

Conversations through Calligraphy

Project III

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*'For every form,
He has been the ideal,
His form, visible everywhere.'*

Rig Veda VI.47.18

Data Collection

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Contemporary Calligraphy

Concept

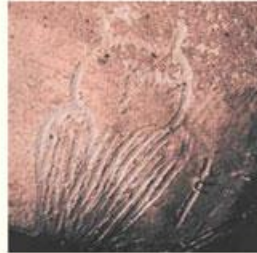
Initial thoughts
Initial concepts
Perceptions of a space
Attributes to a space
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Expression

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Early expression and evolution of Language

world's oldest paintings
cave art on the walls of
France's Grotte Chauvet



Urge to express - drawing and painting

Sound to speech evolution

System for communication - language emerged

Set of symbols and rules - alphabets & Grammar

Areas of content of the written word:

its semantic structure

its linguistic interconnections

its etymology and grammar

Script and writing



CLOCKWISE

Nagarjunakonda Scribe
RAJA LEKHAYA

Wooden Scribe from
Thebes (Cairo Museum)

Assyrian Scribes
(8th Century B.C.)

God Toth
In the form of IBIS



Accumulation of wisdom necessitated its being recorded
Sound - speech - writing

Systems of writing across time and cultures

Origin

Configuration of letterforms

Intrinsic attributes

Necessity

Purpose

History of Scripts



Cuneiform Script
Royal Palace of Ebla,
2400 B. C. E

pictures - pictograms - ideograms -
rebus, syllabic and phonetic writing - the alphabet

Art of Egyptian pictograph

The Chinese ideograph

The Semitic Phoenician Alphabetic signary



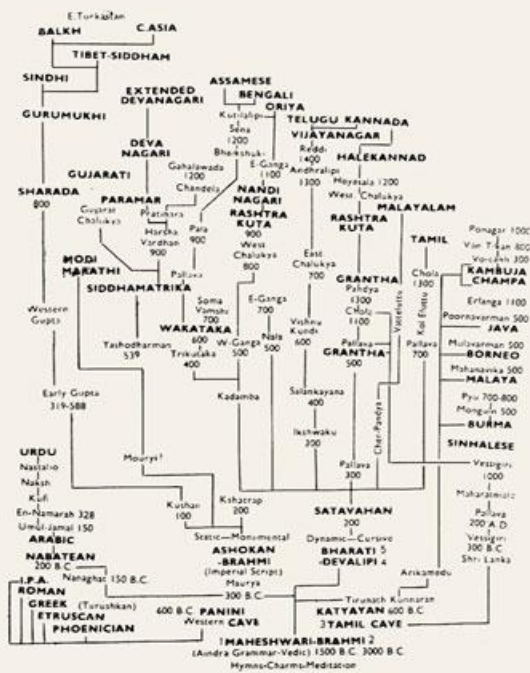
Hieroglyphic script
tomb of Horem Heb



Hieratic writing on
Papyrus 1285 B. C. E.

History of Scripts

SOUTH-ASIAN SCRIPTS OF THE BRAHMI FAMILY OF SCRIPTS



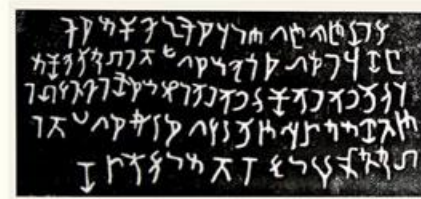
1 Pannavana Sutra 2 Jaina-Bhagavati Sutra, Lalitavistara 3 Lalitavistara
4 Padmapurana, Lalitavistara. 5 Amara-kosha, Padmapurana

The Maheshwari sootras - fourteen syllables from the sounds of the Cosmic Dancer Shiva's damaru key to the great grammarian Panini's

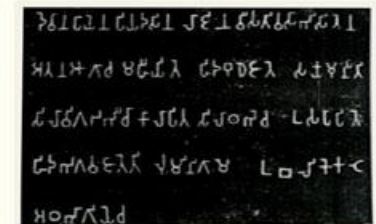
The signs on the Indus Valley seals Before 3rd century Brahmi and Kharoshthi flourished in India.

The Mauryan Brahmi of Ashoka's edicts of the 3rd century B.C. base for the development of various scripts all over India

Travelling through time and topography - Brahmi changed



Kharoshthi



Brahmi

Writings through the ages



Trajan column



Book of Kells



Writings through the ages



Carolingian Script

Seguira lo c'sempio delle l're che pono
 ligar si con tutte le sue sequenti, in tal mo-
 do cioè
 aa ab ac ad ae af ag ah ai ak al am an
 ao ap aq ar as at au ax ay az
 Il medesimo farai con d i k l m n u.
 Le ligature poi de' e f s se sono
 le infra
 scritte
 ff, fa ff fi fn fu fr fu fy,
 ff ff st, ta te' ti tm tn to tg tr tt tu
 te ty
 Con le restanti lettere, de' lo Alphabeto, che
 sono, b e' g h o p q r x y z, z
 non si deve' ligar mai lra
 alcuna seguente'

que euangelistarū et apostolorū au-
 dicitas promulgauit. In quibus mē-
 ta de ueteri testamento legitmus que i
 nostris codicibus non habentur: ut
 est illud: et egipto uocauit filium meū: et
 quoniā nazarethus uocabitur: et ui-



Cursives



Typography



Gutenberg's Bible

First mass-produced book was successfully printed - the Gutenberg Bible of 1454

Rotary steam presses

Line-casting machines – linotype, monotype

Photocomposition (Intertype et. al., start 1950-60, end 1975-85)

Digital (start 1973-83)

Digital fonts

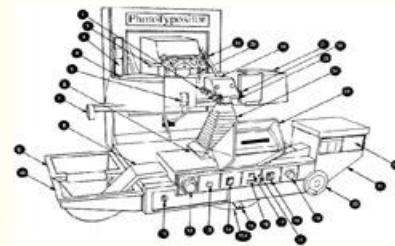


Structural differences - Graeco-Roman and Indian scripts.

