

Position Through Iterating
Position Through Contextualising

Process 01

Position Through Iterating

What does it mean to 'unwrap' something? What meaning does our unwrapping behavior have? Starting with these questions, I experimented iterations over two weeks. In the first step, I got 100 different maps that were unrealistically unwrapped by virtual objects in Cinema 4D and gathered them into square-shaped publication form. This was simply an act of unwrapping, but at the same time, it was also an act of observing and unfamiliarizing a daily object. This behavior included several acts such as unwrapping, dissecting, mapping, exploding, and so on.

On the second iteration experiment, I attempted to bring the act of 'unwrapping' into real life and impart materiality. Rather than literally opening objects of various materials, I used the method of 'frottage' to map that was as similar to the first experiment form. In this stage, the limited paper size made me focus on certain parts of the objects, and brought me to think about the individual's perspective on objects. And also, this led to an enquiry about how to understand surface and object.

The actual actions intended to be unwrapping were expressed as actions such as rubbing and scratching while I was doing frottage. In all this process, my position was to observe and present of views on various other behavior and objects derived from the act of 'unwrapping.'

001 // *Unwrap and Fold(Wrap)*

Both the iteration processes are focusing on the act of 'unwrapping'. Here, 'unwrapping' can be expressed in other words as 'dissecting', 'separating', etc., and the opposite can be presented as 'wrapping' and 'folding'. Folding is the act of making 2D into 3D, and it is generally deformed by using tools or applying pressure to an object or surface(Jackson, 2018). In order to unwrap the object under pressure again, another pressure must be applied. However, even if it is unfolded following this process, its original appearance does not return. It's already damaged, scratched, and shifted. What's interesting about this project is that objects with substance are damaged and irreversible, while unwrapped maps on digital are undamaged and leave no marks anywhere.

The fact that an object can be unwrapped is the same as that it has already been folded before. Exploring the opposite concept together allows me to think more deeply about the meaning of behavior, and extends it to the enquiry of the relation between them.

002 // *Making Art Strange: Defamiliarization*

The images in the square paper show unwrapped images with a very dry and neutral perspective. It is difficult to recognize the original appearance of objects that unwrapped in numerous aspects only with their opened segments. For these reasons, only after looking at the name of the object written below, do people infer what the map was and what the object was originally like, and then put it together like a puzzle. Victor Shklovsky, a pioneer of Russian formalism, first proposed this concept of 'Defamiliarization' in 1917. According to him, defamiliarization literally means making the object unfamiliar, the shape difficult to recognize, and the perceptual process more difficult and longer(Gunn, 1984). Two stages of 'A Map of Unwrapping' practices make things unfamiliar to the viewers by opening daily objects in different ways on a two-dimensional plane. And this unfamiliarity is the core idea of the whole project to look at things, actions, and a notion from a new perspective.

¹ Jackson, P. (2018). *Cut and fold techniques for promotional materials*. London: Laurence King Publishing.

² Gunn, D.P. (1984). Making Art Strange: A Commentary on Defamiliarization. *The Georgia Review*, Vol. 38(No.1(Spring 1984)), pp.25–33.

003 // Gestalt Theory

According to the Gestalt theory, ‘the whole is a new thing, completely separate from any sum of its parts(Reinfurt, 2019)’. In other words, there is a context and interrelationship between each element, and the whole does not collect parts, but there is something beyond parts. The core concept of this Gestalt theory can be applied in two ways to this project.

The first is the sum of 100 iterations. It is not until a number of unwrapped iterations are gathered that it has a meaning as ‘A Map of Unwrapping’. A map that looks like a simple computer graphic has a big context of ‘defamiliarizing’ everyday objects by having a number of them. Secondly, the idea of Gestalt can be seen in the sum of processes iteration 1 and 2. Presenting Map 1, created using the digital map, and map 2, created using the frottage technique together, works as a piece of a project by itself that brings out the enquiry about the position based on the surface and object.

