In 'The Alphabetical Room<sup>[1]</sup> ' project, the designer dragged the mouse from one margin of a three-dimensional grid. The path created by this movement of writing connected successive grids, forming a black trail that gave the illusion of the letter 'A' floating in a cubic space. While trying to recreate these specific letterforms in Glyphs, my experience felt more like repositioning black pieces on the walls within my own imaginary three-dimensional space than simply writing down the letter 'A'. Such experience was quite intriguing, as treating the two-dimensional digital space as a three-dimensional space.

To continue exploring, I tried to hack this font editor by creating the pixel patterns within its default editing space. But these patterns weren't random - they were based on a hypothetical letterform 巃 that I created, following the rule invented by artist Xu Bing in his project 'An Introduction to Square Word Calligraphy<sup>[2]</sup>.' I used the newly crafted letterform, meaning 'space' in English, as input for my iterative experiments, to minimize the influence that any known letter would cause. As this letterform was barely recognizable, I found myself somehow playing the role of an unspecified 'scribe'. Unlike traditional copying, my approach was quite willful -- I wasn't overly concerned with reliability or legibility. Instead, I treated the two-dimensional editing tab as my three-dimensional exhibition space, where I continuously rewrote and displayed this new letterform 巃. It's worth noting that, despite the accumulation of Opentype files in my laptop folders, they were neither intended for circulation, nor were they exhibits; rather, they were byproducts generated throughout the process. The sole content of this exhibition was the repeated display of 巃, and my primary task was to scrutinize the limitations and conveniences of this 'exhibition room' as a tool.

While experimenting, I always began the process by creating consecutive pixels, following a predetermined order of path as if I were writing the letter 12. Then I manipulated both the grid units and the components within each pixel to reshape the space. It was fascinating to observe patterns evolving in the two-dimensional digital space, like peering into a continuously upgrading kaleidoscope. I could continue this process indefinitely, exploring various combinations of shapes. And if 'projecting forward' and 'make reasonable guesses'<sup>[3]</sup>, this letterform 12 would gain more three-dimensionality. Even though the input for this experiment was not a known letterform, I could still tell that Glyphs, as a tool, were better at assisting me in painstakingly adjusting the shape and spacing of an existing structure. Therefore, at this point, I'd like to pause and reconsider 'manipulating vectors' in Glyphs as an extension of the term 'writing as a technology'<sup>[4]</sup> (2007). Are the typeface always crafted with the intention of being incorporated into the language and script system? In other words, aside from creating hypothetical letter-forms, are there any other scenarios where a letterform is intentionally designed not to conform to any established public system?

References:

- [1] Liad Shadmi. The Alphabetical Room. [2022]. Retrieved from https://www.behance.net/gal-
- lery/151989635/The-Alphabetical-Room

[3] Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver, Pages 51, Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation, [1972] 2013

<sup>[2]</sup> Xu Bing. An Introduction to Square Word Calligraphy. [1996]. Retrieved from https://www.xubing.com/en/work/-details/209?year=1996&type=year#209

<sup>[4]</sup> Ingold, Tim. Drawing, Writing and Calligraphy. Pages 120-151. Lines: A Brief History. [2007].