

Research summary

[Abstract]

How can the bodily relationship between people and phones be reorganised? This project explores how the relationship between people and phones might change if the body became the primary condition of digital interaction. In contemporary digital environments, phone interaction has gradually been reduced to repetitive and habitual finger gestures. The body is often treated as a tool for completing tasks rather than a sensing and acting subject. This project challenges current interaction logic by proposing a body-first approach to digital interaction.

The project takes the form of an instruction-based practice, developing a behavioural system composed of bodily postures, alternative body parts for interaction, and phone-related digital tasks. Participants are invited to use their phones through different postures, movement rhythms, and spatial relationships. The final outcome developed into a card-based publication and an online archive website that collects traces of participants' actions through photographs, texts, drawings, and other forms of documentation.

This project relates to interaction design and instruction-based practices within graphic communication design, while also engaging with discussions around embodied interaction and interface culture. It examines how the body is organised and habitualised through digital interaction, and attempts to rethink the position of the body within digital environments by rearranging posture, movement, and interaction rules. The enquiry is also connected to broader questions surrounding digital culture and everyday life. For people who use phones and digital devices for long periods of time, many interactions gradually become unconscious and repetitive behaviours. Rather than attempting to correct or prevent these behaviours, this project uses

instructions and behavioural experiments to make participants more aware of the bodily relationships that have become naturalised between people and phones, while opening up possibilities for imagining new forms of bodily interaction with digital devices.

[Context]

This project explores how the body can re-enter digital interaction, focusing on how phones, as everyday digital devices, gradually shape bodily behaviour through long-term use. In contemporary digital environments, most phone interactions are optimised to become fast, continuous, and low-friction processes. Actions such as scrolling, tapping, and switching interfaces have increasingly been reduced to repetitive and unconscious finger gestures. Interaction is compressed into minimal bodily involvement, while the body itself is often treated as a tool for completing tasks rather than something to be sensed or consciously noticed. Rather than criticising phone use or attempting to reduce screen time, this project aims to reorganise the conditions of interaction so that participants become aware of the body's presence within digital interaction and reconsider the naturalised relationship between people and phones.

This enquiry is closely connected to discussions around embodied interaction. In *Where the Action Is*, Paul Dourish argues that interaction is not simply a cognitive process, but an action situated within the body, space, and environment. Interaction is not an abstract activity that occurs only on a screen, but something shaped by bodily posture, movement paths, and spatial relationships. Drawing from this perspective, the project understands digital interaction as a bodily organised behaviour rather than a purely screen-based operation. As a result, the project is less concerned with usability or efficiency, and more interested in how interaction shapes bodily movement, perception, and spatial awareness.

The project is also influenced by instruction-based practices such as Yoko Ono's *Grapefruit* and George Brecht's *Water Yam*, where short instructions generate behaviour, imagination, and participation rather than fixed outcomes. Extending this structure, the project uses instructions as a method for generating interaction. Through prompts such as "Stand on one leg," "Use your nose to operate the phone," or "Hold the phone like a baby," participants are invited to use their phones through different postures, movement rhythms, and interaction relationships. These instructions are not intended as functional recommendations, but as alternative arrangements of interaction conditions.

In terms of methodology, the project develops through instruction writing, behavioural experiments, card systems, publication design, and archive structures. Interaction is broken down into multiple layers, including posture(body condition), body interface, digital action, social condition, and object. Participants generate new interaction instructions by randomly combining cards from different categories. For example, one interaction may consist of "Stand on one leg," "Using your forehead," "Check tomorrow's weather in London," and "Like carrying a bowl of soup." This systematic method of generation is influenced by instruction manuals, game rule systems, and interface logic, while transforming interaction itself into a reorganised behavioural structure.

The project also engages with interface culture and contemporary digital interaction systems. Many current interfaces prioritise seamlessness, efficiency, and uninterrupted flow, aiming to make interaction as natural, continuous, and invisible as possible. In contrast, this project uses awkward, slow, exaggerated, and sometimes absurd bodily actions to make interaction perceptible again. Rather than proposing a new correct form of interaction, the project temporarily interrupts naturalised interaction logic through

instructions and behavioural experiments, encouraging participants to reconsider the relationships between the body, space, other people, and interaction itself.

The final outcome developed into an instruction card system, a publication, and an online archive. The card system allows participants to randomly generate new interaction conditions, the publication documents these behavioural structures and interaction logics, and the archive website collects traces left by participants after completing the instructions, including photographs, texts, drawings, and behavioural records. The website is not designed as a social media platform, but rather as a growing behavioural archive documenting how different people reinterpret these interactions across different bodies and spaces.

