

EMOTICONIZED

Dislocated Emotions: The Mangafication of Feeling is a research-driven design volume that examines how emotion is visualized, codified, and mechanized in contemporary culture.

Beginning with the semiotics of manga and emoji, it traces the transformation of human affect—from hand-drawn symbols and exaggerated expressions to digital reactions and algorithmic predictions. Affect and emotional capitalism, where feelings become measurable, optimized, and commodified.

https://chentian-lynn.github.io/project1_video/



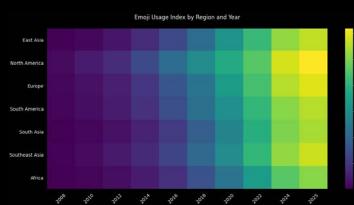
INSPIRATION

Conceptual Data Analysis

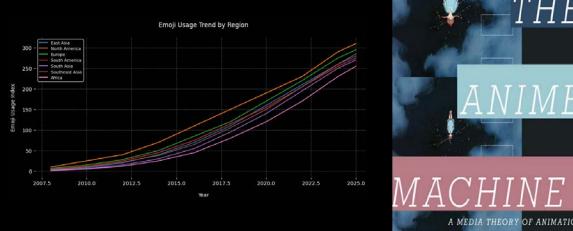
Paper Research

This visualization compares emoji usage across major world regions from 2008 to 2025. The data illustrates how emotional expression has shifted from local, image-based formats toward a globally standardized symbolic system. Despite regional differences in early adoption, all areas converge toward high emoji usage after 2018, signaling the emergence of a unified emotional lexicon.

Emoji Usage Index by Region and Year



Emoji Usage Trend by Region



This project draws its theoretical foundation from two seminal works in contemporary Japanese media studies: Azuma Hiroki's *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals* (2001) and Thomas Lamarre's *The Anime Machine* (2009). Together, these texts provide a critical lens for understanding how emotions in anime, manga, and digital culture shift from subjective experience to symbolic, modular, and ultimately computational forms. Their insights form the intellectual backbone of EMOTICONIZED.



Azuma, H. (2001). *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*. University of Minnesota Press.

Azuma's theory of database consumption argues that contemporary anime is no longer structured around traditional narratives but instead around a database of reusable character attributes—such as eye types, personality traits, emotional expressions, and symbolic gestures. In his view, otaku audiences consume not stories, but modules, assembling affective meaning through the repetition and recombination of familiar emotional signs.

Lamarre, T. (2009). *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*. University of Minnesota Press.

While Azuma focuses on cultural logic, Lamarre's *The Anime Machine* analyzes the technical mechanisms through which anime produces emotional expressiveness. For Lamarre, animation is not merely a visual style but a machine—a system of planes, layers, frames, motions, and intensities that together create affective impact.

1.



Emoji Usage Trend by Region



2.



3.



4.



1.Ukiyo-e Portrait — Origins of Stylized Emotion

2.Semiotics of the “Anime Eye” — Emotional Coding in Modern Manga

3.Process Sketching — Constructing Emotional Panels

4.Yonkoma Format — Two-Column Rhythm & Everyday Exaggeration

Influences & Visual References

The visual language of this project draws from the long genealogy of Japanese graphic expression. Edo-period ukiyo-e established the precedent for stylized, non-naturalistic faces, where emotions were communicated through codified lines rather than anatomical accuracy. This lineage extends into modern manga, whose expressive exaggerations—particularly the bishōjo “big eye” convention analyzed in contemporary semiotics—demonstrate how affect becomes a designed visual code. Such research frames emotion not as a spontaneous expression but as a culturally constructed signifier.

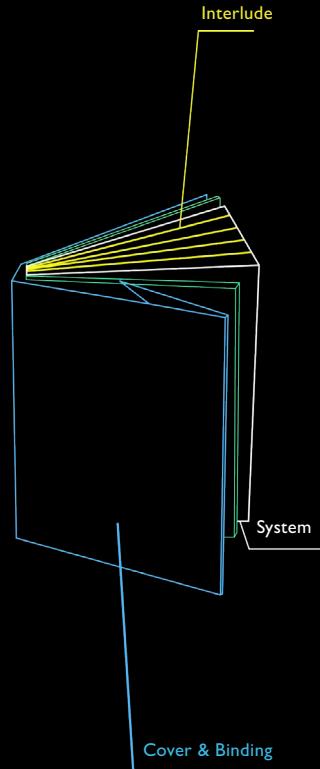
The project adopts the two-column rhythm and compact tankōbon format of early yonkoma and slice-of-life manga, whose spatial economy aligns with my interest in emotional modularity. These works rely on repetition, timing, and symbolic shorthand—mechanisms that resonate directly with the book's theoretical core. My use of black-and-white rendering with screentone textures further emphasizes the semiotic nature of manga images. Screentones, historically used to simulate shading through mechanical patterns, function here as a metaphor for emotional abstraction: a system built from dots, grids, and layers rather than continuous realism. They highlight how manga constructs affect through compression, contrast, and symbolic mark-making.

The chromatic accent of yellow is deliberately introduced as a counterpoint to the monochrome system. Inspired by the visual identity of San Diego Comic-Con, yellow operates as a cultural signal linking the book to broader comic traditions beyond Japan. Within the project, it functions both as a navigational device and as an index of emotional “volume,” marking key sections where the symbolic systems described in the research reach a heightened intensity. The tension between monochrome structure and yellow intervention mirrors the book's conceptual interplay between simplification and amplification.

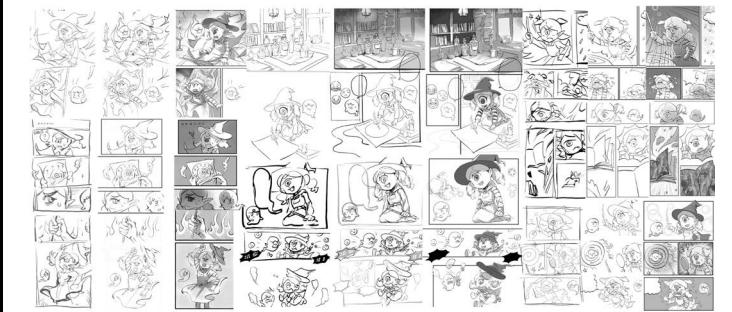
This project draws from ukiyo-e stylization, manga semiotics, and the graphic anatomy of the “big anime eye.” The black-and-white screentone system foregrounds emotional abstraction, while the two-column manga grid reflects the modular logic of symbolic affect. Yellow borrowed from the visual language of San Diego Comic-Con—acts as a cultural anchor and conceptual amplifier within the predominantly monochrome world.

CONSTRUCTING THE BOOK

Interlude Wireframes



Interlude Sketches



Interlude Final Pages



Process Explanation

Interlude Production Explanation

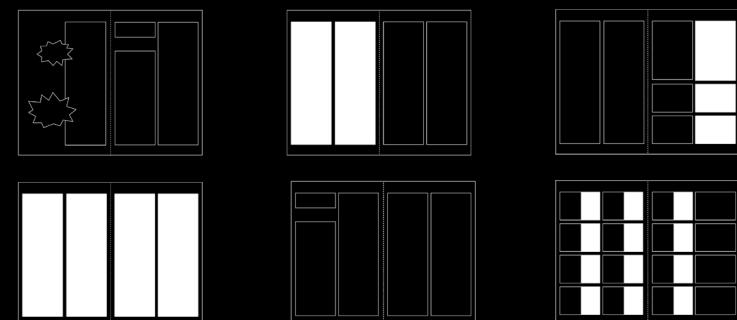
Each interlude page reveals the visual workflow behind the emotional comic panels. Beginning with rough layout sketches, the drawings are refined through clean linework and completed with two-tone shadow rendering. This step-by-step process demonstrates how gesture, narrative timing, and emotional symbols gradually take form through sequential drawing.

