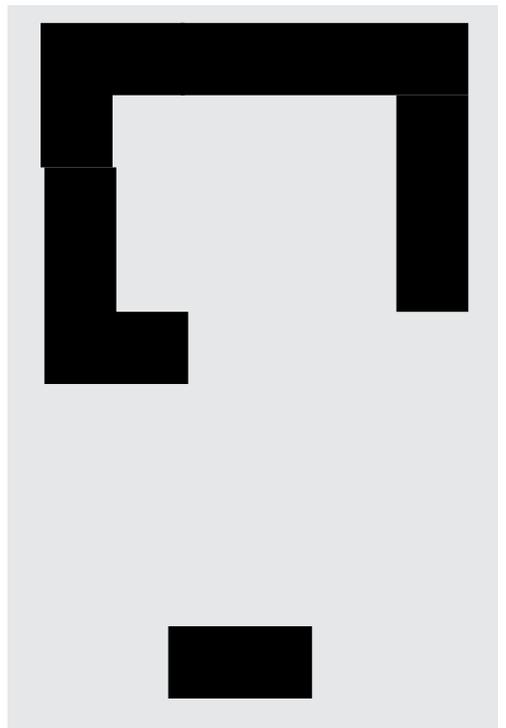
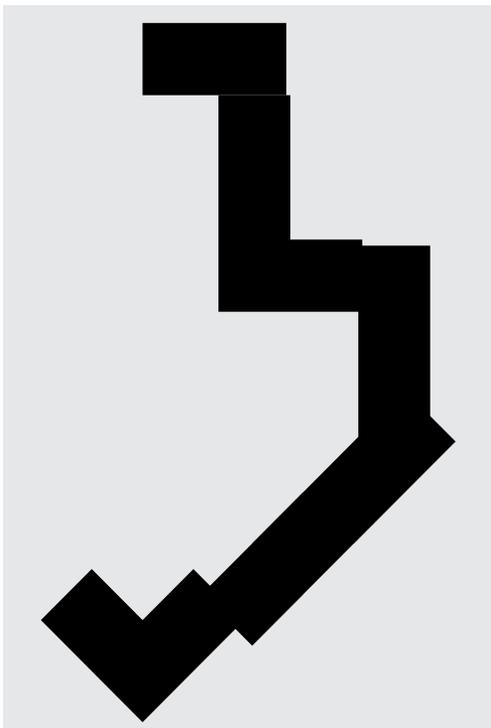
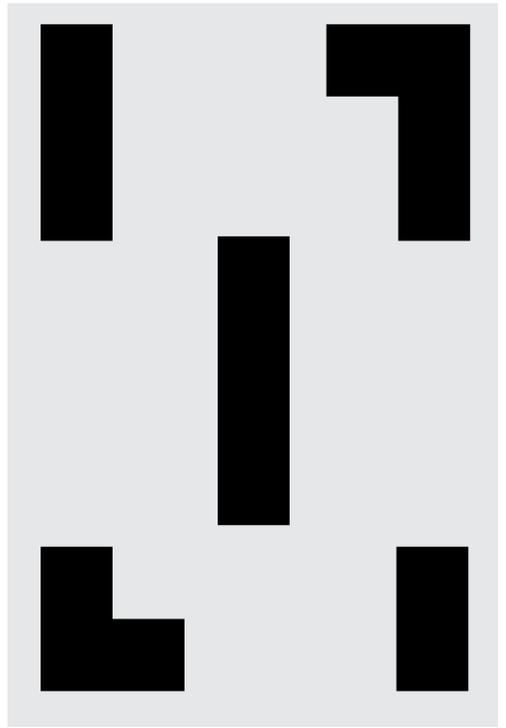
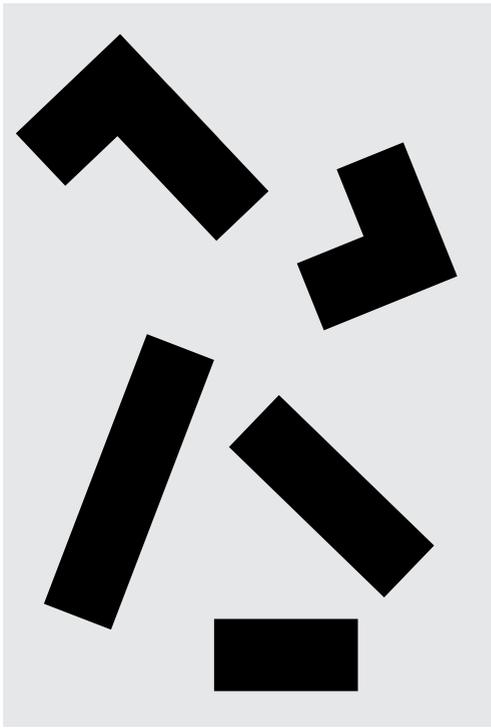
