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A FRAMEWORK FOR SYNCRETIC PLURIVERSAL NARRATIVE: SOMAESTHETICS AND CONSCIOUSNESS IN THAI DESIGN EDUCATION

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University of Plymouth

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**UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH**

**A FRAMEWORK FOR SYNCRETIC PLURIVERSAL NARRATIVE:
SOMAESTHETICS AND CONSCIOUSNESS IN THAI DESIGN EDUCATION**

by

TOMMASO MAGGIO

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Art, Design and Architecture

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

'One inescapable fact of human existence

is that it is experienced in a body '

(Law, 1995)

In this title, by use of the title 'A Framework for A Syncretic Pluriversal Narrative', I name the conceptual, dynamically flexible structure intended to guide the development of an inclusive, context-based storytelling framework. It is the backbone of the approach discussed within this thesis. The term 'somaesthetics', coined by philosopher Richard Shusterman (1966), has been chosen to indicate the connection between design education and the physical bodies of student and professional design practitioners. In the case studies developed and presented here, the designer's primary task is to understand their own body, in both its physical and social dimensions. This is because, as designers and practitioners, we are unable to empathise with or design for others if we are not consciously aware of who we are. The thesis adopts a syncretic worldview and a site-specific perspective, and is structured around case studies conducted in real-world educational contexts within the territory of the Kingdom of Thailand. This practice-based research explores the three main interrelated forces of society, the body (in both social and moral terms), and design education. Within this context, the term 'syncretic worldview' refers to the blending of multiple perspectives, and particularly reflects my merged view as a European practitioner – a white immigrant – operating within the local context of

design practice and design education at the university level in Bangkok, one of the Southeast Asia's larger cities. Finally, the term 'consciousness', as noted in the subsequent chapter about key words, refers to self-awareness and emotional sensitivity toward others, developed through micro-subsequent actions with the object of rediscovering and pursuing personal acceptance and community roots.

Cultural studies and design education are widely known to be interconnected. While exploration has become a fundamental tool for arts and design practitioners, it is crucial to emphasise that adopting the lens of an ethnographer or the role of behavioural expert shifts the focus of the investigation towards a transformative understanding of oneself and, consequently, of others. Teun Adrianus Van Dijk, a scholar of Critical Discourse Analysis, makes the pertinent statement: "People learn that other people in similar circumstances have the same or similar beliefs, or, vice versa, they learn to accept (or reject) what they are told by others" (1988:246). If we agree, then we can affirm that the significance of body varies tremendously in different societies, shaped by their moral, social, spiritual and religious cultural strata. For example, in a Chinese context, the concept of 'face' carries a profound meaning. It can be read at two levels: as the social face (*mianzi*) and as the moral face (*lian*). Lawrence Hsin Yang, a researcher in psychiatric epidemiology, and professor of medical anthropology Arthur Kleinman, have explained that this concept encompasses an intertwined system of reciprocity known as *renqing* (2008: 5). A similar analogy can be found in the context of formal Thai society, where "each can lose face or gain face" (Persons 2008: 53). The Kingdom of Thailand, as noted by the medical anthropologist Felicity Aulino, perceives the social body as one that acts

“as an actual living organism of which everyone is a part” [...] and where Aulino emphasises that group harmony and its maintenance has particular significance (2014: 417). By closely observing these considerations and adopting a perspective that incorporates this site-specific point of view, my investigation has resulted in the development of a series of case studies. Bridging design ethnography and cultural studies, this practice-based research reflects my long-term immersion in the host society, where the perpetual flux of Theravada Buddhism has been influenced by Confucian collectivism. Notably, prior to 1949, Thailand played host to significant immigration from China. (Baker, Phongpaichit, 2009). Confucian philosophy, as the dominant culture with a thousand-year history, has significantly influenced most East Asian countries across various domains, including ethics, politics, and education (Nguyen, Terlouw, and Pilot 2006).

Furthermore, my involvement in a long-term project with a Devised Theatre company, which relies heavily on visual and sensory storytelling rather than scripts, led me to reevaluate the significance of the body in terms of both its physicality and moral implications. On the theoretical level, my exploration of the works of the French phenomenological philosopher Merleau-Ponty and his concept of the body’s centrality at the individual level, serving as a medium for enhancing one’s connection to the self and the surrounding context, resonated with my belief that our perception of reality is shaped by the cultural environment that surrounds us. This practice-based research was initiated as a dialogue on the need to reframe the approach to design education in order to be open to traditional culture, while developing an ameliorative comprehension of the body (self-others) as an interface to engage with society at large.

Every day *Tuk-wan* (ทุกวัน), the subtle interplay between tradition (*samai-korn*) and modernity (*samai-mai*) shapes the lives of the inhabitants of the former Kingdom of Siam. It is within this context that my practice-based research has come to fruition. By embracing the initial cultural gap, and uncertainty as the norm, I acknowledge its inherent ambiguity, which professor Bill Gaver refers to as a “resource for designers” (2003). My role as both lecturer and designer has informed my thesis, which is based on work related to design pedagogy and its application both within and outside of the academic context. The journey towards this thesis began long before I enrolled in this doctoral program.

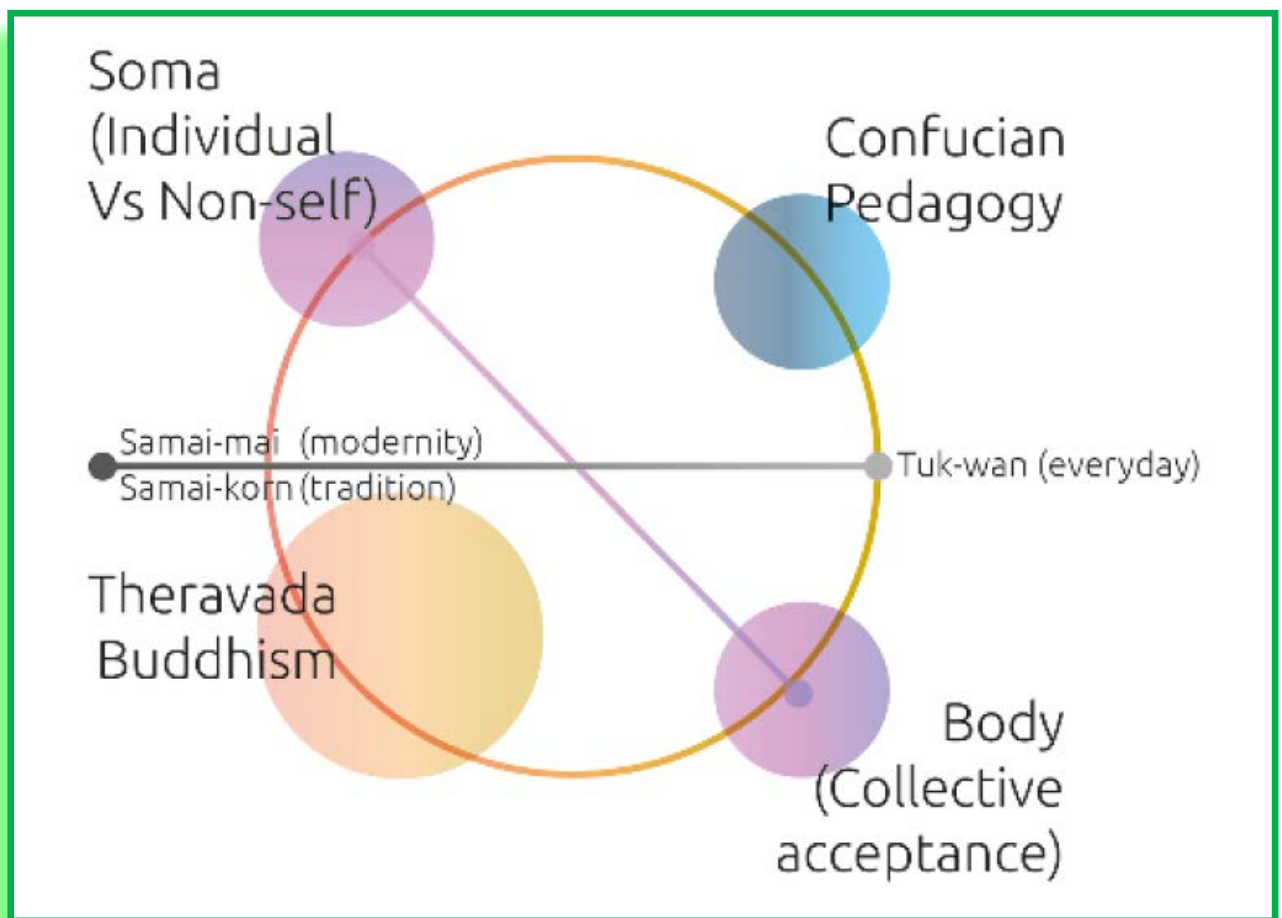


Figure 1: Physical, social, and spiritual bodies, on Thailand context (Maggio, 2017)

I have been studying art and design since high school, where I successfully completed a course in Architecture and Interior Design, earning a Maestro d'Arte diploma after five years of study and hand-drawn technical drawings and prototypes. Following that, I earned my Master of Science degree at the School of Design at Politecnico di Milano, Italy. During my studies I also participated in the Erasmus Programme at Kunsthochschule Kassel, Germany, for one academic year. My career has subsequently been shaped by immersing myself in various cultural contexts, including Mexico and Thailand. Since 2006, I have co-developed curricula, taught, and initiated long-term collaborations between academic institutions and industries. I started my professional journey at universities and art and design schools in Milan, Italy, and later gained overseas experience in Monterrey, Mexico and Mexico City; Bangkok, Thailand and Shanghai, China. Over the last three years, my practice has expanded to include publishing an illustrated book with my new-born daughter. I have also collaborated with parents' associations and international schools, initiating art and design workshops and activities for children in their early years. This expanded to providing arts consultancy for K-12 international schools.

Navigating the complexities of living between two countries, I have been fortunate to find honest gatekeepers and develop a strong network through my engagement with academia, art and design. This network has grown exponentially and has led to engaging conversations that have, from time to time, resulted in tangible project outcomes or the dissemination of relevant information among the circle.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Planetary Collegium, my supervisors, and their guidance and support. A special thanks goes to Roy Ascott, Mike Phillips, Jane

Grant, Gianni Corino, Francesco Monico, Pier Luigi Capucci, Derrick de Kerckhove, and all the '*Planetarians*' – my colleagues at the Planetary Collegium. I am grateful to all of you who have reviewed my work and expanded my perspective, listened to my practice-based narratives, and accompanied me on visits to various places, meeting people with an extraordinary range of cultural and professional backgrounds. All these encounters, and their iterations in Italy, the United Kingdom, China, Greece, and beyond, have influenced the way I have been able to document this practice-based research on paper.

As does any journey, this one had its complexities, and I want to express my immense gratitude to my beloved wife, Laura Perin, and to my daughter, Eleni Maggio Perin, for their encouragement, which provided the final push that allowed me to reach this moment in my life.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

Relevant international design pedagogy forums and trans-disciplinary conferences were regularly attended, at which I usually presented work, sometimes as the conference keynote speaker. Several papers have been published as conference proceedings and as articles in 'Technoetic Arts: A Journal of Speculative Research' published by Intellect books. A list of these is provided in the Appendices.

Word count of main body of thesis: 42.539 words

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Date 26/07/2023

A Framework for Syncretic Pluriversal Narrative:

Somaesthetics and Consciousness in Thai Design Education

Tommaso Maggio

ABSTRACT

The investigation began by examining the diverse conceptions of creativity in the Western and Eastern hemispheres, specifically focusing on 'Ex nihilo' and 'In situ' (Ames) and how it is applied to creative education. The studies delved into the early modern art and design schools in Western countries, such as the German Bauhaus Art School (1919-33) and the Russian Vkhutemas Institute (1920-30), to gain a comprehensive understanding of how these experimental educational institutions influenced and continue to influence the contemporary global design education agenda. The thesis poses questions about how these approaches have been adapted within significantly different cultural contexts.

The research explores emotions as cultural artefacts (Clifford) and the significance of soma (Hannah), by means of a dialogue with the concept of the social body as a living organism (Aulino). These elements, intertwined with the concept of somaesthetics (Shusterman), propose a soma-design approach that positions cultural identity as the central aspect of a (future) professional designer's mindset. This approach signifies a shift beyond the established episteme and techne of silo-based design education, towards a syncretic understanding of the profound impact of the self as an active participant in the local-global community.

These studies have been underpinned by practice-based initiatives carried out in the region, in my role as a creative practitioner and educator. The thesis advocates for syncretic frameworks as a new domain for pluriversal narratives (Escobar) within the realm of Thai design education. The practice-based research revolved around several prototypes, including Emotional Space (ES), Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM), and designerly activities such as YONOK, and The Dharma Vision. Scholarly activities were conducted in the design departments of Chulalongkorn University and Assumption University of Thailand, involving the analysis of and reflection on students' responses. Designerly activities encompass collected experiences that increase awareness of local narratives and taboos. These case studies are initiated and developed to foster participatory and culturally-driven dialogues, facilitated through multiple local voices, to enhance context consciousness. Iterations serve to challenge the limitations of this critical approach, both within and beyond the academic context, while fostering the ability to generate pluriversal conversations.

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1. Introduction

“The ‘ways of seeing’ , are, to some measure, imposed or prevented
by the culture we live in”

Massimo Negrotti (2001)

The central focus of my PhD in practice lies in the unusual position of being a white immigrant who has relocated to and is working in South-East Asia, where I have developed and tested art and design practices and pedagogical methods. While it may initially seem to align with the increasing numbers of Western design schools establishing programs in Asia, being a lone traveller clearly necessitates adopting a nuanced approach that respects and adheres to local customs and norms. Before allowing myself to introduce any potential alternative to the existing status quo, it was crucial for me to undergo total immersion and engage with a diverse range of experts. Thus, my journey in Asia began with an ethnographic lens and cultural studies, followed by a deep exploration of cultural aspects facilitated by various gatekeepers. These gatekeepers encompassed a wide range of professions and expertise, including academics, art and design practitioners, Buddhist monks, financial advisors, diplomats, and product exporters.

As documented in these pages, my PhD studies allowed me to traverse the globe and compare the accumulated outcomes with professionals residing in different parts of the world, from the North to the global South. Upon reflecting on the body of the work I have produced during these years, particularly at the end of this academic journey, I have observed an enhanced ability to select projects, and an integration of

my entire being into my work. Encapsulating this has involved embracing the '*sabai-sabai*' (take it slowly) mood from Thailand, combined with my Italian inclination to develop and bring fresh ideas to fruition. It has become a mantra that I have shared with students and clients, ultimately shaping my signature approach.

I am a design practitioner and educator. Since 1998, I have been operating in the design industry, and since 2006 I have stepped into the design education system; first in Italy, then in Mexico, Thailand and China. Design pedagogy has gradually become the centre of my professional life. While operating in Bangkok as the first expatriate lecturer in a new program in communication design at Chulalongkorn University, I co-developed some modules for freshmen. Chulalongkorn University, founded in 1899 during King Chulalongkorn's reign as a school for training royals and civil servants, is the oldest public university in Thailand. Initially developed in Europe, early experimental educational arts and design labs such as the German Bauhaus Art School (1919-33), have profoundly impacted and continue to influence the contemporary global design education agenda, even in geographically and culturally distant contexts.

At the time, my class was composed of 50 students: 90% Thai nationals, and the rest Chinese, Laotian and Japanese by passport. Among them, 80% were females aged 18-19 years, mostly Theravada Buddhists, living with their parents in Bangkok. A high percentage of students had previous experience in international schools and boarding schools since their early years. Less than 10% were able to read and write the Thai language, but the overall class had a good command of English.

To teach the first year students the design basics elements of design, like dot, line and plane, my colleagues and I developed several practice-based learning experiments. These exercises worked well during class but, after a few weeks, we noticed that students forget those early practices. Around that time, I started a collaborative project as the production art design director with B-Floor Theatre, a collective based in Bangkok. They were selected by the Wellcome Trust as part of 'Art in Global Health' supported by the Wellcome Collection, to develop a play to disseminate scientific information on Melioidosis and Malaria diseases – a critical issue in local rural areas.

Their performances were developed through a process of creative collaboration and improvisation known as Devised Theatre. This work spanned four months, in periods ranging from one day a week to every day during the performance period. I collaborated with technicians, scientists, performers, and the audience, engaging in conversations and interactions. This experience compelled me to deeply question my practice, as it opened my eyes to other perspectives and led me to analyse previous theories about theatre practice, and the culture of the body. It was during this time that I came across an interview with Bernard Stiegler, where he stated that, as in the case of a pianist, "If you want to become an autonomous pianist you must transform your body into such a thing like the piano. But this is the case for all your knowledge, and knowledge is a set of automatisms incorporated in the body." (2015). It was the turning point of my practice and throughout these studies, I am aiming to find a gap in scholarly and designerly activities where theatre can be

incorporated as a performing tool, and the body can serve as the means to acquire self-awareness (sensory-emotional) and expand the learning path of design students and professionals.

These are the Scholarly and Designerly Activities:

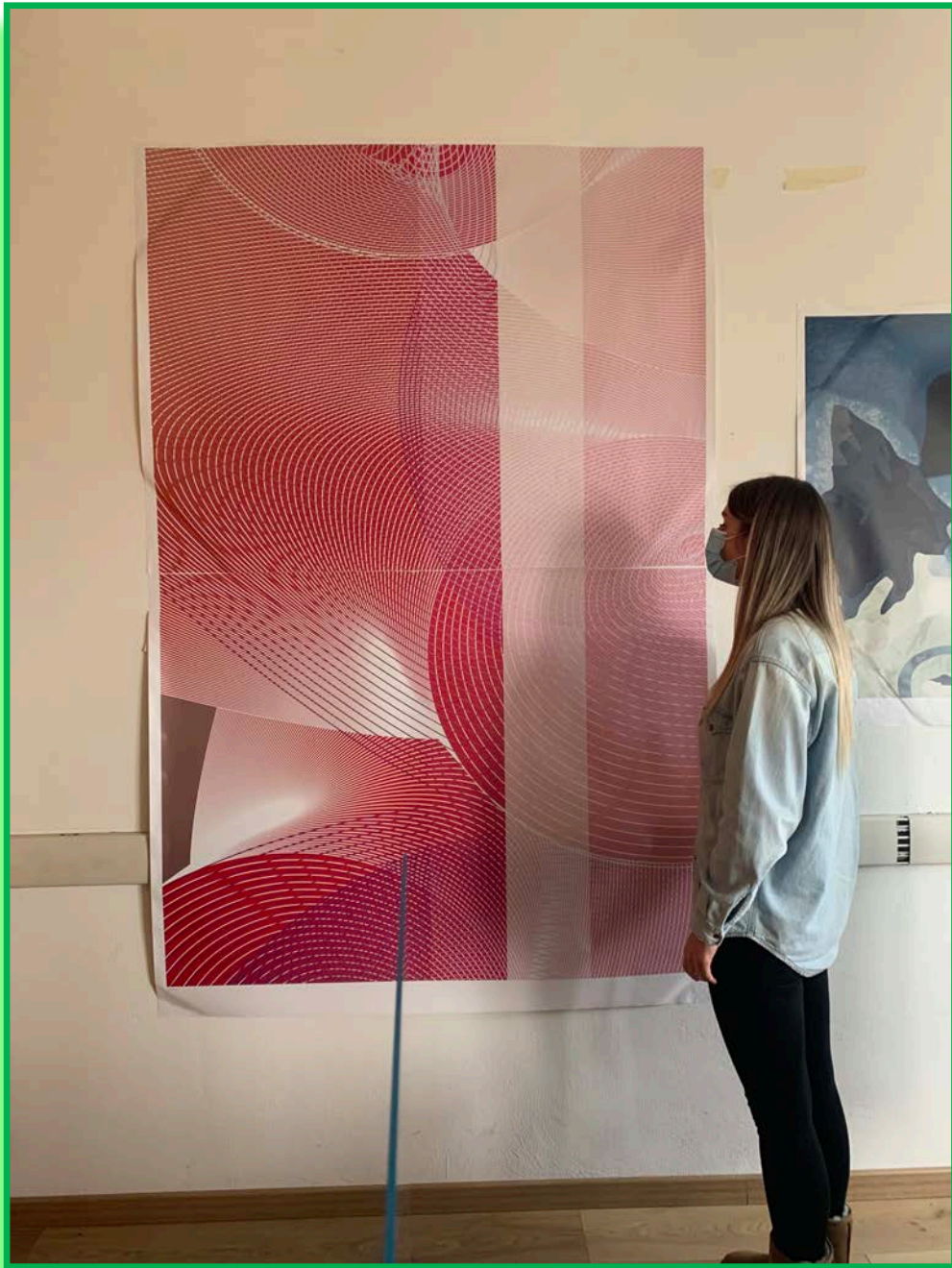


Figure 2: Dharma Wallpaper, Printing test. (Maggio, 2021)

Emotional Space (ES)

Emotions are translated into tangible elements in a six-month-long student project. It differs from the others by investigating self and collective preconceptions and translating them into a dedicated space within which others can immerse themselves.



Figure 3: Emotional Space, drafting the potential installation space (Maggio, 2015)

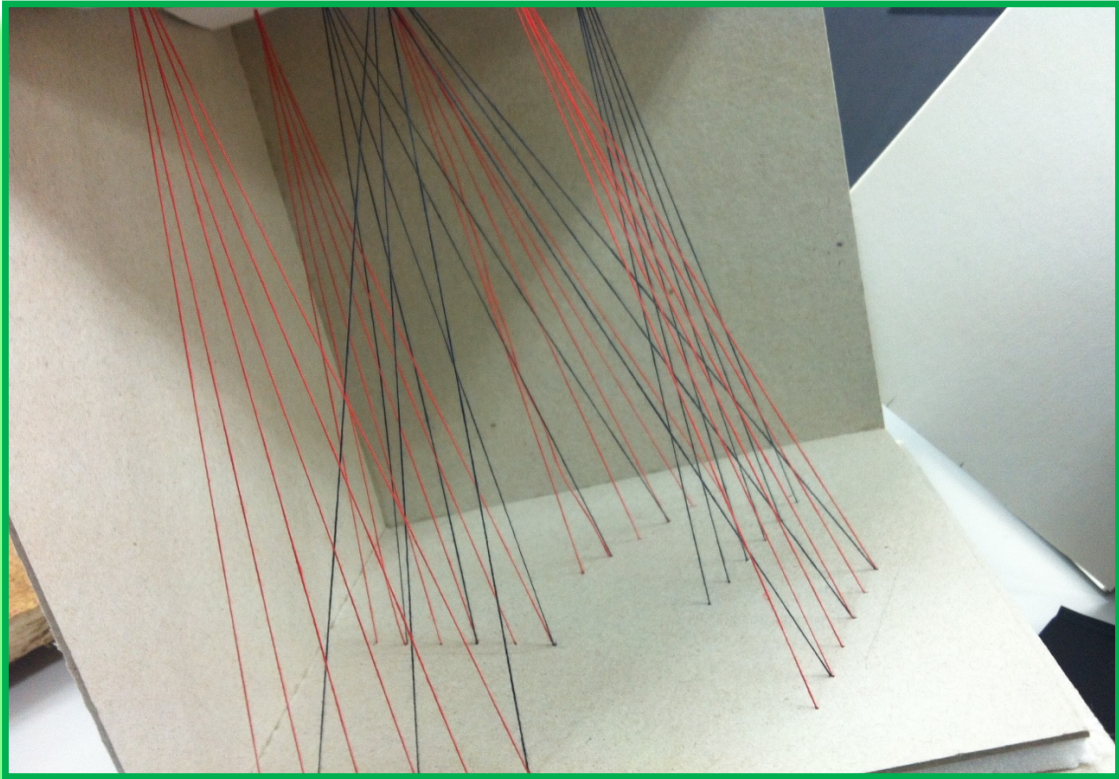


Figure 4: Emotional Space. Translating the untouchable into tangible, Emotions, physical mock-up paper and coloured cotton thread (Maggio, 2015)

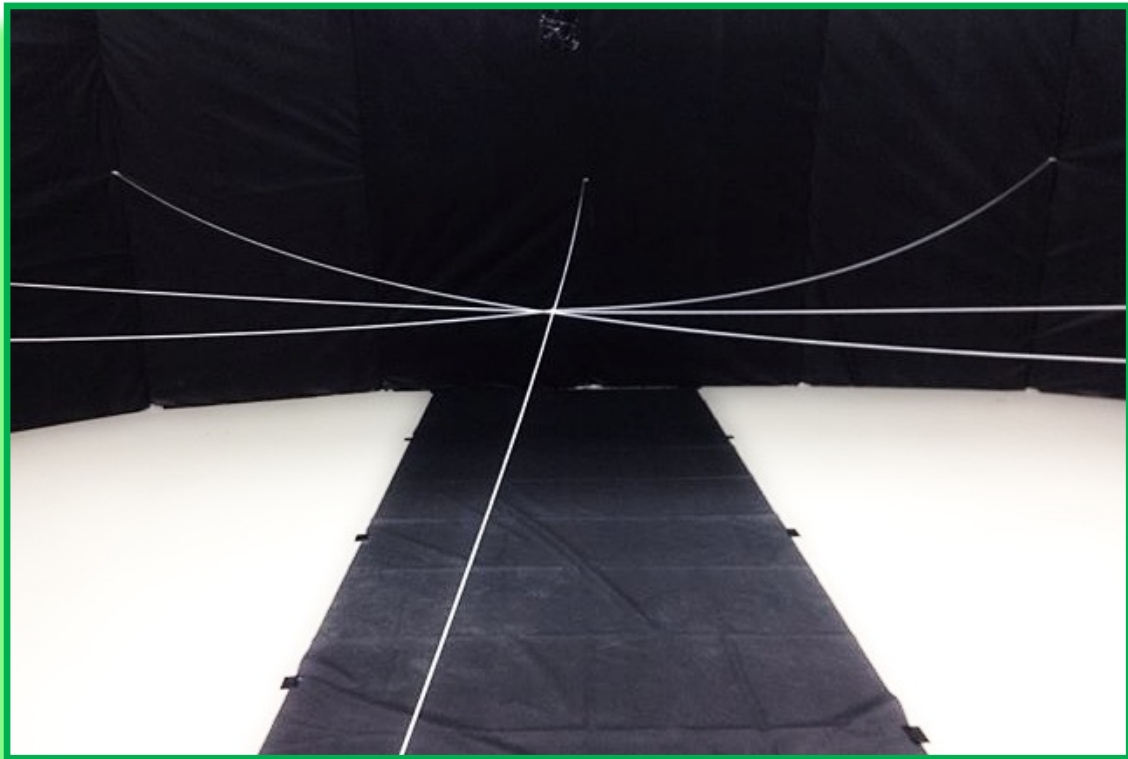


Figure 5: Emotional Space (Maggio, 2015), Translating the untouchable into tangible, Emotions, 1:1 5mt x 5mt maze with white cotton thread and black fabrics to define the space

Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM)

This prototype iterated (see Figures 3 and 4) and analysed self-awareness in motion. The concepts of movement and time have been integrated as elements of the discursive design. In so doing, this inquiry proposes the design appropriation of craft, and the way of thinking as an approach to enable self and collective awareness.

Figure 6: Sense-Perception and Self Motion. Translating words into a physical tool (Maggio, 2016).

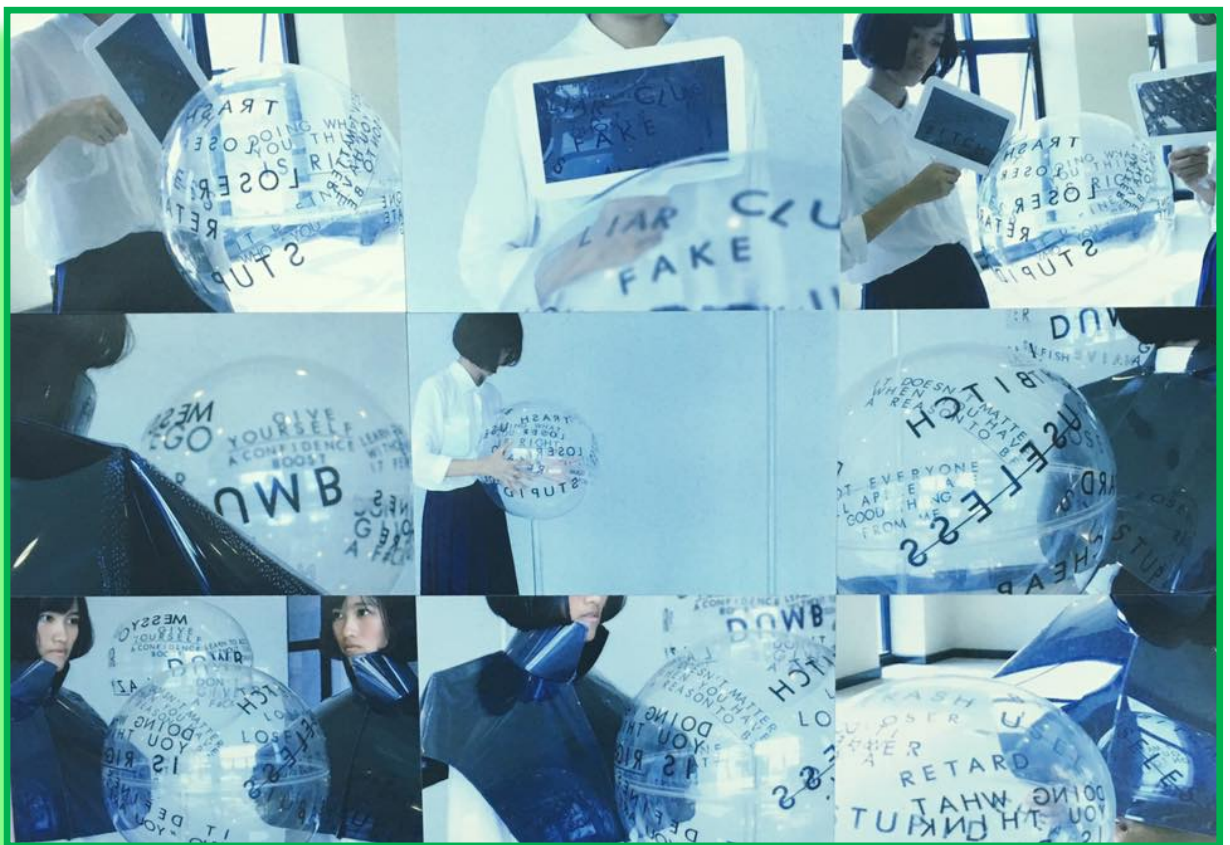




Figure 7: Sense-Perception and Self Motion. Balance the unbalanced, boosting self-awareness and team confidence (Maggio, 2016)

Scholarly Activities, earliest Attempts

Senses to Cultivate Collective Consciousness (SCCC)

The prototype (see Figures 5 and 6) explores first-year students' self-confidence by using body gestures to relate to objects and space. It is directed by movement-based theatre performance techniques—an investigation into how the new knowledge can be comprehended by practicing theatrical embodiment.

