Daily Disharmony

Master's Thesis

Visual Communication
Kunstuniversität Linz

Chieh Lu

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Master’s Thesis

Kunstuniversität Linz
Master of Arts (MA)
Visual Communication

SUPERVISION
Univ. - Prof. Anna Artaker

PRODUCTION
Printed in Offset Paper 100 grs
in ecoypy, Taipei, Taiwan

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and has not been submitted before to any institution for assessment purposes. Further, I have acknowledged all sources used and have cited the references.

Linz, 2026.

Abstract

This research begins with an intuitive fascination with "incongruity" in everyday life, focusing on those subtle moments where the order of our environment feels slightly off. By using Displacement as a core methodology to research and organize related practices, I have built a framework called "Daily Disharmony." This study applies two photographic modes of operation. The first is Observational Incongruity, which captures naturally occurring oddities. The second is Interventional Displacement, which involves human-induced changes to spatial order. This ranges from recording temporary structures within the environment to actively placing heterogeneous objects into settings where they do not belong, creating intentional shifts in logic and function.

The work was conducted across Europe, Japan, and Taiwan. Rather than grouping images by location, the thesis focuses on the specific logic of displacement in each setting, such as the subtle and unexpected shifts within European spaces, the transitional states in Japanese urban infrastructure, and the spontaneous clutter found in Taiwan. These landscapes address a central question: how a slight shift in the coordinates of objects or actions can break our cognitive automation and reframe our perception of reality.

By integrating these experiments and research from the past two years, this thesis sews together my creative path. It argues that "incongruity" is not just a visual anomaly but a critical lens for seeing. Ultimately, it invites viewers to recognize the hidden contradictions in our routines and the inherent flexibility of the world we inhabit.

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Introduction

01

Background and Motivation

This study began with my ongoing observation and fascination with everyday environments. We live in spaces highly defined by functions, routines, and social norms. These norms create a stable order that causes our perception to "automate," leading us to ignore details that are not related to efficiency. However, within this seemingly perfect structure, small and subtle misalignments always appear—such as meaningless piles on the roadside, remnants of broken facilities, or slight failures in symbol systems. Although these phenomena are trivial, they reveal the fragility and absurdity of the logic of reality.

The establishment of this viewing mode started during my photography practice in Europe. An early series, European Streetfood, recorded food remains and packaging abandoned on city grounds. Placed in refined public spaces or the shadows of grand buildings, these objects showed a strong misalignment between

function and setting. Objects that were meant to be consumed and valued existed in a forgotten and rejected state within a highly ordered landscape. This creative experience made me realize that this "misaligned" state is not just a random discovery, but a powerful perceptual mechanism that can be captured and manipulated.

Therefore, the motivation of this thesis is to systematize the act of "capturing and creating small absurdities in daily life" into a photographic methodology. By capturing observational incongruity and precisely operating interventional disruption, this research aims to explore how "incongruity" can become a path to reshape perception and provide a tool for deconstructing daily norms in the field of visual communication.

Incongruity as a Way of Seeing

This research suggests that "Incongruity" is not a visual accident, but a deliberate mode of seeing. It shifts the focus from dramatic scenes to the re-framing of everyday logic—treating photography as a way to "pierce through the thin film of reality." By noticing where things don’t quite fit, we can pause our "autopilot" logic and see the hidden gaps in daily life.

The study adopts two practical paths to realize this perspective:

The Observational Path: Focuses on capturing "ready-made" ruptures in the environment. It records moments where the original function of a space fails or elements are displaced by chance. This approach reveals the artificial, often absurd, structures hidden within social and urban order.

The Interventional Path: Involves active displacement to test the boundaries of belief. By intentionally placing everyday behaviors or objects into unexpected contexts, it creates a tension between the image and its setting. This path challenges our perception of "seeing is believing" and questions the authenticity of the contemporary image.

Research Scope

This study treats Taiwan, Japan, and Europe not as geographic locations, but as samples of different "order systems." I observe how aesthetic tension arises when these systems are disrupted:

European Cities (The Defined Site): European landscapes often have a strict "spatial grammar" with clear boundaries between functions. Against this highly defined background, I observe "consumption remnants." In the Street Food series, discarded food creates a sense of disharmony when it clashes with the formal public setting.

Japanese Cities (The Suspended Order): My focus here is on out-of-service railway tracks. By placing everyday human behaviors in these non-functional spaces, I test the "theatricality" that occurs when an environment loses its original purpose but remains as a provisional order.

Taiwanese Cities (The Overflow of Privacy): Public spaces in Taiwan often show a "collapse of boundaries." I focus on demolition sites and outdoor laundry—places where private life (like furniture or clothes) "overflows" into the public ruin. This creates a strong sense of incongruity as private functions are exposed in the open.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is organized into five chapters. The structure traces a journey from Displacement to Absurd, moving from theory to practice to show how "incongruity" becomes a way of seeing:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Provides an overview of the research background and objectives. It introduces the methodological framework used to investigate daily disharmony through photography.

Chapter 2: Displacement (Context and Theory)

Establishes the philosophical foundation, exploring theories of the displacement.

Chapter 3: Strategies (Methodology)

Describes the aesthetic approach used to build my work. This includes the application of the Deadpan style and other artistic references that influenced my visual language.

Chapter 4: Absurd (Project)

The practical core of the thesis, presenting a collection of photographic series that explore the concept of displacement. It concludes with a brief spatial presentation plan for the works.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Synthesizes the research findings and reflects on the evolution of the methodology

DIsplacement

02

Definition and Theories

This study creates incongruity primarily through displacement. The "displacement" explored here is not about optical illusions; instead, it focuses on the deconstruction and reconfiguration of context. This displacement involves two dimensions: first, the physical level, which involves pulling an object away from its intended position; and second, the contextual level, which creates a functional rupture. Through this dual displacement, everyday objects and behaviors generate "visual friction" in alien spaces, revealing the absurd nature hidden beneath the order of reality.

In terms of semantics, the word "displacement" is usually understood as removal from an original or expected position. According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*,[1] displacement refers to "the act or state of being moved, replaced, or forced out of its original position." This definition emphasizes the change in spatial relationships and the state of being "out of place."

However, in the context of art and visual culture, displacement is not just about physical movement; it is about the interruption of the relationship between objects, spaces, and their usual contexts. In other words, the sense of displacement does not come from the fact that "something was moved," but from the fact that "something appears in a place where it is no longer considered reasonable." This unreasonableness is built upon our existing understanding of daily order, function, and categorization.

