

# annotated bibliography

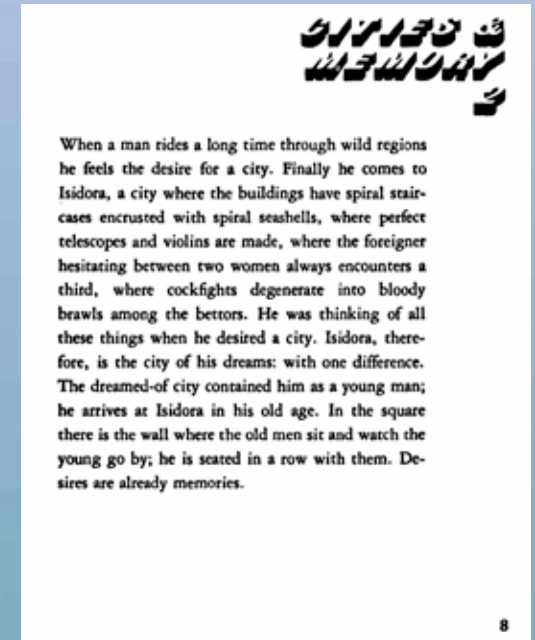
# 1 Invisible Cities

Calvino, I. (1974) *Invisible Cities*. Harcourt Brace & Company.

Through fictionalised versions of Marco Polo and Kublai Khan, Calvino depicts cities as metaphors for larger themes such as memory, desire, and language. The cities act as philosophical reflections on human experience and perception, rather than geographical places. For example, the city of Armilla is constructed through pipes, but there are no homes.

In my initial exploration, I identified the union of the various geographical places I come from as my true home, a concept I've dubbed "my Pangaea". The various aesthetic descriptors of the cities in Calvino's text, later revealed as cities within cities or variations of the same city, made me realise that the places I come from contain varying levels of detail in my mind. I noticed this when I was able to map multiple routes I've run in North Acton, but not in Chandigarh.

Therefore, I started to question what Chandigarh means to me as part of my identity. My parents originate from there, but I haven't lived there as I have other cities. This led me to think more deeply about the themes of home and identity, and how they relate to place. To me, it's the memories which make the place, so I decided to explore how I can represent them.



(Calvino, 1974, p.8)

# 2 The Debate

Crouwel, W. & Van Toorn, J. [1972] (2015) 'The Debate', in *The Debate: The Legendary Contest of Two Giants of Graphic Design*. The Monacelli Press, pp. 21–38.

In 'The Debate', Crouwel and Van Toorn discuss opposing perspectives on objective versus subjective approaches to design. While I understood Crouwel's perspective, I resonated with the latter's stance that using your own positioning can create better design that emotionally connects with viewers. I reflected on what it means for me as a designer to create work about my identity.

Van Toorn's assertion that Crouwel's approach "condition[s] human behaviour" rather than serves communication reminded me of the benefits of a designer's personal input, especially now that tools such as AI and Canva are reducing the friction between concept and finished product in graphic design. In my 50 iterations in week 2, I looked at objects and symbols as forms of communication that transcend language. In the flatlay of objects from Oman, I included the 'shahid' ring, worn on the forefingers of Bedouin women. Without context, it's ornamentation. For me and for many others it's a powerful symbol of Arab heritage. Through my iterations I start to exemplify that especially in current design discourse, it's important to make intentional choices resist the design mould that Crouwel's stance promotes.



*"You impose your design on others [...] and now our country is inundated by waves of trademarks and house styles and everything looks the same.*

*What your approach does is basically confirm existing patterns. This is not serving communication—it is conditioning human behaviour."*

*—Van Toorn to Crouwel in 'The Debate'. (2015, p.29).*

# 3 Psychogeography

Self, W. (2007) 'Prologue: Walking to New York', in *Psychogeography*. Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 11–19

French philosopher Guy Debord coined the term Psychogeography in 1955, defining it as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals." (1955, p.23). Through my first 100 iterations, it became clear to me that my perception of the scale of different cities was dependent on how I've existed there. North Acton feels small to me, but almost limitless; the boundaries of the area don't feel well defined because I frequent areas that feel close to home but lay beyond the geographical boundaries.

Since my project naturally explores how surroundings affect my own emotions and behaviours, I decided to research this term further, to understand how certain places define me and I define them. Since I have very few routes mapped in Chandigarh, I struggle to define myself by the city. However, it led me to consider alternative ideas of belonging, such as objects or memories.