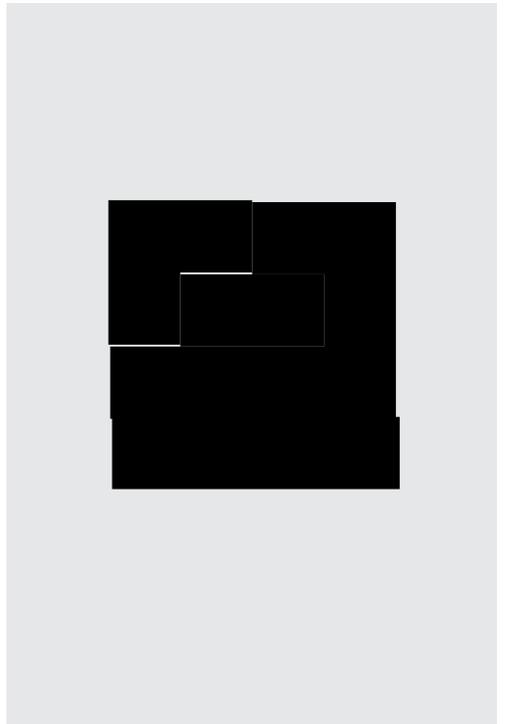
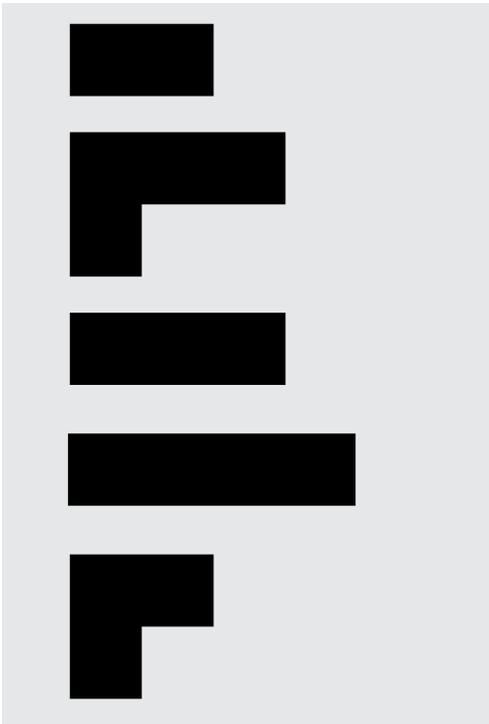
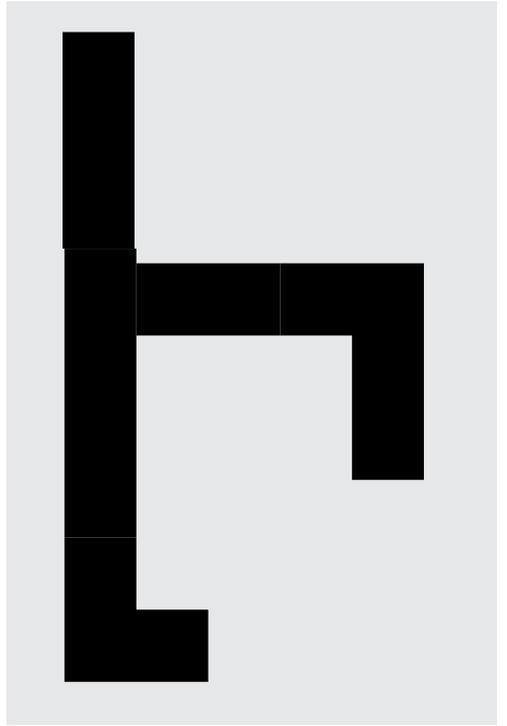
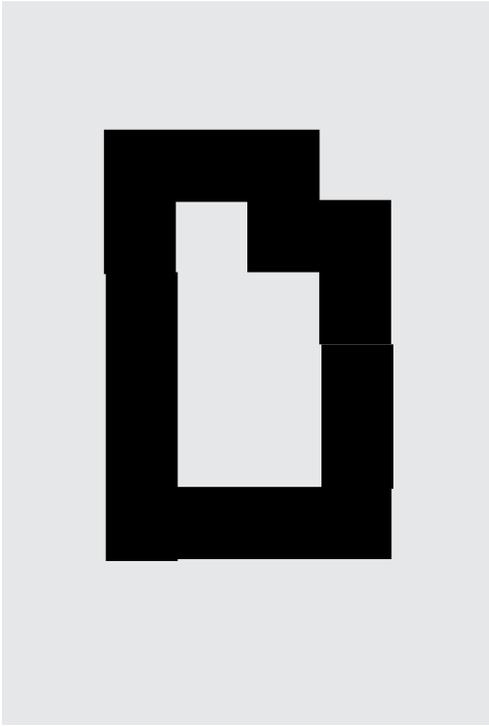