Anthropologist Mary Douglas points out in Purity and Danger that "disharmony" is not a quality of things themselves,[2] but a state produced when an element cannot be fit into an existing classification system. She defines "dirt" as "matter out of place." This perspective

1 https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/displacement

2 mary douglas, purity and danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo (new york: praeger, 1966), 35-36.

provides a key direction for understanding displacement: the sense of absurdity comes from the failure of order and classification, not from the abnormality of the object itself.

The success of "displacement" must be built upon the identification of the "original site." As Douglas suggests, if we do not first define the boundaries of order, we cannot perceive what is "out of place." Therefore, before exploring displacement, one must have the ability to identify everyday coordinates.

This is a core concern for georges perec in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*.[3] in the essay 'approaches to what?', perec introduces the concept of the 'infra-ordinary' to counter the spectacles and extraordinary events focused on by the mass media. For him, the "infra-ordinary" consists of things that happen every day but have become transparent and taken for granted—such as the sound of a teaspoon hitting a cup or the silent corners of our living spaces. Through meticulous recording and list-making, Perec attempts to "interrogate" the life we have stopped seeing.

This concept provides an essential practical premise for this study: before displacement can occur, one must first precisely mark the "original site" of an object through keen observation of the infra-ordinary. The functional context where an object originally belongs, and its coordinates within the public landscape, are anchored through this gaze upon mundane details. Only when the object's position in its original system is clearly identified can the act of "displacement"—transferring it to a heterogeneous space (such as a private living room)—trigger a truly intense visual friction. Under this logic, the "infra-ordinary" is not merely a description; it serves as the origin of the coordinates for the aesthetics of displacement, grounding the sense of absurdity in a highly precise reality.

3 georges perec, species of spaces and other pieces, ed. and trans. john sturrock (london: penguin books, 2008), 205-207.

When an object is removed from its preset coordinates, the "incongruity" between it and the new environment highlights the material existence of the object itself. In the street observations and interventional projects of this research, the juxtaposition of unrelated objects is intended to create "logical glitches" within an ordered urban system.

Regarding this phenomenon, visual culture critic Lucy Lippard (1973) noted that when objects that usually have nothing to do with each other meet in the same space, they produce a kind of "Visual Friction."[4] This physical displacement breaks our expectations of the order of reality.

The tension triggered by this physical displacement leads further to the concept of "Defamiliarization" (Ostranenie), proposed by Viktor Shklovsky (1917). Shklovsky argued that the purpose of art is to wake people up from the "automatization" of daily perception.5 In our routine lives, our perception of things is often numb and overlooked; the task of art, therefore, is to "increase the difficulty and length of perception."

By juxtaposing unrelated objects, the "visual friction" created in this study serves as a means of practicing defamiliarization. As Shklovsky stated: "The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself."[6] When a pizza no longer appears on a dining table but on the street, or when a person remains in a non-functional, static state on a railway track, the viewer's gaze is forced to pause on these "logical glitches." This breaks the habitual interpretation of reality and generates a sense of aesthetic shock.

4 Changing: Essays in Art Criticism. New York: Dutton. (p. 82-83).

5 victor shklovsky, "art as technique," in modern criticism and theory: a reader, ed. david lodge (london: longman, 1988), 16-18.

6 shklovsky, "art as technique," 18.

This pause in perception essentially stems from the failure of the object within its system of meaning. in *Mythologies* (1957), Roland Barthes pointed out that everyday objects are often given a layer of 'myth' by society, making them appear natural and taken for granted.[7] when an object is removed from its original associative relationships through displacement, this layer of myth collapses, exposing the object in its raw, non-natural state.

In *Elements of Semiology*, Barthes further argued that the meaning of a sign depends on the system in which it is located.[8] When this research pulls everyday objects or behaviors out of their preset functional chains, it effectively cuts the connection of symbolic meaning. This "contextual vacuum" leads to cognitive confusion—the object no longer refers to its original function but returns to a pure, and even unsettling, material existence.

7 roland barthes, mythologies, trans. annette lavers (london: paladin, 1984), 109.
8 roland barthes, elements of semiology, trans. annette lavers and colin smith (new york: hill and wang, 1968), 27-31.

It is precisely this collapse of contextual myths that forms the core of the aesthetic shock, ultimately leading to the 'absurd' as described by Albert Camus (1942).[9] Camus argued that the absurd arises from the rupture between the human longing for order and the 'irrationality' of the world. when an everyday landscape is presented in an 'out-of-place' state through displacement, this failure of logic acts as a crack in reality. as camus wrote in *The Myth of Sisyphus*: 'at certain moments of awakening, the stage sets of daily life collapse'.[10] this collapse strips away the social disguise of objects, forcing us to face the world's meaningless yet intensely real nature.

In summary, "Displacement" in this study is not just a shift in spatial coordinates, but a visual strategy of "de-automatization." Through physical relocation and the rupture of cognitive context, objects hidden within the daily order are re-observed and re-understood.

9 albert camus, the myth of sisyphus and other essays, trans. justin o'brien (new york: vintage international, 2011), 12-14.
10 camus, the myth of sisyphus, 12.

Through this practice of displacement, this research does not try to offer a new order; instead, it aims to create or present an "absurd moment." In this shock, the viewer can no longer "explain" the world with habitual logic but must, as Camus advocated, "confront" the absurd reality with a highly sober consciousness.

This practice does not seek a surreal illusion. Instead, through the "framing" of photography and the "intervention" in space, it magnifies the logical gaps that already exist in the real world. Between the disintegration of myth described by Barthes and the collapse of stage sets described by Camus, what this study seeks to capture is that moment when things are "no longer taken for granted."

The aesthetic shock brought by this "visual friction" ultimately pushes the viewer into a state of sober observation. Only in the moment when the world can no longer be explained by habitual logic are we able to truly "confront" the heterogeneity of reality and its essential

absurdity. This provides the methodological foundation for the following chapters, in which this study captures roadside remnants, intervenes in railway spaces, and experiments with the materiality of imagery.

Artist References

Having established the theoretical foundation of displacement, I believe it is necessary to trace the artistic cases that have substantively influenced my creative practice in terms of visual experience and logical framework. The selection discussed in this section is not a random listing, but based on two different types of dialogue: those who serve as "theoretical benchmarks" for comparison, and those who provide "practical inspiration" as predecessors.