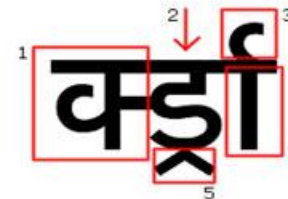
Printing press arrived in India 1556

Books printed in Devanagiri 1796

Most of the type styles took inspiration from calligraphic traditions.



Phototypesetter



Type - Indian Languages

Calligraphy



Expression of sound, idea, inspiration through form

Explore the emergence of sound (nada);
of speech of writing which gives form (akara) to language

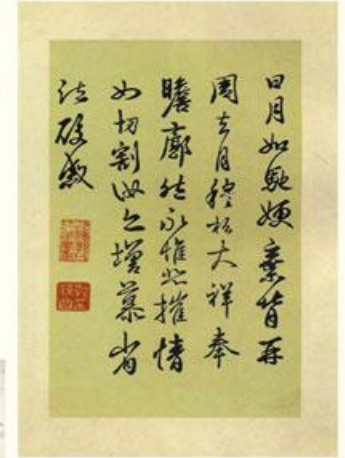
Language of the letterform is seen to become equivalent to the
written word itself

An awareness of the metaphysical (adhyatmic),
aesthetic (saundarya), structural (rachana), spatial (akasha)
and technical (upayojana) considerations of the aksharas

In the care and concern with which it is written,
the sign becomes symbol, the unmanifest is made manifest.
And the form transcends the act of writing to become an act of
spiritual dedication: Calligraphy

In most languages word is the basic unit of meaning, whereas,
in Sanskrit, the letter is the basic unit of meaning

Calligraphy from across the world



Calligraphy and its various tools



"An unerring sense of relationship is called for: of writing tool to surface, or content to form"

Writing tools and surfaces affect letterforms.

Chisel on stone - austere characters

Stylus on palm leaf - curvilinear scripts

Birchbark (bhurjapatra) and etched copperplate - formal quality of writing

Paper and brush, with inks in 'five shades of black' - vital art in China and Japan.

The quill, gliding over the smooth surfaces of parchment and vellum (made of sheepskin and calfskin, respectively), - intricate patterns of the illuminated manuscripts of Europe.

It is the broad nib that gives the pen its constructive and educational value. It is essentially the letter making tool."

Edward Johnston

In India surfaces used for writing were:

rocks, pillars, gold plates, silver plates, copper plates, palm leaves, birch bark and cloth.

Meeting with Prof. Kshirsagar



The story of letters - why was letter born?

Now that technology takes care of the standardization, why not go beyond...

Calligraphy is a performing art

I also see a book than just read it

Education has not created the recognition of its aesthetic value

Japanese calligrapher - why just black ink and paper?

Tonal values allow people to see colours they want to see

Mind exists in an abstract reality: it is either in the past or the future. In the present it is only the absence of mind which happens when I am doing.

My sorrow is I can't be illiterate again.

My sorrow is my word will only reach to the limit of your vocabulary

Applications and role today

Cartography



Visual Poetry



Cartography

Musical notation

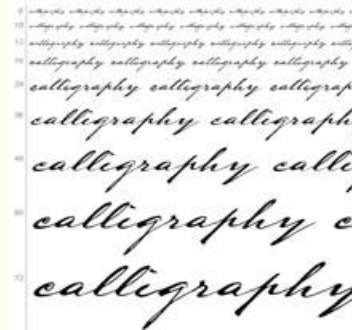
Visual poetry

Calligraphic Fonts

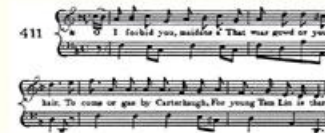
Communication Design



Calligraphic fonts



Musical Notes



Applications and role today



The Jain Mandir adopts the original writing method to document their holy scriptures.

Trained scribes

Specially made paper

Specially made ink

Appropriate attire and head gear

Traditional method of binding



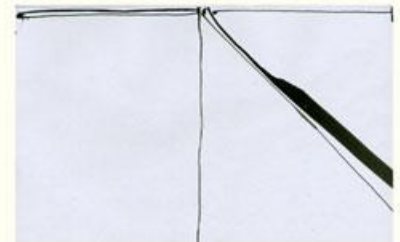
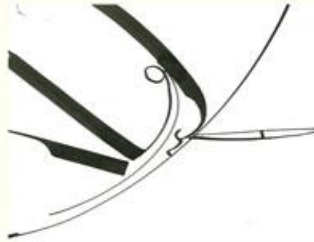
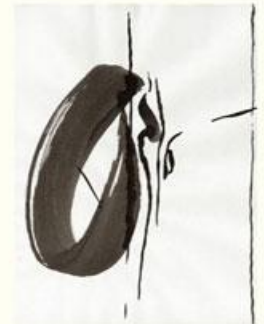
Contemporary Calligraphy

