

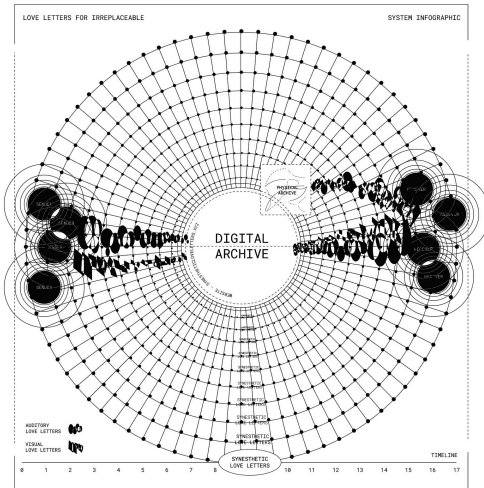
WRITTEN WORK : LOVE LETTERS FOR THE IRREPLACEABLE
CSM-MAGCD-DAIN-KIM

LOVE LETTERS FOR THE IRREPLACEABLE

1 ABSTRACT

/ HOW CAN THE SENSORY EXPERIENCE OF LOVE BE MANIFESTED AND COMMUNICATED THROUGH DIGITALLY MEDIATED SYSTEMS?

This project asks how the sensory experience of love can be manifested and communicated through digitally mediated systems. *Love Letters for the Irreplaceable* proposes a new communication system that maximises sensory elements, such as image, photograph and sound, by borrowing the traditional form of the love letter. It offers one possible way to reimagine and re-experience love in the digital age. Love letters become a record of sensory communication, and like letters once written in the hope of eventually being read, these new letters are also archived, waiting to reach someone, someday.



Love Letters for the Irreplaceable, System Design, 2025

In *Love Letters for the Irreplaceable*, the website collects and records sensory inputs and transforms them into a physical archive box that combines image and sound to create a new form of sensory record. At the very bottom of the box, an invitation is embedded, which reconnects the participants to the digital archive (website) and invites them to reply to the love letters in the digital system.



Love Letters for the Irreplaceable, Archive Box, 2025

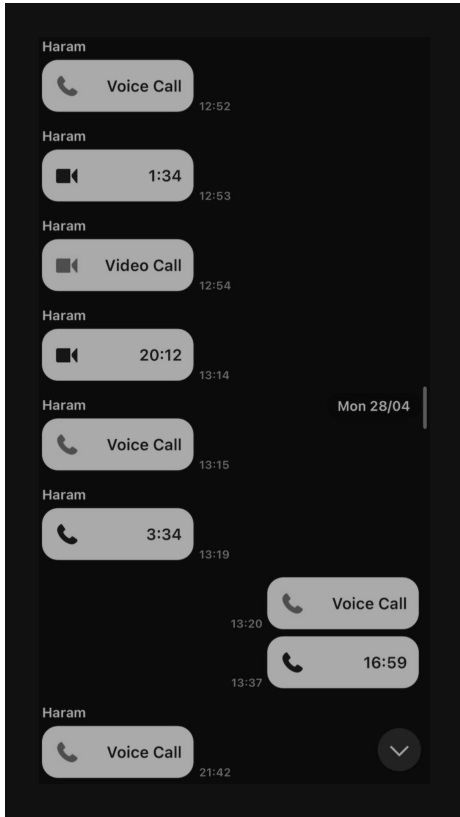
This circulation of love by the project critically explores the social trend in which human sensory experience and relationship are increasingly replaced by digital technologies. In *Alone Together*, Sherry Turkle mentions the connection produced by digital media, noting "We don't want to intrude on each other, so instead we constantly intrude on each other—but not in real time." She also states, "The ties we form through the Internet are not, in the end, the ties that bind. But they are the ties that preoccupy." (Turkle, 2011).

Building on these questions, *Love Letters for the Irreplaceable* seeks to recover the sensory presence and emotional interaction that are often overlooked in digitally saturated environments. It experiments with the possibility of restoring sensory communication through the language of design, proposing that design can serve as a medium through which emotion, memory, and sensation are explored. Through sensory narratives and visual archiving, the project demonstrates the expanded practical potential of graphic design.

