

**EVERYDAY MESSAGING
ASSIGNMENT TASK 2**

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PERCEPTION

OBSERVATION

CONNECTION

RATIONALE

In Assignment Task 1, I explored ideas surrounding the sun, shadows and time, delving deep into sundials and their ability to condense an abstract natural phenomenon- the sun- into a communicable form. Assignment Task 2, which I have titled POC (Perception, Observation, Connection), can be seen as an expansion of these concepts, this time diving even further into the distorted world of shadows and perception.

Shadows are one of the most influential forces we are subject to in our everyday lives, almost constantly influencing how we perceive, navigate and interact with space. They can be both subtle and stark and are present almost everywhere there is light- as they are simply products of light and three-dimensional matter- yet they are entirely two-dimensional and become one with the environment in which they exist. Despite the large impact shadows have on us, they more often than not go completely unnoticed, their presence weaving its way into our subconscious, impacting us unknowingly.

Further, in an exponentially fast-paced world in which we are flooded with information and stimulation, there are always so many things we can be doing and, consequently, so many things we are doing. There is always news to read, friends to message, Tik Toks to devour and schedules to adhere to, and all too often the alluring glow of phone and laptop screens takes precedence over simple observation. With habits like these seemingly hard to avoid, it is easy to become detached from our surroundings and the present moment, ignoring the many subtle beauties of the physical world. Slowly, the eye of the flaneur is being blinded. What would we see if we simply looked around more? An awareness is gained through observation, altering our perception physically, but also mentally, opening up a new world. Taking the time to observe allows us to connect with the physical world, and in doing so we are freed to connect with our own minds- providing moments of inspiration and time for thoughtful reflection.

With these concepts in mind, I wanted to create something that was not only about perception, observation and connection, but that also provided an environment for the user to experience such things. Shadows are fleeting- especially when cast by the sun- existing in a certain state for only a brief moment, distorting as the earth orbits and rotates. They are in a constant state of flux yet appear so stationary, subtly deceiving the glancing eye. In this way, using shadows in design seemed the perfect way to represent these ideas, and allowed me to create a piece of design that also exists in a transitory state.

Process:

My research began with lots of walking and observing, perhaps as a reaction to COVID-19, in order to get a grasp on how shadows interact with the world, and us. I then started to look into shadow art where people create sculptures, often out of rubbish or household items, and when a light is shone on it from a certain angle a shadow image is projected that looks entirely unfamiliar to the object itself. This led me to Plato's famous "The Allegory of the Cave" from "The Republic" which explores concepts of perception and enlightenment, using shadows and light as metaphors. Some people in the cave have had their legs and necks chained since childhood, unable to see anything but what's before them. Behind them is a low wall with people walking and carrying "all sorts of vessels" which appear above the wall, and behind that a fire blazes. Plato divulges that the people who are chained would see only their own shadows and those cast by the vessels, leading them to think that the voices they can hear from behind the wall are in fact coming from a being that looks like the shadows cast by the vessels. "To them, I said, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images." This quote in particular struck me, illustrating the perception altering abilities of shadows, both physically and mentally.

From here, I decided to use this quote as the basis of my final work, and started to test the possibilities of casting three different shadows from one object. This then moved onto seeing if I could create three different shadows from one set of letters to ultimately spell out the quote from Plato's "Allegory of the Cave", but I quickly realised how complicated this would be. It needed to be thought about in terms of X, Y and Z faces, and every letter on each face has to intersect with a letter on each of the other faces in order to create three shadows from three separate angles. The width and height of each object has a direct effect on its shadow from all angles, so in order to project the quote in three parts, each letterform must be the exact same dimensions. I then created a set of letters using a 10x10 grid, ensuring that each form was simple and geometric in order to give the idea the best chance at working. Next, I started to arrange the quote into three different parts, arranging each face using a rigid square grid. I decided on a 7x6 grid as a base as it worked the best with the number of letters and words in the quote and allowed it to still make sense when read in parts.

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However, as well as each face needing the same number of letters, I realised that each row on faces X and Y must also have the same number of letters for the composition to work, which posed some legibility problems due to splitting up words. But even after solving faces X and Y, face Z doesn't automatically work as it is essentially a product of X and Y (the letters can basically end up anywhere on face Z). In order to combat this, I started drawing dot grids to comprehend how it would all work, which ended up being like solving three puzzles at once- constantly moving letters around and breaking up words in ways that both allowed the formation to work and also be readable. Each letter now had to be thought of as a 6x6 grid, with each space between words being the same as the width of a letter. It also ended up being necessary to add blank characters to the composition, but these also had to be positioned logically within the quote. So this is basically how it all works:

- The number of letters in each row on faces X and Y must be the same
- The number of letters in each column on face X corresponds to the number of letters in the adjacent row on face Z
- The number of letters on face Y corresponds to the number of letters in the adjacent column on face Z
- Place a dot on face Z where two letters on faces X and Y intersect, but due to their being six layers on each face, many of these clash making the formation not possible
- Alter the positions of each dot/letter using trial and error until it finally worked

But even after this, some of the 3-letter-hybrids simply could not work together in the same letter sculpture, so this made for further adjustment until all of the combos were plausible. I, L and T were all difficult letters to work with due to their thin profile. Some letters also had to be altered from their original form. Now, with it finally figured out, I took each letter combo into an old demo for a shadow art visualiser program to help visualise each individual letter sculpture, which I would then make out of sticks of balsa wood.

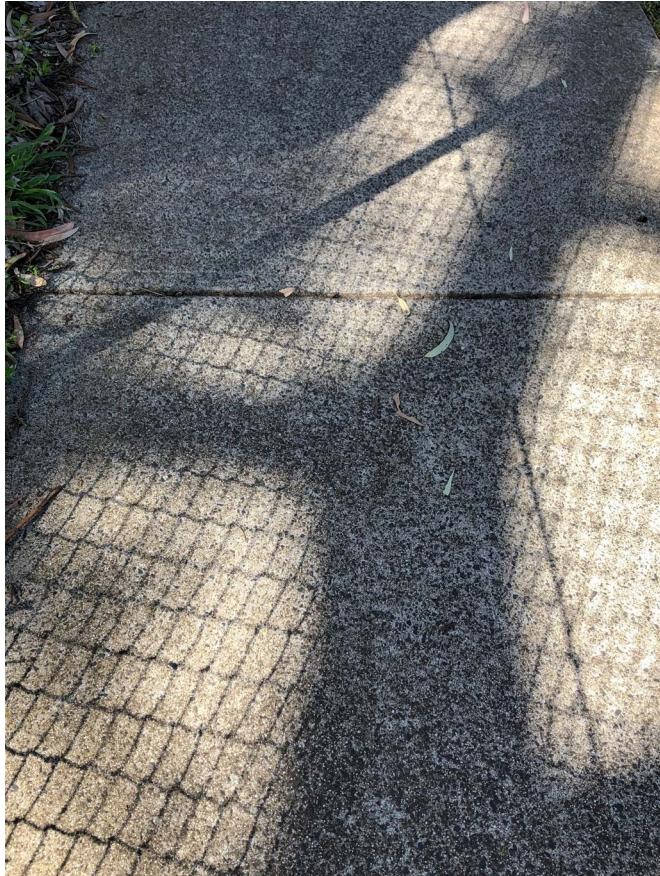
To me, the process of this project was all about planning, problem solving and precision, using relatively lo-fi methods and materials. Over 300 lengths of balsa wood needed to be measured, marked, hand cut and glued together to form the 3-dimensional hybrid letterforms, using two old video cassettes taped together as a square to achieve "precise" right angles. I only started doing the latter after about ten letters had already been made, and it turned out to be a great innovation. Before this, the ends of each length of balsa had to be meticulously sanded down to a level surface in order to achieve straight letterforms which took a considerable amount of time. This whole lo-fi setup was reflective of COVID-19, but also linked to the DIY making methods I explored in Assignment Task 1. I chose to leave the sculptures unpainted and all marks and imperfections visible, because in the end the final work is about the shadows, not the sculptures. Once all letterforms were made, I calculated

the necessary lengths of fishing line needed to hang each layer, measured, marked and attached the fishing line and screw eyes to the sculptures. I then marked out a final dot grid on a piece of card, indicating the exact position for each piece of fishing line to thread through. Finally, after having done a series of distance tests while the letterforms were untied, I positioned the installation 1 metre away from each of the intended projection walls, and taped the ground using masking tape with a pathway for the viewer to follow. And voila!