Aksharaya - a group of people interested in Calligraphy

Works of Achyut Palav

Aksharyoga seminar held in IDC in February 1986

Prof. Santosh Kshirsagar



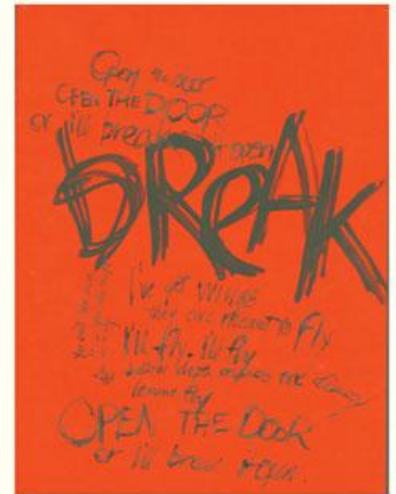
Explorations

Calligraphy workshop
Prof. Santosh Kshirsagar

Helpless

HELP

Can't move, struggling, there's someone
else, they're leaving
When you're alone, you feel
When you're alone, you feel
When you're alone, you feel
When you're alone, you feel
When you're alone, you feel
When you're alone, you feel



Explorations

Urdu Script
Exploration of single words

مگر مچہ

کشکش

صبح

مصروف
مصروف
مصروف
مصروف

مصروف
مصروف
مصروف
مصروف

انسان
اکیل
اکیل
اکیل
اکیل

مصروف

حرام
فطر

Explorations

Arabic Script
Doa E Aayatul Kursi



Initial thoughts

Illustration through calligraphy

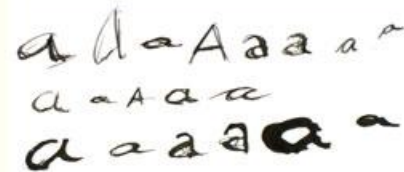
Emphasis on text as an image and not just alphabets

Express using the forms of the alphabets itself
than relying on the meaning they suggest



How can thought be directly reflected in
a typographic expression instead of relying
on a structured understandable or legible text ?

Initial Concepts



A graphic novel

A story where the characters as well as the environment and circumstances would be represented in calligraphy

Fictional stories on each alphabet (for children)

A set of stories based on each alphabet as a character
How it behaves in different situations

Story of letters

How they were born, where all did they travel
and how did they evolve into various forms

Nature of Conversations

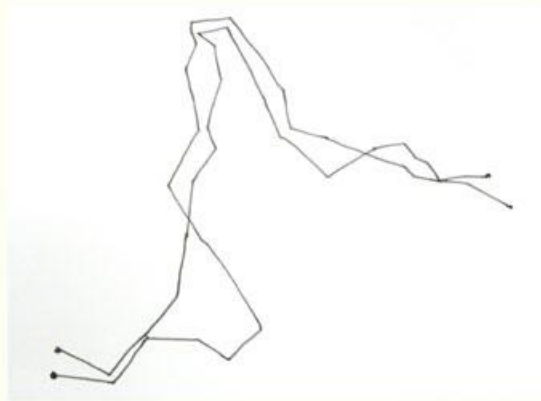
How colourful conversations are in their structure, pattern
What are the varying tonal values that appear & disappear
Tone of voice and its visual expression

Conversations at different places

Kind of conversation that are peculiar to a place
How do they contribute to the identity of the place

Identities of people

Speaking patterns that become representative of characters



Initial Concepts

Representations of conversations through calligraphy



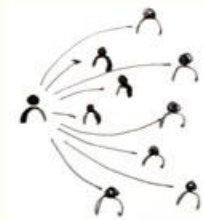
Natural conversation between different people at different places

Conversation between a same set of people at various occasions



Expression of opinion over a particular concern by different people

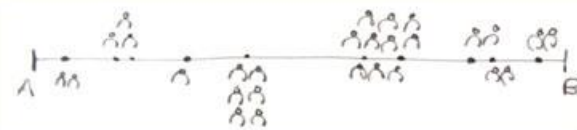
Routine conversation between the same set of people who meet up at a same place, time regularly and talk



Conversation of one person throughout a day

Conversations that take place at a particular place

Conversations that take place between a certain distance



Perceptions of space

Spatial Order

Concrete perceptions in terms of figures, directions, positions, magnitude, direction

Space relations

Sensation of particular line and angles
Perception of whereness to thereeness

Kant

"Neither space nor time are conceived as substances, but rather both are elements of a systematic framework we use to structure our experiences"

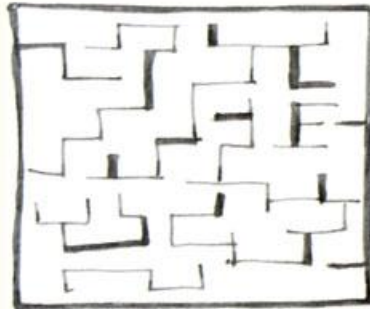
Schopenhauer, in 'On the will in nature'

"Space is the condition of the possibility of juxtapositions"

Is space real or is it just a conceptual framework?

What makes any given space different from the other?

