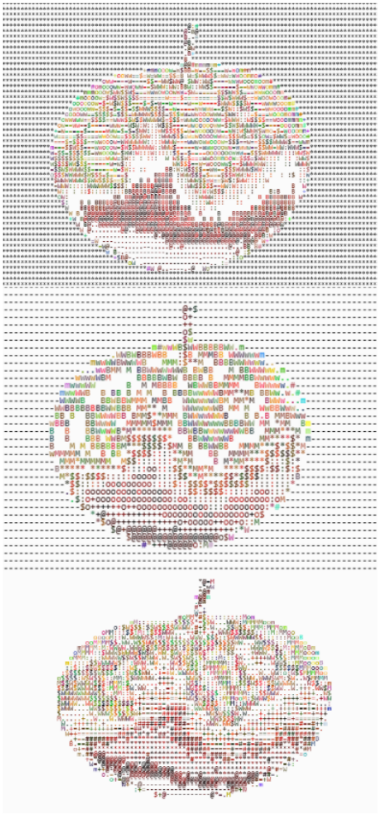
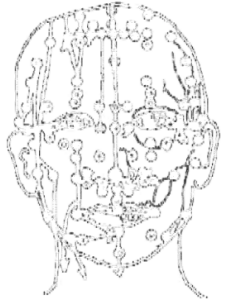


I chose the media experiment in the method of iteration in unit 1, and wanted to continue exploring the possibilities of ASCII art.

*This was my third iteration. I used p5.js to write a set of code that turns an input image into ASCII art. For this version, I chose an apple and created a kind of “portrait series” of it. At first, I focused on accurately showing the apple’s shape and color. But in this round, I wanted to break the original generation rules—so I randomized both the character order and the character colors to see what the apple would look like.
When the logic shifted from brightness and color mapping to complete randomness, the result started to move away from a realistic image. Instead, it became more about chance and abstract visual forms.

Because this code is not the most complete version, there are some problems in the rules and export quality, so I want to continue to improve my system.

Last term, I mainly explored ASCII in terms of generative logic, parameterized adjustment, and dynamics. For this time, I have addressed these issues and used ASCII ART as a visual form to explore the iteration of images.



I first chose a chair as the input image because it is an extremely familiar and recognizable object in our daily lives. Its structure is simple and stable - usually composed of a seat, a backrest and legs, with a clear geometric outline.

The recognizability of the chair provided me with an ideal starting point for a series of experiments in the number, density, and arrangement of symbols without completely losing the viewer's perception of the object.

I tried to follow the original shape and color of the chair quite closely. I experimented with using different types of characters to fill the image —like letters, punctuation marks, arrows, patterns, different language, and even emojis.

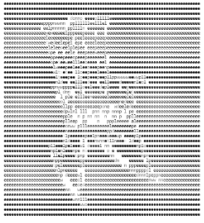
Selected from 100 iterations of exercises

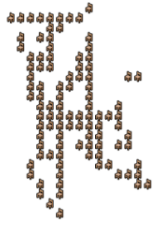
Then, during the experiment, I found that I could add a few lines of code to control the spacing between characters. The closer the characters are, the more restored the shape is; the sparser the characters are, the more abstract they are.

I began to think: How many combinations of abstract information do we need to recognize an object?

So I started to conduct a series of compression and distortion experiments on the number, density, and arrangement of symbols. I wrote a program to fuse several different sets of characters and generate them randomly, and each image obtained is different. When I reduce the number of characters or change the distribution pattern of characters, I can still "see" the existence of the chair; and when the characters are lost to very few, it is impossible to recognize that this is a chair.

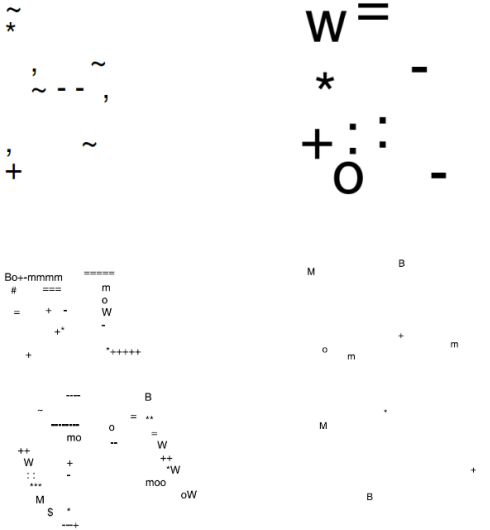
So I want to find a key node - when the object goes from "recognizable" to "unrecognizable".

