

Unit 2 Written Assignment  
MA GCD

**HOW TO CRAFT  
TOUCHING NARRATIVES  
AT THE DIGITAL AGE?**

Victoria  
de Rohan Chabot

# INTRODUCTION

Risography animation, perforated paper stop-motion, rotoscoping, wood animation... My projects at CSM constantly revolve around the relationship between crafts, animation, and storytelling. In my bachelor thesis, I compared the effects of paper animation mechanisms (in pop-ups, for instance) to magic: in my opinion, a surprising emotion appears to us when a tangible object is activated and comes to life in our hands.

At CSM, my animation practice has shifted from tangible objects to the screen: I now position myself as an animator/motion designer and, more broadly, a communicator in a digitalized world where video reigns: from the 16:9 format of cinema to the endless scroll of Instagram and TikTok reels. A world where AI-generated videos exist and are accessible to all. Yet I remain sensitive to materials, to all those mediums (paper, fabric, wood...) that anchor our stories and messages in our everyday reality. They preserve gestures and mistakes, and in that sense, are deeply human. Their wear and tear are reassuring; their physicality touches us. How to build touching narratives at the digital age? On a practical level, how can the video format become a fluid, plastic field of experimentation, to be deconstructed

and reconstructed, molded with the intervention of various mediums? What is the value today of the encounter between digital tools and materiality? What is the scope of such embodied communications?

I considered several applications of this mixed media practice during Unit 2. It first allowed me to tell an abstract story through a poetic piece on the function of perforations in our daily lives. Later, inspired by the work of Mathilde Bédouet, I mixed analogue and digital medias to reactivate archives and dust off memories from my own collection. Since September, my subject has become clearer, rooted in the Alpine culture passed down to me by my paternal family. I wonder how to convey this intangible heritage through animation in a changing environmental context.

# SEQUENCE N°1

An animation  
practice grounded  
in between



ANALOGUE & DIGITAL

fields.

During Unit 2, my practice of animation first became sharper in its form: in this fast-paced digital age, like other communicators, I feel the need to embed materiality in my work.

*Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*<sup>1</sup> exposes well my state of mind at the early stages of Unit 2. In the essay, Laura Marks theorizes a sensorial relationship to images in the digital age, encouraging a more embodied lecture of them.

She introduces her book by defining two concepts that will serve as the basis of her thesis: "optical visuality" and "haptic visuality". According to her, in Western culture, legible, frontal, purely "optical" images are often considered as the only path to understanding. However, there is another approach to grasp images, "haptic visuality", which involves the viewer's body and senses. For her, the gaze can also be tactile, leading to a more embodied apprehension of the observed object, enabling an intimate perceptual experience. She situates this thought in the digital age, and recalls, while "digital video seems to have given up its body", that a video is above all a material object, governed by sensitive transformations.

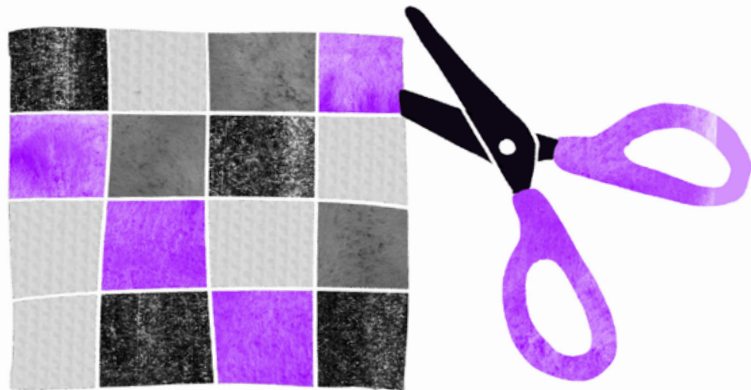
The author precisely moved me when she evoked the phenomenon of "analogue nostalgia": the desire among

young filmmakers born into an all-digital world to reinject grain, wear, and defects into modern media. I really identified myself in this movement, investigating an aesthetic gesture, but also one of resistance to the stream of digital images that foster passive scrolling and reduce attention to visuals. How can we truly capture the eye in an environment saturated with flat, fluid, fast-moving visuals? I believe there is a tension between analogue videos and the immaterial channels they circulate on.

I'm particularly drawn to the idea that Marks does not suggest a haptic visuality to totally overtake an optical one, and that it's the oscillation between the two that generates what she even qualifies as "erotic". In my own making process, it could refer to constant ways back and forth between analogue and digital mediums.

In fact, I found out that my need of materialized communications was not only speaking to the audience in me but also to the craft enthusiast that I am. Incorporating matter is an ethical seek for more human communications as much as a practical one as I particularly enjoy experimenting with the frame-by-frame processes. Pierre Faucheux elaborated photographic "quartering" collages at the end of his graphic design career<sup>2</sup>. He formulated the concept of "écartelage", translated as "spreading" or "quarter" in English: a visual tension where text, image, and graphic surfaces are spread away from each other in order to activate the page. He wrote: "you have to tear the page apart, make it express what it hides".

