

Project 1

Ghost in the machine

Introduction

Ghost in the Machine explores Conditional Design through rule-based experiments and workshops.

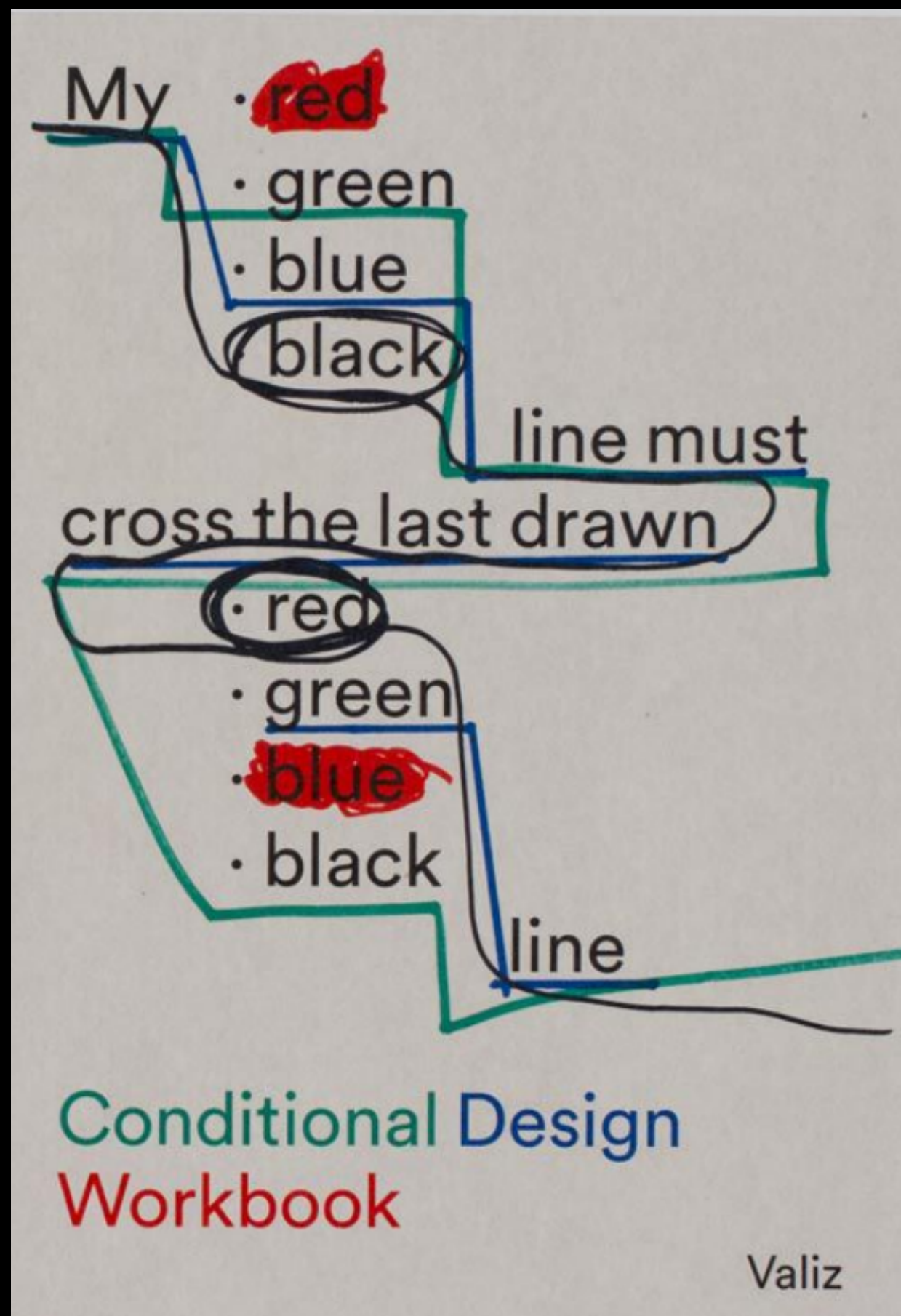
The project focuses on process rather than outcome, using constraints, collaboration, and chance to reveal human imperfection and unpredictability within systems.