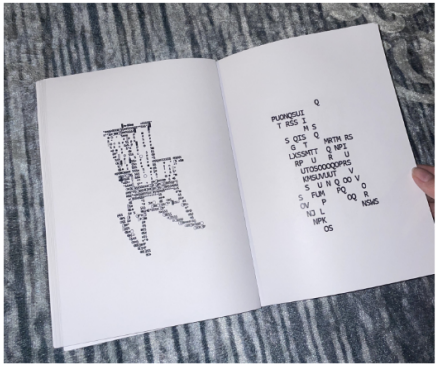




Selected from 100 iterations of exercises

In the end, I manually typed symbols to fill in the outline of the chair. It felt more like drawing with text than coding. This approach had more human subjectivity and control—kind of like sketching with symbols to test what the shape of the chair would become under human intervention.





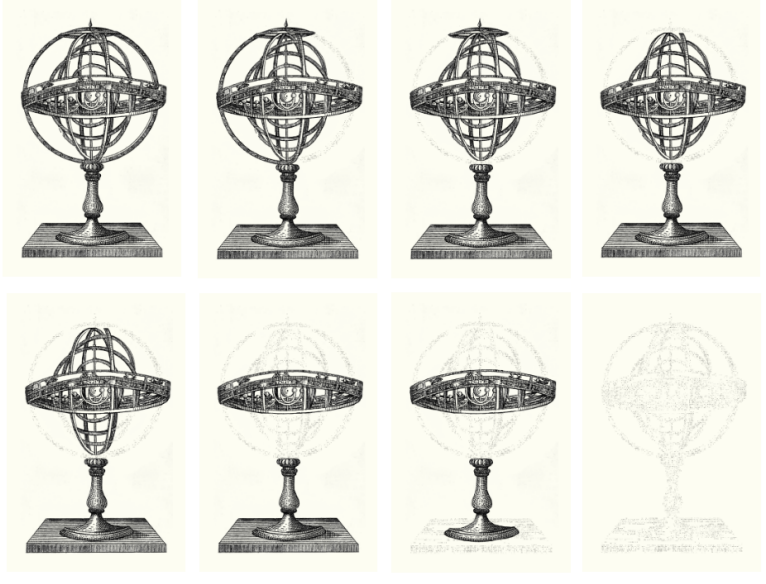
Selected from 100 iterations of exercises

I watched a movie by Bong Joon-ho called Mickey 17, which mentioned the philosophical concept of the Ship of Theseus paradox, which I found very interesting.

If the rotten wood on Theseus's ship was gradually replaced until all the wood was not the original wood, would the ship still be the same ship?

23 1 The ship on which Theseus sailed with the youths and returned in safety, the thirty-oared galley, was preserved by the Athenians down to the time of Demetrius Phalereus.[29] They took away the old timbers from time to time, and put new and sound ones in their places, so that the vessel became a standing illustration for the philosophers in the mooted question of growth, some declaring that it remained the same, others that it was not the same vessel.

So I took an illustration of an astronomical instrument from my collection and tried to simulate the theory of the Ship of Theseus based on the structure of the instrument, gradually replacing the entire image with ASCII characters and showing the whole process.



Tycho Brahe / Astronomiae Instauratae Mechanica

This book records the large number of instruments that Tycho Brahe built for his astronomical observations. These instruments are a way for humans to understand nature with their bodies. They are handmade, designed according to human scale, and used to accurately observe and measure celestial bodies. They reflect the inseparable relationship between empirical knowledge and material tools in early modern science.

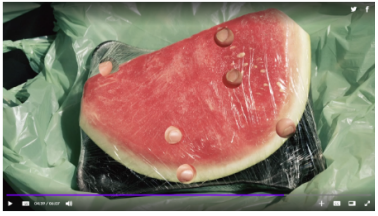
Plutarch / Parallel Lives

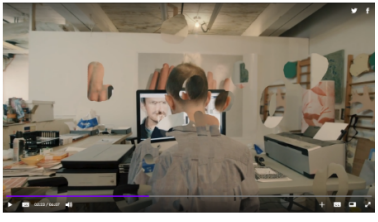
23 1 The ship on which Theseus sailed with the youths and returned in safety, the thirty-oared galley, was preserved by the Athenians down to the time of Demetrius Phalereus. 29 They took away the old timbers from time to time, and put new and sound ones in their places, so that the vessel became a standing illustration for the philosophers in the mooted question of growth, some declaring that it remained the same, others that it was not the same vessel.

