Read the Unreadable

Unit 2 Symposium

Runlan (Cecilia) Lin

Methods ↔ Positions



What is this?



Is it a sponge?



Is it a sponge?



Is it a sponge?



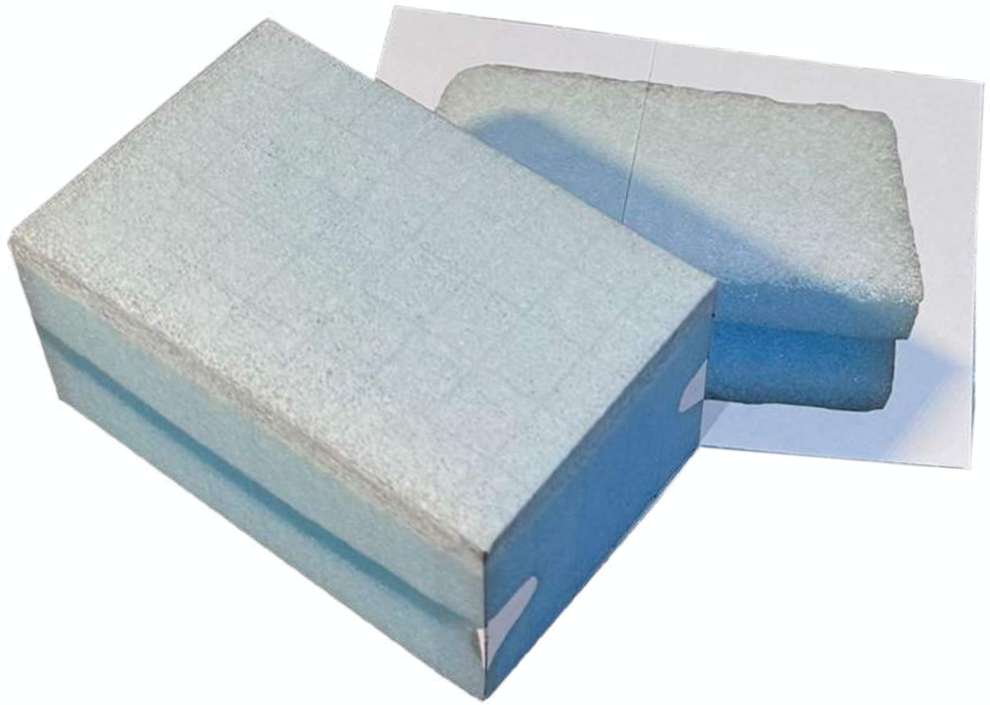
An image?



An image?



An image?



Or a paper box made from an image of a sponge?



Let’s try squeezing it.



Squeeze out the air.



Squeeze out the air.



Squeeze out the air.



Compress it into a crumpled ball.



Then release.



Unfold.



Unfold again.



And what we get is a new object called “sponge”.



It’s still a sponge,
but one that has gone through a folding of meaning and dimension.

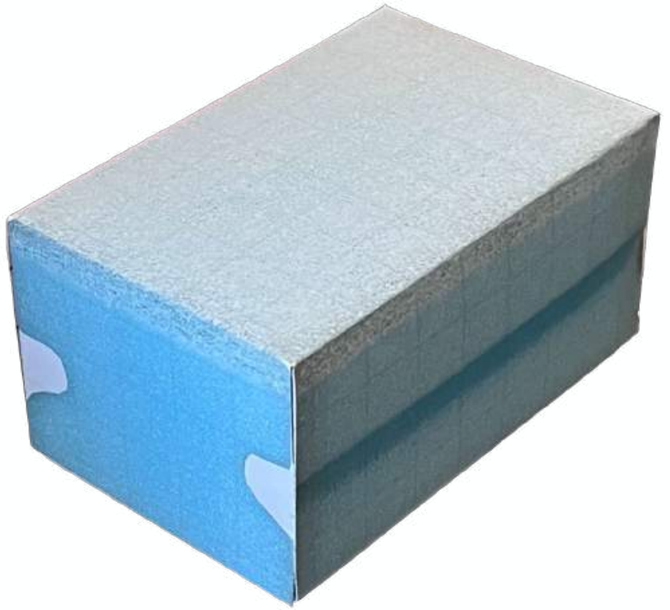


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzS2vZz1CeI

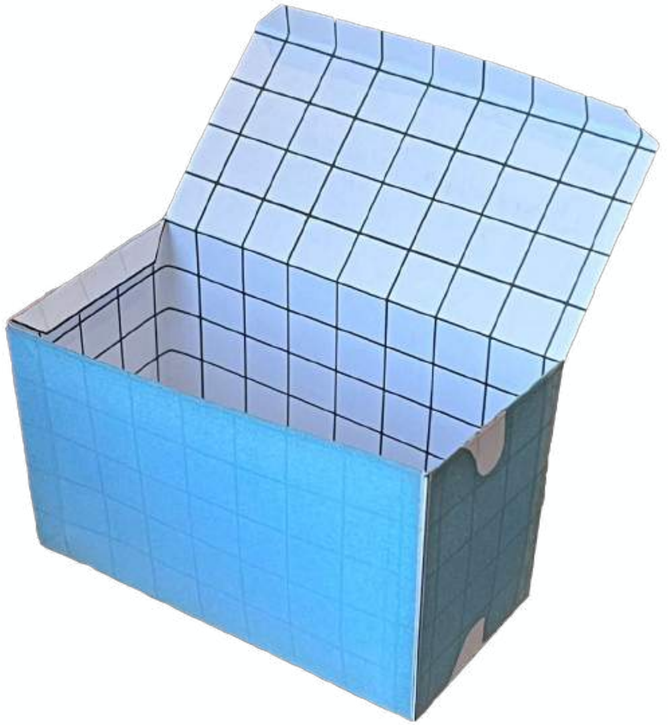
What is this?
A row of books on a shelf?

Or a photograph?

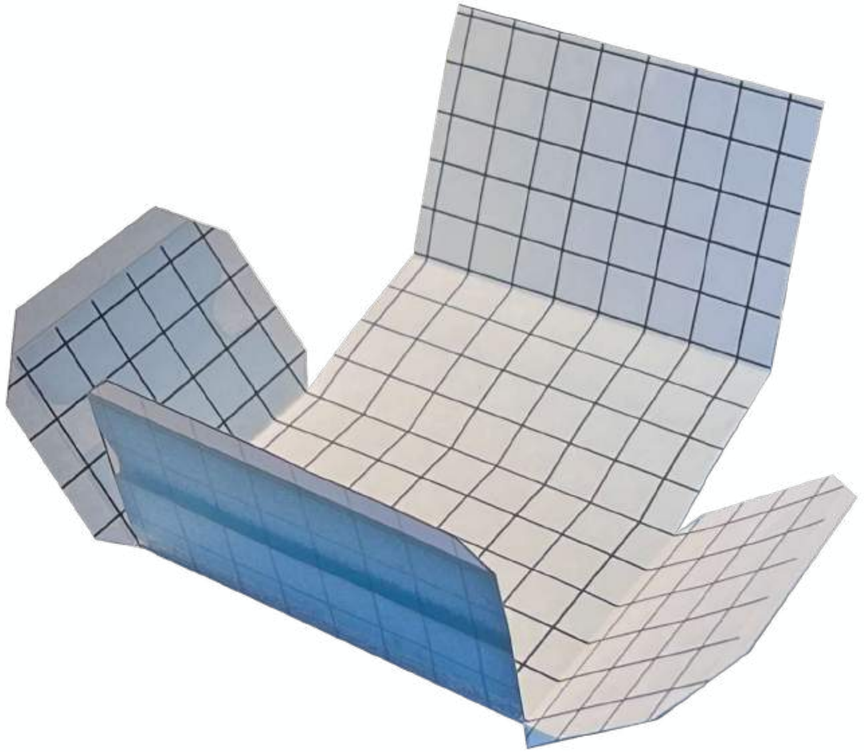
Space too is compressed by dimensions,
and its meaning flows between them.



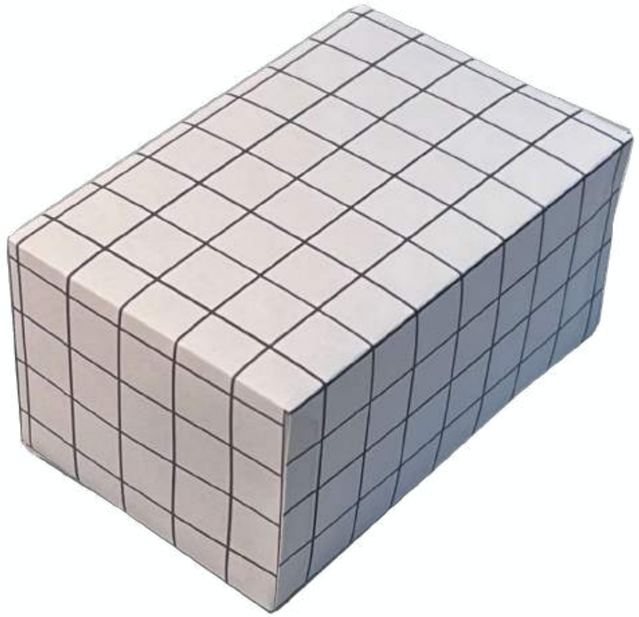
Objects,



space, and dimensions

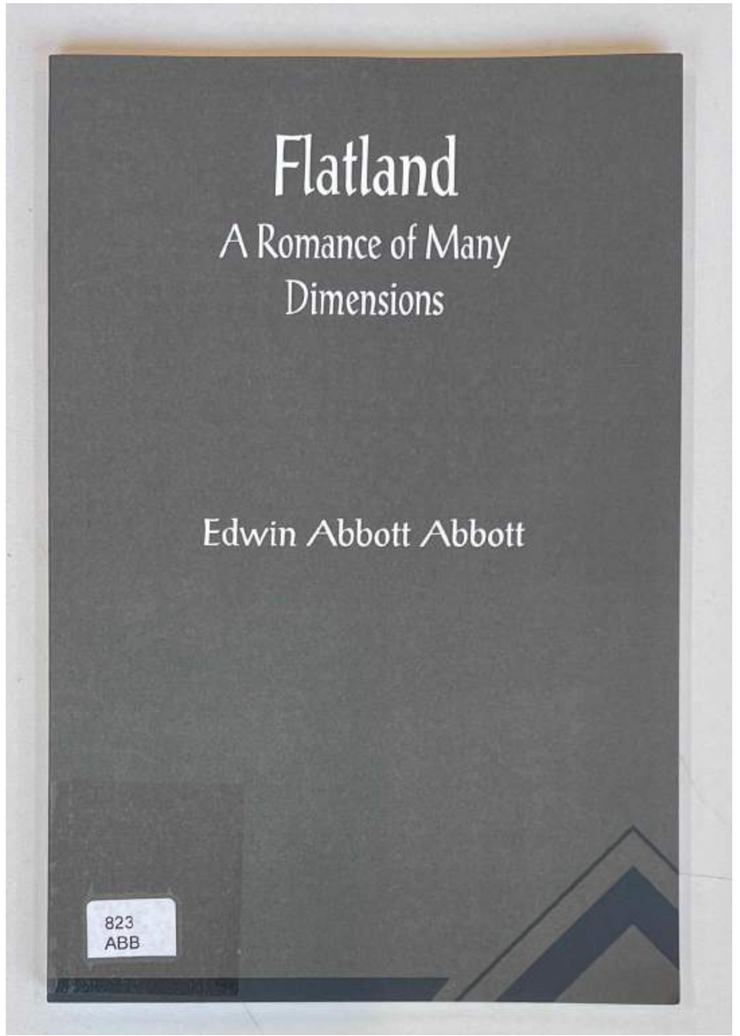


can be transformed and redefined through folding.