Through documenting workshops and creating an original Conditional Design exercise, the project examines how rules shape behaviour, interaction, and emergent narratives.

The final artefact presents both the process and reflections on working within controlled yet unstable design systems.

Conditional Design

Inspiration



This project is inspired by Conditional Design and its focus on rule-based systems, chance, and human imperfection.

Rather than controlling outcomes, the project explores how simple rules can generate complex behaviours and unexpected narratives.

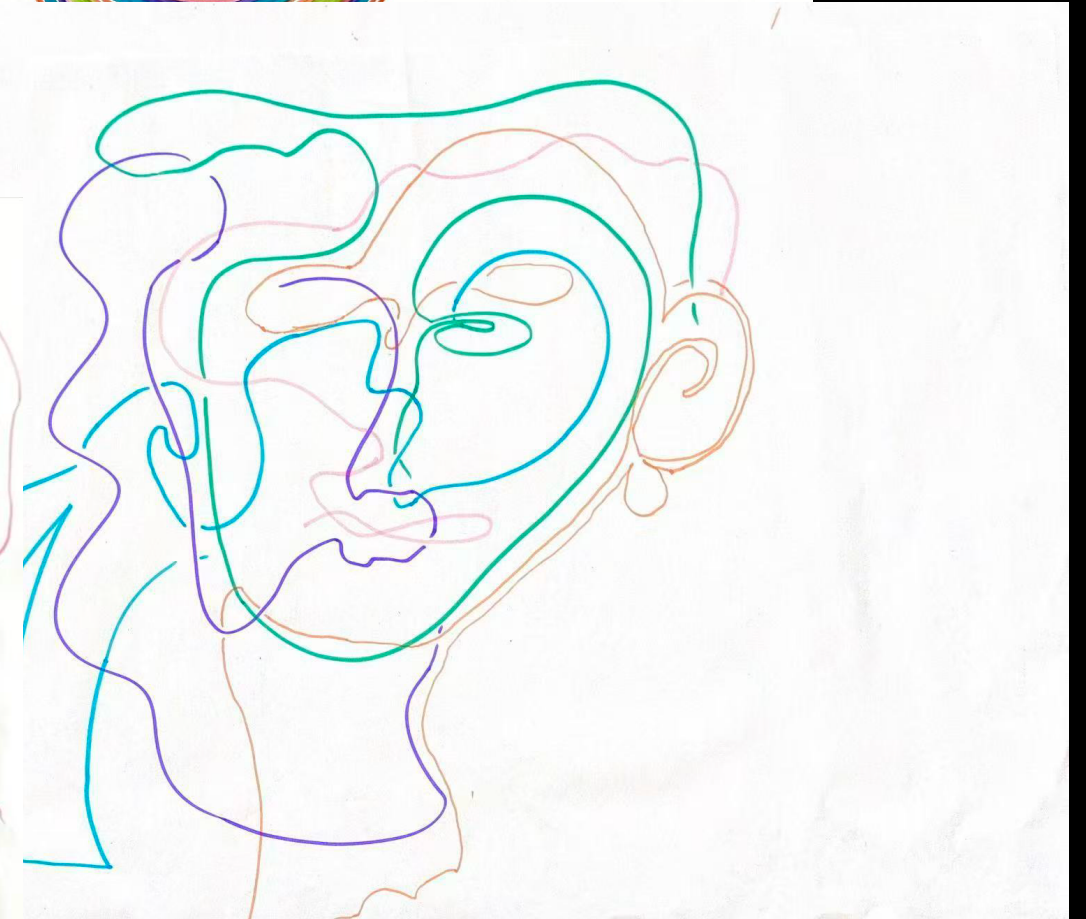
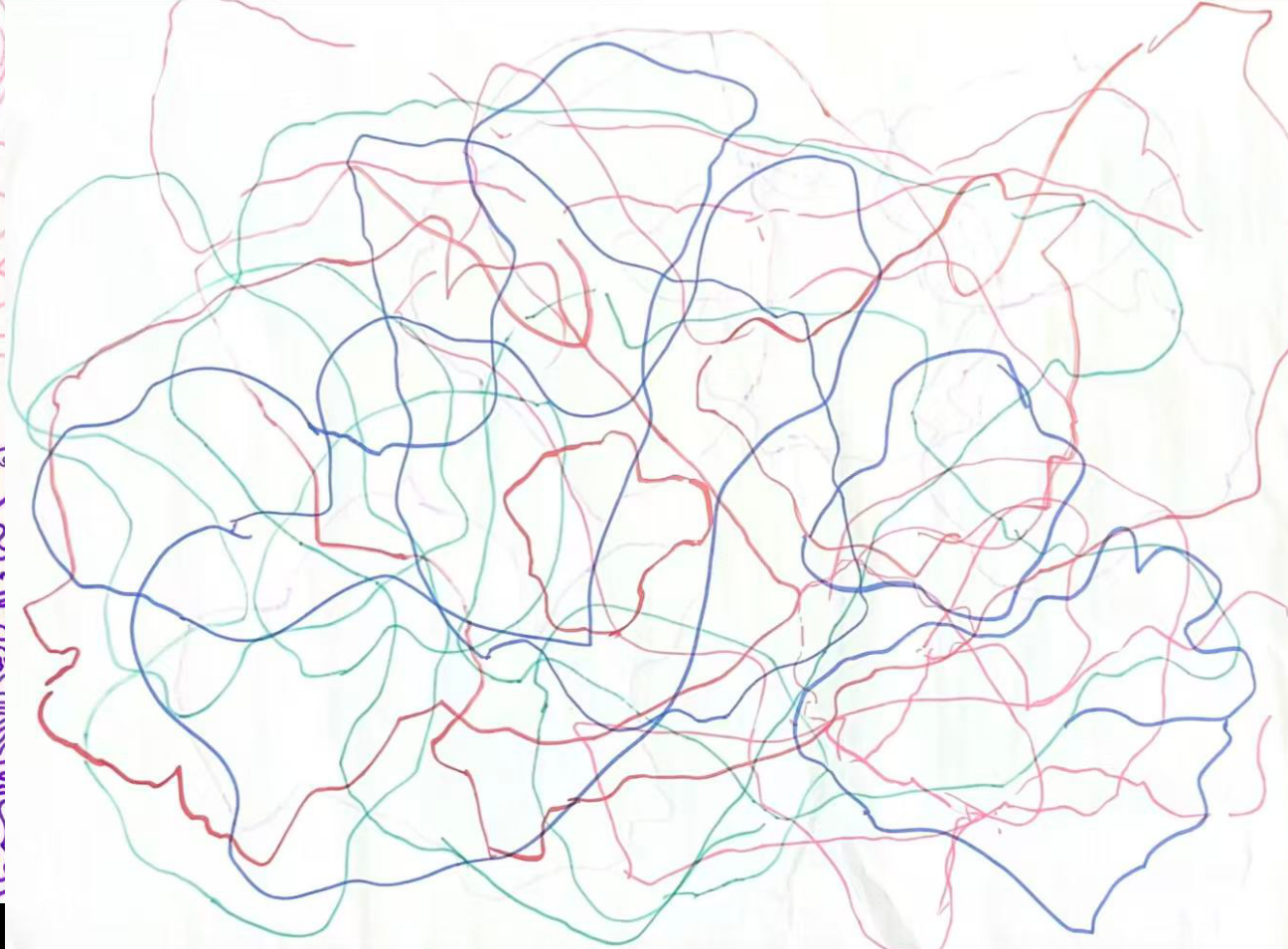
