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\* **ver•ba•li•zing v. 1:** \*  
\* expressing ideas or feelings in \*  
\* words by speaking out loud. \*  
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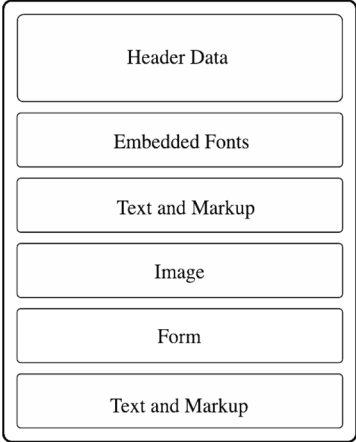
**CONTAINERS & WORLDS**

Words are shifting intermediaries in form and content relationships. The printed word exists as a form (the signifier) giving shape to an idea (the signified).

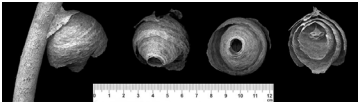


An adaptation of the Saussurean model of semiotics. The word “flower” contains the concept of a flower.

At the same time, the word is a substance, a unit used to build a text, a system, or a language. It simultaneously contains and is itself contained. Words hold meanings, texts hold words, designs hold texts, technologies hold designs, infrastructures hold technologies, etc.



A container format or “wrapper” embeds multiple data streams into a single file, as shown above with an example layout of a PDF.



Wasps of different species form nests of different sizes using chewed mud.

“Poetry involves creating substance... out of a substrate that is based on the poet’s own personal world of interrelated symbols... Can graphic designers do these things too? Be author and meta-author at the same time?” **04**

**05** “... According to union typesetter and historian Henry Rosemont, newspaper printers in the mid-nineteenth century relied on a broad but informal education in “language, history, geography and other subjects,” which enabled them to produce entire articles from telegrams consisting of little more than the relevant nouns, verbs, and modifiers.”

**06** Remediation, as termed by Marshall McLuhan: “The content of one medium is always another already existing medium.” The new appropriates the old, and the old asserts itself within the new.

In *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, McLuhan argues that the advent of the Western printing press encompasses all preceding written forms, and has reinvented human consciousness; an extremely formal analysis that fails to recognize earlier cultural instances of movable type and the many systems that never embraced from this technology. **07**

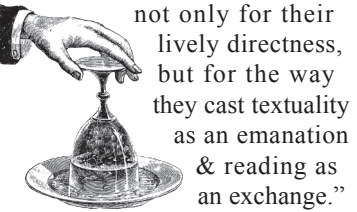
**OUT LOUD & LIVENESS**

An exchange from *Phaedrus*: **08**

**SO:** You know, Phaedrus, that’s the strange thing about writing, which makes it truly analogous to painting. The painter’s product stand before us as though they were alive, but if you question them, they maintain the most majestic silence... It is the same with written words; they seem to talk to you as though they were intelligent, but if you ask them anything about what they say... they go on telling you just the same thing forever.

**PH:** Once again, you are perfectly right.

**09** “The Crystal Goblet began as a speech. Or rather, it was written to be spoken before it was printed. To say that it “began as a speech” blurs distinctions between speech, writing, and typography in a way deftly managed by Warde herself. Invocations of voice, presence, and personal connection all prove effective in her speech-text;



**SETTING & SPILLING**

**LEFT** “Tupperware: The Nicest Thing That Could Happen To Your Kitchen!”

**CENTER** “Bro hit a speed bump 🚗💧water #watercupprank #watercupchallenge #prank #chaos #unexpected #fastfood #mcdonalds #fyp #rip #wet #drip #spill #speed #speedbump #oops #funny #viral #viraltiktok #comedian”

**RIGHT** “The biggest champagne tower!”

Reconciling with branched histories and fuzzy contexts:

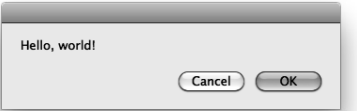
**INSTEAD OF SEARCHING FOR GALAXIES, SHOULD WE TRACE CONSTELLATIONS?**



**10** Background GIF of art.teleportacia.org, website of artist and internet theorist Olia Lialina

To say something out loud is to push an idea into existence, and subsequently, circulation.