For me, to fully deconstruct my creative system, I must examine it through two complementary dimensions. First, I introduce specific cases across diverse fields that use "displacement" as a core strategy. While my creative context may not fully overlap with these artists, comparing my work to these conceptual reference points allows me to extract and define the logic of spatial movement and coordinate shifts within this research.

Secondly, beyond conceptual debate, I am also concerned with the handling of visual syntax in imagery. I will analyze how specific photographic rhetorics intensify the material tension of objects within their environments, and explore how different observational perspectives capture the variations and anomalies of everyday functions across various cultural contexts. For me, these visual inspirations are as vital as the concept of displacement itself; together, they constitute the observational logic I apply when documenting landscapes.

Therefore, the review in this section is not a simple listing of works. Instead, it is an attempt to deconstruct my creative system into two parts: conceptual comparison and visual syntax. Through this dialogue, I hope to demonstrate how my work, while borrowing concepts from contemporary art, transforms them into a personal visual practice regarding the inherent sense of rupture within everyday order.

The photography series *Equilibres (Quiet Afternoon)* (1984–1985) by the Swiss artist duo Peter Fischli & David Weiss is a classic case study in the displacement of objects. In this series, they take everyday items, such as kitchen utensils, vegetables, and tires, and stack them into temporary structures on the verge of collapse through precise calculations of the center of gravity.

In their analysis of Fischli and Weiss's practice, Isabelle Lynch and Sophie Lynch (2016) highlight how the duo's work levels contradictory categories such as 'order and chaos' and the 'possible and impossible'. This perspective emphasizes that the displacement in Equilibres is more than a simple re-arrangement; it is a deliberate suspension of physical and functional expectations. By displacing objects like vegetables into a state of 'precarious balance,' the artists defy the everyday logic that 'what goes up must come down.' This specific application of displacement transforms mundane items into fragile, temporary monuments, effectively capturing a moment where the functional world is forced to stand still in an 'odd' and 'absurd' configuration.



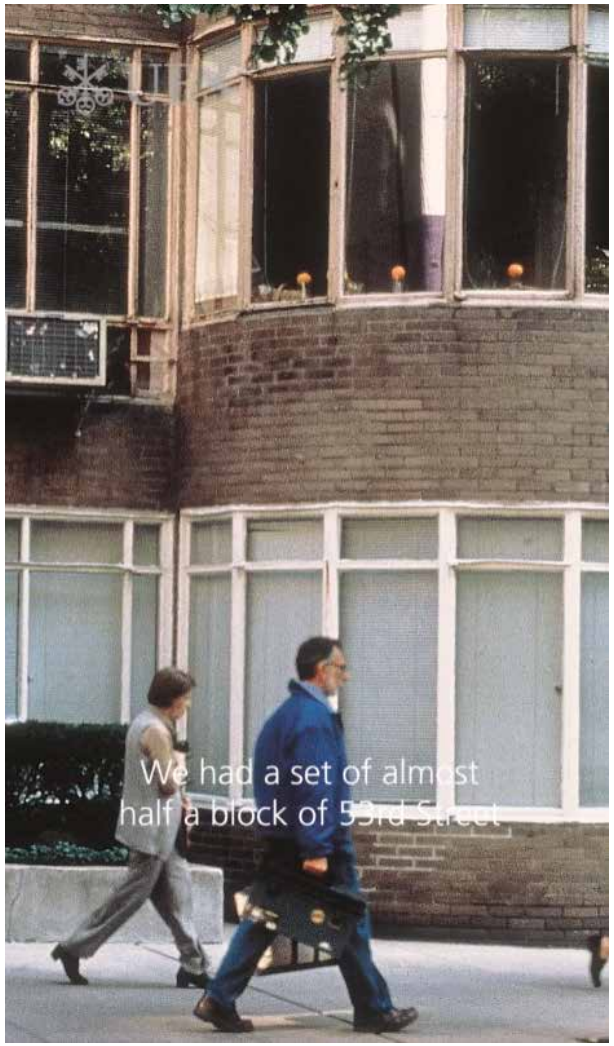
img 01

In the 1993 work *Home Run*, Gabriel Orozco situated individual oranges on the windowsills of residential buildings facing the Museum of Modern Art. This subtle act of displacement functions as a spontaneous "infiltration" of the urban fabric.[11] Although the oranges themselves remain physically unaltered, the minute shift in their spatial coordinates creates a quiet yet powerful interference within the reality of the street. By placing a common, inexpensive commodity at the threshold between private domesticity and public visibility, the work forces a collision between commercial order, personal space, and the act of pure observation.



img 02

11 Jean-Pierre Criqui, "Gabriel Orozco," Artforum, https://www.artforum.com/events/gabriel-orozco-5-188583/.



img 03

This minimalist displacement effectively ruptures the viewer’s automated perception. When an orange is stripped from its usual circulation—moving away from the supermarket shelf or the dining table—and reappears in an unexpected, "out-of-place" location, it ceases to be a mere object of consumption. Instead, it is transformed into a "magnetic" focal point that compels the passerby to re-examine the overlooked traces of daily life. Such practice proves that profound transformation does not require large-scale material change; rather, by reconfiguring the relationship between an object and its environment, displacement reveals a hidden strangeness beneath the order of reality, turning a mundane scene into a poetic disturbance of the landscape.

The photographic practice of Kyoichi Tsuzuki provides a sociologically deep observational foundation for "everyday absurdity." In *TOKYO STYLE*, he directs his lens toward the chaotic and authentic Japanese urban living spaces typically excluded by mainstream design aesthetics. Within these cramped apartments, the incongruity between objects and their environment does not stem from artistic staging, but is a necessary outcome of living space under extreme compression.