Perceptions of space



Even if its a void, it is still a space as a whole
There is a space within a space within a space
Perception of boundaries

Is it mental associations or the physical positioning
that gives it identity?

Places are often arbitrarily assigned a NAME
Name - Textual association with the abstract space

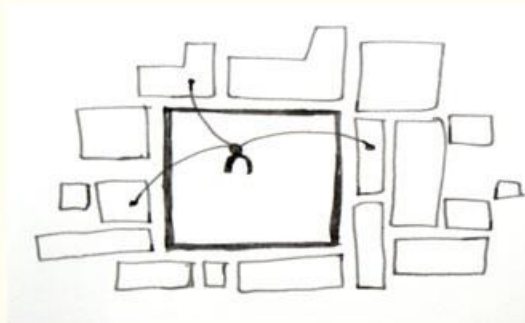


Container of all the stationery and dynamic elements it holds
Artefacts create the visual image of the space
They are physical, tangible, finite and hence identifiable
with names attached to them

A place also holds a lot of invisible or intangible things
smells, sounds and minds are some of them

A space when shared also allows for interaction
It takes place when a place facilitates it,
people perceive it and act on it
It is then a part of the space

Interactions in a space

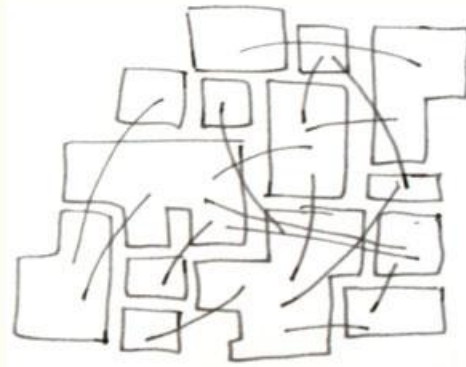


Conversations is the verbalisation of concepts involving abstractions and concrete objects which make up the reality in which we reside - Wikipedia

It is communication between by 2 or more people on a particular topic

Temporal and dynamic

They are invisible



How much room does a place allow for what kind of interaction is an individual's prerogative

Are certain kind of interactions associated to a place?

Will the layer of intrapersonal or intragroup interactions alone be able to represent that place?

People's association with other contexts and places

Narratives in a conversation connect it to other places

Space - part of larger interconnected space

Narratives of different places converge and diverge

Representation of a space

Challenge is to recreate a given space in another given space through visual representations of narratives that exist there in the form of conversations



Label / Name
Arbitrarily defined space



One plane
longshot view
all elements
all activities
all its layers



Physical
structure
navigation
division



Activities
Multiple
co-ordinated



People
as a whole
similar activities
purpose



People
as individuals
different backgrounds,
different contexts,
different mindsets



Narratives
Convergence
and divergence
of various micro
narratives

Conversations in a space



They travel in time - they travel across a distance

Depicted in a space they travel in directions

Several conversations when take place in a space they are all entangled and layered one on top of the other. They are all travelling differently, at different magnitudes, in different directions all in a given space

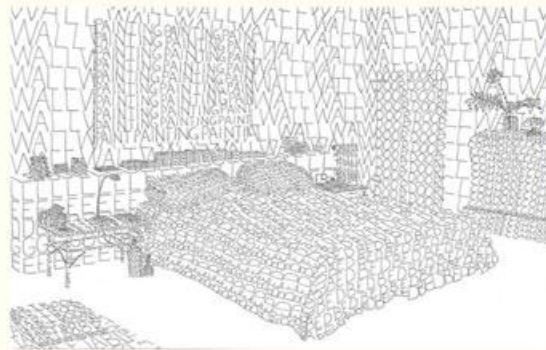
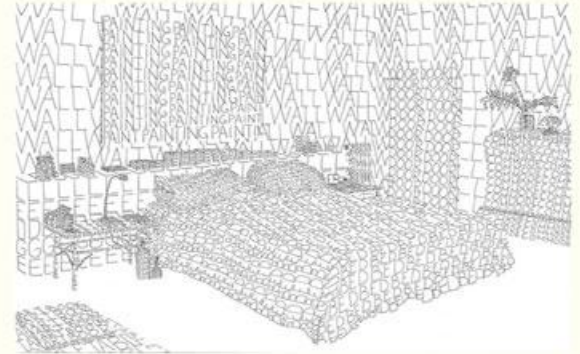
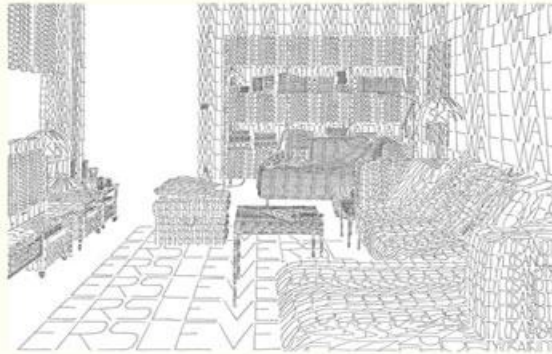
There therefore emerges a web of conversations if depicted visually with overlaps and interconnections between them

They may not be linearly perceived as one might witness many conversations at one time simultaneously

Paying attention to one, then requires consciously ignoring the rest. They are difficult to hold or capture