This paradox not only challenges our traditional understanding of the identity of objects, but also raises important questions about the relationship between form and change. As time and replacement go by, does the core "materiality" of the object still continue?

When the "materiality" of tools and objects is abstracted into data characters, do we still regard them as "that thing"? I use symbols as "materials" to participate in creation. In the process of replacement, characters are both destructive and constructive - they dissolve the entity of the object, but establish a new symbolic existence.

Lucas Blalock / *Digital Toolkit*

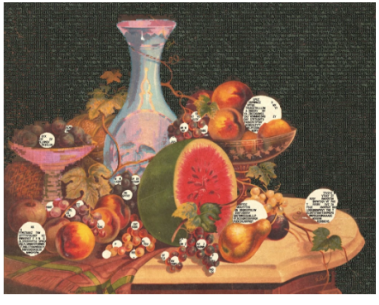




Blalock employs a method that makes images "stutter": he makes viewing unsmoothly, creating perceptual discomfort that forces the audience to pause and reconsider how they see. This interference not only challenges the form of images but also challenges the habitual expectations underlying the very act of viewing.

This inspired me to realize that design or visual expression is not merely about conveying content, but more importantly, a reflection on and questioning of media structures. Must images always be "clear" to carry informational value? Perhaps we can make people aware that seeing is never a direct or natural act—rather, it is the result of cultural conditioning.

enigmatriz / *ascii-art*



Classic still life meets ASCII art in this work. Original composition remains, but parts become ASCII elements. The hybrid image challenges perception, transforming design into critical commentary—not just decoration.

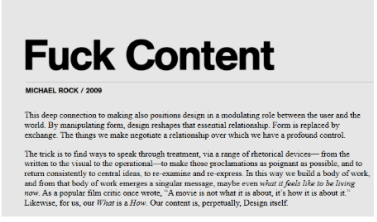
It relates to my own methods of exploring how images change in different media and contexts, inspiring me to express the transformation and instability of images through "destruction" or "tampering."

Joseph Kosuth / *One and Three Chairs*

This work can be seen to highlight the relation between language, picture and referent. This conceptual artwork interrogates how we understand objects—not by what they are, but through how they are represented.

When objects are placed in different systems of representation, how does their identity transform? This deconstruction of 'how meaning is constructed' has led me to understand visual language from a more structural perspective, no longer viewing 'images' as straightforward appearances.

Michael Rock / *Fuck Content*



Fuck Content

MICHAEL ROCK / 2009

This deep connection to making also positions design in a modulating role between the user and the world. By manipulating form, design reshapes that essential relationship. Form is replaced by exchange. The things we make negotiate a relationship over which we have a profound control.

The trick is to find ways to speak through treatment, via a range of rhetorical devices— from the written to the visual to the operational—to make those proclamations as poignant as possible, and to return consistently to central ideas, to re-examine and re-express. In this way we build a body of work, and from that body of work emerges a singular message, maybe even *what it feels like to be living now*. As a popular film critic once wrote, "A movie is not what it is about, it's how it is about it." Likewise, for us, our *What* is a *How*. Our content is, perpetually, Design itself.

As mentioned in this article, design plays a role in modulating, reshaping, and negotiating an interface between users and the world, over which designers have profound control.

The classical scientific instrument illustrations I chose represent a specific "world" - a world in which scientific knowledge is recorded and understood through concrete, observation-based and painting-based visual forms. This form itself is an interface between users and knowledge.

Michael Rock / *Designer as Author*

Designer as Author

MICHAEL ROCK / 1996

What does it mean to call a graphic designer an author?

Authorship, in one form or another, has been a popular term in graphic design circles, especially those at the edge of the profession, the design academies and the murky territories that exist between design and art. The word authorship has a ring of importance: it connotes seductive ideas of origination and agency. But the question of how designers become authors is a difficult one, and exactly who the designer/authors are and what authored design looks like depends entirely on how you define the term and the criteria you choose to grant entrance into the pantheon.

Authorship may suggest new approaches to understanding design process in a profession traditionally associated more with the communication than the origination of messages. But theories of authorship may also serve as legitimizing strategies, and authorial aspirations may actually end up reinforcing certain conservative notions of design production and subjectivity — ideas that run counter to recent critical attempts to overthrow the perception of design based on individual brilliance. The implications deserve careful evaluation. What does it really mean to call for a graphic designer to be an author?