This leads me to a more focused question:

How do objects carry multidimensional experiences?



Let’s start with a book.



§ 5.—Of our methods of recognizing one another.

You, who are blessed with shade as well as light, you who are gifted with two eyes, endowed with a knowledge of perspective, and charmed with the enjoyment of various colours, you, who can actually *see* an angle, and contemplate the complete circumference of a Circle in the happy country of the Three Dimensions—how shall I make clear to you the extreme difficulty which we in Flatland experience in recognizing one another's configurations?

Recall what I told you above. All beings in Flatland, animate or inanimate, no matter what their form, present *to our view* the same, or nearly the same, appearance, viz. that of a straight Line. How then can one be distinguished from another, where all appear the same?

The answer is threefold. The first means of recognition is the sense of hearing; which with us is far more highly developed than with you, and which enables us not only to distinguish by the voice our personal friends, but even to discriminate between different classes, at least so far as concerns the three lowest orders, the Equilateral, the Square, and the Pentagon—for of the Isosceles I take no account. But as we ascend in the social scale, the process of discriminating and being discriminated by hearing increases in difficulty, partly because voices are assimilated, partly because the faculty of voice-discrimination is a plebeian virtue not much developed among the Aristocracy. And wherever there is any danger of imposture we cannot trust to this method. Amongst our lowest classes the vocal organs are developed to a degree more than correspondent with those of hearing, so that an Isosceles can easily feign the voice of a Polygon, and, with some training, that of a Circle himself. A second method is therefore more commonly resorted to.

Feeling is, among our Women and lower classes—about our upper classes I shall speak presently—the principal test of recognition, at all events between strangers, and when the question is, not as to the individual, but as to the class. What therefore "introduction" is among the highest circles in Spaceland, that the process of "feeling" is with us. "Permit me to feel you and be felt by my friend Mr So-and-so"—is still, amongst the more old-fashioned of our country gentlemen in districts remote from towns, the customary formula for a Flatland introduction. But in towns, and among men of business, the words "be felt by," are omitted, and the sentence is abbreviated to, "Let me ask you to feel Mr So-and-so"; although it is assumed, of course, that the "feeling" is to be reciprocal. Among our still more modern and dashing young gentlemen—who are extremely averse to superfluous effort and supremely indifferent to the purity of their native language—the formula is still further curtailed by the use of "to feel" in a technical sense, meaning, "to recommend-for-the purposes-of-feeling-and-being-felt"; and at this moment the "slang" of polite or fast society in the upper classes sanctions such a barbarism as "Mr. Smith, permit me to feel you Mr. Jones."

Let not my Reader however suppose that "feeling" is with us the tedious process that it would be with you, or that we find it necessary to feel right round all the sides of every individual before we determine the class to which he belongs. Long practice and training, begun in the schools and continued in the experience of daily life, enable us to discriminate at once by the sense of touch, between the angles of an equal-sided Triangle, Square, and Pentagon; and I need not say that the brainless vertex of an acute-angled Isosceles is obvious to the dullest touch. It is therefore not necessary, as a rule, to do more than feel a single angle of any individual; and this, once ascertained, tells us the class of the person whom we are addressing, unless indeed he belongs to the higher sections of the nobility. There the difficulty is much greater. Even a Master of Arts in our University of Wentbridge has been known to confuse a ten-sided with a twelve-sided Polygon; and there is hardly a Doctor of Science in or out of that famous University who could pretend to decide promptly and unhesitatingly between a twenty-sided and a twenty-four sided member of the Aristocracy.

Those of my readers who recall the extracts I gave above from the Legislative code concerning Women, will readily perceive that the process of introduction by contact requires some care and discretion. Otherwise the angles might inflict on the unwary Feeler irreparable injury. It is essential for the safety of the Feeler that the Felt should stand perfectly still. A start, a fidgety shifting of the position, yes, even a violent sneeze, has been known before now to prove fatal to the incautious, and to nip in the bud many a promising friendship. Especially is this true among the lower classes of the Triangles. With them, the eye is situated so far from their vertex that they can scarcely take cognizance of what goes on at that extremity of their frame. They are moreover of a rough coarse nature, not sensitive to the delicate touch of the highly organized Polygon. What wonder then if an involuntary toss of the head has ere now deprived the State of a valuable life!

I have heard that my excellent Grandfather—one of the least irregular of his unhappy Isosceles class, who indeed obtained, shortly before his decease, four out of seven votes from the Sanitary and Social Board for

https://youtu.be/OXky0fyp_hc

A physical book is a book.





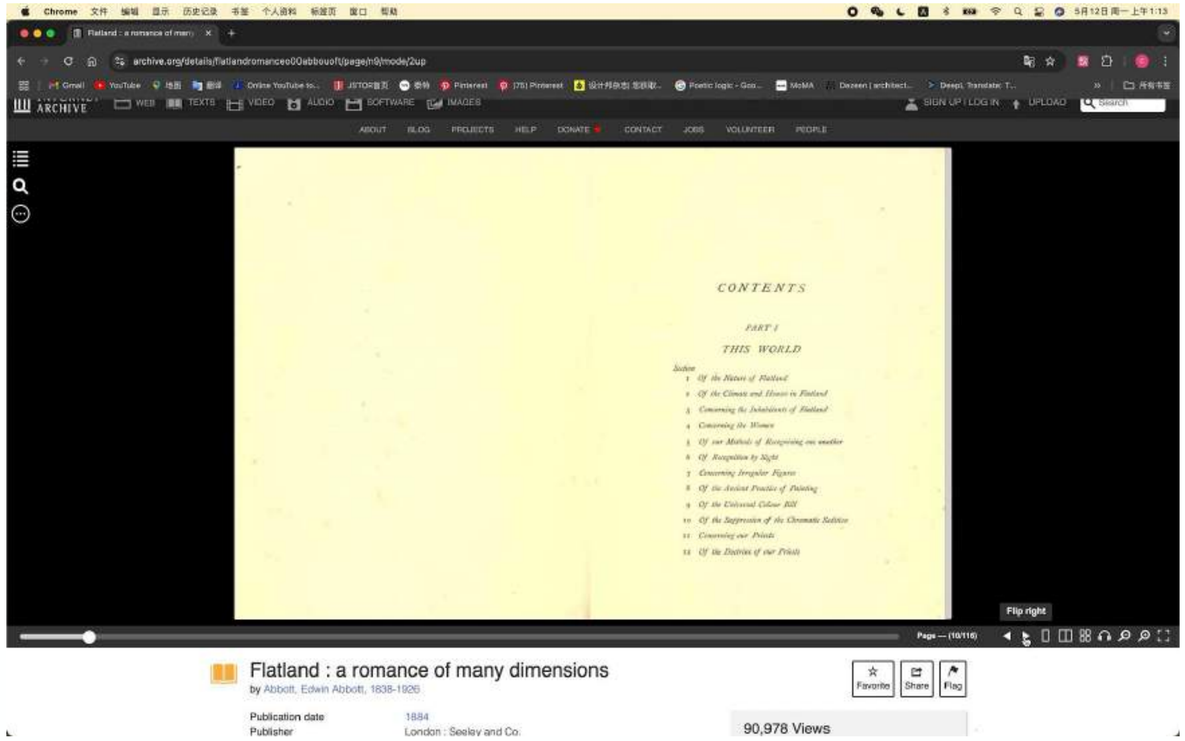
https://youtube.com/shorts/t8SRDmXIGzw?feature=share

Text on a mobile browser is a book.



https://youtu.be/KNNDAOfft38

An e-book on an iPad is a book.



https://youtu.be/HcXLp6TcNs8

A website viewed on a laptop is a book.

Dimension lies in the transition between these forms.

And here, you might realize the powerful role that medium and reading method play in communicating between dimensions.

Then, what is reading?

The printed page is static. Like an empty house, the book does not change while you are away. It waits, making meaning only in the strangely private relationship called reading.

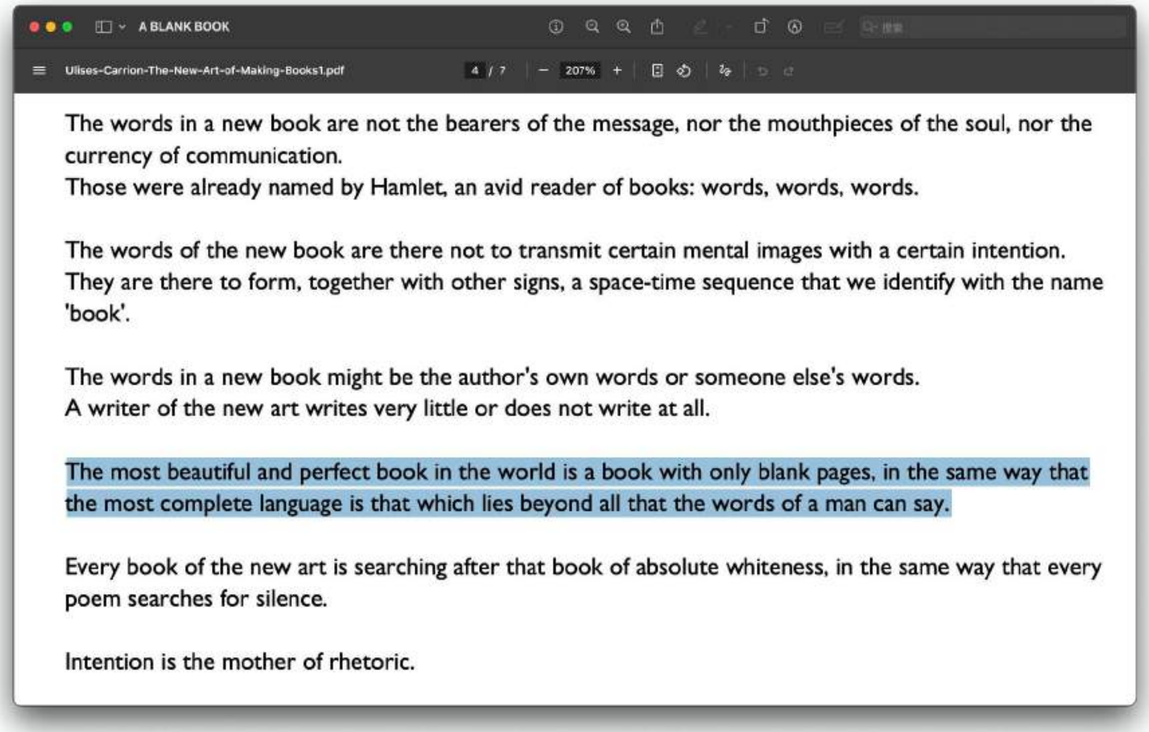
Reading is an event, not an act. Books are incidental (in the fullest meaning of the word). Texts are signals, transmissions. This is where I am now when I read, not a place but a mode, not a favourite chair but a state and frame. Think of it as resolution.