*"The manner in which the contemporary world warps the relationship between psyche and place, the ways in which [psychogeographers] go about this task, are various. [...]"*

*Some see psychogeography as concerned with the personality of the place itself. Thus, in his novels and biographies, Peter Ackroyd practices a 'phrenology' of London. He feels up the bumps of the city and so defines its character and proclivities."*

*(Self, 2007, p.11).*

# 4 Waste Not

Dong, S. (2009) *Waste Not* [Installation]. Museum of Modern Art (Viewed: 17 April 2026).

Piles of objects occupy the floor in a room of the MoMA. The observer is guided around organised arrangements of domestic clutter, including plastic buckets, slippers, pieces of styrofoam, old bags, and toys. At first glance, 'Waste Not' seems to represent the excessive effects of consumerism. The real meaning is deeper: this is everything the artist's mother has ever owned. Her drastic hoarding habits are a result of the 'wu jin qi yong' philosophy that objects should be used to their maximum potential and nothing should be wasted.

Dong's mother's objects become a portrait of her, and her beliefs. It reflects the relationship I have with my own possessions, especially clothes and jewellery. I was confronted with what attaching meaning to my objects means. 'Waste Not' inspired me to look at my possessions as self-portraiture.

In my formative years, I moved cities and/or countries each year. When the concept of home had no geographical permanence, it started to manifest itself in the items that I chose to bring with me. Eventually, my home became a broad concept of performed identity. When I wear bold silver rings from souqs in Oman, or Indian jhumkas, I'm conveying at a glance who I am. 'Waste Not' inspired me to lay out my belongings and see what they mean without my presence.



Wronn, J. (2009) *Projects 90: Song Dong* [Photograph]. Available at: <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/960?> (Accessed: 17 April 2026).

# 5 Earthland

Lee, N. (2026) *Earthland* [Poster]. Available at: <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/nao-lee-graphic-design-discover-160426> (Accessed: 17 April 2026).

Finding myself rooted in theory to develop answers, I decided to look at visual references to provide momentum, and Nao Lee's posters did just that. Lee's posters begin as explorations of her experiences in a format that starkly opposes the grid-based rules of western, modern and Swiss design. The result is canvases layered with complex narratives that are interpreted according to one's own perspectives.

The visuals resemble maps that might guide the way to Lee, or ourselves. With her work in mind, I looked at my own 100 iterations and came up with a two critical questions. 1. What do the collection of maps say about me? 2. After coming to the concept of my Pangaea, how do I map that for myself in a way that reflects others' experiences as well?

Mimicking Lee's style, I layered the object flatlays to reinterpret 'my Pangaea', an iteration from the previous week that conceptually represented home as a place in between the places I'm from. After several iterations of adding layers, noise and distortion, I started to create a new map, one that visually plots my Pangaea, though is indiscernable without context. By exploring and iterating on this further, maybe I can start to map this out further.



# 6 Material Perceptions

Ljungberg, A. (2018) 'An Emotional Perspective on Everyday Use', in Bull, K. A., Gali, A. (ed. 5), *Material Perceptions*. Norwegian Crafts, pp. 115–135.

Through his essay 'An emotional perspective on everyday use', Ljungberg discusses what the hidden quality of objects are, what isn't visible during use, and what it means when objects embed themselves back onto us.

In creating my self-portrait flatlays, I realised I was unknowingly curating the selection of objects. I chose to include certain jewellery and objects that represented my attachment to each place. For London, I intentionally included my half-marathon medal, despite it not being a piece of jewellery. The image it holds of me is important: I completed a challenge that in another part of my life felt quite literally impossible. The function of the object does exactly that, it celebrates me, so I included it.

However, my passport was the sole object representative of my identity as an Australian. When contrasted with flatlays of London, India or Oman, the passport's singular nature speaks volumes. The passport (a functional object) exposes my hybrid identity as Australia isn't a country I visually embody. The pages containing multiple stamps expose my privilege; I travel frequently and to many countries. The narrative these pages expose forms part of my identity. Similarly, the objects I use to create all of my flatlays have imprinted their mark on me. Without them, my sense of self would be in disarray. This is what I want to start interrogating in the next stages of my project.

*"Functional objects bear images of us as users and as human beings."*

*(Ljungberg, 2018, p.115).*