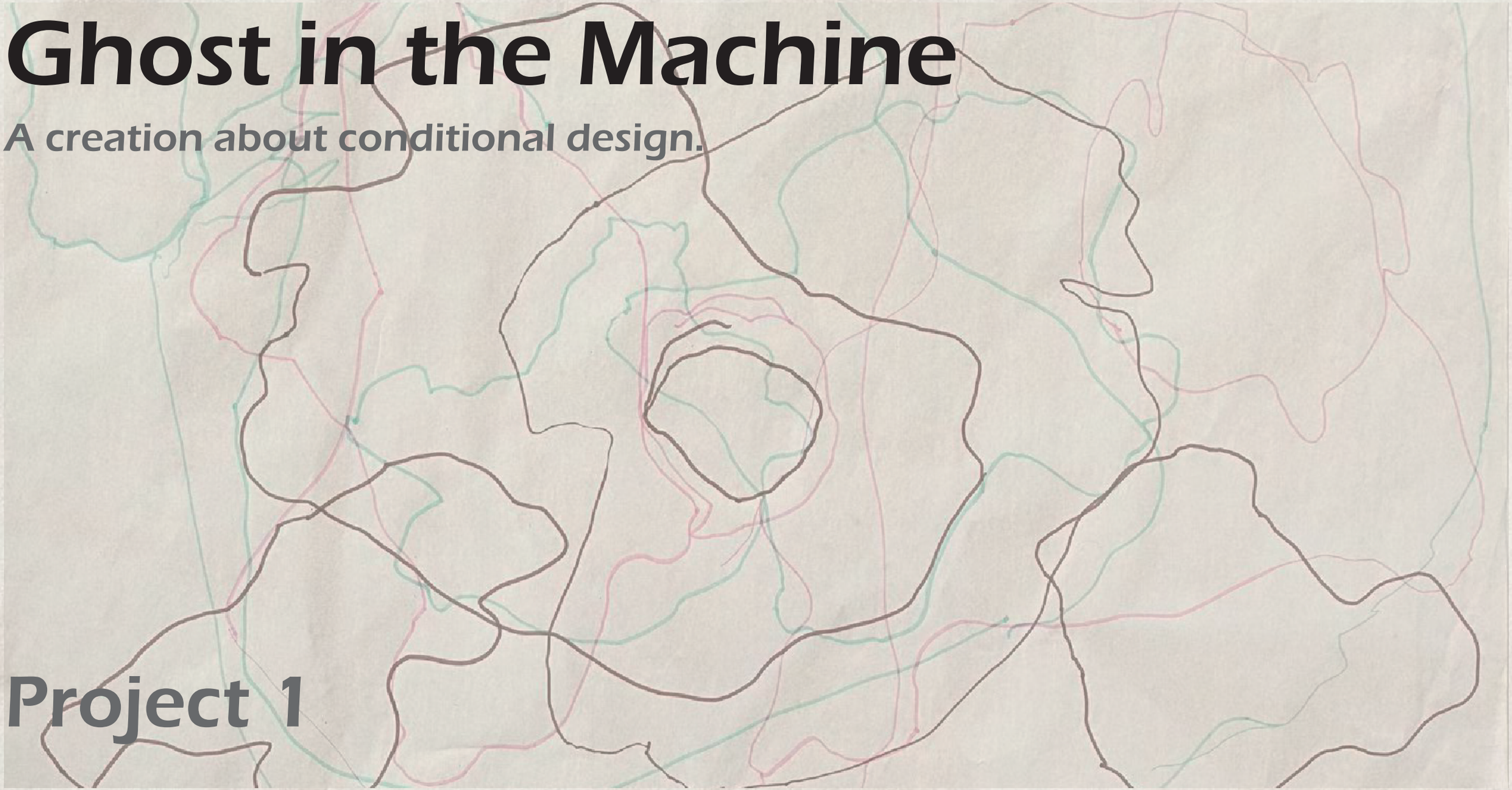
Ghost in the Machine

A creation about conditional design.