Mieke Gerritzen, Geert Lovink and Minke Kampman. (2011) *I Read Where I Am.*
Courtesy Graphic Design Museum, Breda Valiz, Amsterdam.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NPCGmSO23c

So I believe, reading is an event, and reading is an ongoing process of decoding, clarifying, and discerning.

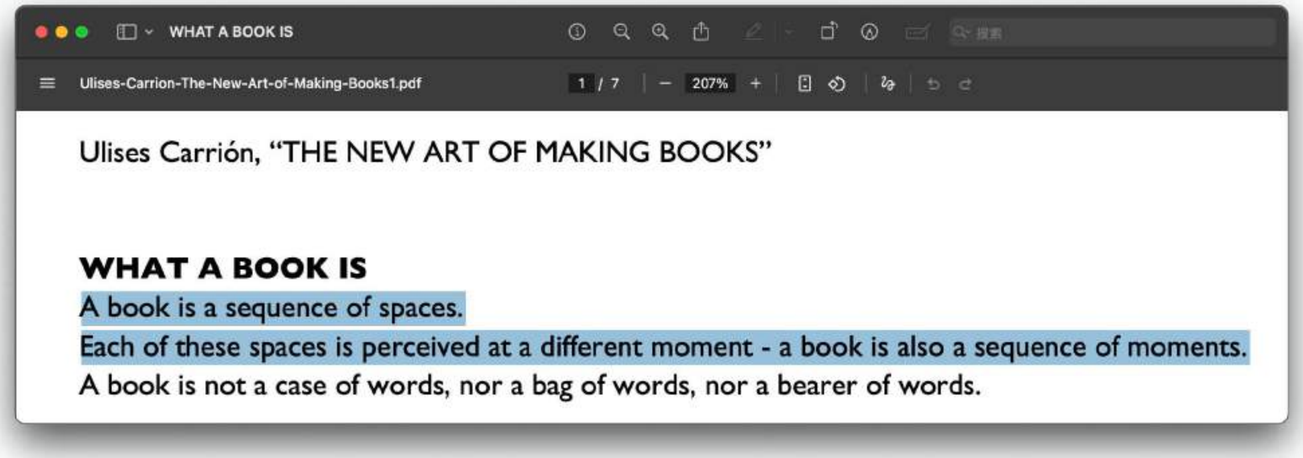


Carrión, U. (1975) 'The New Art of Making Books', *Kontexts* No. 6-7. Available at: https://www.serraglia.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Ulises-Carrion-The-New-Art-of-Making-Books1.pdf (Accessed: 20 Oct 2025).

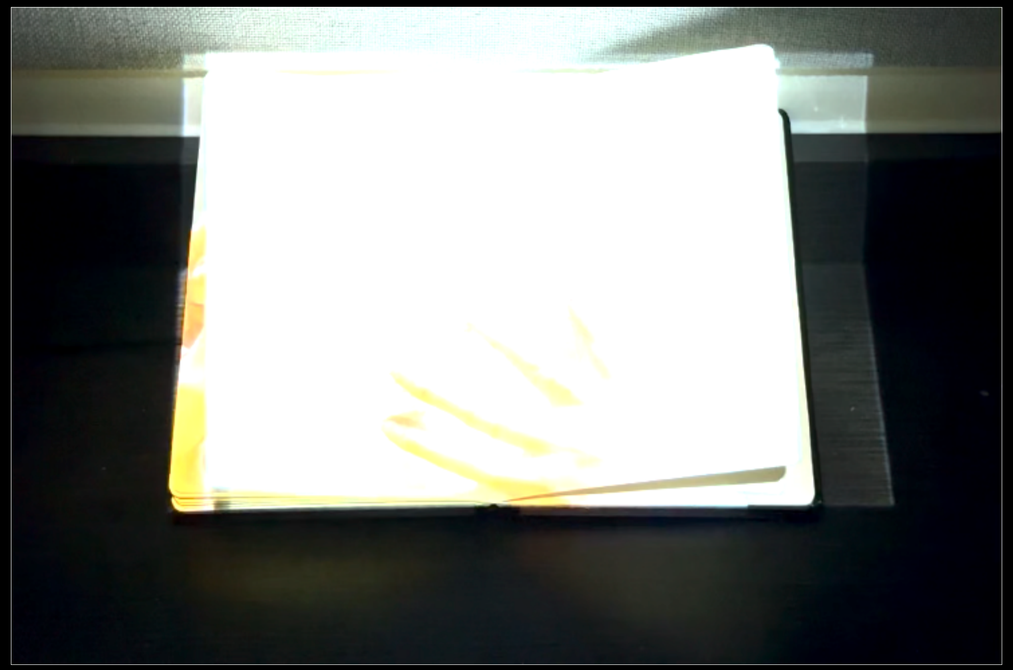
However, when a book is no longer just a container for text, but a medium itself, what will happen if we READ or redefine its structure and content?

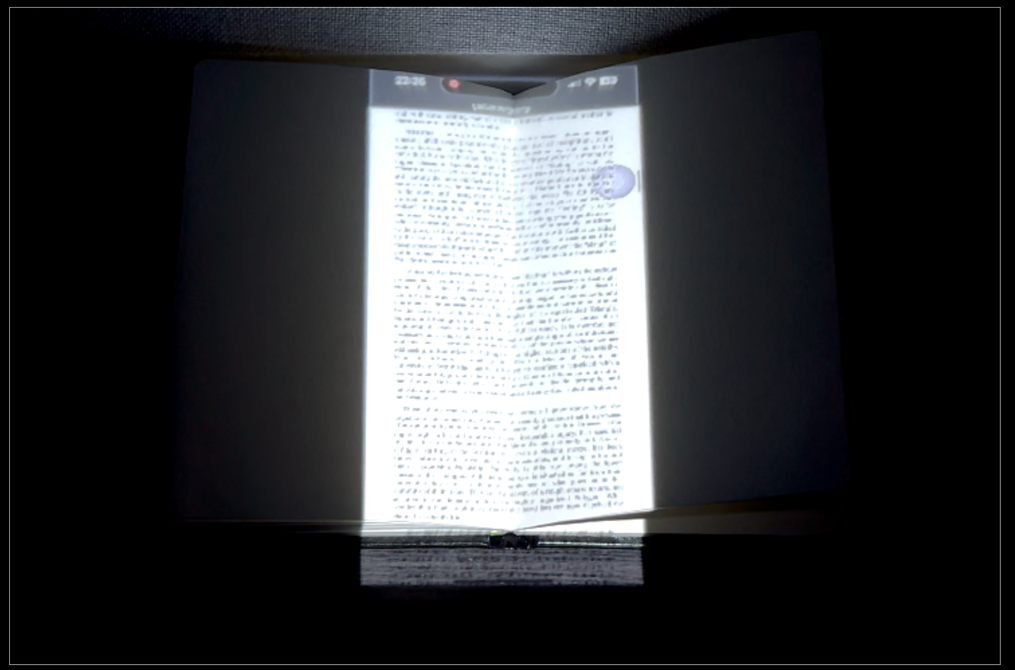
Or more precisely: How to understand a book?

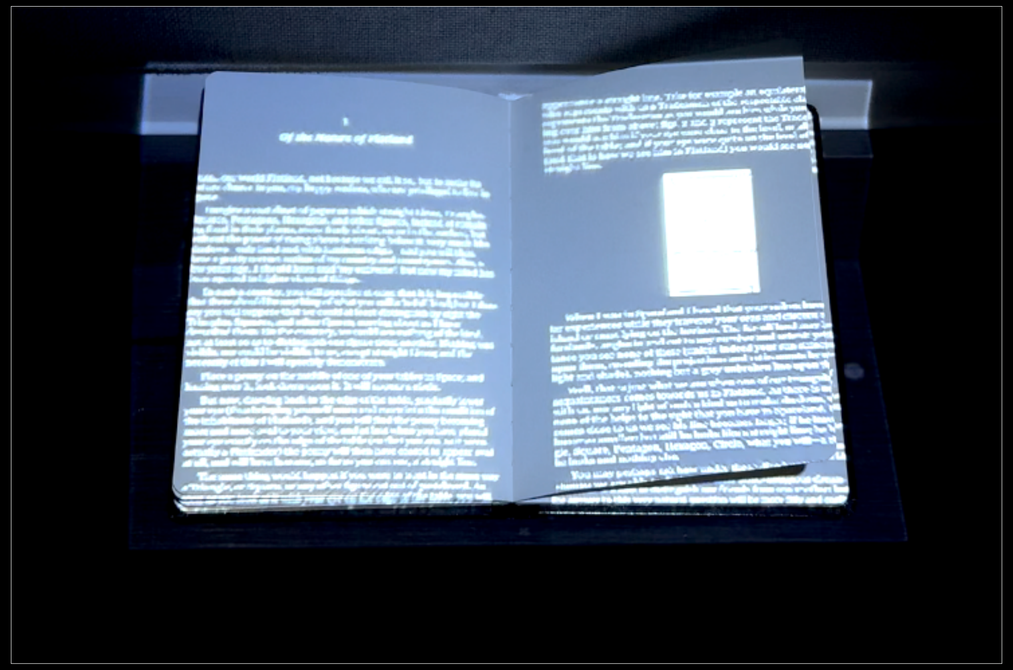
Well, my answer is:
A book is a space of reading.



Carrión, U. (1975) 'The New Art of Making Books', *Kontexts* No. 6-7. Available at: *https://www.serraglia.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Ulises-Carrion-The-New-Art-of-Making-Books1.pdf* (Accessed: 20 Oct 2025).