This project relates to publishing, interaction design, systems design, and participatory practice within graphic communication design, while also connecting to broader questions surrounding digital culture and everyday behavioural structures. It is not concerned with optimising interaction, but with examining how interaction organises the body, and how the body might re-enter digital systems.

[Projected contribution]

This project attempts to expand graphic communication design beyond information delivery and interface optimisation toward the reorganisation of bodily behaviour and interaction conditions. Rather than treating interaction as something that happens only within the screen, the project understands it as a behavioural process shaped by the relationships between bodies, spaces, and other people. Through instruction-based systems, participatory publishing, and behavioural archives, the project explores how graphic communication design can not only communicate information, but also

generate behaviour, organise interaction, and reconstruct relationships between people and digital devices.

Practically, the project combines card systems, publication design, instruction writing, and online archives across multiple media, proposing a design structure that is both participatory and continuously generative. It has also expanded my understanding of graphic communication design, shifting design away from being solely a visual output toward functioning as an interaction framework or behavioural system.

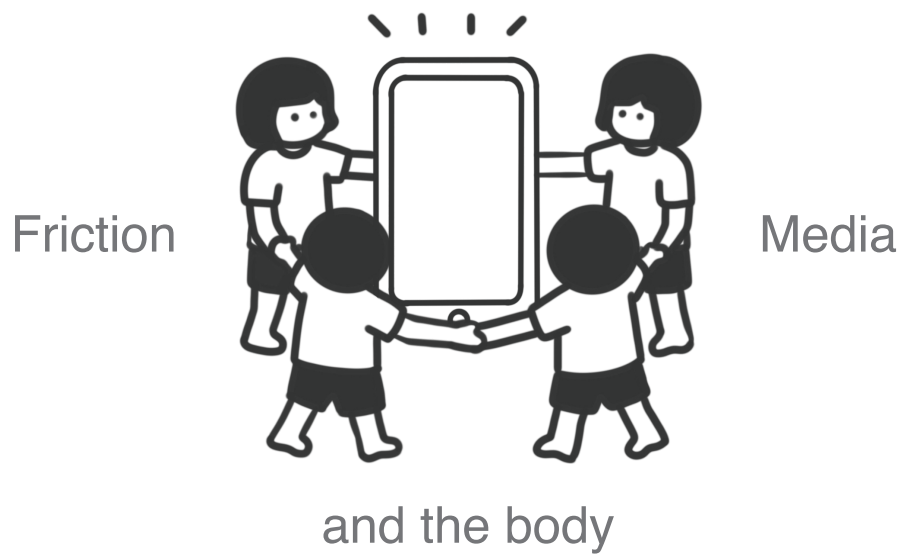
Theoretically, the project engages with discussions surrounding embodied interaction, interface culture, and instruction-based practice, while considering how digital interaction gradually shapes bodily habits and modes of perception in everyday life. Through awkward, absurd, or intentionally inefficient interaction instructions, the project makes interaction perceptible again rather than allowing it to remain invisible and habitual.

Beyond the course itself, this project will continue to influence my future practice. It has led me to become increasingly interested in the relationships between behaviour, participation, interaction systems, and publishing, while exploring how graphic communication design can construct not only visual language, but also behavioural structures, participatory mechanisms, and relationships between people and systems. In the future, I hope to further develop practices related to instruction-based interaction, participatory archives, and the relationship between bodies and digital media.

[Reference list]

1. McLuhan, M. and Fiore, Q. (1967) *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*. New York: Random House.
2. Tilley, A.R. and Dreyfuss Associates (2002) *The Measure of Man and Woman: Human Factors in Design*. Revised edition. New York: Wiley.
3. Dunne, A. and Raby, F. (2013) *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
4. Dourish, P. (2001) *Where the Action Is: The Foundations of Embodied Interaction*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
5. Frere-Jones, T. (2026) 'In 2026, We Are Friction-Maxxing', *The New York Times*, 14 January. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).
6. Ono, Y. (1964) *Grapefruit*. Tokyo: Wunternaum Press.
7. Brecht, G. (1963) *Water Yam*. New York: George Maciunas and Fluxus.