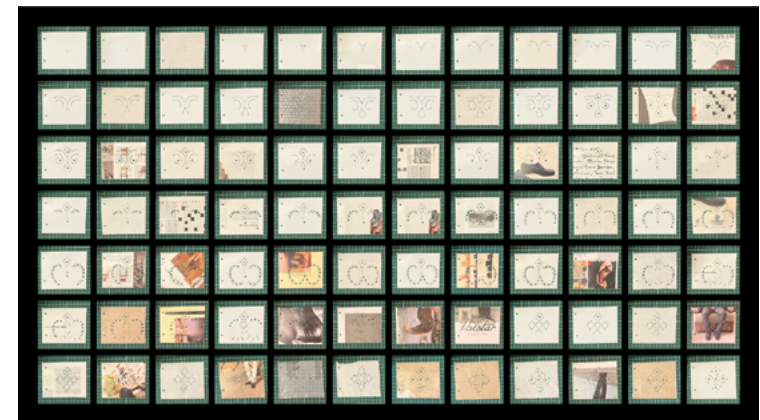
Transposed to video, this principle becomes a plastic motor: video is no longer a smooth flow, but an unstable material than can be manipulated. By printing, cutting, retexturing, engraving, digital sequences, the moving image can be transformed into a space for manual experimentation, where each frame can be broken, stretched, recomposed...Video becomes a plastic territory, a workshop as much as a screen, where various artefacts can be brought into life.



Visual excerpt from the Video Essay I made

In that sense, by investigating the shoemaker at the corner of my street in Unit 1, I had already come across the craft of brogue, the art of dressing leather shoes with perforated motifs. During the *Positions of Iteration brief*, I perforated a hundred patterns on leather scraps, pages from shoemaking magazines, and other materials related to footwear. These poked sheets were conceived as frames of an animation, gradually revealing brogue patterns. I bound them into a book that can be flipped, and also aligned them digitally to bring them to life.

I lost count of how many holes I punched by hand for this project. It tested my body: the friction between tool and palm, the repetition of the gesture even gave me blisters. Yet, I loved the rigor of this deeply embodied process and can hardly describe the satisfaction it procured to see each of its tangible components come to life together.



A 100 frames of Brogue, from my Position of Iterating Project

If I found this satisfying, I wonder how Mathilde Bédouet felt at the release of *Summer 96*<sup>3</sup>, a core reference in my practice. The Cesar 2024 nominated short movie depicts a boy enjoying the beach with his family in Brittany, until they suddenly find themselves caught by the rising tide.

Mathilde Bédouet narrates this story using rotoscoping, an animation technique that consists of redrawing real-life videos. She breaks them down and alters each of its five thousand images using coloured pencils: a medium that reminds her of childhood and supports the film's fictional intentions.



One frame from Summer 96

Her colour palette is vibrant, almost like drawn from a cartoon, and the textured pencil strokes introduce grain, warmth, and emotional depth to the moving story she is shaping. The high fidelity of the images is impressive, realism is striking in the details, when we perceive, for example, the folds of a sarong that the wind prevents from spreading. Frame-by-frame processes can be very tedious and demanding exercises, but their rare material quality is astonishing nowadays and clearly stands out in prevalent flat digital aesthetics in the field of animation and motion design.

On that note, how can I position my analogue practice in the digital era? I have previously expressed my attachment to handmade techniques, but does using them mean relying solely on them? What is the value of reconciling their aesthetic qualities with the efficiency offered by digital tools?

This question seems to be at the heart of Daniel Savage's practice<sup>4</sup>, also known as @somethingsavage on Instagram. Recently, he has developed a unique experimental approach to frame-by-frame animation, working in tandem with a silhouette machine. It allows him, for instance, to transform a 3D animation of rotating flowerpots into felt-tip pen hatchings on paper. Once the video is reconstructed, the result is both rigid and organic, unsettling in its visual paradox: the felt-tip pen, a smearing and inherently irregular tool, produces a precise, mechanical texture, a filling of parallel lines of equal thickness. To me, this extension of hand gesture through a digital tool broadens the scope of animation. In Daniel Savage's case, the animations remain short, yet their volume is impressive: he regularly publishes new tests, demonstrating the efficiency of his system. By intervening after an initial human conception, digi-

tal tools can ease the laborious manual production process, allowing projects to be developed on a larger scale: with higher frame rates for greater fluidity, more complex imagery, and longer lasting animations.

I myself relied on machinery during the first part of the *Positions of Triangulation brief*. In this animation, the implicit narrator is a chalet that bears witness to the passing of the seasons. I used it as an embodiment of the Alpine culture, a symbol encompassing all seasonal customs. The enumeration of these traditions, combined with the slow reading pace of my grandmother, who performs the chalet's voice, resulted in a video of about one minute and thirty seconds. With that in mind, engraving each of its frame on wood manually, as I initially intended, would have been a vertiginous undertaking. Aware of my limited technical expertise, I instead chose to outsource this stage to the CSM Laser Cut Workshop. This allowed me to focus on the illustrations and on the interplay between engraved and unengraved areas. I still added an ultimate manual layer by painting touches of colour to reveal certain details before scanning it all and editing the video.

I am aware that not engraving the wood myself diminishes the embodied approach of my work. I was also unable to select the type of wood I wished, a more local essence, truer to the evoked region. Nevertheless, this process allowed me to save time and complete the entire video on wood. And more importantly, I appreciate

the hybrid quality created by these back-and-forths between analogue and digital processes, which I find mutually enriching.

Thus, on a practical level, being very sensitive to materiality, I feel the need to incorporate it into my animated stories, both as a receiver and as a creator of messages. In my view, it allows to craft more human, deep forms of communication in a digitalized world. However, I am also a twenty first century designer, aware of the tools at my disposal that I can use to push the limits of manual labor and broaden perspectives, as long as I remain trueful to material authenticity. My animation practice sits somewhere between analogue and digital processes, sometimes drawing more from one than the other. However, as a graphic designer I know that any form should depend on the messages it seeks to convey. In my case, which kind of messages?

One wood plank containing my frames  
for my studio work of Positions of Triangulating brief



## SEQUENCE N° 2

Through this  
hybrid approach, which

STORIES

to tell?