The interlude stories follow a small witch and a weary ghost as they move through four fundamental emotions—joy, anger, sadness, and surprise. Their exaggerated reactions become a playful exploration of how emotional codes behave within manga, echoing the project's broader study of symbolic expression.

Layout & Grid System Explanation

The book adopts a two-column grid as its primary layout structure, referencing the vertical reading rhythm commonly found in manga and light novels. This stable framework provides clarity for both text and imagery while reinforcing the project's research-driven tone.

To contrast this stability, many panels intentionally “break the grid”—extending beyond columns, collapsing gutters, or interrupting margins. These interruptions create dynamic pacing and visual tension, mirroring the project's theme of disrupted emotional legibility. The balance between strict structure and expressive rupture reflects the core logic of manga itself, where order and exaggeration coexist within a unified visual language.



Cover & Binding Description

The book is hand-bound using exposed thread-sewn signatures with brushed adhesive, allowing the spine to open completely for uninterrupted comic spreads. The visible stitching becomes a material metaphor for the project's conceptual interest in revealing the structural mechanics behind emotion.

Thick, raw boards serve as the front and back covers, creating a tactile contrast with the smooth interior pages. The uncoated edges and visible layers emphasize material honesty, while the yellow accent threads echo the visual vocabulary of emoji and manga symbols—subtly connecting the physical object to its thematic inquiry into emotional modularity.

BOOK DESIGN

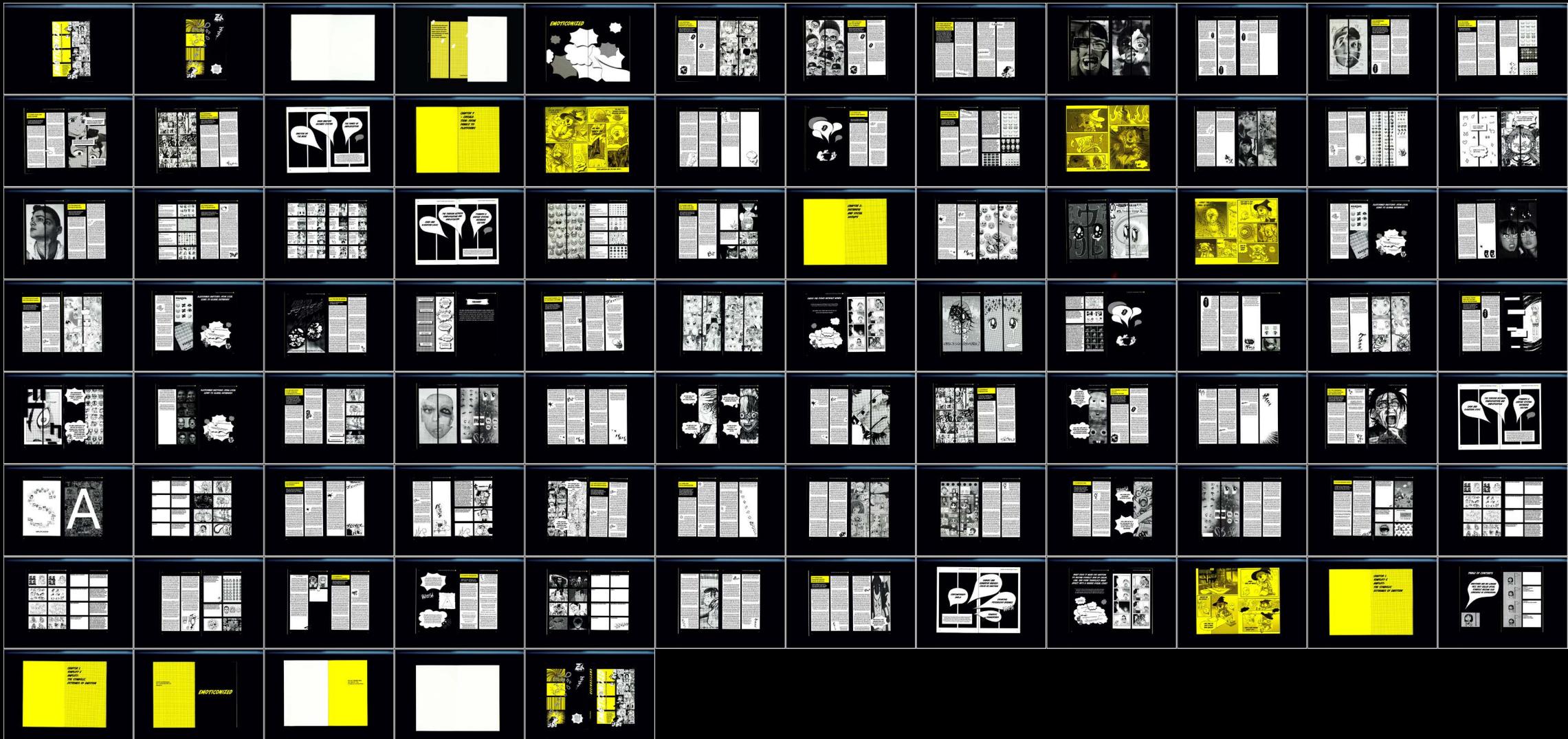
Visual System



Materiality & Printing Exploration



OUTCOME



EMOTIONAL TYPEFACE & TYPEWRITER BLENDING SYSTEM

This project explores a new form of dynamic typography using emotion detection and emotion blending.

By blending the SDF of multiple typography and controlling parameters in real time, the typeface can change its form according to emotional states. The system combines typewriter-style animations, retro pixel aesthetics, and emotion-driven shape variations to introduce a new expressive dimension to digital text.

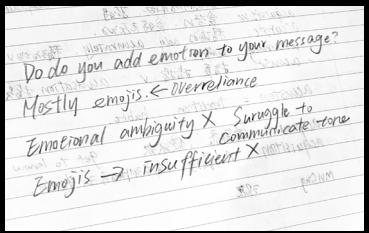
https://chentian-lynn.github.io/emotional_typeface/



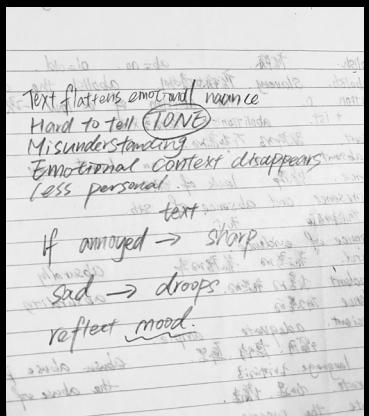
INSPIRATION

Primary Survey

Interview Excerpt 01 — P1, 19yo, International Student



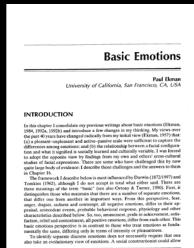
Interview Excerpt 02 — P2, 25yo, Designer



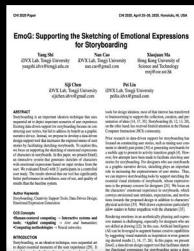
Paper Research

Paul Ekman's theory of six basic emotions (1972) provided the psychological foundation for my system, offering a clear and universally recognized emotional framework—Happiness, Sadness, Anger, Fear, Surprise, and Disgust—onto which I could anchor distinct typographic behaviors. This model not only gave the project a stable categorical structure but also ensured that the emotional states represented in the typeface would be broadly interpretable across cultures. Building on this foundation, the EmoG project (2018) demonstrated how emotions can be translated into manipulable visual parameters such as distortion, curvature, tension, and motion. EmoG showed that emotional expression can be decomposed into visual components and re-constructed through computational rules, validating the idea that form itself can act as an emotional carrier.

Together, these works shaped both the conceptual and technical direction of my project: Ekman defined which emotions to represent, while EmoG revealed how emotional qualities can be encoded into form. This dual influence allowed me to design a parameter-driven system in which emotional input directly influences SDF rendering—affecting edge behavior, spatial deformation, noise texture, and animation speed. As a result, the project evolves into an expressive SDF-based typography system where letterforms dynamically register shifts in emotional state, offering a new mode of affective communication within digital environments.



