Unit 2 Synthesis: Triangulating a Critical Position

This research began with a question of form: what happens when randomness becomes a tool in itself and how can structure and intuition coexist? My early studio practice, which moved from the manual iteration of Karel Martens' monoprints to the systematic randomness of p5.js, sought to answer this question by designing conditions rather than aesthetic outcomes. The initial process culminated in the Dancheong typeface system, where I translated culturally grounded architectural patterns into modular forms. This work established my core thesis: that design is a process of defining constraints and discovering cultural, personal outcomes, moving from code to culture and embedding generative thinking into historical form.

The second phase of this unit introduced two conflicting reference points that forced a critical re-evaluation of this position. These were the studio work on UK Signage Disruptions, using systematic intervention to create malfunction in public signage, and the written critique of Universal Standardization, confronting the philosophy of Dieter Rams. The task of triangulation was to reconcile my initial focus on specific, culturally grounded making with the necessity of breaking universally generalized systems.

This process enabled me to reinforce and untangle key aspects of my research. The foundational lesson from generative coding that design is a rule-set was reinforced, as the rigorous structure extracted from Dancheong's motifs presented that highly specific cultural forms can operate as design parameters. My initial thesis was explored by experimenting with the concepts of simplification and reduction (unsmoothing) inherent in figures like Rams. While Rams' principles provided a crucial framework for critiquing aesthetic 'smoothing,' the focus of the research progressed past the idea of mere reduction. The written analysis revealed the core problem is not just taking things away, but the reductive violence of generalization eliminating the specific, singular, and individualized experience that defines human reality. My goal shifted from designing forms that embody personal structure to designing systems that critique the generalized, abstract structure imposed by others.

The synthesis of these two projects, the culturally grounded modularity of Dancheong (structure/specificity) and the necessity of visual failure (critique/de-generalization), leads to a new, stronger position for my practice. The functional conflict is resolved by redefining what constitutes success in design. While my research has involved various studio explorations and written critiques, a single underlying concept emerged: the necessity of creating systems that work specifically as a unique, non-repeatable instance. The studio work, which involved the systematic disruption of UK Signage (such as mixing English and Korean text or breaking the arrow logic), showed that the process of unsmoothing is a

critical necessity. It uses structural complexity to generate visual friction that introduces the burden of specific, singular context back into the generalized system.

This practice seeks not to reduce unique experience into an efficient abstraction, but rather to show complexity clearly and reveal how systems work for the purpose of critical engagement. Moving forward from this triangulation, the key realization is that all of my exploration has a recurring focus for individualized experience, not generalized templates for ease. This new position now drives my research toward a practice that prioritizes the reclamation of specific, singular reality over the abstract authority of standardization and applying personalized parameters to design specific form/experience.