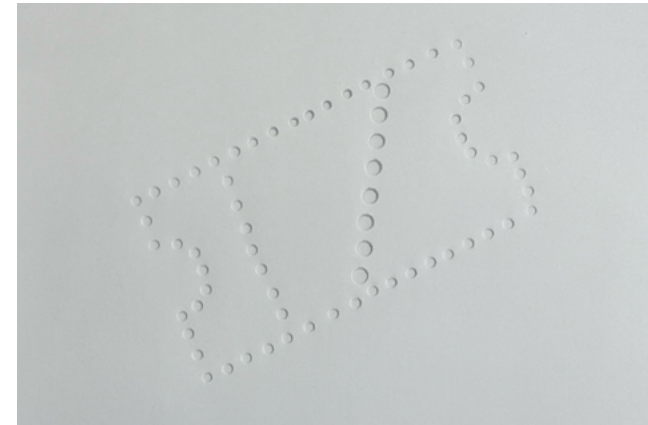
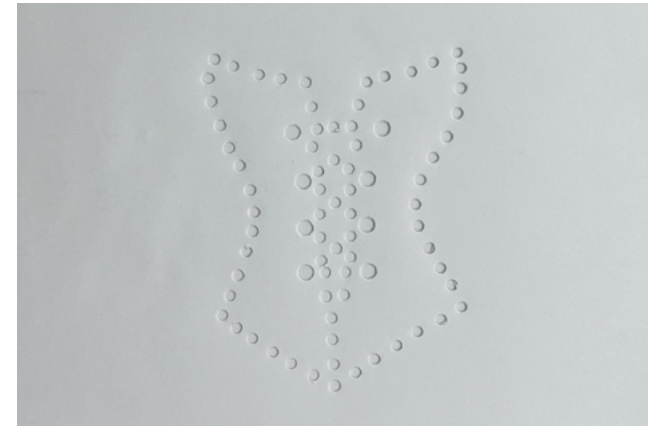
**This question became the main outcome of my video essay and discussion with Laura Knight before the summer: what subject could be explored through this sensory approach to animation? Where does it have the most impact and relevance today, according to me?**

At the beginning of Unit 2, I tended to prioritize form over content in my animations. Sometimes, the form even became the content itself. For instance, in my *Positions of Iterating* brief, the story about the craftsmanship behind the brogue shoe, mentioned earlier, gradually evolved into a poem about the perforation and its essential functions in our everyday lives. I was interested in the following paradox: removing material to fulfill a function. In this case, the form of the animation, a stop-motion made of perforated paper, merged with its subject. It was an interesting poetic exercise: illustrating a concept, making it tangible. Yet, faced with so much abstraction, I wonder how to anchor my work in more concrete and real-world issues. Summer break hit at the perfect time.

I have had the opportunity to gain three precious professional experiences at the heart of the animation field since July. At the beginning of the summer, I joined the set design team of animator Alix Bortoli, a Central Saint Martins alumni. Alix has a singular way of approaching stop motion: she imagines whimsical stories that unfold in dreamlike yet tangible worlds, entirely handcrafted by her team. During this

internship, I created miniature leather characters for the Christmas campaign of a leather goods brand. At a different scale, I also painted life-size sets for the launch campaign of a new collection by the Hungarian cosmetics brand Omorovicza<sup>5</sup>, inspired by the baths of Budapest. I participated in the shoot and saw those decors being brought to life. Alix's use of stop motion allows her to transcend the limits of reality: she recontextualises materials from our physical world into fictions of multiple scales. This experience in manual pre-production for stop motion revealed to me the imaginative power of animation, while also making me realise that it is often employed by brands, especially those with high communication budgets, for commercial purposes.

This immersion was followed by another one in a 2D animation studio based in Paris, Studio Da Fonseca, which produces educational and explanatory videos for various medias. During my internship there, I had the chance to work on an episode of a program I was already familiar with, as it featured in my own CSM bibliography of references: *Karambolage*<sup>6</sup>, produced by Arte. Each episode explains



*Some frames from my Tribute to the holes stopmotion*



Backstage image of *A gift of gratitude*, a stop-motion advertisement directed by Alix Bortoli

a phenomenon, an object, a custom, or a word originating from German, French, or Spanish cultures. I specifically contributed to the animation of a script explaining the origin of the term "Spanish flu" used to describe the post World War One pandemic, which in fact does not come from Spain. Manipulating archives through animation, collaging facts and vulgarizing a complex source of information through hand drawn illustrations highlighted that the material form marries well with pedagogy and the documentary genre. Mixed media animation can enrich didactic content, dust off archives and thus make a complex knowledge much more accessible.

Finally, at the beginning of October, I remotely worked not as an animator but as a producer, ensuring the smooth pipeline of a music video created by Pencil TV agency to celebrate the tenth anniversary of *Rush Hour* song by Mac Miller<sup>7</sup>. Danaé Gosset, the studio's

founder, divided a rough cut she had designed into ten sequences, one for each animator on her team. They were asked to paint their section frame by frame, following precise guidelines regarding colour palette, tone, and level of sharpness. Once scanned, the images were aligned and chained up, and Danaé handled the post-production. Although my role was limited to tracking the progress of the animators, I was able to closely observe the production process and was fascinated by the encounter between 3D, AI-generated elements in pre-production and the soft, tactile quality of hand-painted watercolour applied afterwards. In this case, similarly to Alix Bortoli's work, the feedback loop between analogue and digital techniques seems to foster fiction. Here, however, fiction is offered freely, serving artistic and entertaining purposes rather than commercial ones, especially since it was released seven years after the rapper's death.



One watercolor frame of *Rush Hour*, a music clip directed by Pencil TV

These unexpected experiences had a profound impact on my practice and my desire to contextualise it further. They demonstrated that materiality could realistically and meaningfully be applied across various fields, whether for pedagogical, commercial, entertaining, etc. purposes.