A Report from the Periphery

Laura Pappa

Illustrations by
Rudy Guedj





Advertising, by 2080, had come down off the hoardings and gigantic video screens of yore. It was now so interwoven with the fabric of everyday life that you could never be sure, when having a conversation with someone, whether he was performing a “sitcom” (situation commercial), or simply talking about the rainy weather and the consequent need to carry an umbrella. Advertising execs and creatives were like the Stasi of East Germany: mixed into every crowd, equipped with a million pairs of lips, eyes and ears in the form of family, friends and neighbours.

People had evolved together with the emergence of this trend and most had learned to pay no attention to it. Some used it as an excuse for casual small talk, others tried numerous means to break these human advertising machines by continuously sabotaging their efforts.

As with any trend or societal progression, there were also people who had a hard time coping with these new tendencies. This group of people never got used to telling an ordinary passerby from a salesperson and thus avoided any possible human interaction in the grave fear of becoming part of another sitcom. After numerous violent incidents between the sales execs and citizens, also referred to as “customers”, additional police forces were recruited to monitor safe transactions.

All this led to a large group of people distancing themselves from city-life, moving to the countryside or smaller islands, where progress hadn't hit that hard. This also accounted for a long forgotten demographic: the population that referred to themselves as graphic designers. These were people who had been taught the traditional ways of spreading messages through means of visual communication and its numerous physical outlets. Most of them now worked odd jobs and many had moved on to new career opportunities entirely, though the graphic designers still held the flag high in glorification of the pre-sitcom era.

The graphic designers emigrated onto a large cargo ship, sailing between the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean, which made only a handful of stops every year to welcome new members and to release the ones who no longer

wished to inhabit this society. Instead of appropriating old habits and traditions, the graphic designers took the founding of this new world as an opportunity to rethink many aspects of their daily lives. On this ship they created living conditions and societal structures to suit their own interests and needs, relying largely on their skills and insight gained in the past through their training in communication.

This report describes some of the community's non-traditional ways of life through subjects such as education, politics, religion, agriculture, entertainment and philosophy.

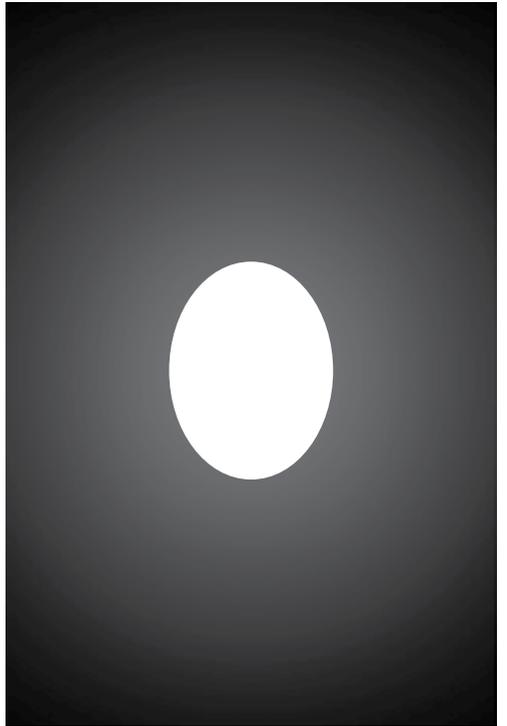
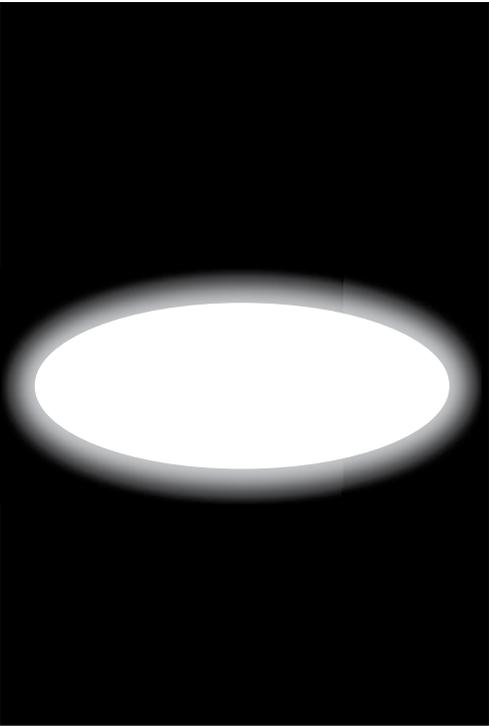
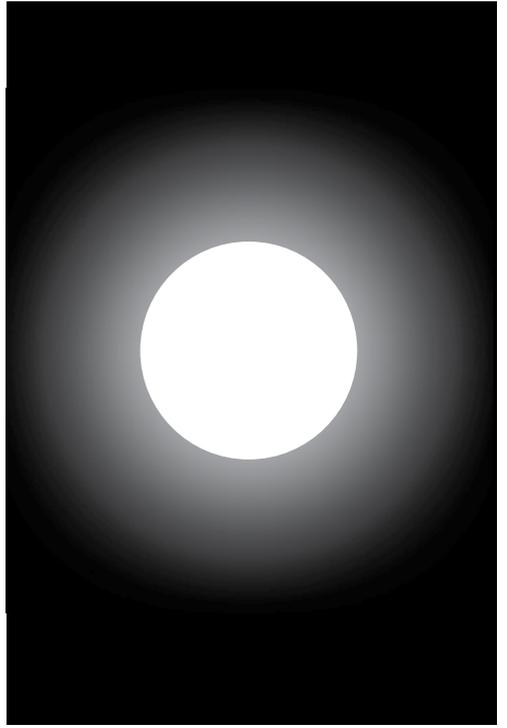
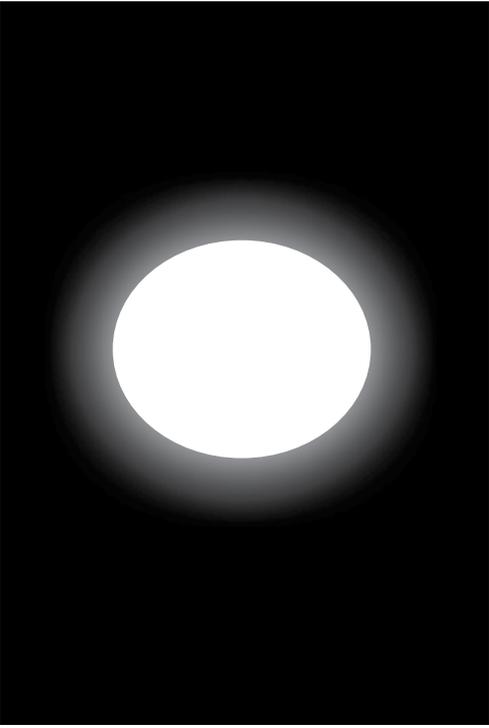
Chapter 1. Education