Reimagining Digital Interaction



01 Friction and Digital Behaviour 03

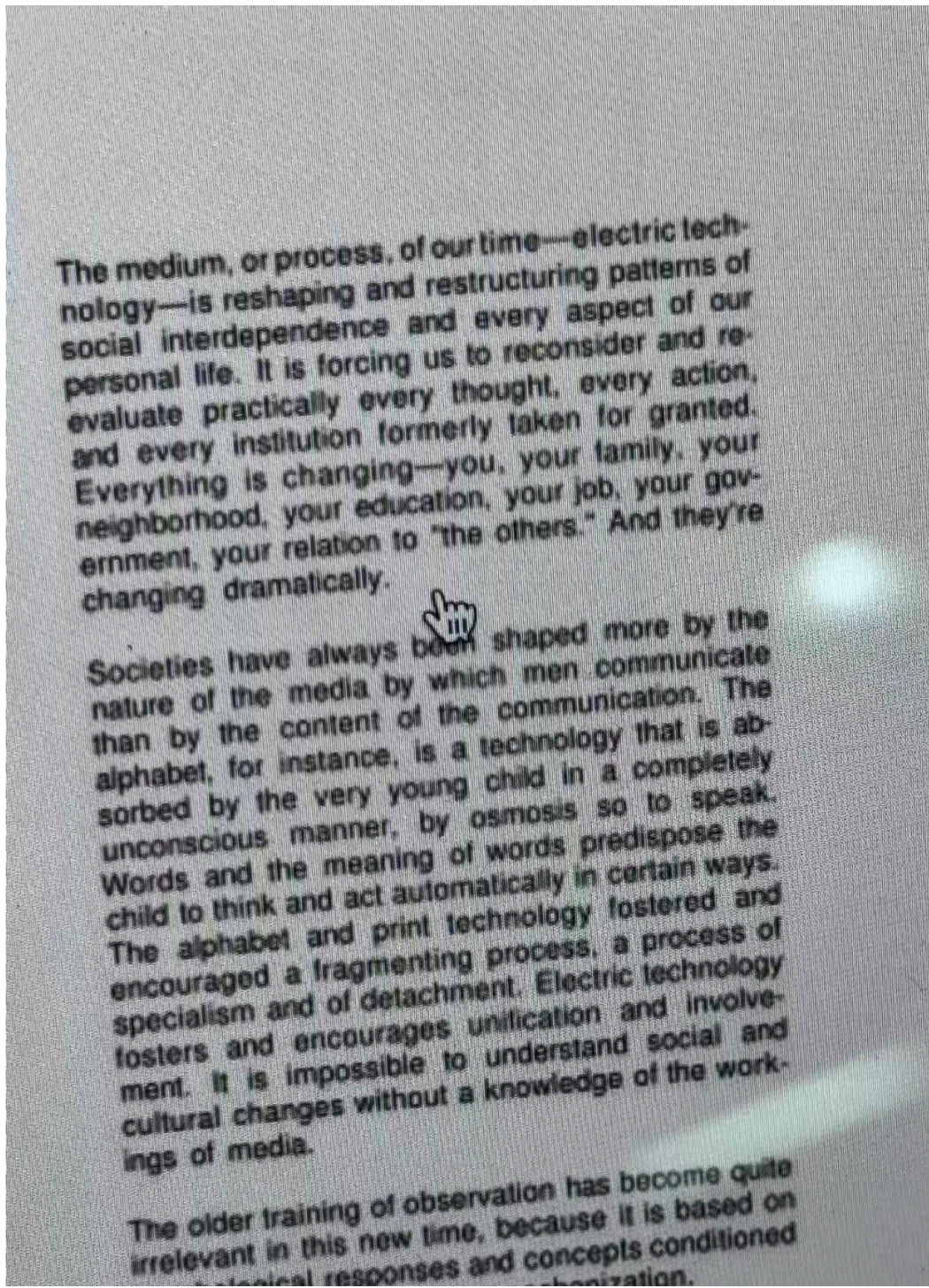