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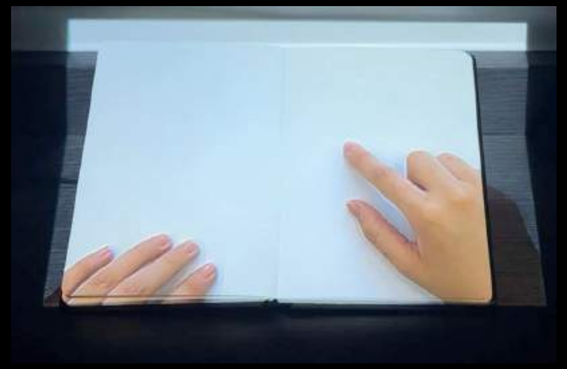

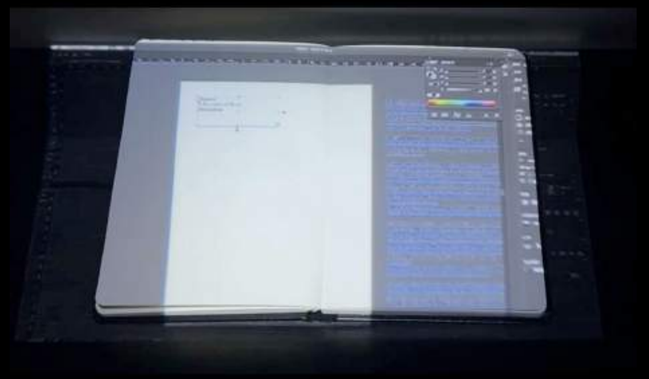

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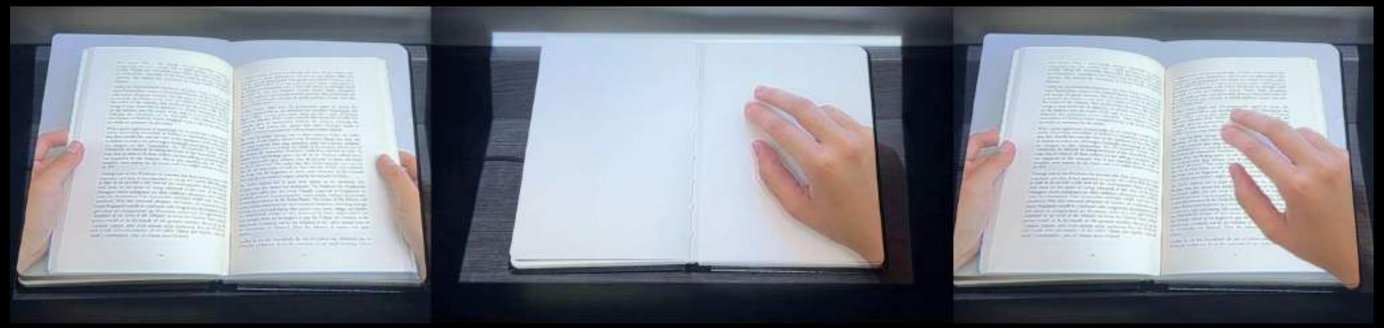
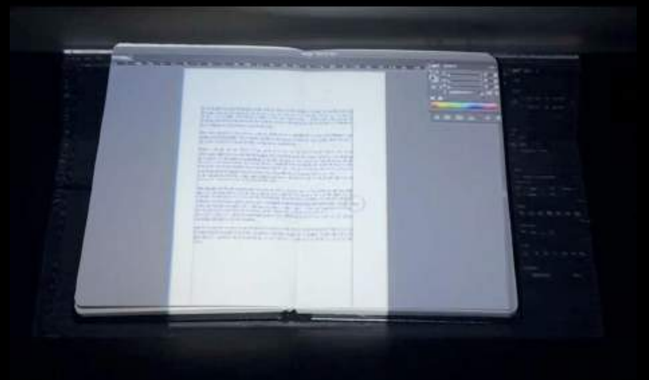
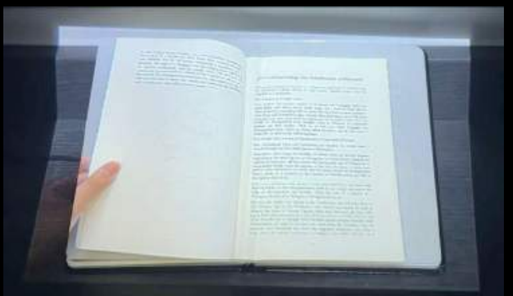
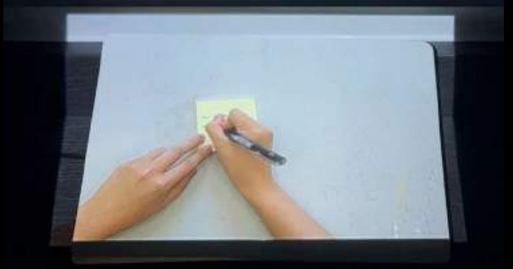




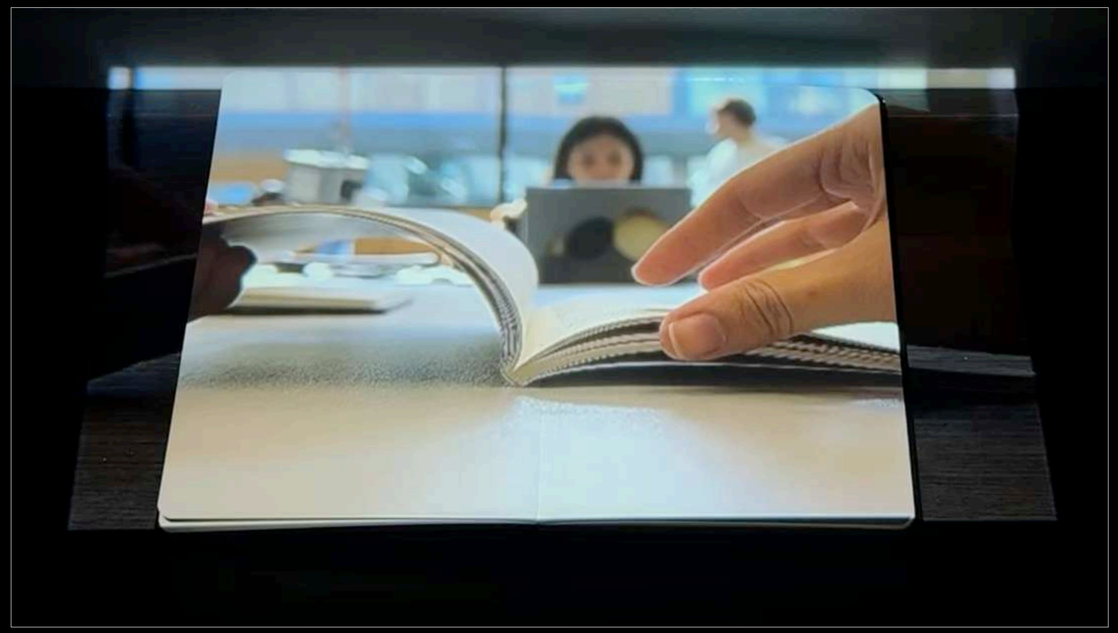


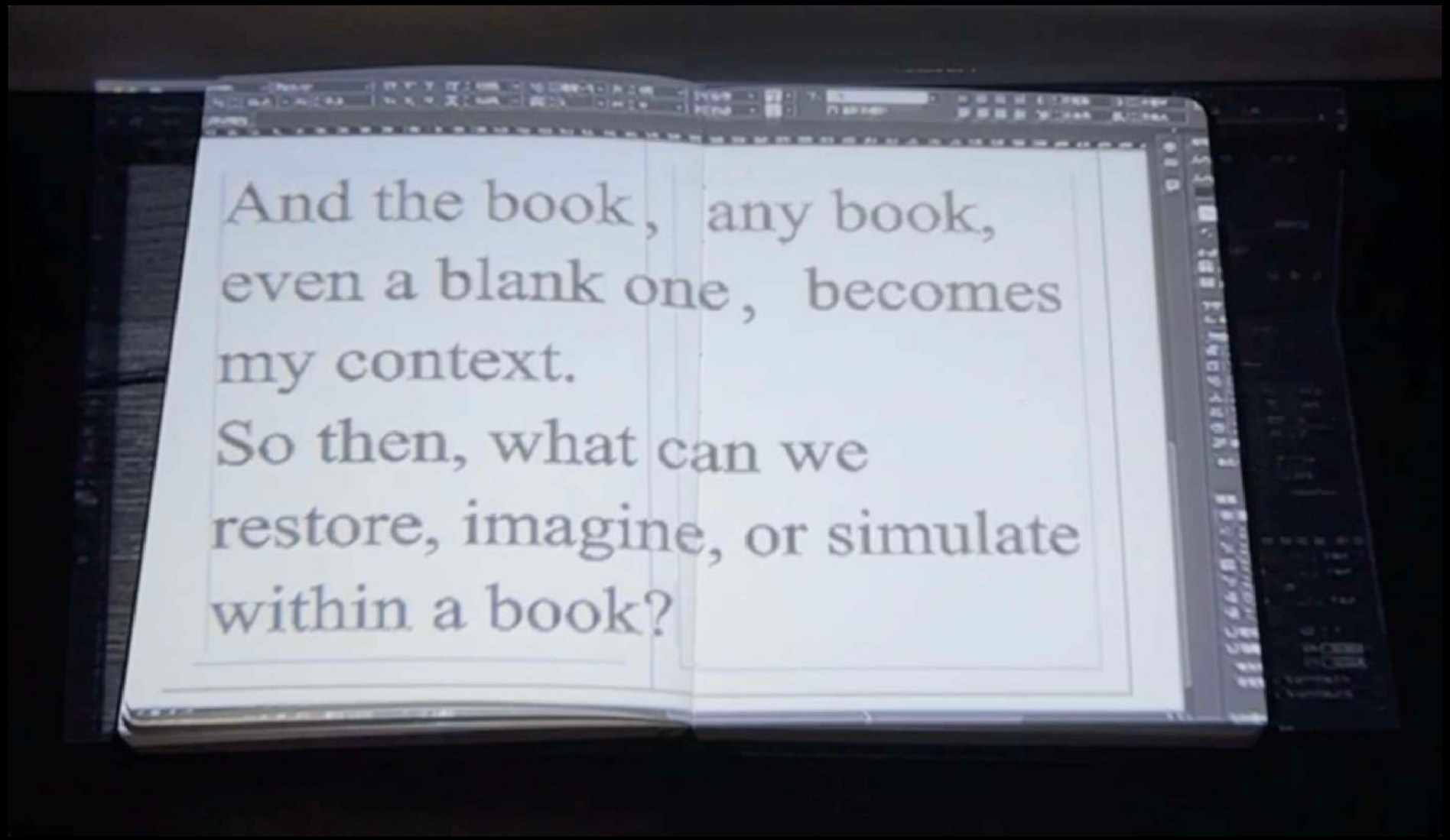











And the book, any book,
even a blank one, becomes
my context.
So then, what can we
restore, imagine, or simulate
within a book?