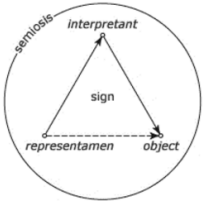
What is an author?

That question has been an area of intense scrutiny over the last forty years. The meaning of the word itself has shifted significantly over time. The earliest definitions are not associated with writing; in fact the most inclusive is a "person who originates or gives clearly index authoritarian — even patriarchal — connotations: "father of all life," "any inventor, constructor or founder," "one who begets," and a "director, commander, or ruler."

All literary theory, from Aristotle on, has in some form or another been theory of authorship. Since this is not a history of the author but a consideration of the author as metaphor, I'll start with recent history. Wimsatt and Beardsley's, seminal text, "The Intentional Fallacy" (1946), drove an early wedge between the author and the text, dispelling the notion that a reader could ever really know an author through his writing. The so-called death of the author, proposed most successfully by Roland Barthes in 1968 in an essay of that title, is closely linked to the birth of critical theory, especially theory based in reader response and interpretation rather than intentionality. Michel Foucault used the rhetorical question "What is an author?" as the title of his influential essay of 1969 which, in response to Barthes, outlines the basic taxonomy and functions of the author and the problems associated with conventional ideas of authorship and origination.

This article's discussion of entrepreneurial authors has made me re-understand the role of form in image practice. In Rudy VanderLans's "Emigre", the design typography itself is part of the discourse, and form and content are generated simultaneously and promote each other. This article made me realize that my practice is not only "translating" images, but also borrowing form to explore the critical possibilities of design. This process of interweaving form and content is gradually forming the method of "graphic author".

Charles S. Peirce / *On Signs*



Dynamic

Peirce proposed that signs consist of "representamen, object, and interpretant," emphasizing meaning emerges through interpretation rather than being fixed. His theory reveals how signs dynamically mediate our cognition of the world.

Peirce's semiotic theory has influenced the direction of my research by encouraging me to focus on how meaning is formed, shifted, or even lost through visual transformation. It made me think more critically about the relationship between form and interpretation, and what happens when a symbol no longer clearly represents its original object.

Francisco / Critical Graphic Design: Critical of What?

The article says that critical graphic design should not just focus on style, but should question visual power structures through design language, ways of reading, and social functions. Images are not neutral—they shape how we understand reality and what we think images are. Mainstream design trains us to recognize things quickly, but Modes of Criticism wants to break this habit and make us think more about how we see and understand images.

Hito Steyerl / In Defense of Poor Image

IN DEFENSE OF THE POOR IMAGE

HITO STEYERL

The poor image is a copy in motion. Its quality is bad, its resolution substandard. As it accelerates, it deteriorates. It is a ghost of an image, a preview, a thumbnail, an errant idea, an itinerant image distributed for free, squeezed through slow digital connections, compressed, reproduced, ripped, remixed, as well as copied and pasted into other channels of distribution.

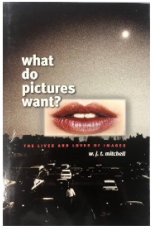
The poor image is a rag or a rip: an AVI or a JPEG, a lumpen proletarian in the class society of appearances, ranked and valued according to its resolution. The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and reedited. It transforms quality into accessibility, exhibition value into cult value, films into clips, contemplation into distraction. The image is liberated from the vaults of cinemas and archives and thrust into digital uncertainty, at the expense of its own substance. The poor image tends towards abstraction: it is a visual idea in its very becoming.

The poor image is an illicit fifth-generation bastard of an original image. Its genealogy is dubious. Its filenames are deliberately misspelled. It often defies patrimony, national culture, or indeed copyright. It is passed on as a lure, a decoy, an index, or as a reminder of its former visual self. It mocks the promises of digital technology. Not only is it often degraded to the point of being just a hurried blur, one even doubts whether it could be called an image at all. Only digital technology could produce such a dilapidated image in the first place.

When an image transitions from one medium to another, its meaning and status inevitably shift. This slippage is not merely a loss of information at the physical level but, more importantly, a reconstruction of the image's function on a cultural level.