Education was among the first pillars to be reconfigured by the community. This was predominantly due to the population's specific interest in language. Not just language as their native tongue, but language as an emulation of thought and speech, as a visual tool and not least as the most essential tool for communication. This new community, populated by language enthusiasts, brought new dimension to the use, interpretation and transformation of basic language concepts and generated many new instruments and gadgets along the way that departed from these ideas. Next to this, the graphic designers experimented with forms of education and constantly tested new courses to improve the curriculum.

1.1. Classroom

All the furniture in the classroom is built by the pupils themselves. The first week of education is dedicated to the planning and production of chairs and benches that the group finds most suitable for their upcoming study activities. Besides making the furniture, the group also decides how to position the elements in the room. This means no classroom looks alike: some have decided to omit the chairs and benches entirely and have opted for other seating surfaces such as carpets; some have found that working standing up is the most beneficial for taking in information and work in a nearly bare room equipped with only the essentials such a tools and books.

All classrooms have standard bookshelves developed in the early stages of the ship community's educational reform. These shelves are two-dimensional surfaces that allow for books to be displayed open and on a random double-page in an attempt to foster associative and creative



abilities in the pupils. All pupils have their personal shelves where they can play and interact with relevant quotes, sentences and visuals from their books. When not in use, the shelves act as bookmarks as well as memory tools, similar to placing an open book below one's pillow to memorise its content.

