

Information Migrants

by Nai-Syuan Ye

Prologue

If I had to pinpoint the moment I fully committed to my art career, it would be the summer of 2022, the moment I decided to pursue an artist visa, letting go of the path of finding a job I didn't fit into. It was fascinating: the day before, I was pretending to be supremely confident in my practicality, tailoring my CV to become a full stack developer in a big tech company—the job that would grant me a working visa. The day after, I was pitching my imaginative ideas to an art organization to prove that I am an “actual artist” for my artistic visa.

As I learned to be an adult, I tackled complex systems not through manuals or institutions, but through whispered advice, handwritten instructions, and shared intuition. This instinct for seeking alternative pathways informs my practice. After the visa ordeal, I began sharing my experience, documents, screenshots the DBTs¹ and email exchanges with others in the most informal ways — handing them USBs, Bluetooth-sharing files, voice memos and opening shared drives. It almost felt like I was sneakily passing along information, giving a knowing wink, then disappearing in the void behind the machines. Over time, this act of sharing discovered my patient practice and growing enthusiasm for what I now call “warm network telecommunication²”.

Positioning

| Technology, Migration, and Informal Knowledge Networks

I am an interdisciplinary designer, translator, messy coder, occasional writer, and machine romanticist. I graduated from ArtEZ University of the Arts in graphic design. I write, create books, build installations, and develop websites. *I approach technology not as a neutral tool but as something deeply personal, warm, and imperfect— full of memories, human touch, and even frustration.*

I position my practice at the intersection of migration, relocation, informal knowledge networks and intercultural exchange through the lens of telecommunication, focusing on how knowledge is transferred, stored, and shared between people. I'm interested in how obsolete technologies, handmade networks, and sharing knowledge within communities can help counteract the isolation caused by systematic and institutional neglect.

My artistic practice is rooted in my experience as a migrant. Growing up in a big family in Taiwan, my warm little island, I was surrounded by an intricate web of informal knowledge-sharing. Information and data flowed through grassroot structures built by whispered salon conversations, auntie's gossip, random handwritten notes at repair shops, a neighbor's quiet recommendations, or the hearsay at the market. These human-scale, fluid ways of knowing contrast sharply with the structured, often impersonal systems I encountered upon migrating to the Netherlands. The shift was disorienting, moving from an environment where knowledge felt alive, passed on hand to hand, to one where as a foreigner I felt locked behind procedures, institutions, and official documentation. Dutch culture values individuality and self-reliance, making personal connections feel transactional or scheduled. While the government provides clear guidelines, integration is more than filling out forms—it's about adjusting to a new life, dealing with feelings of displacement, living with the weekly discrimination and fighting for a support network. The effort of trying hard

to fit in during integration can sometimes be really heartbreaking, because it's a path we've chosen for ourselves. When I got my artist visa extension, I described it as a survival show. The structured, efficient system is almost brutally judging the value we can feed to it. While I admire Dutch design for its simplicity and clarity, I realized the one-size-fits-all approach to information-sharing often ignores the nuanced realities of migration. Understanding the lived experience behind the language matters just as much as the accuracy of the information itself.

¹ “大補帖” (Da Bu Tie, short for DBT) originally referred to herbal tonics but became slang in 1990s Taiwan for pirated software compilation CDs. With the rise of broadband, these discs faded, and the term later came to include legal software/documents bundles as well.

² Telecommunication is the transmission of information over a distance using electronic means, typically through cables, radio waves, or other communication technologies. In a broad sense, storage devices like cassettes, CD, USBs and portable drives are included in the definition of telecommunication, as long as information is communicated through technology.

³ Grassroots refers to movements or organizations that originate from and are driven by the local community, relying on collective action and bottom-up decision-making to create change.

Warm network telecommunication and machines

This relationship between knowledge and structure extends into my fascination with technology and machines. Historically, technology has bridged distances and facilitated communication. While it is often seen as neutral and rigid, I view technology, much like language, as deeply organic and human, carrying echoes of the people who have handled it, modified it, and shared it. I'm drawn to the warmth embedded in everyday machines—the tangled mess of cables, the comforting weight of a well-worn device, the ingenuity of makeshift fixes. These imperfections are memories, making technology feel alive, not mechanical. I find joy in small sensory details: the struggle of a USB stick fitting into the port, the subtle hum of electronics interfering with the radio, the soft spin of a fan waking up. These moments reveal intimate, almost magical interactions..with machines—similar to how my personal accent and speech pattern changes because of the change in environments I navigate.