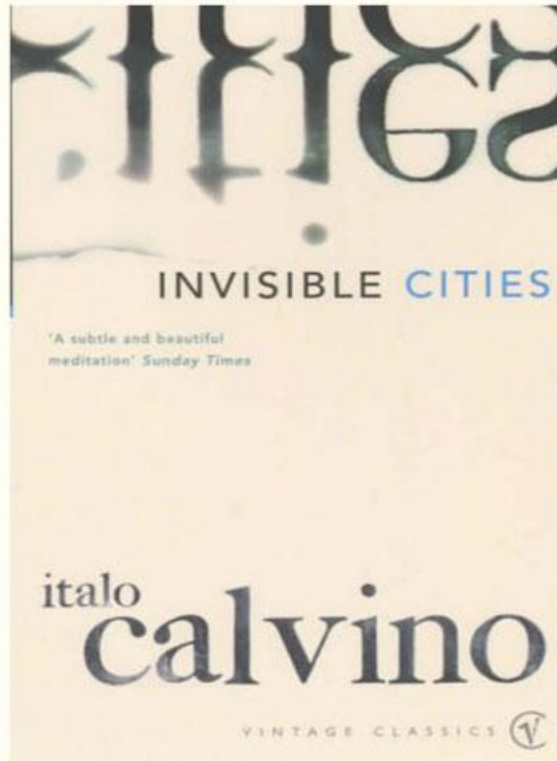
The content and nature of conversation, voice of the speakers, tone or attitude, clarity variations, overlaps, speed or tempo, pauses and silence

Examples of representations



Examples of representations

Invisible Cities
Italo Calvino



Palestine
Joe Sacco



Places considered

- 1 Places where people come together, sit, chat and especially catch up for a conversation
 - Conversations are a lot less related to the space itself
 - Different kinds of conversations
 - Cafeterias, parks, restaurants, Marine Drive, Staff Canteen
- 2 Places where people come together for a particular activity
 - Conversations are more or less related to the activity or the function of the place
 - Other subjects too
 - Places that allow activities like travelling, shopping, worshipping, posting

Conversations captured from the following places:

 - Crawford Market stationery bazaar
 - Dhobi tala roadside sellers
 - Ladies compartments inside a train

Place chosen Ladies Compartment in the train

Calligraphic explorations of Conversations

English

winding? winding? winding?
 winding? winding? winding?
 winding? winding? winding?

English
 winding?
 winding?
 winding?

शुभरा
 अडे
 अडे

English
 winding? winding?
 winding?

winding? winding?
 winding? winding?
 winding?

winding?
 winding?
 winding?

English
 winding?
 winding?
 winding?

winding? winding?
 winding? winding?
 winding?

winding?
 winding?
 winding?

full time

Computer Computer

Computer

Computer

मोठी

मोठी

कहाँ भेजना है

कहाँ भेजना है

कहाँ भेजना है

कहाँ भेजना है

कहाँ भेजना है

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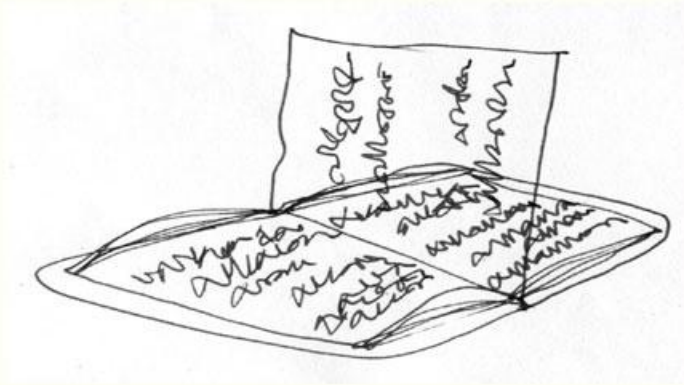
कहाँ भेजना है

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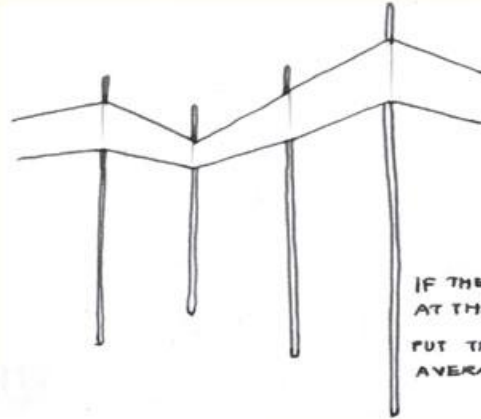
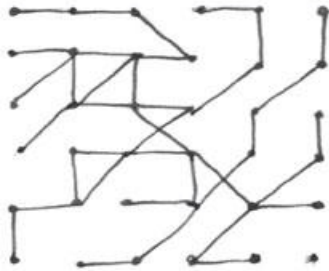
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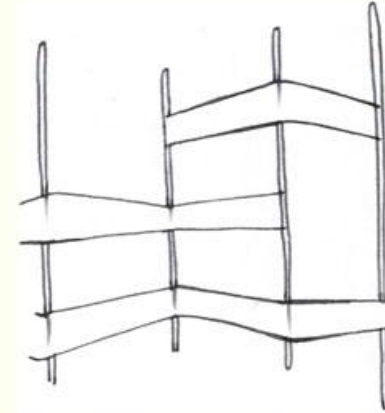
Compositions in the given space