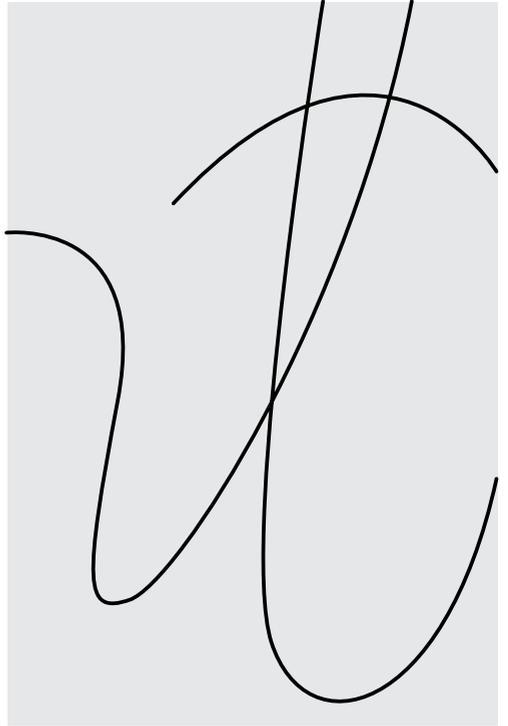
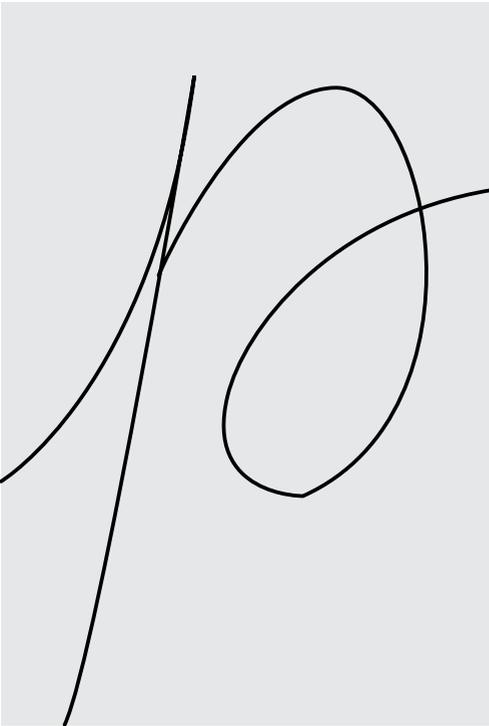
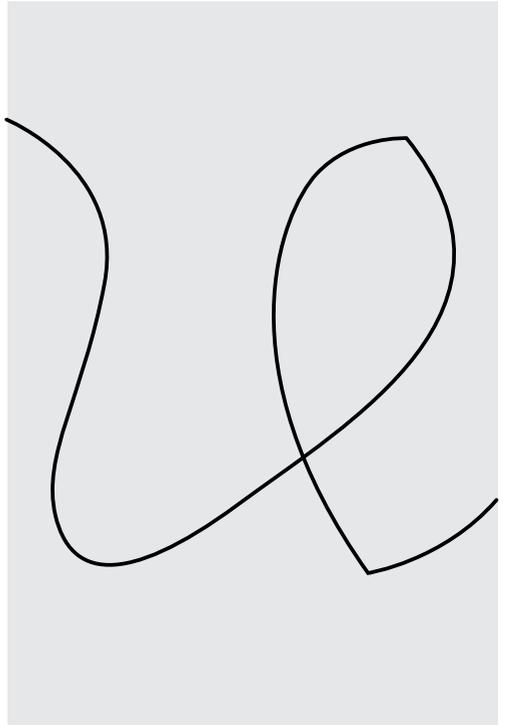
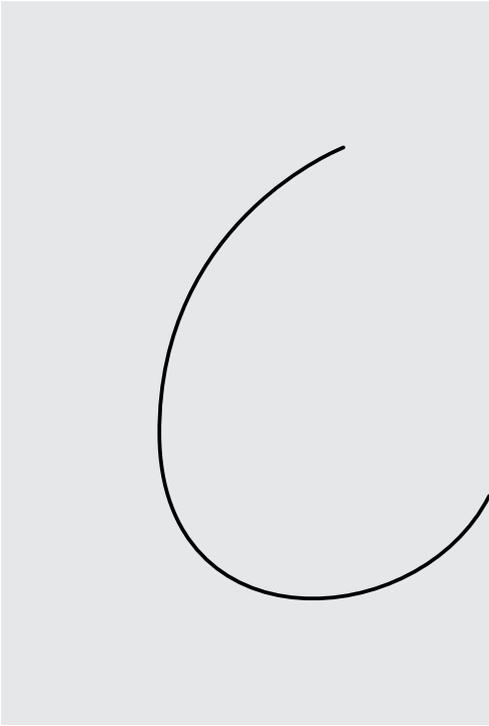
Next to the furniture (or lack of furniture in some cases), the classrooms are also equipped with a number of custom-made light bulbs, about one bulb per four students. Besides lighting the dim space, these light bulbs can be programmed to sing or talk to the students. Technology is not advanced enough for the bulbs to talk back but that's also not what they're intended for. The bulbs are used as subliminal educational tools, playing music that swarms with informative content and is packaged with popular melodies.