Project 1

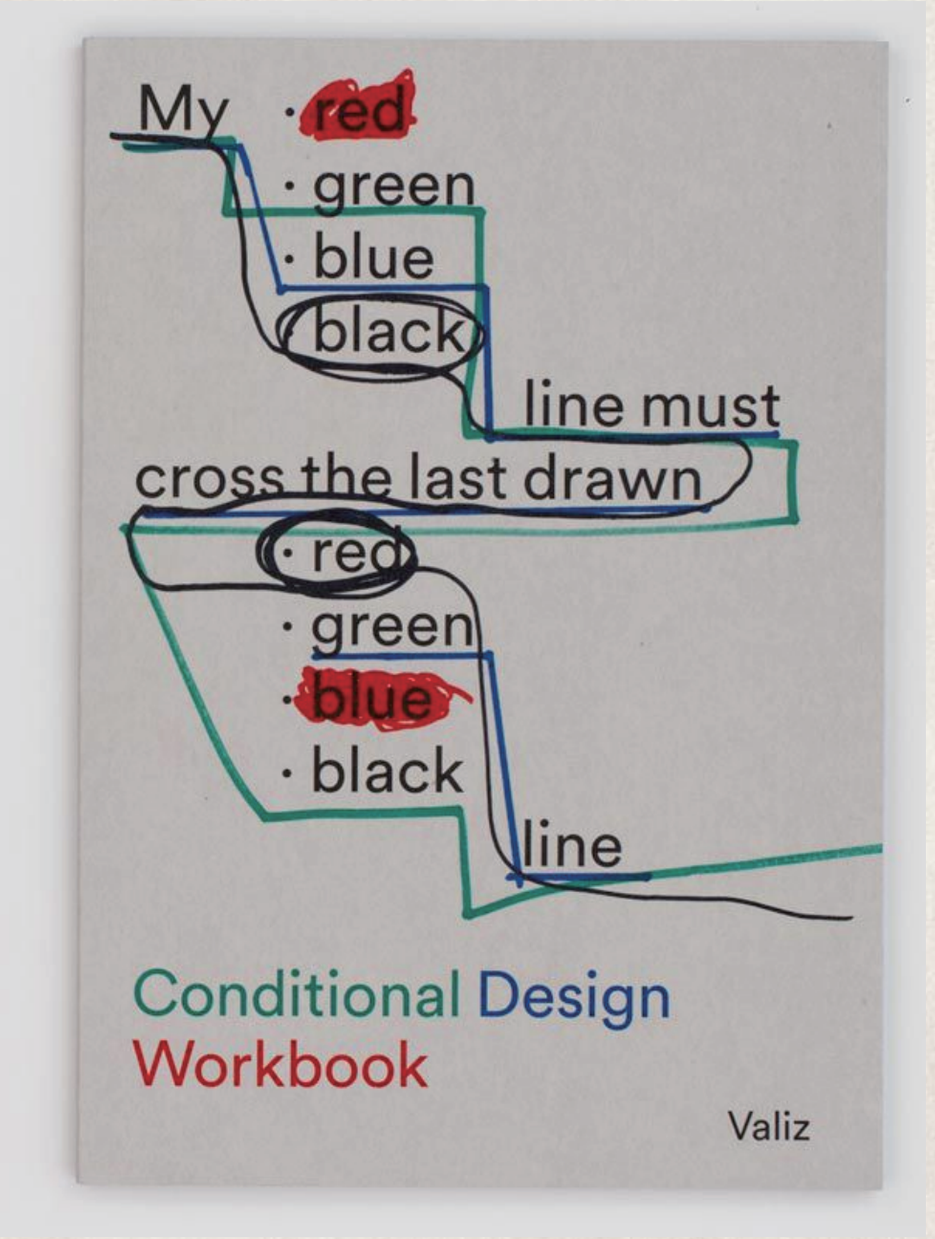
RESEARCH

What is conditional design?

Conditional design is a creative method that centers around rules, conditions, and collaborative processes, rather than the traditional design approach that aims for the final visual effect. It was proposed by designers such as Studio Moniker, and its philosophy emphasizes that designers do not directly "draw" works, but rather gradually generate creativity through the development of a set of clear rules.