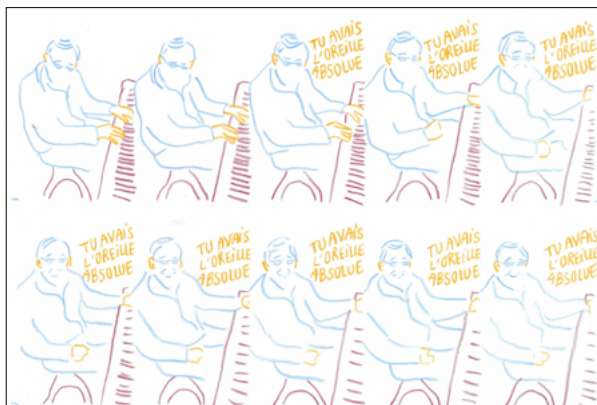
Yet, when I returned to CSM in September, I recalled the question Laura Knight asked me during our conversation: "what is your purpose for MA GCD?". I answered that I wanted to take advantage of the creative freedom, the genuine "sandbox", that CSM offers as other art schools, to borrow Alfonso Matos's words in *Who Can Afford To Be Critical*<sup>8</sup>. Matos criticizes the delusional gap between these academic bubbles and the industry; I am fully aware of this issue, but I wish to embrace it, to use this open framework to tell stories that I might find more difficult to express later on.

In this sense, I thought again of Mathilde Bédouet's work, which lies somewhere between the documentary, the fictional, and the personal.

Indeed, she initially intended to make a documentary by revisiting old VHS tapes from her childhood, full of vivid memories. Among them, the footage mentions the recurring local news story she used to fear during her vacation on Callot Island in Brittany: a road was often submerged by the tide, regularly trapping travellers and their cars in the middle of the water. This real-life event would have provided the basis for her documentary, enhanced with interviews and additional testimonies. But instead, she decided to draw inspiration from it to establish the framework for a fictional story. She chose to recount the emotions of Paul, a boy caught between two ages, neither a child nor a teenager, wrestling his doubts and insecurities in a situation that seems both literal and metaphorical: the sea isolating him from the shore.

Mathilde Bédouet uses rotoscoping as a tool for selective memory, fragmenting and reframing her own stories and the ones she creates to share to a broader audience her childhood memories. I am very interested in the approach of using animation to commemorate, reignite stories.

In this spirit, during the *Positions of Contextualising* brief, I drew from my own material, the video library on my iPhone, and tried to extract the essence of joyful moments from these recordings. I wondered how rotoscoping could be used to reactivate memories. This led to a series of six short videos, all based on the same system: at first, I revealed only a key detail within the frame, then gradually uncovered the rest of the scene using felt-tip pen drawings. Each animated sequence terminated with a short contextualisation of the moment: a few live-action frames from the original video, with my voice reading a caption summarising its date, place, and occasion.



*I found a video in my gallery shot when my grandfather suffered from Alheimers. Although his memory was exponentially fading, his ability of playing any song on a piano keyboard without having taken any lessons remained.*

*Though this animation, I aimed to make that moment last a little longer using rotoscoping. I tried to emphasize on his gift, guiding the viewer's eyes on his ear, then hands, and gradually revealed the human behind it.*

Retrospectively, I did not find this exploration particularly successful. The technical outcome was rather disappointing compared to the aesthetic qualities of *Summer 96*, for instance, and it would have deserved more care to achieve greater visual fidelity. Moreover, the captions lacked a sensory dimension. Perhaps this was due to the serial format, which multiplies the stories to tell and prevents a deeper focus on a single one? My earlier coloured pencil tests, based on a video of my grandfather playing the piano, were more convincing.



*Photograph of my family chalet, 1988*



*Photograph of my family chalet, 2017*

Then I thought of another narrative that holds a deep personal value, especially at this moment, the story of a place that has shaped my family's memories and identity: the mountains, and more precisely, the isolated chalet where we've spent our summers and winters for generations.

I spoke about it with my father and my grandmother, two figures who, to me, characterize this place differently.

My grandmother is its most ancient still living guest in the family. She told me about the chalet's history: it was once an alpine farmhouse, seasonally used by local farmers, "alpagists", to raise livestock and grow vegetable, fruits, and dairy products. Later, in the early 1900s, the property was apparently restored by the University of Oxford to host English students for summer reading retreats. Finally, my great-grandfather acquired it, and from renovation to renovation, generation to generation, these solid foundations became the family chalet I know today. My grandmother described her sensations upon discovering the place at first: the damp smell, the creaking wooden floors.

My father, on the other hand, a lifelong mountaineer and alpinism enthusiast, approached it more pragmatically: he provided me with the chalet's measurements, its exact location, the materials it's built from, and listed all the surrounding peaks and their altitudes. For him, the place is linked to his dreams: to maps, routes, to the adrenaline of setting off on a new ascent in the middle of the night.

His mother, fonder of picking mushrooms and raspberries than of pure mountaineering, sees it instead as a comforting cocoon within an often harsh surrounding nature.

The hostile environment she mentioned reminded me of the song *Blanc* by the French band MPL<sup>9</sup>. In it, a father in a near future explains to his son what snow used to be like, but the child struggles to believe that it once covered everything in white. This sad image echoes the effects already visible in Haute-Savoie today: thinner snowfalls, more frequent avalanches, hotter summers... Moved by this, I decided to relocate my work within this personal and environmental context.

## What will the seasons look like in a few years? How will their transformation alter the customs tied to them? My enquiry thus got sharper: how can a cultural and family heritage be preserved through animation in a changing environmental context?