EmoG: Supporting the Sketching of Emotional Expressions (2018)
EmoG demonstrates how emotions can be translated into controllable visual parameters, enabling designers to sketch emotional states through form and distortion.



Ekman's Basic Emotions — Paul Ekman (1972)
Ekman identified six universal basic emotions—Happiness, Sadness, Anger, Fear, Surprise, and Disgust—through cross-cultural psychological studies.

Concept

COMMUNICATION TODAY
text messages
online chat
emoji limits

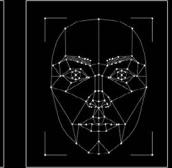


EMOTIONAL LOSS



WHY TYPOGRAPHY
visual material
dynamic expression
readable + emotional

TECHNOLOGY PATH
Emotion Detection
Mapping System
SDF Mixing
Real-Time Shaders



NEED FOR EMOTIONAL TYPE

DESIGN GOALS
Improve Communication Quality
Bring Emotion Back To Text
Create A New Futuristic Typing Experience

RESPONSIVE TYPOGRAPHY



HUMAN EMOTIONS
happiness
sadness
anger
fear
surprise
disgust

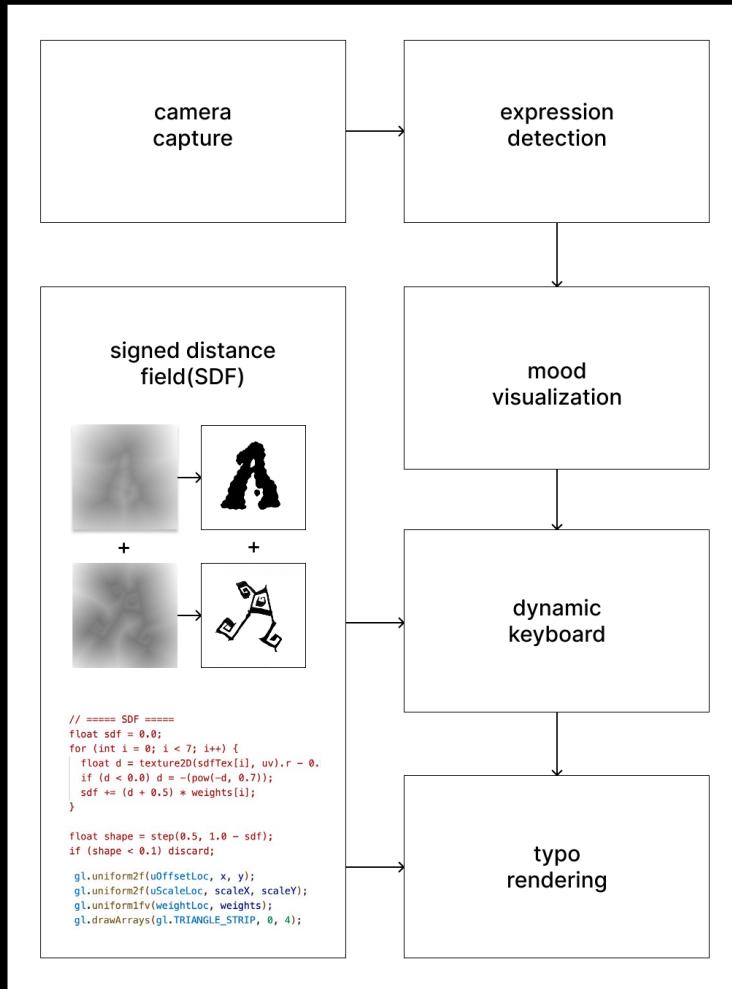


EMOTIONAL DATA

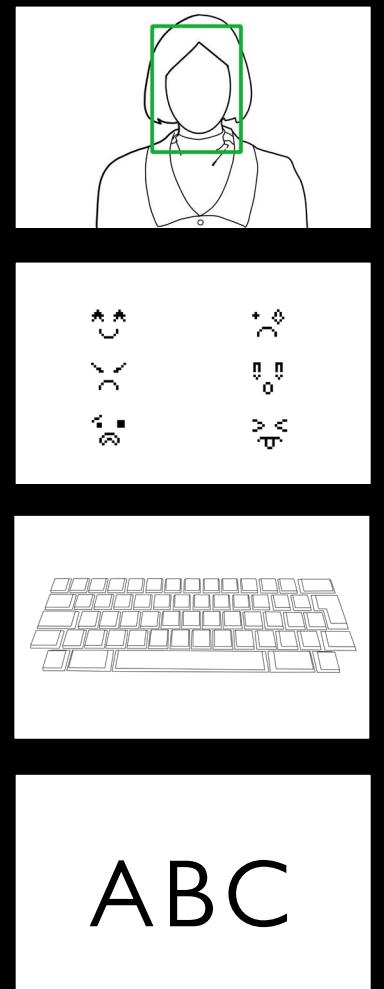
EMOTIONAL VISUAL FORM

FRAMEWORK

Technical Workflow



Components



of the user's facial landmarks and expressions. It leverages advanced machine learning models to perform emotion classification, rapidly assigning proportional scores (e.g., happiness, sadness, anger) to the current detected expression. This ensures the rapid and accurate conversion of complex visual data into actionable emotional metrics for the subsequent processing stages.

a pixel icon or a segment. The intensity or size of these visual elements is directly proportional to its magnitude, effectively converting the complex input data into easily readable discrete metrics. This display provides continuous and intuitive visual feedback reflecting the user's changing emotional landscape.

tracks user interaction. When a key is pressed, the system triggers a dynamic key illumination or highlight effect on the corresponding key, providing tactile feedback while showcasing the blended emotional glyph.

visual noise and glow of old CRT monitors, achieving a fluorescence and vintage aesthetic. This combination of dynamic emotional blending and stylized rendering delivers a unique and impactful visual experience.