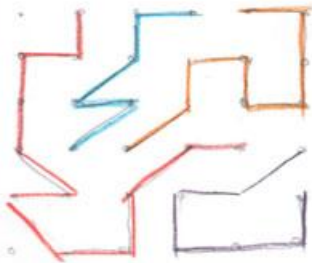
Compositions in the given space



IF THEY ARE ALL
AT THE SAME LEVEL,
PUT THEM ABOVE
AVERAGE HEIGHTS



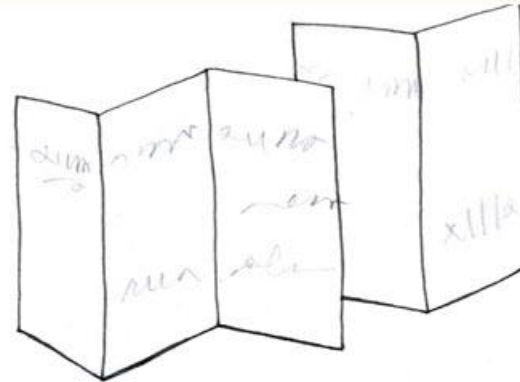
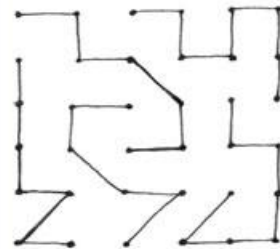
OR. MAKE PEOPLE
WALK OVER AND
UNDER IT.



OR FIGURE
OUT THE
NAVIGATIONS
BETWEEN
THEM.
SO THAT IT
COULD BE AT
AN EYE LEVEL

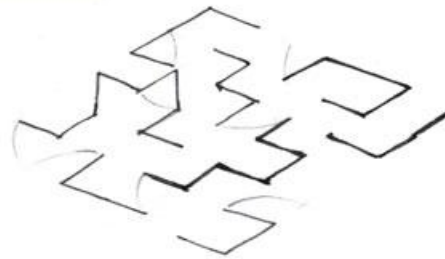
MAKE SPACES FOR
NAVIGATION EXTREMELY
CRAMPED, OR
LIMITED.

Compositions in the given space

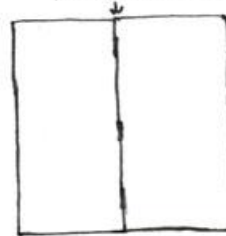


TRANSPARENT
ACRYLIC/GLASS
PANELS
SCREEN PRINT,
VINYL STICKER,
PRINT ON TRANSPARENT
PAPER.

- MAYBE THE PANELS
ARE MADE OF
TRANSLUCENT PAPER.
(GATEWAY).

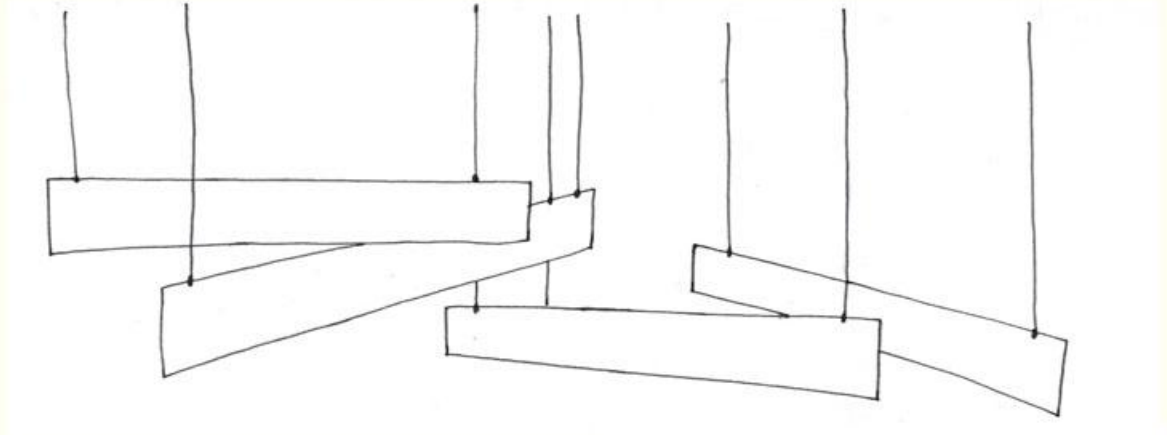


HINGED PANELS.



- Have conversations printed in white so that it becomes further invisible.
- and requires some background for reading. (a dark paper or something).