First, I had to understand how to convey something intangible, an atmosphere: the warmth of shared meals over raclette, skiing, mushroom picking, the sudden appearance of chamois. In this sense, I was deeply struck by the opening scene of *Sentimental Value* by Joachim Trier<sup>10</sup>, which I can only describe from memory since I no longer have access to it: the camera focuses on a house, first as a whole, then through its flaws, cracks, and imperfections. The house is more than a setting, it mirrors the struggles of its inhabitants, their complex relationships. This scene physically embodies the idea of family reconstruction through the personification of a house.

The notion of giving physical form to an intangible heritage through the object that contains it fascinated me. It resonated strongly with my conversations with my father and grandmother: both described the chalet in personified terms: "well seated on the mountain", "nestled", "charming". From this, I began to write a story in the first person, told from the chalet's point of view and interpreted by the warm voice of my grandmother.

My first attempt at writing described, through the eyes of the chalet, each season one after the other along with its associated customs. I listed them in the order I had been taught at school: spring; summer; autumn; winter - the "natural" order. But in the context of a changing climate, I began to wonder how would global warming impact that presumption.

A study by the French Ministry of Ecological Transition<sup>11</sup> confirmed that the mountains are "on the front line of climate change", and that the projections for 2050 are grim: retreating glaciers, landslides, increasing natural hazards such as avalanches and wildfires, water stress... Yet what caught my attention most were the proposed solutions. One in particular stood out: "moving away from the all-ski model and de-seasonalizing". Indeed, since the nineteenth century, the attractiveness of the mountains has largely relied on winter sports, and eventually on summer hiking. The study calls for valuing the natural and cultural heritage of the mountains all year round, to move beyond the so deeply rooted bi-seasonal mindset.

With that in mind, I tried to disrupt the linearity of my initial narration by listing the seasons not according to their natural order, but to their perceived popularity. I began with the ever-favoured winter and summer, then shifted the focus toward the mid-seasons, quieter, yet equally compelling in my eyes. This second version of the text grounds my story in a less naïve, more clear-eyed perspective on the climatic circumstances.

Thus, during Unit 2, I realized that a semi-analog, semi-digital animation practice could serve various purposes today: fictional stories, commercial advertisement, educational content. However, it was a personal and environmental story that fueled the first part of *Positions of Triangulating*. I attempted to write an ode to the mountains of our time, subject to major climate challenges, but in my opinion still full of treasures if we broaden our perspectives. My attachment to the alpine culture is embodied in this poetic piece by the wise and reassuring voice of a chalet, a witness to a changing environment.

Je suis né à 1450 m d'altitude,  
Il ya plus d'un siècle. Depuis,  
j'ai vu se succéder : alpagistes,  
étudiants d'Oxford, alpinistes  
et familles. Mais chaque année,  
mes visites favorites, ce sont  
les saisons!  
La plus populaire, l'hiver  
La neige me tait, mes hâles glissent  
Le soir bouillonnent en moi leurs  
vires et leurs raclettes  
Sa rivales, l'été  
Draps et feutres sèchent au soleil  
Sous le tempo des mousquetons  
que cliquent. La teinte mystique  
égaye mon essence brune.  
Hélas désormais l'hiver fond et l'été  
brûle, alors j'observe leurs discrètes  
concurrentes.  
L'automne:  
Coulmelle, girolle, amaranthe tue mouche  
sous mon toit humide, c'est le cope  
qui regne  
Le printemps:  
Les chamois regagnent les alpages et  
savourant leurs premières fleurs.  
Concurrentes? Non, alliées! Moi, le petit  
Chalet du Mont Forcher, je célèbre les  
mi saisons autant que l'hiver et l'été

## SEQUENCE N°3

### CONVERSELY

what approaches  
would not suit my formal and  
conceptual aspirations?

For the second *Positions of Triangulation* brief, I first saw conflict between my sugar-coated vision of the chalet and the horrific house portrait conveyed in *The House*<sup>12</sup>. Structured as an anthology, this dark, almost horror-like comedy tells three distinct stories set in different eras, all unfolding within the same unsettling domestic space. In the first, occurring in the early twentieth century, an impoverished family is persuaded to move into a vast, fully furnished house that soon starts consuming them. The second follows a developer attempting to renovate and sell a property while battling an infestation of beetles and uninvited guests. In the third, the house stands

alone in a dystopian future ravaged by floods, where its owner desperately tries to preserve it. Therefore, I was interested in examining how both my last project and *The House* articulate contradictory conceptions of home, one nurturing and intimate, the other alienating and decaying. I wondered how the two narratives engaged with the materiality of the house so that it appears almost haunted in one and becomes a refuge in the other.

I wrote a whole essay analyzing the texture in the 1h30 stop-motion animation, comparing it with my own modest project's materiality. Here is only an excerpt from the whole piece.



One frame of *The House*, where the decaying materiality of the house works against its occupants.

It seemed that in *The House*, materiality is inherent to the chosen animation technique: the entire set was built as miniature models, and puppets were handcrafted. The team behind manipulated matter, shaped wood, felt, and paper to bring them to life frame after frame. More importantly, they

worked meticulously on the effects of these textures: the torn wallpaper in the third story, the cracked floorboard, the mold, the dampness. In contrast, I chose a frame-by-frame animation process using only wood, the emblematic material of the alpine chalet because of its local source, its insulating

properties that keep warmth, and resist harsh weather. I embellished some details with a few touches of paint, but mostly left it bare, so that it remains the noble material so characteristic of the alpine dwelling that narrates the story. After noting those opposite treatments of mediums, I also noticed the terrifying, electronically altered voices of *The House* characters (especially the squatters in the second story) contrasting with the warm, wise voice of my grandmother, who performs the chalet in my animation.