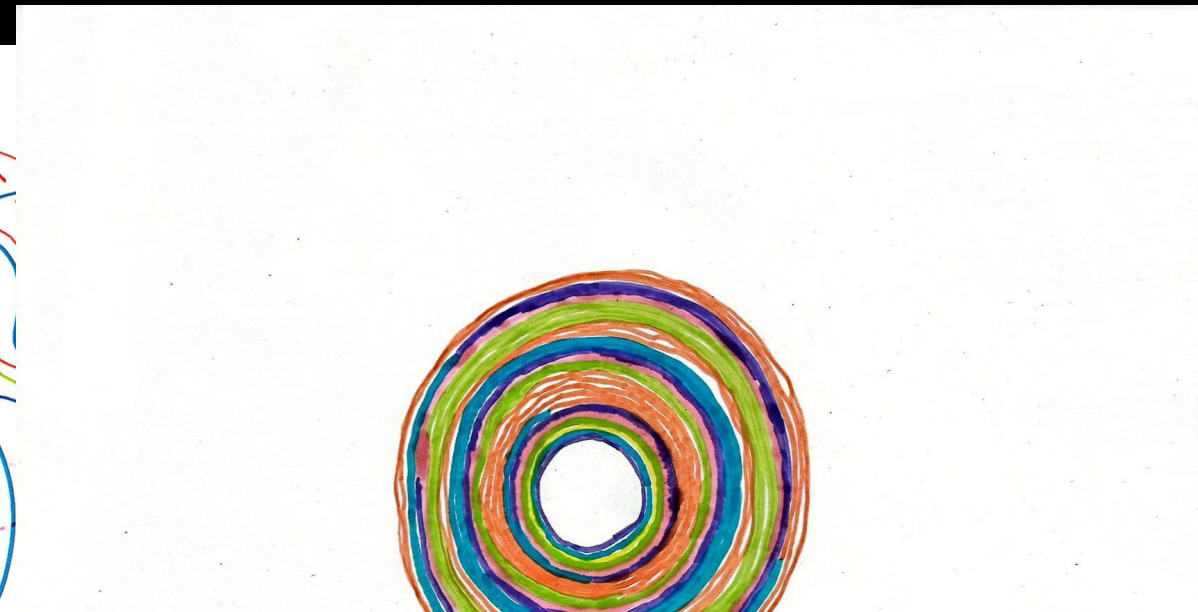
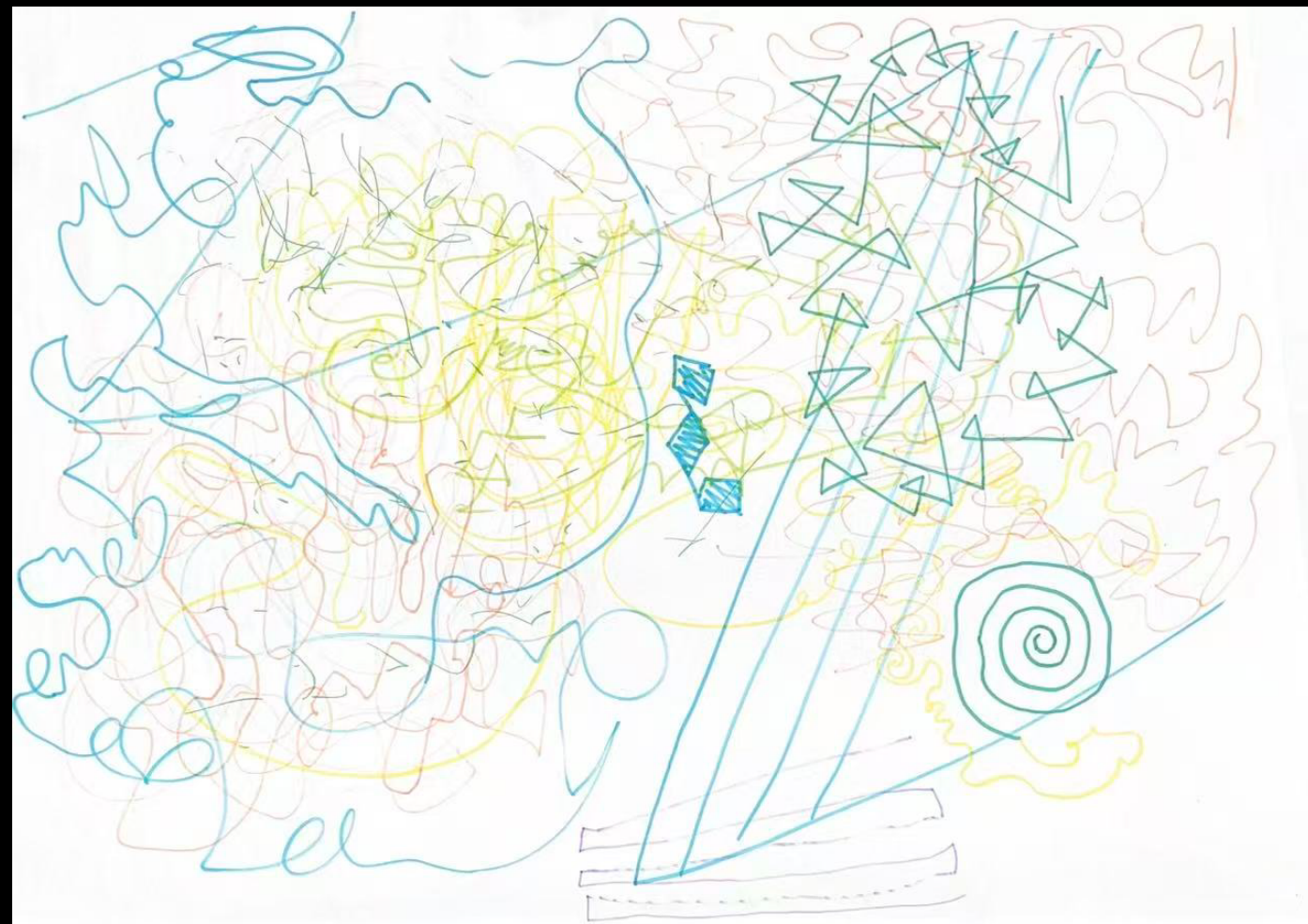
The idea of Ghost in the Machine comes from observing moments where systems fail, bend, or are disrupted by human intuition, mistakes, and physical limitations.