How can we understand reading as a multidimensional event that can be triggered by unreadable things?

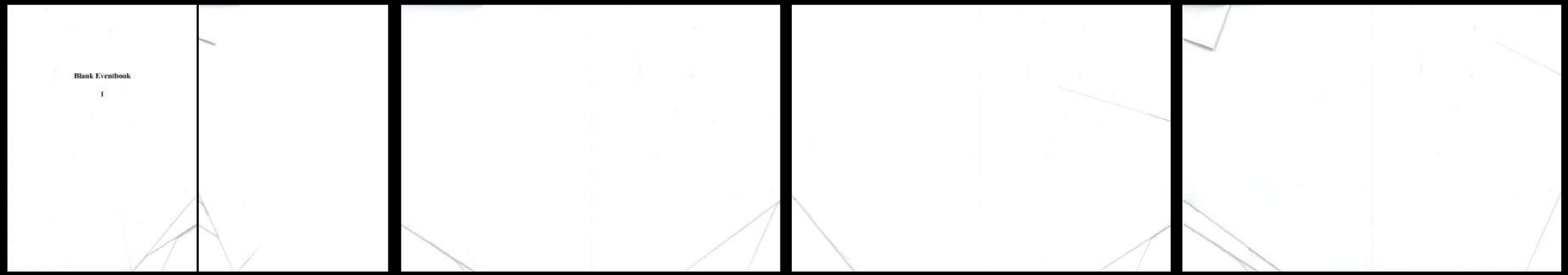
Let’s bring the blank book into physically reading.





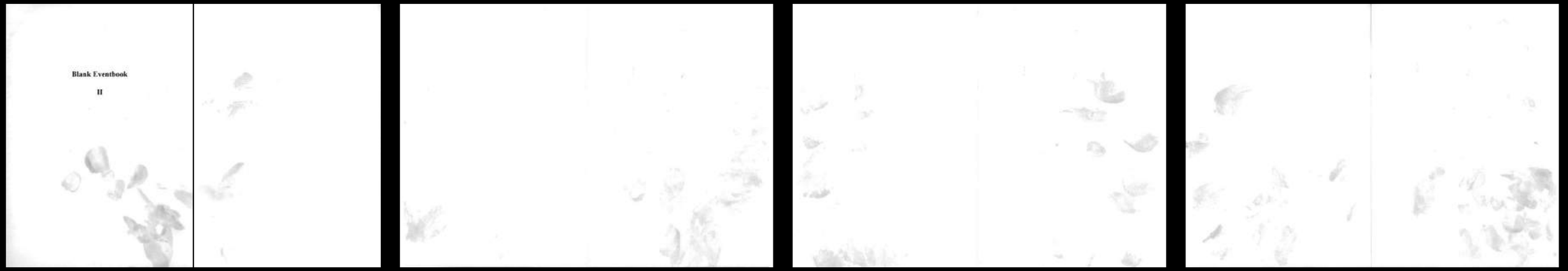
Blank Eventbook I

The **first booklet** records the folded corners that appear during reading. I often find these folds in library books, so I consider them a very common kind of event.



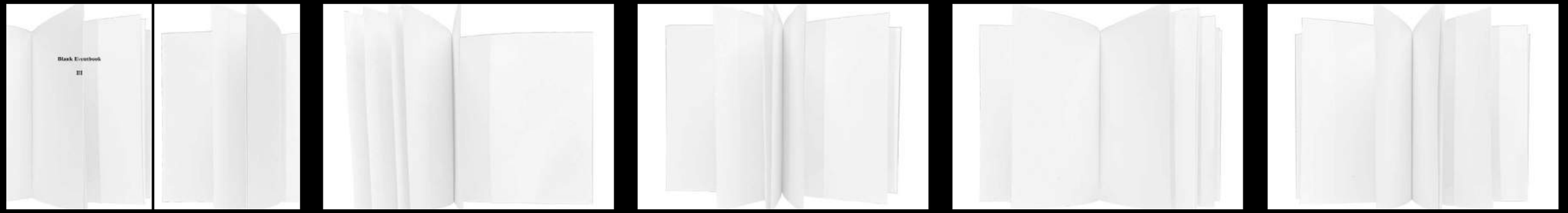
Blank Eventbook II

The **second booklet** documents the traces left by fingers turning the pages (a necessary but invisible event).

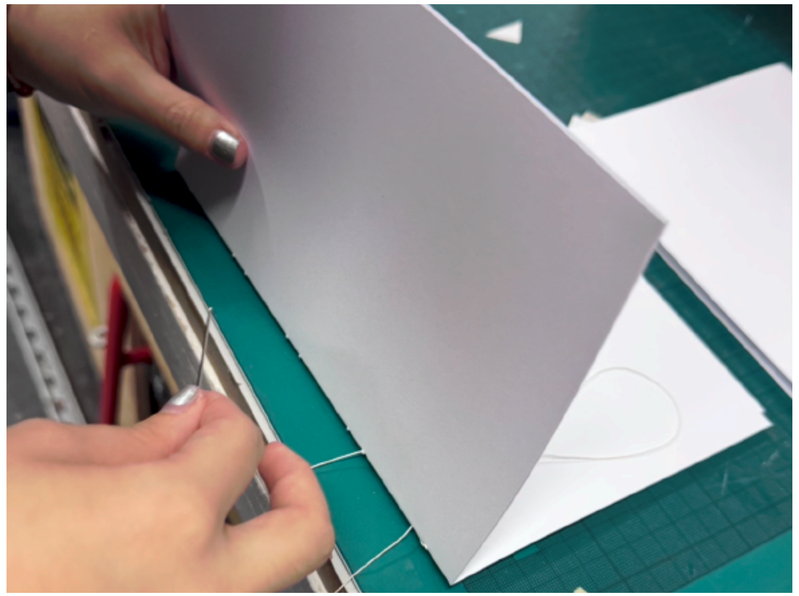


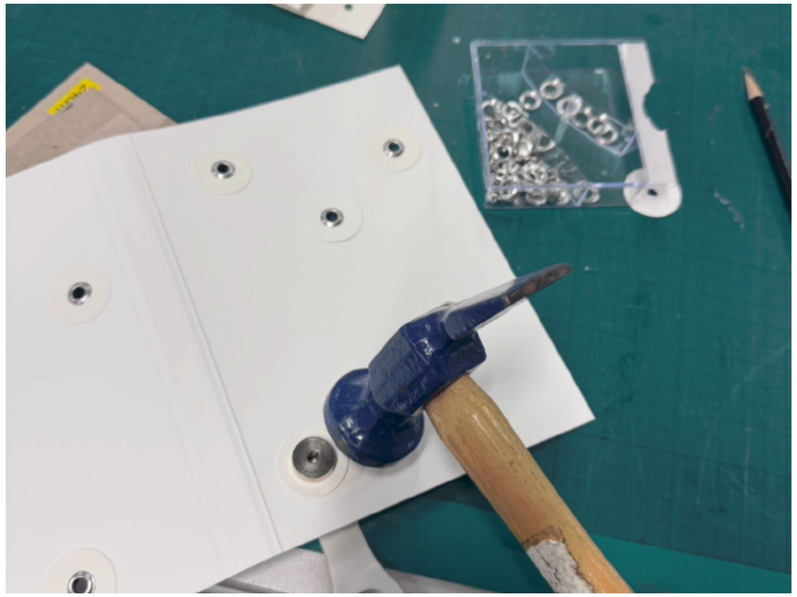
Blank Eventbook III

The **third booklet** prints the motion of turning blank pages onto blank paper. When you flip through it, the content of the booklet moves with your gesture. I see this as a form of dimensional communication.