When functional boundaries of everyday objects rupture within limited space, they form a raw, vital interior landscape. This observational perspective later extends to the periphery of public landscapes in *Roadside Japan*, where Tsuzuki collects a vast array of peculiar sites forcibly carved out of everyday backgrounds by individual will. Whether it is a collection stacked to the ceiling in a tiny apartment or a startlingly large private museum appearing abruptly by the roadside, these scenes reveal how a bottom-up, non-staged sense of absurdity arises when standardized social systems can

no longer accommodate human desire.



img 04



img 05

The core of this image-making lies in Tsuzuki’s "anti-aesthetic" curiosity and his respect for the site. He does not use a photographer’s authority to filter or organize space; instead, he utilizes wide-angle lenses to fully present the chaotic order of objects "growing" within their environments. For Tsuzuki, these seemingly incongruous stackings and placements are manifestations of the inhabitants' or builders' will to live—the most authentic encounter between objects, people, and space. He acts more as an editor of landscapes than a creator, allowing the heterogeneity growing within the cracks of the everyday to manifest naturally through "non-interventional" documentation. This method of observation emphasizing "immediate collection" over "predefined symbols" proves that absurdity is often rooted in the most honest details of life, providing a powerful empirical basis for exploring the transformation and reconstruction of object identity within everyday landscapes

Within traditional Japanese culture and Shinto belief, the *torii* plays a critical role as a spatial symbol; it is regarded as the boundary between the "sacred realm" and the "secular world," a form of sacred barrier (*kekkai*). Structurally, a *torii* typically consists of two upright pillars and a horizontal lintel; its very existence announces a transformation in the nature of the space, reminding those who enter to maintain a sense of awe. However, Motoyuki Shitamichi's *torii* series captures the strange evolution of these sacred structures after they are detached from their original religious and political systems. In his field observations in Taiwan, he discovered that *torii*, which should stand vertically as taboo boundaries, have been laid flat on the ground. Their physical sacred height has been dissolved, and they have been repurposed as benches for rest in public parks. This drastic displacement—from an "untouchable sacred symbol" to "usable domestic furniture"—reveals how an object is redefined by the pragmatism of common life once it loses the support of its original system.



img 06

Another significant case is the integration of *torii* with everyday signage. Structures that once bore the majesty of the divine are appropriated as frames for park signs, merging with boards containing navigational information. In this context, the original religious function of the *torii* has been completely transformed; it is no longer a gateway separating the sacred from the profane but has become a functional bracket integrated into the vernacular landscape. Shitamichi's work meticulously documents this process of functional "reinterpretation": when the grand narratives of history and religion retreat, these leftover remnants acquire new functional identities through the organic reconstruction of their environment. This total functional dislocation not only creates visual incongruity but also provides a profound perspective for understanding the fluidity of object identity within everyday spaces.



img 07

Practices Beyond the Art Field

The application of displacement is not limited to the realm of contemporary art; it is also a common and potent rhetorical tool in contemporary visual culture and commercial discourse. These cases utilize varying degrees of environmental misplacement to interrupt the viewer's automated perception, categorizing into "issue-oriented" and "visual strategy" based on their underlying motivations.

Firstly, in the exploration of social issues, displacement is used as a tool to reveal reality. For instance, the Swedish furniture brand IKEA once displaced a dilapidated apartment from a Syrian war zone into a middle-class furniture showroom (IKEA, 2016). This extreme contextual juxtaposition forces viewers to detach from their comfortable consumer habits, transforming what was once a distant news image into an immediate, physically pressurized reality. The impact of such displacement lies in breaking the established

connection between objects and their safe environments, forcing viewers to confront the social truths behind the landscape.



img 08



img 09

On the other hand, in commercial creativity and brand marketing, displacement is transformed into a practical path for creating visual spectacles. For example, an outdoor brand called 37.5 once displaced a physical pop-up shop onto a thousand-foot vertical cliff, proactively placing stable consumer behavior into the extreme natural environment. This drastic shift in coordinates dissolves the object's original everyday function, refining it into a visual symbol charged with intense tension.

These examples demonstrate the powerful visual disturbance inherent in the concept of displacement. Whether through the misplacement of a Syrian apartment to trigger emotional and social reflection or through a cliffside pop-up shop to create a sense of visual defamiliarization, the core remains the utilization of the "contextual rupture between object and landscape" to re-initiate the viewer's gaze



img 10



img 11

Strategies

03

Deadpan

In my creative practice, visual syntax is never a mere stylistic embellishment; rather, it is the core tool through which I construct a sense of everyday incongruity. I choose to treat the "Deadpan" aesthetics of contemporary photography as an observational strategy, utilizing its inherent transparency, extreme clarity, and minimal emotional intervention to establish a neutral container within the image. This allows me to distill displaced objects from the noise of everyday narratives. For me, this visual treatment is essentially a means of countering habitual perception; when an image ceases to provide active emotional guidance, the cracks hidden within the order of reality are forced to manifest.

Specifically, my visual practice is informed and balanced by two primary dimensions: on one hand, the establishment of image texture and a sense of framing, which utilizes precise visual description to allow objects to manifest an intense material presence

once their coordinates are invalidated; on the other hand, the development of an observational perspective that seeks to capture moments of surreal texture within mundane landscapes. The combination of these two elements constitutes my method for a neutral sampling of everyday order. The following sections will further analyze the artistic cases that have inspired me in terms of image rhetoric and landscape observation during the formation of my creative concepts.

The term "Deadpan" originally derives from theater and cinematic performance, referring to an actor's ability to maintain a completely rigid or expressionless face (where "pan" is slang for the face) to produce a dry, humorous, or detached effect.[12] When transposed into the context of photography, it refers to a visual style that refuses to actively convey emotional messages or provide dramatic guidance. In contemporary photography, Deadpan is not

12 Peter Lančarič, "The Theoretical and Philosophical Basis of the Deadpan Aesthetics," European Journal of Science and Theology 13, no. 6 (2017): 108-109.

merely an "unemotional" style; it represents a strategy of ultimate objectification and a rational mode of seeing. By removing the creator's subjective lyricism, the image maintains an equal and rational distance from the viewer.

According to Charlotte Cotton, Deadpan is a "cool, detached observation."[13] Its visual characteristics typically include a frontal perspective, a lack of obvious emotional direction, and an ultimate pursuit of detail. This aesthetic removes the photographer from the role of a subjective intervener, making the image appear as a "neutral statement" of reality. Peter Lančarič further defines it as a "specific, scientific, and systematic methodology," aiming to create an objective factual visual record.[14] This approach shifts the "burden of interpretation" from the artist to the viewer, forcing them to engage in independent thought within a context

13 Charlotte Cotton, The Photograph as Contemporary Art (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014), 81.
14 Lančarič, "The Theoretical and Philosophical Basis," 107.

devoid of emotional cues.