**However, looking at the bigger picture of my Unit 2 work, I felt that other references might be more relevant to place in contrast with my practice as a whole. I began to wonder what conceptions of animation stand in opposition to my analogue, personal, and environmentally interested approach.**

Artificial intelligence presents an ambiguous case in this regard. In 2024, Toys"R"Us released its first advertisement entirely created with AI (except for the VFX and music) crafted to recall the brand's roots<sup>13</sup>. It narrates the dream of young Charles Lazarus, the founder of Toys"R"Us, which gave rise to the emblematic children's toy store.

From a formal standpoint, the video initially adopts a realistic style. The opening scene, with its wide shot, establishes the context: we see the bicycle shop run by Charles's father, where

Thus, in both cases, physical matter plays a crucial role in defining the atmosphere; it is manually altered so that in one it comforts, while in the other it repels and unsettles the viewer.

Showing this piece to Max Colson during my 1:1 tutorial, I took a step back and realized that *The House*'s material tone was indeed conflicting with mine within this specific project.

Charles supposedly grew up. Then, a semblance of real human characters appears, including the protagonist, a little boy meant to represent Charles as a child. Gradually, the boy falls asleep and the small toy he was playing with - a giraffe that is none other than the Toys"R"Us mascot - draws him into a whirlwind of toys.

The visual quality of the ad bears no resemblance to an analogue rendering. For the first realistic scenes, it's clearly a deliberate artistic choice, although a debatable one. The presence of artifi-

cial intelligence is clear: the boy's face lacks consistency, and the movement of his neck seems unnatural. Introducing realistic human characters feels like a risky bet, given the inherent flaws of their generation. I wonder if, in such a realistic narrative, fully embracing the artificiality of the tool with more cartoonist characters wouldn't have been wiser, so it does not compromise the story's credibility. AI technologies are still evolving though, these errors might eventually disappear.

But then why entrust the production of an advertisement to artificial intelligence? The article "Why Toys"R"Us used OpenAI's Sora to create an AI-generated video"<sup>14</sup> mentions the financial difficulties faced by Toys"R"Us, which went bankrupt in 2017 before being acquired by WHP Global. Later, the article quotes the president of Toys"R"Us Studios, who stated that they used AI to "push the boundaries of tech in ways that would not have been possible in a traditional studio lot — especially with a limited budget and lack of a time machine".

However, the lack of materiality is, in my opinion, a major drawback when the film animates toys: these objects, which are meant to evoke real, hand-made toys that can be grasped and manipulated, are completely textureless. For me, this visual quality illustrates the smooth, soulless aesthetics that AI is capable of producing. Their visuality is purely "optical", to borrow Laura Marks's term, as they don't engage our senses nor our emotions.

A key point is raised: the undeniable cost-effectiveness of AI, which significantly reduces production costs and optimizes the workflow. Using AI eliminated the need for actor recruitment, filming, set construction, and more. And all of this on a timescale of weeks rather than months, which seems hardly achievable with traditional methods for a video longer than a minute. Under these conditions, my approach seems difficult to apply. Frame-by-frame animation is a particularly time-consuming process, completely at odds with the pace of this

kind of workflow. It requires physical resources: equipment, paper, sets that are precisely what creates the richness on screen.

Finally, I still question the sustainability of such an approach. The previously cited article indicates that to obtain the film, "the team created hundreds of AI-generated video shots with Sora before narrowing them down to a few dozen". There is therefore considerable waste behind the production of the advertisement. A study by UNEP<sup>15</sup> evidences that AI data is physically stored in data centers. Their construction is very energy-intensive, generates significant electronic waste, and consumes important amounts of water and sometimes combustible energy. Are they reliable tools to consider in the long-term?

I am aware of the impact of a hybrid practice that oscillates between physical techniques - which involve a lot of paper, for example - and digital tools such as scanners, softwares, computers... However, some resources can be environmentally friendly. This is the case, for example, in the work of Edd Carr<sup>16</sup>, a video artist who uses plant-based materials in his animations, or natural development processes like cyanotype to align his practice with his eco-conscious motivations.

## CONCLUSION

As a synthesis, my Unit 2 practice takes place at an all-digital age in which video content is omnipresent. Moved by the concept of "analogue nostalgia" formulated by Laura Marks, my work is deeply attached to materiality, fuelled by embodied methods and tactile aesthetics that convey emotions beyond stories, such as Mathilde Bédouet's astonishing rotoscoping film *Summer 96*.

Although to me activating crafts through motion is extremely satisfying, pragmatically, I realized that frame-by-frame processes and their many stages can be tedious and time-consuming. In that sense, I wondered how machinery and digital tools could intervene in a hands-on approach to animation. Could they ease some of its production phases? CSM's laser cutter turned out to be a game changer in my project of *Positions of Triangulating*, bridging my lack of skills in wood engraving. Does using it compromise the authenticity of the craft though? In the case of artist Daniel Savage, his hand's extension by a silhouette machine leads to ambiguous visuals that echo the mystery of his multi-layered approach.

I do think Unit 2 sharpened my practice, locating in somewhere in between analogue and digital processes.

Dialoguing with Laura Knight in June encouraged me to ask myself, what kind of messages can and should be told through this hybrid animation approach? My stop-motion poem *A Tribute to Perforations*, was an attempt to question an abstract concept: the structuring role of perforations in our daily lives. I then searched for more realistic and tangible narratives to tell using a similar technique. In response, unexpected internships over the summer showed its suitable application in fictional, pedagogic, entertaining and some commercial contexts.

Yet, rethinking of Mathilde Bédouet's film, I progressively shifted my view towards a more personal aspiration: drawing from my family chalet experience to tackle climate change's effects on local alpine seasons. There is a tension between the fading of popular Winter and Summer, and the growing potential of Autumn and Spring nowadays. How to reignite the in-between seasons in both visual and textual forms? One possible answer was

personifying an alpine chalet, giving it a wise and warm voice to witness the evolution of its surroundings.