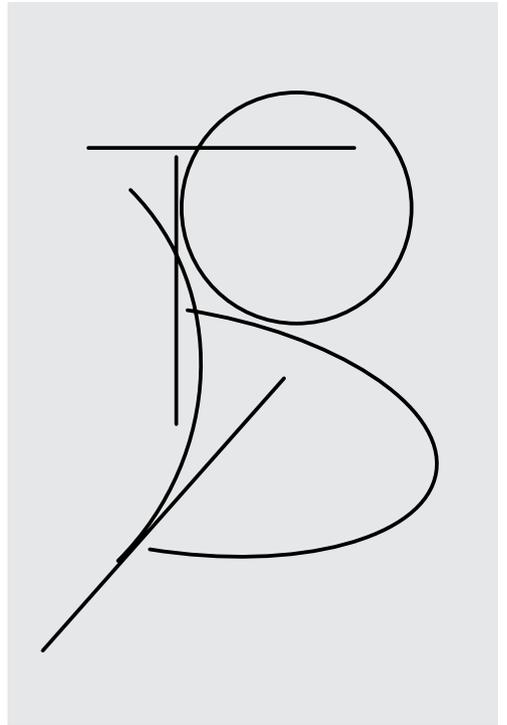
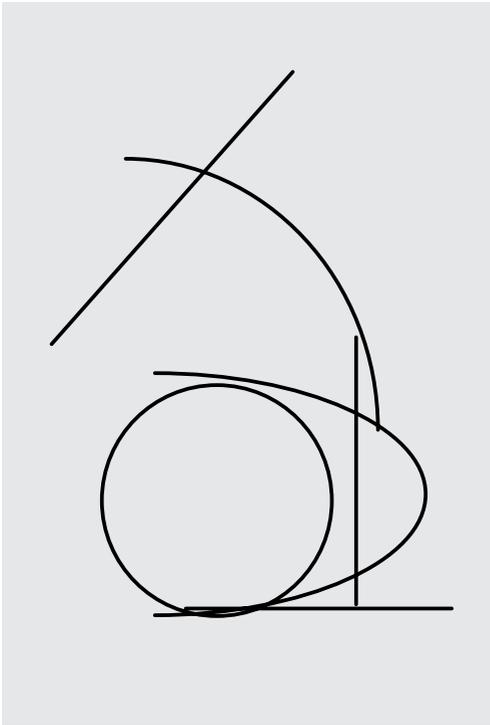
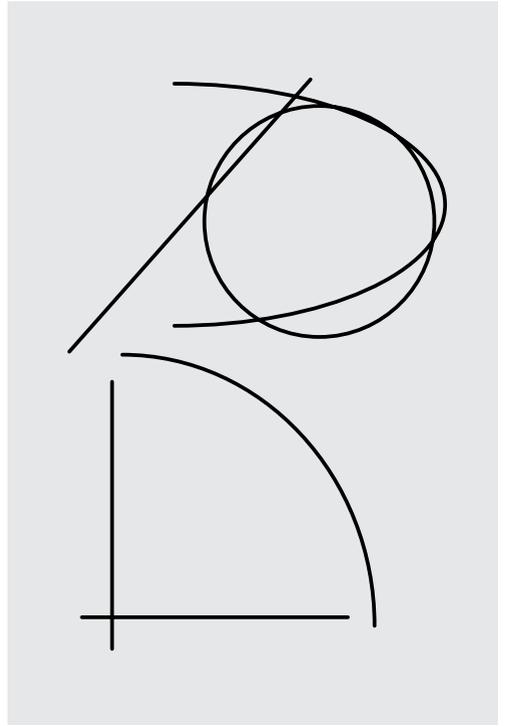
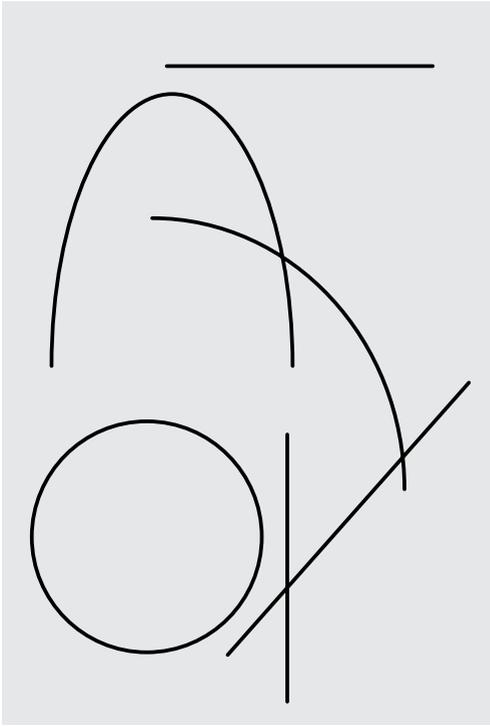
The sonic experience doesn't end there. Instead of regular writing appliances, all pupils use what is called the amplified pencil, a standard charcoal pencil that is furnished with a simple sound-amplifying device, vocalising each line or movement the hand draws onto paper or any other surface. This technique is believed to enhance sound and word documentation skills, as well as creating tangible links between the two, thus raising sensitivity to sound as a communicative device but also offering creative translations to written notation.