PROCESS

Sketch

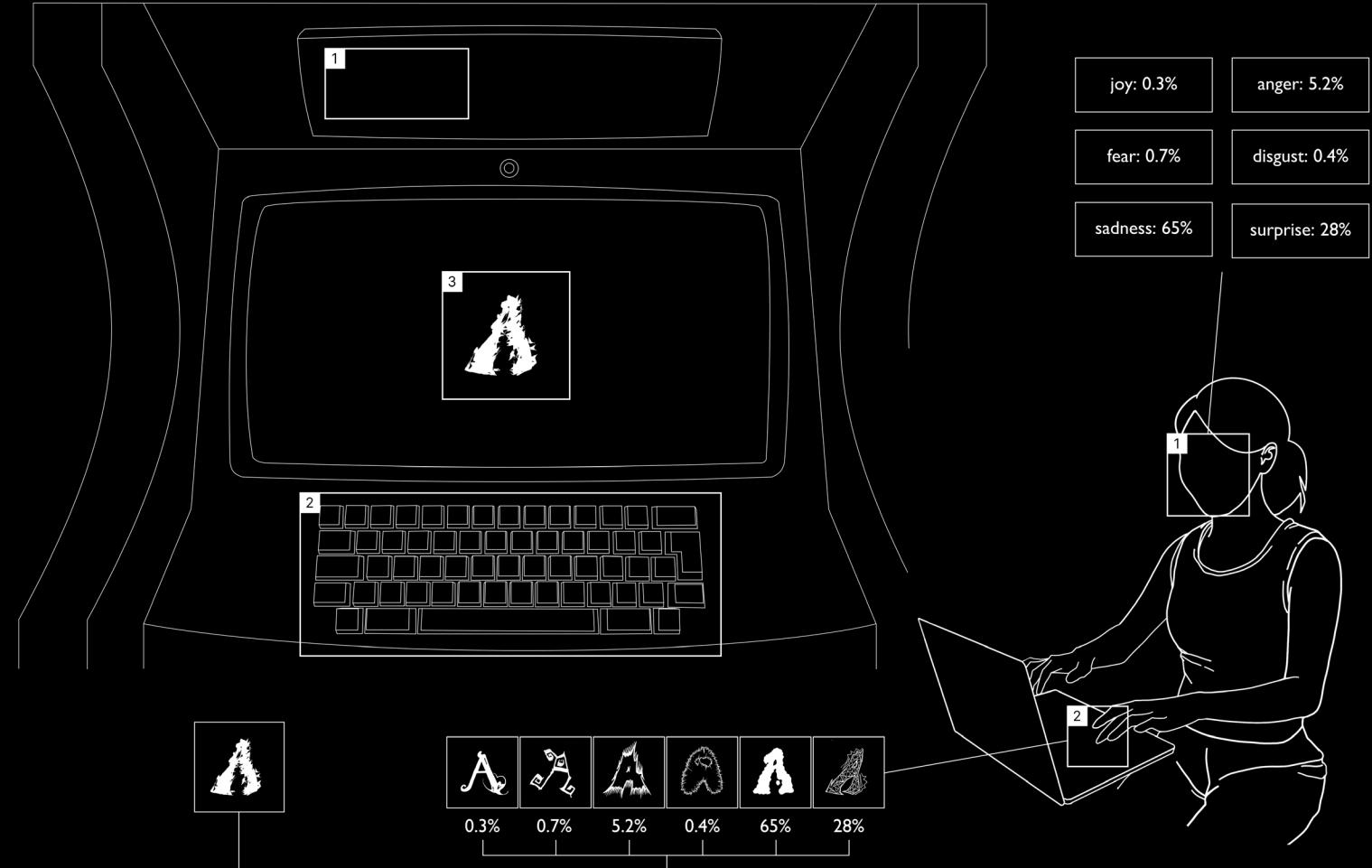
Emotional Typography — Sketch Development

The design process began with a series of exploratory sketches on tracing paper, allowing me to freely experiment with how emotional qualities could manifest as typographic forms. Working by hand made it easier to exaggerate shapes, push distortions, and test expressive gestures that later informed the digital SDF rendering. Each sheet focused on a single emotion: anger evolved into sharp, explosive strokes that fractured outward; sadness softened into drooping, liquid-like shapes that seemed to melt under their own weight; fear took on trembling, fragmented contours; while happiness opened into rounded, buoyant curves.



System Design

https://chentian-lynn.github.io/project2_video/



OUTCOME

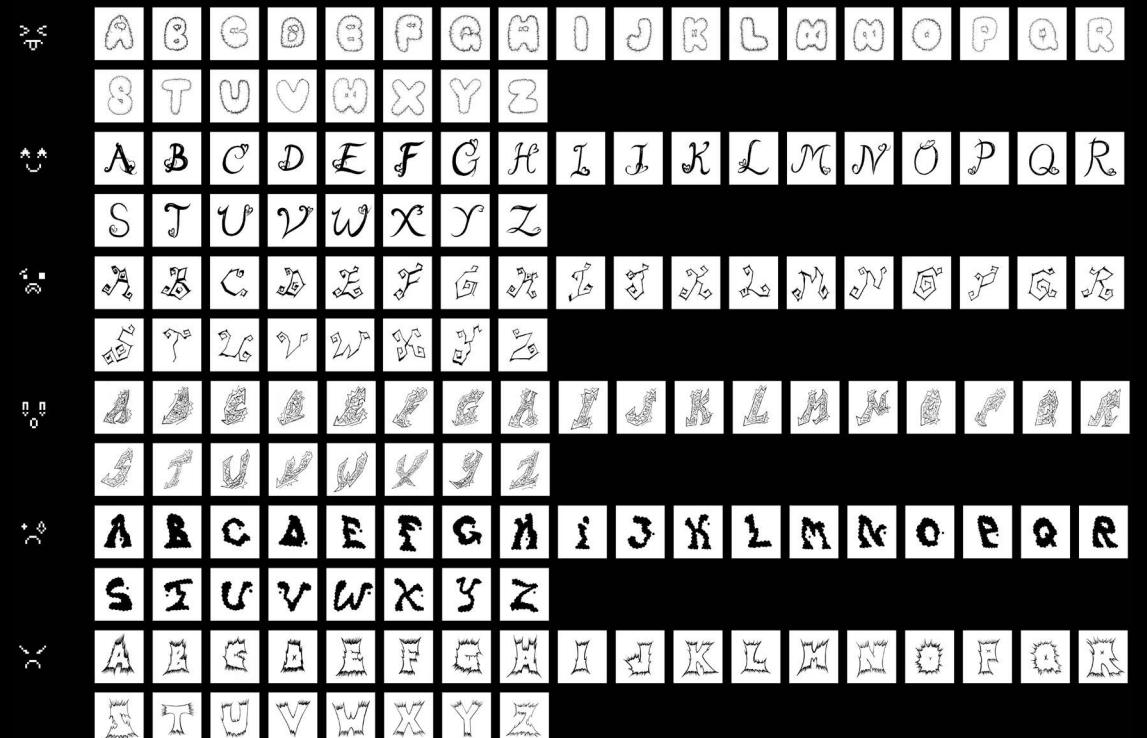
Display

When users interact with the system, they simply type as they normally would, but the text begins to respond to them. Their emotions subtly shape the letterforms: anger sharpens the strokes, sadness pulls them downward, happiness opens them into softer, brighter shapes. Users see their feelings reflected back in real time, creating a sense of emotional acknowledgement. The interaction becomes more than typing; it becomes a moment of self-awareness, where the digital interface mirrors the inner state of the user and transforms emotion into visual expression.



Emotional Typography

The six rows of alphabets represent six core emotions mapped to typographic behaviors. From top to bottom: Disgust, Happiness, Fear, Surprise, Sadness, Anger. Each emotional state drives a unique visual transformation of the glyphs.



OUTCOME



FRAGMENTS OF PLAY: 3D INTERACTIVE MEMORY SPACE

This 3D interactive project reconstructs the media landscape that shaped my childhood with manga shelves, sticker packs, plastic stools, TVs with static, handheld consoles, and endless screens. Each object becomes a memory gateway, blending personal nostalgia with a quiet sense of unease.

By walking through these fragmented rooms, the viewer retraces my early encounters with imagination, loneliness, friendship, and digital immersion. The experience invites reflection on how small objects once carried emotional weight, and how screens gradually replaced them. It is both a return to the past and a reminder to step outside the glow.

https://chentian-lynn.github.io/fragments_of_play/



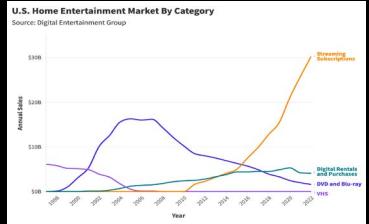
INSPIRATION

Primary Survey

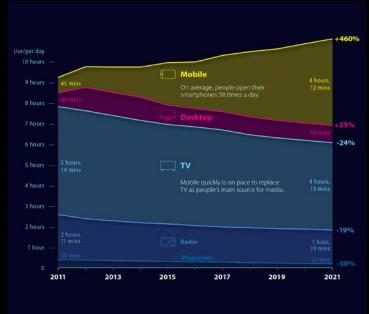
Data is collected from online databases to examine how the mediums of animation, manga, and games have evolved over time. This includes market size trends, shifts in dominant formats, and changes in user engagement—such as usage duration and distribution across different platforms and demographics.

Research also highlights the transition of media from paper to CDs, DVDs, and eventually to computers and mobile devices—revealing a clear trend toward medium homogenization. This inspired my project: as the physical forms through which we experienced childhood manga and animation gradually disappear, what happens to the memories carried by those fading media?