Final Design:

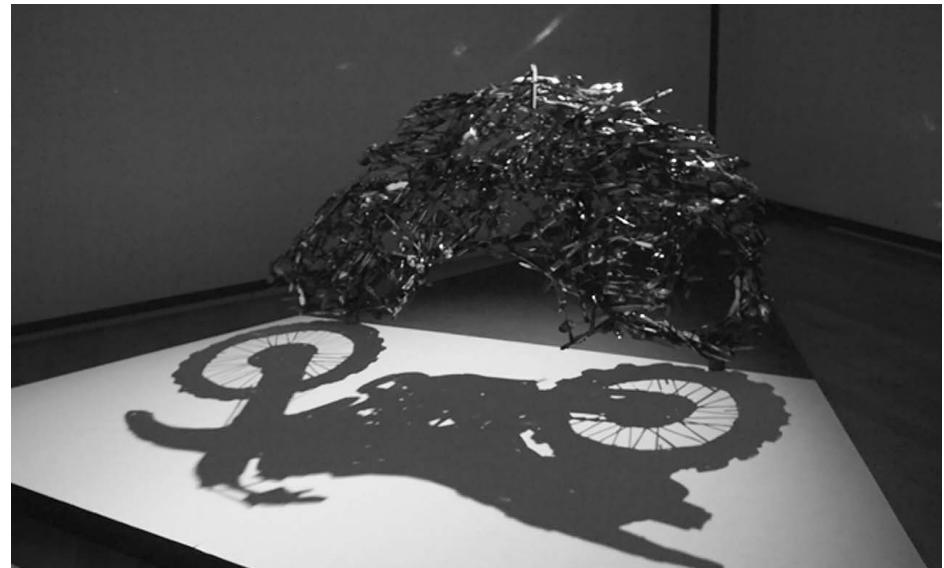
The final result of my everyday messaging exploration is a reflective design piece about perception, observation and connecting with your surroundings, encouraging others to do the same via interactivity and thought-provoking text. The installation comprises of 27 hanging hybrid letterforms that projects the quote, "To them, I said, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images", in three parts from three separate angles. The room in which it is situated is completely dark, and the viewer is given a torch before they enter as a means of projecting the shadows onto the wall. The dark room creates an eerie yet meditative space, free from indications of time. The viewer is invited to explore the installation, following the marked path if they please but without restraint, moving the torch around and aligning letterforms and lines of text as the light becomes parallel with each layer. The shadows projected onto the wall are in a state of constant flux, and exist in a legible state only at certain distances with a parallel light. The moments in between legibility, to me, are the most exciting. As the viewer navigates the room, the shadows traverse along the walls, the rigid geometric letterforms morphing into unrecognisable forms as the torch moves from one face to the next. This beautiful abstraction that is present within shadows also creates beautiful moments of serendipity as the quote is slowly dismantled and reassembled by the light. The shadows become a part of the space itself while also being entirely temporary. The final face of the installation is to be viewed from a lying down position- marked by the tape stick figure- projecting the shadows onto the roof. This is ultimately a reference to the sun, meditation and enlightenment, giving the viewer time to properly pause, observe and reflect. The non-letter-symbols on faces X and Z also reference these ideas. Ultimately, the viewer is given final authorship of the installation- what they experience while in the room is almost completely out of my hands, which I love. The shadows become a part of the space itself while also being entirely temporary. Through this, I hope that each viewer can feel their own sense of connection to the space and the shadows, allowing people a moment to pause, observe, reflect and explore in hope that these things can become a part of their own lives.