Furthermore, Michael Fried's concept of "Antitheatricality" provides a philosophical foundation for this calmness.[15] He argues that Deadpan images possess a "self-contained" quality, where the objects within appear to be in a state of "Absorption"—entirely immersed in their own material existence while ignoring the gaze of the viewer. This rhetoric establishes a "psychological distance" in viewing. This distance is not intended to create mere alienation but to break the viewer’s habitual emotional identification with everyday objects. When the image refuses to "perform" for the viewer, the object is released from its original functional chains and social myths, returning to its primal "Thingness." Under this cool and depersonalized observation, the incongruity and absurdity of reality are no longer revealed through dramatic conflict, but rather

15 Noam Leshem and Lauren A. Wright, "Reviews: Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before by Michael Fried," Critical Quarterly 51, no. 2 (2009): 113-114.

through a near-archival, expressionless disclosure that forces the viewer to confront the strange existence of what was previously taken for granted.



img 12



img 13

Artist References

In examining how the Deadpan aesthetic intervenes in image construction, the visual lexicon of Swedish director Roy Andersson provides a profound dialectic. Andersson developed a stylistic hallmark known as the “Complex Image,” where each shot is treated as a self-contained work of art or a tableau vivant. This extreme pursuit of the individual frame aligns his cinematic logic more closely with the contemplative nature of still photography. Andersson’s construction of Deadpan does not stem from a random capture of reality but through a precise “visual cooling” achieved within a highly artificial studio environment. By deliberately removing all dramatic shadows and employing a pale, desaturated color palette for both the spatial settings and the characters' skin tones, he eliminates emotional fluctuations. This “bleached light” renders the characters as rigid and lifeless as specimens, achieving a state of de-personalized, neutral recording in a visual sense.

This establishment of calmness is deeply inspired by the 1920s movement of Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity) in painting. In an interview with Philippe Bober (2020),[16] Andersson noted that the power of New Objectivity lies in its “sharpness and meticulousness,” where all elements within the frame are simultaneously in focus. He consciously challenges the cinematic convention of background blurring, insisting that images should achieve a clarity where “everything is important.” This application of extreme deep focus grants equal visual weight to grotesque details and mundane landscapes alike. Such a “de-centralized” quality serves as a key mechanism within the Deadpan rhetoric to strip away the viewer’s emotional projection and pivot toward rational observation. When the image ceases to dictate a focal point through depth of field or lighting, the viewer is compelled to engage in “scanning” the various layers of the static frame (Chinita, 2018). Andersson asserts that “space tells the truth more than the human face

16 https://artouch.com/people/content-12190.html

does,” and thus refuses the use of emotional close-ups, believing that the closer one gets to a subject, the less one truly perceives of their essence. This cool and detached distance allows space itself to emerge as a material subject endowed with narrative agency.

This rhetoric of extreme stillness makes the “displacement” occurring within the space appear exceptionally sharp. In Andersson’s imagery, incongruous historical fragments or surreal events are frequently juxtaposed within pale, emotionally disconnected “non-places,” such as offices or clinics. As film critic Enoch Tam (2015) observes, Andersson’s imagery invites the viewer into a mode of “contemplative viewing.”[17] Because the camera maintains absolute immobility and refuses to provide emotional cues, the banality and absurdity of reality are laid bare under this “compulsive gaze.” Through this radical practice of

17 Enoch Tam, "A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence: A Mode of Contemplative Viewing," Hong Kong Film Critics Society, April 28, 2015, https://reurl.cc/Ykzkll.

Deadpan, Andersson successfully shifts the image from mere narration to a philosophical disclosure, forcing the viewer to confront the strange yet inevitable truths of the human condition within these cool and meticulously constructed frames.

On the other hand, Jeff Wall's photographic practice elevates the Deadpan aesthetic to the pinnacle of "staged photography." His core aesthetic revolves around the concept of "Near Documentary"—a process of "re-presenting" reality through highly artificial, cinematographic means of production. According to the critical analysis by Zheng (2019), Wall's work is not a random "capture" of a spontaneous moment in the traditional photographic sense, but rather a deliberate "re-presentation" of visual experience. Through the meticulous restoration of realistic details, Wall imbues his images with a documentary-like objectivity that is, in fact, the result of extreme human control. This "second-order construction" of reality grants mundane, everyday spaces a painterly sense of solemnity and physical

pressure.

A quintessential example is the work "*Insomnia*" (1994), which depicts a man lying exhausted on a cramped kitchen floor in the middle of the night. Although the act of a man lying on the ground carries strong narrative tension, Wall employs an exceptionally cool and detached treatment. According to the analysis by Michael Fried (2008), this work demonstrates an ultimate "Antitheatricality."[18] The man in the image exists in a state of total "Absorption", he is entirely immersed in the agony of insomnia and the absurdity of his surroundings, his gaze and posture completely ignoring the presence of the spectator. This negation of the viewer establishes a cold, inviolable psychological distance, which lies at the heart of Deadpan's philosophical depth: by removing dramatic emotional cues, the image transforms into a closed, self-contained system, thereby returning the agency of interpretation to the viewer.

18 Michael Fried, Why Photography Matters, 143.

Technically, Wall demonstrates how to utilize the clarity of “deep focus” to grant equal visual weight to the cluttered kitchen details, the faded floor, and the recumbent man. Zheng (2019)[19] points out that Wall’s work pursues a “truth” attained through contemplation; by materializing light and obsessively refining details, he allows an ordinary space to manifest a sense of uncanny reality. Within this Deadpan framework, the body of the man lying on the floor is no longer a mere vessel for emotion but functions more like an “object” displaced into a desolate space. The viewer is compelled to engage in “scanning” the layers of this static frame, confronting the strange yet inevitable truths hidden within the banality of everyday life.

19 https://arthistorystrolls.com/?p=4397



img 14



img 15

Parallel Influences

In *Sleeping by the Mississippi*, Alec Soth manifests a photographic relationship born of "curiosity"—one rooted not in a photographer’s preconceived critique of social phenomena, but in a brief, warm encounter with a stranger. Regarding the photograph *Charles, Vasa, Minnesota*, Soth describes this process as something akin to a "performance" co-authored by the photographer and the subject. Rather than treating the subject as an object for study, he enters the subject's self-constructed living space with a gaze nearing affection. The core of this image-making lies in a "poetic rupture"; Soth deliberately avoids complete, prose-like narratives in favor of capturing moments that are fragmented, ambiguous, yet charged with tension.

