* Project Statement

Languages are symbols, they are the information which be given. And information can be anything.

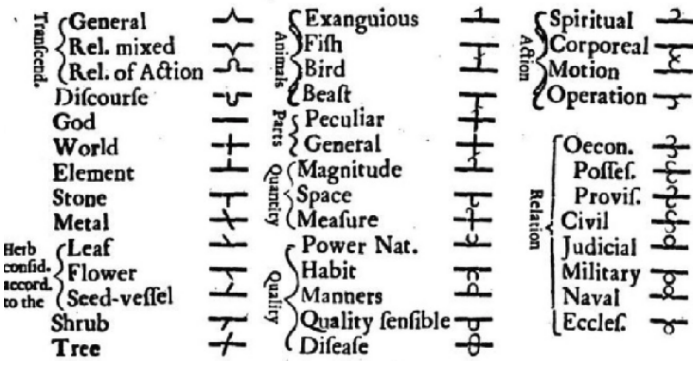
This project explores the evolving visual language of plants, inspired by the account of research on plant vision in *What a Plant Knows: A Field Guide to the Senses*, and focusing on 1/11 of the plant "visual" language - Phytochrome B. Through the visualization of the information from Phytochrome B, basic characters are constructed, and a series of visual expressions with life form characteristics are gradually deduced based on the life cycle and behavioral logic of plants. In this way, the almost infinite and diverse possibilities contained in plants when responding to the concept of differentiation and development of language are demonstrated. And everything is based on the differentiation and evolution of the same basic symbol.

* 1 Reference specifically related to your project in its method

At the begining of this project, I have consistently aimed to convey the idea that language is information. Though languages may appear different and distinct, they in fact originate from a unified body of knowledge.

This led me to reference the concept from linguistic movement in 17th century, particularly John Wilkins' *An Essay Towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language*. In it, Wilkins sought to translate all human knowledge into a universal symbolic language, with the aim of breaking down boundaries and enhancing the exchange of information.

Notably, he used only extremely simple basic shapes, which, through various combinations, generated thousands of symbolic characters. This approach mirrors the encoding logic I follow—deriving infinite formal possibilities from a single, simple foundational element.



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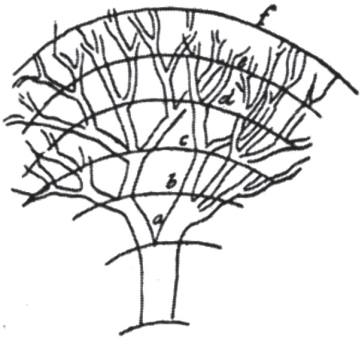
Munari, B., [1978] 2004. Drawing a Tree. Mantova: Edizioni Corraini.

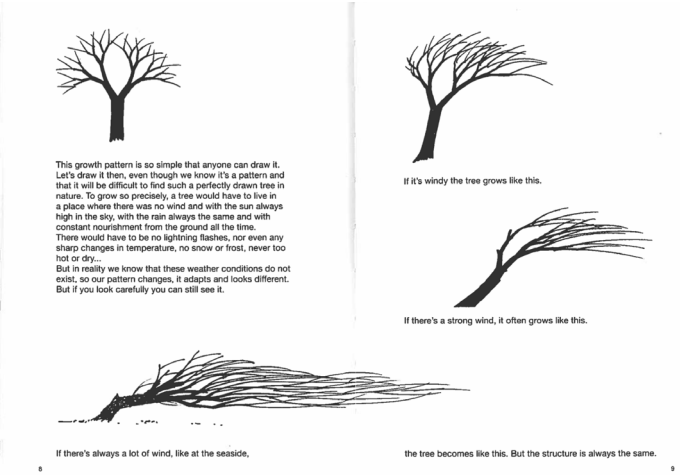
* 1 Reference specifically related to your project in its topic

Draw a Tree, based on Leonardo da Vinci's botanical studies, poetically and narratively explores the differentiated forms of a tree under various environmental conditions. Unlike conventional scientific works, its narrative approach shifts the focus from purely rational analysis to a more imagination on life and the individuality of living forms. It's a direction I've always been drawn to: while science and coding remain central to my research, I am particularly interested in how rational and complex content can be embedded within contextualized scenarios and communicated through emotionally resonant means.

For instance, the temporal logic of watching a tree slowly grow and transform—accompanied by narrative text rather than dry, intricate diagrams—creates a more immersive and affective experience.

Additionally, I drew inspiration from the book's analytical method of layering a tree's structure, adopting the stages of a plant's visual function as a framework for stratification, and used this logic to create a foundational information chart.





References list

Wilkins, J., 1668. An Essay Towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language. London: Printed for Sa. Gellibrand and for John Martyn. Available at: https://archive.org/details/AnEssayTowardsARealCharacterAndAPhilosophicalLanguage [Accessed 30 April 2025].

* 1 Reference **demonstrates a critical position in context of your specific topic, medium, or method**

In the subsequent iterations of this universal symbol project, I zoomed in on the original translated passage, ultimately narrowing my focus to just one word: "Language." Yet even this single word reveals an overwhelming complexity. Following a dictionary-style deconstruction of its meanings, I broke "Language" down into three concepts within plant thinking: "synchronization," "extension," and "development." I then dove into each of these notions, exploring the countless expressive traits plants display in response to them — suddenly, it all seemed infinite.