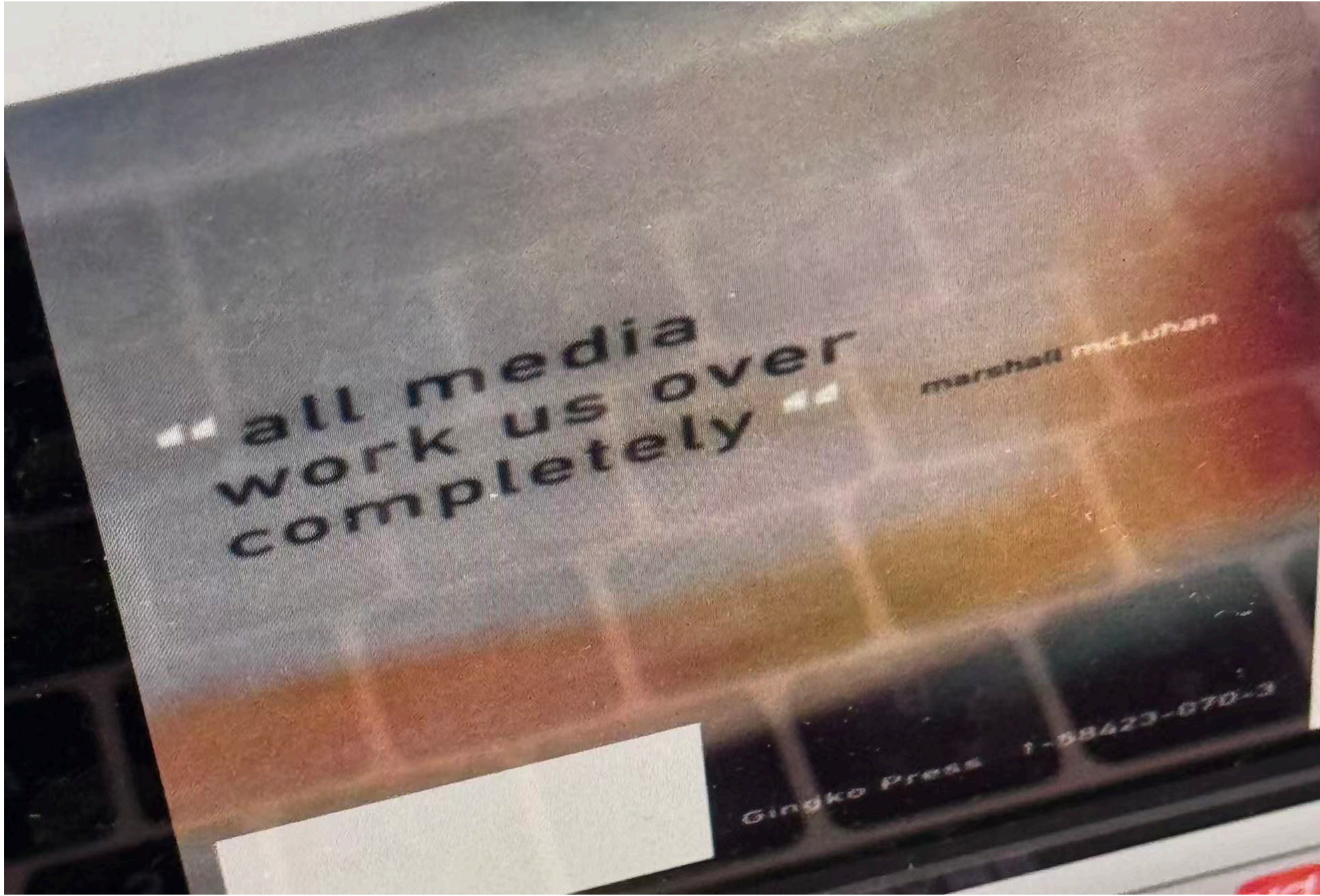
Kathryn Jezer-Morton
In 2026, We Are Friction-Maxxing