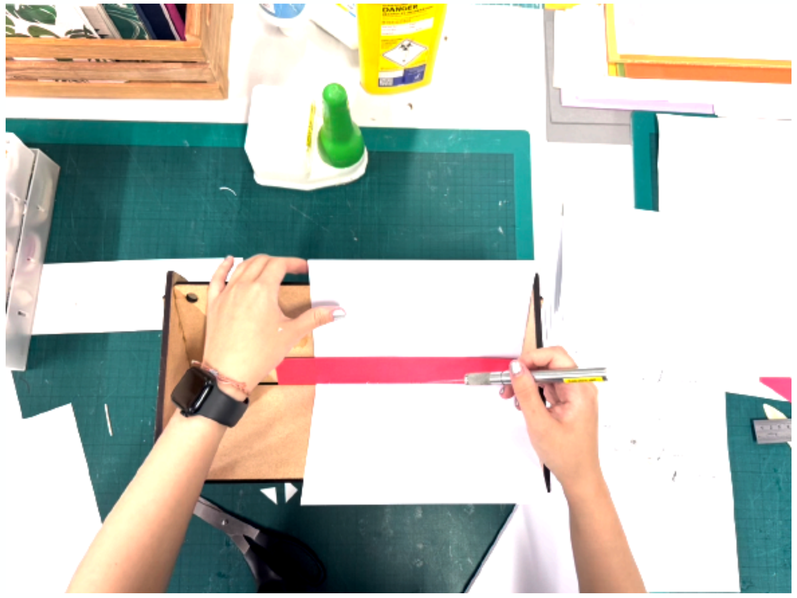



Blank Eventbook
IV
Blank Eventbook
I

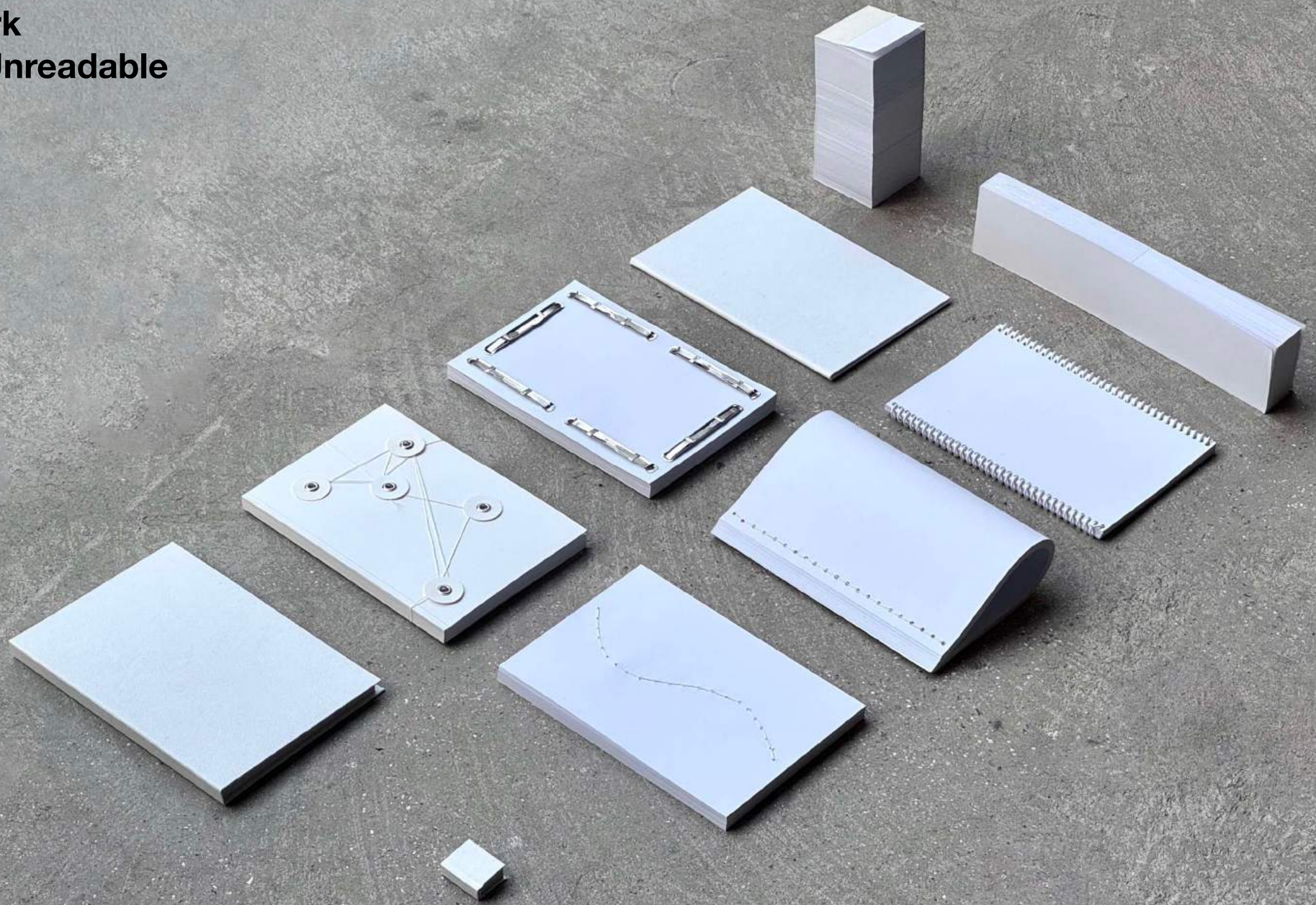








Studio Work
Read the Unreadable



Studio Work
Read the Unreadable

A Tiny Book · 3cm*2.5cm





Studio Work
Read the Unreadable

A Book with All Pages Glued Shut



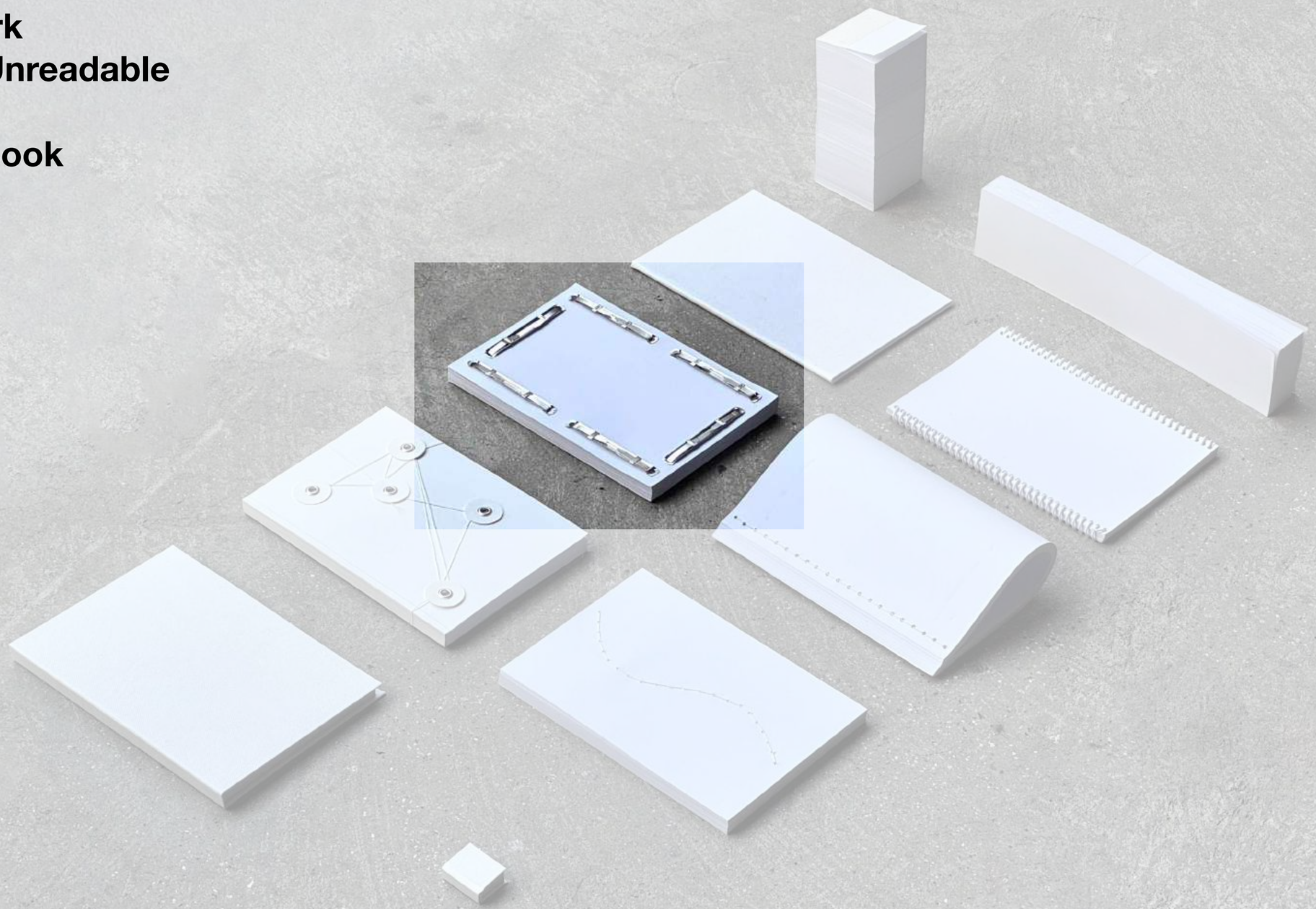
Studio Work
Read the Unreadable

A Book Wrapped in Strings



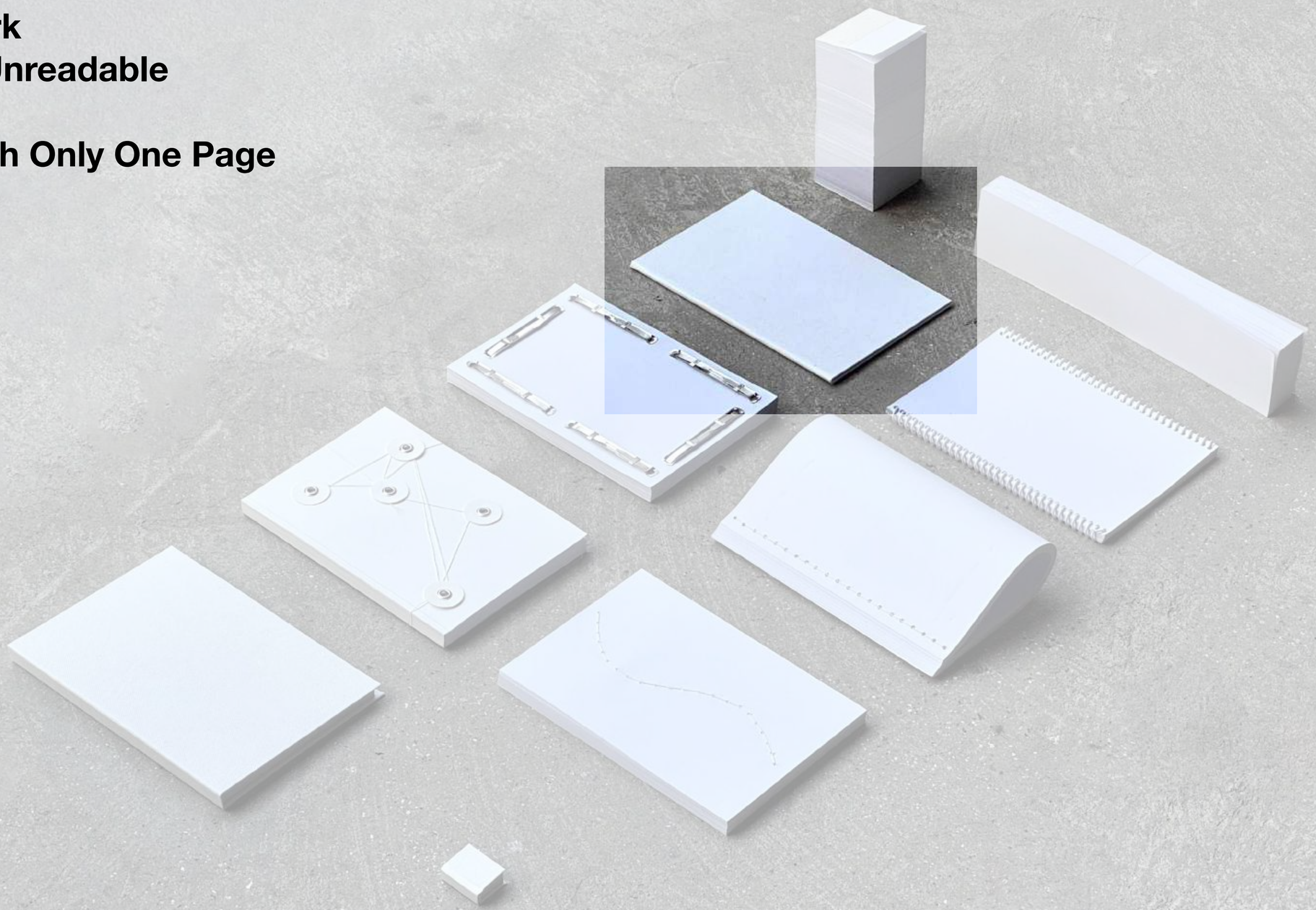
Studio Work
Read the Unreadable

A Sealed Book



