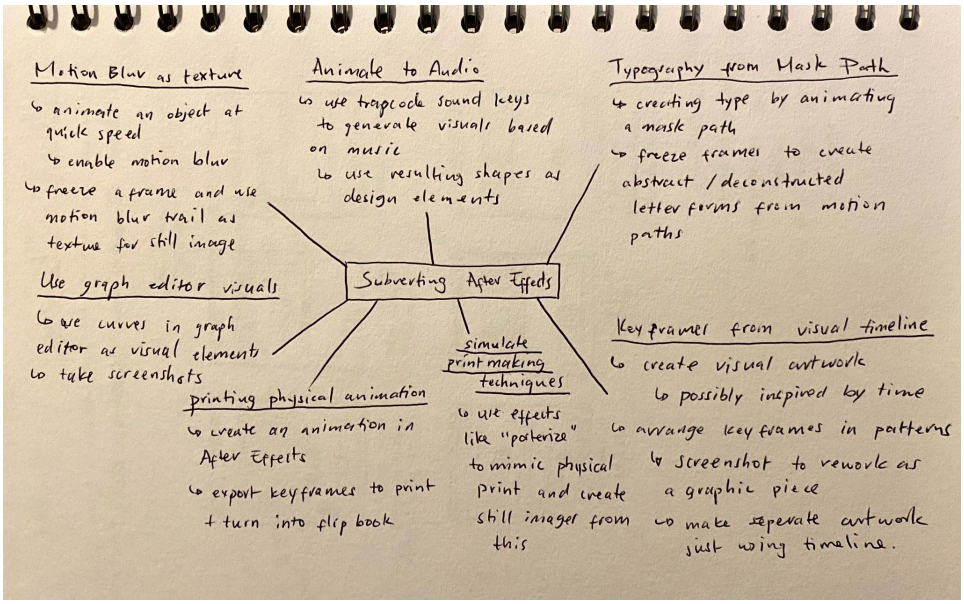
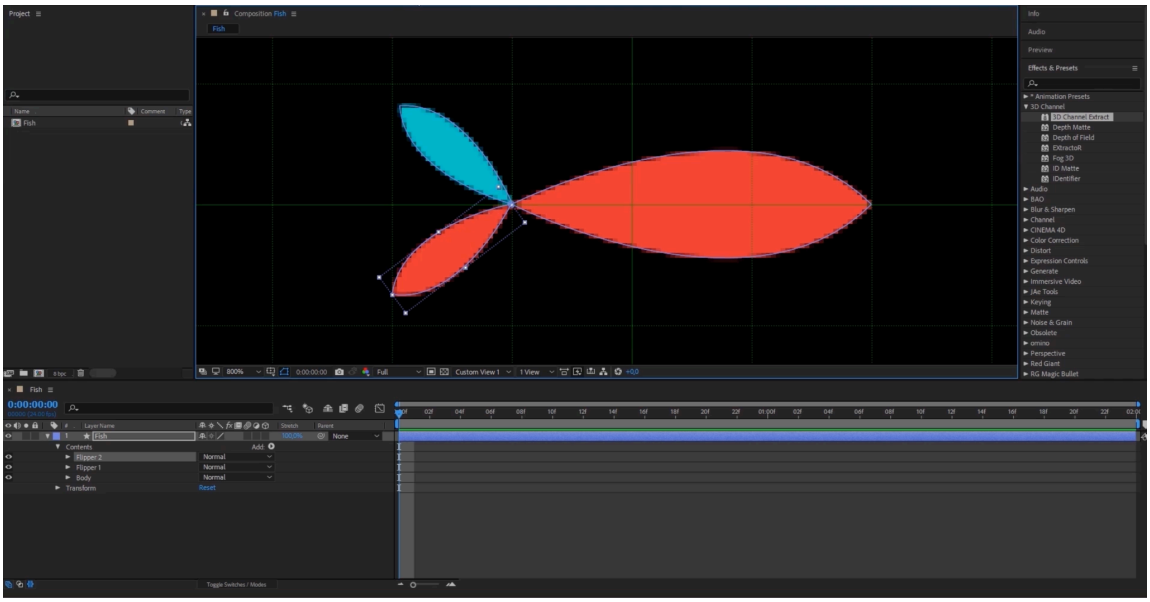
> Consider how you can subvert its primary function, use, or context—in other words, *what* it does, *how* it does it, or what it does it *for*—as a way of interrogating it.