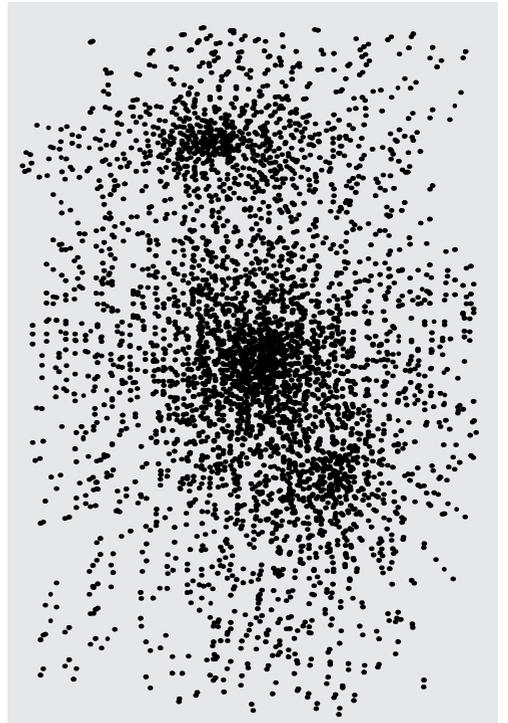
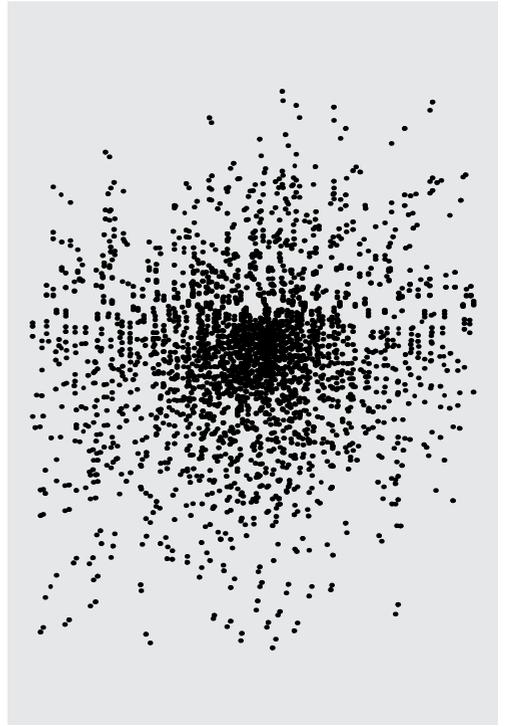
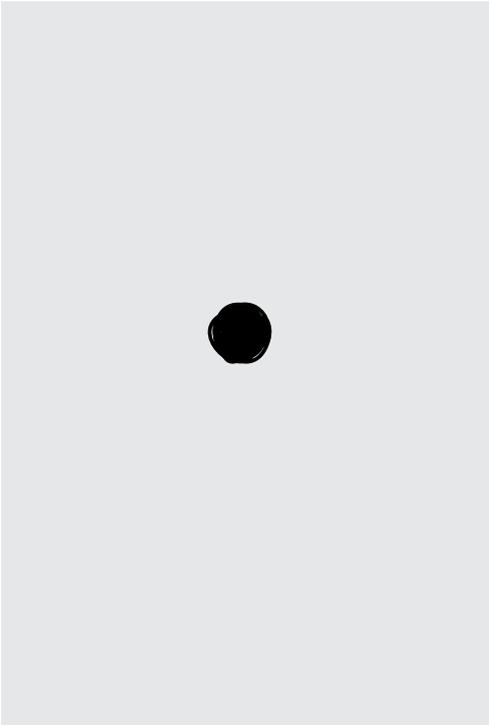
Note! These methods and devices account for the community's key transformations in the classroom as an educational space. These methods are constantly questioned and new ones are added and tested every single day both by the faculty as well as the pupils.

1.2. Language & Writing

A lot of emphasis is put on reading and writing (R-W) throughout the studies. From an early age children are exposed to the basic foundations of language and are encouraged to communicate with their own unique letterforms and sounds. Different games are created to







facilitate this, including modular stone set games that create an endless amount of visual combinations through the use of differently drawn lines. These games are seen as the precursors to the creation of complex language systems that children can continue developing in the course of their development.

Different gadgets have been developed to create links between the generation of a thought and its transformation into a language that can be conveyed to other receivers. This includes physical devices that, through a sense of touch, explain the relations between bodily movement and the creation of letters and symbols. Pupils are trained to master the use of such devices, making them very sensitive towards the physical creation of language, while also developing their motor skills and boosting creativity.

Note: Most of the new technology, just like anything else the community has introduced, has been created by amateurs, but even more so by loony enthusiasts who are interested in putting different bits together and seeing what comes out. Many of the “inventions” can therefore seem somewhat redundant but are actually all the more exciting to the community members, who are confronted with finding use for the useless—for the record, not a single invention has ever been rejected or deemed unusable.

Next to learning about language concepts and developing new systems, the traditional Latin alphabet is taught like a sacred religious concept that needs to be nurtured and kept out of harm’s way. But needless to say, this study goes hand in hand with learning how the form of a typeface affects the way you read the letter. On the ship, each typeface is affiliated with a number of emotions and the pupils need to study and know these by heart. This has been brought to extreme lengths, where any piece of writing by a pupil is always connected to a specific typeface and assessed according to the tone and emotions conveyed by it.