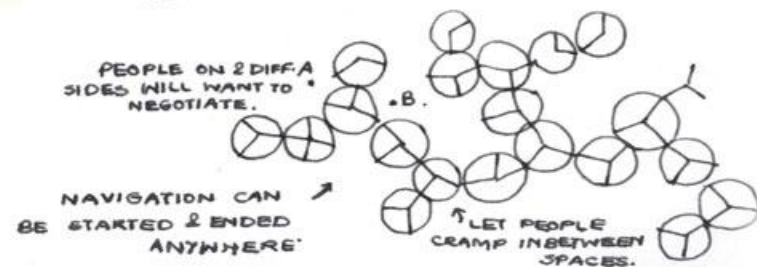
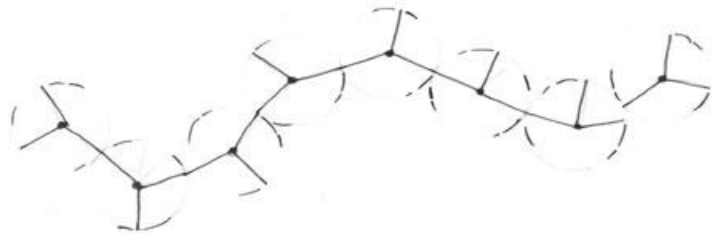
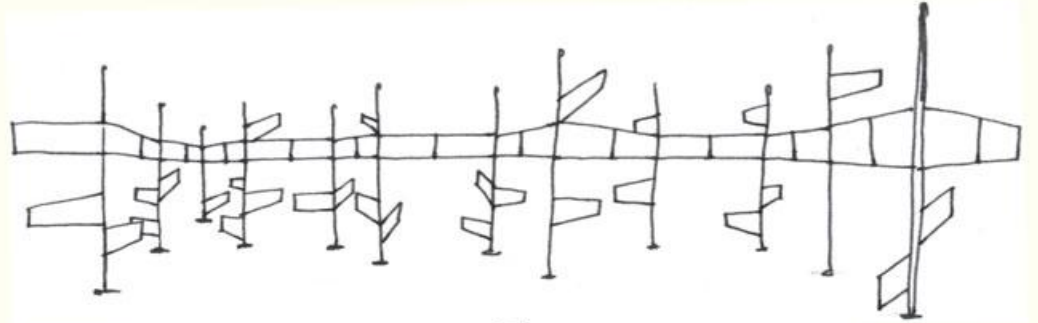
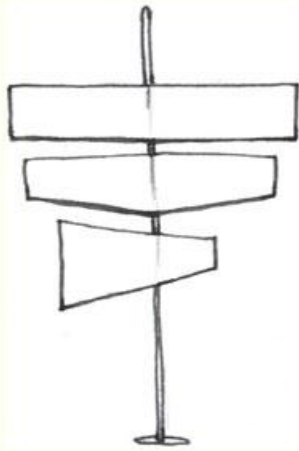
Compositions in the given space



Panels (paper) suspended from the ceiling at different heights or maybe at an average eyelevel.

When at eyelevel and produced on transparent paper, translucent paper, it would also suggest people; that would add as backgrounds to the panel.

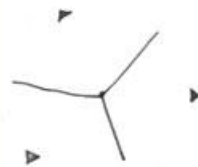
Compositions in the given space



Compositions in the given space

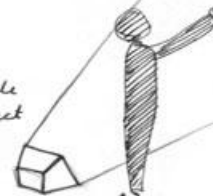
PROJECTIONS:

- Panels placed at various distances maybe at different orientation as well.
- Projections of conversations float on these translucent surfaces with the silhouettes of people the place contains.
- The orientation of these panels could be kept changing varying the light and shadows on the surface.



(Will have to plan so that people have no choice but to obstruct the projection).

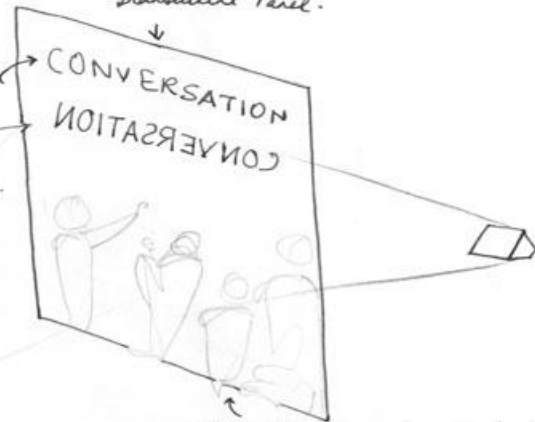
One conversation seen upright. The other seen in reverse and hence mysterious and ununderstandable.



Projections of conversation would also be disturbed by the movement of people between projector & panels.

- The conversations could move / pan horizontally.
- Panels could be represented both in time and space.

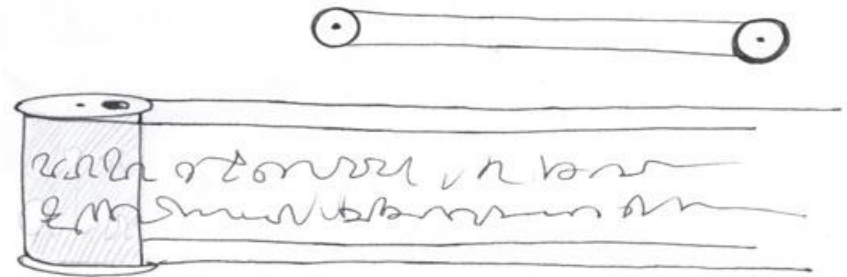
Translucent Panel.



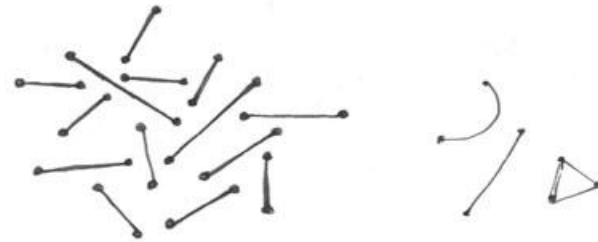
Silhouettes of people coming in between the projector and the panels from both sides.