● PROCESS





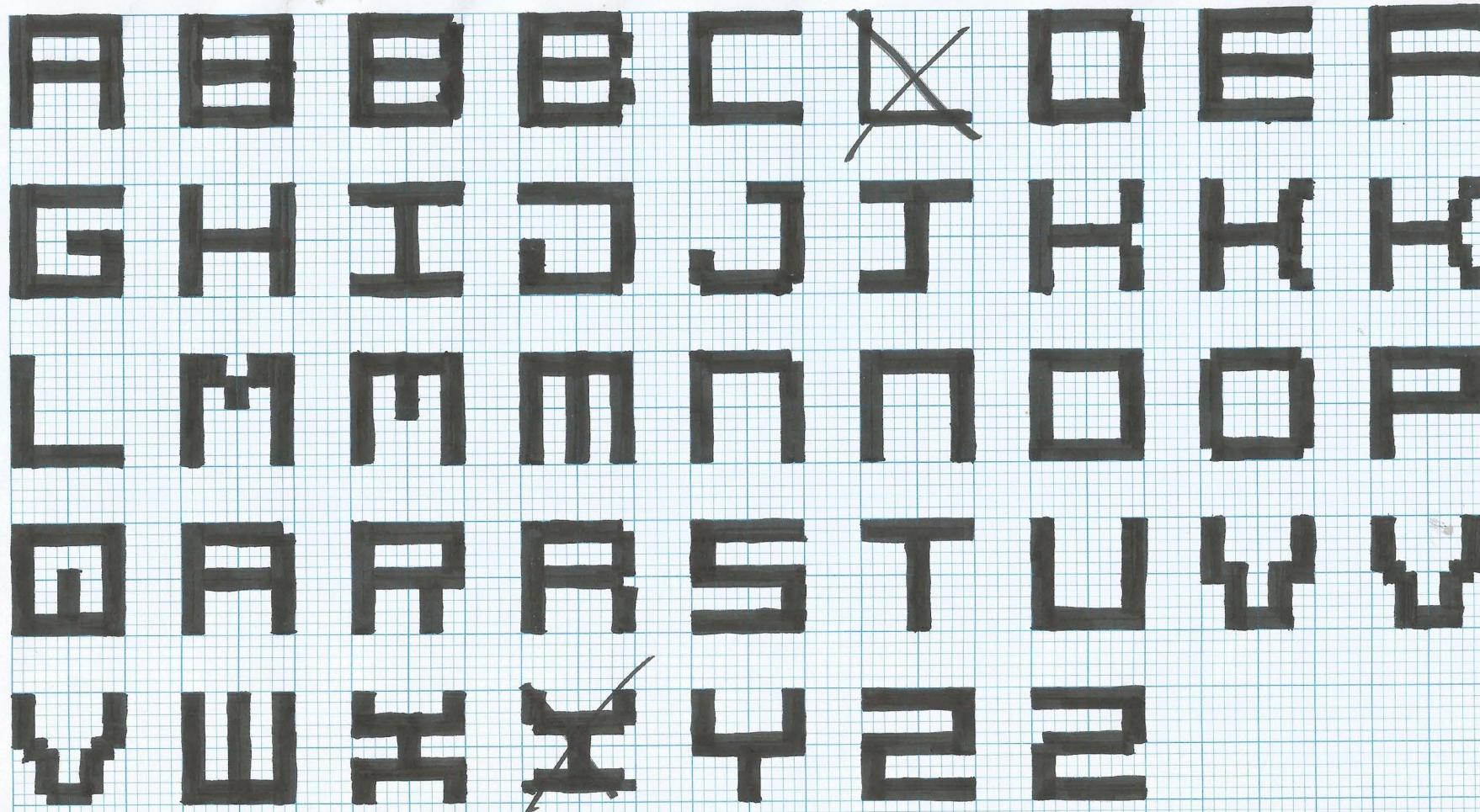
Howard Nemerov - One Day Poem Pavilion



Shigeo Fukuda - Lunch with a Helmet On



Shigeo Fukuda



Original 10x10 grid alphabet

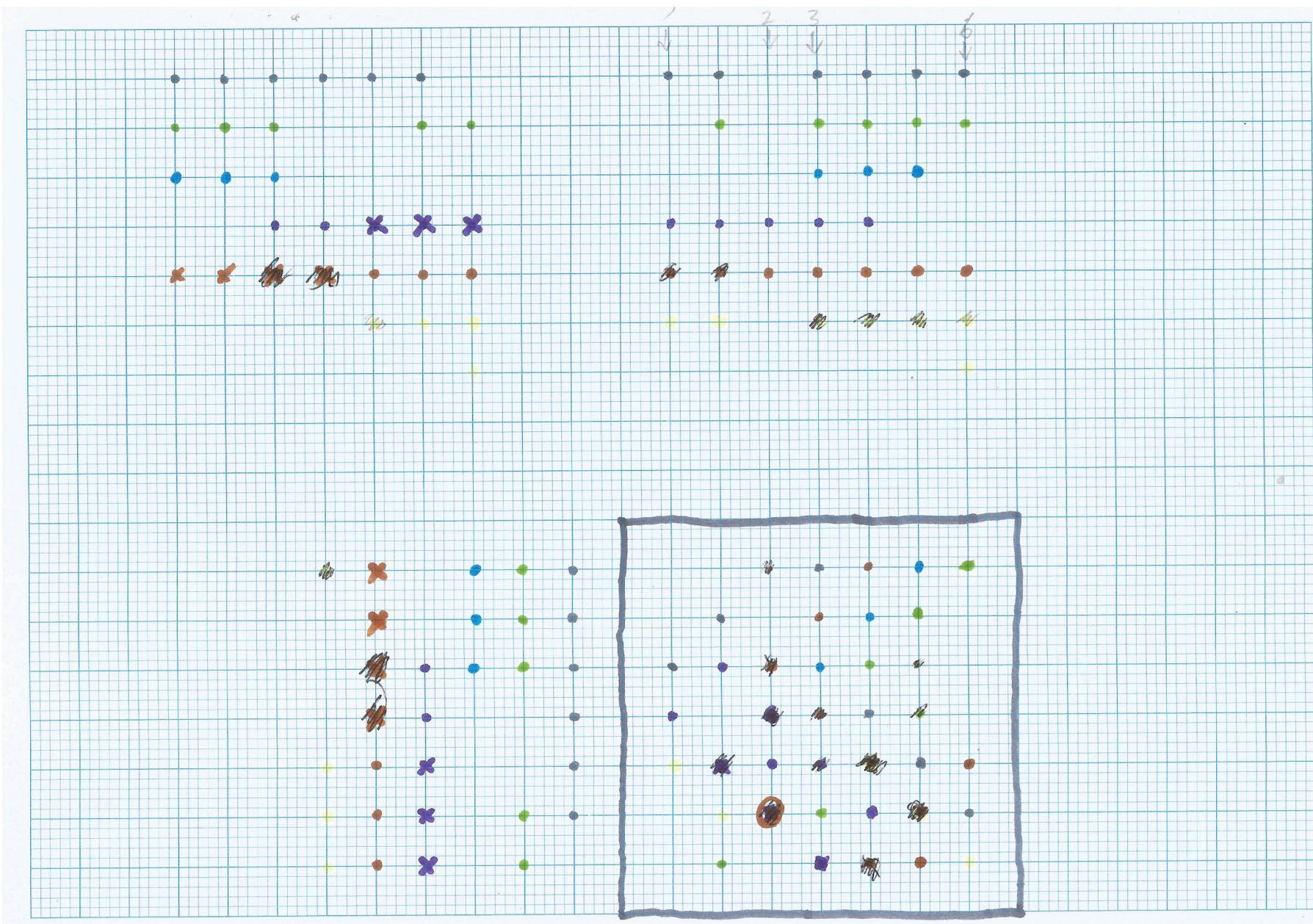
A B B C D E F

G H I J K L

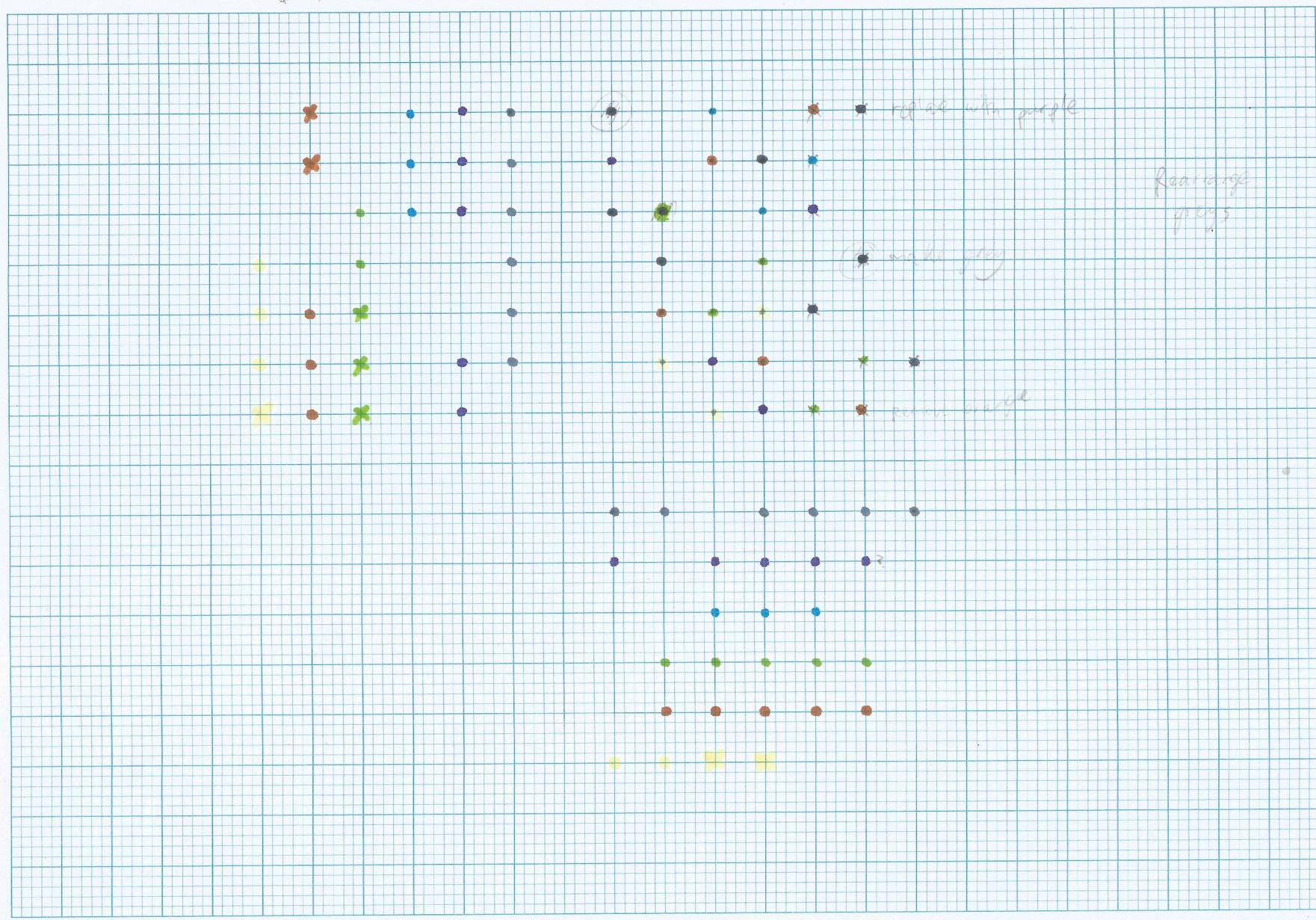
m n o p q

R R R S T U V

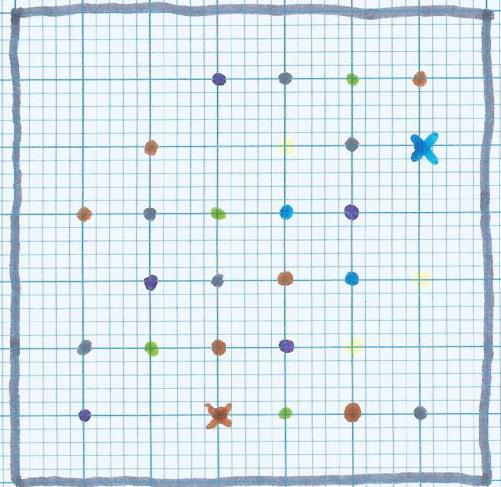
W W X Y Z Z



