

In the early stage of Unit 2, my practice focused on how graphic design might challenge the static frame of visual communication—how form, typography, and image could generate a sense of motion through layering, contrast, and the cutting and reassembling of visual elements. What these experiments shared was an exploration of the density of time rather than its linear dimension. I later applied this visual language of overlap, complexity, and instability to themes of identity and memory. In the project *Positions through Contextualising*, I developed a tunnel book that translated this sense of temporal density into physical form, breaking the boundary between two- and three-dimensional space to examine how, as a Mainland Chinese individual, my identity and memory were reconstructed through the spatial layering of life in Hong Kong.

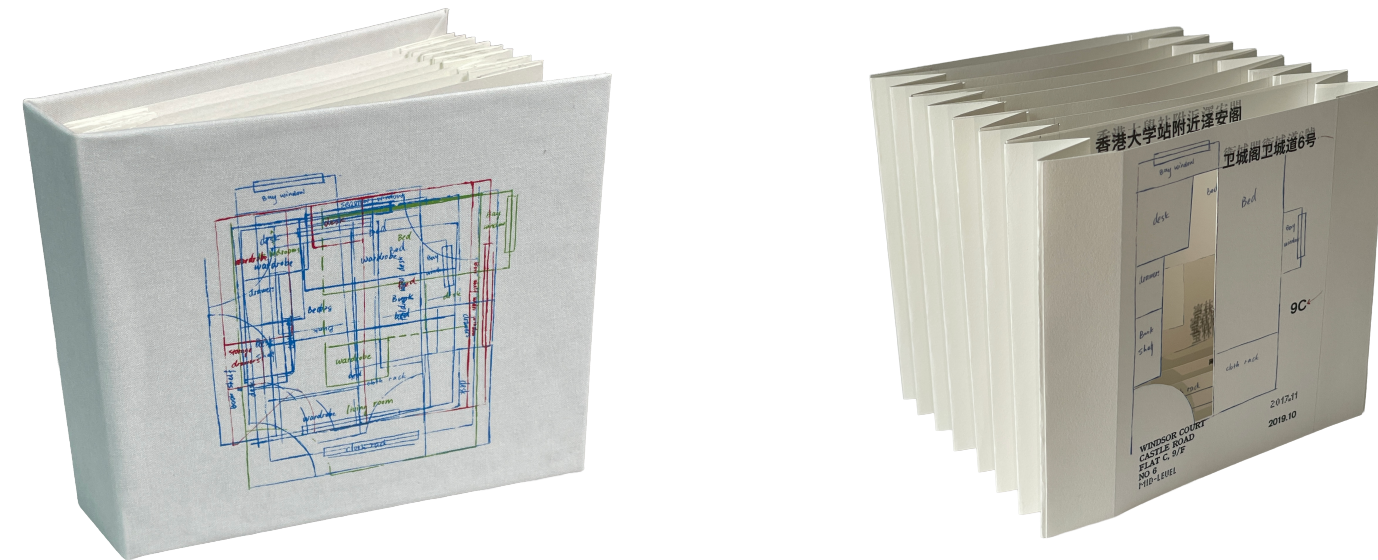
In the second half of Unit 2, my focus shifted toward the visual representation of identity in the British context—specifically, how Chineseness is shaped and reinterpreted. Through everyday observation, I noticed that many visual representations of “China” in the UK—particularly within Chinese restaurants and shops—carry a sense of the “familiar yet strange,” a split between intimacy and alienation. This led me to ask: Who constructed this visual grammar? By studying the history of Chinese migration and the development of Chinese cuisine in Britain, I realised that visual style and migration patterns are deeply interconnected. The early and post-war Hong Kong immigrants of the 1950s–60s established a symbolic, decorative, and often accommodating aesthetic; after the 1980s, with the arrival of Mainland immigrants, new visual strategies emphasised regional specificity and “authenticity”; and since the 2010s, a younger generation raised in a globalised environment has introduced a more branded, individualised visual language that responds to the Western gaze through self-expression. Based on these observations, I began to collect and categorise these visual samples in a *typological catalogue*—focusing for now on restaurant naming—to examine how *Chineseness* is continually translated, appropriated, and rewritten in the British context.

After analysing Chris Lee’s project *Typography as Racialisation: 1882–1982–2019*, I found certain parallels between his research and my own: both explore how Chinese diasporic identities are visually represented within Western systems, though from different standpoints and methodologies. Lee situates his work in the American context, using typographic reconstruction to reveal the racialised formation of visual language. In contrast, my work operates within the British context, investigating how different migrant communities use visual design to articulate belonging and identity. Lee’s project results in a type specimen that transforms the visual legacy of anti-Chinese history through acts of re-making. My catalogue, meanwhile, begins as a visual archive and gradually evolves into a research tool—one that helps trace the cultural logic beneath surface representations.

This comparison made me realise that mere collection and presentation do not form critical inquiry. I began to refine the structure of my catalogue to encourage a more analytical mode of viewing, while also considering how translation and re-making might become integral to my design methodology. The bilingual street signs in London’s Chinatown became a new point of entry: their Chinese names are transliterations of English through Cantonese pronunciation. For many recent Mainland immigrants, this phonetic and linguistic difference shows a subtle break in recognition and belonging. Whether in the romanisation systems of restaurant names or the writing systems of street signage, I began to ask how visual design might mediate these fractures to create new forms of identification and connection.

Looking ahead, I aim to continue exploring the relationship between translation and representation through both linguistic and visual means. By experimenting across sound, writing systems, and imagery, I hope to reflect on—and reconfigure—how my own dual identity, shaped by experiences in Mainland China and Hong Kong, can negotiate a more fluid and self-defined expression of cultural belonging within the British context.

## SYNTHESIS 2/2



Studio work (first half of unit 2)



## Studio work (second half of unit 2)

*Other reference:*

Roberts, J.A.G. (2002) *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West*. London: Reaktion Books.

Kuhn, P.A. (2016) *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*. Chinese simplified translation. Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing House.

## Positions through triangulating



Typographics (2024) Chris Lee. [online]  
Available at: [https://2024.typographics.com/  
conference/chris-lee](https://2024.typographics.com/conference/chris-lee) (Accessed: 2 October  
2025).

AI tools (ChatGPT) were used for language polishing and translation in Unit 2 writing process.