Digital orality, or How To Talk With Your Computer:



“A “Hello, World!” program is often the first written by a student of a new programming language, but such a program can also be used as a sanity check to ensure that the computer software intended to compile or run source code is correctly installed.”



Octavia Butler, in conversation with Samuel Delaney at MIT (02/11/1998): **12**

**OB:** I generally have four or five books open around the house—I live alone; I can do this—and they are not books on the same subject.

They don’t relate to each other in any particular way, and the ideas they present bounce off one another. And I like this effect.

...So, I guess, in that way, I’m using a kind of primitive hypertext.

**13** “Unicode is big. But the web is infinitely big. Like a fractal with its endless regress of complexity, a new web page can always be inserted between two existing ones, creating an infinitely large system.



The evolution of the Sierpinski triangle, a fractal equilateral triangle, subdivided recursively into smaller triangles.

**14** “Today, publishing is personal and everyday. It’s the intimacy of direct communication over networks. It’s the fundamental act of making public...”



**11** Detail from Ad Reinhardt's "How to Look at a Cubist Painting" (1946)

**RIVERS & ORBITS**

**15** “Instead of a cloud, let’s use a metaphor that makes the web’s individual, cooperative nodes more visible. This way, we can remember the responsibility we each have in building a better web.

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The web is a flock of birds or a sea of punctuation marks, each tending or forgetting about their web garden or puddle home with a river of knowledge nearby.”

Unicode, by contrast, is a technology of universality, not infinity. The goal of unicode is to facilitate all the world's writing systems, to arrange and classify them, but then to stop.



Oh, how small is this vast Unicode when compared to infinity!”

**16** “With more and more media readily available through this unruly archive, the task becomes one of packaging, producing, reframing and distributing; a mode of production analagous not the the creation of material goods, but to the production of social contexts, using existing material. What a time you chose to be born!”

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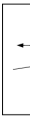
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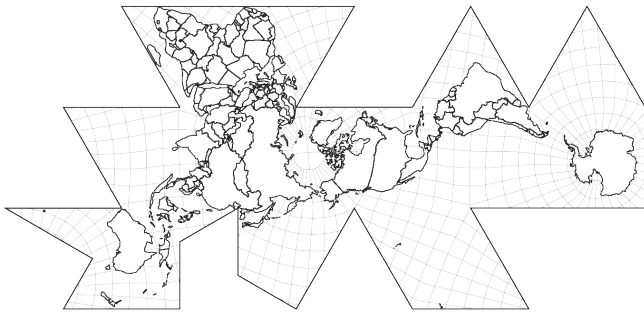
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An Ongoing List of Every Gerund I Can Think Of:  
Synthesizing...  
Encountering...  
Fragmenting...  
Gesturing...  
Shaping...  
Naming...  
Coloring...  
Bridging...  
Signaling...  
Tracing...  
Defaulting...  
Interrupting...  
Pausing...  
Databasing...  
Shifting...  
Interfacing...  
Surveying...  
Scaling...  
Rupturing...  
Underlining...  
Subtracting...  
Dispersing...  
Marking...  
Forgetting...  
Cherishing...  
Compositing...  
Spreading...  
Seeing...



The Dymaxion map, by Buckminster Fuller, is projected onto the surface of an icosahedron, and can be unfolded and flattended to two dimensions.



Fugdi dancers, illustrated from Konkani Vishwakosh Volume II (1999)

**SPACE IS A PLACE!**

**19** “Cyberspace loosens place, for place is no longer stable or proper. Places disappear and/or move rapidly.”



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\* **ver•ba•li•zing v. 2:** \*  
\* making a word, especially \*  
\* a noun, into a verb \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

The fragment is never sure or complete; it exists within the shifting boundaries of its context and audience— forever changing.