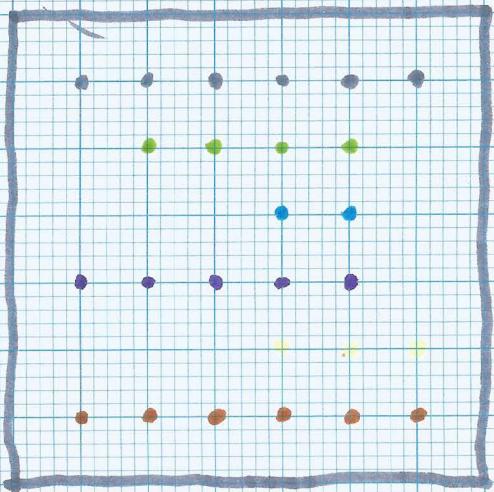
First attempt at letter positioning using a dot grid



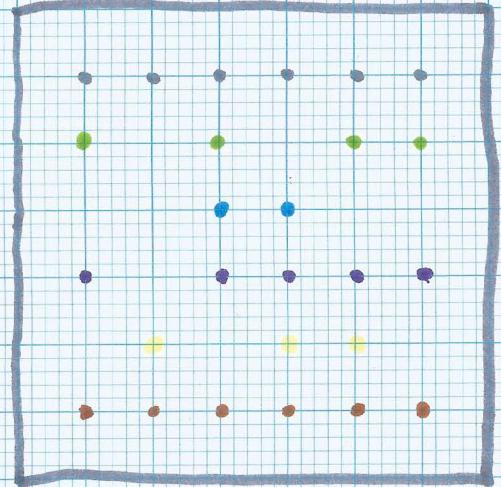
BIRDS EYE VIEW

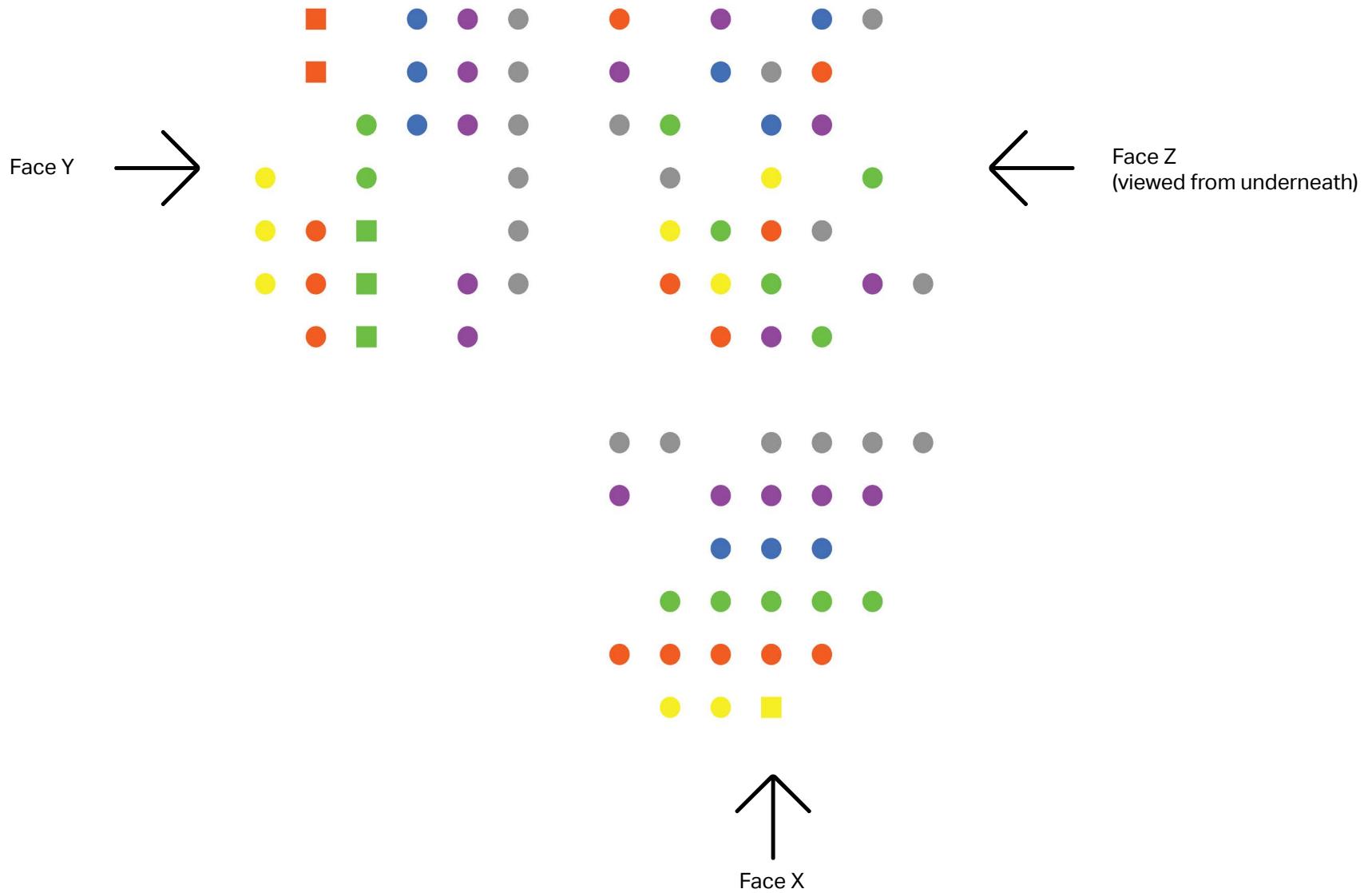


FRONT ON VIEW



LEFT
HAND
SIDE
VIEW





Final dot grid. Each colour represents a layer. Each dot represents the position of a letter as viewed from that face. Squares on face X and Y represent blank characters.

