

A Framework for The Agency of Sketching

This thesis project aims to answer the following research question:

“What was and is exactly the agency of design sketching with its affordances in the past, in the present and probably in the future?”

To answer this question, the various roles of sketching in different design phases are studied, taking both a **theoretical perspective** and a **practical perspective**.

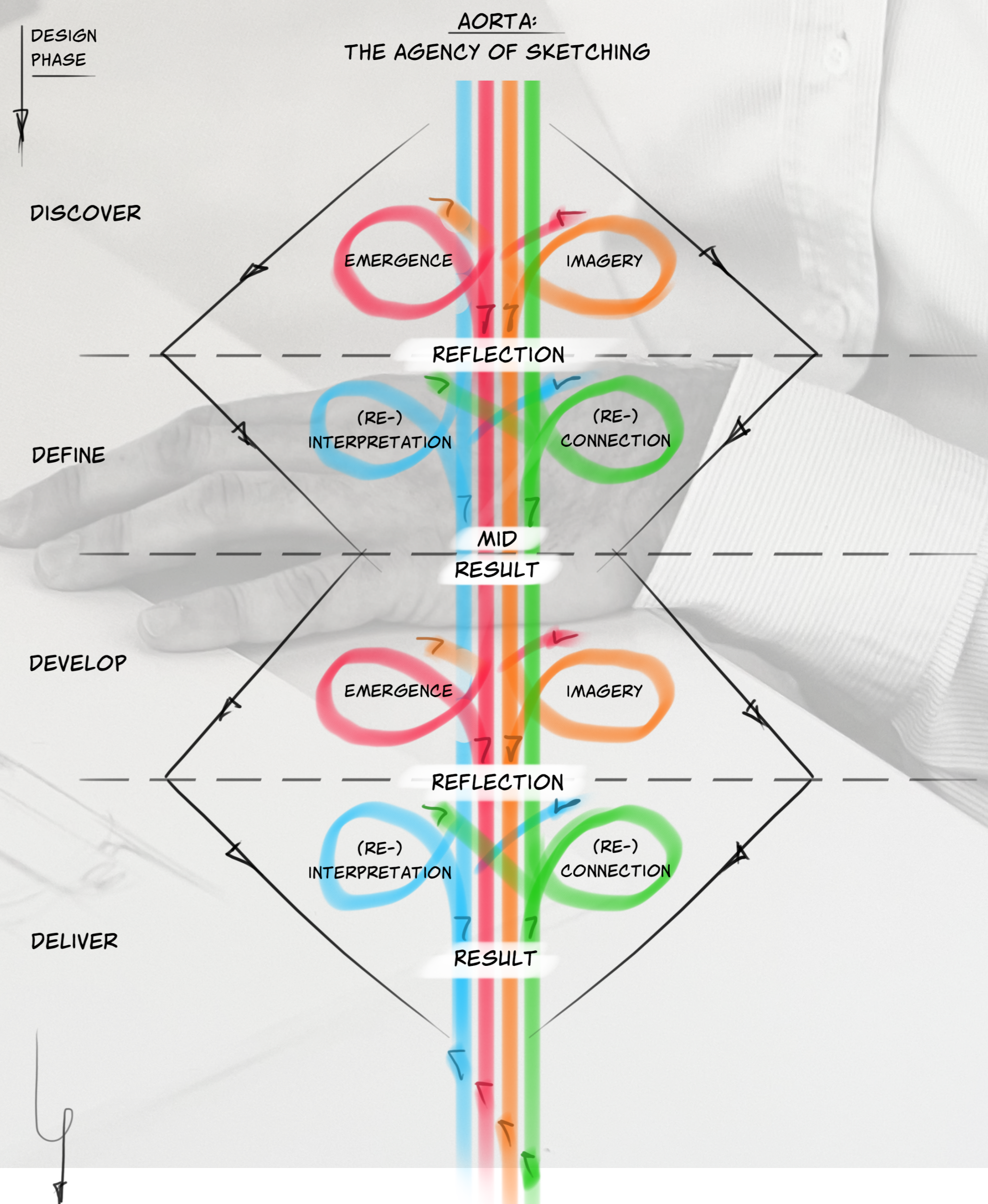
First of all, a review of the literature is conducted to produce a cohesive theoretical foundation for the role of sketching in the design process. Existing literature in the field of design sketching often lacks a wider view on the human perception of pictorial representations in general. However, the perception of sketches by non-designers, such as clients, is increasingly important. Therefore, this thesis project also zooms out to provide a perspective beyond ‘design sketching’: the human psychology behind the perception of sketches and paintings. This leads to a better understanding of the interactive human role that is involved concerning the agency of design sketching.

Additionally, the project focuses on design sketching in practice. Firstly, it analyzes the development of design sketching from the twentieth century till now. Thereafter, to gain insights on design sketching in modern times, the results of interviews with five designers are presented. This offers crucial insights into the contemporary context of design sketching as well as knowledge of current approaches to upcoming trends that are appearing in this field and might shape the agency of sketching.

The interviews provide two observations. Firstly, there appears to be a decline in the sketching skills of young designers entering the work field. Secondly, designers tend to increasingly pay attention to the affordances of drawing with regard to outwards communication, rather than a focus on internal affordances. This might lead to an unbalanced practice of design sketching, in which some core affordances with regards to the design process are lost.

Hence, the situation calls for increased recognition of the significance of sketching in design. The project aims to explain the key aspects of sketching for designers. The essential theoretical affordances of sketching are captured in a framework that reveals the agency of design sketching.

The Framework for the Agency of Sketching should be applicable in practice, with the following goal: to let designers rediscover design sketching as an agency and unlock its benefits. Therefore, while the primary focus of this thesis project revolves around the development of the theoretical framework, its possible application in practice is briefly explored. This leads to the proposal of two concept directions: a digital direction and an analog direction. The digital tool aims to trigger sketching inspiration, involvement with colleagues and collaboration, by using the framework as a recording platform. The analog tool, involving process cards, responds to the fact that a physical object can lower the threshold for interaction; the concept can be used both by design students, professionals and clients. Both concepts stimulate a deeper understanding of the agency of sketching for design.



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