“Publishing is less about the objects you make, and more about the actions you take. Your publics form around these actions, through the dispersion of material.” **14**



**03** “Like "poems", which are sites of literary production where language too is an actor independent of intentions and authors, bodies as objects of knowledge are material-semiotic generative nodes. Their boundaries materialize in social interaction.”

**BODIES & SPACES**

**03** “We are also bound to seek perspective from those points of view, which can never be known in advance, that promise something quite extraordinary, that is, knowledge potent for constructing worlds less organized by axes of domination... I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity.”

**20** “I live on earth at the present and I don’t know what I am. I know that I am not a category. I am not a thing - a noun. I seem to be a verb, an evolutionary process - an integral function of the universe. ”



I DON'T KNOW HOW TO NOT WRITE,  
BUT I ALSO DON'T KNOW WHAT TO WRITE.



SLOP.rtf

Several folders deep into my laptop’s local disk, I keep a TextEdit file entitled “SLOP”. SLOP.rtf is a repository for every inking of a project that has come to me from the fall of 2022 onwards; the name being an on the nose attempt at making sure I don’t treat any of them as overly precious. When I began the last year of my undergraduate degree, I frequently consulted SLOP.rtf in hopes of finding some viable direction for my thesis, translating and expanding its ideas in my notebook, my iPhone’s Notes app, and tabloid sheets folded into fourths.

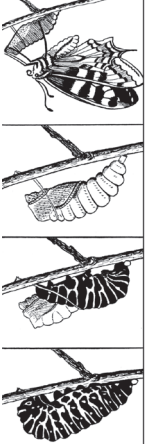
These jottings kept adding up and I began to see a matrix of themes slowly emerge: notes on doubts, defaults, disruption, and distribution—all overlapping and questioning each other. The notes slightly varied in topic and fidelity, but were consistent through their fragmented textuality and foundation in some specific research avenue.

I routinely sat on my bedroom floor with all these papers spread out in front of me. For each idea I scanned, I kept asking myself: wouldn’t this just be better off as a research paper? A lecture? A linear composition of words with little to no design intervention? I’ll just write a bunch of essays and address their formal container

at the very end —my typical practice as a design student obsessed with this roaming idea of research. **01** When I began to write these critical essays, I almost immediately ran into a block. Ideas that once seemed so generative in their clipped forms became difficult to verbally expand into fully-fledged write ups.



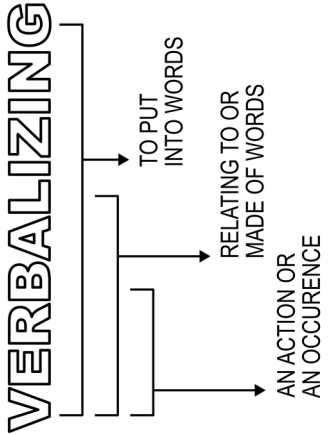
I went back to the floor. In what was less an epiphany and more an admission, I recognized that it was this very act of scrawling and articulating that I wanted to examine. Perhaps these written fragments wouldn’t be compelling when turned into longer forms, but rather when they were allowed to exist just as they were: fragments. They could be, as Susan Buck-Morss puts it, “pieces of text that transform themselves”. **02**



The word “verbalizing” embodies this ongoing transformation. A gerund that defines the process of turning an abstract concept into a tangible expression, “verbalizing” represents a text that is still in the making. Its outcome is undetermined,



I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DESIGN,  
BUT I ALSO DON'T KNOW HOW TO NOT DESIGN



its meaning is ambiguous, its material is malleable and its position is mobile. In being a kind of production, the term also reminds one of the formal capacity of texts. They aren’t just printed ideas, but also pieces of language that take shape and occupy space. Articulating turns into form-making and form-making turns into articulating.