X

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TRUTH
WOULD
BE

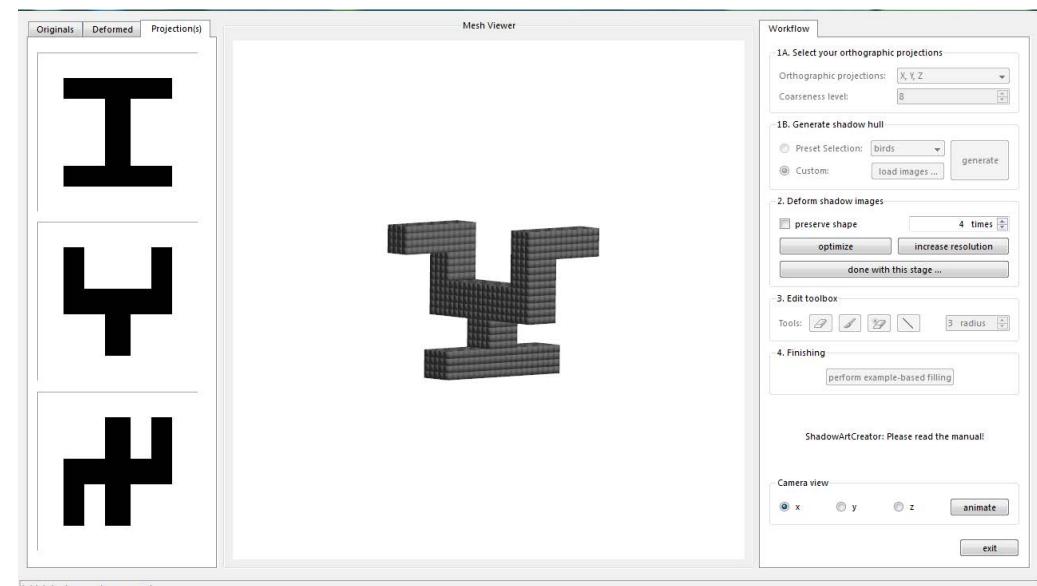
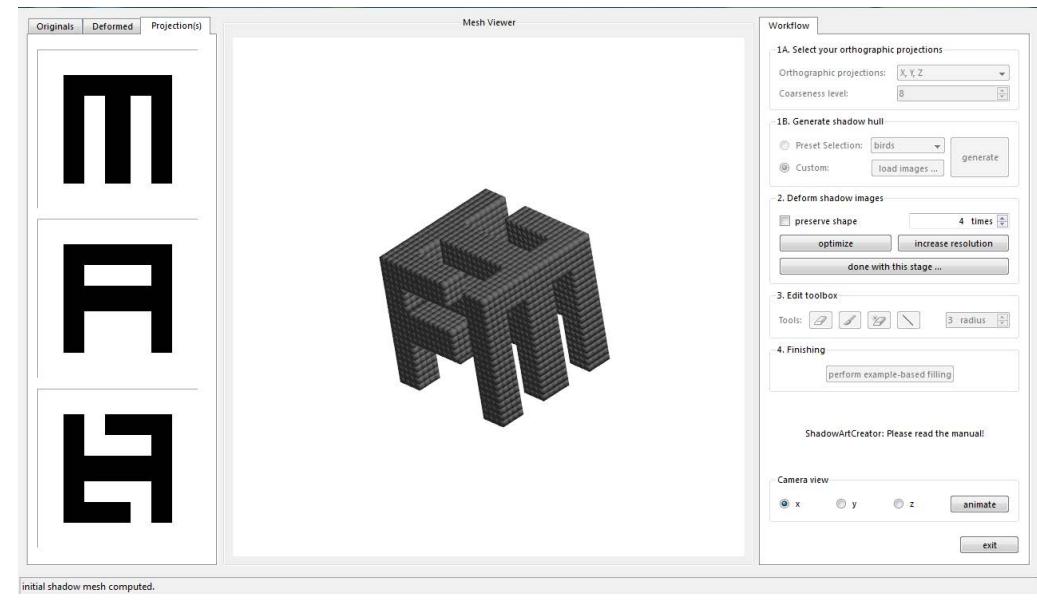
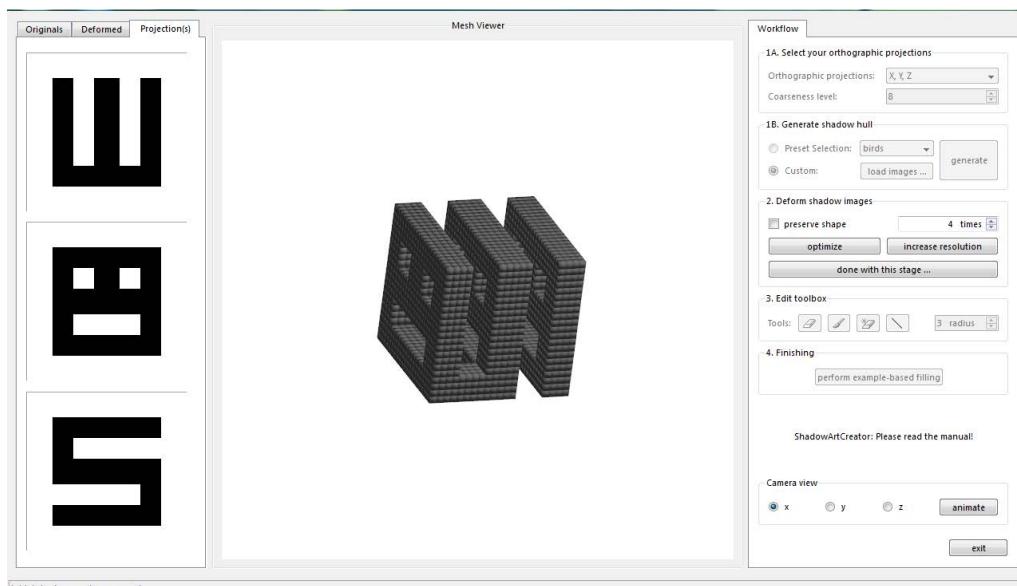
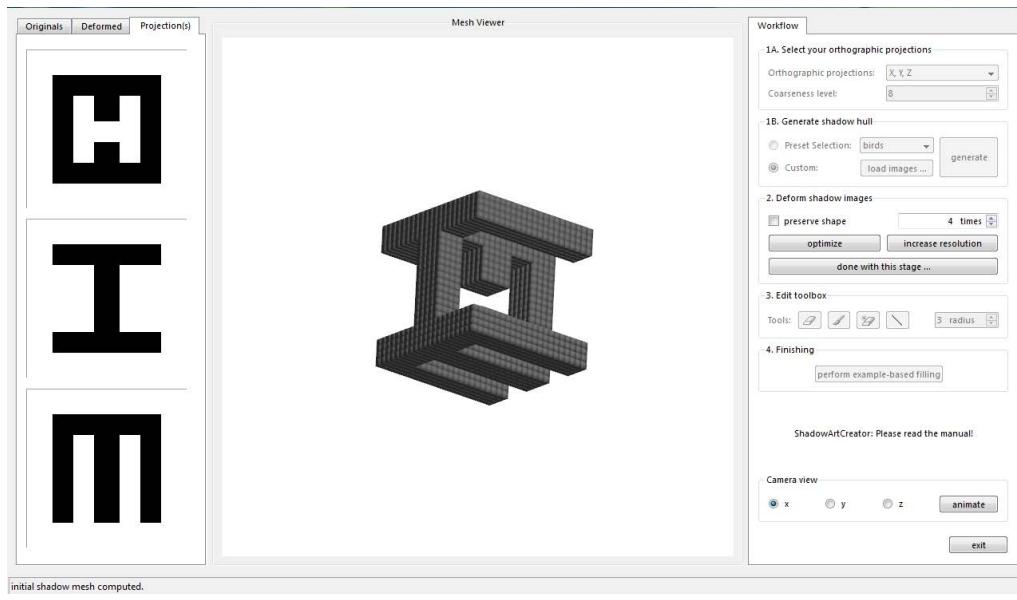
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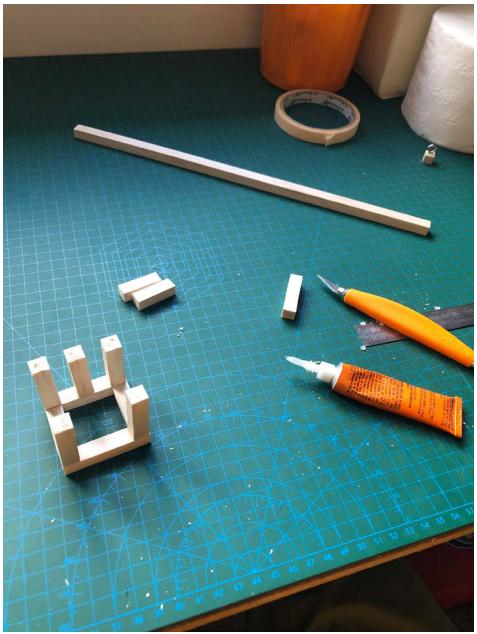
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Final layouts of all faces