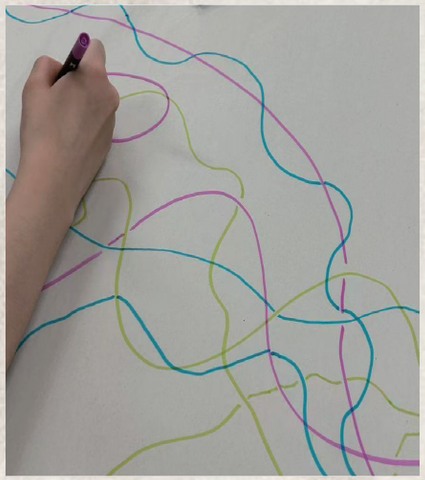
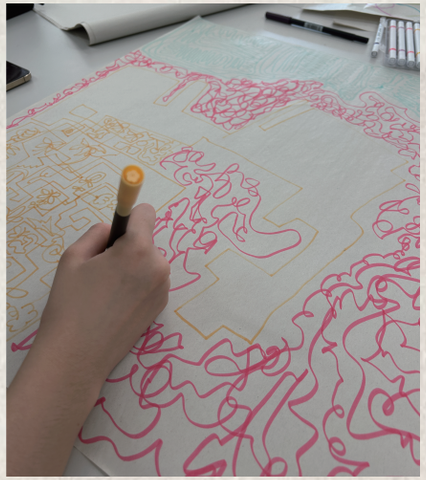
My Understanding

Give an instruction and then create around it, gradually forming the creative result in the process.



Moniker, S. (2014) On the 5th of June, 2014,we built with straws, Conditional Design. Available at: https://conditionaldesign.org/ (Accessed: 22 December 2025).

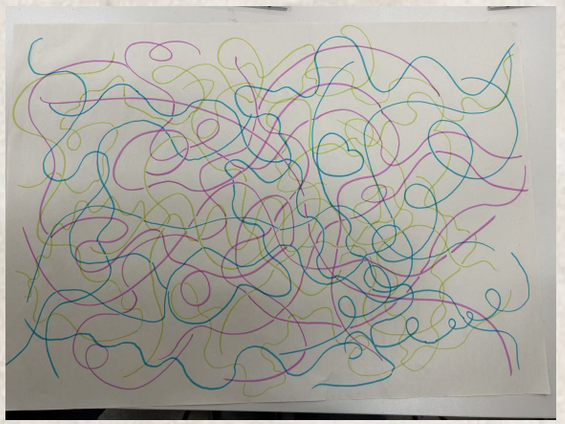
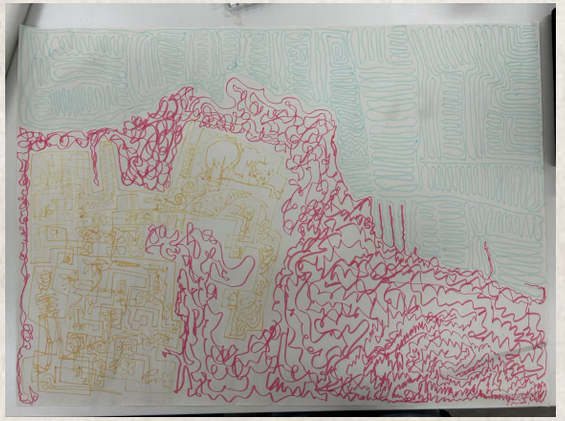
PROCESS

In the lesson task, the mentor set three different conditions for us to create, so that we can have a clearer understanding of what conditional design is and how it should be implemented. The first condition is to require different people to draw circles from the center to the outside using colored pens of different colors; The second condition requires drawing a line, and you need to decide whether to cross someone else's line based on your own ideas; The third condition is to draw continuously and not overlap with others' drawings.

In this process, I need to consider whether to strictly follow the rules and also take into account the painting space of other members in the group. I cannot be allowed to draw freely and need to think more.