004 // Unwrapping and Frottage

In the second iteration, the act of ‘unwrapping’ was intended to bring to reality, which led to the exploration of objects by doing frottage. Unwrapping used in the first iteration was done in the 3d program. The function called ‘UV unwrapping’ used here is a function for creating the texture of an object and serves to peel and unfold the surface. Therefore, there is no backside in this unwrapping map, and in order to obtain a hidden backside map of the object, it must be unwrapped separately. This opened map is difficult to physically restore its form in reality.

In this context, the second iteration actually attempted to unwrap the object in the most similar way to the first iteration by using frottage. Unlike 3d maps, which are organized in the same size in a square publication form of 1:1, real objects cannot be written on the same paper in different sizes. Therefore, in each pages of the publication, all or some of the different objects are recorded in various sizes. Each page of Josse Pyl’s work, *I THINK and I’ve THOUGHT* thought, is taken from a different work, where broken parts from images, suggest new associations between images and remind them of new reading methods(Josse Pyl, 2022). I thought that images of different sizes could come together to suggest a new connection from the concept of ‘unwrapping’.

³ Reinfurt, D. (2019). *A *new* program for graphic design*. Los Angeles: Inventory Press ; New York, Ny.

⁴ Josse Pyl (2022). *I THINK and I think I’ve THOUGHT a thought*. Amsterdam: Roma Publications.

005 // *The Use of A Chair(2021)*

Ahn Kyuchul proposed *The Use of a Chair*(Ann, 2021) at an exhibition called *The Other Side of Things*(2021). The title of this exhibition contains the author's perspective that 'the truth lies behind the surface of the object that is invisible'. And *The Use of Chair*(2021), which stems from this author's point of view, shows us how to use chairs in a variety of ways that we didn't expect.

On the contrary, my project focuses on the external appearance of things. Rather than looking at the uses and concepts of objects, I first focused on the appearance that we could find first, suggesting an enquiry for how it is perceived. What is the most effective way to understand objects? Can simply unwrapping things up to help us understand them? If we find its meaning in the act of unwrapping, can it be said that we can see the invisible side of things and behavior? Ahn Kyuchul's work, which approaches completely in the opposite direction, makes me critically think about the meaning of this project and what meaning this project and find, which started exploring from the external side of things.

006 // *The Medium is the Massage*

The studio project focus on the act of 'unwrapping' itself rather than the content of what is unwrapping. And so far, the 3D program and paper with pencils are used as mediums during the process. This naturally draws attention to what messages computer programs and human frottage practices present and make us aware of them. What implications can this flow 3D to paper and pencils have specifically?

Marshall McLuhan marks that the media itself has implications with presenting the phrase "The medium is message." According to him, media evoke in us unique ratios of sense perceptions by altering the environment. In other words, it alters the way we think and act-the way we perceive the world(Mcluhan and Fiore, 2001). The perspective of exploring the act of 'unwrapping' in the medium of computer program and human frottage practice will lead us to understand our behavior through the way this media works, as McLuhan's perspective.

⁵Ahn, K. (2021). *The Use of a Chair*. [Pencil on paper].

⁶Mcluhan, M. and Fiore, Q. (2001). *The Medium is the Massage : An Inventory of Effects*. Berkeley, Ca: Gingko Press.

Process 02

Position Through Contextualising

007 // Unwrapping = 'Finding Surface'

‘What is unwrapping?’, ‘What is the significance of unwrapping?’ These are the most basic questions throughout the whole project. Unwrapping is not a gesture of opening and looking inside the object, but more of an act of peeling and unfolding the surface. And that’s why this gesture is the same as focusing on the ‘surface.’ This line of thought leads to the position that the significance of unwrapping is understanding our surroundings by ‘finding the surface.’ However, what does it mean to be focusing on the surface? Can we find meaning in it?

In *Are We Human* (Colomina and Wigley, 2016), the author refers to the contemporary surface with modernism. The advent of modernism after the war hid everything inside, leaving only a few necessary functions on the surface. It is mentioned that these smoothed surfaces anesthetize our senses by removing the friction, and act as a shock absorber for ‘sanitation’ of body and mind.