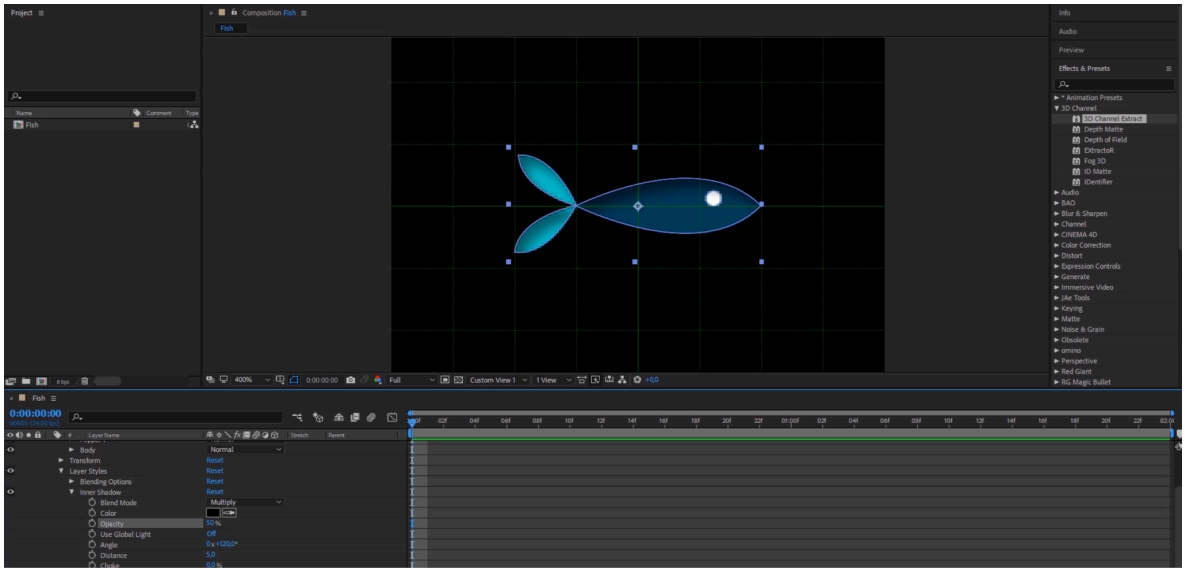
For week 2 of this brief, I decided to interrogate what After Effects does something *for.* I created a mindmap of ideas on how I could subvert its function in ways that changed the outcomes of an After Effects piece, or what it animates *for*.