Lesson outcome

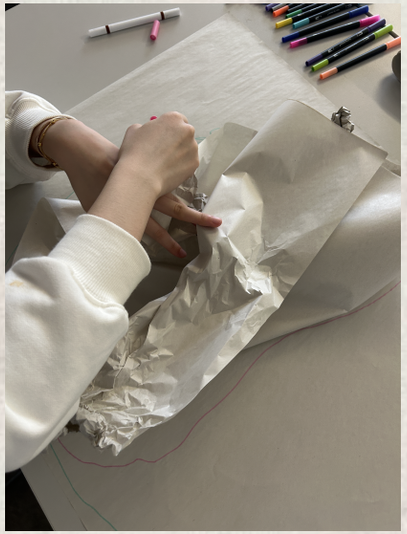




CREATE

Our group designed a drawing experiment called SUPERIMPOSE, which generated visual results naturally through multiple overlays and behavioral differences among different participants by repeating the action of crumpled paper in a loop.

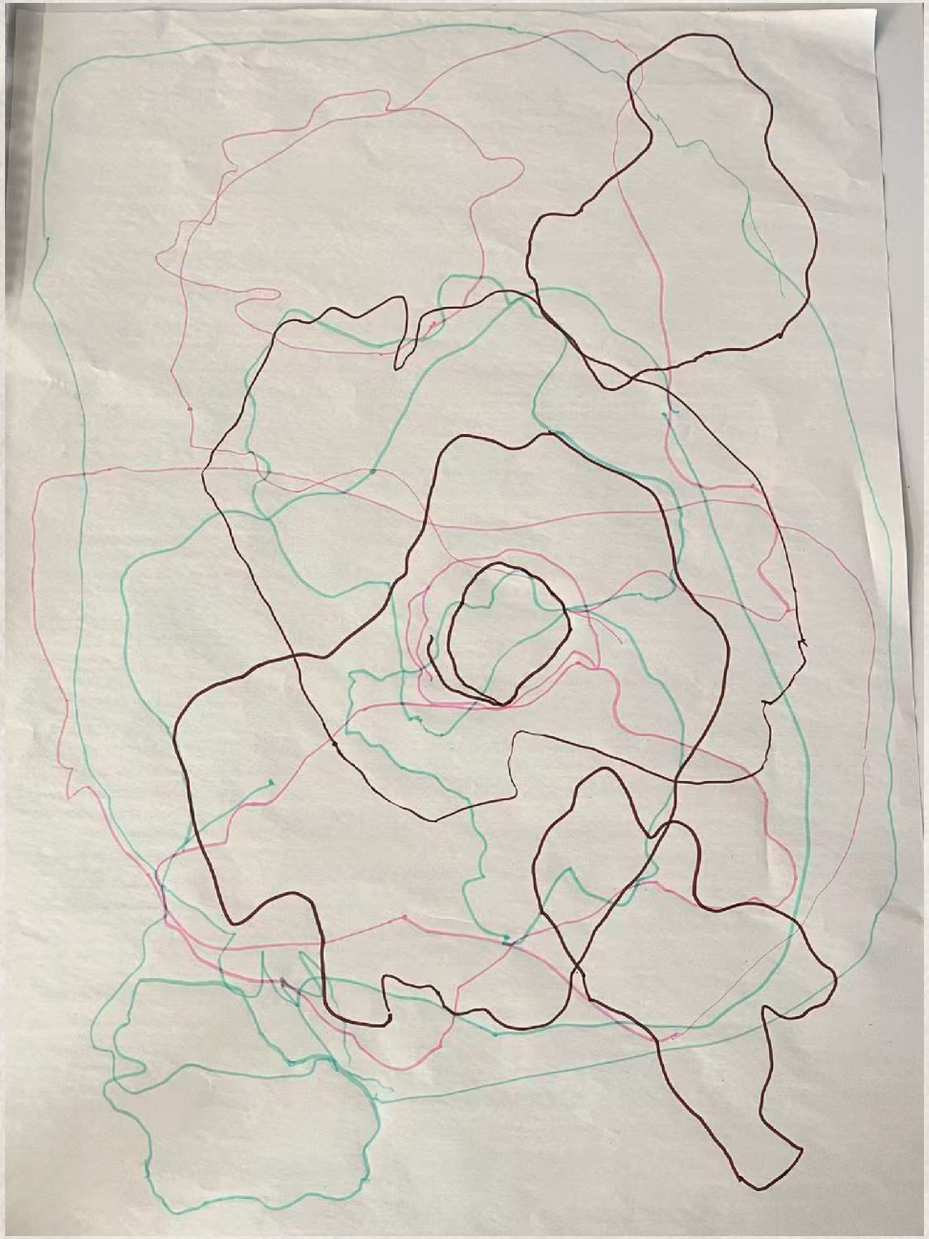
Rules

The first step is to crumple the paper once. Draw the outline of the crumpled paper in your own color. The second step is to enter the loop action, take the crumpled paper and knead it again to create a new random shape, using your own color to stroke along its shape. The third step is to repeat the above process - crumple once, outline once, and each participant continuously adds new contour lines.





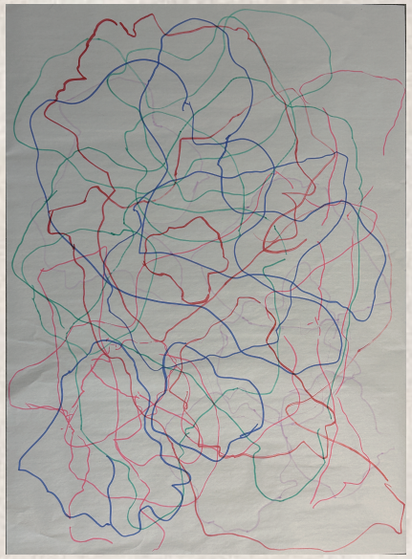


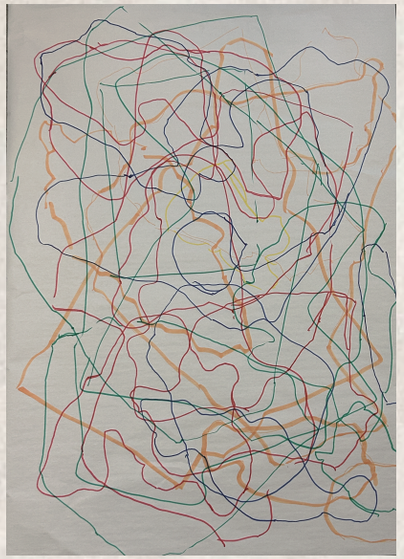


