

Project² Silent Love

Abstract

This project is centred around the observation and documentation of food and the implicit love between parents. I like to use food as my entry point to observe the connection between people, and this time I am aiming at an audience of people who act as children in the family. In my opinion, since parental love is often ambiguous, contradictory, tiny and hidden, I hope that my work can enhance people's perception of happiness and observation of love, and cherish and magnify it, so my enquiry is **“Through translating and contextualising how does personal experience of the unseen familial love be exposed using publication?”**

I will be conducting interviews with my close friends and collecting 10 true stories to present as content for the publication. Emotions are soft and delicate, in terms of visual expression, I want to combine photographic images with embroidery, to emphasise and amplify the love from the family hidden behind the food through the lines of embroidery, when the food photography is transferred onto a textured paper base, the hard-touch paper becomes the figurative carrier of daily life; and the embroidery threads become the manifestation of the abstract emotions behind the images, this kind of fabric-image dialogue is exactly the relationship between the fabric and the image. This dialogue between fabric and image is a double deconstruction of 'invisible love'.

Context

In the process of visually translating and recontextualizing nonverbal emotional expressions within the family, several artists' practices had a profound influence on me. They explored the relationship between memory, emotion, and home across different cultures and mediums, and made me gradually realize that emotions don't have to be spoken aloud—they can be slowly “seen” through materials, forms, structures, or even a single thread. This led me to start questioning: can I translate emotion through soft media? Is this the right kind of medium? And how can a publication carry a strong sense of storytelling?

One artist who deeply influenced me is Louise Bourgeois, especially her cloth book **Ode à l'Oubli**. She stitched pages out of old clothing, and the seams and fabric textures together formed a kind of “narrative structure of memory.” This made me realize that storytelling doesn't necessarily rely on words or photographs—it can exist in the organization of objects, the sequence of textures, or even the direction of a needle's path. This form of “nonverbal narrative” deeply inspired my thinking about the structure of my publication: I don't need to arrange the story in a linear timeline. Instead, I want to allow the audience to flip through it like a “family archive of emotion,” and feel love and memory through the interaction of images, touch, and materials.

So I began collecting real stories from my friends and myself, and decided to narrate them in the first person to enhance the viewer's sense of immersion and empathy.

Another important starting point for my understanding of the “materialization of emotion” came from Do Ho Suh's representation of “home” and Lee Mingwei's work **The Mending Project**. They made me reconsider the relationship between “material” and “emotion,” and helped me realize that as a visual communication designer, I don't always need to rely on strong symbols. Emotion can also be carried through the physicality

and intimacy of materials. Inspired by this, I began experimenting with the combination of embroidery and paper—so that emotion is not simply “expressed,” but is instead “stitched out,” “left behind on the paper,” like traces of emotion slowly emerging.

It also made me reflect: could my publication be more than just a “narration,” but also a “trigger”? So in the project, I began by recording the real family food memories of my close friends, inviting them to voice these “invisible emotions.” This also became a form of “mending the past self.”

After deciding to combine images and embroidery, I turned to the works of two young artists—Colussi Cramer and Laikblua. They are both skilled in using hand embroidery on photographs, adding a second layer of “emotional path” to static images through threads. For example, the seemingly casual stitches in Laikblua’s work actually precisely emphasize the tension between gaze, body, and emotion. This made me realize that embroidery is not simply an “addition” to the image—it’s a reactivation, a “visual guide to emotion.” This method became one of my main approaches in image processing: I would select the most subtle emotional parts of an image and highlight them with embroidery, making them key touchpoints for the reader to resonate with the image.

Beyond this, I also referred to research in psychology about the connection between food and emotion. In **Food for Love: The Role of Food Offering in Empathic Emotion Regulation**, Hamburg, Finkenauer, and Schuengel (2014) point out that food is not only a response to physical needs, but also a behavior of emotional support. They propose: “The sharing of food resources as well as the use of food as a support behavior increases interpersonal closeness.” This made me realize that food in the home often acts as a metaphor for love—it doesn’t say “I love you” directly, but expresses deep care through a bowl of hot soup, an apple, or a dish made for over ten years. This kind of nonverbal emotional expression is exactly what I’m trying to capture at the core of this project.

In the end, what all these references have in common is that they choose “slow media,” “soft materials,” and by delving deeply into personal experience, they make emotions visible and touchable. This way of storytelling deeply influenced my understanding of visual communication design: emotion doesn’t need to be declared loudly—it can appear quietly, gently, even repeatedly. In my own practice, these references not only offered aesthetic directions, but also guided my way of thinking. They led me to reflect: the value of design is not just in “making things clear,” but in “making things felt.” The meaning of visual language is not only to deliver information, but to build emotional channels, awaken memory, and connect people. For me, this influence will continue to shape my future visual practices that center on intimacy and cultural emotion.

Project Contribution

This project explores how non-verbal emotions—especially those quietly shared around the family dining table—can be visualized and given physical form through graphic communication design. The dining table, as a space filled with subtle, everyday intimacy, becomes the starting point for observing and collecting those fleeting, hard-to-describe moments of familial warmth. Using materials like embroidery and paper as “translation tools,” I aim to turn these emotional dialects into visual languages that can be touched, interacted with, and shared.

My audience is primarily young people who share similar cultural backgrounds and life experiences—those who might be living far from home, caught between cultures, or feeling emotionally distant from their roots. Many of us carry blurred memories of family and a longing for connection. Through this work, I hope to create a space where they can reconnect with those small but meaningful emotional moments, and find new ways to express and understand love. At the same time, this project also reaches a broader audience by offering a new perspective on how design can be used to communicate care and emotional connection in a fragmented world.

In terms of form, the project moves beyond the boundaries of traditional flat design by embracing “soft media” like embroidery, encouraging a tactile, slower, and more intimate way of making and experiencing design. This has deeply influenced how I view my own practice—not just as a visual language, but as a way to hold emotion, memory, and culture. Moving forward, I hope to continue exploring how personal and collective feelings can be translated into visual stories that heal, connect, and resonate.

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