Compositions in the given space

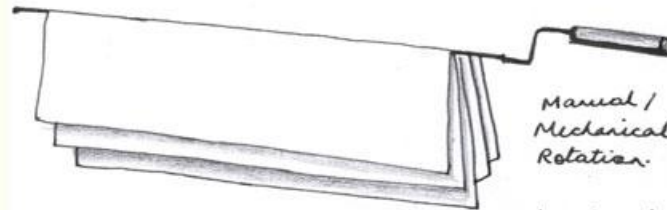
WHITE PRINTING / VINYL CUT NEGATIVES



ends of a conversation
printed in white.
The distance between the end
lengths would depend on
the length of the conversation.
These conversations are then
randomly placed.



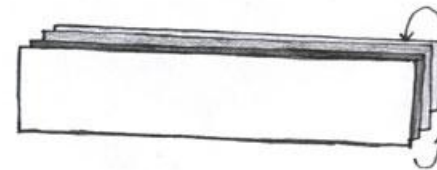
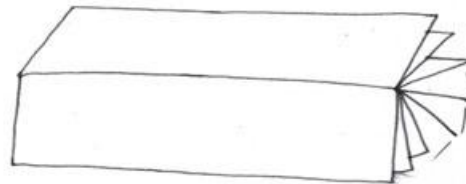
Compositions in the given space



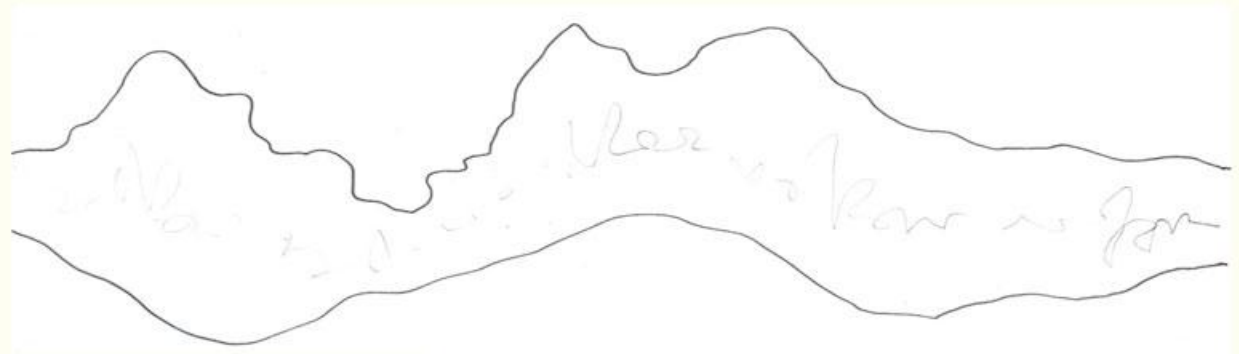
Manual /
Mechanical
Rotation.

wherein dialogues
flip one after the other
- one could begin
overhearing anywhere.

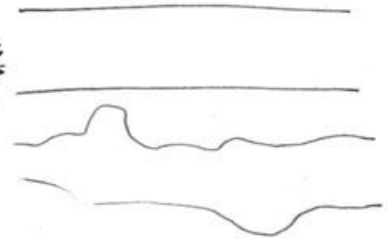
- several conversations
like these will be
flipping simultaneously
at varying speeds.



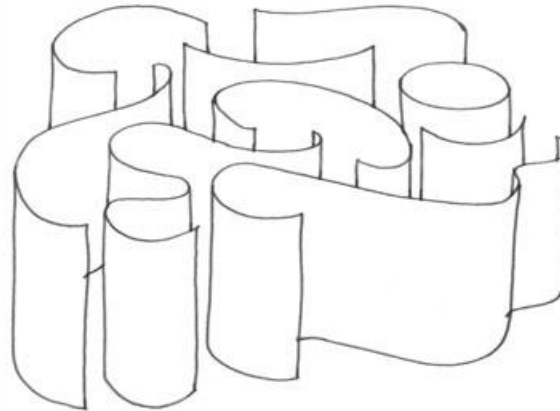
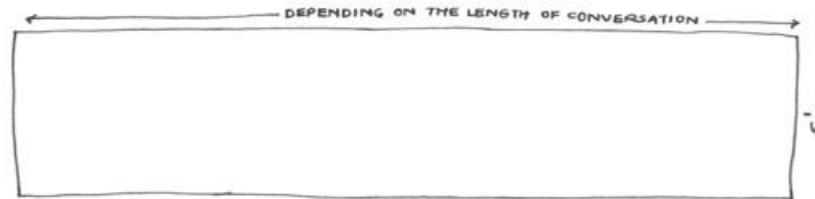
Compositions in the given space



INSTEAD OF
STANDARD CROPPED CANVAS,
HAVE THE CONVERSATIONS
ON ORGANICALLY SHAPED
BACKGROUNDS THAT
WOULD DEPEND AGAIN ON
THE NATURE OF THE
CONVERSATIONS.



Compositions in the given space



→ THE PANELS ARE ORGANICALLY ARRANGED AFTER ALL THE INDIVIDUAL CONVERSATIONS ARE READY. AS THEY ARE 5' TALL THEY WOULD ACT AS PARTITIONS AND ONE COULD MOVE AROUND BETWEEN THEM. THEY DO NOT FOLLOW A PARTICULAR GRID. THE APPEARANCE OF THE FINAL STRUCTURE WOULD EMERGE AND NOT BE PRE-PLANNED.

The final form



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