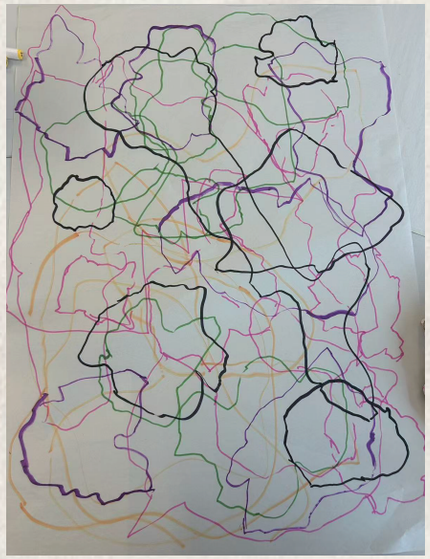
OUTCOME

Other group processes and outcomes









Reflection

Every time the paper is kneaded, it feels like a release of pressure, equivalent to visible pressure, which is conditional but ultimately results in a very rich pattern. When practicing conditional design, I deeply felt that even small changes in rules can greatly affect the final form.

During the execution process, I gradually realized that in traditional graphic design, loss of control or contingency is often seen as a mistake; But in SUPERIMPOSE, uncertainty is precisely the source of creativity. Participants are unable to predict what shape will appear in the next round, and this' openness' shifts the design from 'presentation' to 'discovery'. And in the process, everyone has different shapes and is unique.