Distribution of U.S. Entertainment Device Sales (1998–2022)



Share of U.S. Entertainment Device Usage Time (2011–2021)



Paper Research

Alzubi's *The Evolving Relationship between Digital and Conventional Media* (2023) demonstrates a clear shift in media consumption habits driven by the rise of digital platforms. Through quantitative analysis, the study shows that younger audiences increasingly prefer on-demand, mobile, and interactive forms of media, while traditional mediums such as print, physical discs, and broadcast television continue to decline in relevance and frequency of use. Similarly, *The Evolution and Impact of Streaming Services* (Global Media Journal, 2024) argues that streaming has fundamentally reshaped the media landscape by altering how content is distributed, consumed, and valued. It highlights how streaming platforms surpass conventional media not only in accessibility but also in cultural influence, accelerating the displacement of physical and analog media forms.

Together, these studies reveal a larger narrative: as society moves toward digital immediacy, earlier media artifacts, such as comics, CDs, television broadcasts, and childhood gaming devices gradually fade from everyday experience. My 3D environment exploration project responds to this cultural shift by reconstructing the physical and emotional spaces where older media once lived. By inviting viewers to walk through scenes built from personal memory of newsstands, plastic stools, CD shelves, early televisions, the project becomes a form of media archaeology. It aims not only to preserve these disappearing mediums but also to re-examine their value: how they shaped imagination, identity, and connection in ways that today's hyper-digital landscape often overlooks.



The Evolving Relationship between Digital and Conventional Media: A Study of Media Consumption Habits in the Digital Era (Alzubi, 2023)

The Evolution and Impact of Streaming Services: Changing the Media Landscape (Global Media Journal, 2024)

Book Reference

MENKO TOYS 2 shows how simple childhood media like cheap cards, stickers, toy prints can become a meaningful visual archive.

This inspired me to reflect on my own childhood mediums: comics, CD cases, old TVs, plastic stools, early game consoles. The book made me realize that I could also turn these ordinary objects into an archive by using 3D scenes to revisit the media that shaped my imagination before everything became digital.



Personal Experience



Sticker Sheets

Sticker sheets were my earliest form of 'collectible media': small images traded, arranged, and touched. They shaped how I first interacted with characters, color, and narrative in a physical, playful way.



Plastic Dress-up Toys

These low-cost dress-up toys created miniature worlds of roles and imagination. Their bright packaging and interchangeable parts taught me how physical objects could build stories long before digital avatars existed.



Early Game Devices

Handheld game consoles were my first pathway into interactive worlds. Borrowed from siblings or friends, each device felt like a different portal that blending play, exploration, and early digital curiosity.



Newsstands & Manga

Newsstands and manga shelves introduced me to 2D culture long before screens took over. Printed covers, crowded layouts, and cheap paper formed my earliest sense of fantasy, visual rhythm, and storytelling.

PROCESS

Sektch

Code Implement

Model and Texture

Dialog Box

In the early sketching phase, I explored different scene compositions and key objects drawn from my childhood memories.

I mapped out potential layouts, transitions, and interactive elements such as manga shelves, sticker packs, plastic stools, game consoles, and TV setups to understand how each memory could occupy physical space in the 3D environment.

These sketches helped establish the narrative flow and spatial rhythm before moving into digital implementation.

This project uses Three.js to build an interactive 3D environment where players navigate using WASD controls. The system enables free exploration and interaction within the scene, creating an immersive real-time experience. Objects become highlighted when they are interactable, determined through both world-space distance checks and screen-space proximity detection.

Player control

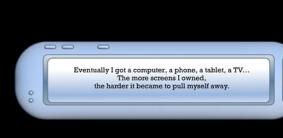
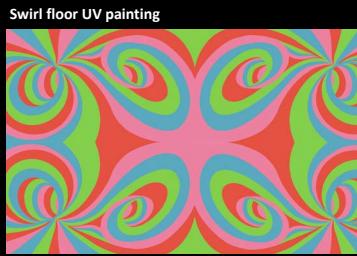
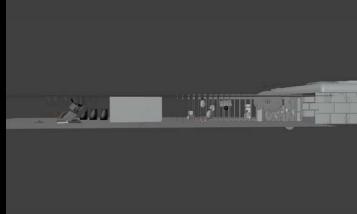
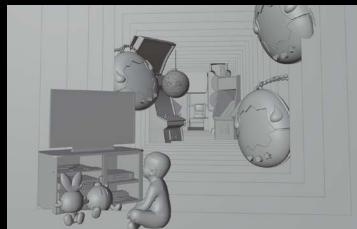
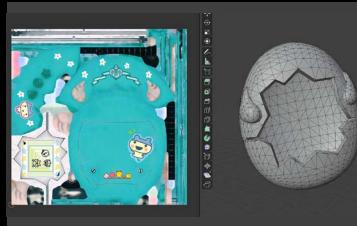
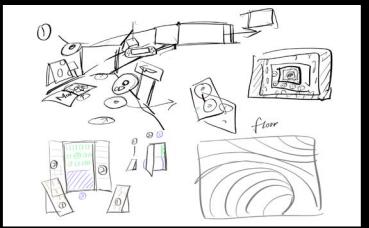
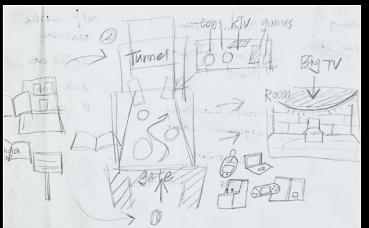
```
// ===== Player controls =====
function onKeyboardEvent(event) {
  switch (event.code) {
    case 'ArrowUp': moveForward = true; break;
    case 'ArrowLeft': moveLeft = true; break;
    case 'ArrowRight': moveRight = true; break;
    case 'ArrowDown': moveBackward = true; break;
    case 'KeyD': moveRight = true; break;
    case 'Space': if (canJump) velocity.y += 50; canJump = false; break;
    case 'KeyE': if (close_to_tips) tipsImage.style.opacity = 1 - tipsImage.style.opacity;
  }
}

// ===== Interactable object detect =====
const cameraPos = controls.object.position;
let dist_to_center = 9999;
let idx = -1;
for (let i = 0; i < interactables.length; i++) {
  const boxPos = interactables[i].position;
  const cameraPos = any;
  const boxVector = new THREE.Vector3(boxPos.x, cameraPos.y, boxPos.z);
  const distance = cameraPos.distanceTo(boxVector);
  const threshold = 20;

  if (distance < threshold) {
    const proj = boxPos.clone().project(camera);
    const screenX = (proj.x * 0.5 + 0.5);
    const screenY = (proj.y * -0.5 + 0.5);
    const screenZ = (proj.z * 0.5 + 0.5);

    const nearCenter = Math.abs(screenX - 0.5) < 0.4 &&
      Math.abs(screenY - 0.5) < 0.6 && screenZ > 0.6 && screenZ < 1;
    const dist_to_center = Math.sqrt(Math.pow(screenX - 0.5, 2) +
      Math.pow(screenY - 0.5, 2));
    if (nearCenter) {
      if (distance_to_center < dist_to_center) {
        dist_to_center = distance_to_center;
        idx = i;
      }
    }
  }
}

// ===== show interact hint =====
if (idx >= 0) {
  close_to_tips = true;
  const boxPos = interactables[idx].position;
```



I designed three distinct dialogue box styles based on memories from three different periods of my childhood. Each style visually reflects the emotions of its era and is assigned to interactive objects within the corresponding scene.

The first style features dreamy, soft shapes and pastel colors, capturing the imaginative atmosphere of my early encounters with manga, stickers, and playful media.

