

# Written Response [Draft 1]

Through copying and analysing motion-based works in After Effects, I began to reconsider my previous understanding of time in relation to making. In the past, I associated time primarily with labour: the longer I spent on a work, the more refined it could become. However, working with animation software shifted this perception. Time no longer functioned only as a measure of production, but as an active compositional structure within the work itself.

Compared to my previous understanding of two-dimensional composition, constructed through points, lines and planes, After Effects introduces time as an additional dimension through which spatial depth is produced, rather than modelled. A single change at one moment in time can transform the entire trajectory of the image. This raises critical questions: how can time operate as a material within composition rather than merely a duration of making? In what ways does temporal control reshape ideas of space and visual rhythm?

To explore these questions, I propose a studio-based experiment in which I animate the same set of graphic elements under different temporal conditions. By keeping spatial composition constant while altering timing, easing and sequencing, I aim to observe how time alone restructures narrative and spatial depth. This experiment will allow me to explore time as an active paintbrush, shaping the composition through duration rather than spatial arrangement.

for Friday, January 23

# Written Response [Draft 2]

After an initial stage of experimentation with After Effects, I became interested in how keyframes govern the majority of actions within the software, and how the intervals I set between them perform much of the work. This led me to reconsider the relationship between time and visual form: Could it operate as a compositional material that translates directly into the artwork? In response to this question, I began to experiment with “hacking” the Timeline Panel, treating it not as a back-end control interface but as a primary site of composition.

However, through this process, it became clear that within After Effects’ operational logic, time itself cannot exist independently of spatial attributes. Keyframes can only regulate the speed or rhythm of transformation between predefined parameters; they cannot autonomously determine where an object moves from or to, nor what shape it becomes. This limitation clarified the role of time within the software: rather than replacing spatial composition, time functions as a relational compositional mechanism, responsible for organising the order, rhythm, and overlap of events.

Against this backdrop, I began to use the *Conditional Design Manifesto* as a methodological lens through which to analyse and advance my enquiry (Maurer *et al.*, 2013). The manifesto emphasises conditions over outcomes, systems over singular forms, and process as something that can be repeatedly executed while producing difference. Rather than attempting to make time directly determine spatial placement, I instead designed a set of experimental conditions that allowed time to intervene in the organisation of graphic relationships.

By keeping the temporal structure consistent while allowing spatial parameters such as scale and position to vary, the same time-based conditions generated multiple visual outcomes. Spatial relationships adapted in response to a fixed temporal framework. In this system, time does not replace spatial composition, but operates as a structuring constraint that governs how spatial elements relate to one another.

By adopting Conditional Design as a methodological framework and working within the constraints of After Effects, the focus shifts from producing a fixed visual result to designing conditions that allow differences to emerge. Rather than resolving the question of time as a compositional material, this process positions graphic communication as something that can unfold, adapt, and remain contingent, existing not as a final image, but as a system negotiating the relationship between time, structure, and visual form.

## Reference:

• Maurer, L., Puckey, J., Wouters, R. and Paulus, E. (2013) *Conditional Design Manifesto*. Amsterdam: Conditional Design.

for Friday, January 30

# Written Response [Draft 3]

Into the third week of the project, the research shifted from exploring time as a potential compositional material to understanding time as a structural constraint on composition itself. Rather than asking how time might be represented or shaped, the focus became how time determines whether composition can exist at all.

Composition here is understood not as a fixed image, but as a set of conditions that allow elements to coexist simultaneously. From this perspective, time does not generate variation; instead, it limits simultaneity. Different elements appear at different moments, sometimes overlapping, sometimes delayed, but at no point are all components present together. Point, line, and plane continue to exist, yet they never fully coincide. As a result, the composition cannot be held as a complete whole; it is spread across time and remains perpetually incomplete.

In developing this approach, I was drawn to broader reflections on how time is structured and understood. In *The Shape of Time*, George Kubler challenges linear, biologically modelled narratives of history, proposing that time operates through relational sequences rather than continuous progression (Kubler, 1962). This framework reinforced the idea that time actively structures the emergence and disappearance of form, rather than merely containing it.

This perspective also resonates with certain Eastern philosophical understandings of time, which emphasise cyclicity, intuition, and momentary awareness rather than linear accumulation. The Chinese phrase “花開花落自有時” (flowers bloom and fall in their own time) encapsulates this view: time is not a consumable resource, but a recurring condition through which existence unfolds. This idea informed the visual poster developed from the experiments, where composition is never fixed, never fully revealed, and always contingent on temporal flow.

Through these experiments, time is reframed not as a neutral container for motion design, but as a relational structure through which graphic elements are organised and experienced. Composition no longer resides within a single frame; instead, it exists across duration, defined by absence, delay, and the impossibility of complete simultaneity.

Reference:

• Kubler, G. (1962) *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

for Friday, Feb 6