



UNIT 2 ENQUIRY

How to Visually Represent Complex Human Experiences – Journey from Light to Creative Anxiety
Why: To process & make sense of lived experiences.

△3 SYNTHESIS

On one hand *The New Happy* is a reference which oversimplifies complex human experiences. On the other hand, *Art & Fear* is a reference that delves deeply into the complexity of a specific human experience. In between, me, trying to experiment visual representations inspired by both formats.

During Unit 2 I found myself tiptoeing around concepts without hitting the target. Maybe due to my own fear or self-doubt. My intentions throughout were to experiment by visually representing complex human experiences such as consciousness, light, colour and creative anxiety.

Although certain human experiences are universal, there is no need to visually universalise them like an isotype (picture language). By oversimplifying concepts for things to be swallowed without chewing, like the problem of TED talks explained by Benjamin Bratton, the result can become cynic, dehumanised and shallow.

After the dialogues over the summer, the project had taken a new and more narrow approach to the question. Instead of continuing trying to visually represent the concept of consciousness and light. I moved towards trying to represent *creative anxiety*. And by creative anxiety I meant a variety of anxiety inducing experiences shared amongst creative practitioners while working on a project. For that, I sent out a questionnaire to different kinds of creative practitioners from haute couture fashion designers, music and playlist designers, creative directors, and graphic designers.

To get to this point, I researched into what is universal design, accessibility, inclusive neurodivergent design, and ethics. For a brief week I contemplated the idea to design for anxiety, however through my studio practice I was truly interested to continue experimenting with different visual representations of the designers' common experiences of creative anxiety while working on a creative project.

My intention was to visually represent complex human experiences such as anxiety due to my interest in making sense of lived experiences. As Catherine Haylan Moon mentions in her *Studio Art Therapy* book, we can heighten awareness of the significance of events by portraying them through drawings, storytelling, journaling or other artistic means. We can discern meaning from artistic retellings for self-reflection or share with others to gain multiple perspectives.

From the answers I found common issues which I tried to explore different ways to communicate the data following inspiration from the books *Visualising Complexity: Modular Information Design Handbook* by Nicole Lachenmeier and Darjan Hil, plus, *Dear Data* by Georgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec. In contrast as I also attempted to represent the data via digitally illustrated representations. The experiments were not successful, causing anxiety and misinterpretations amongst the audience (peers and tutor), nor they were inclusive or universal all.

Failure gives us the information we need to get to where we are going. The choices I had taken during my studio practice such as the approach, medium and techniques to universalise and oversimplify my research, removed the human complexity of the content. The visual language used did not work for the content and while deconstructing it I got lost and didn't fully deal with the content. Furthermore, I realised that to design accessibly and inclusively we need humans at the centre of the design, and I had, unintentionally, removed them in the process.