This approach brought me in the direction of what should be the purpose of ‘finding surface’? Based on this idea, this project examines ‘What meaning does the surface of objects and spaces around us imply in our daily life?’, and ‘What meaning can be surface production process could suggest?’

008 // Accumulated Energy on the Surface

After organizing the idea that ‘The significance of unwrapping is ‘finding the surface’’, I had two following questions to go further process. The first was ‘Is it okay to involve subjectivity when reproducing a surface in the process of ‘finding surface’? or do we need to focus on reproducing just like the original?’ And my answer was, ‘Yes, this whole process is bound to be subjective.’ For the next question, ‘Which surface would you look for from a critical point of view?’, one of the most important line of enquiry was influenced by the project of Do Ho, Suh. Through his work *Rubbing/Loving* (2016), he reproduced the interior of the space where he lived for 18 years in New York. According to him, the energy is accumulated on the surface (Suh, 2016). This approach brought me to the next line of enquiry. Then, which object most contains the accumulated experiences and energy? For the answer, I found the benches in the common space as an answer. I thought that the surface of the bench in a public space where various people gather, sit, touch, and spend time would be accumulated an unmeasurable amount of energy. Based on this idea, I reproduced benches in different public places by rubbing them with transparent film.

⁷ Colomina, B. and Wigley, M. (2016). *Are We Human? : Notes on an Archaeology of Design*. Zürich, Switzerland: Lars Muller.

⁸ Suh, D.H. (2016). *Rubbing/Loving*. [Extended Play] Available at: <https://art21.org/watch/extended-play/do-ho-suh-rubbing-loving-short/> [Accessed 29 May 2022].

009 // Screen as a Surface I

When I scanned the transparent film by hand and put it on the monitor to see them look more clear, I found it as if I were facing all the surfaces I met during the whole process. A monitor screen is a surface itself that has materiality, but at the same time, its content when it's turned on. According to Giuliana Bruno, the screen is a very contemporary surface(Bruno, 2016). Even though her idea is focusing on the screen for projection, this could be considered with the monitor screen as well. Following her approach, we recognize the screen as an object when it is turned off, but we find it as the content itself when we watch it. In other words, the screen we face every day has both characteristics: a surface with materiality and the content itself. Bruno's perspective leads me to a new question, 'How can I find the surface of the screen monitor?' In response to the enquiry, I made the black pixels appear on the screen along the trajectory by touching and dragging(rubbing) the computer and mobile screen. This is designed to experience the same state as the screen off by making it black.

010 // Screen as a Surface II

These days, we can easily find works to break down the boundaries between reality and the virtual world. Forced Perspective(Kozlowski, 2021) is one of the works that make us mistake digital images into real still-life. This project is designed to make the space on the screen look different depending on the angle or distance the viewer looks at the screen. It looks like a still-life image until interaction happens. Considering Bruno's approach to the screen as a modern surface(Bruno, 2016)., I thought it is the same as excluding the aspect of the screen as a surface. It's because, if this work has the purpose of being placed in space as still-life, unlike TV, there will be no option of 'off', and the power off will be to be removed from the space. In this context, Kozlowski's work has the opposite characteristics of my project to find the surface of the screen. This leads us to think critically about creating digital art as an act of finding the surface. All digital art is different from everyday objects such as TV, and it needs a separate space to exist. What space should my project be in to play the role best? Is this approach working well to find the surface of the screen?

⁹ Bruno, G. (2016). *Surface: matters of aesthetics, materiality, and media*. Chicago London University Of Chicago Press.

¹⁰ Kozlowski, M. (2021). *Forced Perspective*. [Body Tracking Camera, Electronic Display(s), Custom Software] Available at: <https://www.mpkoz.com/projects/forced-perspective> [Accessed 29 May 2022].

011 // *Scratches as a Proxy*

I did rubbing on the surface of benches to find ‘accumulated energy and experiences’ on the surface of a public area, and what I got is scratches on the film. The stage of scanning to make the scratches clear brought me a new question. ‘How to read these fragments?’ The scratches obtained by rubbing the surface are just ‘scratches’ on a transparent film without prior knowledge, and they do not even represent clearly whether they are the surface of the benches. This was a new challenge to how to read these fragments. Does this really show a record of the surface? Or is it presenting a gesture for my record of ‘rubbing’?