The notion of constant activity, especially expressed by the suffix “-ing”, is also seen through a secondary meaning of “verbalizing”: turning a word, usually a noun, into a verb. A text isn’t a passive artifact but rather a continuous interaction with its surroundings. This echoes Donna Haraway’s approach to turn the “object of knowledge” into an agent. **03** “Verbalizing”, then, can be seen as the implementation, circulation and documentation of conversations between texts, actors and environments.

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As of me writing this (and you reading this), I have put together approximately 500 words. If you’ve made it this far, THANK YOU! I can’t help but wonder why you would read all of this. I also can’t help but wonder why I would write all of this. A third interpretation of verbalizing “is a

tendency to excessively speak with little real content. This isn’t a self-deprecating or existential provocation, but more or less a pause to make sense of things. After many attempts at styling this thesis as a modular syllabus or a functional toolkit, I’ve come to see it as just that: an opportunity to make sense for myself. I am unsure if I will find another opportunity to make work like this, especially in a shifting field entrenched in such precarity. All this “verbalizing” compels me to recognize and embrace the uncertainty and incompletion that characterizes the practices of design and articulation.

Perhaps all the items in SLOP.rtf aren’t works waiting to be fully constructed. They could be half-baked inkings, content with their unrealized form. The essay is never really finished, the project is never really polished and I think that’s okay!

Shravani Bagawde,  
Spring 2024



**11** How to Look at a Cubist Painting, Ad Reinhardt

**10** Olia Lialina’s Website

<https://art.teleportacia.org/>

**09** The Crystal Goblet: Underpinnings of Typographic Convention, Emily McVarish

**08** Phaedrus, Plato

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1636/1636-h/1636-h.htm>

**07** Referencing Juliette Cezzar’s lecture “Typeforms: History + Context”

**06** Understanding Media: Extensions of Man, Marshall McLuhan

<https://otherforms.net/typography-automa-tion-and-the-division-of-labor/>

**05** J. Dakota Brown

**05** Typography, Automation and the Division of Labor: A Brief History,

<https://chimeric-working.netlify/app/>

**04** Chimeric Working: Graphic Design, Poetics & Wordbuilding, Tiger Dingsun

<https://philpapers.org/archive/harskt.pdf>

**03** Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective, Donna Haraway

**02** Seeing Making Room For Thought, Susan Buck-Morss, Adam Michaels, Kevin McCaughey

<https://networkcultures.org/entreprecarial/what-design-cant-do/>

**01** What Design Can’t Do,

Silvio Lorusso

<https://networkcultures.org/entreprecarial/what-design-cant-do/>

**12** Open discussion with Octavia Butler & Samuel Delany, MIT Media in Transition Project

<https://www.blackhistory.mit.edu/archive/transcript-octavia-butler-and-samuel-delany-1998>

**13** Jodi’s Infrastructure, Alexander R. Galloway

<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/74/59810/jodis-infrastructure/>

**14** Urgentcraft: Radical Publishing During Crisis, Paul Soulellis

<https://soulellis.com/writing/post-documental/>

**15** My website is a shifting house next to a river of knowledge. What could yours be? Laurel Schwulst

<https://thecreativeindependent.com/essays/laurel-schwulst-my-website-is-a-shifting-house-next-to-a-river-of-knowledge-what-could-yours-be/>

**16** Dispersion, Seth Price

<http://www.distributedhistory.com/Dispersion2016.pdf>

**17** Mass Media, from Critical Terms for Media Studies, John Durham Peters

**18** Keep Art Flat!, Lomholt Mail Art Archive & Formular Press

<https://www.lomholtmailartarchive.dk/keep-art-flat/press-release>

**19** Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun

[https://www.monodtheque.be/wiki/images/5/54/Wendy\\_Hui\\_Kyong\\_Chun\\_Control\\_and\\_Freedom.pdf](https://www.monodtheque.be/wiki/images/5/54/Wendy_Hui_Kyong_Chun_Control_and_Freedom.pdf)

**20** I Seem to Be a Verb: Environment & Man’s Future, Buckminster Fuller

## NOTES ON VERBALIZING...

### REFERENCES & FURTHER READING