2 CONTEXT

2-1. RESEARCH MOTIVATION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

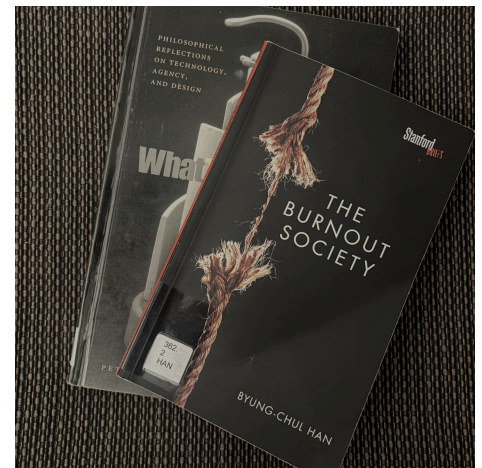
This study originates from personal experiences that revealed the communicative limitations of long-distance relationships. While living apart from my family and partner, emotional communication through technologies such as real-time messaging and phone calls often became unclear, weakening our connection. This vagueness was not simply a matter of physical distance, but it stemmed from the structural "absence of sensation" in digital communication environments.



The record of phone call with my partner, 2025

"Technological artefacts indeed close off some possibilities by the way they mediate experience, but they also open up new ones. Technology mediates our behaviour and our perception..." (Verbeek, 2005). Verbeek suggests that digital technologies are not merely tools for communication, but mediums that shape our behaviour and structure. McLuhan similarly argued that "the medium is the message," implying that the medium itself structures human perception and sensation (McLuhan, 1964).

The definitions of "technology" and "medium" offered by Verbeek and McLuhan indicate that as technology becomes the primary interface for human relationships, both the form and content of those relationships are being restructured. This project investigates how emotions are conveyed—and which sensory dimensions are excluded—within the mediated structure of digital communication. It asks: how is the absence of sensation being addressed in digital environments?



The burnout society - Han, Byung-Chul, What things do - Verbeek, Peter-Paul

2-2. PROBLEM

As Byung-Chul Han writes, *"In the digitalised late modern age, we constantly post, like, and share, while pretending not to notice the naked, hollowed-out meaning of life"* (Han, 2024). Han also notes that *"being networked does not mean being connected,"* arguing that digital interactions do not allow for boredom or deep mental relaxation.

Love, the theme of this project, is not a simple emotion, but an existential experience in which sensation and emotion intersect. Love arrives through the senses. Even as we express and reimagine love through language, we often rely on complex sensory cues, such as gaze, sound, and temperature. That is why so many songs, pieces of music, and artworks are based on love.

Is love possible without sensation? Instant replies and algorithmically mediated attention raise the question of whether they simplify or even omit the physical and emotional presence that love inherently carries. Love is an experience that slowly builds, not something delivered in an instant.

This understanding of love, alongside Han's critique, aligns with the central concern: that digital media often standardise the subtle sensory layers or replace them with specific systems. As a result, these tendencies reinforce a structure that simplifies emotional communication and affective depth.

Through a critical awareness of this absence of sensation in the digital age, *Love Letters for the Irreplaceable* explores how the experience of love can be restructured sensorially within the digital communication environment.

The following excerpt from John Keats's love letter and poem, which inspired the project, symbolically represents the sensory communication beyond the text that the project aims to pursue: "Sweet Silence: nectar of your kiss. I loved the sweet silence of hay as it cured." (John Keats, 1817). Keat's poetic language constructs love through a multisensory polyphony¹ in which sound, taste, and touch intersect. This way in which emotion is delivered through sensation, rather than language alone, is a key component the project aims to implement.

From this perspective, the classical form of the 'love letters' functions as a methodological tool to experiment with the recovery of sensory presence. At the same time, it also serves as a familiar and structured medium of communication for participants, highlighting a fundamental contrast with fast-paced and standardised digital communication.