Following the initial approach, I read these scratches as a proxy of ‘accumulated energy’ obtained when the film met the surface of the bench directly. However, if the scratches were taken as a record of the gesture of the rubbing process, how did the next step go? Just as Mann interpreted proxy differently and analyzed climate change with a completely different approach in Chun’s article(Chun, 2018), the scratches, which are a proxy of the gestures to meet the surface, could bring very different implications for surface and object.

012 // *Understanding the Surface of Touch Screen*

The project finally presents the materiality of the screen monitor and touch screen by rubbing and touching gestures. And especially the mobile touch screen has a different character from the previous surfaces. It suggests a new direction from the current status. What is the scalability of touching a screen? It is different from simply touching and rubbing the surface of the objects. The touch screen presupposes that ‘it manipulates something by touching the surface of the screen.’ As Mende is referring, ‘Hundreds of patented gestural movements for navigating, steering, and moving the image surface in real-time mark the scalability of the gaze by means of touch(Mende, 2020)’, touching the screen is a gesture that connects the real world outside the screen and the virtual world inside the screen. Thereby, it’s suggesting the expansion of the gaze into the virtual space. The touch screen is also the bridge between reality and the virtual world, and all gestures such as touch, dragging, and pinch-to-zoom are made on this surface. The characteristics of the touch screen’s “operability” and “expansion of the gaze” go beyond the screen presented by Bruno and throw a new challenge on how to understand it as the most modern screen.

¹¹ Chun, W.H.K. (2018). *On Patterns and Proxies, or the Perils of Reconstructing the Unknown*. [online] www.e-flux.com. Available at: <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/accumulation/212275/on-patterns-and-proxies/> [Accessed 29 May 2022].

¹² Mende, D. ed., (2020). *The Code of Touch: Navigating beyond Control, or, Towards Scalability and Sociability* - Journal #109 May 2020 - e-flux. [online] www.e-flux.com. Available at: <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/109/331193/the-code-of-touch-navigating-beyond-control-or-towards-scalability-and-sociability/> [Accessed 29 May 2022].

Surface and materiality, how do they exist in our modern society, and what role can materiality play in an era when digital becomes the primary and world is turning into virtual? Starting from these interests, Bruno refers to various elements that make up the surface, such as textile and light, but she especially focusing on the screen as a modern surface after presenting old surfaces as canvas and sheet. In other words, by concentrating on the surface of the screen, she talks about what role it plays in modern art field and technology, and how it relates to us.

The entire form of the text, starting from the fabric, which is the oldest and most familiar material, to the screen for projection, the most contemporary fabric, helps to smoothly understand the characteristic of the surface. After, it focuses on where the screen is placed and projected, and in the end, it refers to the materiality of the screen that has a kind of 'space' such as movie theaters, art galleries, and exhibition halls. Following this structure, she gradually brings the materiality of the screen deeply into the idea of how we're engaging with surfaces.

The most significant idea in the text *Surface*(Bruno, 2016) is her position that she is focusing on the screen as a representative modern surface and trying to find how they are building relationships with us in space. Here, the screen has a feature of both a real space that has materiality and virtual space that projects the images on it. And furthermore, the physical spaces where the screen is usually fixed, emphasize the materiality of the screen.

In the end, by referring to the two characteristics of the screen, Bruno tells the story of how we live with the relationship between content, space, and surface through them. For example, through projection, other forms of coordination, memory, and transformation can occur when various things happen on the surface and impact us. This reminds me of the perspective that how *Are We Human?* (Colomina and Wigley, 2016) dealing with the modern surface. It defines modernism as the smoothed surface by mentioning post-war society. It works as anesthetizing our senses by hiding everything inside and sanitizing the surface. In other words, it is working as a shock absorber. This is an approach to how the smoothed surface has a relationship with our lives. This idea is also linked to Ahn Kyu-Chul's essay *Outside and Inside* in the book *The Other Side of Things*. He points out that all aspects of objects are hidden these days, leaving only the most important elements, so we have no idea how they are constructed. If the TV breaks down, for example, we can't fix it ourselves, but we have to call experts, and in most cases, we have to 'replace' parts or buy new products at the end(Ahn, 2021b, p.17). For smoothed modern surfaces, *Are We Human?* and Ahn's writing refers to the relationship between humans and surfaces in a similar way.

