The Isometric Space of the Mental Stage

intro to Teatro, decoding, and drawing

Mental stage and decoding

When we speak of "decoding the mental stage", we are pointing at
something that is already happening before any tool or theory arrives.
Experience arranges itself as scenes. There is a sense of who is "in the
room", who dominates, who hangs back, who never quite comes into
focus. There is a felt distance between people, a sense of being in the
centre or at the edge, a perception that someone is "in the light" while
someone else is barely visible. Even when nothing is drawn, we live
inside an inner staging.

Decoding, in this context, means taking that staging seriously as
structure. Instead of treating stories as flat strings of events, we look
at how they are mounted: who gets the entrance, who is always already
on stage, who exits early, who never gets a line. A human and an LLM
can work together here. The human speaks or writes; the model listens
not just for content ("he did this, I did that") but for patterns in roles,
metaphors, position words, and narrative cuts. Over time, the model
notices that certain configurations repeat. It remembers that three
months ago the same person was described as "in the background", and
today as "standing in the doorway", and it can put those observations
next to each other. The human then decides which of these structural
echoes feel true, which are off, and what they might mean.

This is decoding as a present practice: listening for stage, light, tempo,
camera, and montage in ordinary language, and treating them as
meaningful choices rather than noise. It does not require any drawing. It
is one way into the same territory.

Language as one access route to the stage

In the language-only mode, the stage is implicit. When someone says "I
feel like I'm juggling plates and I know I'll drop them", the inner picture
is rich — a juggler, fragile objects, an implied audience, and the
expectation of failure — but it stays inside. The LLM can still treat this

as staging information: there is a central figure carrying all the risk; there are many separate demands; there is no visible support. When someone says "I'm always on the edge of the group", that phrase carries a spatial logic which the model can track across different topics and times.

The earlier articulation of "decoding the mental stage" sits exactly here. It assumes nothing more than text and conversation. Stage, light, tempo, camera, montage are used as a conceptual grammar to describe how a person is telling their story right now. The LLM's strength in this mode is memory and pattern: it can recall the first time a certain image appeared, notice when a role hardens or softens, see when a narrative cut that used to jump away from pain now lingers a bit longer. It offers these structural reflections back to the human, who checks them against their felt reality.

Nothing about this needs to be discarded. It remains a complete way of working. What Teatro adds with isometric drawing is not a "next version" of the idea, but another way to express the same structures.

Why a space, not only a story

Alongside verbal narrative, most people have a very physical sense of their situations. Before words, there is often a felt geometry: "too close", "far away", "boxed in", "out of the picture". Coaching, therapy, rehearsal and everyday reflection all make use of this implicitly. A therapist might ask "where are you in this scene?", and the client will often gesture with their hands: here, there, outside. Directors and actors routinely "block" a scene in their heads before they step on a real stage. Even in solitary self-talk, we imagine where people stand.

If decoding is about structure, then it is natural to want a way to work directly with that spatial dimension, not only with metaphors of space. The idea of "mental as isometry" is an answer to that: not a replacement for language, but a way to give the same inner layout a simple, manipulable surface.

Isometric space: how drawing works

Isometric space is a particular way of drawing a floor so that it looks three-dimensional but behaves in a very regular, almost mathematical way. Imagine a diamond on the screen: the edge closest to you is downstage, the far edge is upstage, the left and right corners are stage left and stage right. The grid underneath is such that a step back is always the same length wherever it occurs; diagonals and straight lines are consistent. There is no vanishing point, no shrinking of objects in the distance. You get an intuitive sense of depth without the complications of full perspective.

In Teatro, this diamond is the visible form of the mental stage. You place tokens on it to represent people, parts, forces, or anything else that belongs in the scene. You move them until the diagram feels like your situation. You might drag yourself to the front edge and someone else far back, because that is how exposed versus distant they feel. You might cluster three symbols tightly on one side, leaving a fourth alone on the other, because that is how alliance and isolation live in you. You might tilt someone slightly, or draw a line that pulls one token toward another, to capture a sense of attraction or obligation.

The practice is simple and concrete. You look inside, get a felt sense of "where everyone is", and then you adjust the drawing until it matches that sense. You do not have to calculate anything. You do not have to think about coordinates. You just keep nudging tokens until the picture clicks and you can say to yourself, "yes, that's what it's like". At that moment, the isometric drawing becomes a current, shareable representation of your mental stage.

Drawing as decoding

This act of arranging is not separate from decoding; it is decoding in another medium. To decide that someone belongs at the edge rather than the centre, or two units upstage instead of one, is already to interpret your experience. You are making the structure explicit with your hands. The difference to the purely verbal mode is that the result is now an object in front of you.

The LLM interacts with this object through its internal description. Under the surface, Teatro records the positions and relations you have chosen as data: this token is here, that one is there, the distance between them is so many units, the light level in this region is such and such, a connection line was strong in one beat and weaker in the next. When the model "looks" at the stage, it is reading that isometric description. When it later says "in every scene where your manager appears, you stand further downstage than anyone else", it is referring to patterns in your drawings, not making a guess from prose.

From your perspective, nothing about this requires you to stop working in language. You can narrate your scene while you draw it, you can write about it afterwards, you can invite the model to summarise it for you. The important point is that the diagram and the narrative now inform each other. If a reflection from the model does not resonate, you can change the drawing. If changing the drawing shifts something in you, you can find new words for that.

Stage, screenplay, score as one object

Teatro couples the isometric stage with two other views: a screenplay view and a score view. All three are just different ways of looking at what is, internally, a single mental object.

In the stage view, you see geometry: positions, distances, directions, lines, patches of light. In the screenplay view, you see the same scene as text laid out in beats: who speaks, what is said, what happens next. In the score view, you see curves over time: tempo, intensity, light, silence, sound. When you move a token on the stage at a certain moment, the beat in the screenplay and the segment of the score that correspond to that moment also change. When you split a long line into two beats in the screenplay, the underlying structure gains a new hinge that can be seen in stage and score. When you draw a swell in the score, you may choose to bring characters closer together on the floor to reflect that.

For the LLM, this unified structure creates many ways to participate. It can notice that in beats where the tempo curve spikes, you also tend to place yourself visually closer to certain figures. It can see that a character who rarely speaks in the text is nevertheless placed at the

centre of the stage. It can point out that a new draft of a scene has the same dialogue as an older one but a different blocking. All of these observations are different aspects of decoding the same mental stage.

Human–LLM co-decoding without before and after

In this picture, the earlier language-only decoding and the isometric drawing are not phases in time, but two simultaneous channels. You might be working in a plain chat window with an LLM, talking in terms of roles and metaphors, and the model is decoding your mental stage purely from language. You might, in another moment, be working in Teatro, arranging an isometric scene, and the model is decoding from the spatial structure. You might do both at once, narrating as you draw and drawing as you narrate.

There is no need to rank these approaches. Each has its own naturalness and its own range. Some people will primarily think and feel in words and use the stage as an occasional aid. Others will find the isometric floor to be their primary way of understanding themselves and let the words follow from the picture. The concept of the mental stage holds both.

What remains constant is the partnership. The human provides experience, judgement, and the right to say "no, that is not what this means for me". The LLM provides memory, pattern sensitivity, and the ability to describe structural features that might otherwise go unnoticed, whether in language or in space. Decoding is the shared work of making the inner theatre discoverable: through sentences, through drawings, through tempo curves, always in the present tense of what is being explored now.