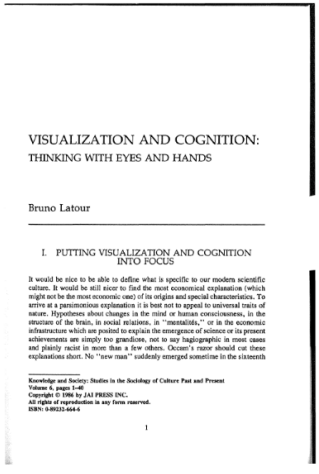
This perspective has influenced my research. In my practice, images are deconstructed into signs and coded structures, where character sets replace pixels to construct visual forms—a more radical form of media "translation." The visual language of images is transcribed into programming language, and with it, the mechanism of meaning-generation undergoes transformation.

W. J. T. Mitchell / *What Do Pictures Want?*



In this article, Mitchell mentioned that "metapicture" refers to a special kind of image that can reflect on itself, contain other images, or be used to reflect on the essence of images in theoretical discourse. One type is the nested metapicture. This type of metapicture shows that the meaning of images is not fixed, but highly dependent on the context and framework in which they are located. When an image is nested inside another image, its original meaning may be changed, emphasized, or weakened.

Bruno Latour / *Visualization and Cognition*



VISUALIZATION AND COGNITION:
THINKING WITH EYES AND HANDS

Bruno Latour

I. PUTTING VISUALIZATION AND COGNITION INTO FOCUS

It would be nice to be able to define what is specific to our modern scientific culture. It would be still nicer to find the most economical explanation (which might not be the most economic one) of its origins and special characteristics. To arrive at a parsimonious explanation it is best not to appeal to universal traits of nature. Hypotheses about changes in the mind or human consciousness, in the structure of the brain, in social relations, in "mentalités," or in the economic infrastructure which are posited to explain the emergence of science or its present achievements are simply too grandiose, not to say hagiographic in most cases and plainly racist in more than a few others. Occam's razor should cut these explanations short. No "new man" suddenly emerged sometime in the sixteenth

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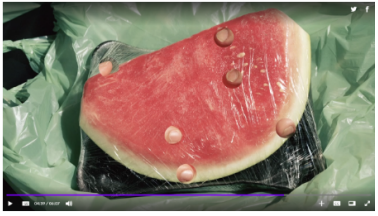
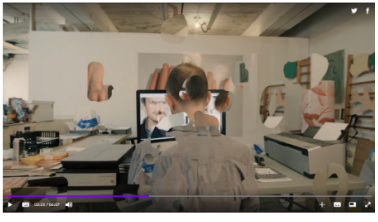
In Latour's article, he denied the grand explanation that attributed scientific development to changes in human mind or ideological evolution, but emphasized the core role of "inscription skills" such as writing and imaging in scientific power. The mobility, immutability and combinability of images or texts make them more mobilized in adversarial situations, thus promoting the concentration and capitalization of knowledge. This means that the transition from sensory experience to abstract calculation is not a leap in thought, but the result of changes in media form, especially the advantages of "encodable inscriptions" in information collation, dissemination and calculation.

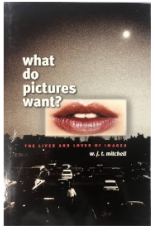
Lucas Blalock / *Digital Toolkit*





Blalock's work has profoundly influenced my understanding by revealing that all images are essentially incomplete - mutable structures that remain perpetually open to reorganization and reinterpretation. His statement about wanting to engage in active thinking during the image creation process particularly resonated with me, as it inspired me to approach my own character replacement methodology as an ongoing experiment in developing new ways of visual understanding. Where Blalock conceptualizes Photoshop as functioning like an "extension of the hand," I have come to regard ASCII characters as operating like a specialized "deconstruction tool for visual language."

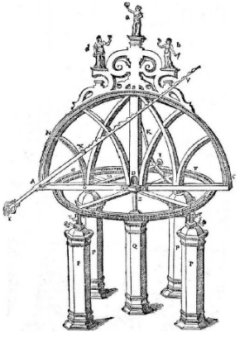
W. J. T. Mitchell / *What Do Pictures Want?*



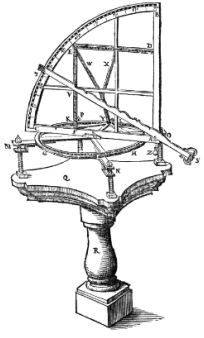
This process can also be seen as a response to Mitchell's question: "What does the image want?" In my project, I tried to respond to this question: the image wants to live in the new media logic, and it longs to continue to be understood even if it is recoded. As Mitchell emphasized, the agency of an image does not depend on its material form, but on whether it can establish an interactive relationship with the viewer. ASCII character images seem to have removed the details of the original image and have lost their original productivity, but they also open up another viewing channel.