Isn't surface the closest concept to a graphic design field in a way? The designed graphics can only be expressed through the medium in some way. And if it's a digitally generated image, in fact, from the time it was produced, 'surface' has been deeply involved. Paper is a very old medium, and various related attempts have been made to question the medium of paper in design and art fields. In contrast, The screen is the most frequently used material for communication. However, aren't we neglecting the screen that shows us digital content? This text leaves room for thinking about contemporary communication methods, by focusing on the surface that makes it possible to see them further from the significance of digital media.

¹ Bruno, G. (2016). *Surface: matters of aesthetics, materiality, and media*. Chicago London University Of Chicago Press.

² Colomina, B. and Wigley, M. (2016). *Are We Human? : Notes on an Archaeology of Design*. Zürich, Switzerland: Lars Muller.

³ Ahn, K.C. (2021b). *The Other Side of Things*. Seoul, Republic of Korea: Contemporary Literature, p.17.

‘Life is the contingency of spaces.’ This is the basic idea and position about space for Do-Ho Suh. He thinks that the spaces he has lived form the trajectory of his life as they are connected together. Therefore, most of his works were created in a way that reproduces the spaces in which he lived. The most representative projects were mainly made of fabrics, however, after facing the limitations of expression by using fabrics, he went through a new process called frottage. This new attempt shows his perspective and deep engagement with the idea of ‘How space could be reproduced?’

Rubbing/Loving (Suh, 2016) was made by the process of rubbing just as the title represents. He stuck the white paper on every surface of the space where he lived for 18 years in New York and then filled the paper with colored pencils. This method of production is not just a simple spatial reproduction, but a very personal commemorative process of finding and feeling his experience and energy, which is accumulated in the space. His 18 years of life lay on every surface he touched during his stay. The rubbing and reproducing process is the same as presenting his life itself for 18 years, and it stands for his perspective of space and life very clearly.

Rubbing all the surfaces takes a lot of time and effort. Unlike ordinary public spaces, it is almost impossible to go back once you leave the residential place. New tenants might come in and live, and many things could change in the process. Even if the exterior is preserved, the interior could be newly remodeled, and also the space itself may disappear over time. In other words, from the moment we leave the place, it becomes a space of a very different personality than we used to know. In this context, the process of his project, which takes a long time to rub the surface, is also an arrangement and farewell for 18 years of life in New York. This whole performance evidently shows his position for space that he recognizes his life through space.

His position toward the way he describe the space can also be found in the expressions he uses in the work process. The title ‘*Rubbing/Loving*’ contains the meaning of ‘rubbing=loving.’ He mentions, that ‘a rubbing gesture’ is like a gesture of love. In fact, this title is based on a misunderstanding created by the sound difference between Korean and English. Since there is no sound distinction between ‘R’ and ‘L’ in Korean, if he writes ‘rubbing’ in Korean, people can read it as the word ‘loving’. The process of touching and feeling the surface directly through the act of rubbing is for him to remember and commemorate the space. And the title denotes his attitude toward reproducing space very well in that it expressed this act as a gesture of love with the collaboration created by English and Korean, the languages he uses. This title, along with the rubbed surfaces, can be seen as an expression of his life itself.

Suh considers his life as a movement of moving into another space. Therefore for him, reproducing the space in which he lived is like describing himself. The expressions he has used, such as ‘life’, ‘accumulated energy’, ‘layer of time’, and so on, are very abstract. However, because of the clear characteristic of his process and visual outcome, it is communicating apparently. This can inform that invisible and abstract concept could be communicated well by approaching them more conceptually.