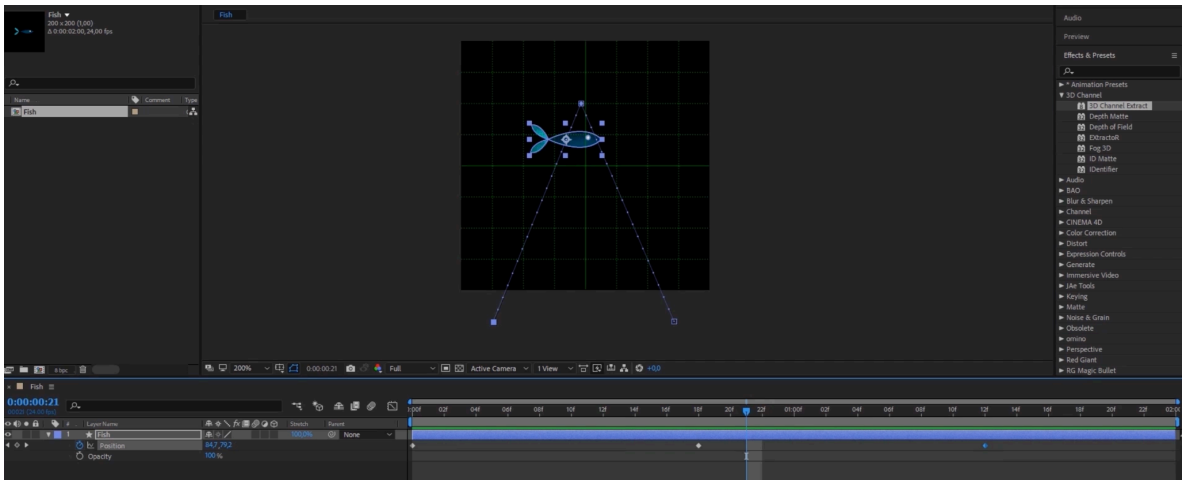


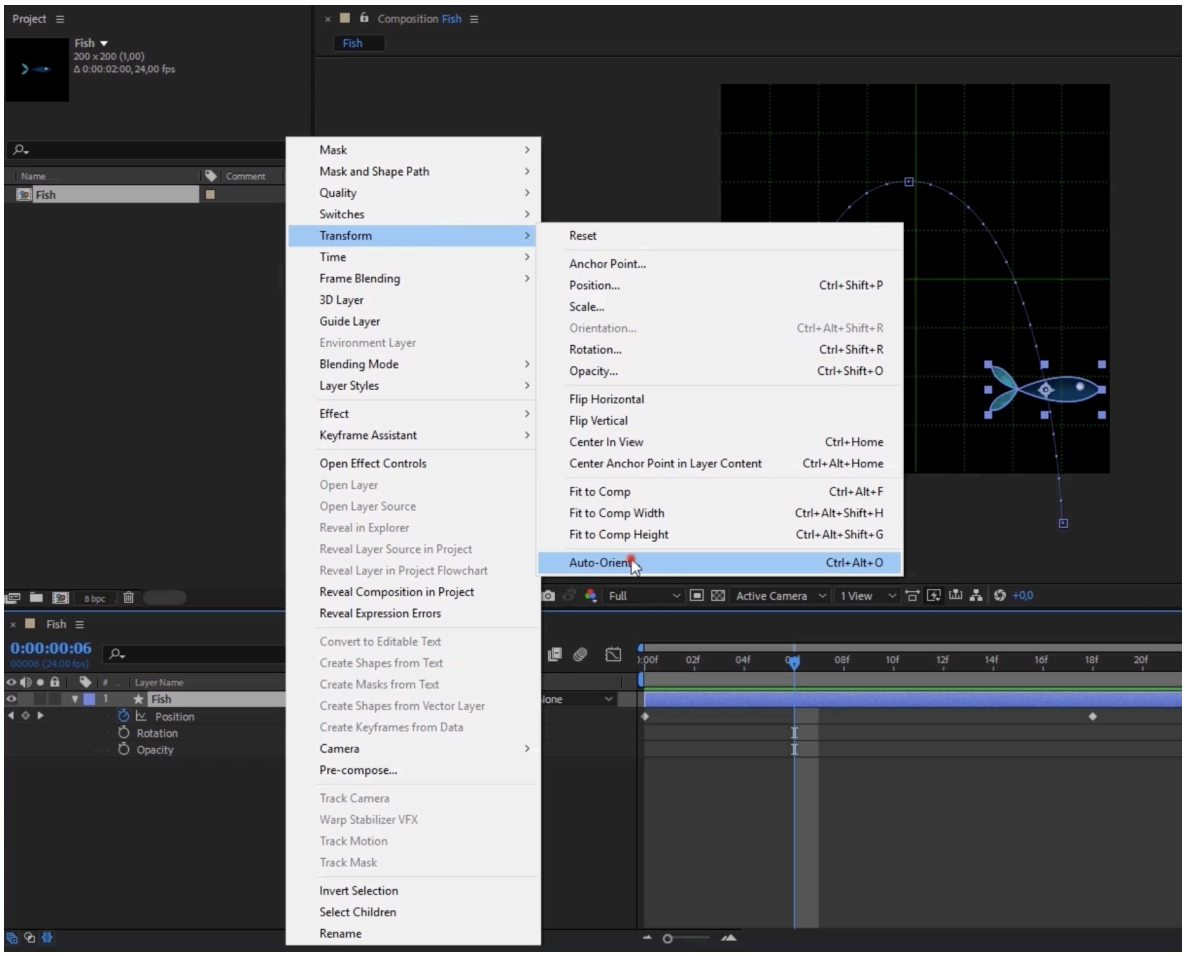
Iteration 1: Creating a digital animation for print animation (flip book)