02 Media, Body, and Interaction 07

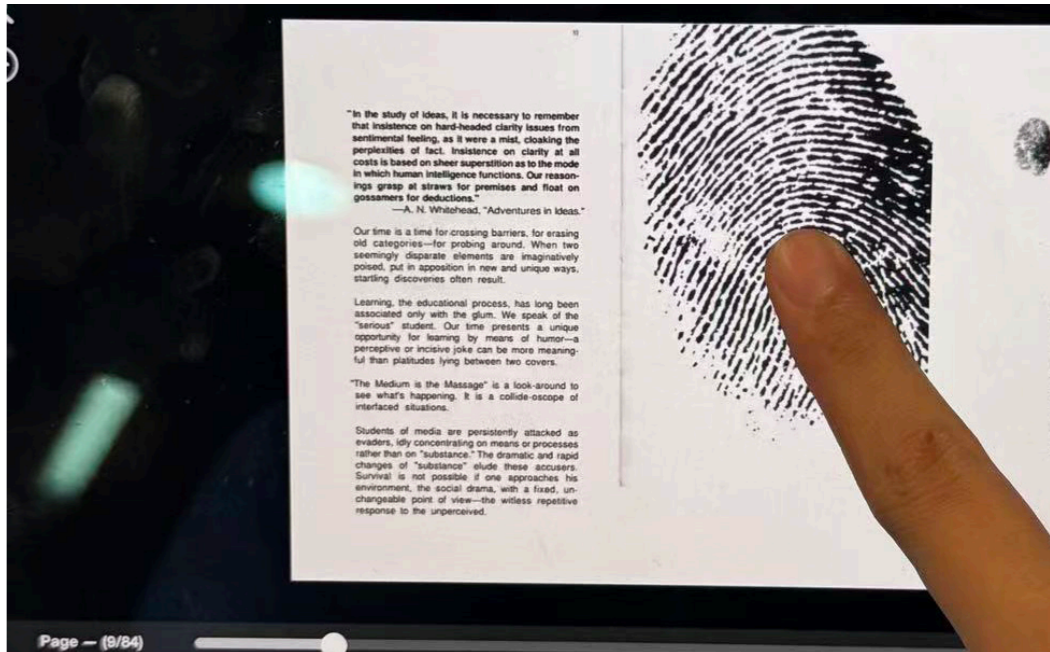
Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore
The Medium is the Massage

03 Speculating Alternative Interactions 11

Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby
Speculative Everything



(I photographed the references from a computer screen using my phone to explore how the body and the device participate together in the act of reading.)



Friction-maxxing is not simply a matter of reducing your screen time, or whatever. It's the process of building up tolerance for "inconvenience" (which is usually not inconvenience at all but just the vagaries of being a person living with other people in spaces that are impossible to completely control) — and then reaching even toward enjoyment. And then, it's modeling this tolerance, followed by enjoyment and humor, for our kids.

There are some obvious places to begin your friction-maxxing journey. Stop sharing your location with your kids and your partner. Locations should be shared on a need-to-know basis, via asking "where r u." Otherwise, everyone's location is their private business and privacy is a gift that we all deserve but whose existence requires friction.

Stop using ChatGPT completely. No, it does not have good ideas for meal planning. Buy a cookbook. Text your friends for advice. Go to Trader Joe's. Come on. Let your kid experience a bit more independence than they did last year, and self-soothe while you worry about them until eventually you stop worrying so much. (You will always worry a little bit; worrying is friction and there's nothing wrong with it.)

Are you ready for more friction? Invite people over to your house without cleaning it all the way up. Babysit for someone who needs a night out — convince this person, who will surely resist for friction-aversion reasons, to let you come over and chill at their house for a few hours. If you have kids,