In the case of Charles, the rooftop photograph was not intended to imbue the object with some social metaphor, but rather to respond to the subject's will to live, expressed within his private domain (such as

the attic he refers to as his "cockpit"). When Charles stands on the roof holding model airplanes, the incongruity between the object and the environment is essentially the photographer's intuitive presentation of the subject's inner world, rather than a deliberately orchestrated symbol. Through this approach—emphasizing "immediate feeling" over "predefined meaning"—Soth allows the object to generate a natural sense of displacement within the frame. This method of construction ensures that the work not only records the physical presence of the object in space but also preserves the visual temperature generated at the moment the shutter is pressed, based on the understanding and resonance between the photographer and the subject.

If Deadpan aesthetics provide a sense of structural stability, then Issei Suda's way of seeing has provided a crucial inspiration for my observational perspective. He does not pursue grand narratives; instead, he locks his gaze onto the most trivial fragments of the mundane street. He excels at stripping away a strong sense of the "unhomely" from an extremely ordinary reality through precise composition and the intensification of visual textures. For me, this gaze acts as a form of visual sampling, capable of unearthing hidden, surreal energies from beneath the surface of everyday order.

In Suda's logic of observation, he does not create displacement through physical movement; rather, through an estranged gaze, he transforms familiar everyday objects—such as roadside greenery, street artifacts, or ordinary spatial corners—into visual symbols charged with raw tension. This observational logic is highly consistent with my own observation of the "endogenous absurdity" found in Taiwan's streets: both seek to identify moments that are unsettling yet possess

intense material tension within a mediocre order.

I borrow the texture from his gaze, one that is both detached and penetrating, and transform it into my own practical strategy. Suda's influence allows me to maintain an acute intuition when confronting sites of displacement within the landscape, attempting to preserve that ineffable sense of strangeness within the object. Through this estranged gaze, the everyday landscape is no longer a passive background but a visual field full of cracks in order, waiting to be re-perceived.



img 16

Absurd

04

Streetfood / Concept and Execution

My practice of "Active Gaze" originated from observations of European streets. Upon arriving in Austria, I noticed the frequent appearance of abandoned food items on the pavement—a phenomenon that contradicted my previous experience, where food rarely appeared in public spaces unless by accidental dropping. While this involves various social and cultural factors, my primary interest lay in the profound visual rupture these objects created within the landscape. Consequently, I began documenting them.

During the recording process, I adhered to a non-interventionist principle: I did not touch the objects, alter the scene, or wait for specific lighting or timing. I simply sought them out through random encounters, as many were readily present without deliberate searching. This approach ensured that the documented incongruity between the object and the landscape remained an authentic occurrence.

In the sampling process, I developed a specific logic for object selection. Compared to the ubiquitous empty beverage bottles on the street, I was more drawn to solid foods with clear "edible functions, such as French fries, bread, or burgers. These objects possess a strong material presence. Within social consensus, they should exist in a state of being "consumed" or "properly disposed of in a trash bin." However, when they are abandoned on the pavement in their complete forms, a powerful visual friction is generated between their "edibility" and the "desolation of the environment."

In terms of photographic strategy, I primarily employed two methods. When the food was surrounded by clear landscaped landmarks, such as storefronts or trash bins, I deliberately increased the shooting distance to include the full environmental context. This established a defined scene, allowing viewers to recognize the outdoor setting, which in turn highlighted the anomaly of the food as an "object that should not be there." Conversely, if the food lacked surrounding environmental information—for

instance, if it lay on a nondescript tiled floor, I adopted a more isolated and concentrated gaze.

After accumulating dozens of images, I organized and printed them into a physical Zine. For me, this was a process of transforming random observations into an "archive." In the editing phase, I avoided complex layouts, opting instead to juxtapose the images in a simple, repetitive manner.

When these seemingly accidental displacement phenomena, originally scattered across various locations, are gathered together, the cumulative visual information allows viewers to more clearly perceive the pervasive ruptures within daily order. Printing the images on paper also endowed these everyday fragments with a tangible weight,



img 17



img 18



img 19



img 20



img 21

Streetfood / Reflecting

This series situates itself in conversation with Gabriel Orozco’s logic of "displacement." In Orozco’s work, placing mundane objects in unexpected settings such as an orange on a windowsill disrupts the viewer’s automated perception. Similarly, the abandoned food items I document are functionally obsolete. By being captured out of place, they are momentarily liberated from their original systems of consumption.

However, a key distinction lies in the nature of intervention. While Orozco’s work is driven by a deliberate artistic will to manufacture absurdity, the Street Food series focuses on pre-existing displacements. I do not intervene in the scene; instead, I position myself as an observer of the authentic ruptures created by the oversight, forgetfulness, or randomness already present within the social order.

This practice also echoes Kyoichi Tsuzuki’s "wild sociology." Like Tsuzuki, I am interested in the reality at the system’s edge, documenting spaces often excluded by mainstream aesthetics. Yet, my approach diverges in the purity of visual processing. While Tsuzuki accumulates dense, prose-like details to build a folk narrative, I tend to isolate the object from its environment.

Compared to Tsuzuki’s broad sampling, I employ a more restrained, eye-level gaze to extract single objects from their backgrounds. By attenuating subjective emotion and narrative intent, I focus on the direct material conflict between the object and the space. This observational displacement is positioned between Orozco’s active intervention and Tsuzuki’s social documentation, serving as a neutral sampling of everyday disharmony.

Railways / Concept and Execution

During my residency in Japan, I sought to integrate local landscape characteristics with the core of my creative practice. The region where I resided had suffered from severe flooding, which left the primary railway system damaged and inoperable, abruptly interrupting the daily routines that relied on rail transport. Through field investigations, I discovered that while these abandoned tracks maintained a clear sense of physical order, their social function had completely stalled. My initial location scouting revealed a transitional state of "functional retreat." This transformed the railway from a fluid tool of transportation into a static, theatrical space—an ideal stage for experimenting with everyday absurdity.



img 22



img 23

Once the creative direction was established, I proactively contacted and negotiated with the president of the local railway company, attempting to transform this dysfunctional public landscape into a site for practice. To heighten the contrast between functional stagnation and daily life, I invited local residents to participate in the project. During the behind-the-scenes preparation and communication, I asked participants to bring objects that represented their daily identities, professions, or lifestyles into the scene. I specifically suggested objects of significant volume or quantity (such as stacks of crops or unrolled fishing nets) to ensure that the visual tension between the objects and the environment remained potent within the vast, deep perspective of the railway.