Exploring a reference of an AI generated animation confirmed that these technologies do not reach the material richness of an analogue process and aesthetic yet. Considering both types of workflows, AI do significantly reduce the duration and costs of analogue production that involve various phases from conception to crafts, scanning or live shooting, and editing. On that note, who can afford a practice like mine? Can it only target luxury industries and commercial purposes? Is there a way of lowering its price? Maybe by lowering its complexity, drawing from lo-fi aesthetics instead of seeking the neat ones? Could tricks

other than loop animation reduce the amount of frames? Finally, pointing out AI's environmental impact mirrored the sustainability of my own practice. Inspired by Edd Carr's eco-friendly approach to animation, I wonder how to immerse myself further in the materiality of the mountains. As I might have a physical access to my chalet in the next months, how can I locally engage with the place's organic materials?

## APPENDICES

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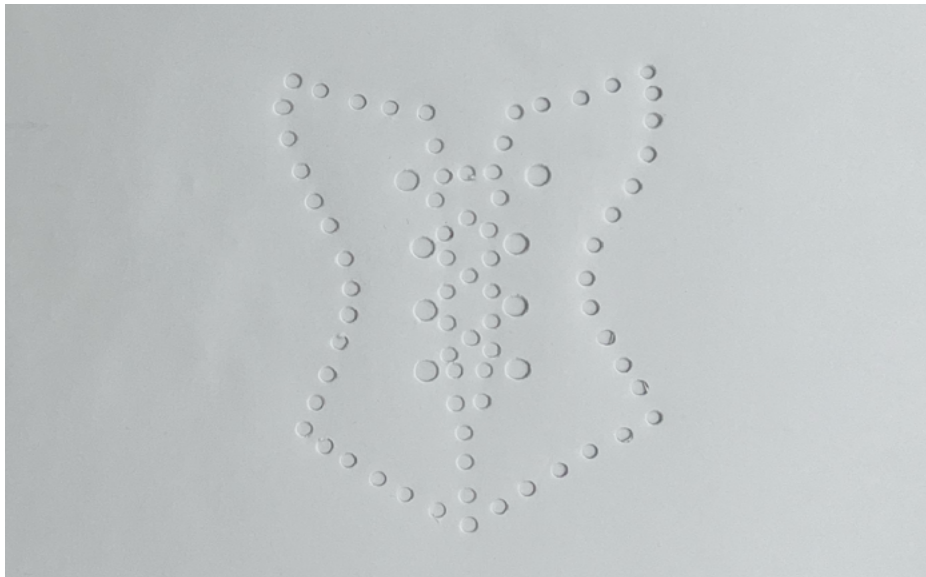


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# TRANSCRIPTS & LINKS

## Positions through iterating

Stop-motion animation *A Tribute to Perforations* & its process available at:  
<https://victoriaderohan.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2025/05/02/positions-through-iterating/>



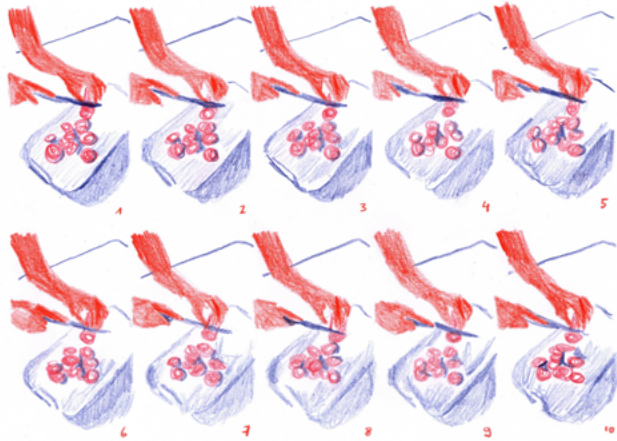
### Transcript:

Empty but full of purpose.  
I record a passage, quiet yet tangible proof  
that someone was there.  
I pull things close, holding bodies in shape,  
pages together.  
I let things flow, filtering water, air and light,  
catching just enough to let the rest pass.  
Sometimes I only please the eye.  
I exist to charm!  
I remove but I fulfill, I'm not what's there,  
but what gives shape to everything else.

## Positions through contextualizing:

Experimentation with rotoscoping available at:

<https://victoriaderoan.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2025/06/05/positions-through-contextualizing-studio-work/>



System of dust off archives & its process available at:

<https://victoriaderoan.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2025/06/05/positions-through-contextualizing-studio-work/>



« March, 27th 2025,  
Dad took my on tour at the White Valley »



« May, 31st 2024,  
For my birthday, Lolo and Juliette sing my  
favorite song »



« July, 7th 2023,  
Marine and Tiphaine take me to Cabourg »



« July, 4th 2020,  
Four hands cooking at Ann's in Shanghai »



« June, 3rd 2023,  
About to go trekking at the Verdon Gorges  
with Eloise and Valentine »



« August, 4th 2021,  
On the road with Jeanne and baby  
Shanghi »