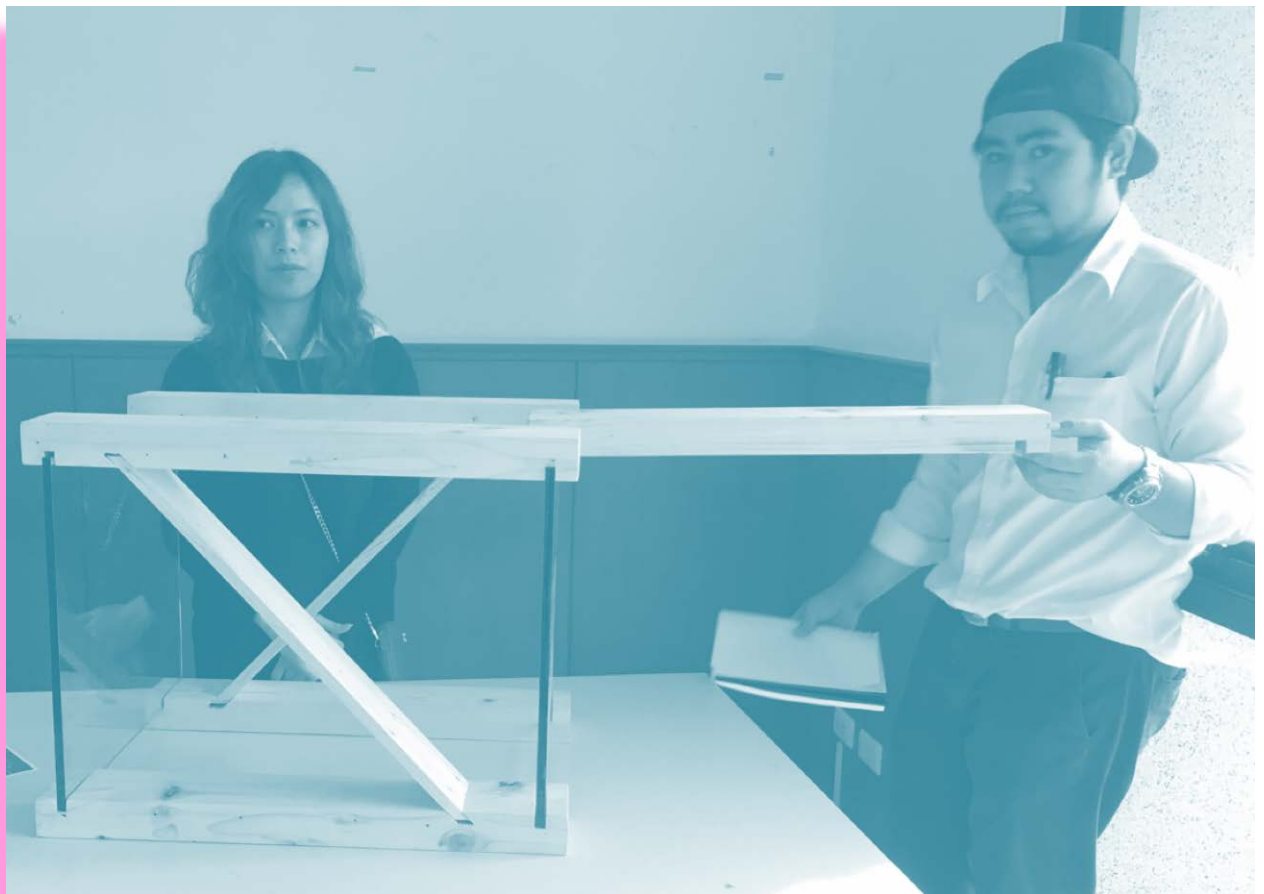


Figure 8, 9 and 10: Senses to Cultivate Collective Consciousness, early attempts (Maggio, 2014)

Practice Oneness, not Two not One (POTO)

On reflecting on the self, to initiate a deeper conversation about the body, called soma, as perceived within and sensed by others.

Figure 11: Practice Oneness, not Two not One (Maggio, 2017) Embrace the concept of non-duality, which transcends the distinction between self and others as soma versus body, and views them as a possible encounter of material entities.



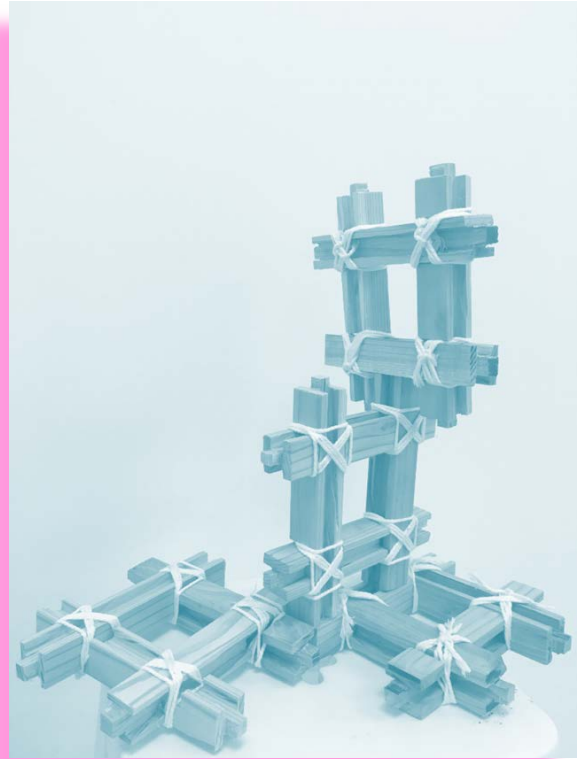


Figure 12-13: Practice Oneness, not Two not One (Maggio, 2017)

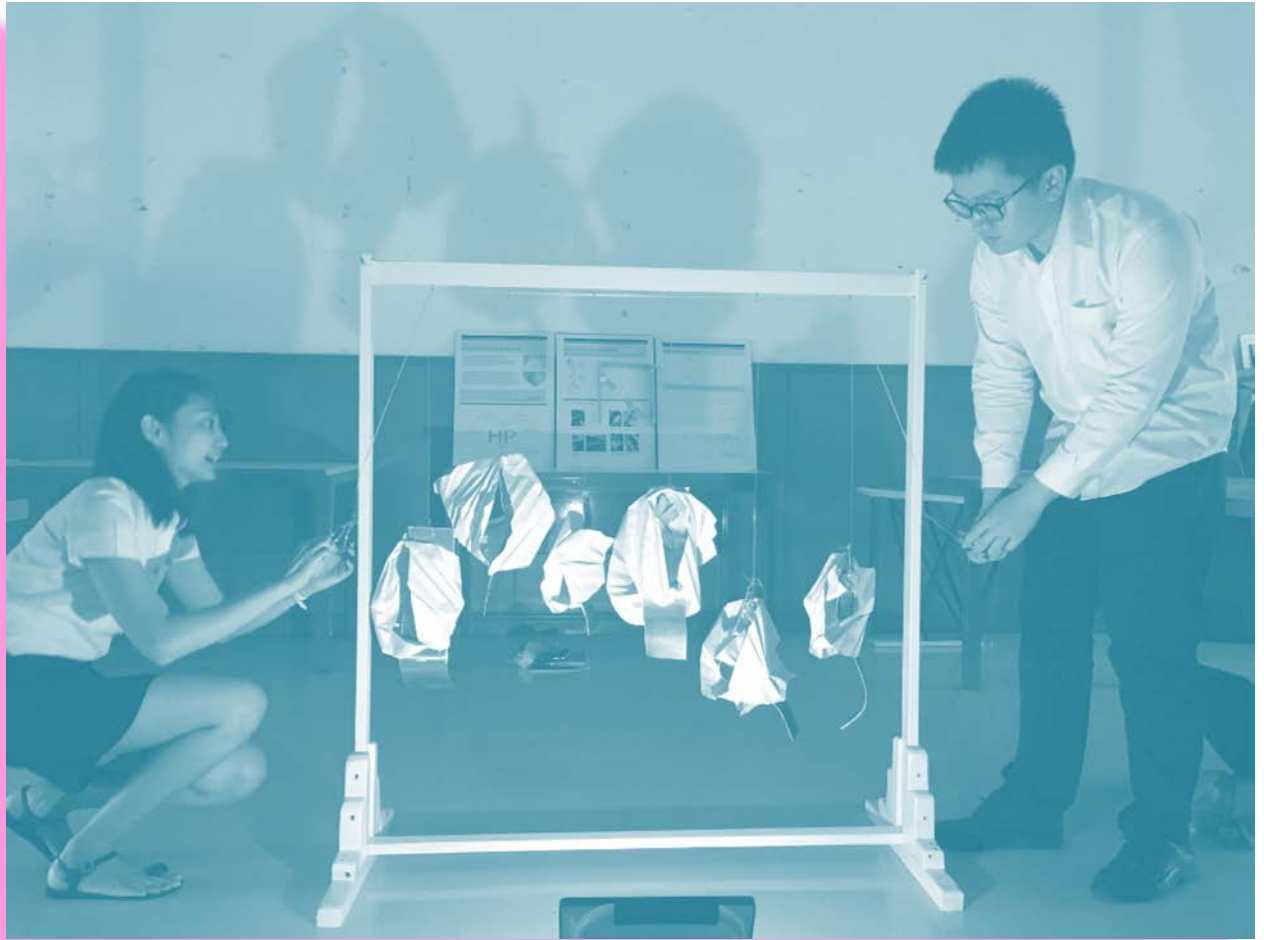


Figure 14: Practice Oneness, not Two not One (Maggio, 2017). Touching our vibrations, mock-up mixed media.

Observer to Participant (OTP)

This initiates a process of transforming translate the academic conference guests from passive observers to active participants. It enquires deeper into self-collective awareness by enabling each person to relate to another person, and activates participants via physical theatrical techniques.

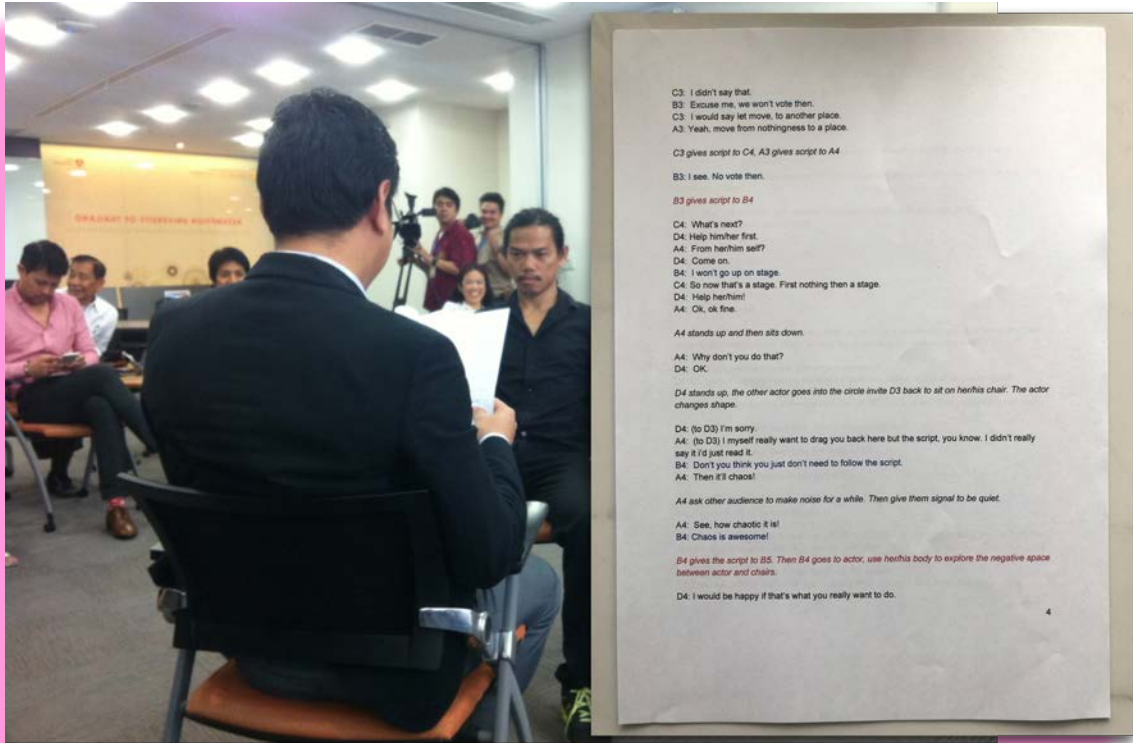


Figure 15 - 16: Observer to Participant (Maggio, 2015) the performers and the script, and, above, In the spatial configuration, the central chair serves as the stage where each observer transforms into a participant

True Perception: Meditative Awareness as a Gateway to Artistic Expression

Dharma art refers to art that springs from a certain state of mind on the part of the artist that could be called the meditative state. It is an attitude of directness and unself consciousness in one's creative work' (*Chögyam Trungpa*). Through the practice of meditation, we have explored the gateway to artistic expression using different mediums of art, as a personal expression, and through a collective process.



Figure 17-18-19: True Perception: Meditative Awareness as a Gateway to Artistic Expression (Maggio, 2020).

This was the moment of the workshop where participants freed themselves from preconceptions and possible anxiety of inadequacy, using their hands and feet to draw their emotions.





Figure 17-18-19: True Perception: Meditative Awareness as a Gateway to Artistic Expression (Maggio, 2020).

Designerly Activities

YONOK, Collecting Memories

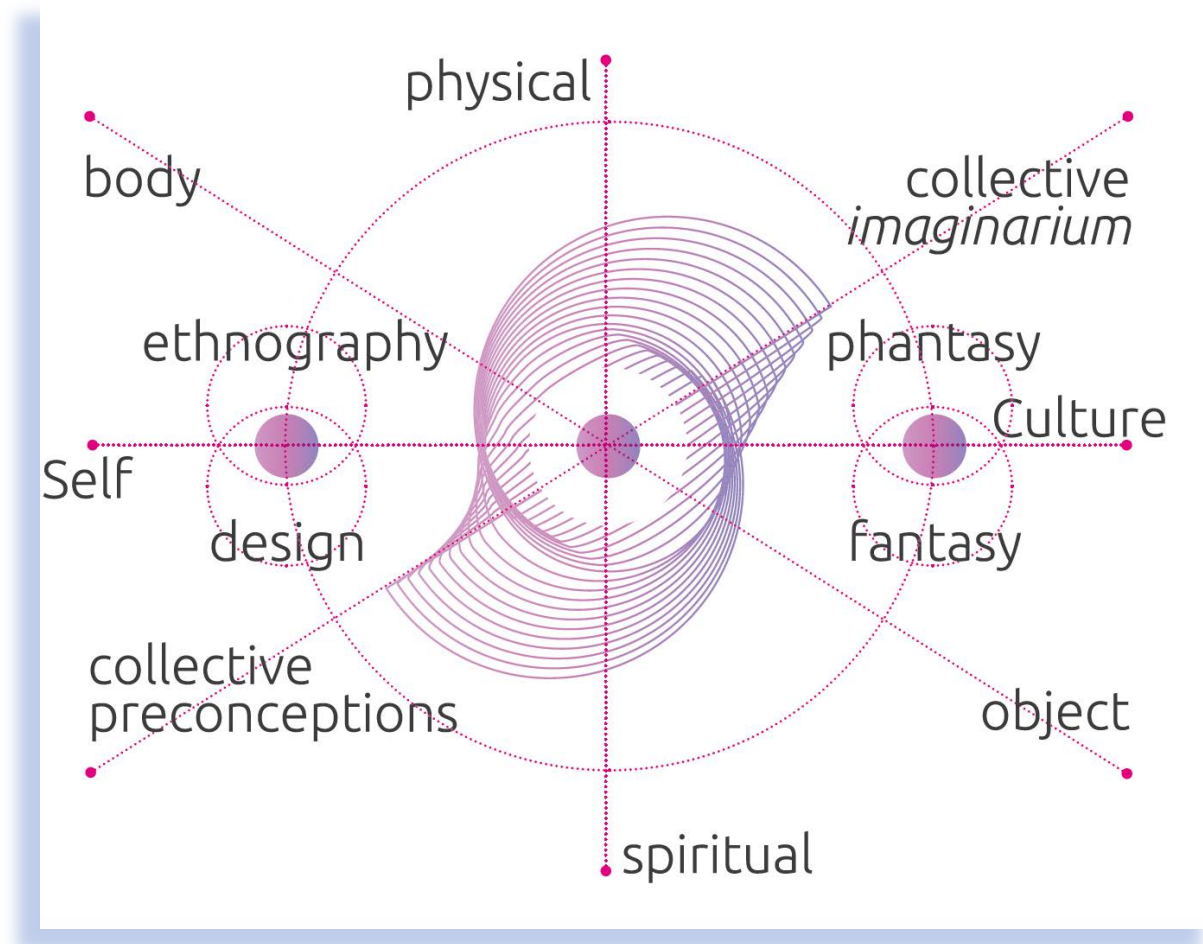
YONOK, (see figure 14) has been initiated outside the academic context; however, it integrates the findings of the previous experiments. It is a fashion project started to gather personal-local memories and the visual richness of the unique local craft of South-East Asia. While moving from west to east, collecting became an automatism.

It became then something unexpected. The result, as an artefact, could then be defined as a medium able to connect cultures by reframing the initial observer's preconceptions.



Figure 20: YONOK, Capsule Collection (Maggio, 2014)

Figure 21: YONOK, Capsule Collection, infographics (Maggio, 2014)



5. Illustrations – The image and related caption have been added in response to the examination team’s correction request and proofread by a professional copy editor for the submission on 27 July 2023.

The Dharma Vision

Cultivating consciousness via Arts and Meditation comes after a series of experiments on living the now, the newness. Lately, Ambienta, a wallpaper company based in Italy, called for collaboration. The result is a wallpaper collection.



Figure 22: Dharma Ayutthaya, Dharma-Chang-Rai, Dharma Krabi, Wallpapers for Ambienta (Maggio, 2021)



Figure 23: Dharma Ayutthaya, Dharma-Chang-Rai, Dharma Krabi, Wallpapers for Ambienta (Maggio, 2021)

– *Shifting Prospective*

Survival Games

Theatre had a profound impact on this practice-based research. While in Southeast Asia, I was invited by B-Floor, a Thai based performance company, to act as Production Art Director for work on a devised and movement-based public performance. The production was called 'Survival Games', and was sponsored by the the Wellcome Trust, a UK-based research charity, as part of 'Art in Global Health'. The behind-the-scenes work took place over five months. It was on stage for two weeks at Pridi Banomyong Institute, Soi Thonglor, Sukhumvit Rd., Bangkok, Thailand





Figure 25, 26, 27: Survival Games, Set Design (Maggio and Perin, B-Floor, 2013)

1.1. Note on Ethics

All the prototypes described in the body of this thesis have been conducted within the pedagogical context of higher education, at the bachelor and masters levels.

This research formed a core curricular component of the International Program in Product Design at Assumption University of Thailand, for the following modules:

PD 3203 Product Design Studio III equivalent to credits: 6 (2-8-8)

PD 3204 Product Design Studio IV equivalent to credits: 6 (2-8-8)

PD 4205 Product Design Studio V equivalent to credits: 6 (2-8-8)

Additionally, the research was conducted for the International Program in Communication Design (CommDe), Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, specifically within the Studio on Introduction to Drawing as Discipline. It was here that I introduced bringing elements of devised theatre to the discipline of design pedagogy. Within this educational and institutional framework, the sensitive data of single participants has been collected or disclosed, but has not been shared with any third party. Student participants have been anonymised in all documentation. These projects did not store or use people's data to inform the research conducted within this thesis or fall within the other requirements for ethical approval of research.

1.2 Research overview:

aim, question, methodology

For the senses to work, there must be 'something in between'.

It is only through the medium of light that we can see colour,
only through the medium of air that we can hear.

(Aristotle (419a) as quoted by Sean Gaston, *Starting with Derrida*, 2007 p. 94)

Where should we position the social–physical body in the design pedagogy and, consequently, in this industry-based discipline? To address this question, I have engaged a design methodology that incorporates embodied phenomenological (1st person) and observational (3rd person) methods in an iterative, collaborative creative process. By operating within the framework of design pedagogy, theatre as performance is considered as the tool, and the body serves as the means to acquire self-awareness (sensory-emotional) and expand the learning and training path of design students and professionals.

Building on the previous work of Western theoreticians and practitioners in art and design pedagogy, I have developed prototypes, including the Emotional Space (ES), which draws inspiration from the concept of correalism defined by the architect and educator Kiesler as “the dynamics of continual interaction between man and his natural and technological environments” (1939). This concept was applied in his Laboratory for Design Correlation at the School of Architecture at Columbia University. Additionally, this scholarly activity aims to evoke the philosophical concept of Sartre, the ‘hodological space’ which refers to a place that lacks a fixed

set of coordinates independent of any particular subject and instead represents a constantly varying field of force experienced by the subject.

Another prototype, called Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM), is also part of the scholarly activities developed within the cultural context of Thailand. It refers to experiments conducted by the British artist and theoretician Roy Ascott during the 'Groundcourse' at Ealing Art College in London from 1961 to 1964, as well as the experimental 1960's 'situational' projects developed for the evening course at what is now the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in the UK.

Relevant and, significantly, contrary to the current trend in wearable technologies, the EM, SPSM, and the selected designerly activities such as YONOK and The Dharma Vision do not incorporate any digital sensing devices. These four prototypes are intended to assist students and professionals in improving their self-sensing abilities (body) by using their interoception and proprioception senses.

In this context, 'Somaesthetics', a term coined by Richard Shusterman, refers to a way of implementing the design process that encourages designers to be more conscious of their own feelings and bodies. Somaesthetics views the lived body, the 'soma', (Hanna, 1988) as a site for sensory appreciation and creative self-fashioning (Shusterman, 2008, p. 1). Additionally, 'consciousness' refers to the attempt to shift from "ego-centred awareness to a unified field of shared awareness" (Russel P, 1983).

As a western practitioner and educator operating in South-East Asia, how can I initiate a process to introduce alternative narratives and adjust the Western design education imprint? This question is further influenced by positionality (England, 1994): I am a white immigrant in South-East Asia, specifically Thailand, having migrated with my wife from Italy, frequently travelling between the two countries to enhance projects. I had the opportunity to participate in a Design Research Society (DRS) conference in Bangkok, which prompted me to question the applicability and utility of the Western-based design education approach that I was employing as the foundation of the bachelor course in communication design, under the guidance of the program director, during my time teaching in Bangkok.

Through this practice-based research process with active participants, the ambition is to increase their engagement and sense of collectiveness, thereby influencing their preconceptions about themselves and others. The evaluation of the practices described within this thesis is rooted in the intention to initiate syncretic narratives at both academic and industry levels.

1.3 Key Terms

The following is intended as a description of key terms used within this practice-based research. Other terms and related definitions less fundamental to the practice are outlined where appropriate within the text or footnotes:

Scholarly activities

Designerly activities

Syncretic

Theatre

Body

Somaesthetics

Pluriverse

Positionality

International

Scholarly activities

Scholarly activities refers to a series of prototypes created within the academic design context of Thailand. In line with the thesis itself, I am operating within the framework of design pedagogy, using theatre as a performing tool, and the body as a means to acquire self-awareness (sensory-emotional) and enhance the learning path of design students.

These case studies are rooted in early art education experiments conducted before and after the Second World War in Western countries such as the UK and the US. Examples include: those beginning in 1937 at the Frederick Kiesler Laboratory for Design Correlation at the School of Architecture at Columbia University; the 'situational projects' developed for the evening course at what is now the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in the UK; and the experiments conducted between 1961 and 1964 in Roy Ascott's 'Groundcourse' at Ealing Art College in

London. The purpose of these scholarly activities is to adapt these early pedagogic experiments done in the context of Western art education into south-east Asia, specifically within communication and product design courses at universities located in Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand. Furthermore, the aim is to expand these activities with a pluriversal narrative while being aware of my positionality as a researcher. Initially, as an academic, and later as an observer of the 18-21 year-old students, who were predominantly Thai nationals (80% of the 40-student classes), with a mixed gender and diverse cultural and belief backgrounds ranging from Theravada Buddhism to Catholicism and Brahmanism, as they engaged with the prototypes. These evaluation of these experiences focuses on the observed level of syncretic narrative that the students were able to formulate before and after their involvement. Success is determined by whether there was an increase in consciousness about the self (sensory and emotional) and others, as demonstrated through micro-subsequent actions that show awareness and acceptance of personal and community roots.

Designerly Activities

Designerly activities are prototypes conducted within the design industry contexts of Thailand and Italy. The pedagogy applied for these activities follows the same framework as the scholarly activities. The foundation is built upon the pre- and post-Bauhaus Art and Design School educational models. It is important to note that the design discipline originated from the industrial sector. The objective of designerly activities to transfer the pedagogy, which has been expanded through these studies,

from students to professionals. In this context, theatre as performance is considered as the tool, and the body serves as the means to acquire self-awareness (sensory-emotional) and enhance professional training by developing tangible outcomes through collaborative processes.

The influence of Victor Papanek's book, 'Design for the Real World' (1971), with its emphasis on the relationship between design and people, has played a significant role and has been adapted to diverse cultural and temporal contexts. Working in a culturally diverse context, I have had to take on the role of an ethnographer. Being aware of this diversity, I have engaged in conversation with male and female arts and craft professionals ranging from 20 to 65 years old. The majority of these professionals are practitioners of Theravada Buddhism, which aligns with their family traditions. A project with the B-Floor, a theatre company in Bangkok, selected by the Wellcome Trust as part of their 'Art in Global Health', funded by the Wellcome Collection, to develop a play for scientific dissemination, has further enhanced the concept of utilising the body as means to acquire self-awareness in my studies.

Prototypes for the YONOK capsule collection and The Dharma Vision are extensions based on the aforementioned designerly experiences. The evaluation of designerly activities is based on the perceived level of syncretic narrative observed during and after the creation process with designers and associated professionals.

In summary, these two typologies have been defined based on their respective academic and industry contexts. Design pedagogy serves as the core. Scholarly activities focus on the learning process and outcomes for students, primarily at the university level in Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand. Designerly activities focus on

training professionals and producing tangible outcomes as a result of an expanded process that emphasises collaboration as the fundamental element. The aim is to engage a pluriversal narrative that includes designers and related professionals.

Syncretic

According to Roy Ascott (2006), syncretism has historically destabilised political and religious orthodoxies by reconciling and harmonising previously separate adversaries. Within the framework of design pedagogy, which is the context of this study, syncretic is associated with a narrative. This means that while students or professionals engage in their daily milieu, scholarly and designerly actions serve as tools to enhance their capability to accept, acknowledge, and initiate conversation with alternative perspectives. The syncretic narrative represents the culmination of these prototypes and serves as the locus of subsequent actions taken by the participants.

Theatre

I operate within the framework of design pedagogy, where theatre as performance serves as the tool for both scholarly and designerly actions. The focus on theatre emerged from a collaborative project with the B-Floor, a collective based in Bangkok that was selected by the Wellcome Trust as part of 'Art in Global Health', funded by the Wellcome Collection, to develop a play for scientific dissemination. Their performances are created through a collaborative and improvisational process known as Devised Theatre.

The experience led me to invite the B-Floor's female director to conduct a workshop with freshman students in communication design. The class consisted of 80% female students, aged 18-19, who were mostly Thai nationals practicing Theravada Buddhism, living with their parents in the city. Exploring the relationship between the body and space was the initial attempt to engage in dialogue to bypass taboos and contextual beliefs. Subsequently, I delved into studies on theatre literature, ranging from Augusto Boal and his 'Theatre of the Oppressed' to Anne Bogart and Tina Landau and their expanded methodology called the 'nine viewpoints'. These theoretical foundations of theatre are the fundamental elements of these studies, and the nine principles highlighted the similarities between design and theatre principles. At this stage, theatre as performance became the cornerstone of scholarly and designerly practice – a tool closely connected to the body and role in acquiring self-awareness.

Body

The reference to the body encompasses its social and moral dimensions, while considering it as a living organism. Within the framework of design pedagogy developed in this thesis, the body serves the purpose of acquiring self-awareness (sensory-emotional) to enrich the learning path of design students and extend professional training. As pragmatist philosopher Richard Shusterman has noted, understanding one's own body is crucial for designing for others.

Furthermore, the cultural significance of the body has been explored from both Western and Eastern philosophical and ethnographic perspectives. Given that Thailand is the cultural context under study, it is important to emphasise that

Theravāda Buddhism plays a fundamental role in shaping the national identity. Over the years, I have published articles and presented at trans-disciplinary conferences, incorporating elements of the prototypes that aim to foster a pluriversal discussion about local taboo and contextual beliefs. The body is considered the locus of the perceived world, encompassing its diverse dimensions.

Somaesthetics

In this context, Somaesthetics, a term coined by Richard Shusterman, refers to a way of implementing the design process by fostering a heightened awareness of the designer's feelings and body. Somaesthetics entails considering the lived body, or the 'soma' (Hanna, 1988) as a vehicle for sensory appreciation and creative self-fashioning (Shusterman, 2008, p. 1). Additionally, consciousness is understood as an attempt to shift the 'ego-centred' awareness to a unified field of shared awareness (Russel P, 1983).

Pluriversal Narrative

A pluriversal narrative encompasses a series of activities in favour of a multiplicity of possible worlds – a world where many perspectives coexist (Kothari, 2019) – ranging from the universal to the Pluriverse. Within the context of this practice-based research, it refers to the learning objectives derived from both scholarly and designerly activities within the realms of education and professionalism, where prototypes have been conceptualised, initiated, and tested.

Positionality

Positionality (England, 1994) refers to my personal context and perspective. As a white immigrant to South-East Asia, specifically in Thailand, I have experienced the geography and culture through the lens of migration. My Italian wife and I have migrated between Europe and Thailand, engaging in collaborative projects that spanned both countries. The narrative that developed through this practice-based research differs significantly from those who have immigrated under more severe or politically complex circumstances. However, there is value in my reflective narrative.

In recent times, I have been invited to international conferences and summits to share my narrative as a tool for enhancing educational goals, particularly related to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). SDG 4 is part of the call for United Nations' call for actions and aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

International

Here the term international is used to describe an academic program where the primary spoken language is English, even if most of the students and academic staff were local Thai nationals.

1.4 Chapter summary and thesis outline

In the first chapter review the motivation behind the practice-based research described in this thesis, including the theories underlying my design pedagogy prototypes and the explanation of key terms. I explore the relationship between the framework of design pedagogy, the use of theatre as a tool for performance, and the role of the body in acquiring self-awareness (sensory-emotional) for students and professionals. I also outline the research questions that guide this work and clarify my positionality as a Western professional and educator operating in the Eastern context of South-East Asia, particularly in Thailand. This exploration stems from my desire to explore the integration of the 'body' in design pedagogy and industry.