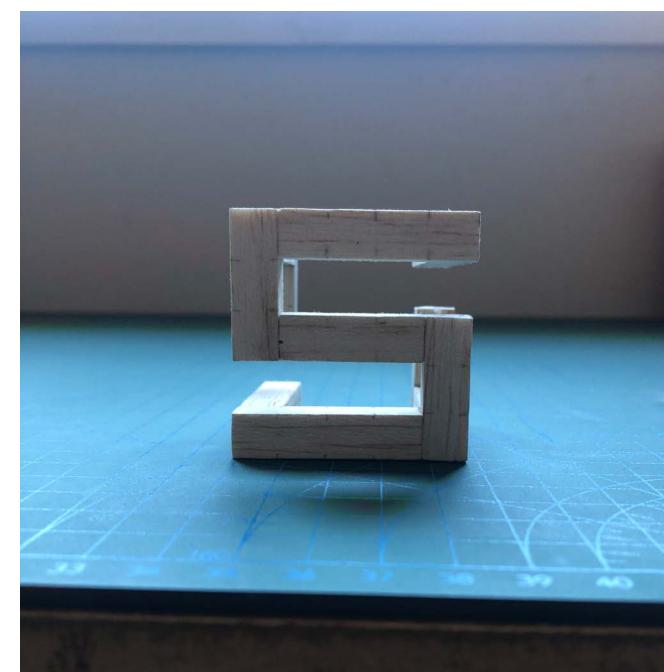
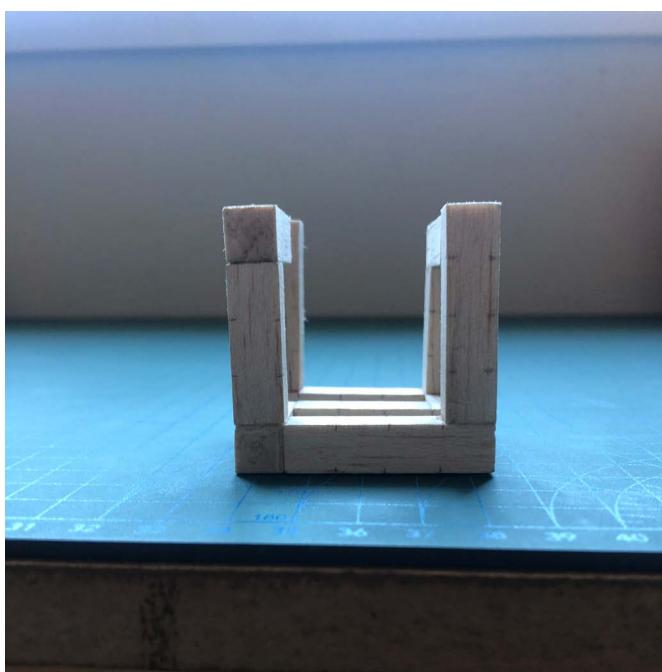
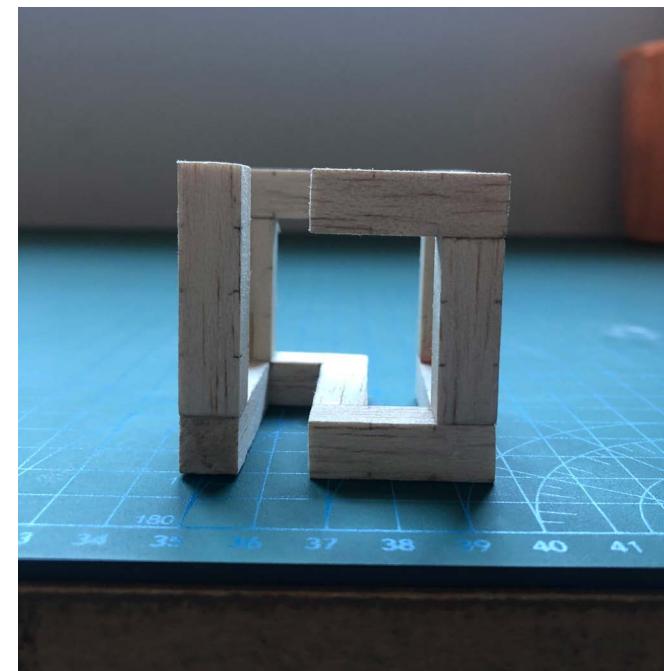
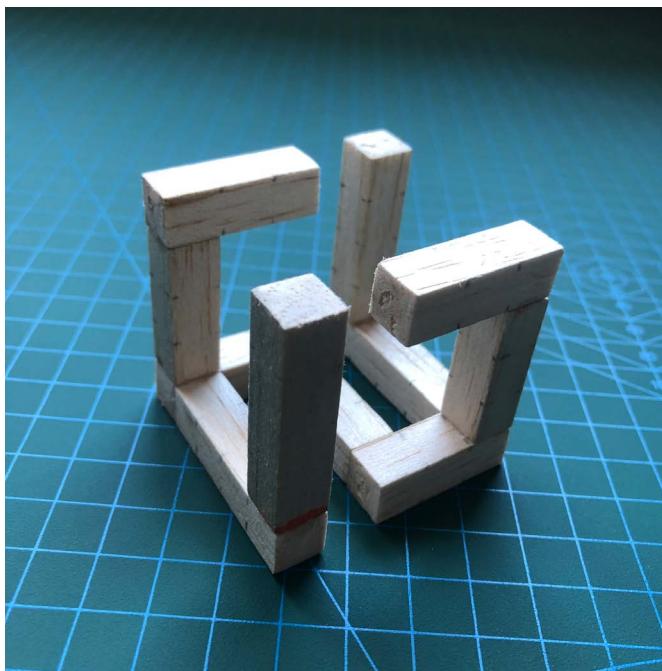