This project gradually replaces some classic scientific instrument illustrations with ASCII characters, and considers whether our perception of knowledge will change when images are reconstructed by digital language. Classical scientific instruments rely on hand-made and sensory experience, representing an empirical knowledge based on body perception; while ASCII characters originated in the computer age and are a highly abstract coding system, symbolizing a knowledge logic that can be programmed and computerized. The project borrows the thought experiment of "The Ship of Theseus": when every detail in the image is gradually replaced by characters, the knowledge it presents also changes. The project aims to arouse reflection on the transformation of knowledge forms, and re-examine how our understanding of the world is reconstructed when reality and virtuality are intertwined.

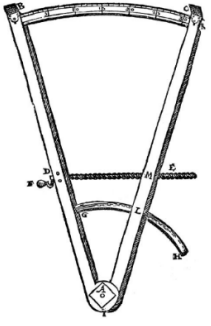
I chose three instruments with completely different structures, from simple to complex.



This instrument, named the Great Azimuth Semicircle, is designed for the precise measurement of altitudes and azimuths of celestial bodies.

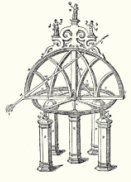


It is a portable azimuth quadrant designed in the 16th century. It is an astronomical observation instrument used to measure the altitude and azimuth of celestial bodies.



This sextant, used to measure the angular distances between stars

GREAT AZIMUTH SEMICIRCLE



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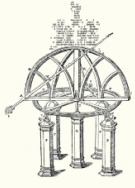

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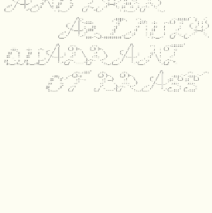
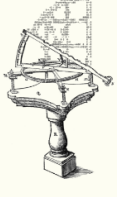
ANOTHER AZIMUTH QUADRANT OF BRASS

1



2



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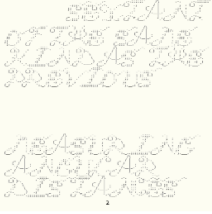
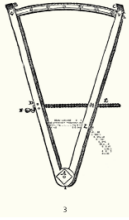
ANOTHER SEXTANT OF THE SAME KIND AS THE PREVIOUS FOR MEASURING ANGULAR DISTANCES

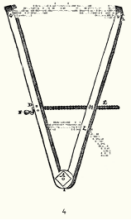
1



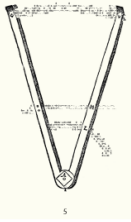
2



3



4



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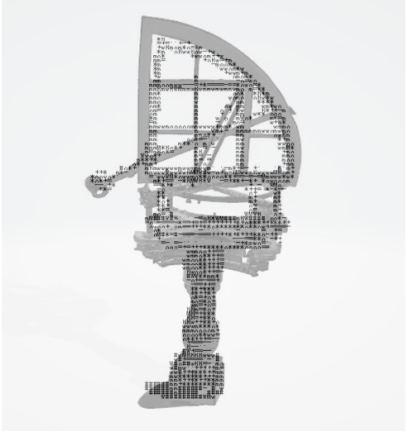
As a further development, I used blender to 3D these scientific instruments, established a rough model structure, and used code to generate ASCII art videos of three-dimensional objects.

The replacement of two-dimensional images emphasizes the tension between surface and symbol, while three-dimensional modeling extends this replacement to the structural level - not only the symbolization of the image, but the entire object structure is reorganized by the coding language.

Through the combination of 3D modeling and ASCII rendering, the image is no longer a visual presentation on a plane, but an entity that can be "reconstructed" by coding logic.

For this exercise I borrowed an open source ASCII tool developed by Studio Freight and modified it using webGL, but I'm still learning so the presentation may not be perfect.

In this process, knowledge that originally relied on sensory experience such as observation and touch has been completely replaced by a system controlled by characters and algorithms. We no longer face the object itself directly, but "see" it through the calculation results. Knowledge is no longer based on the contact and understanding between people and objects, but becomes a form that can be processed by symbols. This way of understanding based on feelings is being replaced by a cognitive method mediated by programs.



https://www.youtube.com/shorts/7XKMdW8TQE4

THANKS