Studio Work
Read the Unreadable

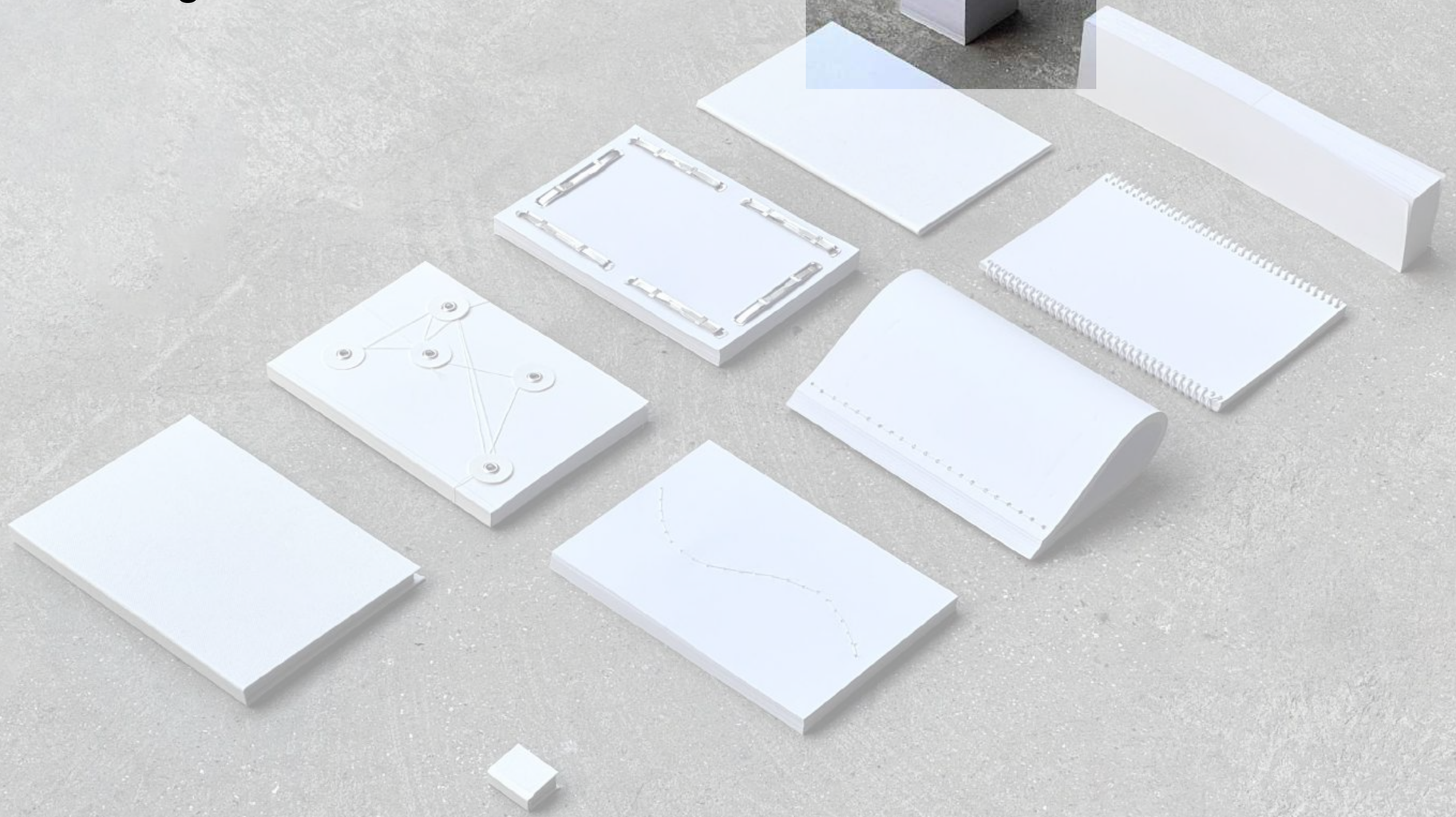
A Book with Only One Page



Studio Work
Read the Unreadable

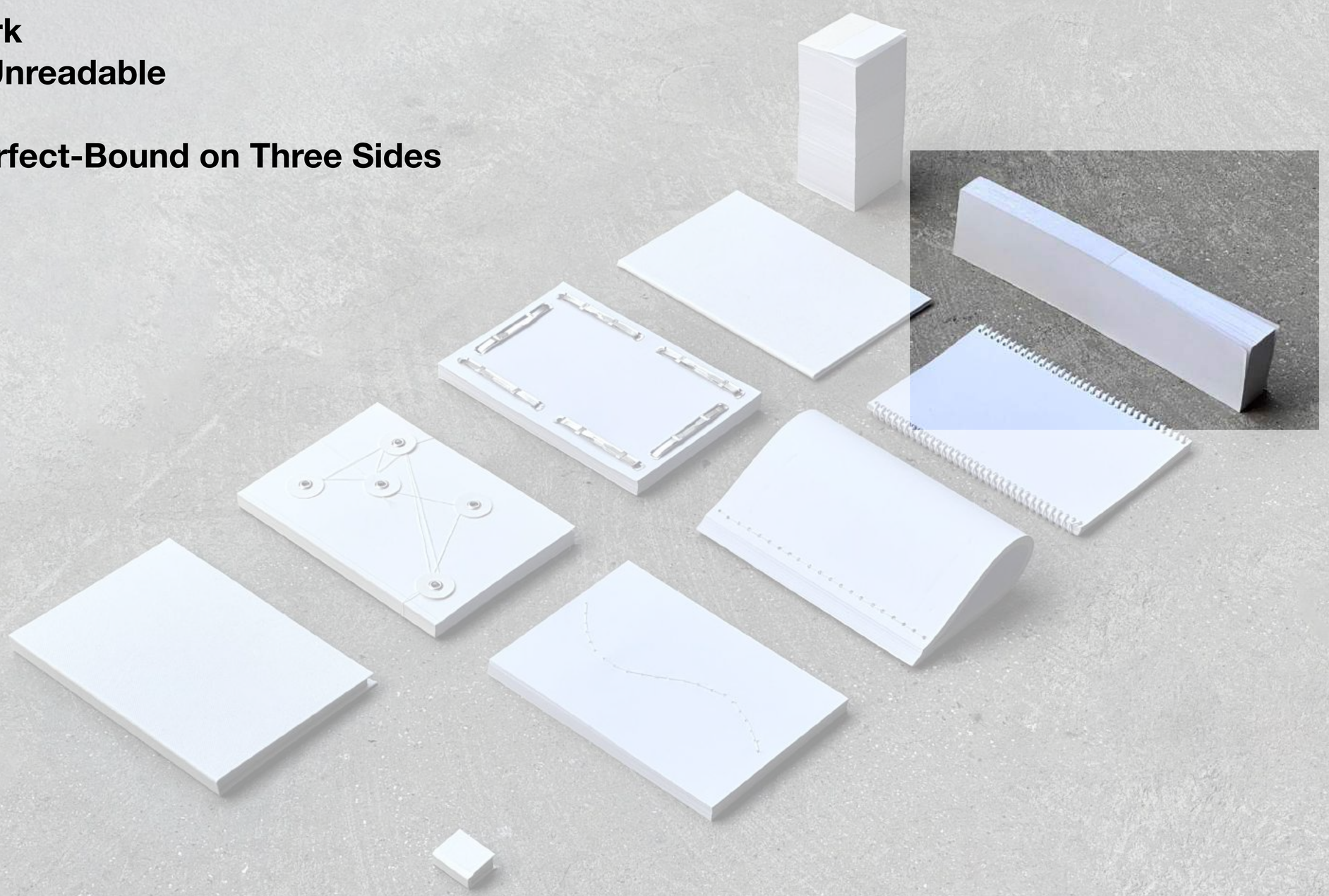
A Book with 1300 Pages





Studio Work
Read the Unreadable

A Book Perfect-Bound on Three Sides



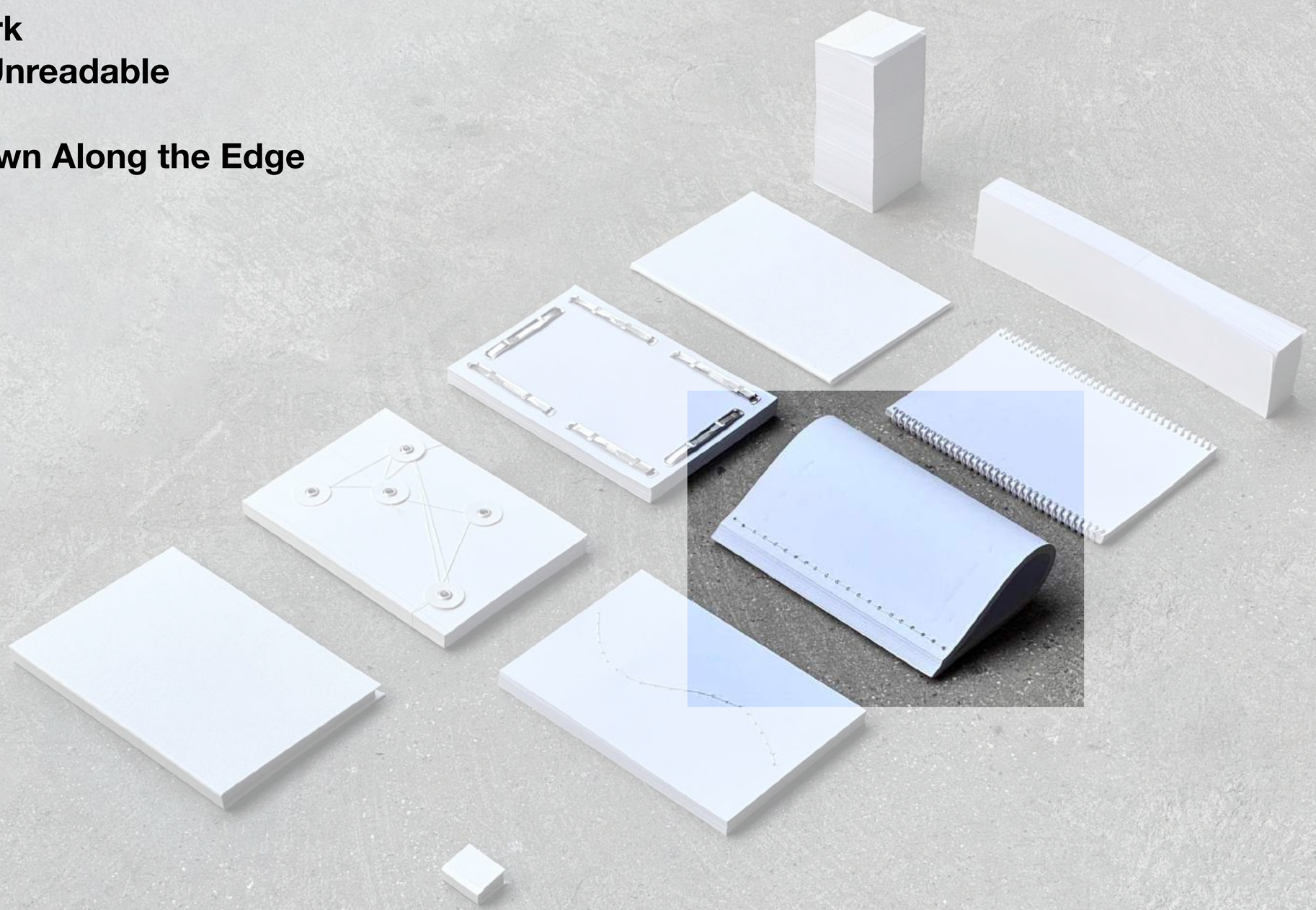
Studio Work
Read the Unreadable

A Book with Two Spirals



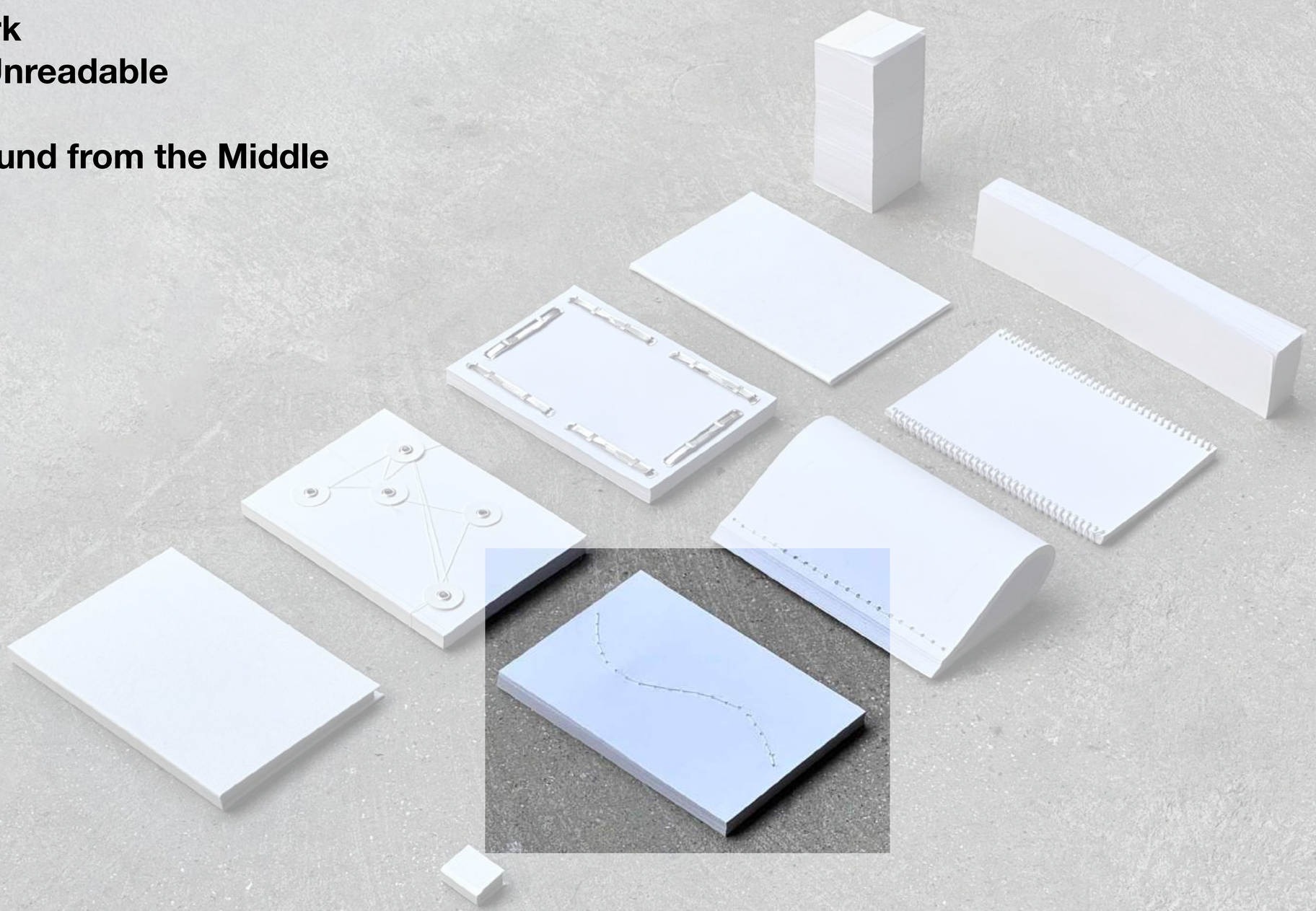
Studio Work
Read the Unreadable

A Book Sewn Along the Edge