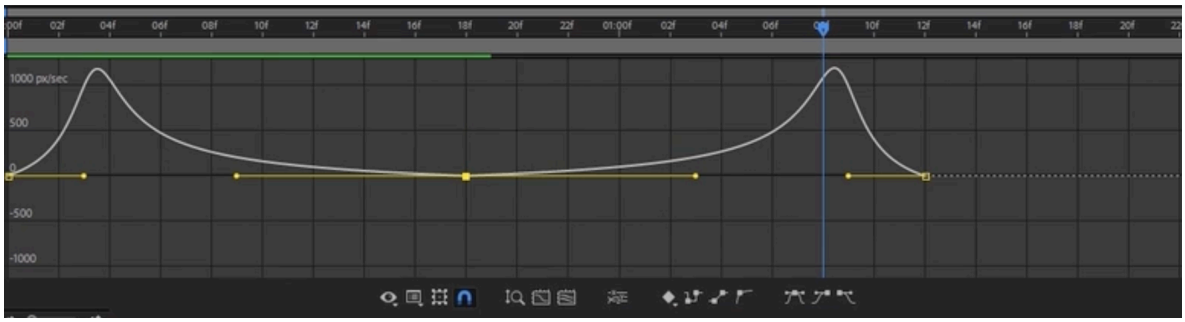
Process of making the fish in after effects

