MA GCD
Unit 2
Alex/Dingyi Tang

03 SYNTHESIS



101 *Line of Enquiry*

My Unit 2 enquiry did not follow a straight line, but it has come full circle. It began with E2City, a web archive recording lighting in the public spaces of Central Saint Martins, whose images were too large to load. Compressing them led me to degraded images and then to memes, where I examined how images wear and drift online. My current project returns from the screen to a physical shared space: the lift. What connects these phases is knowledge that is rarely stated: the traces an image collects in circulation, the shared references needed to recognise a meme, and the unspoken adjustments people make around strangers. Throughout Unit 2, I have used graphic communication design to make this ephemeral, hidden knowledge visible.

102 *From Print to Virtual Prototype*

In the lift, I first approached this knowledge through print. My publication Things You Should Do in a Lift used LiDAR scans and humorous captions to isolate familiar behaviours, such as standing near a wall or looking at a phone. The guide format made these small actions noticeable, but the word 'should' gave my interpretations an authority they had not earned. This placed the work within a history of designed instructions for public behaviour, such as the manner posters Tokyo Metro has produced since 1974 (Hasangani, 2022), including Bunpei Yorifuji's *'Please do it at home' (2008)*. These posters make unwritten rules visible, but also turn them into norms. My work sits within this tension between revealing an expectation and enforcing it. I then built a virtual prototype from the scans so that viewers could enter these scenes, but the figures did not respond. William Forsythe's *Nowhere and Everywhere at the Same Time No. 2* and Lauren Lee McCarthy and Kyle McDonald's *How We Act Together (2016)* showed me that a work can make people respond to one another without reproducing a space realistically. My scans had made the lift look real without showing what passengers notice about one another. Erving Goffman (1963) calls this '*civil inattention*': strangers briefly acknowledge each other, then withdraw their attention to show they mean no intrusion. This attention, rather than realism, is what I want to communicate: where to stand, where to look, and when to look away.

103 *Refocusing the Question*

This interest is also personal. As an introvert living abroad, I cannot always rely on shared expectations about how to behave. Just as recognising a meme depends on shared references, reading a stranger's behaviour depends on expectations I do not always share. A short lift journey can therefore involve more deliberation than my stillness suggests: am I blocking the door, standing too close, looking for too long? This gap between outward stillness and inner attention has refocused my enquiry: how can graphic communication design make visible the unspoken effort of being considerate in shared spaces, and question how we judge behaviour as appropriate?

104 *What Next*

To pursue this question, I will develop the virtual lift rather than film real passengers. A recording lets viewers observe hesitation from outside; a simulation places them in the position of deciding, and can show the thoughts behind each adjustment as text without filming strangers. Other passengers will respond to the player's distance and gaze, a step prompted by tutor feedback asking what should happen once the lift had been reconstructed. The format has limits: a screen removes the physical closeness of a real lift, and a space I design risks reflecting only my own assumptions. To address this, the thoughts will be drawn from classmates' accounts of their own lift journeys rather than written by me alone. My position is that this work should make an expectation visible without becoming another rule. It leaves a question I hope to test with players: if they can see that a silent stranger is worried about being in the way, will they still read that silence as cold or rude?

Reference

Goffman, E. (1963) *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*. New York: Free Press.

Hasangani, S. (2022) *'Social control or trust? A journey through Tokyo's railway manner posters'*, The Newsletter, 93. Available at: https://iias.asia/the-newsletter/article/social-control-or-trust-journey-through-tokyos-railway-manner-posters (Accessed: 29 October 2026).

Forsythe, W. (2013) *Nowhere and Everywhere at the Same Time No. 2* [Installation]. Available at: https://www.museum-folkwang.de/en/exhibition/nowhere-and-everywhere (Accessed: 28 October 2026).

McCarthy, L.L. and McDonald, K. (2016) *How We Act Together* [Interactive online performance]. Available at: https://get-lauren.net/How-We-Act-Together (Accessed: 28 October 2026).