In 2021, I created my graduation project (*Not*) *Fixed*, questioning whether machines are wild creatures we've made or if they have a spirit we haven't yet recognized. I became an obsolete machine collector, fascinated by how they 'act out'; not viewing them as broken objects but as stubborn, unpredictable beings. Some refuse to turn on, others only work under specific conditions, as if they have their own will. I graduated with them as my colleagues, constantly fixing, matchmaking, and observing their quirks. Through this process, I saw fixing not as repair, but as a way of understanding—negotiating with machines that seem to think in their own way.



Nai-Syuan Ye. 'Not Fixed' installation (2021).

Through experimentation with analog signals, DIY electronics, and physical networks, I aim to build a practice and protect where technology becomes a site of warmth, patience, and poetic exchange. In an era where advanced technology prioritizes speed and efficiency, I find value in slowness. Slowness is not inefficiency—it is an invitation to notice, to feel, to engage deeply with the tools we use. Handmade networks, like the makeshift radio transmitters or the delicate interplay of cables in a DIY circuit, reveal an intimacy that advanced technology often obscures. The act of manually tuning a frequency or soldering a connection is not just technical labor but a process of tuning between human, machine, and environment.

Through this, I see a parallel with *Jacques Derrida's* idea of hospitality.⁴ He challenges the structures that dictate who is welcomed and under what conditions, arguing that true hospitality cannot exist within rigid institutional frameworks that impose rules and control. Instead, he proposes an 'unconditional hospitality'—a radical openness to the 'other,' where welcoming is not just an act of giving but a transformation of self.

A handmade network resists efficiency-driven logic; it does not merely transfer information but reshapes it through friction, adaptation, and care. To build a network that does not impose borders but dissolves them is to engage in an act of hospitality—one that invites not just participation, but a rethinking of connection itself. *In my practice, technology is not just a conduit but a site of ethical engagement, where openness and slowness create new ways of learning, unlearning, and belonging.*

This ethos is also what led me to co-found [DuctTape Collective](#), a research duo that embraces machines and materials in their raw state. DuctTape's work resists the polished, seamless nature of modern technology, instead highlighting its imperfections, humor, and tactile presence.

By embracing slow, low-tech methods, I seek to uncover the material and spiritual essence of communication. In contrast to the seamless, invisible infrastructure of modern telecom, these handmade systems expose the mechanics of connection, making them tangible, personal, and open to reinterpretation. It is not about rejecting digital progress but about reclaiming a sense of touch, friction, and presence in how we transmit information.

In This Development Year... This year is about exploring new ways of communicating, both with others and with technology. I will build on my ongoing Lowkey Visa Kit⁵ project, expanding it to include sound-based systems and custom circuits designed for migration communities. This process involves hands-on experimentation with low-tech electronics, allowing me to gain deeper insights into how we transmit information.

This will revolve around one key question:

How can telecommunication, as a system of signals and transmissions, be reimagined as an intimate and poetic, folklore act of migration?

sub questions: - How personal knowledge and bureaucratic data interact within migration systems? - How to sidestep advanced technology and redirect knowledge into tangible warmth and slowness through analog tech. - How non-Western cultures exchange information compared to Dutch bureaucratic systems. - How sound and interaction influences the way we perceive knowledge and trust information.

To further this exploration, I need to deepen my understanding of electronics components and circuits. Therefore, I will immerse myself in Taiwan's Guang Hua Market⁶, engaging with workers to learn from their practical knowledge and techniques in electronics. Guang Hua Market, particularly since it is a place of electronic chaos, second-hand books, and knowledge encounters, is truly a nest of all kinds of expertise and a womb for informal knowledge-sharing.

I want to be a short-term apprentice with non-artists, technicians, radio enthusiasts, and repair workers and their friends, their friends' friends. To learn from their memories and ping pong ideas with them, I will further my understanding of alternative communication methods. These grassroots structures, often dismissed as "informal" or "unprofessional," offer rich, adaptable frameworks that counter the standardized, structural nature of institutional knowledge sharing.