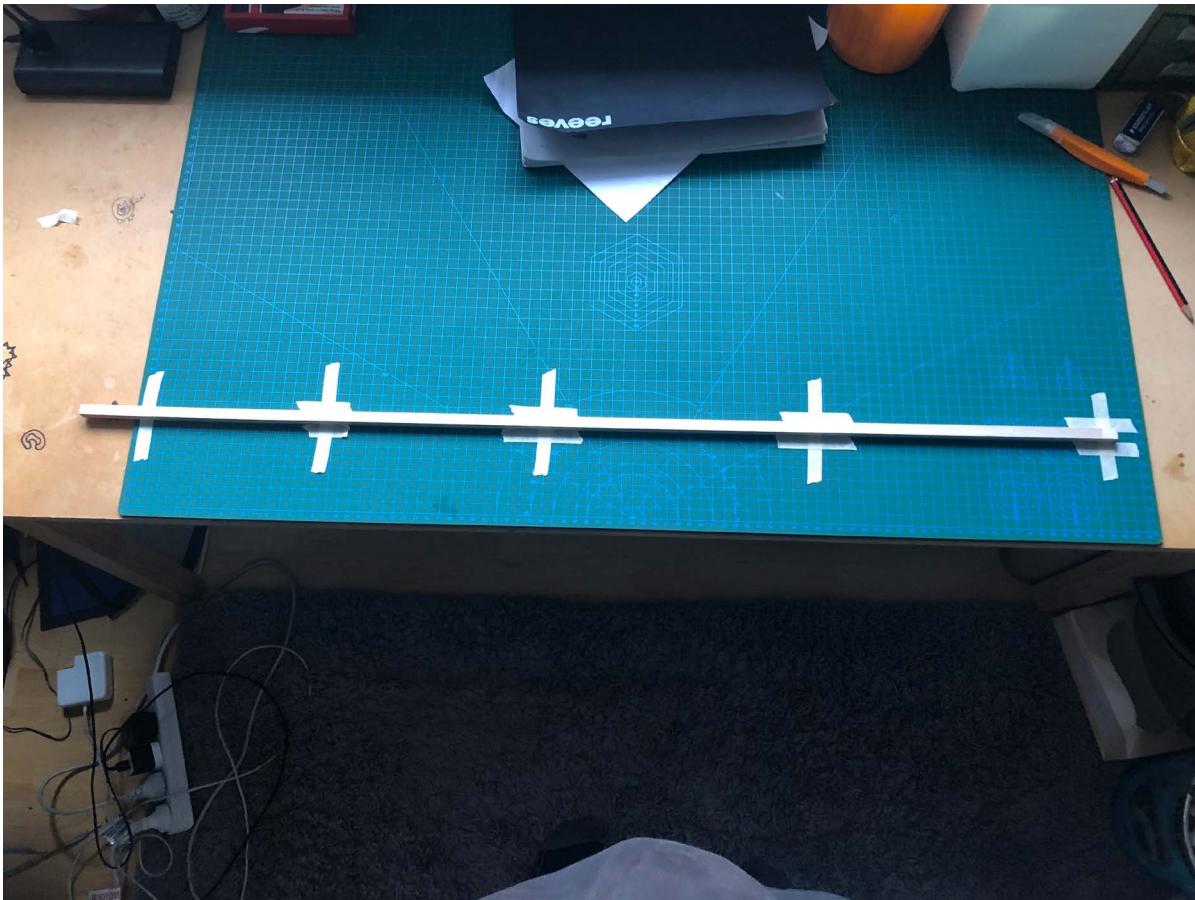
Shadow art visualiser used while putting together the letter sculptures