These moments reveal the “ghost” — the human presence hidden within structured processes.

Process



Outcome



Creation

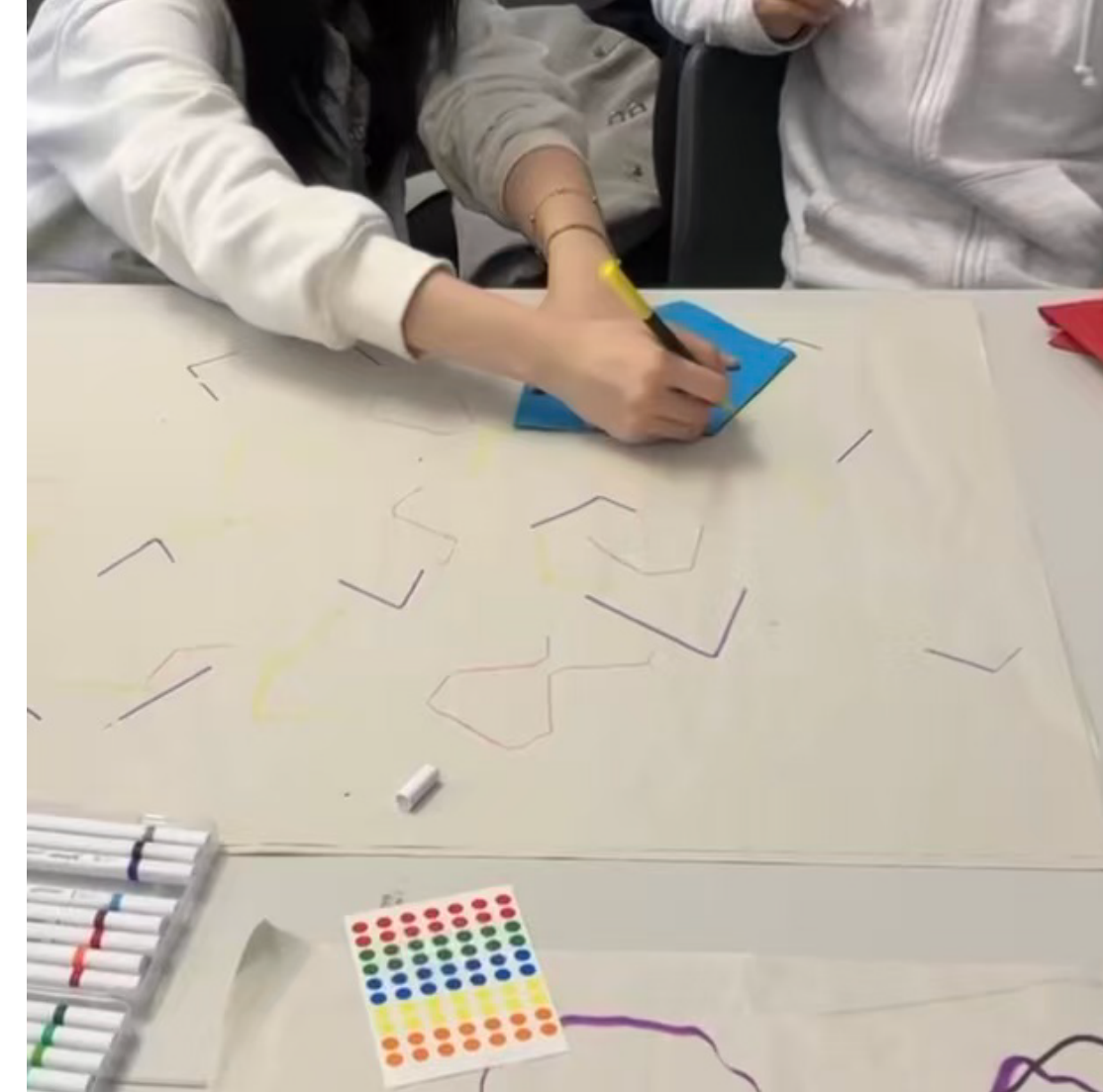
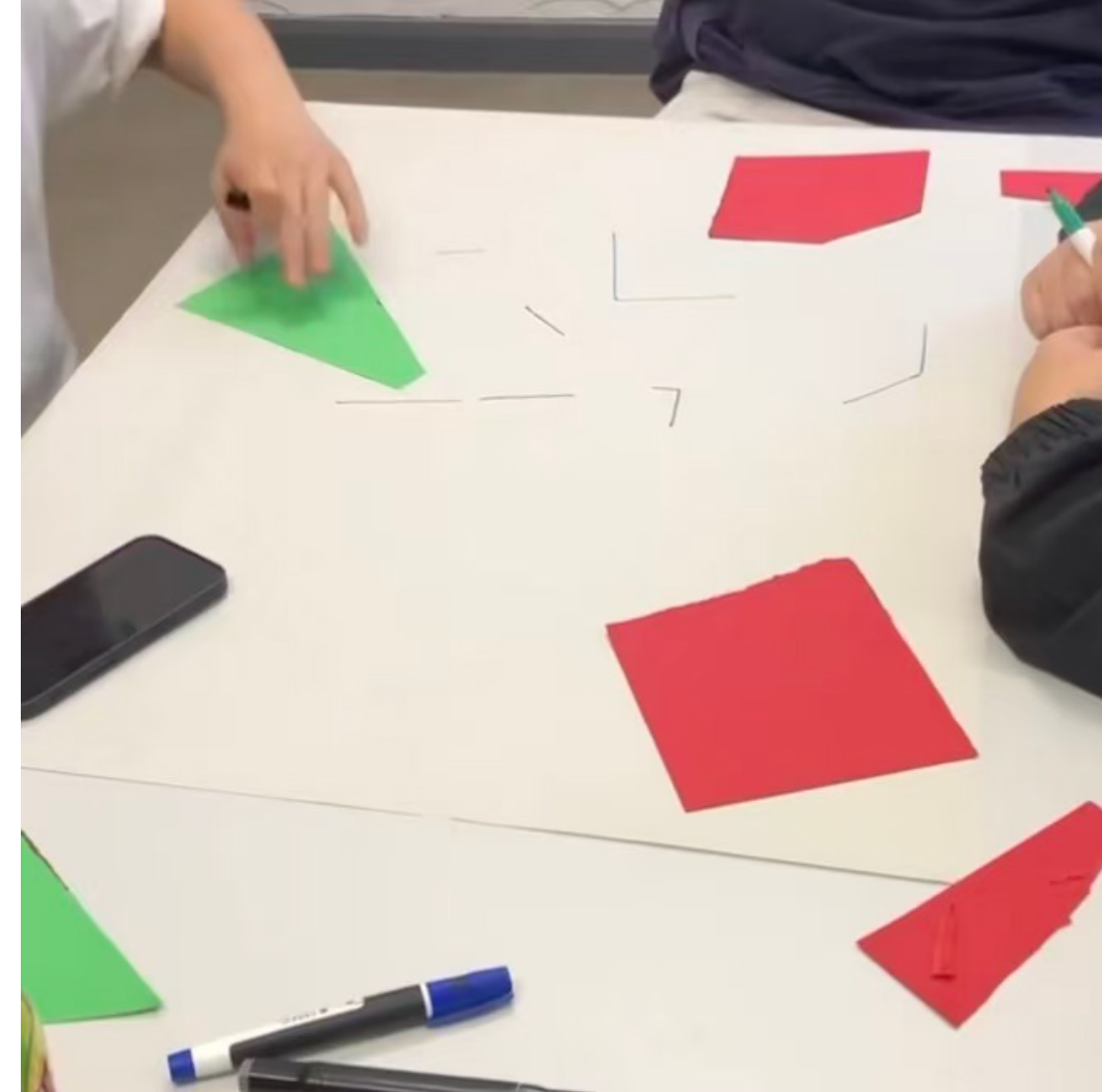
Shape Relay is a conditional drawing exercise based on collaboration and simple rule-based actions. Each participant represents themselves through a single paper shape, placing it in response to the previous mark and extending the drawing by adding a short line for the next person. Through sequential participation and shared constraints, individual decisions become interconnected, gradually forming a collective visual path. The final outcome is not predetermined, but emerges from the accumulation of actions, highlighting how separate individuals can collaborate through rules to create a unified whole.