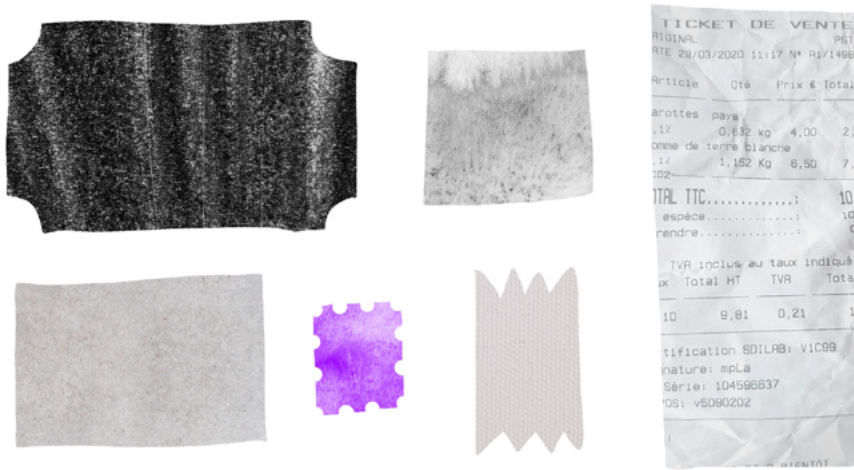
## Positions through essaying:

Video Essay available at:

<https://victoriaderoan.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2025/05/28/video-essay/>

Its process available at:

<https://victoriaderoan.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2025/06/05/positions-through-essaying-studio-work/>



Transcript:

Today, moving images have conquered our screens. We've understood the power of video as a fast, efficient, communicative format. It's so much part of our world that it floods it, submerges it. We no longer watch videos; we scroll through them. Our thumbs glide across screens without a hitch, without resistance. But let's hitch to it for a second, let the video resist us. Because video holds an inherent materiality.

It was once embodied in strips of gelatin and silver, then in magnetic tapes coiled inside cassettes. I was born later, and digital era with me. In this virtual world, I collect matter: tickets, tags, cards. These small tangible fragments reassure me. They speak of a kind of communication that feels more grounded, more vulnerable, more human. I recognize myself in what Laura Marks calls "analogue nostalgia": a tendency, especially among younger generations, to romanticize obsolete devices they've never even used. To long for materiality in a world stripped of it.

I've never smelled or touched a video, and yet I'm convinced it still has a physicality. Yes, it's concealed behind strings of 0s and 1s, but it remains palpable when my screen displays its weight in kilobytes. The digital video has a body, compressed, but a real body that envelops successive images.

So how can we bring that materiality back to the screen? Is there still room for tangible matter in our modern, animated forms of communication? How can we manipulate grain, when pixel rules?

Laura Marks proposes the idea of a "haptic visuality", a way of seeing where the eyes don't just look, they grasp the image, they touch it. This reflexion has shaped my recent work.

I used riso animation techniques to highlight the value of mistakes and human traces in the creative process, echoing Hito Steyerl's tribute to the poor image. I also recontextualized brogue, an ancient shoe-perforation technique, in a poetic piece that celebrates the concept of the hole: a discreet yet powerful form maker, a quiet sculptor of matter in our everyday lives.

Finally, I experimented with rotoscoping, inspired by Mathilde Bédouet's *Été 96*. Like her, I aimed to create tension between fiction and reality, in order to reactivate memory. Rotoscoping, an old animation technique that consists of re-drawing frame by frame real-life footage has a great narrative potential in dusting off archives, bringing them back to life.

Now, I want to go further. To deepen my aspiration to craft more embodied narratives through animation. I want to be part of that movement that disrupts the fluid stream of moving media and tells stories that feel more sincere, more powerful, more human. But for what purpose? To move? To teach? To promote? To entertain? To be continued...

## Positions through triangulation:

Ode to the Alpine Seasons & its process soon available at:  
<https://victoriaderoan.myblog.arts.ac.uk/category/unit-2/>



### French Transcript:

Je suis né à 1450m d'altitude il y a plus d'un siècle. Depuis, j'ai vu se succéder alpagistes, étudiantes d'Oxford, alpinistes et familles. Mais chaque année, mes visites favorites, se sont les saisons:

La plus populaire, L'hiver:  
La neige me tasse, mes hôtes glissent.  
Le soir bouillonnent en moi leurs rires  
et leurs raclettes.

Sa rivale, L'été:  
Draps et herbiers sèchent au soleil  
sous le tempo des mousquetons qui  
cliquent. La teinte myrtille égaye mon  
essence brune.

Hélas, désormais l'hiver fond et l'été  
brûle. Alors j'observe leurs discrètes  
concurrentes.

L'automne  
Coulemelle, girolles, amanites tue  
mouche... Sous mon toit humide,  
c'est le cèpe qui règne!

Le printemps  
Les chamois regagnent les alpages  
et savourent leurs premières fleurs.  
Les cloches des vaches me tirent  
du sommeil.

Concurrentes? Non, alliées!  
Moi, le petit chalet du Mont-Forcher,  
je célèbre les mi-saisons autant que  
l'hiver et l'été!

### Translation in English:

*I was born at 1,450m above sea level  
more than a century ago. Since then, I've seen  
herders, Oxford students, mountaineers,  
and families come and go. But every year,  
my favorite visitors are the seasons:*

*The most popular one, Winter:  
Snow presses down on me, my guests  
slide and glide. At night, their laughter  
and the smell of raclette warm me up.*

*Her rival, Summer:  
Bedsheets and herbariums dry in  
the sun to the rhythm of clinking  
carabiners. A blueberry tint brightens  
my brown wooden skin.*

*But now winter melts and summer  
burns. So I turn my gaze to their quieter  
competitors.*

*Autumn:  
Parasol mushrooms, chanterelles, fly  
agarics... Beneath my damp roof,  
it's the porcini that reigns!*

*Spring:  
The chamois return to the alpine  
meadows to enjoy the first blossoms.  
The cowbells pull me gently from  
my sleep.*

*Competitors? No, allies!  
I, the little chalet of Mont-Forcher,  
celebrate the in-between seasons just  
as much as winter and summer!*

*A huge thank you to my tutors for their attentiveness and guidance, to Laura Marks for our insightful exchange in June, to my father for his enlightening information on our family chalet, and to my grandmother for her mountain stories and her beautiful voice.*