

Project 1

Ghost in the Machine

Conditional Design

Collect / Design / Understand

This project documents three in-class collaborative drawing workshops. The focus is not on visual outcomes, but on observing collaborative processes, group interactions, and how rules, constraints and decision-making shape collective behaviour.

Based on these observations, a new collaborative exercise was designed using Conditional Design principles.



What is Conditional Design?

Conditional Design focuses on setting rules rather than controlling outcomes.

Instead of designing a final form, designers create systems that allow results to emerge through interaction, chance and human behaviour.

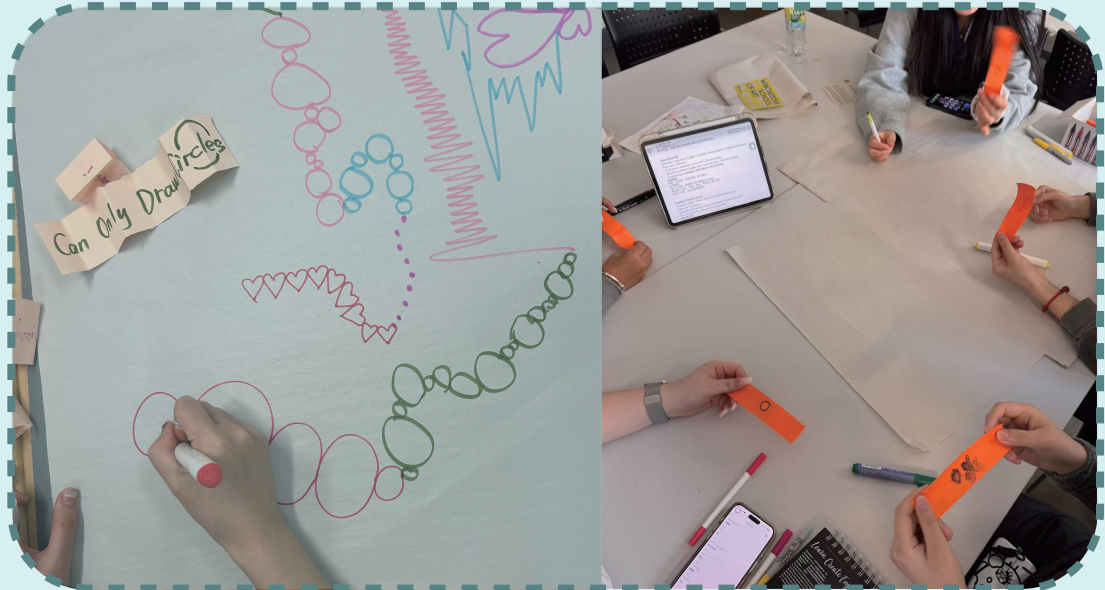
This approach shifts attention from authorship to process, and from individual intention to collective behaviour.

Process Overview

During weeks 01–03, three collaborative drawing workshops were conducted in class.

Each exercise applied different constraints to guide collaboration in terms of time, space and decision-making.

These workshops formed the foundation for understanding Conditional Design through practice.



Workshop I – Perfect Circle



Workshop Meta

Rule: No individual correction.

Finish: Group agreement.

Exercise Description

Participants worked together to draw a circle within a strict time limit.

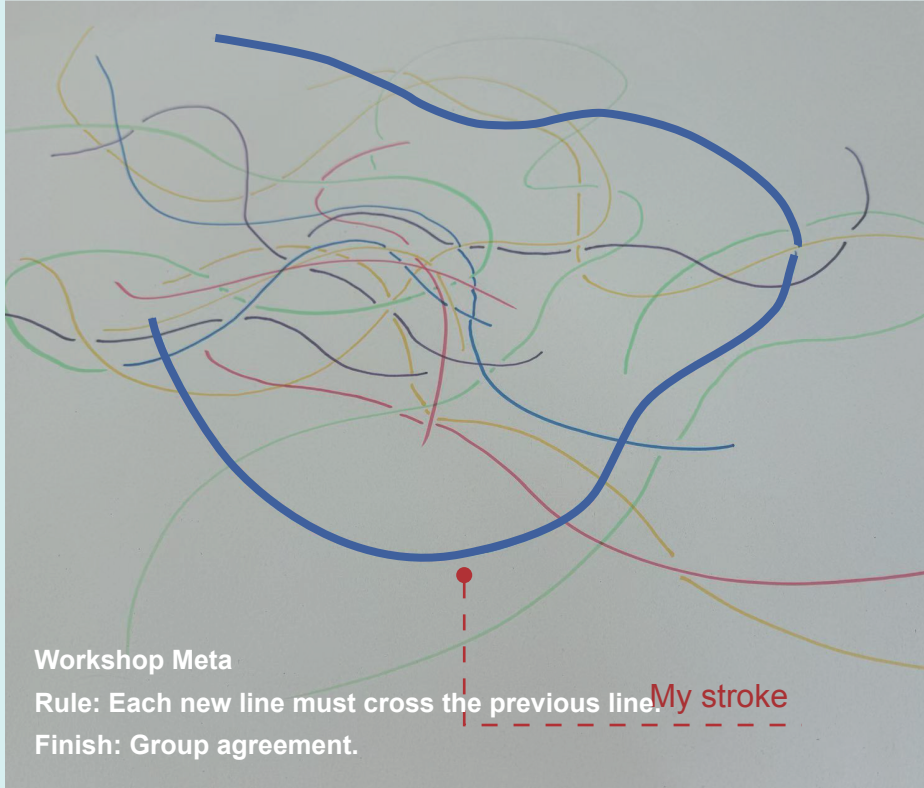
Individual correction was not allowed, and completion was decided collectively.

Workshop I – Reflection

The **time constraint** reduced my sense of control and precision.

I found it difficult to judge when the drawing was ‘**good enough**’, as reaching agreement within the group was more important than my personal standard. This made the role of **collective agreement** more visible than individual judgement.

Workshop II – Knots



Exercise Description

Each new line was required to cross the previously drawn line.

The drawing developed through sequence and response rather than planning.

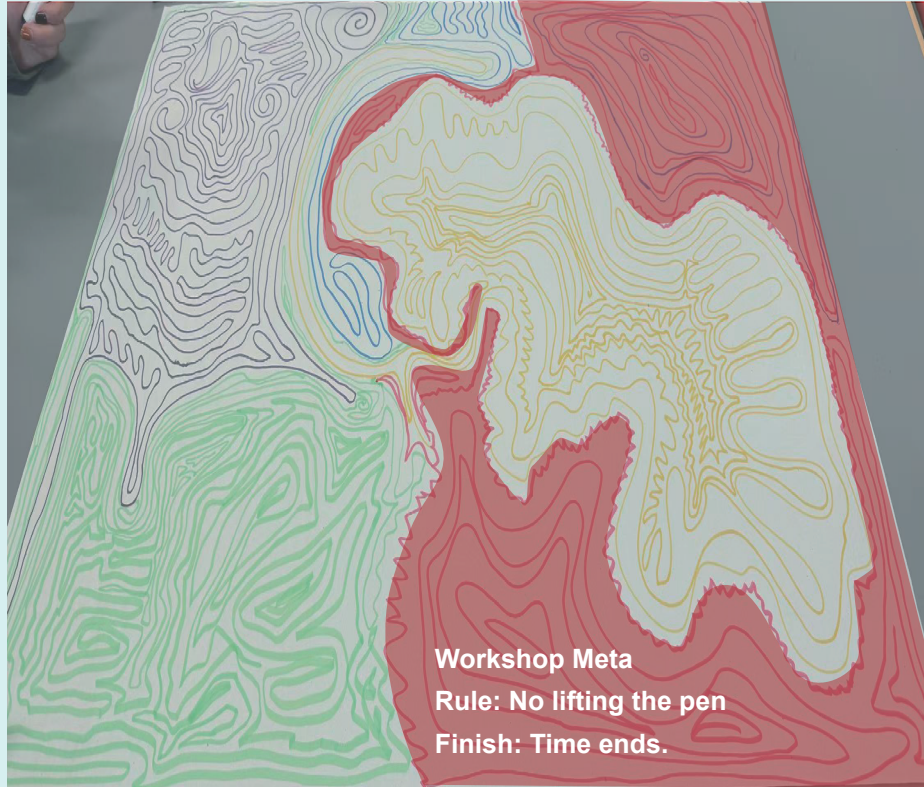
Workshop II – Reflection

I became more reactive than intentional in my decisions.

As the structure grew more complex, my individual authorship gradually dissolved into the system.

The drawing process was no longer led by personal choice, but by responding to existing conditions.

Workshop III – FOUR LONG LINES



Exercise Description

Participants drew continuous long lines simultaneously without lifting their pens. Stopping, correcting or planning ahead was not allowed.

Workshop III – Reflection

I felt that the drawing did not develop according to my original intention. The outcome became unpredictable, and my decisions were strongly influenced by the marks left by others. Control gradually shifted from individual planning to responding to the group.

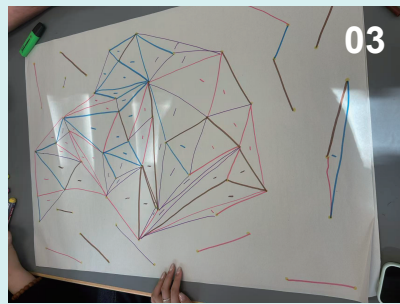
Precedent-Based Prototype



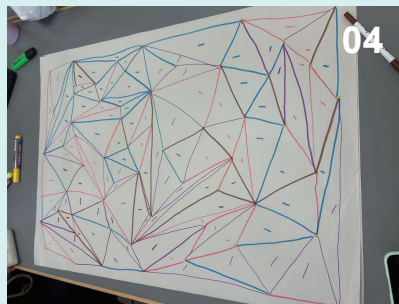
Mark the paper with a set of randomly dispersed dots.



Players take turns to connect two dots with one line.



Closing a triangle scores 1 point.



Count points and note the dominant colour/player.

Extracted Principles

Limited control makes collective judgement visible.

No correction shifts ownership from individual to group.

Turn-taking turns decisions into response, not planning.

Bridge: We used a precedent-based scoring test as a baseline, then redesigned the system using these principles.

New Collaborative Exercise

A new collaborative exercise was designed from the principles above.

By randomising rules and limiting drawing time, the system redistributes control and authorship across the group.



- 01** Each participant first formulates a drawing rule.
- 02** Close eyes, randomly pick a rule, and draw accordingly.
- 03** Each person has 10 seconds to draw and takes turns in sequence.
- 04** Start from where the previous mark ended, until the paper is filled.