During the actual implementation, I selected over a dozen shooting locations along the tracks, ultimately completing ten sets of portraits across various professions. Participants included local farmers, barbers, fishermen, and firefighters, who brought items such as baskets of chestnuts and farming tools, barber chairs

and cutting implements, stacks of fishing nets, and fire rescue equipment into the scene. These distinct professional identities and their corresponding heavy-duty objects were lined up within the linear space of the abandoned railway, forming a series of "visual ruptures" concerning daily functions.

Unlike traditional landscape photography, I positioned the participants in the center of the tracks—a hazardous area strictly prohibited during system operation; this act itself constituted a minor harassment of spatial logic. During the shoot, I deliberately avoided dramatic emotional direction or choreographed movements, instead requiring participants to appear with their objects in a mundane, almost portrait-like posture. This detached recording method allowed environmental information and objects to coexist as equals within the frame, rather than emphasizing individual personality. Through this "actively manufactured" displacement, familiar everyday objects appeared incongruous and ambiguous on the non-functional tracks, thereby inducing the visual friction hidden beneath the veneer of order.



img 24



img 25



img 26



img 27

Railways / Reflecting

In terms of visual syntax, this series draws from the photographic language of Alec Soth, particularly his use of a calm, descriptive gaze to establish a symbiotic relationship between subjects and their environments. However, the focus here moves in a different direction. While Soth's work often seeks metaphorical narratives within a landscape, my approach utilizes a similar visual clarity to examine a state of functional stagnation. The goal is not to tell a story through the objects, but to observe the material tension that arises when their utility is suspended.

This reinterpretation of public infrastructure parallels the work of Motoyuki Shitamichi, specifically his documentation of Shinto gates that have been repurposed for daily use. Both practices share an interest in how the function of a public structure shifts over time. While Shitamichi observes a "natural translation" driven by necessity, my work on this disaster-damaged railway explores a proactive reconstruction of meaning within a functional vacuum. By placing items like barber chairs or tools onto the tracks, I create an intervention that highlights the site's status as a "static stage" rather than a path for movement.

This method also incorporates a tableau aesthetic similar to Roy Andersson, where uniform lighting and a fixed scene amplify the inherent absurdity of the everyday. Under this invalidated order, these domestic objects become incongruous points of disturbance. They maintain their physical presence but are detached from the logic of production.

Through this non-dramatic presentation, the practice moves away from the human-centric storytelling often found in documentary photography. Instead, it combines a Shitamichi-style logic of landscape sampling with a static tableau syntax. This transforms the railway into a theatrical space, revealing the visual friction that occurs when a public system is stripped of its default function and replaced by the weight of everyday absurdity.

Laundry / Concept and Execution

Upon returning to Taiwan, my observational focus shifted toward the awkward incongruity found in the local streetscape. Unlike the sporadic displacement observed in Austria, Taiwan's streetscape often exhibits a sense of chaos formed by multiple overlapping functions. I found that residents habitually place private objects—such as potted plants, furniture, and laundry—within public spaces. This lifestyle blurs the boundaries between public and private, making this "out of place" state a symbiotic norm.

I paid particular attention to the act of outdoor laundry and house demolitions. In these transitional sites, the private sphere overflows into the public realm in ways that are both mundane and surreal. I captured the awkward pairings that result, such as brightly colored laundry hanging on cold industrial fences or private furniture exposed amidst the rubble of a demolition. These scenes reveal the visual ruptures that occur when the social or architectural order collapses.

Compared to the relative simplicity of Austrian streets, the layers of Taiwan's urban environment are far more complex. To navigate this visual clutter, I employ a more concentrated perspective to manage the environmental noise. By isolating these misplaced objects within the frame, I aim to create a sense of estrangement, allowing them to emerge with their own peculiar presence even against a cluttered background.



img 28



img 29



img 30



img 31

Laundry / Reflecting

The practice in Taiwan deepens the definition of the absurd landscape within this research. If the displacement in Austria is an accident of coordinates, the Taiwanese landscape reveals an endogenous absurdity. This absurdity stems from a dynamic process where the boundaries between public and private, or daily life and infrastructure, are constantly blurring and reorganizing.

In the early stages of this practice, I originally focused on abandoned roadside furniture. However, I realized that furniture recycling is a common social behavior in Europe, which often dissipates the specificity of its displacement within cultural norms. To capture an absurdity unique to Taiwan, I had to seek an act that is extremely ordinary locally but profoundly incongruous from a cross-cultural perspective. Although the phenomenon of roadside laundry is not exclusive to Taiwan and can be found in various cultural contexts, I chose to utilize it as a specific visual sample of the local streetscape. For me, this act represents a functional hijacking of public infrastructure, serving as a forced embedding of private life into public space where domestic acts meet an aggressive industrial landscape.

Subject	Cultural Context	Visual Tension	Decision
Discarded Furniture	Common in most regions; lacks unique cultural identity.	**Medium** (follows social norms)	**Exclude**
Potted Plants / Clutter	Standard background in Taiwan; too common to be noticed.	**Low** (tension is diluted)	**Exclude**
Street Laundry	Private use of public space; uncommon in modern urban settings.	**High** (strong conflict and texture)	**Select**

img 32 Selection Criteria for Displacement Objects in Taiwan

I am particularly interested in the awkward pairings that result from this private-sphere overflow. In my work, I capture soft and colorful textiles hanging on cold industrial fences or public utilities. This composition creates a visual collapse of coordinates where the construction fence loses its original function as a barrier and is transformed into a household fixture. When these private fabrics are juxtaposed with heavy machinery or urban noise, their original functions of concealment are stripped away. In the public eye, they are transformed into ambiguous and abrupt symbols that possess a peculiar and absurd dignity.

This further verifies the collapse of the stage set described by Albert Camus in The Myth of Sisyphus. Through framing these states of natural chaos, I do not seek to beautify disorder but to analyze the specific logic of functional layering. To navigate the visual clutter, I employ a concentrated perspective to manage the environmental noise. By isolating these misplaced objects, I aim to reveal the raw and vital absurd energy

that remains in a constant state of overflow beneath the surface of daily order.

Stone / Concept and Execution

The practice at this stage represents a transition from "observational capture" to "active media intervention." I am attempting to utilize specific image carriers to proactively manufacture a logical rupture within closed, standardized spaces. This practice was not achieved instantaneously; rather, it underwent a systematic screening process focusing on the "narrativity" and "materiality" of objects to verify which heterogeneous elements could generate the most intense absurd tension when placed in everyday environments.

In the early stages, I conducted field tests on various heterogeneous object images—a process of continuous trial and error aimed at eliminating "narrative interference." To clarify which objects would produce the strongest sense of dislocation within a standardized tiled space, I have organized the preliminary results into the following table :

Object	Characteristics	Analysis of Visual Impact	Decision
Fried Egg	Sensory, everyday	It has too many associations with food and daily life. People focus on "dropped food" or hygiene issues instead of the space itself, making the absurdity feel more like a joke.	**Excluded**
Pigeon	Biological, energetic	It feels too much like a living creature. In a closed space, it creates a sense of "animal intrusion," which is too distracting and emotional for a calm, visual study.	**Excluded**
Mailbox	Symbolic, social function	It has a very clear social purpose as a man-made object. It looks too much like a surreal collage, which makes it harder to achieve a true sense of "coordinate failure."	**Excluded**
Stone (AI-Generated)	**Neutral, pure matter**	**It has no life or social function. Its solid, primordial look creates a sharp contrast with the tiles. Using AI lets me control the texture perfectly to get the strongest visual tension.**	**Selected**

img 33 Selection Criteria for printed Objects i

to create the images. Instead of searching for a specific rock in nature, I use AI as a tool to 'construct' an image that meets my exact visual requirements. By clearing away natural distractions, I can focus entirely on controlling light, shadow, and volume to achieve a specific sense of presence. This 'simulated materiality' provides a heavy, solid quality that might be difficult to capture in a spontaneous environment, allowing the stone to function as a deliberate, foreign object that interrupts the existing space.



img 34

In the final setup, I turned these high-res stone images into physical paper prints and placed them carefully inside a restroom—a place that is cold, highly standardized, and covered in tiles. This stone doesn't actually exist in the real world, but because it looks so "grounded" and "primordial," it creates a massive visual tension against the restroom, which is all about being "perfectly hygienic" and "man-made." By lining up the camera angle just right, I turned a 2D piece of paper into a 3D illusion, tricking the viewer's sense of depth. This artificial scene forces anyone looking at it to notice the physical clash between the paper image and the actual room, all within a quiet, non-narrative frame. What this project ultimately proves is that when you drop a virtual object—one with no social function or backstory, just pure physical presence—into an everyday setting, the normal order we take for granted finally starts to crack, revealing a deeper kind of absurdity.



img 35

Stone / Reflecting

At the heart of this work is a dual displacement. First is the displacement of texture: transforming a three-dimensional, heavy stone into a two-dimensional print. Second is the displacement of space: placing this image in a restroom—a setting completely at odds with its original logic.

Conceptually, this echoes the approach of Thomas Demand. Rather than recording reality, Demand reconstructs it with paper before photographing it. He maintains a strict Deadpan rhetoric—calm, emotionless, and highly clear. This visual "coldness" amplifies the gap between the material (paper) and the actual object. My Stone project follows a similar logic. By using a Deadpan frame, I hide the drama of human intervention, drawing the viewer’s attention instead to the "material friction" between the image of the stone and the tiled space.

Here, photography is no longer just a record; it is a tool for questioning what is "real." When a digitally generated texture is printed and physically placed in a space, it triggers a conflict between two realities: the perfect digital fiction and the physical evidence of the environment. This is more than just a visual "out-of-place" moment; it is an identity displacement of the medium itself. Through this dual strategy, I invite the viewer to see that perception can be dismantled and rebuilt. It is not just an intervention in a landscape, but a direct challenge to the definition of the image as a "real substance."

Presentation

A living room is originally defined by functions of comfort and rest; however, when used as an exhibition space, its inherent functionality becomes alienated. Heterogeneous objects within the images (such as Austrian street food or non-functional Japanese railways) enter the domestic environment, creating a direct juxtaposition with sofas, televisions, or everyday furniture. This practice implements the core concept of this study: when an object (the image) leaves its "proper place" and enters a living field where it "should not appear," the ordinariness of the site rubs against the absurdity of the image, generating intense visual friction.

Regarding the presentation, I plan to select approximately 20 works of varying sizes. Through a mix of different scales, I intend to establish a "visual chaos" within the space—the oppressive weight of large-scale images intertwining with the fragmented nature of smaller ones. This sense of saturation allows viewers to intuitively experience the collapse and reassembly of reality upon entering. I have opted for an unframed approach, allowing the photographic paper to retain its material characteristics; some works are suspended to fill the air. As viewers move through the space, they cannot appreciate the works from a standard horizontal perspective as in a museum. Instead, they must lean, crouch, or bypass obstacles, forcing a physical interaction between the body and the artwork. The image is no longer just an object on the wall, but a tangible obstacle within the space.

Conclusion

05

This project all started with a gut feeling, an intuitive interest in "out-of-place" things I saw in the landscape. In the beginning, this interest was blurry and hard to put into words because it was just a visual attraction. But through writing and analyzing this thesis, I've been able to break down what's actually behind that feeling. It's about stripping away an object's function, misplacing its carrier, and making its coordinates lose their meaning.

For me, the most important part of this research was turning that spontaneous intuition into a workable method. By systematically looking at the idea of displacement, I'm no longer just waiting around for absurdity to happen by chance. Now I understand how to actively trigger visual friction through physical intervention and image rhetoric. This methodology isn't just a summary of this paper; it's the foundation for my future work.

If I look at my identity as both an observer and a maker, being an observer is like a natural instinct to me. I've always been obsessed with collecting those random, absurd bits of daily life. But being a "maker" was the most interesting takeaway from this study. From collaborating with locals in Japan to trying

out staged scenes with my friends, I realized that stepping in and making something happen isn't about distorting reality. This leap from capturing to making has really expanded the boundaries of my art practice.

Finally, writing this thesis felt like a deep look back at everything I've done over the last two years. Projects that were scattered across different times and places are now tightly sewn together by this one idea of displacement. This "sewing" process didn't just give my old work a new meaning, it also helped me see exactly where I stand right now. This paper isn't just an academic requirement to finish my degree. It's my own personal methodology for finding the absurdity in everyday life, a way to bring my life experiences, my eyes, and my art all together into one clear vision.

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