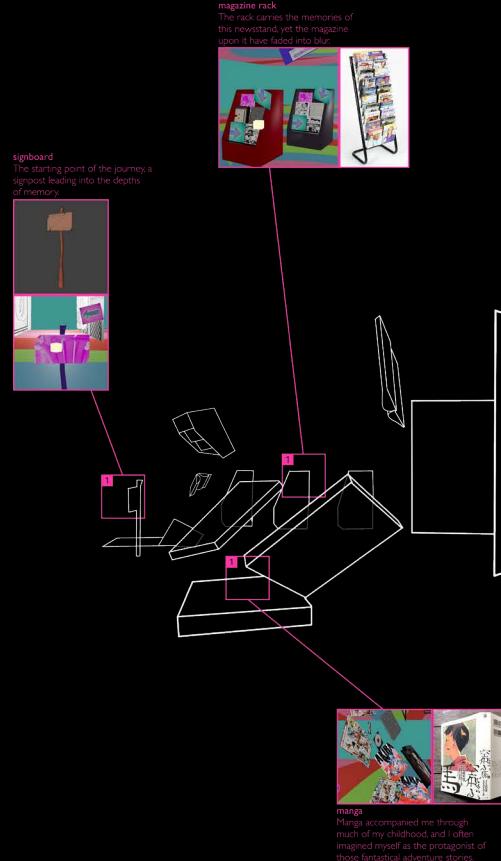
The second style draws from colorful stationery and card-like designs, echoing the years when handwritten notes and small collectibles carried personal meaning.

The final style adopts a machine-inspired, skeuomorphic interface that mirrors my increasing immersion in digital screens, game consoles, and technology. Together, these styles create a visual timeline that supports the narrative and deepens the player's emotional connection to each memory.

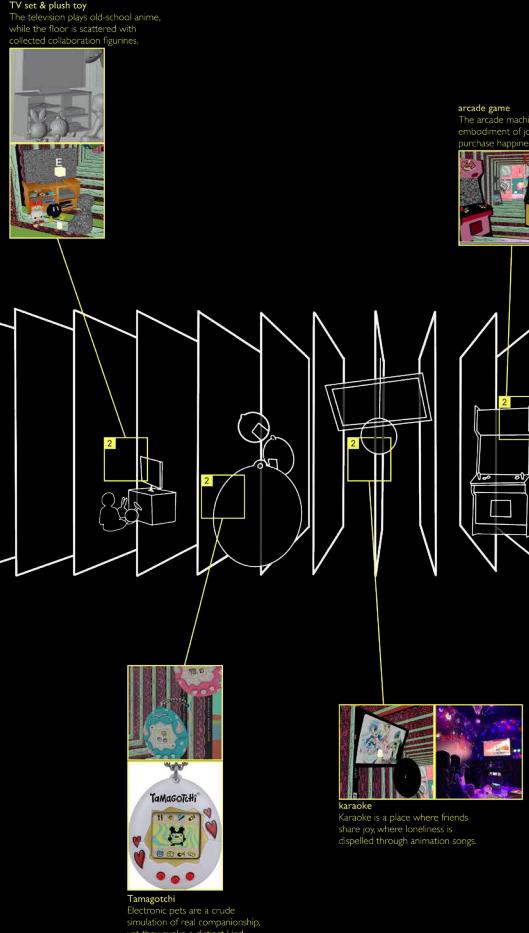


SCENE CONSTRUCTURE

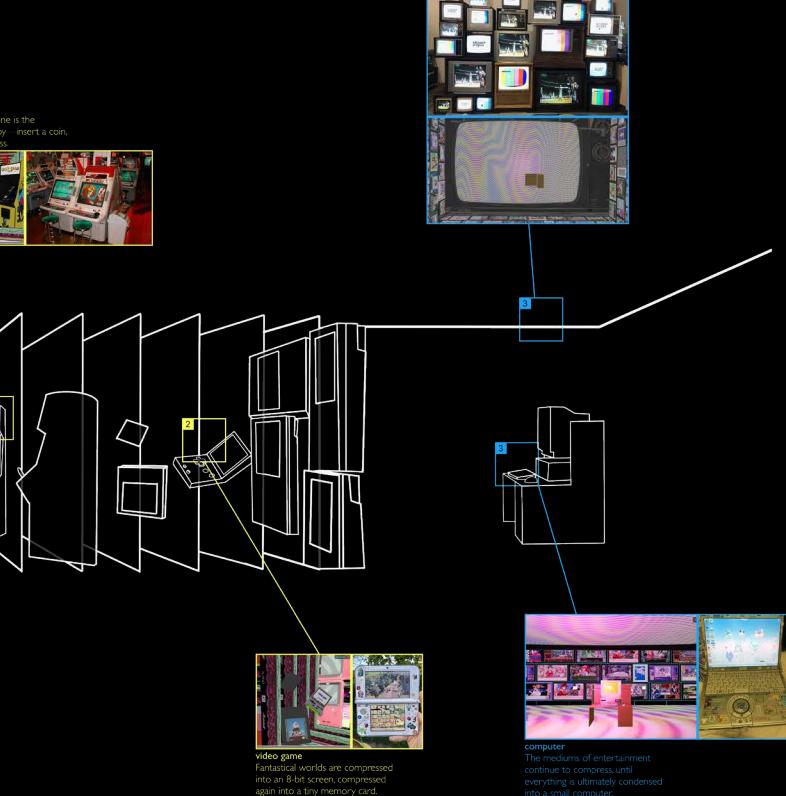
Scene 1



Scene 2



Scene 3



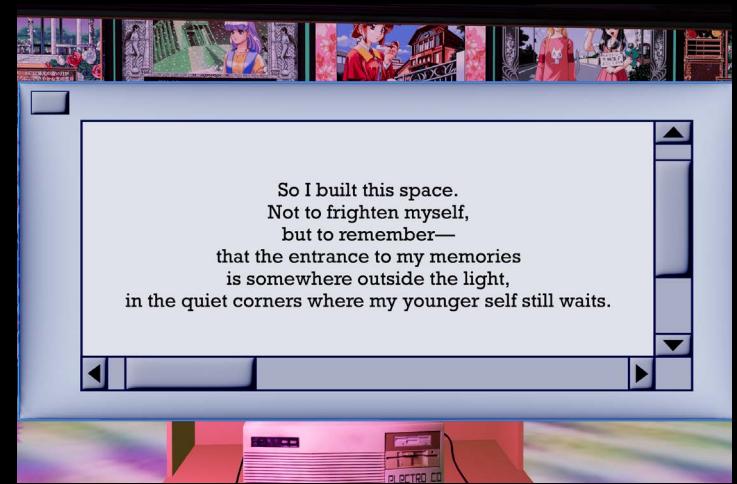
OUTCOME

Display

The final outcome is an interactive 3D memory space that transforms fragments of my childhood into a series of immersive, poetic encounters. Each scene holds an object that once shaped my inner world like manga shelves, sticker packs, plastic stools, fading dolls, glowing screen and invites the viewer to move through them as I once did. The dialogue boxes echo three distinct periods of my life, shifting from dreamy softness to handwritten warmth to machine-like interfaces, mirroring my changing relationship with media and with myself. What emerges is not a reconstruction of the past, but a gentle return to its emotional textures—a quiet exploration of how small objects, fleeting habits, and digital light have shaped who I am today.



OUTCOME



KAOMOJI DIGITAL DICTIONARY CARDS

This project is a visual and linguistic exploration of Asian internet kaomoji, focusing on how multi-script characters ranging from Kannada and Thai to Hangul, IPA symbols, and Chinese combine to form expressive digital faces.

Each entry breaks down a kaomoji's character origins, emotional function, usage context, and cultural history. Presented through stylized graphic layouts, the project highlights how diverse writing systems shape online expression and demonstrates the rich cross-cultural evolution of internet visual language.