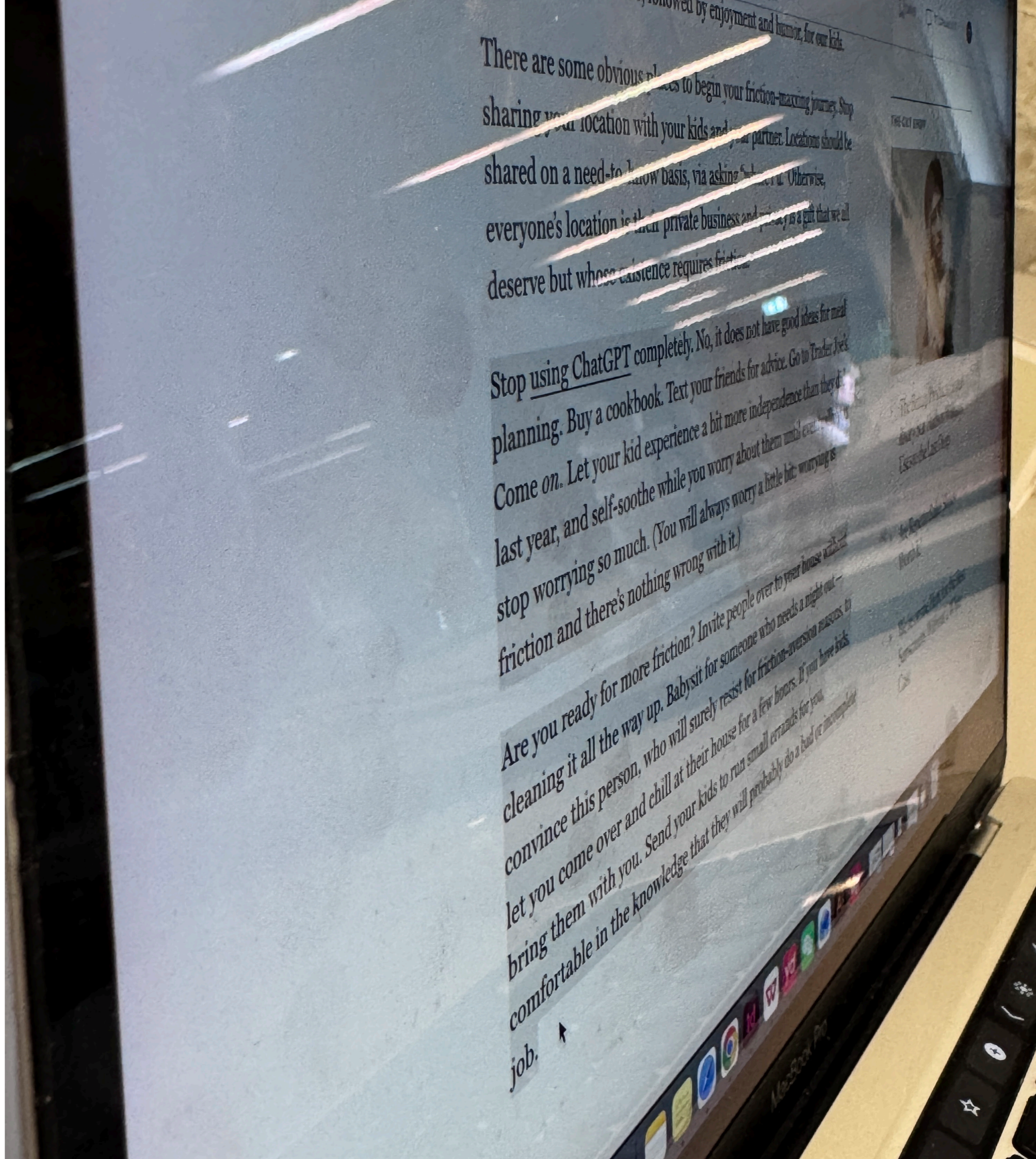
Over the past few months I've been thinking about how the idea of escapism has become redundant. As the world has become increasingly oriented away from life itself and toward forms of distraction and compulsive avoidance, there really isn't much use in escaping, is there? We are always one foot out the door already.

Tech companies are succeeding in making us think of life itself as inconvenient and something to be continuously escaping from, into padded rooms of predictive algorithms and single-tap commands: Reading is boring; talking is awkward; moving is tiring; leaving the house is daunting. Thinking is hard. Interacting with strangers is scary. Risking an unexpected reaction from someone isn't worth it. Speaking at all — overrated. These are all frictions that we can now eliminate, easily, and do.

(This article made me reflect on how contemporary digital interaction is designed to minimise friction, encouraging continuous and almost unconscious scrolling behaviour.)

begin your friction-maxxing journey.
Are you ready for more friction?