A common activity in the school programme is writing and drawing on the walls. This is encouraged to create awareness of one’s actions—what’s written on the wall is meant to stay and to be seen over and over again. But there is also a more specific method than the casual

scribbling used inherent in these wall-writings. This method incorporates the use of a physical writing tool that produces the appearance handwritten lettering on the walls. This tool is solely used to write a single word on the wall, allowing the author to carefully consider and craft his or her expression. Precision is emphasised and practised here by singling out one key word from a longer thought, which shows that the creation of letterforms and language in general is as something dependent on where and how it's positioned.

1.3. Curriculum

A large portion of old traditions and classes have been abandoned, and the residents can instead concentrate on ones they find most relevant for the upkeep and progression of the community. Needless to say, reading, writing and drawing are all seen as key activities necessary to become aware of the world and to find one's own voice and vocation. Next to nurturing basic reading and writings skills, the curriculum includes many new courses and subjects that were rarely touched upon in the old world.

As a continuation of the R-W activities, the pupils also take classes in printing. A portion of each day is spent on reproducing the pupils' work they've generated through researching, writing and drawing. The content is mainly generated through fieldwork, then written up, discussed with the group and collectively printed on the printing press that's stored in one of the containers. The finished publications are put in an envelope with a stamp of a school from the old world and then collected in a large barrel to be dispatched when the ship makes one of its rare landings. Alternatively, the pupils who are overly keen to share their work seal the publications in a bottle and secretly throw it in the water, with the hopes of it washing up on the shore only to be picked up by a likeminded soul.

Printing their own original works, even when sometimes containing trivial or abstract content, is believed to encourage independence, cooperation and a sense of

camaraderie—qualities that are highly valued by the community members.

A large portion of school activity is spent on the various aspects of storytelling. This is primarily taught through the careful inspection of objects according to their material, functional and conceptual qualities, but even more so through deconstructing them. To avoid confusion—the actual functionality of the objects plays little role here. It's all about the stories different objects can tell, step by step moving backwards from the outcome towards the inception of the idea that later produced the object.

Note: As designed objects are considered to embody the purest form of narrative thinking in the community, each new object-creation is developed side-by-side with a textual narrative that is revised every five years, covering the changes of the context and use of the object. The incorporation of object-form storytelling has also been the key instigator for the creation of new items. Each new object produced is made by deconstructing existing objects and putting the loose bits back together in different constellations until something promising surfaces.

The high status of language in the community entails learning a thing or two about articulation. Newborns are introduced to articulation techniques as soon as they make their way out of the womb. Starting off with teaching infants to laugh and cry in as many ways as possible, the teaching is soon followed by more complicated articulation concepts, such as training the performance of different moods. Year by year the study moves on to deeper levels, including acting classes that teach how to become somebody else entirely. This is believed to foster productivity in applied work assignments as well as different forms of collaborative labour.

Another method for mastering articulation is practised through spoken word events that convene on the deck every evening. Each resident, regardless of profession or age, is required to perform at these gatherings at least once a week. The exact format of these performances has been left up to the residents to define, meaning that the results range from undecipherable sound utterances to majestic



concert-like productions like no other. All performances—the lyrical, the nonsensical, the masterful, the hilarious, the quiet, the eerie, the embarrassing, the horrendous—regardless of their quality, are welcomed with standing ovations.

Politics is regarded as a key subject in primary education. Beside the meticulous study of all possible forms of political governing on a global as well as household level, a considerable portion of time is dedicated to the study and practice of propaganda tools. Activities range from the nearly manic production of slogans and banners of all kinds, learning card tricks and more complex illusions and marching on the streets to the plotting of massive campaigns that could potentially fool (or possess) entire populations. At the end of the course, which also acts as the last course in the entire curriculum, each pupil needs to masterfully craft their own political programme and put up a solid campaign to run in the elections for the Legendary President of the container community. As a result, a new Legendary President is appointed every year, unless a coup d'état (usually taking place as a by-product of experiments in the propaganda classes) overthrows the government.

Note: The above-mentioned proceedings only account for a fraction of the full scope of educational activity on the ship, with an emphasis on work that concerns language. Compilers of this report have decided to concentrate on the most revolutionary (even though many of them are considered somewhat nostalgic) aspects of the ship-dwellers' lives and omitted everything that could be considered a norm in the old world.

First paragraph: Momus, *Solution 214–238: The Book of Japans*, Sternberg Press, 2011, p. 123.

This text includes references to works and projects (in order of appearance) by Studio Manuel Raeder, Jan Tomson, Mathew Kneebone, Niko Mihaljević, Felix Salut, Josse Pyl, Jungmyung Lee, Will Holder and Luca Frei, Celestin and Élise Freinet, James Langdon, Nora Turato and members of the political party Partia e Fortë.