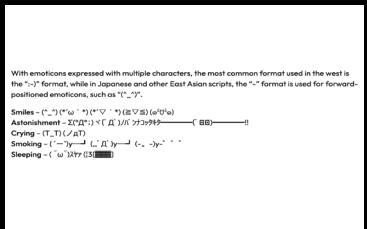


INSPIRATION

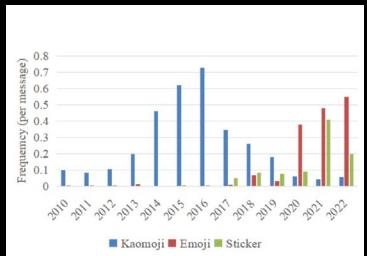
Online Research

An exploration of online forums and articles about the origins, cultural distinctions, and historical development of kaomoji is conducted. The findings revealed clear differences in character usage between countries like Japan and the U.S., as well as shifting trends in how kaomoji appear on digital platforms over time. These insights inspired me to create a kaomoji card-based project that visually introduces their characters, variations, and regional styles in an accessible and engaging way.

Commonly used Kaomoji in Japan



Trend of Kaomoji, Emoji and Sticker used on Bilibili video platform



Paper Research

My paper research focused on two key academic sources: A Cross-Cultural Survey of Emoticon Research Before 2015 and Emoticons, Kaomoji, and Emoji: The Transformation of Communication in the Digital Age. The first study provides a comprehensive overview of how emoticons including kaomoji have been interpreted and used across different cultures. It highlights variations in emotional expression, reading direction, and visual emphasis, such as Japan's focus on the eyes versus Western emphasis on the mouth. This survey helped me understand how cultural norms shape the structure and perception of text-based expressions.

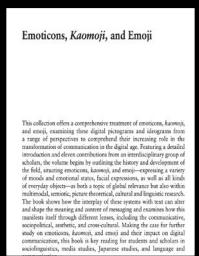
The second text expands the discussion by positioning emoticons, kaomoji, and emoji within a larger communication framework. It traces their evolution from simple ASCII symbols to complex Unicode-based systems, showing how digital media, technological constraints, and cultural exchange have transformed visual language. It also emphasizes the semiotic and emotional functions of these symbols in everyday communication.

Together, these papers provided a deeper theoretical foundation for my project. They revealed how kaomoji exist not merely as cute text icons but as culturally embedded visual languages. This inspired me to design a card-based system that presents kaomoji not only as aesthetic symbols but also as cultural artifacts, helping users appreciate their origins, structures, and regional differences.

A Cross-Cultural Survey of Emoticon Research Before 2015 (Human Centered Design & Engineering Technical Report, University of Washington, 2020)

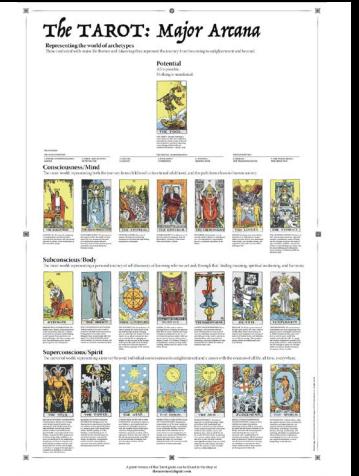


Emoticons, Kaomoji, and Emoji: The Transformation of Communication in the Digital Age (Routledge, 2020)

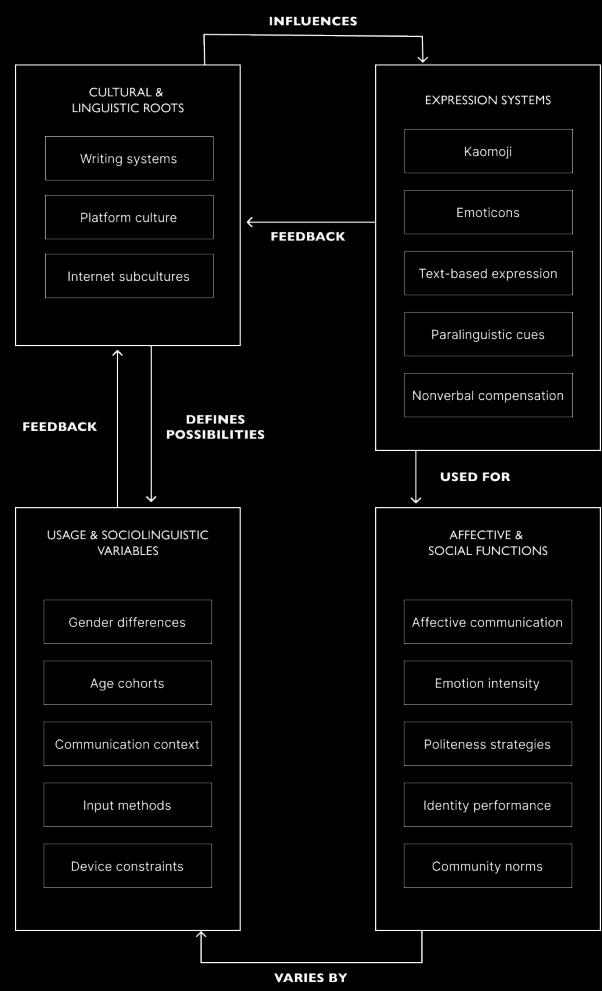


Reveal and Interpret

Inspired by the way tarot cards invite users to flip a symbolic image and uncover deeper meaning, this project reimagines that experience through kaomoji. Just as tarot's front illustration leads to layered interpretations on the reverse side, each kaomoji card presents a simple expressive face on the front and reveals its linguistic origins, cultural references, and emotional symbolism on the back. This "turn-over-to-understand" process transforms everyday internet expressions into meaningful visual artifacts, bridging digital language with symbolic interpretation.