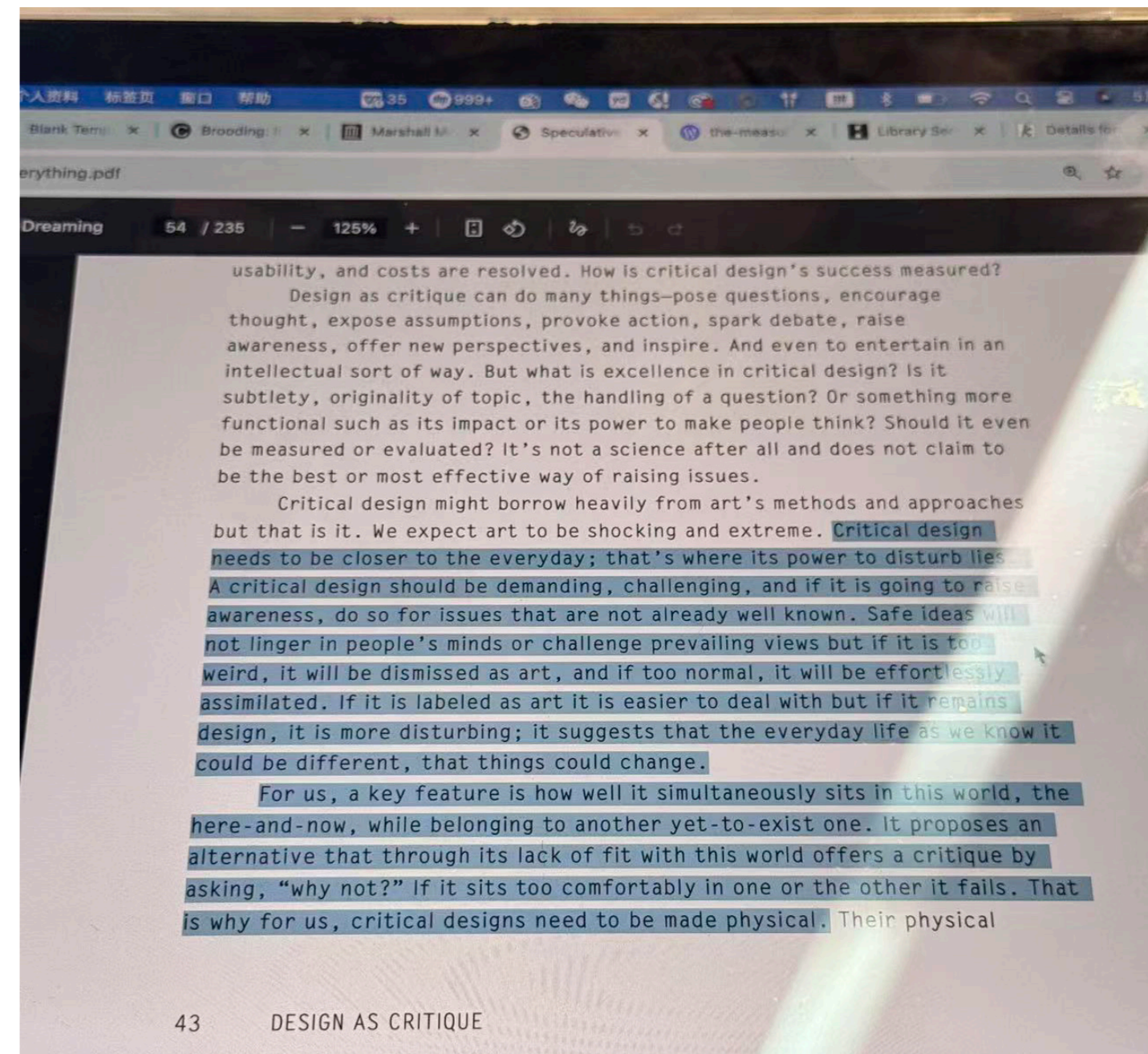
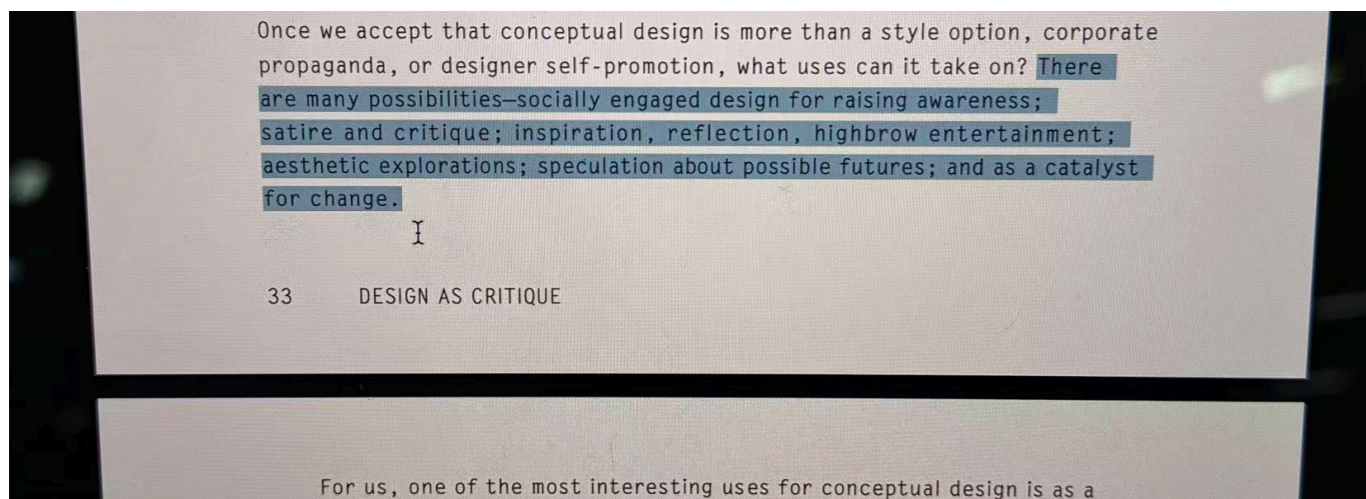
(How can we challenge current interaction logics and propose a body-first mode of interaction?)