Perec's *Think, Classify* (1985) echoes a similar critical perspective: given the complex standards by which we classify information, assigned by a fixed code or logic to the entirety of the world appears nearly impossible (Perec, 1985, p.186). The book also questions how we understand and classify vocabulary — for instance, in the case of synonyms: they are alike, yet never fully the same. So how can we distinguish between them?

This led me to consider two directions:
1. In the case of the three meanings derived from "Language" in plant languages — "synchronization," "extension," and "development" — which aspects share common traits that might accurately express the word "Language"? In practice, I also attempted to emphasize a particular type of plant behavior in order to highlight the shared qualities I intended to translate from the original word.
2. Alternatively, perhaps "language" is inherently a word of infinite meanings — one that is ambiguous, unreadable, "taking us back to that original burbling in which we can with difficulty make out what might be called the readable" (Perec, 1985, p.186). At the same time, it can be rich and open-ended. For example, Perec mentions a dozen different words describing the various states between water and ice. I believe this second direction also speaks to the core of my project, even as it challenges my initial desire to encode and translate information into a unified symbolic language.

Based on the differentiation and enumeration above, I carried out iterations of the patterns. For example, using the same basic shape, I derived different plant parts based on the three outlined meanings (and the distinct movement logics that stem from them). Even when a single shape forms the same plant part, the resulting pattern can be entirely different. Through this process, I arrived at nearly a hundred variations.

For the method of classification and presentation, I found inspiration in the reference book *Draw a Tree*, which organizes elements according to a temporal growth dimension: seed, root/stem, leaf, flower. Following this, I arranged everything in that order. However, I started to question whether this seemingly straightforward sequence was truly definitive.

In *Think, Classify* (1985), there is a reflection on modes of classification, presentation, and understanding: "The products must be offered to visitors in a logical sequence,⋯ and their classification must answer to a simple, clear and precise conception bearing its own philosophy and justification within it, so that the overall idea may be easily grasped." (p.188) In the context of my project, this logical structure might be the differentiation of cells and language: in the process of plant growth, cells continuously divide—from seed to flower; and within the various stages of growth, responses to different semantic orientations shift into different patterns. In this growth, semantics always blurred and intertwined. "Sei Shonagon does not classify, she enumerates and then starts again. A particular topic prompts a list, of simple statements or anecdotes. Later on, an almost identical topic will produce another list, and so on. In this way we end up with series that can be regrouped." (p.193)

References list

Perec, G. (1982). Penser/Classer. Le Genre humain, (2), pp.184–201.

* 2 Reference **drawn from the course reading list that situate your project in a broader discourse or conceptual domain**

Exercises in Style recounts the same story in 99 different styles, but the shifts in tone, slang, gender, personality, and perspective present entirely new interpretations and meanings. "The more I go into each variation, the more I see in it."(p.15) This demonstrates the possibilities of language or grammar—how, once personal stance is introduced, language can undergo iteration and transformation through different combinations, perspectives, structures, and styles.

This idea inspired the design approach of my project: through continuous iterations and variations, I aim to refine and delve into different layers of meaning and perspective, translate the same word 'language'. and explore what unexpected outcomes these accumulations and iterations might bring to the original word "Language." As the author mentions, he felt as if he were trying to destroy literature—though that was not his intention. Similarly, in the development of my project, the continuous process of translation seems that variations and stylistic transformations of a single form ultimately reveal the infinite possibilities embedded within language and the words "Language" itself.

In *Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation*, a common mode of iteration is discussed: all creation relies on the modification and recombination of what already exists, and virtually anything can be combined to produce something new, as long as there is a necessary connection. This logic of iteration—such as the differentiation that occurs under certain conditions like the survival laws of plants—is also the logic I follow. Based on real botanical information, I use the interplay of different visual languages of plants (each possessing a certain purpose related to survival) to reorganize various behavioral logics, thereby generating a series of new iterative results. And these outcomes naturally exhibit a morphological convergence with forms found in nature.

At the same time, as the text suggests, this process of iteration also involves a degree of morphological continuity, composed of gradual, incremental changes rather than abrupt leaps.The continuity of these transformations renders the process traceable, with all iterations ultimately stemming from a simple initial input — highlighting my interpretation of linguistic divergence.

References list

Queneau, R., [1947] 1998. Exercises in Style. London: John Calder.

References list

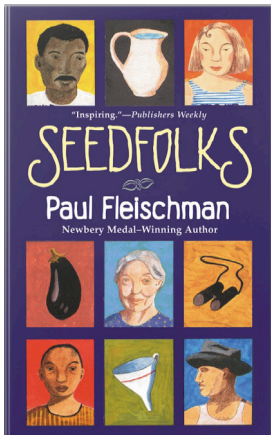
Jencks, C. and Silver, N., [1972] 2013. Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

* 1 Wild Card **identify another type of relationship**

After encoding hundreds of variations of the same plant language and compressing these linguistic information charts into numerous forms resembling seeds, leaves, and flowers, I began to contemplate how to arrange and express these graphical languages side by side. How could I better organize and convey my idea that all differentiated languages in the world originate from a unified source? It was then that I discovered this book.

Seedfolks is a novel exploring community diversity and cultural inclusivity. It tells the story of a girl who starts planting flowers on a vacant lot, which inspires the entire community to plant their own plants, eventually transforming the space into a community garden.

I decided to use this small story as a metaphor and narrative structure, extracting the encoded results of flower-shaped iterations. By categorizing different plants' language information and juxtaposing the language charts from each category, I create distinct yet uniquely blossoming gardens of differentiation.



References list

Fleischman, P. (2004) Seedfolks. New York: Collins. (Joanna Cotler Books).