With these interactions, I aim to create my own network of knowledge—one grounded in real-world, underground experience, not just the creative sector. Through this, I will develop prototypes for personal, human-centered warm network telecommunication systems that prioritize slowness over speed. The aim is not only to refine the Lowkey Visa Kit but also to establish my practice that merges folklore with technology, creating adaptable, open-ended machines that welcome participation. I need to practice these forms in telecommunication, not as relics of the past, but as living, breathing channels through which knowledge can be passed, adapted, and nurtured.

In addition to this, my focus will also include understanding the intricacies of migration, as it directly informs the Lowkey Visa Kit's development. Through studying how information and networks are shared in migrant communities, I'll explore the ways grassroots knowledge can be translated into communication tools that better serve the needs of people navigating bureaucratic and physical borders.

⁵ The Lowkey Visa Kit is a trust-based project aiding non-EU art students with post-graduation visa challenges. It creates 20 USB sticks with auto-uploading features, circulating visa-related knowledge from lived experiences within the community. Inspired by Sneakernet's trade-off between bandwidth and latency, these USBs act as symbiotic nodes, synchronizing content securely and transparently.

⁶ Guang Hua Market in Taipei holds significant cultural and historical value, serving as a dynamic hub for grassroots technology and piracy, particularly in low-tech electronics for local citizens. Over the years, its identity has evolved, mirroring broader social, political, and economic changes in the area, making it an ideal site to explore the intersection of community, makers, and urban transformation.

This development year will lay the groundwork for my long-term artistic practice, which centers on bridging the gap between craft and technology. With the guidance of mentors like *Alina Lupu*, a socially engaged artist focused on connecting the arts with social design and migration issues, and *Joseph Knierzinger*, an expert in obsolete devices and tools or forgotten books in discarded substances, I will refine my vision for the Lowkey Visa Kit, integrating grassroots knowledge with technological exploration. The hands-on experimentation, collaborations, and development of these prototypes will help me establish a deeper, more authentic connection to my craft as a machine romanticist and builder. This positions my practice as one that is both grounded in real-world experience and deeply attuned to the intersection of technology, communication, migration, and human interaction.

Methods and Approach

Information and experiences are often filtered and judged, especially in the art industry, where references are expected to be niche and relevant. My goal is to move beyond that—I seek the raw, unfiltered experience. Self-taught, I embrace a grassroots approach where knowledge flows through books, friends, and personal stories. I wake up as a beginner every morning, like a caveman. This is how I connect with the world, and am actively learning and being excited. My methodology is deeply rooted in a hands-on, sensory-driven process of exploration.

It is an act of unlearning, challenging the rigid systems and structures within both art and technology. It isn't simply about rejecting knowledge—it's about confronting and destabilizing the impossible structures that define what can be known, done, and thought. I aim to perceive information in the fine line between cleverness and foolishness, seeking a balance that challenges conventional wisdom without undermining it, while focusing on deconstructing the predetermined ways of doing and thinking imposed by institutions. Just as deconstruction opens up the structures of power and language to reveal what is excluded, my approach to unlearning is about dismantling systems that impose borders—whether in the form of bureaucratic red tape or rigid notions of knowledge. Unlearning, for me, is a necessary step toward creating networks that transcend boundaries, not by ignoring or replacing the systems we inherit, but by transforming them into spaces where friction, adaptation, and openness lead to new ways of sharing knowledge, learning, and unlearning.

Presentation

For the final outcome, I aim to distribute the electronics I've created, along with the writings and fragments collected throughout this year, as a gesture of gratitude to the people who have helped me unlearn. By sharing these physical elements, I aim to document the memories and trust built along the way, planting a seed for continued exchange. This could take the form of an archive map shared through platforms like Fictional Journal or Framer Framed, but also through more intimate spaces like local community bulletin boards or back in Guang Hua Market itself. I will host workshops at venues like Varia or local fairs to deepen this process of unlearning. Additionally, I'd like to create a local secret frequency radio or a small web-hosting platform, limited to a specific area (like a tree), that only becomes accessible when connected to small Wi-Fi networks, offering an alternative method for information transmission and further exploring grassroots communication.