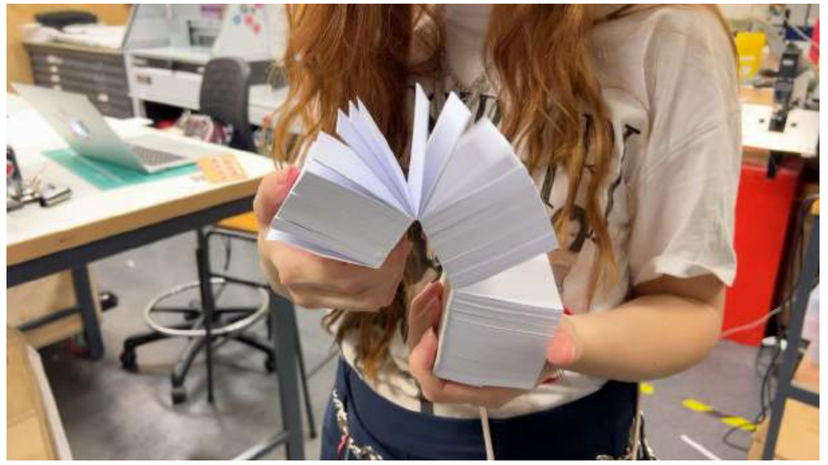
Studio Work
Read the Unreadable

A Book Bound from the Middle







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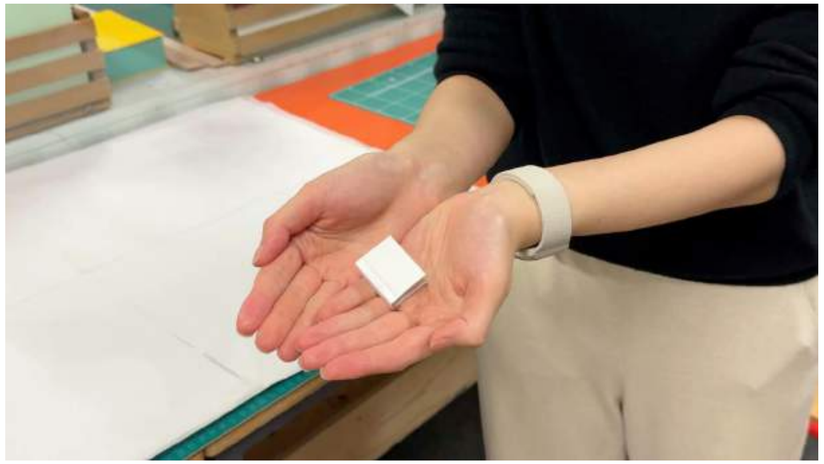






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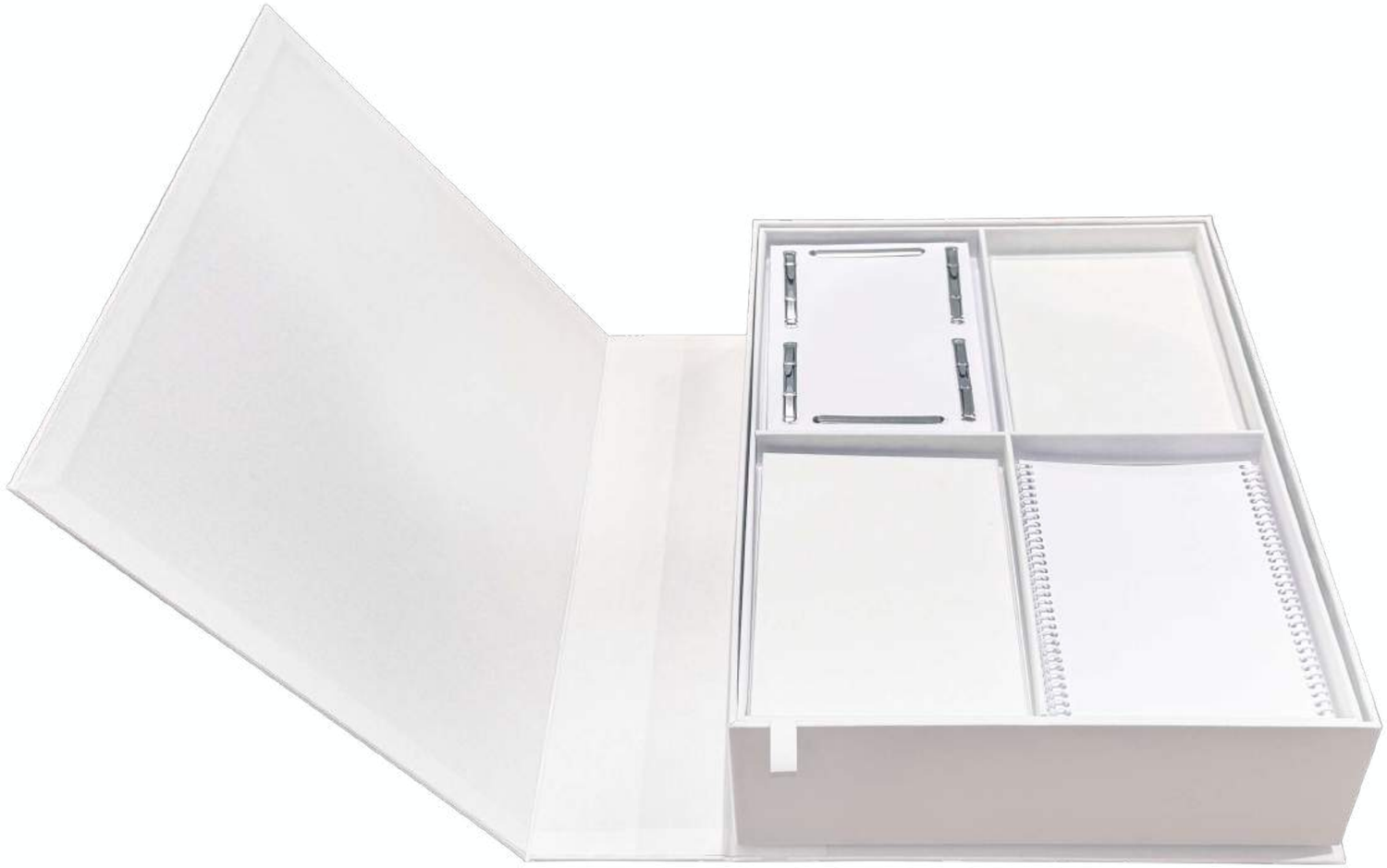
Reading Event Book



What is this?

Is it a book?



A box



filled with blank books?



Or perhaps an unreadable space where reading can take place?

Thanks for listening :)