In Chapter 2 I expand the conversation by introducing significant milestones in arts and design education. I provide an overview of related concepts, theories, and prior work relevant to design pedagogy. Specific references include the German Bauhaus Art School (1919-33), the Laboratory for Design Correlation until 1964, and experiments conducted in Roy Ascott's 'Groundcourse' at Ealing Art College in London. I also discuss the connection to Augusto Boal and his influential publication, 'Theatre of the Oppressed' (1970).

Chapter 3 focusses on enhancing the discussion by examining the Thai cultural context, according to my experience working for major public and private universities in the international bachelor degree programs in communication and product design. I provide a brief review of taboo and beliefs related to Theravada-based Buddhism,

which is the predominant religion in the country. Here, I outline related concepts and previously developed theories, exploring the idea of the social and physical body within this specific cultural context.

In Chapter 4, I present the conceptual framework for the prototypes. I explained my rationale for categorizing my work into the categories of scholarly, and designerly activities. This framework is largely informed by practice-based initiative and immersion in the Thai region and culture, and from my extensive experience as an educator at the university level, for bachelor and master degrees, and practitioner in the design industry in fields ranging from graphic design and fashion, to interior and lifestyle design. I discuss the iterative process of reflection and making, reporting how the prototypes were developed and evaluated using specific pillars that contributed to a deeper understanding of their engagement within the work and context.

Chapter 5 concludes the thesis with a review of the context, aims, contexts, methods, and details of each prototype. I summarise the main developments and contributions of this research. Finally, I outline further research and development directions for the scholarly and designerly activities here proposed.

2. Talking of Design Education

"Form does not follow function. Function follows vision. Vision follows reality."

Frederick Kiesler, 'Pseudo-Functionalism in Modern Architecture'

Partisan Review 16 (July 1949), 738.

In this chapter, I expand the conversation with an introduction to arts and design education milestones by outlining related concepts, theories, and prior work related to design pedagogy. I provide specific references from the German Bauhaus Art School (1919-33), the Laboratory for Design Correlation to 1964, and experiments conducted in Roy Ascott's 'Groundcourse' at Ealing Art College in London. By drawing connections among the previous work, I underline the value of the current ideology related to practitioners and academics today. I devote most of Chapter 3 to contextualising the designerly aspects and theory within the landscape and framework of design education in Thailand.

2.1. Identification of the Field

Design education is a discipline. The 'Conference on Systematic and Intuitive Methods in Engineering, Industrial Design, Architecture and Communications', held in 1962 in London, marked a seismic shift in design as field of study. Organisers of that event were, among others, John Chris Jones, who had previously worked as an industrial designer in a large electrical firm in Britain, and Bruce Archer, who had

experience as an engineering designer in manufacturing before joining the academic field. It is relevant to note the common aspect that both of them had practical experience before joining academia.

John Chris Jones published his book 'Design Methods: Seeds of Human Futures' in 1970, while Bruce Archer first used the term 'Design Thinking' in his 1964 book 'Systematic Method for Designers'[4]. Nigel Cross gained recognition for his collection of essays titled 'Designerly Ways of Knowing', where he explained that designers act in an instinctive way: "There are things to know, ways of knowing them and ways of finding out about them that are specific to the design area". On the occasion of the reprint of John Chris Jones's book 'Designing Designing', John Thackara describes him as a pioneer of 'design thinking' (then known as design methods), and points out that Jones "coined the word 'softecnica' to describe a coming of live objects, a new presence in the world" (Thackara, 2020).

John Chris Jones died in 2022, and his website (<http://www.publicwriting.net/>) continues to feature the following words on its home page: "softopia: an invented word meaning utopian software or a new culture that is softer (and i hope less inhuman) than the mechanised society we inherit". In this practice-based research, the term softopia links to Roy Ascott's concept of 'moistmedia', which aims to "bridge the artificial and natural domains, transforming the relationship between consciousness and the material world".

These ideas of using art and design as tools to reframe human preconceptions hold particular value in the context of my practice based research, which focuses on case

studies in Thailand at Chulalongkorn University, Assumption University of Thailand and Bangkok University. It is also relevant to note that while I was working on my research direction and about to frame my PhD studies, Roy Ascott established a Technoetic Arts degree programme at DeTao Masters College, Songjiang, Shanghai. This has led to fruitful conversations and roundtable discussions with arts and design practitioners and theorists, including such Thai architects as Rachaporn Choochuey, Thai artists like Takerng Pattanopas, curators like Brian Curtin, Japanese artists such as Soichiro Shimizu, Chinese artists and theorists such as Hu Jie Ming, Ni Weihua, and gallerists like Zheng Lin, the founder of Tang Contemporary Art. These conversations allowed me to engage in deeper and wider research into Asian culture and cultural perspectives.

In most cases, these informal conversations highlighted the need for a shift in Western-centred art and design education, especially regarding the revaluation of culture and the local context in which each education module is delivered. Seen through the lens of my professional experience in Asia, I feel a sense of gratitude for the pedagogical guidelines laid out by Western theories. However, it is also clear that not all of these theories can be fully adopted in the East, particularly in the global South. Furthermore, in Southeast Asia, design has often been associated with artistic–commercial activities, which is why it has been integrated into arts schools rather than being part of Architecture or Engineering faculties, as is more common in Europe. For example, during my studies for Master of Science in Industrial Design and Visual Communication at Politecnico di Milano, the program was initially part of the faculty of Architecture. My earliest engagement with design education in Asia was in developing a communication design curriculum at Chulalongkorn University.

The goal was to use theories and examples from the 'Staatliches Bauhaus' theories and examples as a foundational pillar of the new Bachelor's degree program. During one of the early meetings, a senior faculty member mentioned Notomi Kaijiro, an industrial art pioneer who is considered the first design educator in Japan. Notomi Kaijiro, a former samurai and later on the director of the Naval Staff College, had a meeting with Frank Lloyd Wright in 1905, as documented in an article (Haruhiko: 2001, 27). This encounter between these two public figures aimed to move the country forward by keeping alive traditional production methods carried out by hand while exploring the possibilities offered by the 'new' machines (which Wright regarded as the fatal enemy of the arts). Initially, I didn't pay enough attention to this aspect, but as I gained a better understanding of Thai culture and how Japanese culture is perceived in Thailand, I developed a deeper understanding of the historical and present context of the country. Once the program started, it quickly evolved to incorporate local culture, and I took charge of connecting with local and Western practitioners by organising workshops and public talks.

Secondly, but equally important, throughout my years working in Asian countries such as Thailand and China while maintaining strong connections with the UK, (where this PhD and my most recent employer are based), I have witnessed a growing wave of Asian artists and designers who are developing their own design language. They are breaking away from the global visual trends and making their statements both within and outside of Asian countries. Design makers and theorists in Asia are striving to infuse their cultural roots into every phase of their work. On the one hand, their work is expected to be 'globally' contemporary, but at the same time, there is a subtle agenda to showcase the richness of their own culture and context.

The work of Chinese Artist and Designer Fengbo Liao exemplifies this approach. Classic myths and legendary creatures are often combined in his work, creating an imaginary realm that links the past and the present through a visually expressive language. Similarly, design duo '1983 Asia' use branding as a means to communicate the authenticity of a language that represents the fusion of Southeast and Central Asian influences. Chen Zhenda, a graduate of the China Academy of Art, has worked and lived in France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. His European experience has influenced his ability to develop Chinese characters with a twist that captures the interest of Western audiences. In Thailand, Saran Yen Panya, co-founder of 'Citizen of Nowhere', returned to Bangkok after graduating from Konstfack University in Stockholm, Sweden, and established his design office, where his central focus is storytelling. His designs breathe new life into the classic fairytales of Thailand, using an engaging language that has surprised both local and western buyers. As Nigel Cross emphasised in his writings on designerly ways, the concept has been widely accepted and, to some extent, simplified and translated into the popular notion of 'design thinking' today. This is connected to the fact that contemporary design cultures, adopted by academies around 2000, as observed by design theorist Guy Juliet, (3, 2019) "not only involve distributed and multilevel thinking and action in and about design, but also new dispositions and sensibilities on the part of their publics".

In these times, uncertainty – a value that professor Bill Gaver (also known as William Gaver) referred to as a "resource for design" (2003, 233) – takes on a deeper meaning, especially considering the profound adjustments required by the recent

pandemic affecting humans of all ages. It prompts a reevaluation of the role of speculative design within the context in which I operate. Anthony Dunne and Fiona Ray (active since 1994), suggest that design speculation can serve as a catalyst for collectively redefining our relationship to reality (2013, 2). They argue against developing scenarios that prescribe how things should be, as it can be “too didactic”. However, as a practitioner involved in education, I am tasked with creating tools that facilitate the translation of intangible ideas into tangible forms. I have struggled to move students beyond fictional contexts. As my case studies have been moulded within a specific ‘host’ context, the complexity of communication significantly impacts how the message is delivered. After numerous failed attempts, and thanks to my encounter with devised theatre through the B-Floor company, I incorporated the (living) body as the fulcrum of my practice both within and outside of the academic realm. The body became a connector between the physical and the metaphysical, bringing it to the design stage not merely as a matter of proportion but as a tool for individual and collective reflection. This shift has led me to reconsider my place within space and time.

These activities have led me to consider the perspective of the senior curator at MOMA, Paola Antonelli, who often speaks about elasticity – the ability to innovate without allowing it to interfere excessively with one’s own rhythms and goals (Antonelli, 2008: 14). And this philosophy lies at the core of my approach. As an academic, according to the feedback I have received, I encourage my students to reconnect with themselves and their community by guiding them in exploring their roots as an alternative way of understanding history and of challenging their preconceptions.

“He who makes stars from clay – instead of complaining about imperfections of students, he searched for the hidden talents and amplified them to the world” wrote Ass. Professor Chutarat Laomanacharoen, my line manager while working at Assumption University of Thailand.

Furthermore, re-reading the local culture has allowed us to have a better understanding of the context. The project that I created while travelling across the country – the fashion capsule collection YONOK – has been called an example of speculative design. A collection of local memories to enhance possible future scenarios. It was presented as an open scenario where the potential audience, by wearing the clothing, could see themselves in the past, present, and future.

Looking back at the body of work that I have initiated and developed over the past ten years, to some extent, I can now draw connections between my own processes and outcomes and those of some makers based in Bangkok, Thailand. One individual who has particularly influenced my vision is my former colleague, Dr. Be Takerng Pattanopas, whose practice explores the interplay between internal and external spaces. He ultimately presents his work as a form of ‘self-decolonisation’. During our years of collaboration I witnessed his pursuit to express and bring to the surface the illness that was consuming his body from within. Working with him allowed me to engage with a diverse range of makers, from theatre to fine art and performance. I had the opportunity to participate in various contemporary live art performances, some of which emulated body art, occasionally pushing boundaries with experiments inspired by early artists such as FRANKO-B (Italian artist, b 1960)

and a fascination for figures such as Stelarc, the award-winning Australian performance artist.

My enrolment in this practice-based research initiative stems from my personal and professional experience in the design industry and education. Over the course of twenty years, I have amassed a wealth of professional experience managing, coordinating, and implementing multicultural practice-based research projects, including those focused on early childhood and lifelong education interventions. I have also served as a keynote speaker at forums and conferences addressing SDG4 (Education), as well as art and design education. In my role I have trained staff and partners in adopting an art/design mindset. Some of my articles are published in the *Technoetic Arts Journal* by Intellect Books. Some of my art and design practice has been showcased in contemporary art galleries, design exhibitions, and trans-disciplinary conferences in the UK, the US, Mexico, Europe and Asia.

Since 2006 I have been fully engaged in studio teaching, lecturing and curriculum development, specifically within product and communication design departments. This has provided me with opportunities to collaborate with a broad range of design disciplines, including publishing, product design, physical branding, and some experimental ventures in the apparel and theatre fields. While I have taught in Italy and Mexico, the majority of my involvement with design education has been based in Southeast Asia. Comparisons between Western and Eastern cultures have led

me to develop an inclusive perspective on the subjective nature of reality and how it is perceived. As mentioned earlier, my proposed research project places emphasis on experimental learning and the cultivation of intellect through the use of the senses as tools.

Through an exploration of libertarian thinkers and alternative educational methods, coupled with an understanding of the cultural context of Thailand, where scholarly and designerly actions are active, I have reevaluated the concept of the body as a living organism that encompasses its social and moral aspects. Within the framework of the design pedagogy elaborated in this thesis, the body plays a crucial role in acquiring self-awareness (both sensory and emotional) to enrich the learning path of design students and to extend the professional training path.

2.2 Context of Early Design Education Experiments

The entire thesis operates within the framework of contemporary design pedagogy. Due to the positionality issue of this practice-based research enquiry, as stated in the key word section, it is important to note that I am a white immigrant to Southeast Asia, specifically Thailand, and to its geography and culture, having migrated with my family from Italy. Given my experiences and frequent travels between Europe and Southeast Asia to enhance my projects, it might be relevant to underline the progressive changes faced by Western society at the end of nineteenth century. During this time there was an increasing rediscovery of the self through the scientific and aesthetic culture of the body. Tiffany Watt Smith, a British lecturer in Drama,

Theatre and Performance as well as a lecturer at the Centre for the History of Emotions, highlights that prior to 1830, people did not experience emotions in the same way as we talk about them today in Western culture. Instead, they referred to their emotions as 'passions', 'accidents of the soul', or 'moral sentiments', explaining them very differently to how we understand them today. Tiffany Watt Smith (2015). [43]

In 1849, Richard Wagner introduced the concept of 'Gesamtkunstwerk', meaning a synthesis of all the arts, in his two essays 'Art and Revolution' and 'The Artwork of the Future'. According to Wagner, "each art requires and is inseparable from, the other" (as quoted by Taylor 1979: 50). [23] This all-encompassing art approach aimed to achieve a work of harmony. Wagner adopted the concept of 'Musikdrama' (the term coined by Theodor Mundt, 1833) to realise the idea of an immersive art form. Concurrently, the rise of industrial and social modernity brought about a new era of entertainment through theatrical extravaganzas such as the Tiller Girls in England and the Ziegfeld Follies in United States. Figures like Sandow, the modern father of bodybuilding, during performances of the Sandow Trocadero Vaudevilles, produced by F. Ziegfeld Jr., highlighted the human body as a tool of efficiency and power, while dancers like Isadora Duncan emphasised 'soul expression'. The Body Culture encompassed a practice of 'Physical Culture' associated with artistic expression and "the search for archaic, primitive, and authentic somatic experience and self-expression" (Veder 2011). [6]

In this context, the Austrian philosopher and architect Rudolf Steiner became the head of the German section of the Theosophical Society in 1902. The painter Piet Mondrian embedded the concept of theosophy into his visual narrative. Many artistic schools adopted theosophical principles, and it is noted that "all Dutch painters that belonged to the Theosophical Society were symbolists" (2014:439). [7]

In 1912, the then new Anthroposophical Society separated from the German section of the Theosophical Society. The principles of anthroposophy had been developed by Rudolf Steiner, and he applied them to education in what were called Waldorf Schools. Steiner defined anthroposophy as "a spiritual philosophy, part of the knowledge, to guide the spiritual in the human being to the Spiritual into the universe. It arises in man as a need of the heart, of life of feeling, and it can be justified only in as much as it can satisfy the inner need" (R. Steiner, 1973). [8]

Professor Olav Hammer, a researcher in the field of religions, referred to anthroposophy as "the most important esoteric society in European Society" (2004: 329) [9].

On the scientific side, in 1906, Charles Scott Sherrington developed Julius Scaliger's "studies of the sense of locomotion" Jerosch and Heisel (2010: 107), introducing the terms 'proprioception' about movement, and 'interoception' and 'exteroception' related to organs such as eyes, ears, mouth, and skin.[10] These terms expanded our understanding of bodily perception.

Somatics and Somatic practices include the Alexander Technique, which originated in 1890 as a therapy to improve posture, and is recognised by The National Health Service (NHS), the publicly funded healthcare system in England, and the Feldenkrais Method, an alternative exercise therapy that gained popularity in the 1970s. Somatics, including bodywork and movement studies, emphasise internal physical perception and experience. This approach is used in movement therapy, as are the other therapies mentioned above, to signify an approach based on soma, or “the body perceived from within” not because the subject is different, but because the viewpoint is different (Hanna, 1986). [11] In a similar vein, it is important to note that “Somatic Movement is: (a) movement structured around perceptual phenomena, and (b) movement interpreted through perceptual phenomena” (Williamson, A.; Batson, G.; Whatley, S.; Weber, R. 2015). [12]

2.3. Design Education 101

“Education is both a ‘cause ’and an ‘effect’ ...[T]he school is not a passive mirror, but an active force, one that also serves to give legitimacy to economic and social forms and ideologies so intimately connected with it.”

(Apple, 1993).

Despite the overuse of the term ‘design’, it is widely acknowledged that design as academic discipline is relatively young. The first design methods conference took place in London in 1962, signaling an attempt to establish a solid foundation for independent growth. Nigel Cross, a British professor of Design Research, noted that

"this conference is generally regarded as the event which marked the launch of design methodology as a subject or field of enquiry." (1994: 15). [13]

While we still not far from referring to design as a "discipline art" as suggested by Goethe, there is a parallel to be drawn between design and learning theory and practices in formulating a theory of design for learning. Professor Peter Goodyear and Prof. Yannis Dimitriadis, co-directors of the Center for Learning Innovation, emphasise that "someone involved in the design for learning can design things that help other people learn" (2013). [14]

In line with this, at the 29th General Assembly in Gwangju (South Korea) the ICSID (International Council of Industrial Design of Societies of Industrial Design), defined industrial design as "a strategic problem-solving process that drives innovation, builds business success, and leads to a better quality of life through innovative products, systems, services, and experiences [...] the industrial designer places the human in the centre of the process." [15]

It is worth noting that product design, in terms of physical objects, is often considered a subordinate branch of industrial design. Nowadays, most academic and non-design courses refer to product design as a discipline that covers users experience (UX) and user interface (UI). While human perception is central to the design process, the graphically simplified visualization of the 'double diamond' diagram, initially developed and promoted by the British Design Council in 2005 and continuously updated, illustrates the four phases (sometimes under a variety of

names) of Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver. The Human Centred Design ideology promoted by IDEO, a global design consultancy firm, focuses on Inspiration, Ideation, and Implementation, emphasising human cooperation and comprehension of the context in developing physical products or digital services.

In the past, product design education primarily focused on the technical-external aspects of the body, including disciplines like anthropometrics and ergonomics. Ergonomics is considered “the scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of interaction among humans and other elements of a system” (IEA). Notably, in one of his articles Richard Buchanan, professor of Design, Management, and Information Systems at the Department of Design and Innovation, Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University, noted that designers are "moving away from visual symbols and things as the focus of attention to understand products from the inside", that is, from "the experience of the human beings" (2001: 13). [16]

In November 2016, at Cumulus Hong Kong 2016, a meeting of the Cumulus global association of art and design education and research with the Leadership Working Group took place, held at the Hong Kong Design Institute from 21 to 24 November 2016 with the theme ‘Open Design for E-very-thing’. At this event, I had the chance engage in discussion with colleagues from several countries and institutions about the question raised by the former Dean Professor Cees de Bont from PolyU, Hong Kong (he is now Dean of the School of Design and Creative Arts) about whether a physical school would be necessary in the future, and if might not be better to move all instruction out into the community. The discussion delved into the meaning of

tangible spaces and the challenges of predicting educational needs four or five years ahead, highlighting the value of lifelong learning. Looking back at this conversation, it now appears quite emblematic, as a few years later, the global pandemic emerged, dramatically changing the educational landscape. Expectations were high for a new way of teaching and learning, but, in fact, only few institutions were, and are, able to offer a five-star learning experience that does not rely on on-site, face-to-face interactions.

2.4 Pre–Bauhaus, Bauhaus and Post–Bauhaus

As mentioned by Alain Findeli, the Honorary Full Professor from the School of Industrial Design of the Faculty of Environmental Design of the University of Montreal, the ideal design curriculum proposed by the early Bauhaus, where art, science and technologies were equally balanced elements, conflicted with the actual development. While there was a strong exchange between art and technology, the consideration of science was less than what was claimed (2010: 8). [25]

It is worth noting that while crafts, manual skills and materials knowledge were the aim of the school, and perhaps of design education in general, Frederick Kiesler declared at the Conference on Coordination in Design held at the University of Michigan, March 8, 1940, that “Architectural education’s primary purpose is to teach students to think for themselves.” This approach aimed to solve problems through

research based on a broad scientific approach and critical thinking (Phillips 2010: 91). [26]

It is important to underline that by the 1950s, British abstract artist and architect Victor Pasmore, along with Richard Hamilton, the British artist and founder of Pop Art, were at the centre of the Basic Design movement in the United Kingdom. Pasmore believed that British art education was following practices that were essentially rooted in the nineteenth century and that the time was ripe for radical change (Yeomans 2009: 1). [27]

Consequently, they were able to create a new curriculum based on the principle of biological morphology, as elaborated by the scientist D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson in his book 'On Growth and Form '(Shanken 2003: 20). The course, initiated between 1956-1958, developed a model to enhance aesthetic forms that would emerge from a process similar to organic development. Ascott attended that course. [28] In 1961, Ascott was appointed head of foundation studies. He characterised the Groundcourse as a “microcosm of a total process of art education”, and its curriculum was centred around stimulating consciousness through “behavioural” exercises, games and matrices. These activities aimed to disrupt preconceptions and established patterns (Pethick 2006). [29]

Between 1958-1968, “a new culture” emerged at the Hochschule Für Gestaltung in Ulm, Germany, guided by Maldonado, Aicher, Ohl, and Rittel. During this period,

there was a shift where science and technology became the primary focus, while the artistic dimension gradually diminished in importance. Between 1989-1992, Fideli initiated Prometheus Enlightened, a design education project aimed at the “development of an individualistic ethics”. The project incorporated anthropology and cosmology as complementary forces around which the content of a design curriculum could be constructed. (Fideli 2001). [30]

2.5. Design Education and Theatre

I am operating within the framework of design pedagogy, where theatre as performance is considered a tool that permeates scholarly and designerly activities. The focus on theatre emerged from a collaborative project with B-Floor; a collective based in Bangkok that was selected by the Wellcome Trust as part of Art in Global Health, Wellcome Collection, to develop a play for scientific dissemination. Their performances are developed through a process of creative collaboration and improvisation known as Devised Theatre.

Attila Grandpierre, the Hungarian musician and astrophysicist, highlighted the significant role of performing arts in his work ‘The Physics of Collective Consciousness’. He quoted the words of Vekerdy, emphasizing that theatrical artists, especially in ancient Japanese Noh Theatre, have a profound effect on the audience in three ways: through hearing by using words, through seeing by using

movements, and through the use of intense emotion (1997: 24). [33]

Similarly, in the avant-garde theatrical approach (postdramatic theatre), the human body, time, and their spatial relationship are considered key elements, analogous to the universal principles of design. It is worth noting that the viewpoints (improvisation methods) initially introduced by Marie-Overlie (1970) then further developed by Anne Bogart with Tina Landau into 'nine viewpoints' (1997) share a common ground with design principles such as rhythm, shape, and balance. While the design field emphasises the relationship between the user and the product, the theatre field focuses on the ability to explore and underline the social impact of specific objects or actions.

During the proceedings of 'Interacting with Computers' (Macaulay, 2006), the conference on human-computer interaction, it was noted that as computing evolves from fixed screens to constant interaction within our physical environment, the relation between humans and objects needs to be re-evaluated by interaction designers. In consequence, interaction designers began exploring methods outside their own comfort zone. Peer-reviewed papers addressing the use of theatre techniques in design education as part of the design process have drawn inspiration from studies and attempts to integrate and expand participatory design through postdramatic theatre, as theorised by Lehman (2006), which includes avant-garde theatre tendencies since the 1960s. [34] Another method of delivering new scenarios appeared in the Forum Theatre (Boal 1979), in the form of a technique developed by the Brazilian playwright and director Augusto Boal. The aim of this technique was to engage the audience by inviting suggestions for changes within

the play. Stanislavsky's system (1934) focused on empathy and the concept of the 'magic if', an approach which originated from his early technique called 'Emotional Memory'. [35]

In 1926, Dr. Mensendieck co-founded the Brooklyn International Theatre Arts Institute with the designer Frederick Kiesler and princess (and actress, under the name Maria Carmi) Norina Matchabelli. At approximately at the same time, in the essay 'Techniques of the Body', the French sociologist Marcel Mauss wrote "The child imitates actions of adults, which have succeeded and which he has seen successfully performed by people in whom he has confidence and who have authority over him" (Mauss trad. Brewster 1973 [1934], 73). The talk was presented during the meeting of the Société Française de Psychologie, May 17th, 1934, almost a decade after the establishment of the Design-Correlation Laboratory by the designer Friederick Kiesler at Columbia University. According to Kiesler, we are part of an expanded environment where humans must coexist with natural and fabricated landscapes. Inspired by plastic arts, experimental theatre, and early animation, Kiesler developed the spatial concept of the 'Endless'. He formalised the concept of Correalism and coined the neologism 'correlation', an "investigation into the laws of the inter-relationships of natural and man-made organism". In his article 'Pseudo-Functionalism in Modern Architecture' in 1949, Kiesler emphasised his principles: "Function follows vision. Vision follows reality". [36]

Subsequently, in 1966, Roy Ascott coined the term 'Behaviorist Art' to describe a shift in the art scene. According to Ascott, "The vision of art has shifted from the field

of objects to the field of behaviour...The artist, the artifact, and the spectator are all involved in a more behavioural context” (Ascott, Shanken, 2003: 47). [37]. This term has evolved into ‘Interactive Art’ or ‘Interaction Design’, as mentioned by Myron Krueger, one of the pioneers of this field. He described it as “a potentially rich medium in its own right ’which should be judged by the ‘quality of the interaction...the ability to interest, involve, and move people, to alter perception, and to define a new category of beauty” (1991). [38]

In this context it is tempting to associate Ascott’s work with the radical behaviourism of Skinner, who envisioned learning as a process of forming associations between stimuli in the environment and the corresponding responses of the individual. Reinforcement strengthens responses and increases the likelihood of their reoccurrence when the stimulus is present again (1945). [39] In the early 1990s the global design company IDEO launched the concept of ‘body-storming’, a variant of brainstorming, and an embodied ideation method based on movement (Burns 1994). [19]

Recently, the University of Southern Denmark opened a theatre lab as part of the design research department. This initiative is an invitation to explore design participation through theatre to learn what theatre methods can offer. Here, German sociologist, Henning Eichberg, while analysing the dual configuration of the body-soma language, raises the question of a configuration, such as the inter-body (2009: 399), and how this relation is influenced by the context, possibly the host culture. [22]

In the similar vein, the Cumulus conference (International Association of Universities and College and Art, Design, Media) focuses on the search for alternative design practices. This includes investigating the translation of designers into ethnographers themselves. Currently, well known academic programs, such as the AA School studio, Spatial Performance & Design, and the Interactive Architecture Lab at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College, London, are increasingly facilitating dialogues between computing technologies and various subareas of arts and design. It is worth noting that not all institutions and practitioners are prepared or interested in cultivating such uncertain territories, which are new to many.

Consequently, while it is important to emphasise that “Education is both a cause and an effect...[T]he school is not a passive mirror, but an active force, one that also serves to give legitimacy to economic and social forms and ideologies so intimately connected with it” (Apple, 1993), in Asia, the number of design degree programs is growing rapidly. According to ‘Designing Design Education: White Book on the Future of Design Education’ (2021), China alone offers nearly 1000 new courses in Design with a minimum duration of two years. The Technoetic Arts degree programme, curated by Professor Roy Ascott in China, appears to be one of the first to engage students in both theoretical and practical work within the convergent field of art, technology and consciousness studies.

During my time there, I had the opportunity to lead two workshop that focused on culture and body movement within the narrative module. Each workshop had a duration of two hours. I collaborated with a local tutor who helped with minor translation issues. The workshops were attended by forty students, sixty percent of

whom were women based in the DeTao Master area on the outskirts of Shanghai. At the time, they were second year students, and most of them were living alone or with friends in the campus dormitories. When questioned about their cultural beliefs, almost ninety-five percent of the students replied that there is no religion in China. Even in these prototypes, I emphasised the concept of body movement and time as core elements of the practice. Through this approach, emotions were translated from intangible to visible elements, which helped to facilitate self-reflection and engagement in collective awareness. In comparison with other pedagogical prototypes, here, there was no prior acquiescence by the students. It took some time to break the ice, but using the body to create language helped facilitate the process.

Emerging practices in design pedagogy are adopting the idea of integrating body consciousness (awareness) as a relevant element in the design process. Two main paths are particularly notable in this practice-based research enquiry. The first is the integration with post-dramatic and devise theatre, while the second involves restoring body perception through transformative and contemplative learning. Over the past months, I have discussed the integration of the body into curricula both within and outside art and design disciplines at the Contemplative Pedagogy Symposium 2021, hosted by the University of Essex, Queen Margaret University, the University of St. Andrews, and Cardiff Metropolitan University. Additionally, at the U.N. Global Sustainable Development Summit 2021, Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, was one of the 17 SDG's considered for urgent action by all countries. During the summit, the topic of integrating effective visual communication (research) into curricula was addressed. As part of this ongoing

conversation, I am engaged in discussions on contemporary and emerging art and design pedagogy within practice based research, seeking the integration of the body into curricula through various media, ranging from dance to performance. The APARN 2021 Asia Pacific Artistic Research Network, the Design Education Trends 2021, and Trends in Design Education served as valuable platforms to foster cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural collaboration on in this regard.

2.6. Transformative Learning

Transformative learning is often associated with adult learning and lifelong learning. In the context of design pedagogy, where theatre serves as a performing tool and the body functions as a means to acquire self-awareness (sensory-emotional), transformative learning forms an integral part of the foundation for expanding the practice-based research described in this thesis. The concept of transformative learning was first presented as a paper in 1978 by Jack Mezirow the American sociologist and Emeritus Professor of Adult and Continuing Education, in the journal 'Adult Education Quarterly' with the title 'Perspective Transformation'. Subsequently, Mezirow emphasised the importance of contextual understanding, critical reflection on assumptions, and validating meaning by assessing reasons in adult learning (2000: 3). [40]

Transformative learning is “a deep, structural shift in basic premises thought, feelings, and actions” (Transformative Learning Centre 2004). It is a process that involves learning from others' perspectives and questioning assumptions,

emphasising instrumental and communicative learning. The aim is to revise the interpretation of past experiences and use them as guidelines for future actions. It is worth noting that both intentional and incidental learning aspects take place outside the learner's awareness (2000: 5). [41]

Mezirow described transformative learning as a process aimed at reframing our preconceptions, ideas, habits and mind-sets to make them more inclusive. In the article 'A Scenario for Design' Jonas suggested, "Any observation is based on the dualism of self-reference and external reference", highlighting that the 'real world' cannot be perceived as it 'really' is. (2001: 70). [42] The transformative learning process acknowledges this dual level of observation, but challenges the mentioned statement by emphasising the need learners has to become aware of both their assumptions.

Chapter summary

This section provides an overview of the historical and current status of the design education discipline. This chapter identifies the field of operation and its related context by referencing some of the significant work carried out by designers, artists, and theoreticians, with specific references from the German Bauhaus Art School (1919-33), the Laboratory for Design Correlation up to 1964, and experiments conducted in Roy Ascott's 'Groundcourse' at Ealing Art College in London.

Additionally, a brief overview of transformative learning is presented as a fundamental component of my practice. By establishing connections with previous work, the chapter underlines the value of the current ideologies embraced by

practitioners and academics today. The majority of Chapter 3 is dedicated to contextualising the designerly aspects and theories within the landscape and framework of design education in Thailand.

3. Operating in the Thai Society

In this chapter, I enhance the discussion by providing an explanation of the Thai cultural context based on my experience of working for the major public and private universities, particularly in the international Bachelor's degree programme in communication and product design. This leads to a brief review of taboos and beliefs associated with Theravada-based Buddhism, which is considered the primary religion in the country. Concepts and previously developed theories related to the social and physical body in this specific cultural context are outlined.

As stated in the abstract, this practice-based research inquiry adopts a syncretic worldview and a site-specific perspective. The thesis is shaped around case studies conducted in real-world educational contexts and developed in the territory of Thailand. The investigation focuses on three interconnected elements: society, body (in social and moral terms) and design education, which are observed and analysed as correlated forces. This chapter provides an introduction to the key culturally relevant elements that influence Thai nationals.

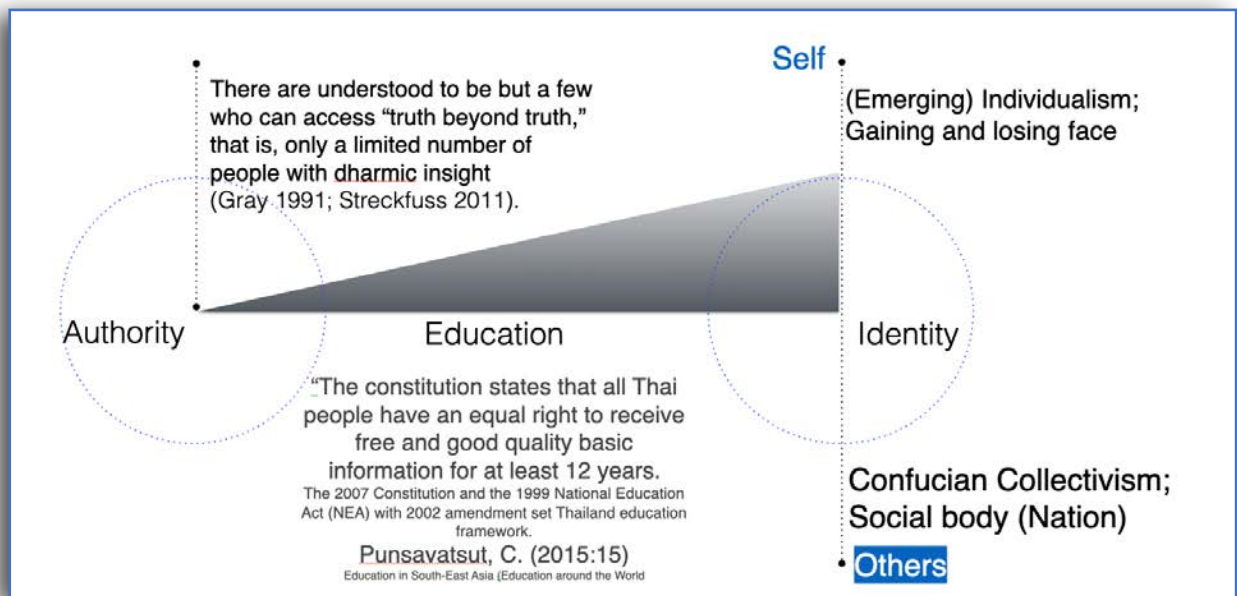


Figure 28: infographics representing the three main elements in Thai Society (Maggio, 2017)

3.1 Social Body

As explained in the key term sections, the reference to the body encompasses its social and moral aspects, considering it as a living organism. Within the framework of design pedagogy elaborated in this thesis, the body plays a crucial role in developing self-awareness (sensory-emotional) and expanding the learning path of design students as well as their professional training.

Considering that this practice-based research operates within the context of design education in Thailand, it is important to consider how Confucian culture influences the Thai conception of the nation as a social body known as '*chaat*', which can also be located within the individual body '*tua*' and its life force or spiritual essence called '*khuan*' (Taylor 2008: 128).

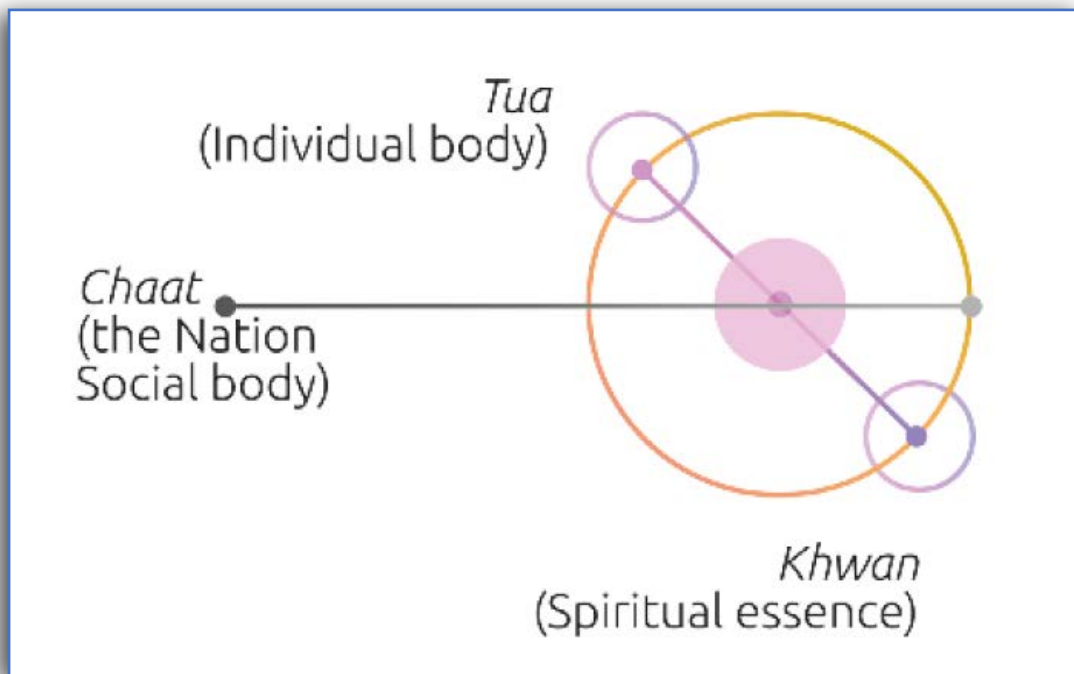


Figure 29 Infographics representing the three main bodies perceived in Thai Society (Maggio, 2017).

when examining the specific territory of this investigation, it is relevant to consider the perspectives of other researchers based in Southeast Asia who define “spiritual ideals as ideals that are concerned with those aspects of human experience which attempt to reach beyond the mundane and the material towards what is transcendent and eternal” (Tan and Wong, 2014: 28). They suggest “that educators plan and implement spiritual education using a design thinking approach”.

Similarly, according to pragmatist philosopher Richard Shusterman, understanding one’s own body is essential when designing for others. The cultural significance of the body has been analysed from both Western and Eastern philosophical and ethnographic perspectives. In the context of Thailand, it is important to highlight that Theravāda Buddhism is a fundamental element of the national identity. Over the

years, I have published articles and presented papers at trans-disciplinary conferences, showcasing prototypes aiming at stimulating pluriversal discussions about local taboos and contextual beliefs. The body serves as the locus of the perceived world.

In Thailand, the territory where the pedagogy prototypes were initiated, it is worth noting that literature on Thai studies conveys that the concept of the body in Thai culture is intertwined with traditional etiquette, folk beliefs and popular traditions, such as the '*wai*' greeting and the sacred tattoo known as '*Sak Yant*'. Additionally, Thailand is predominantly a Theravada Buddhist country. It is important to recognise the body in this context is consistently regulated and shaped by religious discourse (Taylor 2008: 114). To grasp the significance of daily rituals, I initially operated as an observer and gradually gained access to a more visceral aspect of today's Thai society by connecting with gatekeepers. Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that "Thailand is a linguistically diverse nation with an estimated 74 languages spoken within its borders" (Ethnologue, 2005). Kosonen highlights that "[...] on the one hand, literacy in English is essential for the elite and for access to internet technology. On the other hand, for some linguistic minorities, literacy in the local language is becoming ever more important in the definition of their cultural and linguistic identity" (Kosonen, 2008) and "Language, as a comprehensive part of our identity, can present challenges when individuals are unable to communicate using the Thai alphabet in this context. However, operating in the context of international programs, where classes are conducted in English by Thai or foreign faculty members, has partially balanced this issue". "By thus remarking contact with the

body and with the world, we shall rediscover ourselves, since, perceiving as we do with our body is a natural self and, as it were, the subject of perception” (Merleau-Ponty 2004: 239).

I initiated my design teaching approach by comparing traditional design teaching methods and blending them with physical theatre, where the body become the locus for self-reflection. Through my teaching methods, I have developed a method that gently encourages self-reflection and potentially enhances understanding of the impact of 'designerly' actions on society. After several unsuccessful attempts to teach design principles such as dot, line, and space by asking students to draw or create three-dimensional models, I realised the significance of developing case studies centred around the body as a means of self and collective reflection. To bridge the cultural gap between my students and myself as an instructor, I developed a framework where the body serves as the locus of self-reflection, and physical theatre and participation serve as additional tools to enhance self-confidence and facilitate the process of critical thinking.

While Theravada Buddhism the body is perceived “both individually and socially as one of the central part of the basis in lived experience” (Collins, 2013: 137), the concept of the body is further explored through the perspective of the ‘three bodies’ framework, as explained by Scheper-Hughes, the Director of the Medical Anthropology program at the University of California at Berkeley, and Lock, a Canadian medical anthropologist, in their article ‘The Mindful Body’. They present three perspectives for analysing the body: (1) as a phenomenally experienced individual body-self, (2) as a social body symbolic of relationships between nature, society, and culture, and (3) as a body politic representing social and political control

(Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987: 8). Drawing connections among these concepts, I started analysing the behaviour and interactions of my students among themselves, and their attitudes towards lecturers, in project after project. Through observation, I developed various options to challenge their preconceptions.

Traditionally, Thai society is considered non-tactile, evident in their ways of greeting, such as the '*wai*' (where hands are not shaken). While younger generations may be less strict in adhering to this protocol, it remains an ingrained part of the culture and they know when and how to use it. Additionally, it is interesting to note that verbal greetings have gender connotations. As observer unable to understand Thai language, I had to adapt some case studies. During one project, for example, I initially proposed a project blending theatre and product design through the physicality of the human body, which rapidly raised certain concerns among the students. To address these, I invited a female director from a theatre company to explain the activities, and once she clarified the objectives, the students were enthusiastic to participate. The aim of the activity was to use their physical and social bodies, both consciously and unconsciously, to represent basic design principles such as dot, line, and plane. The students recorded these activities as a tool to improve their understanding of intangible concepts and as a gentle approach to challenge gender preconceptions and related cultural biases.

3.2 Overview on Spiritual and Originality

In 2017, I was invited by Assistant Professor Chenwu Wei from NYU University Shanghai, to speak at a workshop called 'Digital Heritage and Innovative Collaborations', held at SIGGRAPH ASIA 2017, in Bangkok, Thailand. The focus of

the conversation was on education about, and the protection and consolidation of, our cultural roots. This closely aligned with the practice-based research presented here, particularly considering the cultural context in which the prototypes are developed. During the workshop, we discussed the diverse conceptions of originality and creativity in Western and Eastern perspectives, highlighting the concept of '*creatio in situ*' (creation in context) as an alternative to '*creatio ex nihilo*' (creation out of nothingness) (Niu, 2013: 278). It is important to note that *creatio ex nihilo* emphasises originality as the primary source of value, while *creatio in situ* focusses on enhanced significance rather than strict originality and novelty (Ames, 2005: 69). Understanding these two viewpoints, we can consider a specific approach method based on their sacredness as a first step to establishing a harmonious engagement with tradition. It is worth mentioning that according to the Pew Research Center's 'The Global Religious Landscape', their survey on religious composition by country, 93.2.% of the Thai population identifies as Buddhist (2010). These statistics provide insight into the current religious landscape of the country. However, it is important to recognise that societies are shaped by a cumulative series of events. In the case of Thailand, a significant event was the massive Chinese immigration that took place as early as the 13th century, which brought with it its own social and moral values, adding them to those of what was then Siam. This connects to the following subsection, which explores the well-known social concept of 'losing face' characteristic of Asian countries.

3.3 Notes on Gaining and Losing Face

The human face holds significant importance in interpersonal relationships and social dynamics. As expressed by the philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, the face

“speaks to me and thereby invites me to a relation incommensurate with a power exercised, be it enjoyment or knowledge” (Levinas, 1969: 198). Yang and Kleinman elaborate on the notion of ‘face’ characteristic of Asia countries, describing it as an intertwined system of reciprocity called ‘*renqing*’ that “also embodies the following overlapping concepts: 1) understanding basic emotional responses in everyday social situations; 2) moral duties associated with gift-exchange; 3) a type of exchangeable social resource (i.e., favor) and 4) one’s *guanxi* networks (Yan 2003)” (in Yang and Kleinman, 2008: 5). In the context of Southeast Asia, specifically Thailand, the concept of gaining or losing face is prevalent, and its influence pervasive. Additionally, face has “five abstract social constructs in Thai society: *nata*, *kiat*, *saksi*, *chuesiang*, and *barami*” (Persons 2008: 53). However, the literature on this intriguing topic relatively scarce, and even when discussing it with my students and colleagues, I encountered difficulties in conveying the reasons for my interest in it. To gain insight, I embarked on an investigation to comprehend the diverse attitudes of professionals and students across different projects. The concept of face appeared to be relevant across all classes, indicating its horizontal impact. Particularly in an extremely hierarchical society like Thailand, face matters. Surprisingly, when I asked for feedback on the subject from all my fifty-seven students, for each project, none of them explicitly mentioned the topic of face. However, during one-on-one conversations, they shared their understanding and interpretation of face. According to my undergraduates, the concept of face becomes increasingly significant with status and age, representing how one is perceived by society. Established professionals must be mindful of how their actions are perceived by others. When asked if the same idea applies to their own age

group (generation), they expressed certainty that as they got older, they would increasingly care more about the sensitivity of this matter.

3.4. Thai International Arts/Design Education

As noted in the book series 'Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects', the establishment of arts institutions in Thailand dates back to 1911, when King Rama VI founded The Fine Arts Department. Corrado Feroci, an Italian artist and sculptor, was initially employed to build a monument for the kingdom, as described by Mukdamanee (2008, 136). He went on to play a pivotal role in the development of art in Thailand. Feroci later became a naturalised citizen, changing his name to Silpa Bhirasri. In collaboration with the former director-general of the Department, Phraya Anumanrajadhon, and architect Phra Saroj Ratananiman (Saroj Sukhayang), they founded the Praneet Silpakum School (the Fine Arts School) in 1934, which is now known as Silpakorn University.

Thailand's culture, deeply rooted in Theravada Buddhism, serves as a lens through which reality is perceived. In 2017, the Pew Research Center confirmed that Buddhism remains the dominant religion in Thailand. Thai society follows the Buddhist calendar, and at the time of writing, the year is 2564 according to that calendar – there is a 543-year discrepancy between the Buddhist and the Gregorian calendars. Within this cultural context, where the majority of the population adheres to Theravada Buddhism, the body is perceived both individually and socially as central to lived experience, as Collins describes (2013: 137). In relation to the physical and social body, qualitative ethnographic research conducted by Pearsons

highlights the Thai concept of 'face' as a complex phenomenon and a conjoined social construct tied to judgements of honour, whereby individuals can either lose, or gain face. (2008: 53). To explore the significance of face, I posed the question of its value to my undergraduate students in product design at Assumption University of Thailand. Based on their anonymous feedback, it appears that the value placed on face increases with social status and age. They emphasised that once one becomes an established professional, one must be mindful of how one's actions are perceived by others. The group appeared to agree that there is a growing concern for their public face as they age. It also significant that the social body in Thai society is perceived as actual living organism of which every individual is a part (Aulino, 2014: 417). The Thai concept of the nation as a social body is referred to as 'chaat'. According to Taylor's description, the social body can be also reduced into the individual body, known as '*tua*', and its life force or spiritual essence, referred to as '*khuan*' (2008: 128). Furthermore, the concept of body is shaped by etiquette and popular traditions, exemplified by practices such as the well-known 'wai' as a form of greeting and the sacred tattoo called 'Sak Yant'.

3.5 Language and cultural identity

Thailand is commonly associated with the Thai language, but it is important to recognise that it is a linguistically diverse nation. According to the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, there are approximately seventy language groups in Thailand, belonging to five different families, along with over sixty ethnic groups. (Ethnologue, 2005, UNDP You Me We Us, 2021)

In 2008, Kosonen pointed out that for some linguistic minorities, literacy in the local language is becoming crucial for defining their identities. Simultaneously, the

importance of speaking a second language like English was emphasised, and described as essential for the elite and for access to internet technology (Ibid).

These notions form the foundation for understanding the cultural landscape, as Fry noted that design is always influenced by culture (2003). In my practice-based research, the ethnographic discourse is considered as fundamental to the initiation of a pluriversal narrative. While conducting this research, I observed that some of the students enrolled in the international bachelor's degree programme, where English is the primary language, were unable to read their native language, Thai. Further investigation revealed that many of these students had been studying in international schools since early childhood, limiting their opportunities to engage with communities outside their bubble, perhaps under the impression that the local language is less relevant for their future success.

The quote from Levinas "It speaks to me and thereby invites me to the relation incommensurate with power exercised, be it enjoyment or knowledge" (Levinas, 1969: 198) emphasises the intimate connection between language and cultural identity. Dahlia Judovitz's quote from her book 'The Culture of the Body' (US: Michigan, 2001, 22) also highlights how "the body, as the object of our observation that we consider to be the most private, personal, and intimate, it is also that part of ourselves which bears extensively the imprint of our society and culture"

4. Prototyping the untouchable

“What ‘touching’ means must touch on the untouchable. Aristotle’s *Peri psychēs* had already insisted on this: both the tangible and the intangible are objects of touch”

Aristotle (*Peri psychēs* 424a)

as quoted by S. Gaston, *Starting with Derrida*, 2007, p.98



Figure 30 - 31: YONOK, Capsule Collection (Maggio, 2014). The first image depicts a moment of a promotional video, while the second one shows the fashion collection on display at the hotel ‘Palazzo Bontadosi’ in Italy. Feedback from locals and expatriates living in the area was gathered and analysed in a related academic paper.



YONOK emerged as the result of a gradual process of collecting the narratives of communities distributed from the north to the south of Thailand. YONOK was initiated outside the academic context; however, it integrates the findings of the previous experiments. It is a fashion project that began as an attempt to gather personal-local memories and the visual richness of the unique local craft of Southeast Asia. While moving from west to east, the process of collecting became an automatism. It then became something unexpected. The result, as an artefact,

could thus be defined as a medium able to connect cultures by reframing the initial observer's preconceptions.



Figure 32: Survival Games, Set Design Summary (Maggio and Perin, B-Floor, 2013)

Tommaso /B-floor – contribution. It was around that time that I started a collaborative project as production art design director with the B-Floor theatre, a collective based in Bangkok and selected by the Wellcome Trust as part of Art in Global Health, Wellcome Collection, to develop a play to disseminate scientific information on Melioidosis and Malarial diseases, a critical issue in the local rural areas.

Their performances are developed through a process of creative collaboration and improvisation known as Devised Theatre. It was a four-month work process, beginning with a single day a week to every day during the performance time. I worked with technicians and scientists, and talked to performers and the audience. I felt compelled to interrogate deeply this process to open my eyes to other perspectives.



Figure 33: A moment of Communication Design program exhibition set-up.

Tommaso was part of the founding team for the Communication Design 'CommDe' international program offered by the department of Industrial Design, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. He was the curator of their first public exhibition called: "In progress n°1: This is not an exhibition", it was host at Bangkok Art and Cultural Centre BACC.

As described in the chapter on methodology of research, the practice-based research revolved around several prototypes: Emotional Space (ES), Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM), and designerly activities such as YONOK and The Dharma Vision. The prototypes aim to explore the impact of a pluriversal narrative on the social reality of the participating individuals. Scholarly activities were conducted in the design departments at Chulalongkorn University and Assumption University of Thailand, where analysis and reflection on students' responses took place. Designerly activities involved collecting experiences to increase awareness of local narratives and taboos, as well as fostering participation and acceptance of oneself as an individual and as part of the larger body of society. Ingrained within the evaluation of the practice, as outlined within the body of the presented inquiry, is its intention to initiate culturally relevant actions. Drawing on previous work developed by Western theoreticians and practitioners in art and design pedagogy, I have developed prototypes, including Emotional Space (ES), which align with the concept of correalism defined by the architect and educator Kiesler as "the dynamics of continual interaction between man and his natural and technological environments" (1939). Kiesler applied this concept in his Laboratory for Design Correlation at the School of Architecture at Columbia University. Furthermore, this scholarly activity aims to evoke the philosophical concept of Sartre's, "hodological space" which refers to a place that lacks a fixed set of coordinates independent of any particular subject. Instead, it represents a constantly varying field of force experienced by the subject.

All the scholarly activity prototypes, including Emotional Space (ES) and Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM), have been developed in the cultural context of Thailand. These prototypes have their roots in early art education experiments that

took place before and after the Second World War in Western countries like the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Examples of these experiments include the experimental pedagogy approaches conducted by the British Artist and theoretician Roy Ascott, such as the 'Ground Course' at Ealing Art College in London from 1961 to 1964, as well as the 'situational' projects developed in 1960 for the evening course at what is now the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design (UK). These experiments form the theoretical practice-based background for the prototypes developed as part of these studies.

Significantly, and in contrast to the current trend in wearable technologies, the prototypes, including EM, SPSM, YONOK and The Dharma Vision, do not incorporate any digital sensing devices. These four prototypes are designed to assist students and professionals in being aware and capable of translating how they sense their own bodies through interoception and proprioception. In this context, emotions are translated into intangible/visible elements that help enhance self-reflection and engagement in collective awareness. These actions foster the embodiment of knowledge as a set of automatisms incorporated in the body.

The prototypes Emotional Space (ES) and Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM) were developed at Assumption University of Thailand, in response to briefs that I co-developed as the module leader for Product Design IV. Ninety percent of the students of the class of forty were Thai nationals, 20-21 years of age. They were of mixed gender, primarily women, and came from various cultural and religious backgrounds ranging from Theravada Buddhism to Catholicism and Brahmanism. As part of the Product Design IV module, we invited professionals to join us, including a Thai service designer and a female director from B-Floor theatre, a

collective based in Bangkok known for their performances developed through a process of creative collaboration and improvisation known as Devised Theatre. The students were divided into groups of 3-4 people each, to develop a practice-based project that integrated questions about the self and community. This was aimed at challenging the preconceptions of being a designer in contemporary society. It required learners to dig into their cultural and family roots and formulate questions about the profession that they decide to pursue, leading them to initiate a pluriversal narrative as a tool of active engagement in a local-global society.

4.1 Scholarly Activities

Scholarly activities refer to a series of prototypes developed within the academic design context of Thailand. In this thesis, as in practice, I am operating within the framework of design pedagogy, utilising theatre performance as a tool and the body as a means to acquire awareness about the self (sensory-emotional) and to expand the learning path of design students.

These case studies are rooted in early art education experiments conducted before and after the Second World War in Western countries like the UK and the US. Examples include Frederick Kiesler's Laboratory for Design Correlation at the

School of Architecture at Columbia University since 1937, 'situational' projects developed for the evening course at what is now the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design (UK) in the 1960s, and experiments conducted by Roy Ascott in his 'Groundcourse' at Ealing Art College in London from 1961 to 1964. The role of the scholarly activities is to adapt these early Western-based pedagogic experiments from the art education context into Southeast Asia, specifically in communication and product design courses at Universities located in Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand. I aim to expand a pluriversal narrative by being aware of my positionality as a researcher. Initially, as an academic, and then as an observer, watching students aged 18-21 years old, with 80% of the classes of 40 consisting of Thai nationals of mixed gender, the majority of which were women. These students come from a variety of cultural and belief backgrounds, ranging from Theravada Buddhism to Catholicism and Brahmanism. They are working and engaging with these prototypes. The experiences are evaluated based on the observed level of syncretic narrative that students were capable of formulating before and after the activities. If there is an illustration of consciousness about the self (sensory and emotional) and others through micro-subsequent actions, such as awareness and acceptance of personal and community roots, then the scholarly activities are considered successful.

Main Scholarly Activities

4.2. Prototype 01 : Emotional Space (ES)

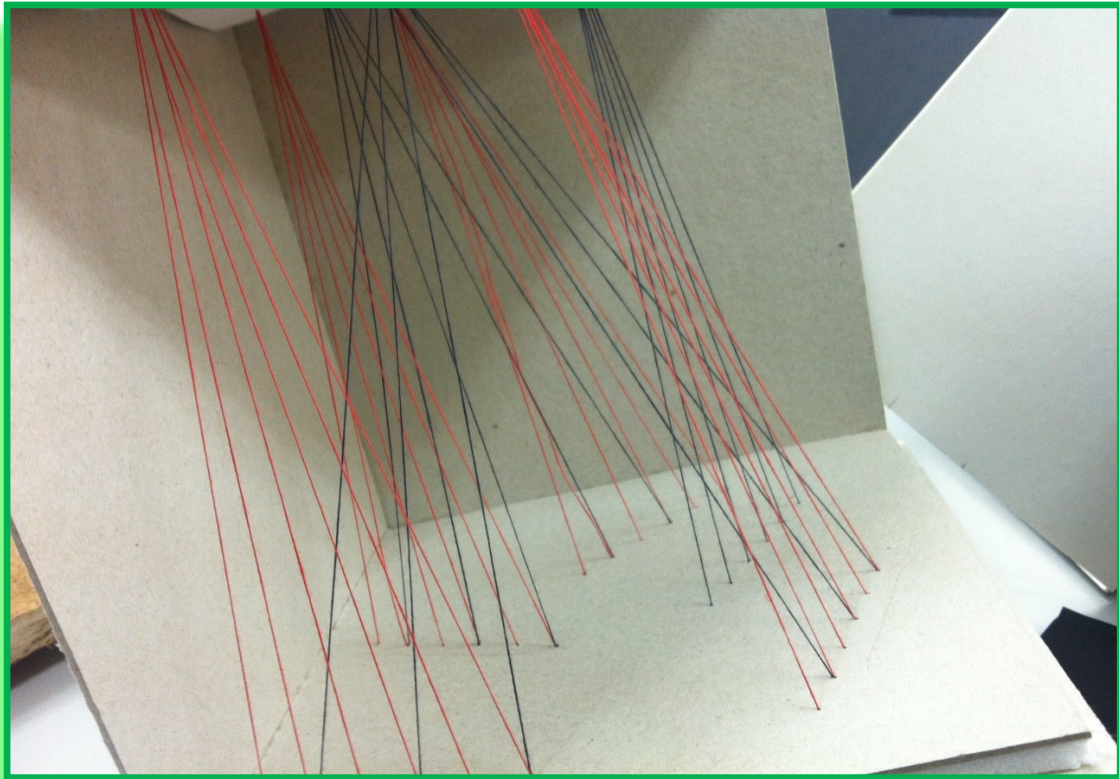


Figure 4: Emotional Space (Maggio, 2015), Translating the untouchable into tangible, Emotions, physical mock-up paper and coloured cotton thread.



Figure 34: *Emotional Space (Maggio, 2015), Translating the untouchable into tangible, 1:1 maze with red light*

This translates emotions into a tangible element within a six months-long student project. It differs from the other Prototypes by investigating the self and collective preconceptions and translating them into a dedicated space where others can immerse themselves.

4.2.1. Context

Emotional Space (ES) was developed in the Product Design department at Assumption University of Thailand. The campus is located near Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport, on the outskirts of the capital city. The development of ES was a response to a brief I initiated as the module leader for Product Design IV. The class consisted of 40 students, 90% of which were Thai nationals, aged 20-21 years old. They were a diverse group, of mixed gender with a majority of women, and with a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds that ranged from Theravada Buddhism to Catholicism and Brahmanism. As part of the Product Design IV module, we invited two professionals: a Thai service designer and a female director from B-Floor theatre, a collective based in Bangkok known for their performances developed through a process of creative collaboration and improvisation known as Devised Theatre. The pedagogy prototype was a semester-long project, coinciding with the students' selection of their thesis subjects, which typically focused on furniture, toys, and other industrial products related to home or hobbies. The outcome of the project served as the final assessment for the students. The physical manifestation of Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM) was publicly displayed during the semester break, allowing students to gather feedback and reflect on their process and perception of realities.

4.2.2. Intention

The aim of ES was to explore the students' capability of challenging their preconceptions about product design and related issues, by encouraging them to explore alternative perspectives to increase awareness of reality as a subjective matter. It also aimed to foster conversations about local narratives and taboos. The prototype was designed as a tool to generate open questions about design practice and engage participants and observers in the co-creation of a pluriversal narrative and artefacts. Overcoming the social concept of losing face was a latent expectation through the co-creation of artefacts as tools used to visualise the intangibility of the students' emotions. The intention was to evaluate each individual's early prototype and document its impact through informal conversations and observations of their peers' interactions. The design of the initial mock-up and consequent conversations helped identify common patterns and fostered student engagement as a collective body.

4.2.3. Prototyping

This prototype (see Figures 1 and 2) iterated and analysed self-awareness in motion, integrating the concept of body movement and time into the practice. Emotions were translated into intangible/visible elements, enhancing self-reflection and engagement in collective awareness. This inquiry proposed the design appropriation of craft and a way of thinking as an approach to enable self and

collective awareness. These actions fostered the physicality of knowledge as a set of automatisms incorporated in the body. The process was planned to be open-ended, facilitating equal contributions and leadership among all the 40 participating students to develop confidence and trust in the self and in the group, and foster active participation. Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM) had collectively-agreed goals and development frameworks. Interest and vision were shared to achieve a common tangible outcome. Each student assumed the role of designer/performer and co-creative director, allowing them to embrace a range of perspectives and critically and constructively evaluate their work. The project spanned an entire semester, with in-person sessions twice a week. Face-to-face communication was the primary channel of interaction with the students.

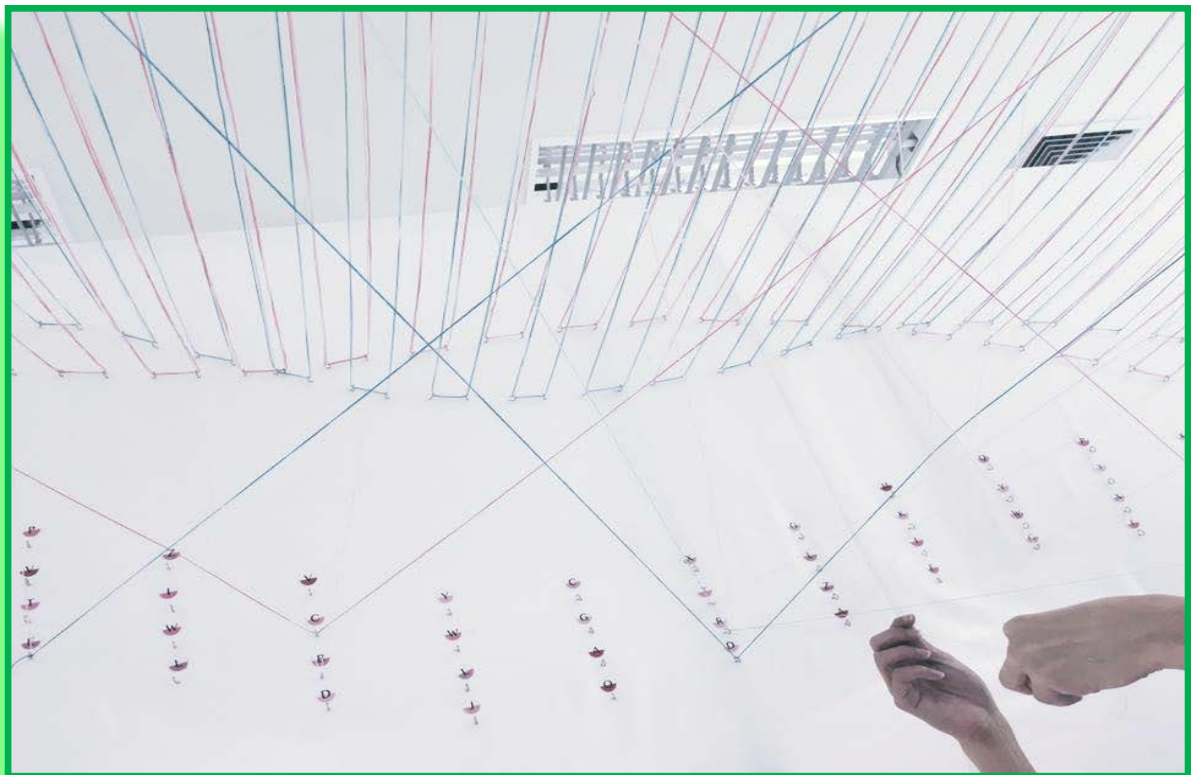


Figure 35: Emotional Space (Maggio, 2015), Translating the untouchable into tangible, Emotions, 1:1 colored cotton thread in space. Correlating peers and their overt and covert emotions.

The classes concluded with a Socratic circle, creating a contemplative learning space where participants shared their impressions and feelings about the process.

The open-ended, guided uncertainty of the brief occasionally resulted in moments of unbalanced power between students/participants. Students used to work in certain, rigorous ways sometimes failed to respond promptly to the unexpected situations generated by prototyping. However, students often viewed as less engaged were able to adapt and restored team balance. Simultaneously, developing physical machinery facilitated a deeper understanding of team work and pluriversal narrative.

4.2.4. Observation and evaluation of practice

The creation of machinery/sculptural artefacts was forged through the interplay between emotion and design practice actions. This was in response to the brief that I initiated as module leader for Product Design IV, which was located on the 8th floor of the School of Architecture and Design. The observed reactions of the students during and after the process had been completed, served as a stimulus for other prototypes. As part of the academic process, in order to validate this design pedagogy prototype, I was invited to demonstrate and explain every single step in front of an external commission of higher education.



Figure 36: Emotional Space (Maggio, 2015), Translating the untouchable into tangible, Emotions, 1:1 Mixed Media Installation.

The investigation, which took place in an interview format, lasted over three hours. A week later, the department received approval for the prototype, which was then integrated into the new product design curriculum. The learning outcome of this change was to move away from the mainstream focus on product functionality and towards a more comprehensive evaluation of the individual/social impact of design actions.

The questions raised during the investigation included how a similar approach could be reproduced by other instructors and how to evaluate the pedagogical outcome in both academic and industry sectors. As explained in the observation and

evaluation/finding chapter, this practice was initiated in order to expand a reflective moment for students and professionals, academics and practitioners.

The Emotional Space (ES) design pedagogy prototype attempted to challenge learners' preconceptions and expectations about product/industrial design education. Typically, learners receive a brief that contains limitations and rules from a potential/fictional customer. However, in the ES prototype, learners unexpectedly discovered that they were partially in charge of their own brief. This challenged the traditional industrial design approach to the discipline, which focuses on the needs of others before the needs of the self. At first, students found the idea of integrating theatre as performance to be unusual and off-topic. However, after this initial hesitation, they began a reflective/contemplative practice that allowed them to develop a better understanding of themselves as individuals and as a group. By reflecting on their own first reactions, they attempted to visualise their emotions. Physical mock-ups helped them with the visualisation process, and one-on-one tutorials allowed them to discuss their feelings.

Discussion about proprioception (the sense of the body's position in space) and interoception (the sense of the body's internal state) helped the debate. At this point, each student assumed the role of designer/performer, which allowed them to gradually understand the subjectivity of reality and open themselves to a pluriversal narrative. This activated participants to critically engage with their own and others' actions, with the awareness of being part of the same body in terms of society. It is also important to note the students' main concerns. The main concern was uncertainty about the outcomes and how they would be evaluated. Since the brief

did not mention any physical product design as a final result, students were confused. Additionally, working on developing the brief together (as a group) was seen as a deterrent for overachievers. Surprisingly, this approach of brief co-development was a boost for typically low profile and average students. The design pedagogy prototype led to a major shift in the class equilibrium, and a new balance was explored. When the prototype was presented at international design education conferences, the question of the efficiency of the current evaluation system in the discipline was often raised.

4.2.5. Summary

The Emotional Space (ES) prototype was part of this practice-based research enquiry. The observations from this prototype were the first step in the interactive process of iterating and documenting the hypothesis of 'A Framework for a Syncretic Pluriversal Narrative: Somaesthetics and Consciousness in Thai Design Education'. At the same time, it was the first activity in a series of creating prototypes, then testing and validating them via participatory conversation to deepen engagement on the subject of self and other in design pedagogy. In this context, students' engagement and active participation were the initial measurement of impact, constituting a reflective practice for learners, and for me as a researcher and practitioner. Notably, a number of colleagues have informed me during conversations that this approach had a positive impact on students. They noticed a change in terms of students' behaviour and the questions they raised. While these are subjective descriptions, it is significant that other professionals in the discipline concur about the value of this experimental pedagogical approach.

This prototype has been presented in peer-reviewed proceedings at the International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA) 2016 in Hong Kong, and in a presentation for Asia Pacific Artistic Research Network (APARN) 2021, and at Design Education Trends 2021, Ukraine. Some of these public talks have raised the value of bringing the physical experience, via the individual and social body, to education, especially during and after conditions such as the recent global pandemic that saw most of us experience long-term lock-downs and separation from families and friends. The focus was not on measuring the interactions adopted to complete the prototype, but on documenting and observing the present and, with some distance in time, how the elements and the related narrative developed from a wide range of perspectives, ranging from academics to professionals, from the North to the global South.

Emotional Space (ES) delivers the following objectives:

The Observations from Emotional Space (ES) which inform the following prototype are:

A designerly approach for Scholarly activities: Emotions are translated into intangible/visible elements, which helped enhance self-reflection and engagement in collective awareness.

The context, roots and location of learner/participants/students: Focus on awareness of who they are and where they come from (cultural background).

Creating conditions to initiate a pluriversal narrative within and outside the academic context: These prototypes helped in the development of the subsequent designerly action prototypes.

4.3. Prototype 02: Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM)





Figure 6-7: Sense-Perception and Self Motion (Maggio, 2016)

This prototype (see Figures 6 and 7) iterated and analysed self-awareness in motion. The concepts of movement and time have been integrated as elements of the discursive design. In so doing, this inquiry proposes the design appropriation of craft and ways of thinking as an approach to enable self and collective awareness. In the second one, an attempt to balancing the unbalanced, boosting self-awareness and team confidence.

4.3.1. Context

Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM) was developed in the Product Design department of the Assumption University of Thailand. The campus is situated near the Suvarnabhumi Airport, located on the outskirts Bangkok. The outcome was a

response to the brief that I initiated as module leader for Product Design IV. The students were 20-21 years old, and 90% of the class of 40 were Thai nationals. The class was of mixed genders, with a majority of women, and with a variety of cultural, religious, backgrounds that including Theravada Buddhism, Catholicism, and Brahmanism. A Thai service designer and a female director from B-Floor theatre, a collective based in Bangkok, were invited to join my module in Product Design IV. B-floor performances are developed through a process of creative collaboration and improvisation known as Devised Theatre. The pedagogy prototype was a semester-long project, and at a time when students were about to select their thesis subject, which typically ranges from furniture to toys and other industrial products, to products related to the home or hobbies. The outcome was then the subject of final assessment for the students. The physical manifestations of the Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM) prototype were on public display during the semester break. This allowed students to collect feedback and have a reflective moment about their process and, subsequently, about their way of perceiving realities.

4.3.2. Intention

The aim of SPSM was to explore the students' capability to challenge their preconceptions on product design discipline and related issues. This was achieved by attempting to explore alternative perspectives to increase awareness of reality as a subjective matter and by encouraging conversation on local narratives and taboos. SPSM was designed as a tool to generate open questions about design practice, with participants and observers co-creating a pluriversal narrative and artefacts. One latent expectation was to find a perspective to overcome the social concept of losing face. This would be achieved through the co-creation of artefacts, which would serve as tools to visualise the intangibility of the students' emotions. The intention

was to evaluate the early prototype made by each individual and document its impact or the reaction it evoked through informal conversations with peers and observations of their peers' interactions. The design of this first step mock-up and subsequent conversations helped to find a 'common pattern' and to foster students' engagement to work as a collective body.

4.3.3. Prototyping

This prototype underwent iterations (see Figures 6 and 7) and analysed self-awareness in motion. The concepts of body movement and time were integrated into this practice, translating emotions into intangible/visible elements. This translation, enabled by the design appropriation of craft and its way of thinking, helped enhance self-reflection and engagement in collective awareness. These actions fostered the physicality of knowledge as a set of automatisms incorporated in the body. The process was planned to be open-ended, to facilitate and empower all participants – that is, the group of 40 students – with an equal level of contribution and leadership. It aimed to develop confidence and trust about the self and the group, enhancing team relations. The title reflected the relevance of active participation. In Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM), goals and development frameworks were collectively agreed upon. Interest and vision were shared to achieve a common tangible outcome. Each student assumed the role of designer/performer and co-creative director, allowing them to adopt a range of

perspectives and critically and constructively examine their work. The overall process took place through physical, in-person sessions, twice a week, for an entire semester. Face-to-face communication was the main channel of interaction with students.

Classes concluded with a Socratic circle, creating a contemplative learning space where participants shared their impressions and feelings about the process. The guided uncertainty of the brief sometimes led to moments of unbalanced power between students or participants. Students, who were used to work in a certain, rigorous way, sometimes failed to promptly respond to the unexpected situations progressively generated by prototyping. Balancing the power dynamics, students who were initially perceived as less participative, were able to adjust themselves and restore the team balance in an organic way. Simultaneously, developing physical machinery facilitated a deeper understanding of teamwork and pluriversal narrative.

4.3.4. Observation and evaluation of practice

The creation of machinery/sculptural artefacts was forged through the interplay between emotion and design practice actions. The outcome was a response to the brief that I initiated as the module leader for Product Design IV, located on the 8th floor of the School of Architecture and Design. The observed reactions of the students during and after the process served as a stimulus for other prototypes. As part of the academic process to validate this design pedagogy prototype, I was invited to demonstrate and explain every single step in front of an external

commission in higher education. The investigation, conducted in an interview format, lasted over three hours. A week later, the department received the approval, and the prototype was accepted to be integrated into the new product design curriculum.

The focus was about to shift from the mainstream focus on product functionality to a more comprehensive evaluation of the individual/social impact of design actions.

The questions raised were about how a similar approach can be reproduced by other instructors and how to evaluate the pedagogical outcome in the academic and industry sectors. As explained in the observation and evaluation/finding chapter, this practice was initiated to expand a reflective moment for students, professional academics and practitioners. Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM) aimed to challenge traditional thinking and teaching about product/industrial design, initiating a nascent conversation that extended beyond the hackneyed limits of the discipline, which often result in isolated silos. Each students assumed the roles of designer/performer and co-creative director, allowing them to understand the subjectivity of reality and open up a pluriversal narrative. It activated participants to critically engage with their own and others' actions with the consciousness of being part of the same body in terms of society. Although raising the question about the efficiency of the current evaluation system in the design education was not the primary goal, the latent/implicit quest of the alternative form of pedagogy was to open the conversation on the subject.

4.3.5. Summary

(SPSM) was part of this practice-based research enquiry. The observations from this prototype formed the first step in the interactive process of iterating and documenting the hypothesis of 'A Framework for a Syncretic Pluriversal Narrative: Somaesthetics and Consciousness in Thai Design Education'. It was also the second activity in the series of creating prototypes, testing and validating them via participatory conversations to deepen engagement with the subject of self and other in design pedagogy. The initial measurement of impact was the students' degree of engagement and active participation, providing a reflective practice for learners and myself as researcher and practitioner. Notably, during conversations a number of colleagues informed me that this approach had a positive impact on students. They noticed changes in behaviour and the questions that were raised. While these were subjective descriptions, it is nevertheless significant that other professionals in the discipline recognise the value of this experimental pedagogical approach. Although the approach cannot yet be considered a scalable pedagogy project due to its one-to-one relations, some of the key elements can be used to develop an alternative approach to design education in the Asia-Pacific context. In fact, this prototype has been presented in peer-reviewed proceedings at the International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA) 2016 Hong Kong and as part of Asia Pacific Artistic Research Network (APARN) 2021. The focus was not on measuring the interaction adopted to complete the prototype, but on documenting and observing the present and, with some distance, the development of the related narrative through a wide range of perspective, from academics to professionals, from the North to the global South.

(SPSM) delivers the following objectives to define and develop the observations which inform the following Emotional Space (ES) prototype:

A designerly approach for Scholarly activities: Emotions are translated into intangible/visible elements, which help enhance self-reflection and engagement in collective awareness.

Creating conditions to initiate a pluriversal narrative within and outside the academic context: These prototypes helped to develop the subsequent designerly action prototypes.

Early Attempts at Scholarly Activities

“To become really autonomous, you must integrate a lot of automatisms” the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler said to Anaïs Nony in an interview in a peer-reviewed article (2015). At the time, as a design practitioner, my attention was drawn to theatre, sparked by my involvement in a collaborative project with the B-Floor theatre for a science-based play sponsored by Wellcome Trust as part of Art in Global Health, Wellcome Collection. In addition to analysing early art education experiments pre- and post-World War II in Western countries like the UK and the US, I looked into the history of theatre, beginning in 1926, with the Brooklyn International Theatre Arts co-founded by Dr. Mensendieck along with designer

Frederick Kiesler and princess/actress Norina Matchabelli, to the 'Groundcourse' at Ealing Art College in London, and 'Behaviorist Art', a term coined by the British theoretician and artist Roy Ascott in 1966. This exploration of theatre experience led me to realise the similarity between the principles underlying the disciplines of design and theatre, particularly after reading about the "nine viewpoints" developed by Anne Bogart with Tina Landau (1997), a technique for training performers and building ensembles, originally conceived by Marie-Overlie in the 1970s.

Figure 8, 9 and 10: Senses to Cultivate Collective Consciousness, early attempts (Maggio, 2014)

4.4. Prototype 03: Senses to Cultivate Collective Consciousness (SCCC)



4.4.1. Context



Figure 8, 9 and 10: Senses to Cultivate Collective Consciousness (Maggio, 2014)

The prototype (see Figures 8, 9 and 10) explores first-year students' self-confidence by using body gestures to

relate to objects and space. It is directed by movement-based theatre performance techniques—an investigation into how the new knowledge can be comprehended by practicing theatrical embodiment.

Senses to Cultivate Collective Consciousness (SCCC) was the earliest attempt to bring elements of theatre performance into design education. It was specifically developed at the CommDe, the International Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts (BFA) programme in communication design, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. The campus is located in the central area of Thailand's capital city, Bangkok. The outcome was a response to the brief that I initiated as module leader for the Design Principles course. The class consisted of fifty students, with ninety percent Thai nationals and the rest Chinese, Laotian and Japanese by passport. Among them, eighty percent were females aged between eighteen and nineteen years old, mostly Theravada Buddhists, living with their parents in the city. A high percentage of students had previous experience in international schools in the city and abroad since their early years, which affected their fluency in the Thai language, their mother tongue. However, their English proficiency was good. It also relevant to note that due to the diverse range of studies and geographical-cultural context background, explaining abstract and geometrical concepts posed a challenging task. In order to overcome this issue within the first weeks of enrolment, first year students were called to participate in a summer session, an induction to design principles and practice.

As explained early in the introduction chapter, some of the early pedagogy design prototypes were inspired by experimental educational arts and design labs developed in Europe as the German Bauhaus Art School (1919-33). However,

probably due to the context, timing, and culture, the application of these classical approaches to design was not working as expected.

The approaches adopted to explain design basic elements like dot, line, and plane were not effective. This was particularly noticeable with the older generation of students – the sophomores. Two weeks after the summer session, once the semester had started, we had to recap design basics once again, and then again. It was during this time that a collaborative project began, developed with a theatre performance. The aim was to bring to the stage a scientific-based script developed by B-Floor theatre, a collective based in Bangkok and selected by Wellcome Trust as part of Art in Global Health, Wellcome Collection. This interpretation of scientific research about melioidosis ignited my vision to establish a bridge between communication design and theatre discipline as a tool to facilitate the learning path of freshmen.

4.4.2. Intention

Since freehand drawings and brainstorming had a limited effect on students' memories, the primary aim of Senses to Cultivate Collective Consciousness (SCCC) was to address the quest to familiarise students with the basic design elements, known in the discipline as space, time, dot, line and plane. Through collaboration with a theatre company and literature analysis, the concept expressed by the French stage and movement coach Jacques Lecoq, "The body knows things about which the mind is ignorant" (The Moving Body, 2000, p.9) was developed.

To explore students' preconceptions and expectations of the communication design

discipline and related industries, an attempt was made to examine the concept of self in relation to others. Enhancing self-confidence was the first step in a conversation built on body movement. The intention was to initiate a dialogue, to increase awareness of reality as a subjective matter by encouraging conversation on local narratives and taboos.

4.4.3. Prototyping

The prototype (see Figures 5, 6 and 7) explores first-year students' self-confidence by using body gestures to relate to objects and space. It is directed by movement-based performance techniques, investigating how new knowledge can be comprehended through theatrical embodiment. The concept of body movement and time has been integrated into this practice. Abstract concepts such as dot, line, and plane are translated from intangible to visible elements, enhancing self-reflection and engaging in collective awareness.

In doing so, these actions foster the embodiment of knowledge as a set of automatisms incorporated in the body, developing confidence and trust in oneself and the group. This enhanced the team relations. The title, *Senses to Cultivate Collective Consciousness*, reflects the relevance of active participation. Each student assumed the role of a dot, a line, and eventually an element in the fabrication of a plane, allowing them to experience geometrical, abstract concepts within their own bodies. The overall process took place through physical, in-person sessions, twice a week for an entire semester. The main channel of communication with students was face-to-face.

As a preventative measure, to avert possible embarrassment, during the first attempt a Devised Theatre practitioner was invited to join the session. The initial hesitation from the freshmen was moderated by the presence and active participation of both instructors and students. There was no separation between the audience and the performance, no stage to separate students from lecturers; we were all learners. Classes concluded with a Socratic circle, creating a contemplative learning space where impressions and feelings about the process were shared by all the participants.

4.4.4. Observation and evaluation of practice

The outcome was an attempt to demonstrate the physicality of knowledge. The design pedagogy prototype was developed as a response to the need to facilitate students from diverse cultural backgrounds to enter the design discipline. The observed reactions of the students during and after the process had been completed served as a stimulus for other prototypes. It was notable that after several weeks, and even months, all freshmen had remembered and fully absorbed the initial approach to design principles. Mock-ups and concepts realised through the entire course, and also supervised by other faculty instructors, demonstrate that the practice of Senses to Cultivate Collective Consciousness helped students assimilate abstract concepts into their practice-based approach. Furthermore, SCCC helped students challenge traditional thinking and teaching about communication design, initiating a nascent conversation that expanded beyond the conventional limits of the discipline, which often isolates itself into silos.

4.4.5. Summary

SCCC was part of this practice-based research enquiry. The observations from this prototype were the first step in the interactive process of iterating and documenting the hypothesis of 'A Framework for a Syncretic Pluriversal Narrative: Somaesthetics and Consciousness in Thai Design Education'. Simultaneously, it was the earliest activity in the series of creating prototypes, testing and validating through participatory conversation to deepen engagement with the subject of self and others in design pedagogy. The initial measurement of impact was students' engagement and active participation, providing a reflective practice for learners and for me as a researcher and practitioner. Notably, during conversations, a number of colleagues informed me that this approach had a positive impact on students. They noticed changes in the students' behaviour and the questions they raised. Although I am aware that these are subjective descriptions, it is nevertheless significant that other professionals in the discipline underlined the value of this experimental pedagogical approach. This prototype has been presented in peer-reviewed proceedings at the International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA) 2016 Hong Kong and as part of Asia Pacific Artistic Research Network (APARN) 2021. The focus was not on measuring the interaction adopted to complete the prototype, but documenting and observing the present and, with some distance in time, the development of the related elements and narrative through a wide range of perspectives, from academics to professionals, from North to the global South.

(SCCC) delivers the following objectives of this practice-based research inquiry:

The observations from Senses to Cultivate Collective Consciousness (SCCC), which informs the other scholarly prototypes developed in the body of this thesis are:

Creating a playful context for active participation in discourse: By displaying playful behaviour, students, after an initial hesitation, start to engage with the practice. Over time and in the long term, it is evident how the philosopher Bernard Stiegler's concept of "being a piano while playing" has been adapted to their practice.

Context, roots, and location of learner/participants/students: Focusing on awareness of who they are in term of their senses, both the outside-in (proprioception) and inside-out (interoception), considering the system as suggested by Clare J. Fowler. Interoception relates to how we perceive feelings from our bodies, which determine our mood, sense of wellbeing and emotions (2003).

4.5. Prototype 04: Practice Oneness, not Two not One (POTO)

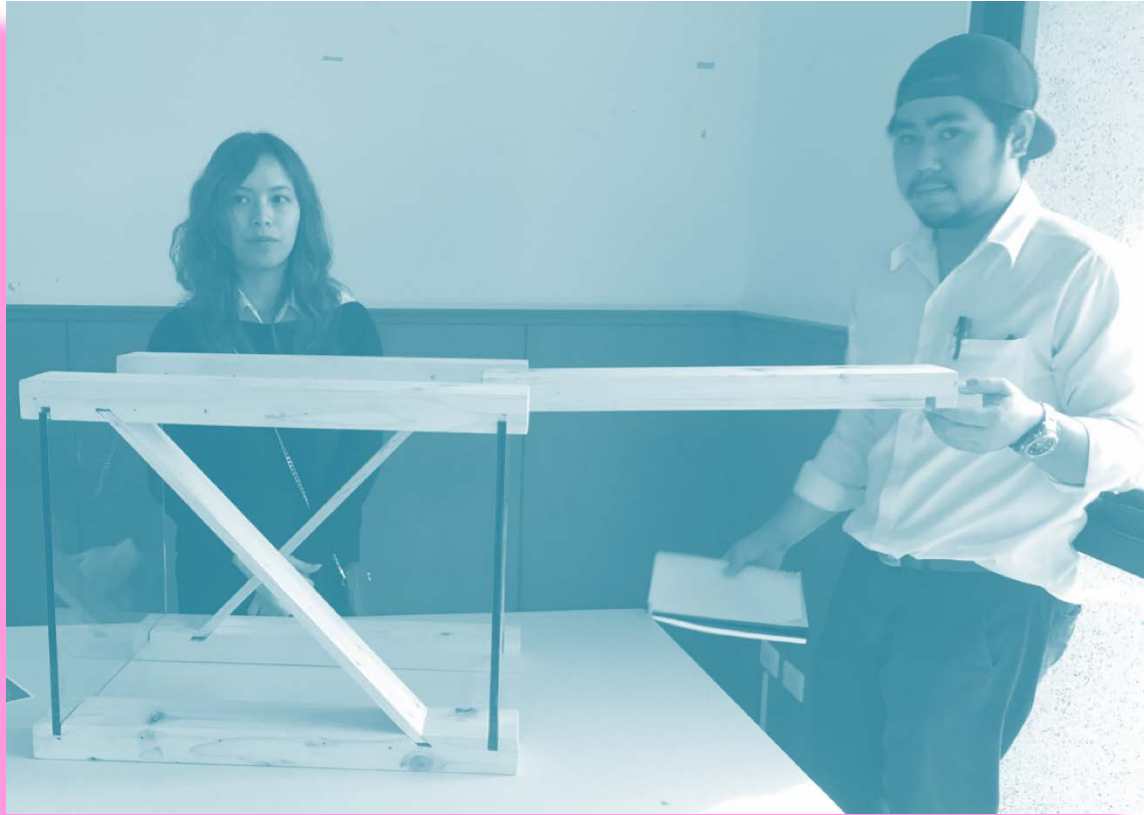




Figure 11-13: Practice Oneness, not Two not One (Maggio, 2017)

By contemplating the self, to stimulate a more profound dialogue about the body as perceived within the somatic realm and sensed by others.

4.5.1. Context

Practice Oneness, not Two not One (POTO) was developed at Assumption University of Thailand, in the department of Product Design. The campus is located near Suvarnabhumi Airport, on the outskirts of Thailand's capital city, Bangkok. This project was a response to the brief that I initiated as the module leader for Product

Design IV. The class consisted of forty students, aged twenty to twenty-one years, with ninety percent being Thai nationals. The class had a mixed gender composition, with the majority being women, and students came from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds ranging from Theravada Buddhism, to Catholicism, and to Brahmanism. This prototype was created for the Product Design III module.

Directors from the B-floor theatre group were invited to participate in the project in their capacity as experienced performers in Devised Theatre. During the review, academic experts from the discipline of product design also joined the team. The pedagogy prototype was a semester-long project and involved third-year students. In the previous modules, students had focused on product creation, emphasising functionality and marketing aspects. The outcome of this project served as the final assessment for the students. The physical manifestation of Practice Oneness, not Two not One (POTO) was on public display during the semester break, allowing students to gather feedback and reflect on their process and their perceptions of reality.

4.5.2. Intention

As defined by Hanna Thomas in 'What is Somatics?' (1986), the soma, being internally perceived, is categorically distinct from a body not because the subject is different but because the viewpoint is different. With this affirmation, shared and incorporated into the students' brief, the aim of Practice Oneness, not Two not One (POTO) was to explore the students' ability to challenge their preconceptions about

the self and others, both in philosophical and physical terms. Toward this end, the students analysed the concept of Oneness and fabricated tangible elements whose form, shape, and materials were driven by their functionality.

The intention was to encourage students to consider the full spectrum of the senses and to be conscious about themselves (soma) and the social impact of their actions, thereby influencing their approach to design. It aimed to open a dialogue about the fact that as designers and learners, we are operating within an interconnected system and are dependent on one another. Understanding oneself from a subjective perspective serves as a tool for comprehending one's role as an active element within a context, and perhaps within society. Similar to other scholarly activities, this project aimed to explore alternative perspectives in terms of the approach to the design discipline, and to increase awareness of reality as a subjective matter. Additionally, by addressing the topics of body and soma, it encouraged conversations about local narratives and taboos.

4.5.3. Prototyping

This prototype (see Figures 8 and 9) introduced and iterated the idea of soma and body. Students were divided into micro-groups of two or a maximum of three people each. Initially, uncertainty was the dominant feeling among students. Similar to the previously discussed prototypes, students here also expected to receive a brief for creating a piece of furniture. Instead, they were asked to analyse themselves by mirroring their self-image. Each student played the roles of both body and soma, working in a symbiotic approach. They began by being asked how their team partner perceived them, and what material could be associated with their team member – if

their team-member were a material, what material would he/she be? They reflected on the self to initiate a deeper conversation about the body as perceived by the soma and sensed by others. In this prototype, the concepts of body movement and time were integrated into practice. Emotions were translated into intangible/visible elements, enhancing self-reflection and promoting collective awareness.

These actions ingrained the physicality of knowledge as a set of automatisms incorporated into the body. The process was designed to be open-ended to facilitate and empower all participants (the group of 40 students) with equal levels of contribution and leadership. This approach aimed to develop confidence and trust in oneself and the group, and the title reflected the importance of active participation. POTO goals and development frameworks were collectively agreed upon. Interest and vision were shared to achieve a common tangible outcome. Each student assumed the roles of both designer/performer and co-creative director, allowing them to adopt various perspectives and helping them to critically and constructively evaluate their work. These actions took place during physical, in-person sessions twice a week for an entire semester. Face-to-face communication was the primary channel of communication with students. Classes concluded with a Socratic circle, creating a contemplative learning space where all the participants shared impressions and feelings about the process.

The guided uncertainty of the brief lead to moments of imbalanced power among the students. Students accustomed to work in a certain, rigorous, way sometimes failed to respond promptly to the unexpected situations often generated by prototyping. However, students often viewed as less participative were able adjust themselves more rapidly, restoring the team balance. Simultaneously, the development of

physical machinery facilitated a deeper understanding of team work and pluriversal narrative along the path toward the inquiry's goal of proposing the incorporation of craft and alternative ways of thinking into design, fostering self and collective awareness.

4.5.4. Observation and Evaluation of Practice

The creation of machinery/sculptural artefacts was forged through the interplay between emotion and design practice actions. The outcome was a response to the brief I initiated as the module leader for Product Design IV, which was located on the 8th floor of the School of Architecture and Design. The observed reactions of the students during and after the process was completed served as a stimulus for other prototypes. As part of the academic process, to validate this design pedagogy prototype, I was invited to demonstrate and explain each step in front of an external commission in higher education. The investigation, conducted in an interview format, took over three hours, and a week later the department received the sought-for approval. The prototype was accepted to be integrated into the new product design curriculum, where the learning outcome was about to shift from focusing solely on product functionality to a more comprehensive evaluation of the individual and social impact of design actions. The questions raised revolved around how other instructors could reproduce a similar approach, and how to evaluate the pedagogical outcome in both academic and industry sectors. As explained in the observation and evaluation/finding chapter, this practice was initiated to provide a reflective moment for students, professionals, academics, and practitioners.

Practice Oneness, not Two not One (POTO) attempted to challenge traditional thinking and teaching in the field of product/industrial design. It initiated a nascent

conversation that extended beyond the stereotypical limits of the discipline's often isolated silos. Each student assumed the roles of both designer/performer and co-creative director, allowing them to understand the subjectivity of reality and embrace a pluriversal narrative. It activated participants to critically engage with their own and others' actions, with the awareness of being part of the same body within society. While the primary goal was not to question the efficacy of the current evaluation system in design education, by shaping an alternative pedagogy, it indirectly aimed to open a conversation on the subject.

4.5.5. Summary

(POTO) was a part of this practice-based research enquiry. The observations from this prototype served as a first step in the interactive process of iterating and documenting the hypothesis of 'A Framework for a Syncretic Pluriversal Narrative: Somaesthetics and Consciousness in Thai Design Education'. It was also the second activity in a series of creating prototypes, testing and validating through participatory conversation to deepen engagement with the subject of self and other in design pedagogy. The students' engagement and active participation were the initial measurements of impact, providing a reflective practice for both the learners and myself as a researcher and practitioner. Notably, through conversations with a number of colleagues, it became evident that this approach had a positive impact on students. Colleagues noticed changes in behaviour and the questions being raised. While their opinions were subjective in nature, it is nevertheless significant that other professionals in the discipline recognised the value of this experimental pedagogical approach. Although this approach currently requires a one-on-one relation, and cannot yet be considered a scalable pedagogy project, some of its key elements can

be used to develop an alternative approach to design education in the Asia-Pacific context. In fact, this prototype has been presented in peer reviewed proceedings at the International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA) 2016 Hong Kong and as part of Asia Pacific Artistic Research Network (APARN) in 2021. The focus was not on measuring the interaction adopted to complete the prototype, but on documenting and observing the current and subsequent unfolding of elements and the development of the related narrative through a wide range of perspectives, from academics to professionals, from North to the global South.

Practice Oneness, not Two not One (POTO) delivers the following objectives to develop:

The Observations from (POTO), which inform the following Observer to Participant (OTP) prototype are:

A designerly approach for scholarly activities: Emotions translated into intangible/visible elements, enhancing self-reflection and promoting collective awareness.

Understanding the context, roots and location of the learner/participants/students, with a focus on awareness of their cultural backgrounds: Creating conditions to initiate a pluriversal narrative within and outside the academic context.

These prototypes helped develop subsequent designerly action prototypes.

4.6. Prototype 05: Observer to Participant (OTP)

It initiates a process of transforming the academic conference guests from passive observers to active participants. Enquiring deeper into self-collective awareness by enabling each person to relate to another person. Activating participants via physical theatrical techniques



C3: I didn't say that.
B3: Excuse me, we won't vote then.
C3: I would say let move, to another place.
A3: Yeah, move from nothingness to a place.

C3 gives script to C4, A3 gives script to A4

B3: I see. No vote then.

B3 gives script to B4

C4: What's next?
D4: Help him/her first.
A4: From her/him self?
D4: Come on.
B4: I won't go up on stage.
C4: So now that's a stage. First nothing then a stage.
D4: Help her/him!
A4: Ok, ok fine.

A4 stands up and then sits down.

A4: Why don't you do that?
D4: OK.

D4 stands up, the other actor goes into the circle invite D3 back to sit on her/his chair. The actor changes shape.

D4: (to D3) I'm sorry.
A4: (to D3) I myself really want to drag you back here but the script, you know. I didn't really say it I'd just read it.
B4: Don't you think you just don't need to follow the script.
A4: Then it'll chaos!

A4 ask other audience to make noise for a while. Then give them signal to be quiet.

A4: See, how chaotic it is!
B4: Chaos is awesome!

B4 gives the script to B5. Then B4 goes to actor, use her/his body to explore the negative space between actor and chairs.

D4: I would be happy if that's what you really want to do.



Figure 15 - 16: Observer to Participant (Maggio, 2015) setting overview, script, acting participants.

This approach initiates a process of transforming the academic conference guests from passive observers to active participants. Enquiring deeper into self-collective awareness by enabling each person to relate to another person. Activating participants via physical theatrical techniques

4.6.1. Context

Observer to Participant (OTP) was developed in the context of the forum Cultural Pulse in Architecture and Design hosted by the Montfort del Rosario School of Architecture and Design at Assumption University of Thailand. The forum took place in the city centre of Bangkok, Thailand. During this event, together with my colleagues from the product design department, I established a new academic journal called 'Design Literacy'. Due to the interest and genuine curiosity surrounding the two design prototypes I had already created, and which have been discussed earlier, the department chair requested that I extend my 'designerly' approach to colleagues. In this case, there were fifty-eight participants, aged between 35 and 67, who were predominantly Thai nationals except for myself and a Laotian, of mixed gender with a majority of women, and a wide variety of cultural and religious backgrounds similar to the students. As a co-organiser of the forum, in addition to designing the visual communication for the event, I had the opportunity to invite external speakers. With the approval of the department, I decided to develop an alternative stimulus to actively engage participants even between presentations.

4.6.2. Intention

The intention was once again to design a pedagogy prototype, but this time not for students, but for professionals working in the academic system – a training session. OTP focused on generating discourse with participants rather than waiting for the Q&A moment during presentations. Assumption University of Thailand, City Campus, was chosen as the main site to host the forum and the pedagogy prototype. The aim of OTP was to explore the participants' capability to challenge their preconceptions of the product design discipline and related issues, by attempting to explore alternative perspectives to increase awareness of reality as a subjective matter and encouraging conversations about local narratives and taboos. It was designed as a tool to generate open questions about design practice by engaging participants as observers and co-creators and of a pluriversal narrative and artefacts.

Overcoming the social concept of losing face was a latent expectation in the co-creation of artefacts, which served as tools to visualise the intangibility of participants' emotions. The intention was to evaluate the early prototype created by each individual participant, and document its impact through informal conversations and observations of their peers' reactions and interactions. The design of this first mock-up and the consequent conversation helped identify 'common patterns', and fostered the participants' engagement in working as a collective body.

4.6.3. Prototyping

In this design pedagogy attempt, inspired by the phenomenological philosopher Merleau-Ponty, who famously said, “there is no inner life that is not a first attempt to relate to another person” (1948: 88) [54], the intention was to adopt the technique of ‘viewpoints’, a technique for training performers and building ensembles developed by Anne Bogart and Tina Lindau.

To initiate the engagement practice with the participants, a script was co-developed with directors from B-Floor theatre, a collective based in Bangkok, known for their performances that are created through a process of artistic collaboration and improvisation known as Devised Theatre. The challenge here was to make participants active and overcome their initial self-doubt. Groups of three people were created, and each group had to read the script aloud and act accordingly. Here are some lines from the script, inspired by and adapted from “While We are Still Watching” (2012-2015) by the Croatian choreographer Ivana Muller.

A5: I feel a difference in the atmosphere of space when the actor is in different spot.

B1: Do you mean me?

A2: Oh yes, of course

C3: I am a Designer; for me space is (please briefly define or talk about the concept of space)

A10: Please go to the stage and make any shape that will best explain your concept of space.

At the session, participants are seated in a Socratic circle. Performers acted independently from the script, responding to gestures and spatial relations created over time by and with the acting audience. This performance helped create a positive social climate and encouraged conference guests to participate actively.. Participation in Observer to Participant (OTP) was facilitated through a workshop delivered to engage the fifty-eight participants, aged between thirty-five and sixty-seven. All, except for a Laotian and myself, were Thai nationals of mixed gender with a majority of women, with a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds. The project intentions outlined above shaped and underpinned the initiation of an academic community aiming to incorporate a transdisciplinary approach into their teaching and research. The workshop provided participants with a basic understanding of how theatre, as a performing art, could be considered a tool within the framework of design pedagogy, and how the individual-social body could function to acquire awareness about the self (sensory-emotional) and expand the learning path of design students.

4.6.4. Observation and evaluation of practice

Participation in the Observer to Participant (OTP) session and the discourse it generated served as the measurement of its impact. It explicitly aimed to actively engage and subtly train academic staff to embrace a transdisciplinary approach in their teaching and research practices. It is also worth noting how incorporating elements from the 'viewpoints' technique helped create a positive social climate,

encouraging participants to be engaged conference guests. Throughout the pedagogy prototype, the participants became active actors in a play without a formal stage. In the two hours sessions, each participant was encouraged to express their opinions, listen to others and share their thoughts. Simultaneously, initiating a pluriversal conversation on design pedagogy was a process facilitated through talking, listening, and sharing. This process resulted in the creation of a shared vision among the small academic community. Moreover, the prototype suggested that blending a designerly approach with theatre elements serve not only as a tool for learning, but also for training staff.

4.6.5. Summary

Observer to Participant (OTP) was a part of this practice-based research enquiry. The observation from this prototype served as the first step in establishing an hypothesis of a framework for a syncretic pluriversal narrative with the aim of training academic staff in the field of design education at the bachelor level.

By co-operating with an external body, the theatre directors, and assuming the role of the facilitator of the conference myself, I was able to play different roles and use various lenses to perceive reality. It was a call for action, fostering the sharing and learning of others' perspectives and methods.

OTP delivers the following objectives for this practice-based research inquiry:

Empower the teaching community as participants to challenge, discuss, and participate in curriculum, pedagogy and research practice-based development.

Designerly approaches for scholarly activities: TP prioritised engaging academic lecturers in hands-on curriculum development to generate dialogue and empower the culture values and professional backgrounds that can challenge the existing curricula.

Designerly approaches for Scholarly activities: Scholarly activity makes a first attempt to move out from the context of the classroom with students. “We all are learners” became the community statement at the end of the session.

Context, roots and location of learners/participants/students: Focus on awareness of who they are and where they come from (their cultural background) and how each educator - lecturer can empower it.

Creating condition to initiate a pluriversal narrative within and outside the academic context: This prototype helped develop the subsequent designerly action prototypes.

4.7. Prototype 06: True Perception: Meditative Awareness as a Gateway to Artistic Expression

Dharma art refers to art that springs from a certain state of mind on the part of the artist that could be called the meditative state. It is an attitude of directness and unself consciousness in one's creative work'(Chögyam Trungpa). Through the practice of meditation, we have explored the gateway to artistic expression using different mediums of art, as a personal expression, and through a collective process.







Figure 17, 18 – 19. True Perception: Meditative Awareness as a Gateway to Artistic Expression (Maggio, 2020).

4.7.1. Context

Meditative Awareness as a Gateway to Artistic Expression' (MAGAA) was developed at the Shambhala Meditation Center, located in the city center business district of Bangkok, Thailand. This pedagogy prototype was a half-day workshop with eight participants. It was initiated as a response to requests from art collectors, art lovers, and meditation practitioners who wanted to understand the relationship between my art and meditation practice. The learners ranged in age from thirty-nine to fifty-two and were of various nationalities, including the US, South Africa, the UK,

Italy, Korea and Thailand. The group was of mixed genders, predominantly women, and from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds, including Theravada and Shambhala Buddhism, and Catholicism. The workshop was co-led with a Shambhala meditation practitioner with over twenty years' experience. My role was to explain how I translate my meditation sessions into visual art. After each micro-session, the outcomes were discussed among the participants. The physical manifestation of Meditative Awareness as a Gateway to Artistic Expression (MAGAA), allowed them to express their emotions, and have time for reflection about their process and their way of perceiving realities.

4.7.2. Intention

Dharma art refers to art that arises from a certain state of mind on the part of the artist that could be called the meditative state. It is an attitude of directness and unself consciousness in one's creative work (Chögyam Trungpa - 2008). The intention of this session was to explore meditation as a gateway to artistic expression, using different art mediums for personal expression and through a collective process. In addition to understanding how I relate art and meditation in my process as an artist, the aim of MAGAA was to challenge the learners' preconceptions about the discipline of art and topics such as being an artist and self-confidences, by attempting to merge individual and collective perspectives. The session was designed as a tool to generate open questions about the coexistence of art and meditation practice, with all participants having an active role in the session.

4.7.3. Prototyping

This prototype (see Figures 11 and 12) iterated and analysed self-awareness in terms of art perception and preconception. The concept of body movement and time was integrated into the practice. Emotions were translated into intangible/visible elements, enhancing self-reflection and engagement in collective awareness. After each meditation session, which lasted about thirty minutes and included sitting and walking meditation, each participant had the opportunity to draw on a large A0 size piece of paper. Each time, I suggested various prompts, such as trying to draw with the opposite hand they use for writing, drawing while lying down, or even sketching using only their foot. Any initial hesitation from some of the participants quickly disappeared, and they began to behave more freely, without inhibition or overthinking. At the beginning, some participants were concerned about not being good at art or drawing, but through the process, they gained confidence and trust in themselves and the group. As emotions were translated into intangible/visible elements, self-reflection and engagement in collective awareness were facilitated. The process was planned to be open-ended to facilitate and empower all participants. Each micro-session finished with a Socratic circle, creating a contemplative learning space where participants shared their feelings and impressions about the process. Most of them expressed that this practice helped them reconsider to review their ideas about art and being good at drawing. Notably, some participants mentioned that the session allowed them to reconnect with their inner child by experimenting and expressing themselves without worrying about judgment from others.

4.7.4. Observation and Evaluation of Practice

The participation in the Meditative Awareness as a Gateway to Artistic Expression ' (MAGAA) session and the discourse it generated served as the measurement of impact. While Observer to Participant (OTP) focused on training academic staff to embrace a transdisciplinary approach in their teaching and research practices, this prototype aimed to inform participants about the relationship between art and meditation practices, and to foster their self-confidence in understanding what art is about.

4.7.5. Summary

Meditative Awareness as a Gateway to Artistic Expression (MAGAA) was a part of this practice-based research enquiry. The observations from this prototype served as the first step in establishing a hypothesis for a framework for a syncretic pluriversal narrative that is open to individuals outside the design discipline. By co-operating with an external body, a Shambhala meditation practitioner, and acting as the facilitator of the session myself, I was able to play different roles and use various lenses to perceive reality. Once again, it was a call for action, involving sharing and from learning others' perspectives and methods. It is worth noting that after incorporating this face-to-face session into my curriculum, groups of people started reaching out to me for private sessions, and international schools approached me to develop series for K-12 students and parents. This led to invitations to several trans-disciplinary conferences, such as the Contemplative Pedagogy Symposium 2021, hosted by the University of Essex, Queen Margaret University, University of St. Andrews, and Cardiff Metropolitan University, and the Global Sustainable

Development Summit 2021 – SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all Quality education through effective visual communication (Research).

(MAGAA) delivers the following objectives for this practice-based research inquiry:

Empower the local community as participants to challenge, discuss and participate in the art and design scene.

Designery approaches for Scholarly activities: (MAGAA) prioritised the engagement of non-design professionals to generate dialogue and empower culture values and professional backgrounds that can challenge preconceptions in art and design.

Designery approaches for Scholarly activities: Here, scholarly activity takes another step outside the academic context. “We all are learners” became the community statement at the end of the session.

Creating conditions to initiate a pluriversal narrative within and outside of the academic context: These prototypes helped develop subsequent the designery action prototypes.

4.8. Designerly activities

This section refers to prototypes conducted within the design industry contexts of Thailand and Italy. The pedagogy applied to designerly activities is the same as that used for scholarly activities. The foundational models are the pre- and post-Bauhaus Art and Design School educational frameworks. It is worth noting here that the design discipline originated within the industrial sector. The purpose of designerly activities is to transfer the pedagogy that has evolved through these studies from students to professionals. In this context, theatre performance is considered a tool, and the body serves as a means to acquire self-awareness (sensory-emotional) and to expand the professional training path. The ultimate goal is to produce a tangible outcome through a collaborative process.

The influence of Victor Papanek's book 'Design for the Real World' (1971) within which he writes "The only important thing about design is how it relates to people", plays a crucial role and has been adapted to diverse cultural and temporal contexts. Working within a culturally diverse setting, I had to engage as an ethnographer. The awareness of diversity led me to engage in conversations with male and female arts and craft professionals between 20 to 65 years of age. The majority of these professionals are Theravada Buddhist practitioners, which aligns with their family traditions. A project with B-Floor, a theatre company in Bangkok, selected by the Wellcome Trust as part of Art in Global Health, Wellcome Collection, to develop a play for scientific dissemination, further strengthened the concept of utilising the body as a means to acquire self-awareness in my studies. The YONOK capsule collection and The Dharma Vision prototypes are extensions based on the above-

mentioned designerly experience. The evaluation of designerly activities is based on the perceived level of syncretic narrative observed during and after the creation process with designers and associate professionals.

In summary; two typologies have been defined based on academic and industry contexts. The design pedagogy serves as the locus. Scholarly activities primarily focus on the learning process and outcomes for students, primarily at the university level in Bangkok, Thailand's capital city. Designerly activities, on the other hand, aim to train professionals and produce tangible outcomes as a result of an expanded process where collaboration is the fundamental element. The aim is to engage in a pluriversal narrative that includes designers and related professionals.

4.8.1. Prototype 01.D: YONOK, Collecting Memories



Figure 30, YONOK, Capsule Collection (Maggio, 2014)

YONOK, (see figure 13) was initiated outside the academic context; however, it integrates the findings of the previous experiments. It is a fashion project begun to

gather personal-local memories and the visual richness of the unique local crafts of Southeast Asia. While moving from west to east, collecting became an automatism. It became then something unexpected. The result, as an artefact, could thus be defined as a medium able to connect cultures by reframing the initial observer's preconceptions.

4.8.2. Context

YONOK was developed in the geographical and cultural context of Southeast Asia, specifically in the former Kingdom of Siam, now known as the Kingdom of Thailand. This designerly activity is connected to Archer's definition of design as the collected experience of the material culture and the collected body of experience, skill and understanding embodied in the arts of planning, inventing, making and doing (1979). Similarly, Victor and Sylvia Margolin suggested that the primary aim of social design is the satisfaction of human needs (2002). As a practitioner and researcher, while transitioning from the West to the East, my early goal was to position myself as an active participant without causing disturbance. During this process, collecting became an automatism. Moreover, living in a host society enabled me to learn and appreciate new ways of perceiving and experiencing the body, which may have "influenced the manner in which emotions are felt and communicated" (Frevert, 2014). Within this long-term prototype, a designerly approach was integrated with an ethnographic approach, aiming to bridge the cultural gap through using the senses as a tool to cultivate awareness. The project initially began almost unconsciously as a way to collect personal memories, but the visual richness of the unique local craft of Southeast Asia unexpectedly became significant, and turned it into something else.

4.8.3. Intention

As a designerly activity, the intention is to emphasise that the design discipline originated from the industrial sector to cater to a broad public audience. Additionally, and equally importantly, the intention is to utilise the practice-based pedagogy approach developed step-by-steps through by prototyping and iteration within an academic context, as a means to empower design practitioners and related professionals. In this context, theatre performance is considered as a tool, and the body serves as the means to acquire self-awareness (sensory-emotional), to expand the professional training path, and develop tangible outcomes through collaborative processes. During the process of adapting to a diverse cultural and temporal context, the words of the Austrian-born American designer and educator Victor Papanek “the only important thing about design is how it relates to people” (1971) have been an inspirational model. When we refer to ‘culture’, we encompass “spiritual culture, material culture and body culture, but these do not just range side-by-side” (Henning, 1: 2007). Furthermore, this designerly activity aims to highlight how “Design has its own distinct ‘things to know, ways of knowing them, and ways of finding out about them’” (Cross, 1: 2006). As a guest in a host society, I had to work navigate through a cultural shift, which prompted a profound exploration of my positionality within this alternative context. The instinctive practice of collecting as a way to engage with a culture thus became a tentative attempt to acquire knowledge as episteme and gain techne. Exploring the landscape through the visual narrative of collected textiles from around the country, became the initial step in building a tool to generate open questions about social practices and taboos in society. The initial

intention was to analyse local fabric production to enhance my understanding of the society – a self-reflective prototype at first. However, over the course of the four-year-long project, it evolved into a tool to materialise the experience. In some ways it aligns with the perspective of the American artist Dan Flavin, who once remarked that artistic experience isn't the object itself, but instead is all around you (2016).

4.8.4. Prototyping

The name YONOK is derived from a lost city in the modern northern Thailand. It appears that from the thirteenth to the fourteenth century AD, the Yonok area stretched from Sipsongpana (China) to Haripunchai (present-day Lamphun province). Conceptually aligned with the intentions outlined above, the prototyping process differed from previous iterations, but the core process of YONOK operates in a similar fashion as the scholarly activities. In fact, even here, the concept of body movement and time has been integrated into this practice. Not only ideas, but also emotions, are cultural artifacts (Clifford, 1973). Here, emotions are translated into intangible/visible elements. Similarly, once the tangible object was displayed to public, it became a node for collective imagination – a link between nostalgia and dream – which helped to enhance self-reflection and foster collective awareness.

This prototype was a four-year project. Initially, fabrics had been collected by travelling to the north and south of Thailand during the dry and rainy seasons, or purchased from local shops or from small silk factories with four or five employees, most of which were from the same family. In some cases, a local gatekeeper brought bring me fabric samples from remote villages in south Thailand. This helped me to realise that Thailand's population consists of over 60 ethnicities, a data point

confirmed and published in 2021 as part of the 'You Me We Us' project conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in partnership with the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre (SAC), the Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPECT) and the Council of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand (CIPT), with the support from the European Union (EU).

From the collecting fabrics to the latest garment prototypes, approximately four years had passed. In total there were twenty pieces, mostly genderless. Thai silk was the main material used, and some samples were created by mixing silk and cotton fabrics. Each article of clothing article took almost two months to complete, from finding the fabrics to adding details such as handmade nacre buttons, as well as engaging in extensive co-designing part with the local tailor. The most challenging and complex aspect of the project was finding the right way to collaborate with local artisans. Unexpectedly, some tailors refused to cut certain fabrics to create clothing because certain patterns held strong connections to their childhood memories and related stories, so they prefer to not alter them. On the hand, despite the language barrier, conversation with other tailors helped shape the collection in a manner that was well-received by the local community.

In order to properly introduce this capsule fashion collection to the potential Thai and Italian consumers, the Italian Trade Commissioner and his wife, an independent film director, an archaeologist, and theatre performers were then invited to a private apartment for a sneak preview without revealing any information about the project. A suitcase containing all the clothes was shared with them, without gender instructions. Each person chose their favourite items, and subsequent Socratic

debates led to engaging conversations where each professional explained their feelings and emotions about the collection they were wearing.

4.8.5. Observation and evaluation of practice

The creation of the capsule collection involved iterating with various professionals operating both within and outside of the design system. This included local tailors, theatre performers, hotel general managers, journalists, silk factory owners and employees, university lecturers, and academic research committees at Assumption University of Thailand, and Artisans Associations in Italy. It began as an exploration of the self, but over time, it became a useful tool to enhance my understanding of my position within the host landscape. The collection comprised tangible elements, such as fabrics collected from diverse areas of the region, and the recent memories associated with them. Once finalised, it became a physical collection, and some extent, a tool to reflect a personal vision within the context. The intended customers, or potential users, became both performers and spectators simultaneously. When a person wears the items, the clothing becomes a tool for unity and a quest for pluriversality. This pedagogical prototype takes on a physical form to educate both the wearer and the observer. The duality of this potential perspective necessitated careful consideration of how to introduce it to a large audience. The initial positive feedback from potential customers and individuals working in the fashion industry led to extending the project to Italy. Over the course of one year, discussions were held regarding possible collaboration for prototyping a similar project with local artisans and folk associations in regions such as Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, to Umbria, and Tuscany. A business plan related to the prototype led to winning a competition called Re-Seed, which provided a start-up in residence (scientific

incubator) with Università di Udine, Friuli Innovazione, Scuola Internazionale di Studi Superiori Avanzati-SISSA and Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia. Financial support and business advice were granted through the competition, although unfortunately they were insufficient to attract investors. On the other hand, while travelling around Italy, I initiated conversations with design and PR professionals. One of them began a round trip around the country in search of hidden or disappearing artisans and folk arts.

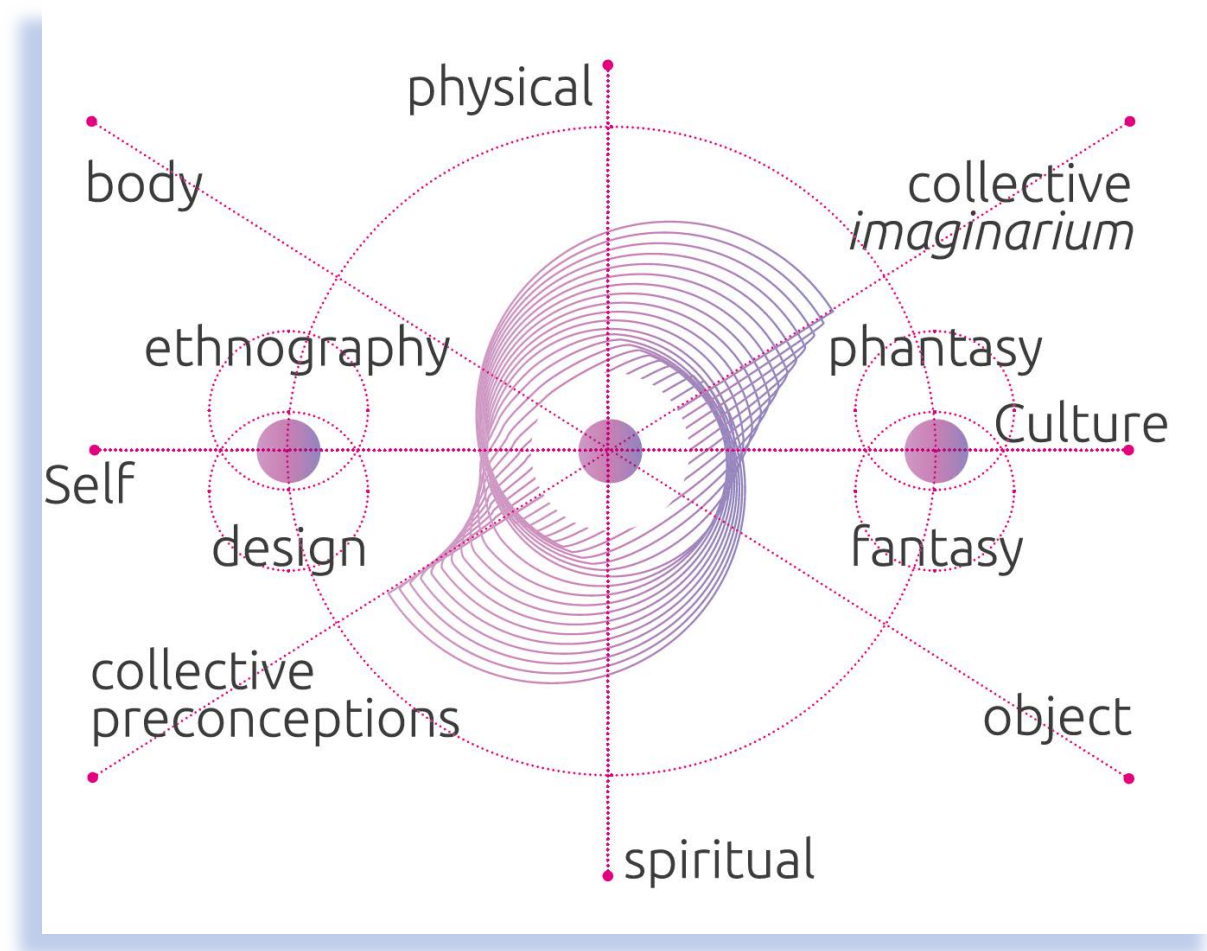


Figure 21: YONOK, Capsule Collection, infographics (Maggio, 2014)

4.8.6. Summary

YONOK was an integral part of this practice-based research enquiry. As described in my paper presented and then published as proceedings for Cumulus Hong Kong

2016 held at the Hong Kong Design Institute from 21 to 24 November, 2016. The theme of the conference was 'Open Design for E-very-thing — exploring new design purposes'. The fashion project initially started as a way to collect personal memories, but it unexpectedly evolved, inspired by the visual richness of the unique local craft, to become a capsule collection created with local artisans during my extended stay in Southeast Asia. Once the final product was shown to the public, feedback exceeded expectations. Exhibited in Italy, it became a new starting point and a platform for conversations, as well as a tool to reframe approaches to initiate pluriversal narratives. It laid the foundation for a methodology to encourage students, future designers, and early-stage professionals, to cultivate self-awareness through somatic activities.

The unplanned nature of this process, raise no questions about cultural appropriation, but prompted conversations about how designers can be inclusive without claiming originality over native patterns. A pluriversal narrative helped initiate debates about originality and creativity in different cultural settings, serving as a focal point for larger conversations. In my paper for the 2016 Cumulus conference, I highlighted how this approach to fashion design could spark conversations about seeing a garment as more than a physical object, acting as a manifesto to reframe cultural preconceptions. In addition to the Cumulus 2016 conference in Hong Kong, this designerly activity has been exhibited and explained at various events and informal meetings within and outside of the academic and design industry. These include: the National Chamber of Italian Fashion (Camera Della Moda), discussions with Barbara Franchin, the founder of ITS - International Talent Support, and participation in the 2014 public event called Note d'Asia/Rivoluzione Artigiana

organised by Confartigianato Udine, (Artisans Association of Udine Province, Italy) at Casa Cavazzini Museum as part of the Far East Film Festival. The YONOK Capsule Collection was also exhibited at Palazzo Bontadosi Art Gallery in Montefalco, Italy, and at the Ninth International Conference on Design Principles and Practices, 12–14 March 2015 at University Center Chicago, Chicago, USA – Special Focus: Industrial–Post-Industrial–Neo-Industrial Design: Reflecting on the Transformation of Production in the Project.

The observations and experiences gained from YONOK, as did similar experiences such as those with Devise Theatre, built a foundation, which led to my further research focusing on the value of body in social, moral and physical terms and the search for a way to incorporate this space into a form of design pedagogy that would include cultural context and self-reflection. It was the first attempt to merge practice-based research and a pure design activity, and was a milestone that allowed me to gradually enter into the host society and, at the same time, enabled me to become a gatekeeper to an alternative narrative about design in Thailand. The Observations gained from YONOK formed the basis for the subsequent prototype: The Dharma Vision.

The following observations from YONOK informed the Dharma Vision prototype:

- Context and location of participants: A focus on designing a physical product that can be read as a manifesto to reframe cultural preconception, a tool to touch on the untouchable (Maggio, 2016).

- Designerly approach meets ethnography: Through immersion in a host society, I unconsciously learned new ways to perceive and experience the body, which may have “influenced the manner in which emotions are felt and communicated” (Frevert, 2014: 43). The materialisation of this experience through the designerly activity led viewers to question their own reality and assumed knowledge.
- Empowering viewers and buyers to discuss the relevance of self-acceptance in term of their roots: A focus on empowering people to challenge preconception about specific geographic areas, such as Thailand, by showcasing the hidden beauty of traditional patterns through the creation of a capsule collection and subsequently engaging in dialogues on pluriversal realities.
- Creating conditions to initiate a pluriversal narrative within and outside of the academic context: These prototypes helped to develop the subsequent designerly action prototypes.

4.9. Prototype 02.D: The Dharma Vision

The idea of cultivating consciousness through Arts and Meditation emerged from a series of experiments on living in the present moment. Recently, I had the opportunity to collaborate with Ambienta, an Italian wallpaper company. I conducted a series of online mindfulness workshops with the company's employees and CEO, which helped to refine my initial message and introduce a new perspective into the company. The wallpaper collection is the outcome of a productive and harmonious partnership among the parties.

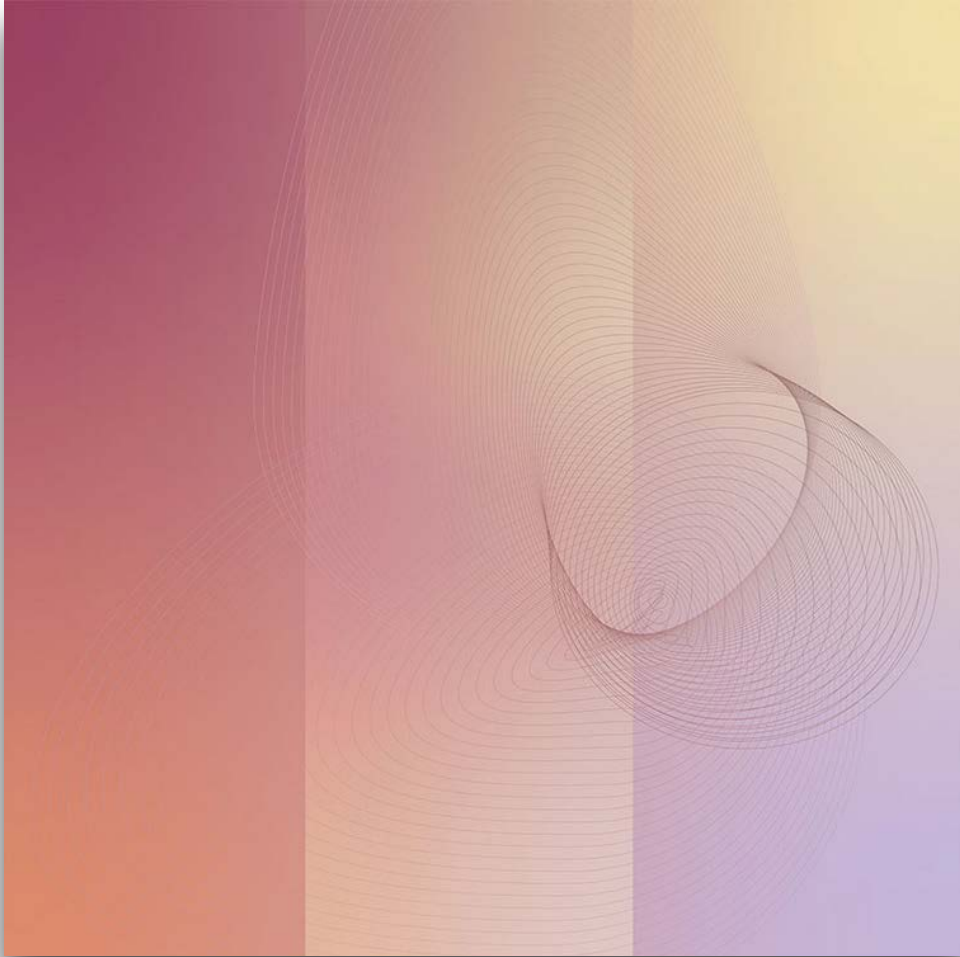


Figure 38: Dharma Ayutthaya, Artwork detail (Maggio, 2021)

4.9.1. Context

As a consequence of engaging in academic studies on cultures, my search expanded to a series of encounter with various religious masters, leading to the development of a series of workshops titled ‘True Perception: Meditative Awareness as a Gateway to Artistic Expression’. These experiences also influenced my daily practice, blending insights gained from these encounters with designerly skills. Over 300 artworks have been created this way, culminating in a solo exhibition called ‘The Meditative Gentleman’, at Duke Contemporary Art Gallery, Gaysorn Village, Bangkok, Thailand. Subsequently, the exhibition garnered attention and was

published in national and international magazines, which led to a potential collaboration with a wallpaper company based in Milano, Italy.

4.9.2. Intention

As mentioned in the key terms section, designerly activities pertain to prototypes conducted within the design industry contexts of Thailand and Italy. The pedagogy applied to the designerly activities is moulded similarly to that applied to scholarly activities. Designerly activities aim to develop tangible products for potential customers, but their underlying intention is to create conditions for subtle training for the professionals collaborating in the prototypes. The objective is to engage in a pluriversal narrative by encouraging participants to become part of the conversation and challenge their own perceptions of others' realities.

4.9.3. Prototyping

The name 'Dharma Vision' is rooted in the cultural context where I conducted my scholarly and designerly activities. In Thailand, which is a region in Southeast Asia, a large majority of religious practitioners are followers of Theravada Buddhism. According to this philosophy, the body is perceived "both individually and socially as one of the central parts of the basis of lived experience" (Collins, 2013: 137). This concept inspired the visualisation of collectivism after a collective meditation session. To ensure privacy, the online sessions were conducted with cameras turned off.

The first session involved two employees from the company responsible for artwork selection. The initial conversation was about how I was planning to approach the

creation of a wallpaper (to be printed on demand) addressing the sensitive topic of meditation. In order to avoid any sensitive issues with the media, we agreed to avoid the use of any spiritual and religious symbols that could directly associate meditation with a specific belief. Over the course of five months of conversations with the company, the tangible outcome was a set of three-tone variation wallpapers. The challenge was how to share knowledge and transfer the experience of immersion in another culture through an artefact. Technical challenges were overcome through clear discussions on what to avoid and how to improve in order to achieve the best printing quality and overall visual effect. In Buddhism, Dharma refers to cosmic order and can be interpreted as the teaching of the Buddha. I proposed three variations called Dharma Krabi, Dharma Ayutthaya, and Dharma Chang-Rai.







Figure 22-23-24: Dharma Ayutthaya, Dharma-Chang-Rai, Dharma Krabi, Wallpapers for Ambienta (Maggio, 2021)

4.9.4. Observation and evaluation of practice

The Dharma Vision was part of this practice-based research enquiry, and similar to YONOK, it began as a self-reflective practice. The fact that gained attention and led to a collaboration with a company for production was not planned in advance. In a way, it can be seen as a natural extension of the previously described capsule collection. By associating the two designerly activities, the word 'Gesamtkunstwerk' come to mind, not as synthesis of all arts, but perhaps as common goal to explore and shared what I have learned from the host society.

The process and results of The Dharma Vision were presented in a series of talks about design education in 2021. It served as an example to demonstrate the positive impact good design can have, especially in promoting wellbeing at home, which is particularly relevant in the context of the current pandemic and repeated national lockdowns. I presented this designerly activity in various talks across different countries: at the Contemplative Pedagogy Symposium 2021, hosted by University of Essex, Queen Margaret University, University of St. Andrews, and Cardiff Metropolitan University; the Global Sustainable Development Summit 2021 – SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all Quality education through effective visual communication, 19-20 Nov. 2021; Design Action 2030 — Industrial Design and Sustainable Social Innovation, Online Conference, hosted by Hubei University of Technology Sino-German Industrial Design Innovations Research School; APARN 2021 Asia Pacific Artistic Research Network; Design Education Trends 2021, and Trends in Design Education, School of Visual Communication – Ukraine, 16 December 2021. In doing so, I made this practice more relevant by talking about it, and it raised questions about the role of design, design educators, and whether it is possible to divide art and design for the benefit of the audience.

4.9.5. Summary

As mentioned above in the Observation and Evaluation of Practice section, The Dharma Vision exemplifies the influence of Victor Papanek's statement that "the only important thing about design is how it relates to people" (1971). The impact we can generate as designers depends on us, and how we choose to create the narrative around it. Aside from the commercial aspect, having the opportunity to

engage in conversations that challenge the status quo of design education and practice is an achieved goal that required a series of other actions to become effective.

The Observations from The Dharma Vision prototype are as follows:

- Context and location of participants

Focus on designing a physical product that can be read as a 'manifesto' to reframe cultural preconceptions, a tool to touch on the untouchable (Maggio, 2016).

- Designerly approach meets ethnography

By immersing myself a host society, I have unconsciously learned new ways to perceive and experience the body, which may have "influenced the manner in which emotions are felt and communicated" (Frevert, 2014: 43). The materialisation of this experience through designerly activity has led viewers to question their own reality and assumed knowledge.

- Empowering viewers and buyers to discuss the relevance of self-acceptance in terms of their roots:

Focus on empowering people to challenge preconception about specific geographic areas, such as Thailand, by showcasing the hidden beauty of tradition patterns through the creation of a capsule collection and subsequently engaging in dialogue on pluriversal realities.

- Creating conditions to initiate a pluriversal narrative within and outside of the academic context:

These prototypes have helped in developing subsequent designerly action prototypes.

Chapter Summary

The chapter describes the practice-based research practice conducted to initiate a counter-narrative, test preconceptions and related hypotheses in the context of Thai design education, specifically in the higher education setting of a university based in Bangkok, Thailand, where the prototypes were fabricated. Being aware of my positionality as a Westerner operating in Southeast Asia, all operations were conducted with respect for beliefs and cultural backgrounds, activating a latent awareness of self and the value of each individual's roots. This approach empowers students–learners to become fundamental players in shaping their own learning paths.

The design pedagogy serves as the foundation. Scholarly activities focus on the learning process and outcomes for students, primarily at the university level in Bangkok. Designerly activities aim to train professionals and produce tangible outcomes as a result of an iterative process where collaboration is a fundamental element. The overarching goal was to engage in a pluriversal narrative that includes designers and related professionals. As mentioned earlier, the practice-based research is structured around a number of prototypes, with the ones elucidated here being the most significant. To provide clarity, I have organised the activities into two areas, to better illustrate the contexts in which they originated. It is important to note at this stage that, as stated in the section on Ethics, all the prototypes described in the body of this thesis were conducted within the pedagogical context of higher

education, at the Bachelor and Masters level. This research formed a core curricular component of the International Program in Product Design at Assumption University of Thailand, for the following modules:

PD 3203 Product Design Studio III equivalent to credits: 6 (2-8-8)

PD 3204 Product Design Studio IV equivalent to credits: 6 (2-8-8)

PD 4205 Product Design Studio V equivalent to credits: 6 (2-8-8)

and for the International Program in Communication Design (CommDe), Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand within the Studio on Introduction to Drawing as Discipline, where I initiated the practice of bringing elements of Devise Theatre to the discipline of design pedagogy.

This calls for a re-evaluation of how we write and evaluate curricula in design pedagogy, especially in non-western cultures and contexts. The initial inquiry into the positioning of the social–physical body in design pedagogy and the broader industry consequently in this industry-led discipline prompted a participatory call to action, where students, learners, and instructors are on the same stage.

Just like many design research projects, the road that lead to the current version of the current prototypes was marked by incremental discoveries. The research questions were initially both “ill-defined” and “ill-structured” (Cross, 2006, p. 7).

Immersing oneself into a new cultural landscape requires several steps in terms of adjustment and acceptance. Early designerly and scholarly activities facilitated this transition by establishing a practice-based research reputation that respects the

legitimacy of the native culture and beliefs. Working as a lecturer at Chulalongkorn University, the oldest and most prestigious higher institution in the country, granted me the access to arts and design cultural groups within and beyond academic circles. Similarly, collaborating with professors at the ethnographic department of Silpakorn University, the first art university in the country, broadened my prospective on Thai culture and its relation to modern and contemporary arts. It is relevant to note that the Silpakorn University was founded in Bangkok in 1943 by Tuscan-born (Italian) art professor Corrado Feroci, also known as Silpa Bhirasri. Some of the other artists, architects and engineers involved in Thailand's modernisation: Corrado Feroci (1892-1962), Mario Tamagno (1877-1941), Ercole Manfredi (1883-1973), Annibale Rigotti (1870-1968), Carlo Allegri (1862-1938), Vittorio Novi (1866-1955), Galileo Chini (1873-1956), Carlo Rigoli (1883-1962), Cesare Ferro (1880-1934) – names as from J Banes (2016) – were also Italians chosen to participate in the building of Thailand's modern architecture and urbanisation (Lohapon, 2019).

Proposing and initiating design pedagogy prototypes has been a complex journey that started with observing and learning daily practices in the host society, then gradually transitioning into becoming an active participant. Due to job duties, I had to compress these design pedagogy prototypes within a relatively short timeframe. With limited time on hand, I had to find the gaps and the right gatekeepers before proposing any design pedagogy concepts, in a process similar to that which I suggested to my students in the design research module. Once these elements were in place, proposals for higher education were written within the gap in module briefs and eventually accepted by line managers and/or department chairmen. Similarly, in the design industry, designerly actions need find the appropriate time

and customers to initiate collaborations that go beyond product-focused scopes. In this industry, the process itself becomes a tool for training employees to expand their preconceptions and points of view.

While developing the scholarly activity called Emotional Space (ES) – a prototype that differs from the others by investigating the self and collective preconceptions, and translating these into a tangible, dedicated space where others can immerse themselves within a six-month student project timeframe – I received the request to present it to an external commission to verify if the learning outcomes and methodology presented were compatible with the quality standards of higher education certification. At the management level, proposing alternative pedagogy approaches to train employees poses some complexities. Studying the common ground and industry-specific language was necessary for success. to succeed.

5. Conclusion: Designing Awareness & Confidence

“As participant designers, we focus on changing ourselves and the way we do things in order to change the world”. Joichi Ito. (2016). Design and Science.

PubPub Available at <https://www.pubpub.org/pub/designandscience>

(Accessed 29/12/2021)

As set forth in Section 1.4 ‘Chapter summary and thesis outline’, in this chapter I conclude the thesis with a review of its context, aim, and methods, and outline the details of each prototype. Additionally, I provide a summary of the main developments and contributions of this research. Finally, I outline further research and development directions for the scholarly and designerly activities proposed here.

The central questions driving my journey are as follows:

1. Where should we position the social–physical body in design pedagogy and, consequently, in this industry based discipline?
2. How, as a Western practitioner and educator operating in Southeast Asia, can I initiate alternative narratives to adjust the Western design education imprint?

These questions have been the backbone of my journey, and only by stepping back for a period of time, was I capable of recognizing the real value of these inquiries. I have discussed and presented my approach at academic and professional conferences from the North to the global South. The feedback received from both within and outside academia consistently highlighted the fact that my approach has boosted self-confidence in students and professionals. Designerly and academic actions have become a cumulative sum of achievements. As noted earlier, the main differences between the two activities is the context and, perhaps, the final users who benefitted from my attention. Designerly actions allowed me to cooperate with professionals within and outside the design system, while the academic system mainly focused on design students. Drawing a connection between these two contexts, it seems that a third culture emerged, or perhaps my capacity to move between contexts and cross-functional teams has improved, giving me the elasticity that Paola Antonelli mentioned in her essay.

5.1. Contribution of the new knowledge to the Thai design context

The hypothesis generated by attempting the fabrication of a framework for a syncretic pluriversal narrative in this practice-based research has been formed around a number of prototypes, including the scholarly activities as Emotional Space

(ES) and Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM), and designerly activities as YONOK and The Dharma Vision. Developed in the South-Asian country formerly called the Kingdom of Siam, nowadays known as the Kingdom of Thailand, the above-mentioned actions, taking place within the Thai design education system, have revealed and emphasised the factors that constitute and define this framework. In a similar fashion, they have also demonstrated their value as culturally relevant actions, capable of sparking collaboration and engaging conversations that empower participants/learners to translate the intangible into visible elements, which helped enhance self-reflection and engagement in collective awareness. These actions foster the physicality of knowledge as a set of automatisms incorporated in the body.

This practice-based research has co-created a pedagogic narrative *with students/* participants, rather than just for learners. It has been a gatekeeper to engage with a large range of professionals: tailors, artists, master jewelers, theatre performers, hotel general managers, journalists, silk factory owners and employees, diplomatic missions, university lecturers and academic research committees at public and private universities, artisan associations, and people with a variety of cultural, religious and spiritual backgrounds, including Theravada Buddhism, Roman Catholicism, and Brahmanism. Most importantly it has led to a conversation with the generation that is about to develop a counter-narrative within the design industry; the majority of whom are, notably, female. By expanding the dialogue between academia and industry, it demonstrated the need for a consistent and pluriversal narrative between the academic and professional practices. Students and professionals who took part were encouraged to take ownership, empowering their self-confidence and building their self-awareness. This outlines a need for a more

holistic approach to design, moving beyond aesthetics within a siloed discipline, via a series of activities, in favour of a multiplicity of possible worlds – a world where many words fit (Kothari, 2019) – from universe to pluriverse. This move call for a re-evaluation of how we write and evaluate curricula in design pedagogy, especially in and for non-western cultures and contexts, while cooperating with a number of minorities.

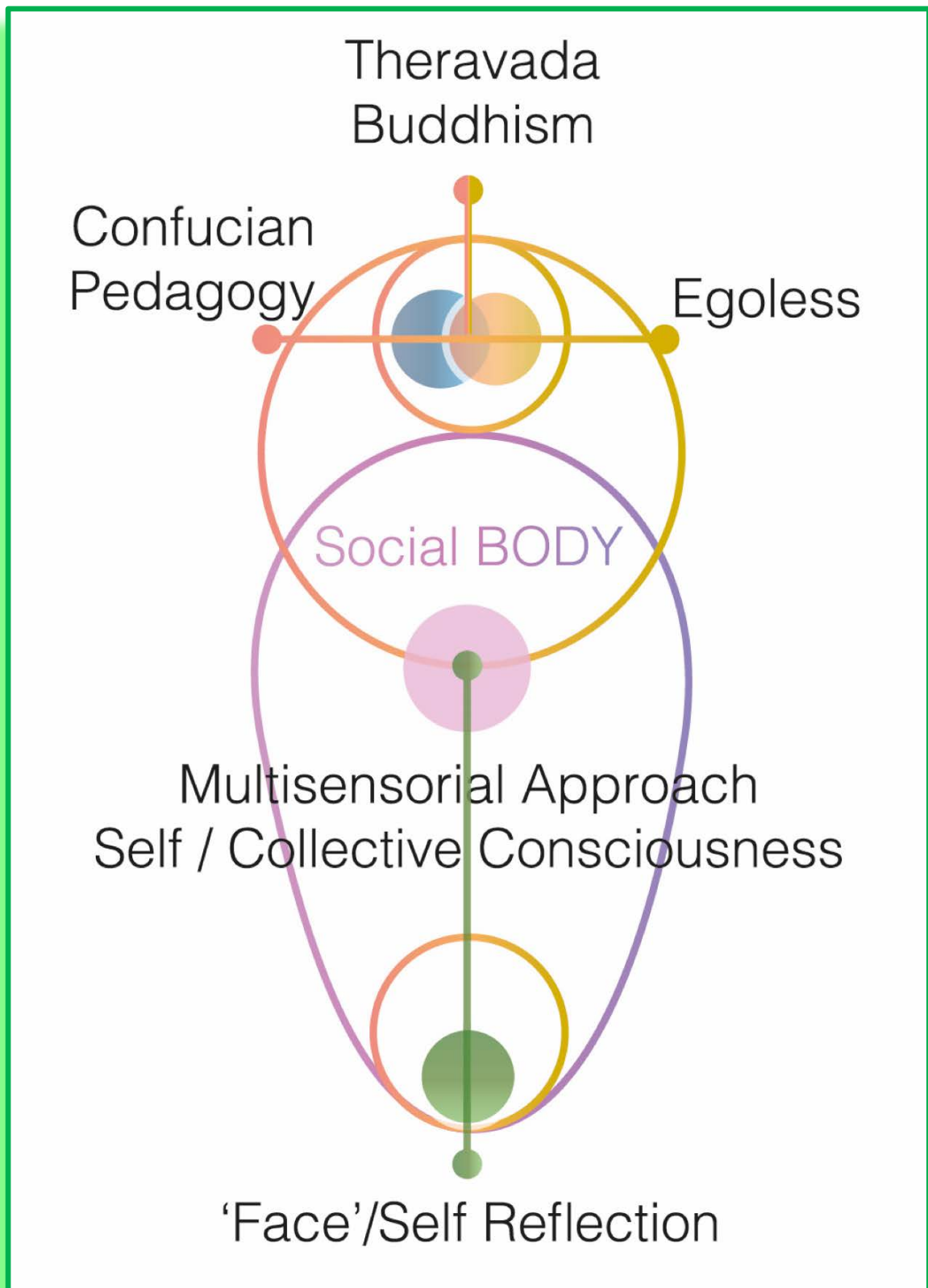


Figure 39, infographics representing elements to enhance collective consciousness within the framework of Thai Design Education (Maggio, 2017).

The above diagram (Figure 19) represents the method that I have experimented with through several undergraduate classes. In the early stages, students are encouraged to think about themselves in terms of the physical and moral body, and this has led the learners to explore their own identity and initiate a way to share their previously untouchable and invisible emotions and feelings. Under the umbrella of a multi-sensory approach, my method advanced a type of self and collective consciousness. As explained earlier, introducing freshmen and sophomore to the basic design principles via traditional drawing techniques and tridimensional models was quite an unsuccessful experience until the concept of the body was introduced. Bringing a physical theatre practitioner to the class to leading a workshop together, was a pivotal moment for the students. Suddenly, the body became the main tool, the way to visualise and grasp abstract geometrical concepts such as dot, line and plane. The embodiment of each of these concepts led to a better relation between students and their spaces – human to object – self to others. This recalls the concept expressed by the French philosopher, Stiegler: “[k]nowledge is a set of automatisms incorporated in the body” (Nony 2015: 15). Quite surprisingly, this first workshop had a long-term impact on students. One of them, years later, developed a thesis on auto-generative tattoo methods, linking the ideas of basic forms and shapes. Others applied these concepts even further to their Master’s theses in contemporary arts, scenography, and branding.

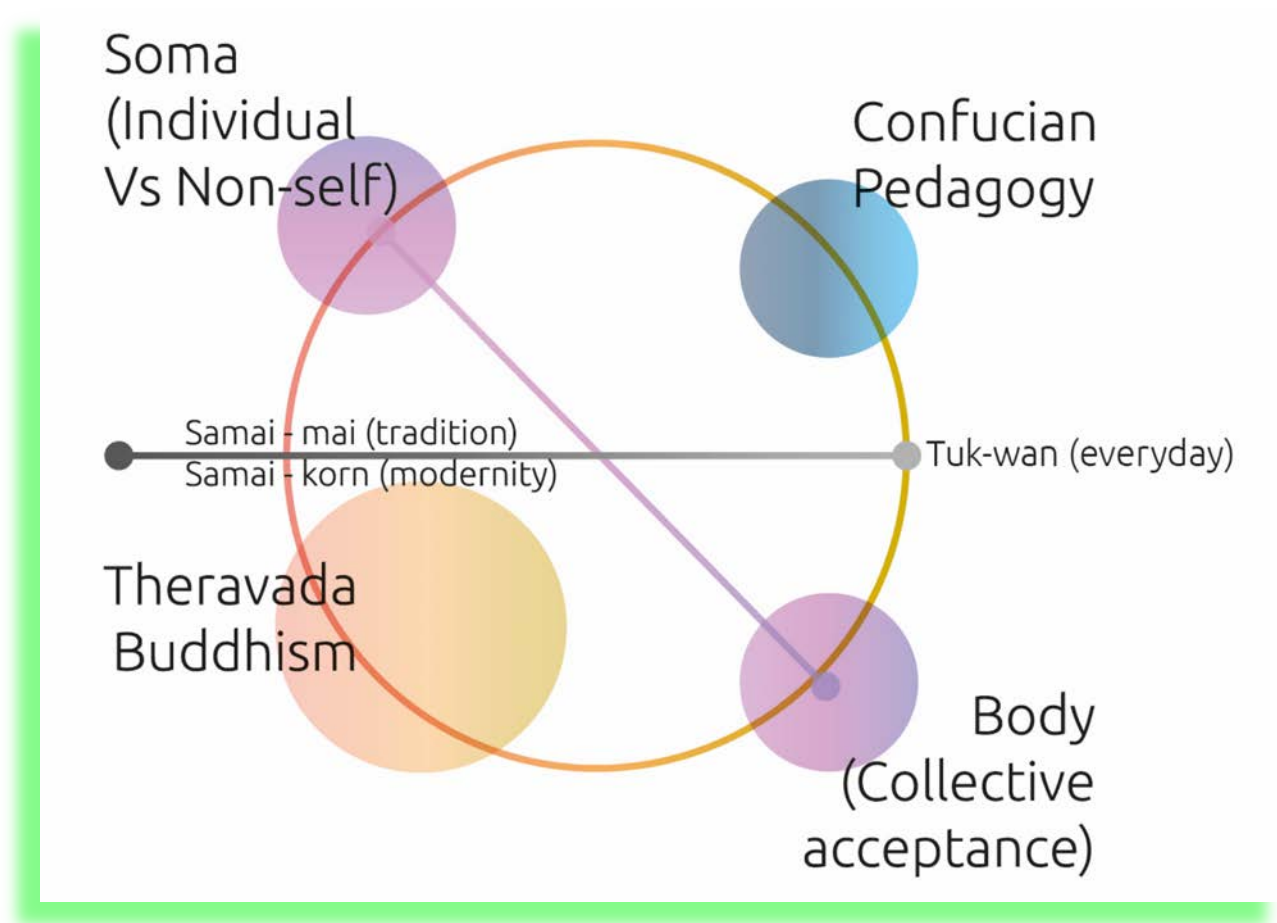


Figure 1 Chart representing cultural context within the framework of Thai Design Education (Maggio, T. 2017).

The above diagram (Figure 20) represents the Thai design students and their social and cultural context; a context where I am acting through the lens of a participant-observer. Theravada Buddhism and Confucian pedagogy as collectivism are the two main elements in this landscape. The (main) learner has to deal with a religious point of view, while the individual should aim to be egoless and, inversely, be accepted by the collectivity. Within this ideology, the physical body must learn to cope with its spiritual framework (an act supposedly achievable only by monks). A secondary, but no less important, layer of context is daily life, where the learner has to contend simultaneously with the sense of tradition in contrast with an optimistic view of

modernity. The university uniform is, for instance, a piece of everyday life. According to undergraduate students, it is not viewed merely as a traditional factor per se, but as a status symbol or the badge of a kind of exclusive membership to be proud of. It is, then, in their perspective, customisable through accessories, which are (mostly) high-tech or from a well-known brand.

5.2. Contribution of the new knowledge to pedagogy via somaesthetics and consciousness

“There is no ‘inner’ life that is not a first attempt to relate to another person. In this ambiguous position, which has been forced on us because we have a body and a history (both personally and collectively) we can never know complete rest.”

(Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1948, *The World of Perception*, p.88)

The aim of this framework is the conscious use of a design approach applied actively in students’/learners’ day-to-day living, reaching goals by increasing self-awareness. Through this, not only we are more aware of who we are but also what we want to achieve. The practice-based part of this research investigates the application of somaesthetics and consciousness in Thai Design Education. As mentioned above, the philosopher Richard Shusterman coined the term ‘somaesthetics’ as a sum of the word ‘soma’, meaning the living, perceptive body, and the Greek concept of aesthetics. It attempts to balance the representational with the experiential realm (2009: 9). Through the creation of a number of prototypes, including Emotional

Space (ES), Sense-Perception and Self Motion (SPSM), and designerly activities such as YONOK and The Dharma Vision, design students/learners and professionals received training to make them more conscious of user experience by experiencing themselves as the users.

5.3. Contribution of the new knowledge toward a culturally relevant attitude

With the word 'culture' we refer to 'spiritual culture, material culture and body culture, but these categories do not just range side by side'

(Henning, 1: 2007)

The practice outlined here reveals alliances between the fields of art, design, education, philosophy, social-science, sociology and meditation. It seeks to interrogate the emergence of adapting to local cultural context by being aware of global practices. It is a quest toward a mode of operating within the uncertainty of a host society where I became, to some extent, part of a minority. As I write, it is 2023 in the Western calendar; 2566 is the year that appears on the Thai calendar, Thailand being a Buddhist state, and one where the equation of authority, education and collective identity are preeminent in daily life. As mentioned above, in this respect the anthropologist Aulino defined the "social body" as an actual living organism of which everyone is a part. (2014: 417). [1]

The comparison between the human body of an individual and the collective body as untouchable is a subtle concept that permeates the idea of the country itself, and has engaged the attention of the author. "To design without first understanding

context is blind and inefficient” (Chow and Wolfgang 2010, 10). [2] Through exploring new modes of enquiry and their deep interrelationship across design, pedagogy and culture, this practice reveal new possibilities in a creative practice conducted within consciousness to develop a pluriversal narrative that promotes an expanded conversation between learners/instructors, learners/learners, instructors/instructors within academia, design, and related sectors of endeavour. It creates new artefacts and stimulates the self and the collective to become active elements of the social body by confronting their inherent bias and preconceptions.

5.4. Contribution of the new knowledge toward new forms of design pedagogy as activism

The notion of challenging the status quo of design pedagogy has been outlined in Chapter 2, laid out in the founding of early art education experiments during pre- and post-World War II in western countries like the UK and the US. These included projects at the Frederick Kiesler Laboratory for Design Correlation at the School of Architecture at Columbia University from 1937 onwards, the 1960s experiments called ‘situational’ projects developed for the evening course at what is now the Central Saint Martin College of Art and Design (UK), and the experiments conducted in Roy Ascott’s ‘Groundcourse’ at Ealing Art College in London between 1961 and 1964. This practice reflects the author’s interchangeable role as designer, researcher, artist, lecturer and activist; connecting the practice and its discourse with a variety of actors. This is both integral to the practice and a practice in itself. During the process of enabling this, a range of professionals with a broad spectrum of various methods and approaches have been invited to work under the same

umbrella. It facilitated an ameliorative practice with students/learners that has led to the opportunity to assimilate others' perspectives by encouraging the expression of self and collective voices. However, with this approach, the initial open question remains: where should we position the social/physical body within design pedagogy and, consequently, in this industry-based discipline? As the author of this thesis developed via a practice-based approach, I can declare with confidence that individual efforts will lead to new, creative possibilities for Thai design education and Asia-Pacific context. The students/learners will affect academia and the design industry by creating pluriversal curricula.

5.5. Concluding Remark

“The consequences of our unwillingness to bring into the classroom our own students' sense of meaning and have them begin to build and exercise a sense of discernment about that meaning and the implications in the world are quite frankly horrifying.” Dr. Daniel Barbezat, Professor of Economics at Amherst College
(Speaking at Syracuse University 15th October 2013)

Academically, design pedagogy is a relatively young discipline, with PhD studies about design being relatively new. Early generations of higher education art and design programs in Thailand were initiated by scholars with the highest degrees from the United Kingdom or United States. As mentioned in the keynotes sections, the term 'international' is used to describe academic programs where the primary spoken language is English, even if most of the students and academic staff are Thai nationals. Within this context, the prototypes as scholarly and designerly

activities were initiated after an initial adjustment to the host society. Gatekeepers sometimes disappeared, but usually I was capable of finding solutions to unpredictable situations with connections previously made through this practice-based research. It is also relevant, in order to fully comprehend the cultural context within which I was operating, to note that Thailand was ruled by the *Saktina* system for many centuries. The *Saktina* lord ruled the land, establishing himself as the owner of the land, though he himself had performed no labour to clear it. (Ratktham n.d.: 7 as quoted on Thai Radical Discourse, p.150). *Saktina* is an old Thai term deriving from a Sanskrit-Thai hybrid: Sanskrit *sakti* (power, the power of the good) linked to Thai *na* (rice, field).

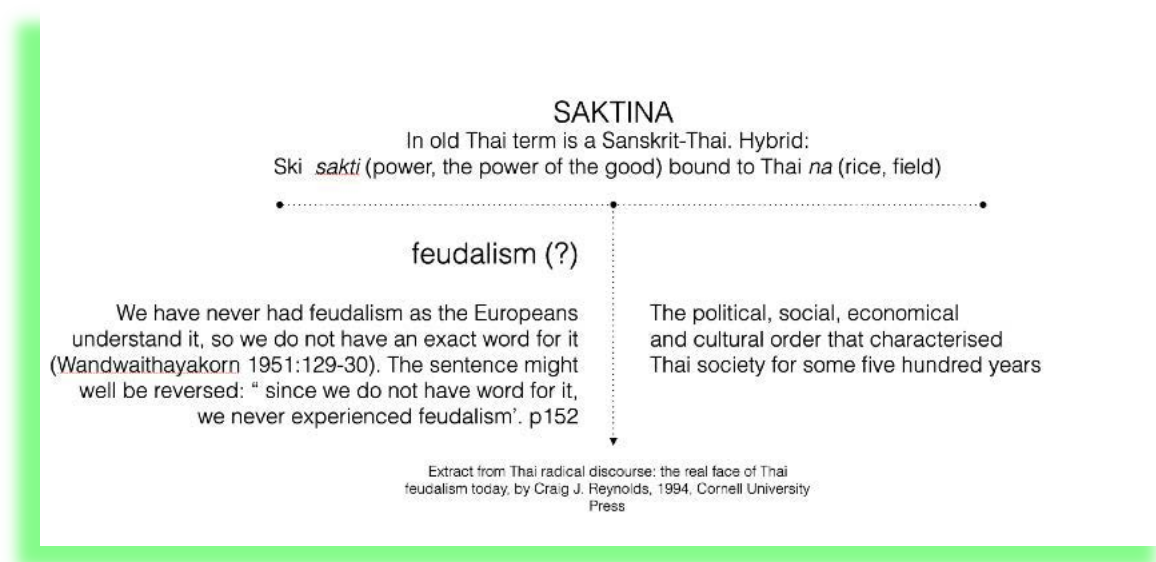


Figure 40: Diagram to explain the Thai concept of Saktina: (Extract from Thai radical discourse: the real face of Thai feudalism today, by Craig J. Reynolds, 1994, Cornell University Press).

Within this context, the relevance of being aware of the host society within which my practice-based research took place, can be seen in their concept of culture and uncultured; *un-Thai* in fact means ‘without culture’ – *watthanatham* in Thai.

Furthermore, as described by Michael Herzfeld, Professor of the Social Sciences in the Department of Anthropology at Harvard University in his article, 'The Absent Presence: Discourses of Crypto-Colonialism', in Thailand the idea of freedom is certainly not a product of this Eurocentric ideology, although its expression in national discourse may owe something to it (2002: 903). Aside from the limitations experienced as a result of operating within a host society, I feel lucky to have been able to conduct my practice-based research in this territory. Obstacle and uncertainty have been the norm in the long journey to develop this thesis. Unanticipated connections have led to projects like the performance with B-Floor and sparked major shifts in my designerly and scholarly perspectives. However, the Senior Curator at MOMA, Paola Antonelli, stated "Adaptability is an ancestral distinction of human intelligence, but today's instant variations in rhythm call for something stronger: elasticity. The by-product of adaptability + acceleration, elasticity is the ability to negotiate change and innovation without letting them interfere excessively with one's own rhythms and goals" (Antonelli, 2008: 14). To this end, *A Framework for a Syncretic Pluriversal Narrative: Somaesthetics and Consciousness in Thai Design Education* is about exactly that: developing and enhancing flexibility to enable designers to become quick learners in a time of constant changes.

5.6. Further development

Design pedagogy, as the discipline that this practice-based research represents, is in a state of continuous transformation; or, at least, this is what the industry seems to expect of it. Currently, data and presentations at conferences attended by

academics and working professionals from all over the world are showing an increase in developing and fabricating curricula capable of including minorities in terms of races, beliefs and related knowledge. The decolonization movement aims to de-center Eurocentric perspectives, and this aspect has become the main path to education reform in several western contexts, to some extent dismantling what education has been during the last century. Conferences and dialogues on how to make design education inclusive are becoming ever more popular. Canada and the US are championing the cause. Art and Design education have a role to play in the process, led by such individuals as Elizabeth 'Dori' Tunstall, a designer, anthropologist, researcher and, currently, the first Black Dean of a Faculty of Design, at the Faculty of Design at Ontario College of Art and Design University, (OCAD University) in Toronto, Canada. Similarly, the Design Research Society (DRS) initiated a group called 'Pluriversal Design SIG', aiming to create a liberatory and radical space within the design research community to promote/create inter-cultural and pluralistic conversations about design. Notably, the DRS, founded in the UK in 1966, is the longest established multi-disciplinary worldwide society for the design research community.

Furthermore, the current pandemic and the disrupted norms associated with it seem to be the new normality that everyone is experiencing at the moment. Countries are attempting to answer the quest of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which is part of a call for action from the United Nations, aiming to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

(Available at <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>)

In this context it is significant that in March 2014, Frog Design, the global design consulting firm, in partnership with PointB (NGO) and local educational and professional institutions in Myanmar, adjacent to Thailand, started a centre to train the 'change agent of tomorrow' by using design thinking as a tool for empowerment for the new generation of citizens. In a similar fashion, Schools2030 (available at <https://schools2030.org>), is a ten-year participatory action research and learning improvement programme based in 1,000 government schools across ten countries. They describe their process as described as open-ended and adaptable to the cultural context.

Within this framework, briefly explained here, my twenty years of professional experience managing, coordinating and implementing multicultural practice-based research projects – including interventions focusing on early childhood and lifelong education – and my practice-based research, will enable me perform actions with a much greater impact. These PhD studies have created a supplementary structural knowledge framework, helping me learn how to learn.

While writing the early chapters, I started a nonpolitical party to enhance relations among Italians living abroad. With the approval of the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the aim of this project is to develop, among other priorities, spaces where education and culture, using art and design as tools, will be the elements used to reach out to Italian citizens to develop participative and inclusive operations.

This year, I began to disclose the narrative of my design pedagogy approach, which led to several invitations to speak and act as the keynote speaker for international conferences on education, and art and design pedagogy forums. These range from European Design Schools, to China University (details in Conferences & Talks).

Submitting my philosophy has granted me access to APARN 2021, the Asia Pacific Artistic Research Network, a platform for exchanging and initiating new narratives with researchers operating in the region. Notably, I was invited to speak at the Global Sustainable Development Summit 2021 (Asia– Africa). I gave a speech ‘SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all Quality education through effective visual communication (Research)’. In this speech, I explained the positive impact of design actions via alternative pedagogy, such as the book called ‘First Words - Prime Parole’ (2019), which I published with my then one-year-old daughter. This illustrated book served as a reference for the online drawing sessions that I developed during lockdowns for early years and Italian families around the globe. In 2021, with the Thai-Italian Chamber of Commerce and an international school as main sponsors, the book was printed in a new three-language edition: Italian, English and Thai, and became a tool for online and onsite workshops on drawing and positive parenting.

In November, I was interviewed by Derek Jones, Senior Lecturer in Design at The Open University (UK), and Convenor of the Design Research Society’s Pedagogy special interest group, for Reality - Realities and Physicality of Knowledge, Futures of Design Education Meetup 10 (details in Conferences and Talks). At the end of my presentation, I asked three main questions of the audience: Where should we

position the social/virtual/physical body in the design education curriculum? How can design teach kids complex topics like mental wellness and/or accepting their roots? Should we integrate a 'Designerly' teaching and practice-based research approach into every school level? The discussion lasted over an hour and then became particularly intense when I introduced the subject of how we should evaluate performance and what kind of new indicators we would need for curricula co-fabricated with students/learners. Additionally, someone noticed the influence of Jacques Derrida's philosophy on my design pedagogy approach, which became more evident after my talk at the Design Education Forum, hosted by the New Art School and sponsored by the China Europe International Design Culture Association (CEIDA). I assume that these PhD studies are tracing the path deeper into design pedagogy and related issues, some of which will require a cumulative effort to enable all potential participants to become mobilised.

The current pandemic has affected everyone at the global scale for the last years, and there is evidence that it has affected education reforms in many areas as well, both in 'developing' and 'high-income' countries. Funding for the arts, including design subjects, has been drastically reduced on a large scale. However, initiatives like schools2030, mentioned above, are integrating design thinking approaches to solve education issues in countries from Portugal to India, Brazil and other countries. Singapore, in its own unique way, has adopted design in their 'School X', created by the Design Singapore Council, to enhance and develop dialogue between citizen communities and authorities. (Available at <https://www.designsingapore.org/initiatives/school-of-x.html>)

These two examples, among others, are tangible case studies where I would like to see the further application of my PhD thesis and subject. Current open dialogues with lecturers from universities around the globe serve as the launchpad for an upcoming platform to connect practitioners with alternative design pedagogy approaches. The workshop 'Nowness, via Arts' at the Contemplative Pedagogy Symposium 2021 with the theme 'Pause: finding space in higher education', hosted by the University of Essex, Queen Margaret University, the University of St. Andrews, and Cardiff Metropolitan University, all in the UK, emphasised the need for celebrating moments of self and collective reflection in the academic space, besides giving instruction. During my session, emotions were translated from intangible to visible elements, which helped enhance self-reflection and engagement in collective awareness. These actions fostered the physicality of knowledge as a set of automatisms incorporated in the body. The use of a foot or an alternative hand to draw led the audience to reposition themselves, to some extent, from professionals to novices. This prototype subtly challenged how we learn via bodily actions. All these dialogues have been incorporated into my practice as collected experience and shared with students/learners that I have met time to time.

Recently, I have received requests to become a PhD thesis supervisor. Even international schools are requesting consultations on how to improve their approach to art and design disciplines. Meeting with people eager to learn, or to help structure their practice-based knowledge, will be a challenge that I am willing to undertake.

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Maggio, T. (2017) 'Taboo of the Body in the Framework of Product Design Education, Thailand, 2nd Interdisciplinary Conference TABOO -TRANSGRESSION - TRANSCENDENCE in Art & Science, 26 to 28 May, Department of Audio and Visual Arts at Ionian University, Corfu, Greece

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Maggio, T. (2016) 'De-schooling Product Design Education, an Experimental Physical Approach', 22nd International Symposium on Electronic Art, ISEA2016 Hong Kong 香港 Cultural Revolution, 16 to 22 May, HK PolyU Jockey Club Innovation Tower - CityU, Hong Kong

Maggio, T. (2016) 'Culture Consciousness Colours and Senses, Material to Immaterial' Asian Symposium on Creativity & Innovation Management 2016, 21-26 February Bangkok, Thailand

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Maggio, T. (2021), Nowness, via Arts: Contemplative Pedagogy Symposium 2021, Pause: finding space in higher education, hosted by University of Essex, Queen Margaret University, University of St. Andrews, Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK, 25 August, Online Workshop.

Link to the event: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/news-and-events/events-listing/contemplative-pedagogy-symposium-2021/> (Accessed: 29 December 2021)

Selected Exhibitions:

Maggio, T. (2020), 'The Meditative Gentleman', Duke Contemporary Art Gallery, Gaysorn Village, Bangkok, Thailand

Academic Collective (2016), 'Open Design for E-very-thing', Cumulus Hong Kong Open Fashion, Hong Kong

Academic Collective (2015), 'Design Literacy Forum II: Culture Pulse in Architecture & Design, Assumption University of Thailand

Maggio, T. (2015), 'Yonok Capsule Collection', Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand

Maggio, T. and Jiro T. (2014), 'Secret Keeper', with B-Floor, Event part of Wonderfruit Festival, Chon Buri, Thailand

Maggio, T. and Perin L. (2014) YONOK. at Bontadosi Hotel & Spa, Art Gallery, Montefalco, Italy

Maggio, T. and Perin L. (2014) Note d'Asia / Rivoluzione Artigiana, Asian Notes: The Handcraft Revolution April 2014, Organized by Confartigianato Udine, at Casa Cavazzini (modern and contemporary artmuseum). as part of FAREASTFILMFESTIVAL, Italy.

Maggio, T. and Perin L. And B-Floor (2014) 'Survival Games', for Wellcome Trust as part of Art in Global Health, Wellcome Collection, Bangkok, Thailand

Appendix:

The appendix below was part of my RCD.2; I have decided to include it in this section to have a traceable view of the direction of my studies since their early

stages. It is worth noting that some of the described prototypes are included with more detail in the main body of this thesis. Additionally, to support my work, which revolves around the relationship between body and context, it is relevant to emphasise the following references that I analysed before proceeding with and enrolling in my PhD studies. One early experience was practicing planking and all its variants from batmanning (hanging upside down) to prating, which was a social trend that peaked in mid-2011 and faded in early 2012. The concept behind it was lying in a face-down position, mostly in incongruous locations. I did enjoy it at the time, but as a solo performance in well-isolated places, while most of my students were engaged in it on campus and sharing it via various social media. It raised some concerns among faculty members at the time. On the other hand, it was, in some sense, somewhat of a flash-back to the Austrian artist Erwin Wurm's one-minute sculptures. The artist has often said that he is interested in daily life. While these ideas fascinated my design mind, at the time I didn't realise how to connect these activities with my way of operating and educating in the context of design in Southeast Asia. Later, I had the chance to start a project with B-floor, the Devise theatre company, and that project is explained in this thesis. Between these experiences I was invited to speak at the ASCIM Asian Symposium on Creativity and Innovation Management, along with representatives from NASA and Cirque du Soleil's top managers, among others. There, I had the opportunity to engage in a workshop for CEOs to boost creativity and self-confidence. Unexpectedly, there was an interesting lab about how to be a buffoon. It was all about crashing through preconceptions about conference behaviours and do's and don'ts with acquaintances. It was led by a specialist from Cirque du Soleil, whose job is to transform Olympic athletes into performers, losing the rigidity of discipline to

embrace uncertainty and spontaneity. It was a spark in my mind. Once enrolled in my PhD studies, further studies and workshops via my practice-based research have allowed me to connect with all these experiences and develop my own approach to boost self-collective awareness for students and professionals.

On Body Culture and Early Findings from Scholarly Activities

‘Gesamtkunstwerk’ (1849), literally translates as the synthesis of all arts, a body of work inclusive of all senses. The term was coined by Richard Wagner in two essays ‘Art and Revolution’ and ‘The Artwork of the Future’, spreading his influence to a wide range of artists and theorists who subsequently became part of early and well-known art education institutions such as the German Bauhaus Art School (1919-1933) and the Russian Vkhutemas Institute (1920-1930). The choreographer Oskar Schlemmer, with his dance of trinity called the ‘triadic ballet’ (Stuttgart, 1922), is still a celebrated and inspiring icon of that time.

Behind the artistic aspect of the body, from a philosophical perspective it is relevant to distinguish between the concept of the body and the soma. A fundamental reference on this subject was written by Thomas Hanna (1986) who wrote “the soma, being internally perceived, is categorically distinct from a body, not because the subject is different but because the mode of viewpoint is different” [19]. Equally

important is the term 'somaesthetics' coined by the philosopher Richard Shusterman to define a "critical study and ameliorative cultivation of how we experience and use the living body (soma) as a site of sensory appreciation (aesthesia) and creative-self-fashioning" (2008) [20]. In an interview with the Interaction Design Foundation, Shusterman suggested implementing the design process by "training designers to make them more conscious of user experience by themselves being the users" (2014) [21]

In the design industry, Body-storm, developed by IDEO, the global design firm, emerged as an alternative method to brain-storming to create a narrative tool to help understand human interactions in relation to space and other objects. According to Jones (2013), "It allows the team and stakeholders to experience some of the functions and working relationships of proposals, either during their formation or after prototyping". [22] Professor of Social and Organisation Learning Danny Burns et al. (1994) suggested that, similar to body-storming, performance can help designers by activating imagination, facilitating empathy with users, communicating within and outside their team, and encouraging less self-conscious contributions. [23] Rather than thinking about theatre as a way of discussing ethnographic insight, Professor of User-Centred Design Jacob Buur stated, "I suggest that we think of the theatre acts as ethnographies themselves, i.e. as accounts of people's (future) practices" (2014: 11). [24]

Immersed in the foreign culture of Thailand I, as participant observer, through an investigation of design practice and scholarly activities, felt the necessity of developing an alternative approach to design education based on the flux of my

experience as practitioner and vice versa. Human factors and ergonomics data are key elements of design studies; on the other hand, “not only ideas, but emotions too, are cultural artefacts” (Clifford, 1973). [25] By tracing connections between the above considerations, I have attempted to process a method of repositioning human issues and Thai culture through the narrative of the body–self, body–space, body–objects as the locus of the design process.

As noted earlier, some Western philosophical thinkers like Aristotle and his peripatetic school, and the Eastern Zen philosophy of mindfulness (as the Zen master Shunryu Suzuki stated in ‘Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind’), emphasis the importance of approaching the world with a beginners mind, open to possibilities; “In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, in the expert’s mind there are few”. Furthermore, in both the West and the East, the parts of the body were known to ancient medicine through the science of gross anatomy, but within the Eastern tradition there is also the concept of the Subtle Body, an invisible energy able to balance the functions of the body’s anatomical parts (Anatomy of Mindfulness, 2016, Wellcome Collection Blog). As Livia Kohn, Professor Emerita of the Department of Religion of Boston University, stated: ‘the body is understood to consist of qi or cosmic vital energy, the material aspect of Dao’ (2009: 51). [50]

It is interesting to notice how only Eastern religions are generally associated with meditation exercises, although the practice of spiritual exercise is common in both East and West. Ignatus Loyola, the theologian and founder of the religious order called the Society of Jesus, wrote *Exercitia Spiritualia*, between 1522 and 1524. According to Massimo Negrotti, Professor of Methodology of Human Science at the

University of Parma and Genoa (2001), the culture where we live imposes itself on our ways of seeing. [51] Similarly, we can refer to the 'Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design' (1979), a theory by the developmental psychologist, Urie Bronfenbrenner, where five systems represent the framework for human development: from the individual, to the microsystem (peers and family), to the mesosystem, then to the exosystem (mass media), and the macrosystem ('global' culture). If we consider the role of a designer as a participative human being within society, then it is extremely important to understand that reality is a subjective matter.

From a scientific point of view, the body can be divided in two main action-based parts: the outside-in (Proprioception) and inside-out (Interoception), where emotions are generated. As mentioned earlier, emotions are a product of the culture we live in; the acceptance and ability to express emotions could lead learners to self-confidence and a better way of understanding collective preconception. My experiments in alternative methods of design pedagogy began after being invited as a visiting lecturer in Mexico and Thailand, where I eventually became a full time lecturer, first in the oldest public university and then more recently in the country's largest private university. Richard D. Lewis, the cross-cultural author, describes Thailand as non-tactile, referring to personal physical space and the Thai ways of greetings, such as the *wai* – with palms pressed together in a prayer-like fashion.

As I experienced freshmen selection for an international program in communication design, I noticed a wide variety in student's backgrounds in terms of education and their family business. The world 'International' in the educational context of

Southeast Asia, means a program conducted entirely in the English language. Before enrolment, or even during their last school semester before university, students are used to attending extra tutorial classes to develop some technical skills such as freehand or technical drawing. Due to the artistic gap in term of episteme and techne, several students struggle during their first year. As mentioned early, Thai society could be called a non-tactile society, whereas in Thai traditional culture, the body is extremely important and sitting posture and ways of greeting (according to gender and hierarchy) are subjects of study for young students. Teacher day (January 16) is a ceremony to underline the respectful relation between students and educators. As part of the event, students perform the traditional sitting posture. It is in this context, in order to welcome students into the new environment of the arts, that I started to analyse and develop several ways of facilitating freshmen to familiarise themselves with new theoretical concepts such as dot, line and plane. Freehand drawings and brainstorming had only a short-term effect on students' memories. On the other hand, after an encounter with theatre directors, it was clear that the concept expressed by Jacques Lecoq, "the body knows things about which the mind is ignorant" (2000: 9), was the right direction to test. [52]

Therefore, I chose to collaborate with non-product designer minds, and as a measure to prevent potential embarrassment on the part of the students, a professional theatre practitioner was invited to join the class. An object-based form of theatre, also called Devise Performance, was used, where all were part of the experience and had the same level of participation. Students embodied the ideas of dot, line, and plane through the physicality of their bodies. In Object theatre, actors

use ready-made objects to create performance (Carrignon 2000, Jurkowski 1998).

[53]

In 2015, in the Proceedings of the fourth Participatory Innovation Conference, Merja Ryoppy and Adreas Heiberg Skouby, stated that they used the Object Theatre approach to explore the effect of a particular product on social practice. In my experiment, the object served as a way to initiate a conversation and visualise subjective reality. Each student expressed their point of view, and the narrative led the group to an abstraction. Then objects (artificial bodies) were substituted with living bodies in order to create compositions. Two years later, another experiment to blend performing arts and design took place during an academic design and architecture conference held by a private university in Thailand. As mentioned earlier, participation is a key concept shared between design and theatre practice. The objective of the conference was to transform passive observers into active participants. The phenomenological philosopher Merleau-Ponty stated, “there is no inner life that is not a first attempt to relate to another person” (1948: 88). [54]

My proposal was to merge Merleau-Ponty’s view with the ‘nine-viewpoints’, a theatre composition technique developed by A. Bogard and T. Lindau. In order to develop the concept, a physical theatre company was invited to perform, and all participants were divided into groups. Each had to read the previously prepared script aloud and act accordingly. Here are some lines from the script, inspired and adapted from the Croatian choreographer Ivana Muller’s performance ‘While We Are Still Watching’ (2012-2015)

A5: I feel the difference atmosphere of space when the actor is in different spot.

B1: Do you mean me?

A2: Oh yes, of course

C3: I am a Designer, for me space is (please briefly define or talk about the concept of space)

A10: Please go to the stage and make any shape that will best explain your concept of space.

All participants were sitting in a 'Socratic circle'. Performers acted independently from the script in response to gestures and spatial relations created in real time by and with the acting audience. The performance helped to boost a positive social climate that encouraged people to be active, participative conference guests. The Reciprocal Maieutic Approach (Danilo Dolci 1996) is a "collective exploration process that considers individuals' experience and intuition as a reference point" and it was the concept behind the task of creating a tentative blend between fourth year (product) design students and postdramatic theatre. [55]

Once the brief had been shared with the students, their first reaction was panic and frustration. However, once they understood the meaning of enhancing their senses and preconceptions, the project was approved and built on top of their emotional response. Several immersive spaces were then built and opened for public view-interaction. Physical spaces, classrooms and other empty rooms from the ground floor to the eleventh floor were transformed into large black-box spaces. Each group of students developed the space according to the sense they would like to emphasise. For example, for the touch they created a dark labyrinth room, then

covered the entire interior surface with materials such as plastic, foam, and cardboard. In order to find the exit each 'user' had to find a subtle rope and follow it.

The brief and the teams were the first generators of emotion, and then individual approaches allowed them express and develop their personal/collective feelings via a broad range of outcomes, from written statement to three-dimensional mock-ups. The idea of each immersive space was then built on the basis of their reactions. The main goal of this physical approach is to increase consciousness through macro-micro actions that might enable the behavioural change. Students of (product) design are accustomed to replying to any brief with a careful observation of the market, and their fictional targets often become too unrealistic. The blend of postdramatic/Devised theatre with design education emphasises the use of the five senses and increases and develops the dimension of self and collective consciousness. The discovery and acceptance of personal emotion are the first steps to leading the group towards collective consciousness. We might compare the idea of personal emotion and the relation with others (peers, neighbours, family) by thinking of the senses and the fact that to 'work' each sense needs a medium, as light is needed in order to see colours. Depending on and independent of others, the learning process should lead students to increase their ability to listen to other point of views in order to gain a better understanding of the self. What 'touching' means is that you must touch the intangible. Aristotle's *Peri psychēs* had already insisted on this: both the tangible and the intangible are objects of touch (*hē haphē tou hatou kai anaptou*) (*Peri psychēs* 424a). [56]

It was a concept for the fourth year (product) design students. Students were separated in small groups and asked to create an installation (based on the above quotation) to be displayed in a public space. Their main task was to reframe their idea of collectiveness and heighten group behaviour. Due to the fact that these attempts were conducted in a non-tactile society, a somatosensory approach had to be carefully experimented with. Through these experimental approaches, students are expanding their learning process beyond the product itself. The aim is to motivate behaviour, and to foster trust within the group. The fourth attempt to create an alternative stimulus in the context of product design education in Thailand emphasised the value of leading the students in an inner exploration of their feelings and emotions.

Additionally, the exercises borrowed from the postdramatic practice highlighted the peculiar behaviour and biased attitude of design students. Some extracts from my observations (field notes) underline how non-reaction was a reaction, especially in the third case, where the hypothetical theoretical gap between the disciplines brought most of the students out of their comfort zone. Notably, the instructor team comprised of professionals with different backgrounds, allowed students to build an empathetic relation that led them to a collective self-confidence. The object-theatre exercise has shown how product design students can interact with physical elements to find new ways of using them without searching for new meanings. Through the exercise of filling an empty space with the human body, students started to search and embed the idea of rhythm and balance.

The weaknesses identified: Students were not sure about the instructor’s method of evaluating their outcomes. Fourth year undergraduates often act and react (in terms of designing) less spontaneously compared to freshmen. The alternative approach could be perceived as deterrent for overachieving students.

The strengths identified: The alternative approach is considered a positive boost for low- profile and average students. The lecturer’s team with different professional backgrounds encourages students to perceive other realities. Designing via a physical approach stimulated students to consider the full spectrum of senses, and the postdramatic theatre approach encouraged students to be conscious of the social impact of their actions, and thus of their way of design. It is also important to underline how this approach might elicit different reaction in different cultures. The following diagram

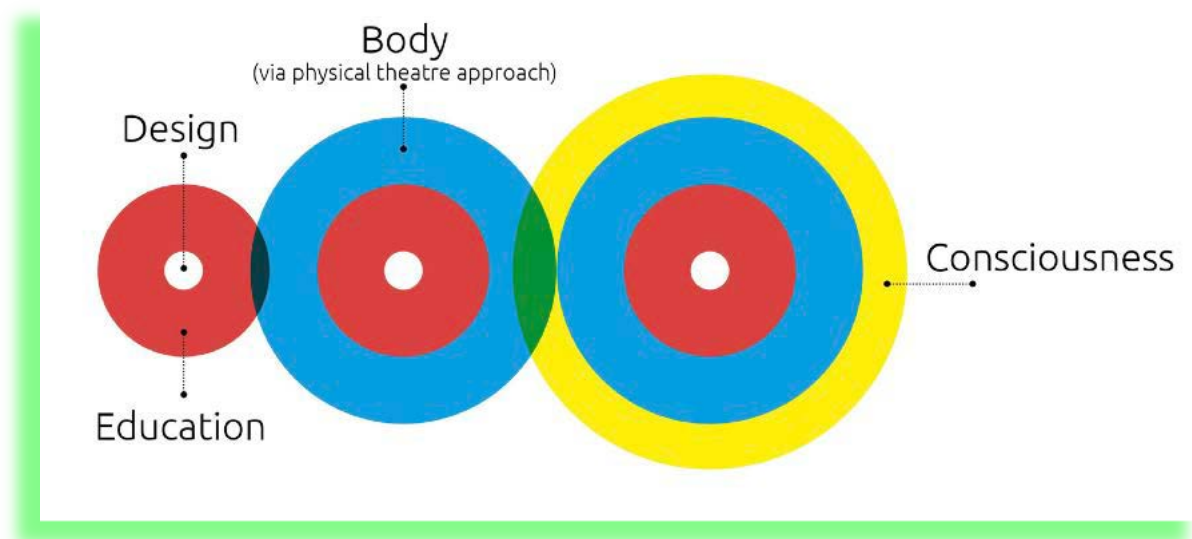


Figure 16: Research Areas at RDC.2 Submission Status (Maggio, 2016)

represents the three main areas of this study: design, education and the body, with consciousness as the potential outcome. Moreover, it is important to underline Thailand and product design education as the framework and context of the applied study. Ericsson and Lehmann found that the superior performance of experts is usually domain-specific and does not transfer across domains. Extensive training within a domain still seems to be crucial to professional expertise (1996). [57]

While the considerations expressed above could be also be applied to the design discipline, my research aims to create a platform (based on Groundcourse) where future designers could develop their senses as a way to cultivate their intellect. In order to develop an extra (designer) sense, several (consciousness) phases may be implemented. This research project is a modular design narrative aimed at permanently enhancing students' awareness of their preconceptions and promoting self-understanding. Each module can be organised heterogeneously as non-hierarchical entries, using a 'rhizomatic' way to form a nonlinear network, to use terms that stem from the theories of the French philosopher Deleuze Gilles and the French psychotherapist Felix Guattari.

The research will lead to an educational design theory and practice platform that is intended to transform the learner through multimodal experiences. The process itself becomes the outcome. In order to create an iteration with the current context, the result(s) are intended to be shown and analysed under the public eye. As a process, it could be compared to a 'transparent' chain in the commercial sphere.

The research project might perhaps be divided into three main phases, the (A) Self, (B) Others, and (C) Extended network. The sum of the three 'layers', without particular relevance in the search order, serves as a tool to lead the learners to comprehend themselves and the impact of each of their actions and their physical or service designs as future professional designers.

The Self is the discovery of the 'I – me' as body, 'me as soma'; the learner, via somatic experience, attempts to understand and implement themselves – the extended self. The Group is where collaboration with small teams enhances self-group behaviour. The Community (or extended network), based on Aristotle's peripatetic school, fosters the learner's behaviour and awareness of their preconceptions to engage (harmonise) with the 'outside world', creating new experiences in order to learn from them, and engaging with new situations to develop self-collective understandings. The experiments are considered experiences built to increase self-awareness through the development of participatory skills within and outside of the traditional classroom. As mentioned earlier, the research locus is the development of a product and communication design education platform based on non-hierarchical entries, with the students' reactions and feedback forming the core of the method. The research context is the design education of Southeast Asia, specifically Thailand, and more specifically, the city of Bangkok.

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