Inspiration

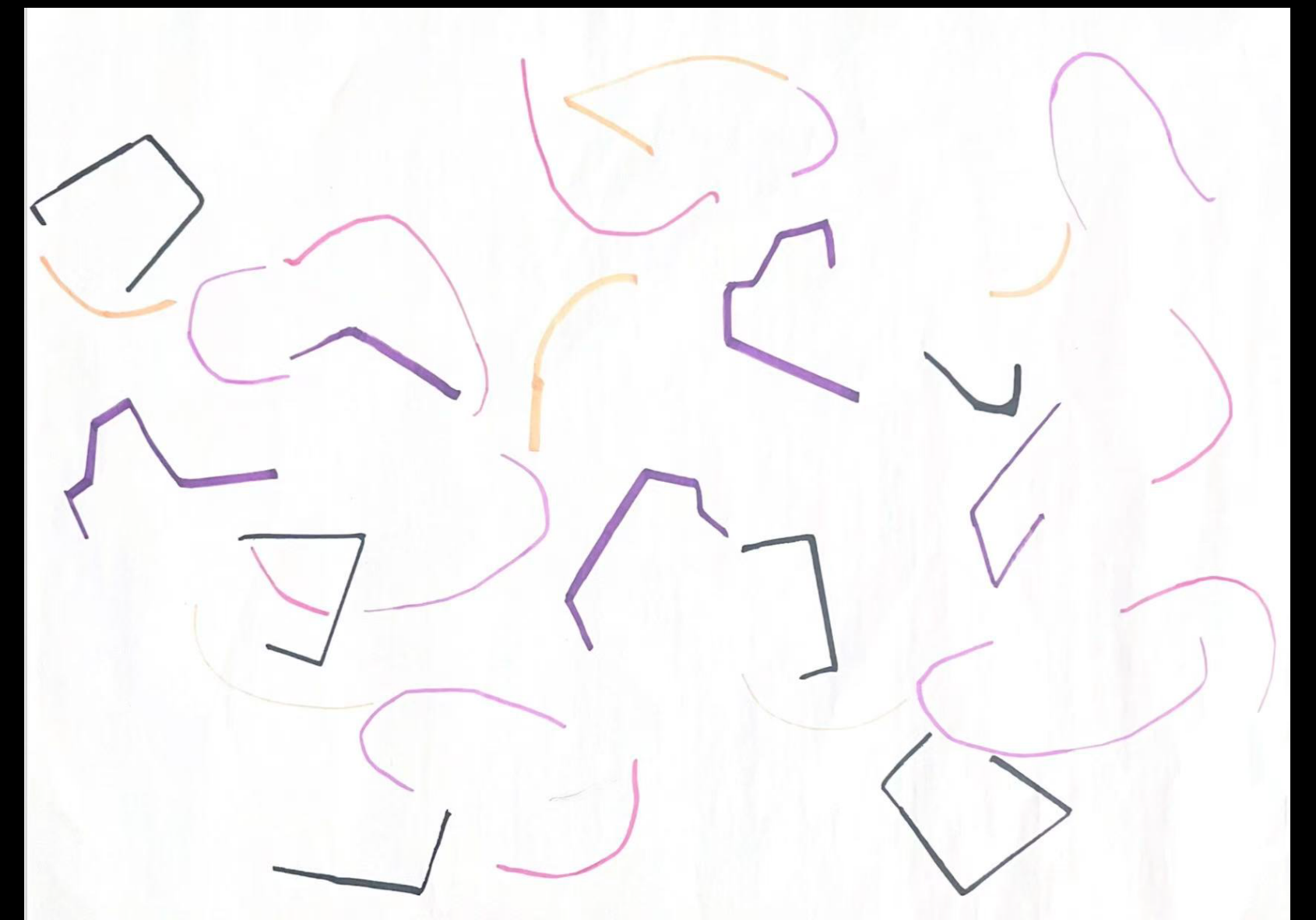
This work is inspired by collaborative design in urban public spaces, where multiple designers contribute to the same area, such as streets or parks, and must follow shared rules to maintain functional and visual coherence.

We explore how separate individuals can collaborate as a unified whole under rule-based constraints. Using irregular coloured paper shapes to represent individual participants or design modules, and a 1 cm overlapping mark as the connecting rule, the abstract logic of collaboration is translated into a tangible collage process, making cooperation visible and perceptible on the page.

Process



Outcome



Reflection

This group-based exercise revealed how simple rules can structure collaboration while still allowing unpredictability and individual expression. Although each participant acted independently, responding to the previous mark created a shared sense of responsibility and continuity within the group. Moments of hesitation, adjustment, and misalignment highlighted how collective decisions are shaped by both rules and human behaviour. The final outcome showed that in Conditional Design, authorship is distributed across the group, and control emerges not from strict planning, but from carefully designed constraints.