First hybrid letterform test

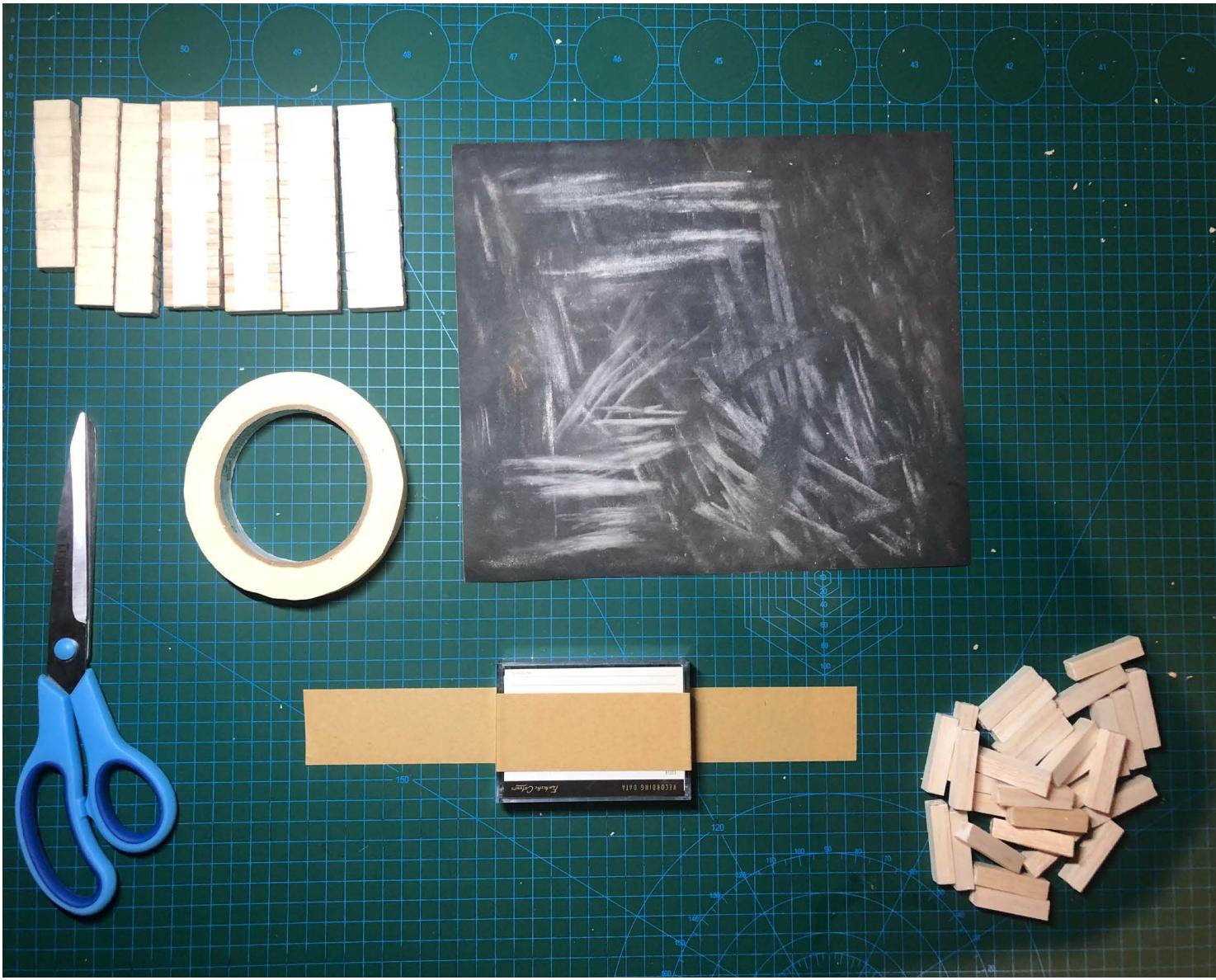






Measuring and marking the balsa wood to be cut





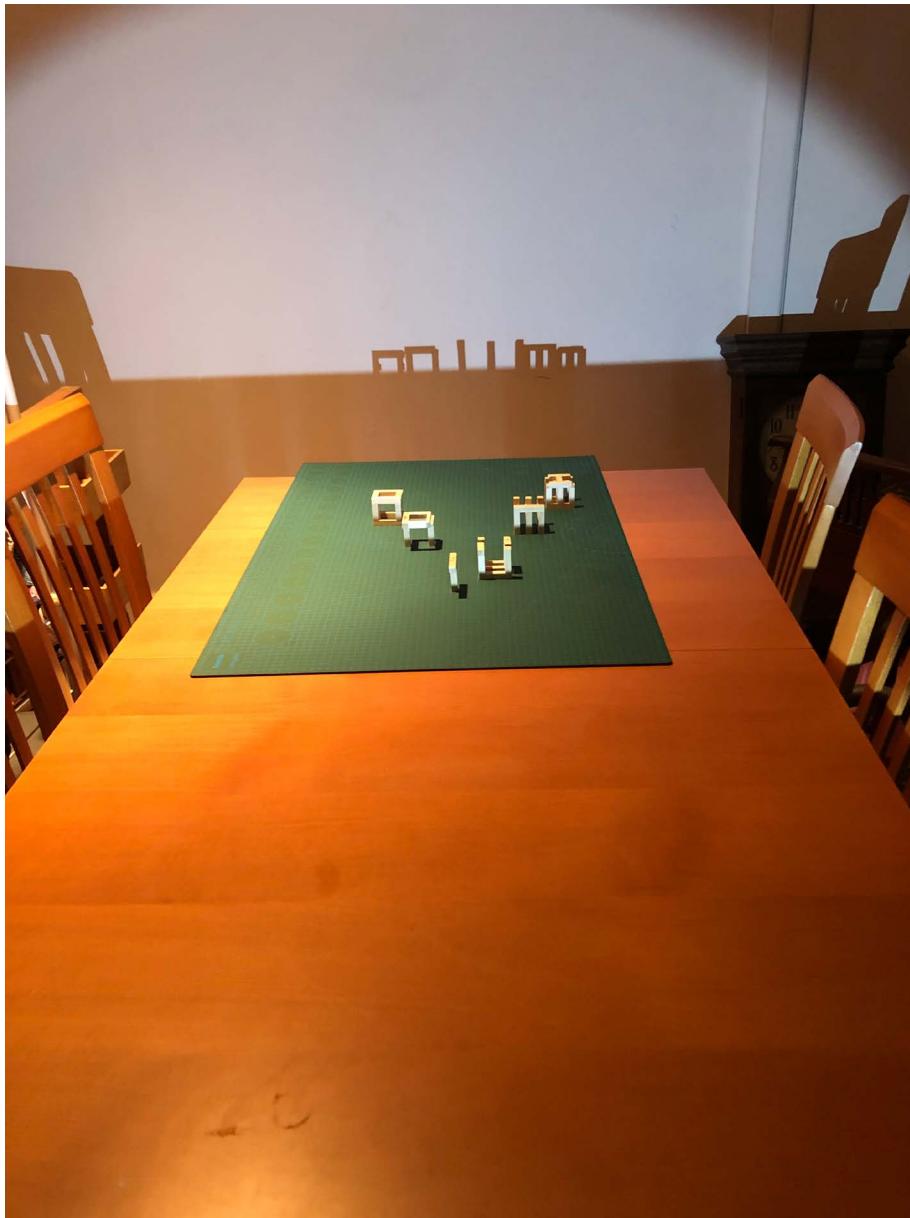
Sanding setup: same lengths of balsa taped together to ensure flat ends and equal length. Video cassette for lining up the sticks to tape together.



Sanded balsa



Makeshift square made from video cassettes, used due to their height and ability to press the wood against them firmly. Helped enormously in making right angles.



Distance tests: testing best distances between installation and wall/torch and installation



Final letter set





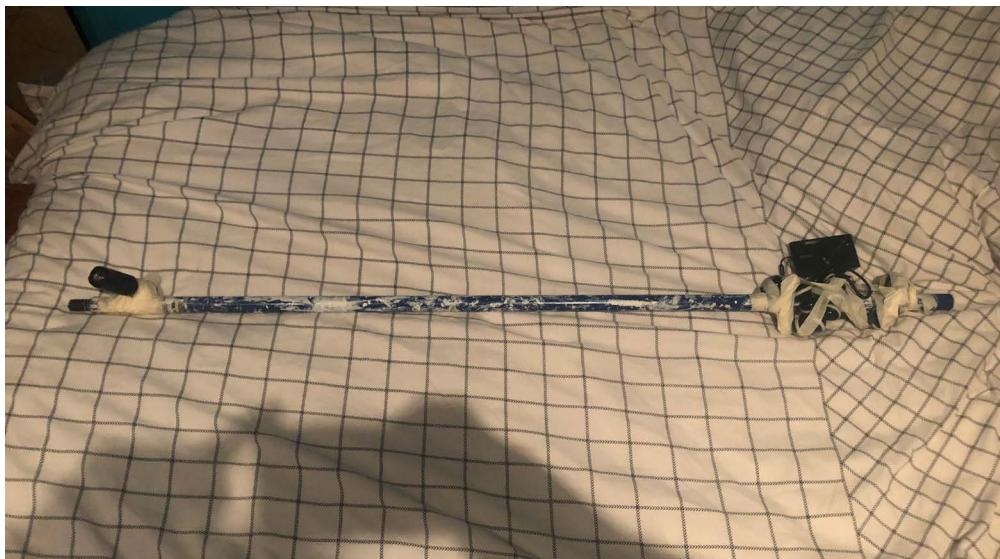
Room setup



● DOCUMENTATION

To document POC (Perception, Observation, Connection) I decided to use an average quality digital point and shoot camera, embracing the noise and quality that it produces. The video is a POV of walking through the installation room, aiming to depict what it would be like experiencing the installation in person. It was filmed using a seriously high tech setup: a painting pole, a bendable tripod, a torch and lots of masking tape (pictured below). The video was too large to attach to the PDF, but is uploaded to Moodle.

Music: Sugai Ken - Sawariyanagi



TO THE LETTER I'M
SICK TO DEATH
TRUE TO THE
LETTER

LITERALLY
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HHS