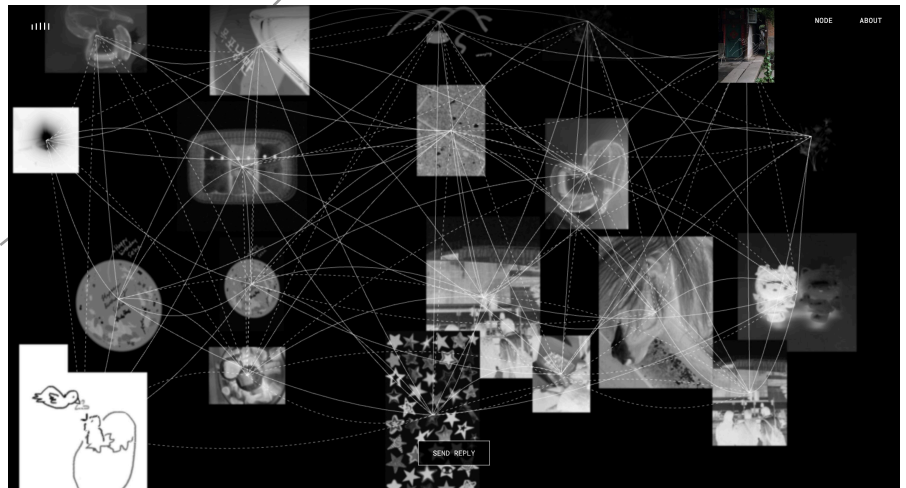
Love Letters for the Irreplaceable,
Web Design, 2025

¹ Polyphony: a type of musical texture consisting of two or more simultaneous lines of independent melody, as opposed to monophony (a single melodic line) or homophony (a dominant melody with chordal accompaniment).

In *Love Letters for the Irreplaceable*, the love letter is restructured not as a text-based message, but as a form combined with sensory memory. The project enables participants to send love letters using two senses—visual and auditory—as their base. When a participant submits a sensory-based love letter, it is archived both in a digital archive and in a physical archive. In the digital archive, visual love letters and auditory love letters interact with one another with graphic language, encouraging participants to engage with the letters through both senses. In the physical archive, a technical structure is used in which printed visual letters trigger the playback of sound when tagged to a specific box part. This system is designed to transform emotion into a sensory experience, rather than a message to be merely read.

In addition, an invitation placed at the bottom of the physical archive box reconnects the participant to the digital, prompting them to write a new love letter. Through this process, love does not end but circulates digitally.

Love Letters for the Irreplaceable,
Web Design, 2025



This project's attempt to reconstruct emotion draws inspiration from *Sophie Calle's Take Care of Yourself*. Calle shared a breakup email with 107 women and asked each to interpret it in her own way. She remarked, "It was a way of taking the time to break up. A way of taking care of myself" (Calle, 2007), suggesting that the circulation and deconstruction of emotion became a form of self-care. *Love Letters for the Irreplaceable* similarly focuses on the multiplicity of emotional interpretation, aligning conceptually with Calle's approach. Calle noted, "...then I started to find more subtle ways of interpretation... I realised the problem of language in such a work—a lot of text—and I tried to find another kind of interpretation" (Tate, n.d.), implying that linguistic limitations led her project to evolve toward sensory forms of response. This progression toward sensory-based interpretation provided a starting point for *Love Letters for the Irreplaceable*. This project designed a structure in which emotions are constructed and communicated through visual and auditory senses. Emotions are transmitted and received through sensory means, expanding the possibilities of emotional communication beyond verbal forms.

In conclusion, the project proposes a digital communicative system in which love is expressed through the senses in the form of a love letter.

Graphic communication design is a practice that materialises language into visual and tangible forms. This field has expanded methodologies, including experimental curation, systematic research, and narrative writing. Studying at Central Saint Martins has made this expanded approach tangible for me, allowing me to understand how design can operate as a complex and sensory medium for mediating both language and emotion. In every work in CSM, I have consistently explored sensory-based design—particularly how senses can be translated into visual language. This project continues that exploration, seeking new possibilities for my graphic communication design.

As Victor Papanek wrote, *“Design is the most powerful tool with which man shapes his tools and environments (and, by extension, society and himself)... It is one of the few professions that deal with the whole gamut of human needs—physical, psychological, spiritual, intellectual, and technological.”* (Papanek. V. 1985)

Referring to Papanek’s view, I believe design holds not only the possibility but also the responsibility to shape environments and relationships in meaningful ways. In my thought, through thoughtful systems that engage with sensation, design can foster more human-centred modes of communication. It can expand beyond problem-solving into empathy-building, helping us reimagine emotion.

This project frames design as an ethical practice—one that seeks to restore sensation, emotion, and human connection. Ultimately, I continue to respond to the enduring question, *What makes us human?*—not by offering a finished answer, but by thinking as a designer.

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