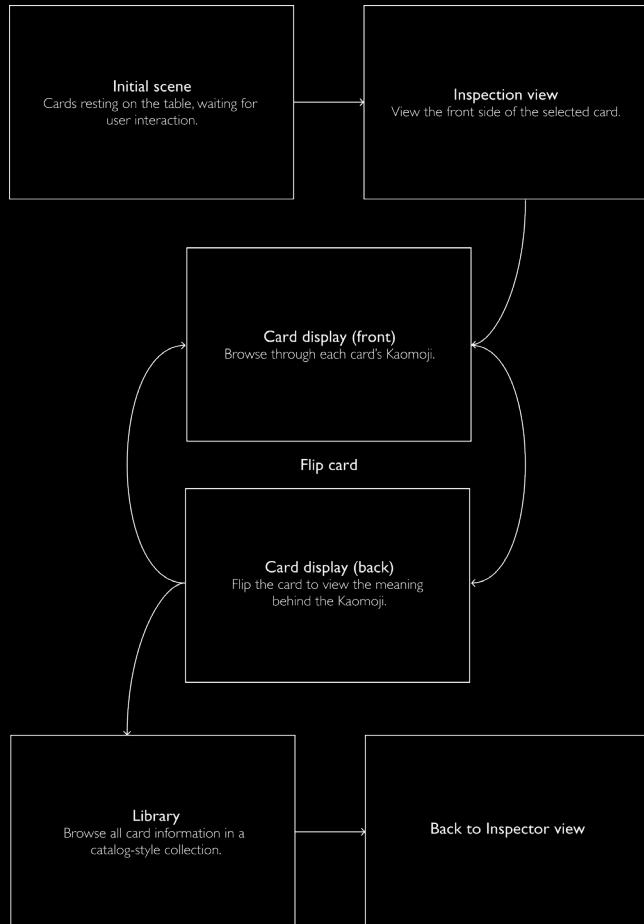


Personal Experience

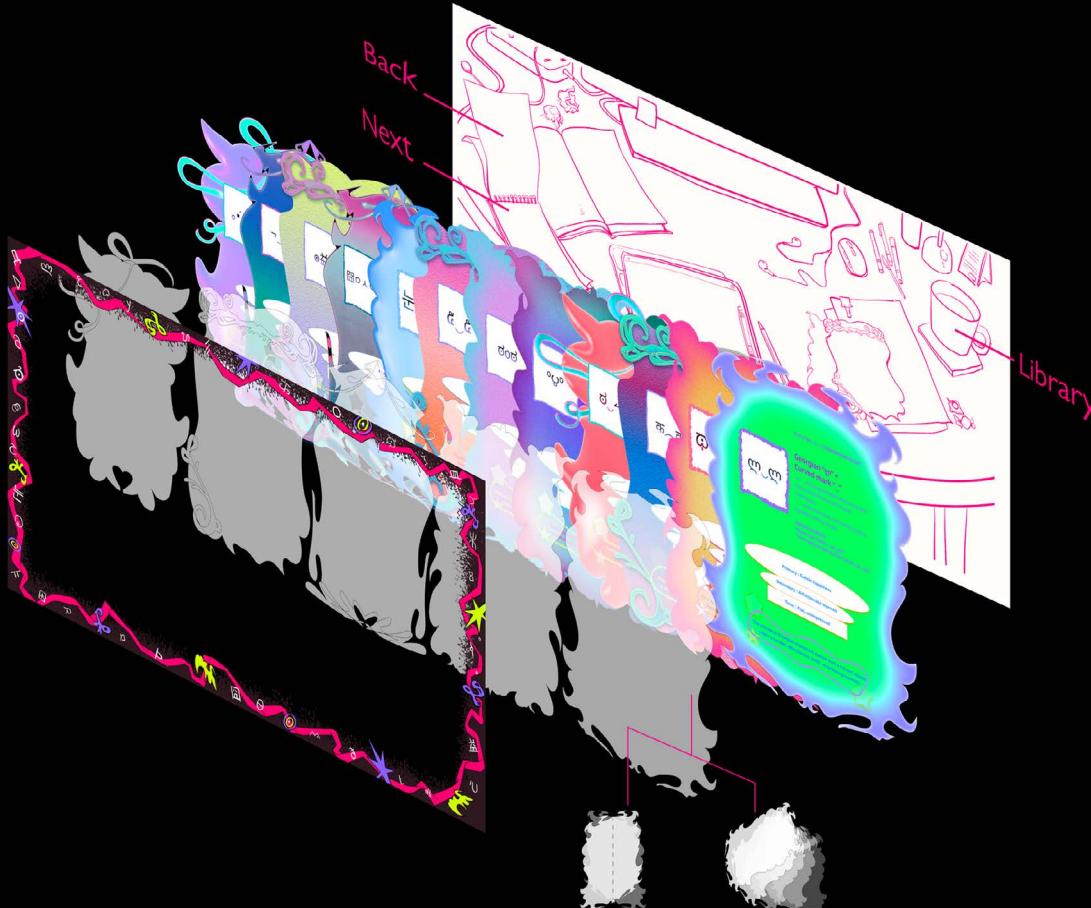


PROCESS

Pipeline

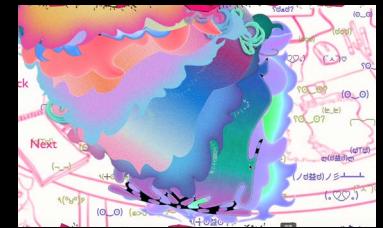
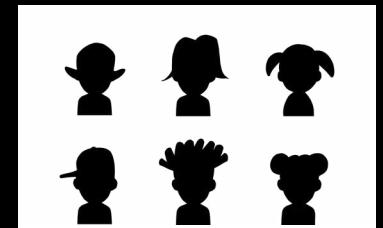
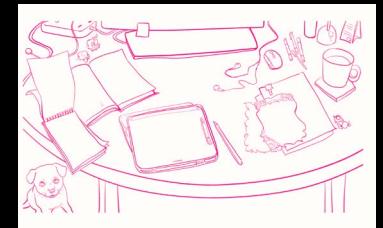


Interaction Design



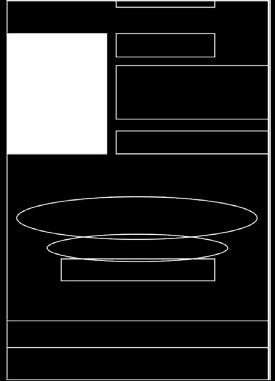
Component

This project contains key components of interaction design, integrating interactive buttons seamlessly into the background for intuitive use. Expressive emoticons are created with SVG paths to add emotional character, while flexible, interactive flip cards enable smooth navigation and an engaging, dynamic user experience.

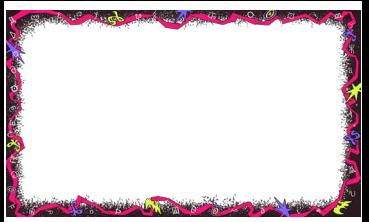


PROCESS

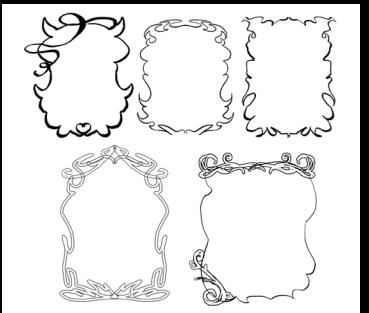
Sketch



The draft interface is structured using a grid system to ensure clear alignment and visual consistency. Inspired by a dictionary format, it presents kaomoji alongside their encoded forms, meanings, and usage examples, allowing information to be explored in an organized and intuitive way.

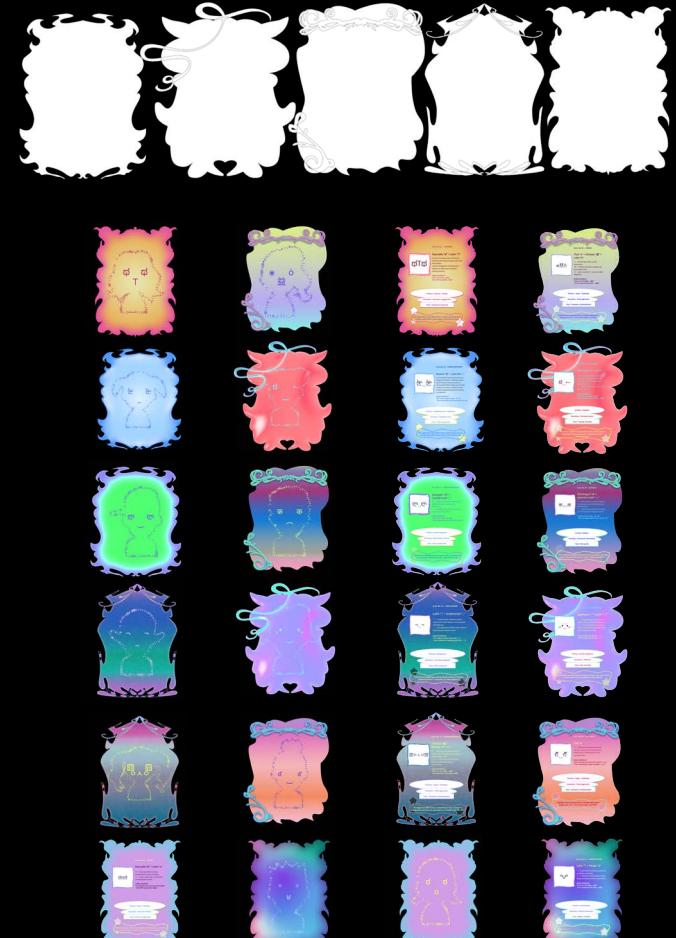


This section introduces the interface border sketches. Bandage elements surrounding the frame symbolize the connection between languages, bridging design language and natural language. The surrounding kaomoji and original symbols are inspired by ornamental patterns found in card design, adding a playful and expressive visual layer.



This section presents early sketches of the card designs. Some layouts are symmetrical while others are intentionally asymmetrical, featuring a variety of decorative edge patterns. The diverse styles reflect the wide-ranging origins of kaomoji characters and their rich cultural diversity.

Card Design



OUTCOME

Display