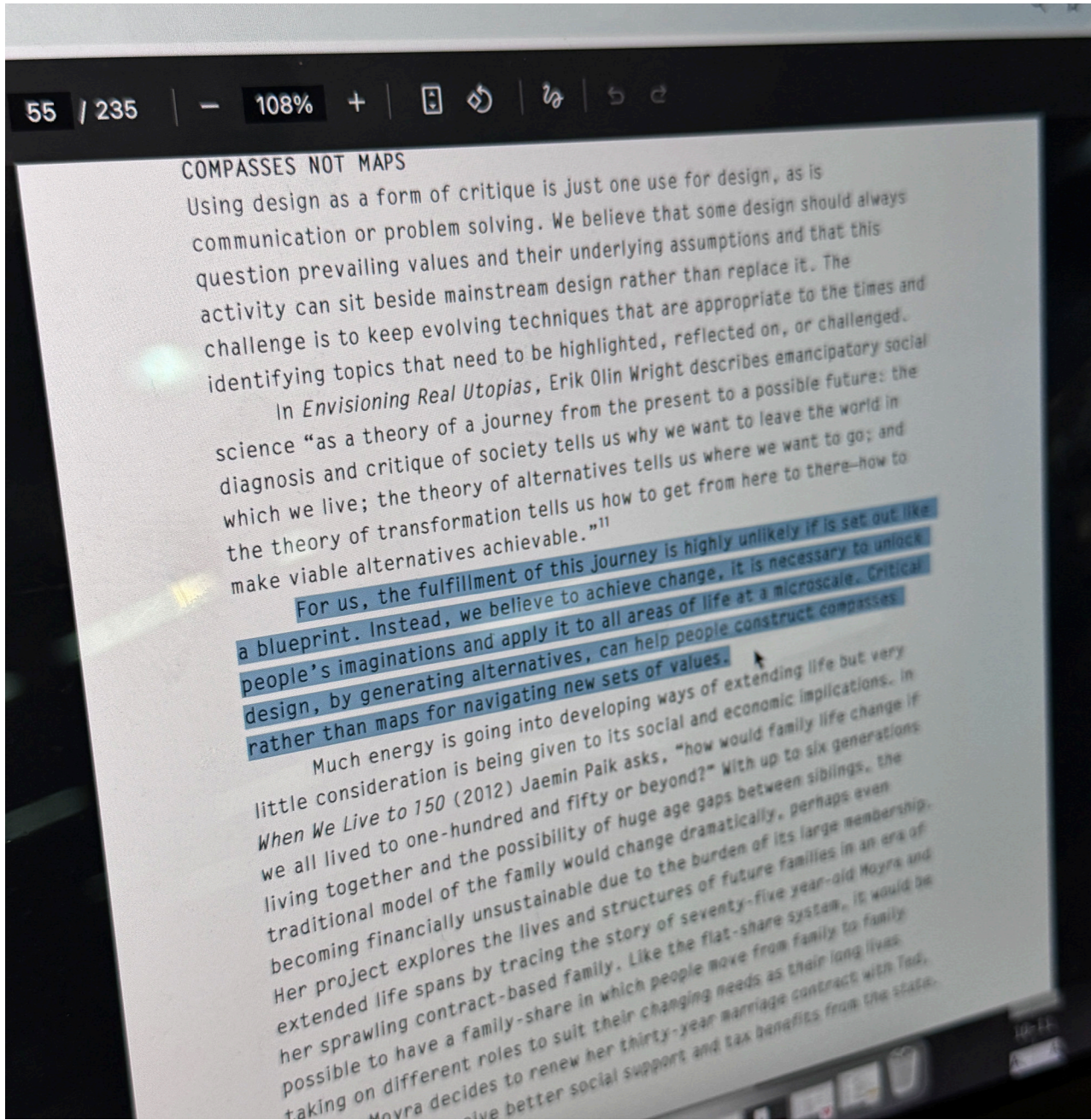


To be human is to refuse to accept the given as given.¹

intellectual sort of way. But what is excellence in critical design? Is it subtlety, originality of topic, the handling of a question? Or something more functional such as its impact or its power to make people think? Should it even be measured or evaluated? It's not a science after all and does not claim to

Could digital interaction be redesigned not simply to optimise efficiency, but to provoke new bodily awareness and behaviours?





I photographed this while doing squats:

