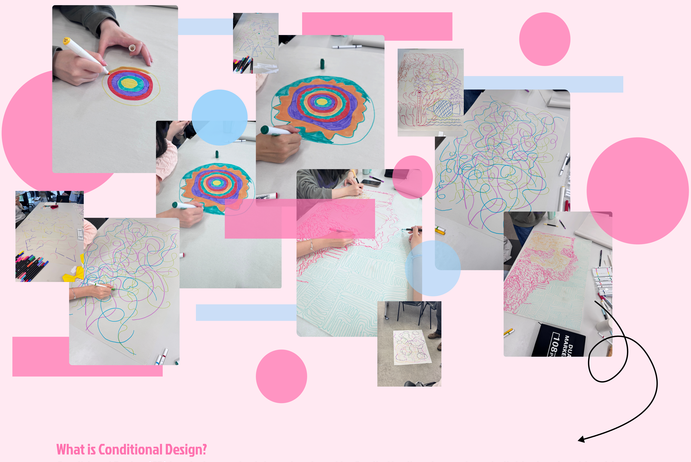
Ghost in the Machine

Shapes of Uncertainty

Workshop



What is Conditional Design?

Conditional Design (CD) is a design methodology developed by Studio Moniker that replaces individual authorship with systems of rules. Instead of designing a final outcome directly, designers create a set of conditions—instructions, constraints, and procedures—that participants must follow. The resulting work emerges through the execution of these rules, often involving chance, repetition, and collaboration.

According to the Conditional Design Manifesto, the designer's role shifts from controlling form to constructing a system in which outcomes cannot be fully predicted. This approach challenges traditional ideas of creativity by embracing imperfection, uncertainty, and process over polish or intention.

Common Rules, Processes, and Collaboration Methods

Across the Conditional Design Workbook and documented workshops, several recurring strategies can be identified:

Simple, precise rules

Instructions are often minimal and clear, leaving no room for interpretation, yet producing complex results when repeated.

Time-based or turn-based processes

Many exercises involve cycles, turns, or repetitions, allowing outcomes to accumulate gradually.

Physical actions and human imperfection

Actions such as folding, tracing, passing, or marking introduce inconsistency and unpredictability.

Collective participation

Multiple participants contribute sequentially, meaning no single person can claim authorship of the final result.

Acceptance of chance

Randomness is not treated as error but as an essential generative force.

These methods foreground collaboration and system behaviour rather than individual skill or aesthetic preference.

My previous workshops and research on condition design sparked my great interest in collaboratively designing game rules in groups.

Group work

Every line is the result of a choice, and each choice belongs to more than one person

This project takes the "SUPERIMPOSE" exercise as its starting point, exploring visual forms generated through rule constraints, collaborative processes, and uncertainty.

In this exercise, each participant follows the same set of instructions:

Crumple the paper → Pass it to the next person → Trace the randomly formed outline → Crumple again → Pass again

With each newly added outline, a new shape begins to emerge—one that is neither created by a single person nor predictable. Instead, it becomes a visual trace of collective behavior.

The final image is the accumulation of imperfect actions, strategic decisions, and collaborative gestures, revealing a core idea within Conditional Design:

Design is not created by an individual, but generated through rules and time.

SUPERIMPOSE

SUPERIMPOSE is a game designed for 3 to 6 players, with the specific gameplay rules as follows:

1. Preparation: Each player needs to prepare a pen of a different color.
2. Game Order: Players take their turns in a clockwise direction.
3. Operation Process:

The first player crumples the paper once first, then uses their pen to trace the outline of the crumpled paper on another piece of paper, and then passes the crumpled paper to the next player.

Each subsequent player, upon receiving the paper, directly crumples it once again with no additional preparation steps.

After crumpling the paper, the player uses their pen to trace a new outline of the crumpled paper, and then passes the crumpled paper to the next player immediately after finishing the tracing.

And so on, repeating the steps of "crumpling the paper once → tracing a new outline with their own color → passing the paper" continuously.

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.

Group Collaboration Reflection & Personal Response

Working in a group required me to let go of individual control and trust both the rules and the actions of others. In the SUPERIMPOSE exercise, each participant followed the same instructions, yet the final outcome could not be predicted or owned by any single person. I found this process both freeing and challenging. While it reduced the pressure to create a "perfect" visual result, it also forced me to accept outcomes shaped indirectly by others. This experience made me more aware of how small actions accumulate over time and how authorship becomes distributed within a system. As a result, I began to see collaboration not as shared decision-making, but as a sequence of influences guided by rules, uncertainty, and human imperfection.

These lines also reminded me of the outline of a font, so I tried to design a font.

Font design

Crumple the paper into the shape of English letters so that the outline of the characters is visible.

Use software to outline the shape of the font.

The overlapping effect gives them a common "invisible ghost" appearance.