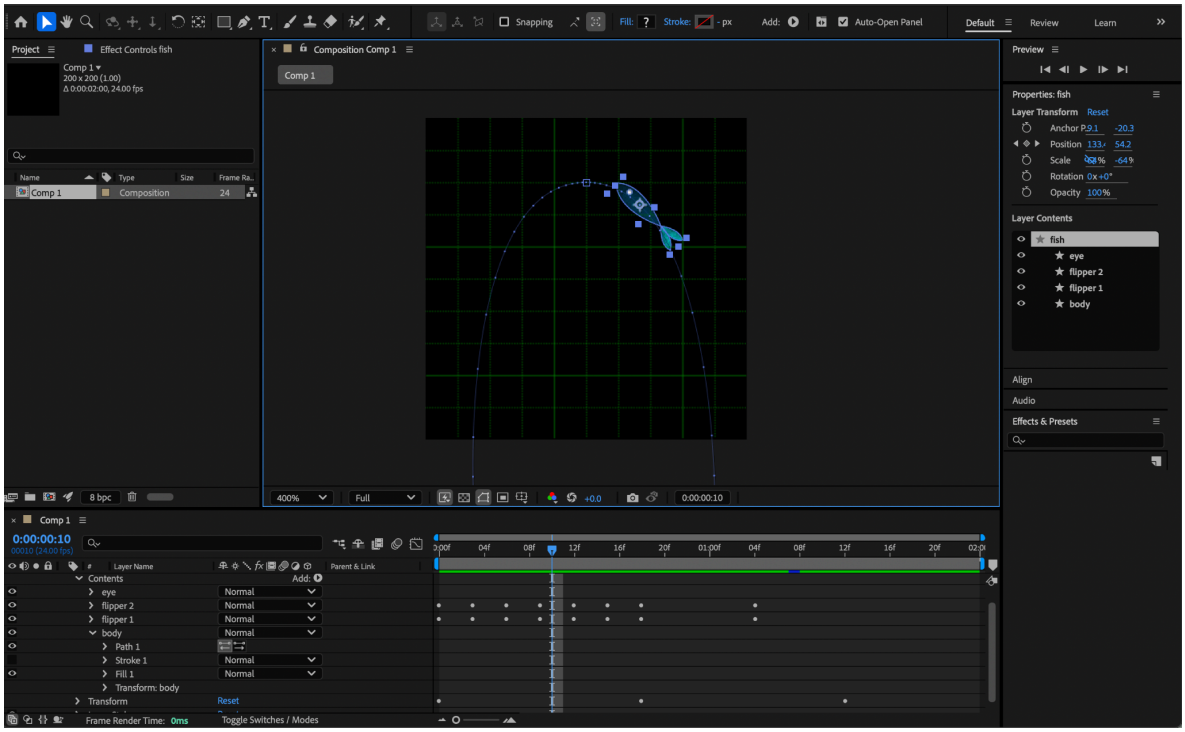


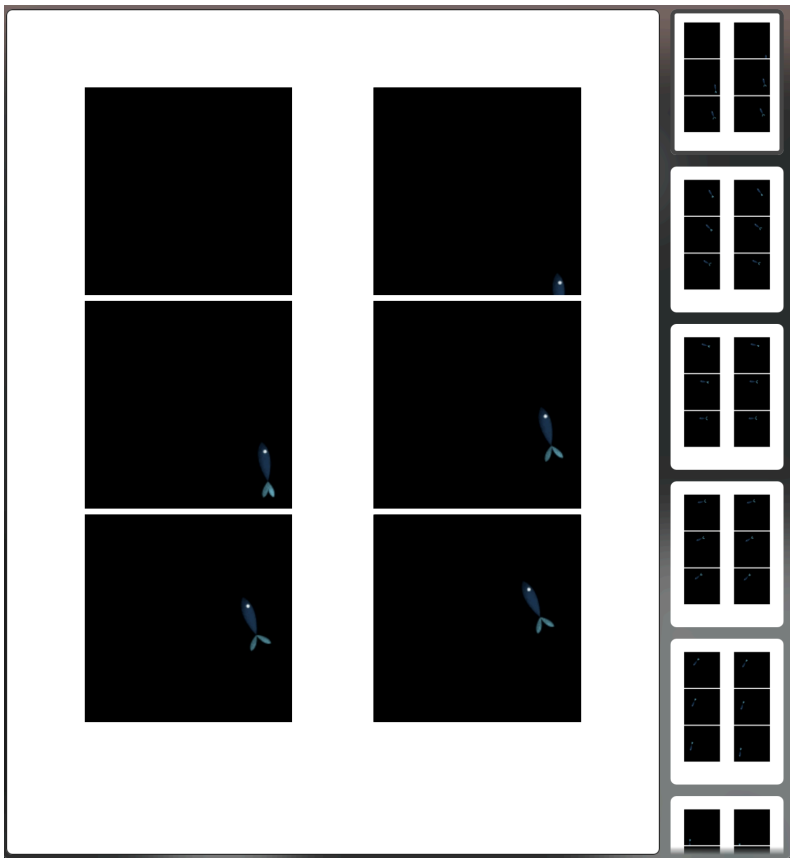

Project
Composition Fish
Fish
Info
Audio
Preview
Effects & Presets
* Animation Presets
3D Channel
3D Channel Extract
Depth Matte
Depth of Field
EXtractoR
Fog 3D
ID Matte
IDentifier
Audio
BAO
Blur & Sharpen
Channel
CINEMA 4D
Color Correction
Distort
Expression Controls
Generate
Immersive Video
JAe Tools
Keying
Matte
Noise & Grain
Obsolete
omino
Perspective
Red Giant
RG Magic Bullet
0:00:00:00
Body
Transform
Layer Styles
Blending Options
Inner Shadow
Blend Mode
Multiply
Color
Opacity
50 %
Use Global Light
Off
Angle
0 x +120,0°
Distance
5,0
Choke
0,0 %
Normal
Reset


Fish
200 x 200 (1,00)
Δ 0:00:02:00, 24,00 fps
Fish
Audio
Preview
Effects & Presets
* Animation Presets
3D Channel
3D Channel Extract
Depth Matte
Depth of Field
EXtractoR
Fog 3D
ID Matte
IDentifier
Audio
BAO
Blur & Sharpen
Channel
CINEMA 4D
Color Correction
Distort
Expression Controls
Generate
Immersive Video
JAe Tools
Keying
Matte
Noise & Grain
Obsolete
omino
Perspective
Red Giant
RG Magic Bullet
0:00:00:21
Fish
Position
847,792
Opacity
100 %
None


Project
Fish
200 x 200 (1,00)
Δ 0:00:02:00, 24,00 fps
Composition Fish
Fish
Name
Comment
Fish
Mask
Mask and Shape Path
Quality
Switches
Transform
Time
Frame Blending
3D Layer
Guide Layer
Environment Layer
Blending Mode
Layer Styles
Effect
Keyframe Assistant
Open Effect Controls
Open Layer
Open Layer Source
Reveal in Explorer
Reveal Layer Source in Project
Reveal Layer in Project Flowchart
Reveal Composition in Project
Reveal Expression Errors
Convert to Editable Text
Create Shapes from Text
Create Masks from Text
Create Shapes from Vector Layer
Create Keyframes from Data
Camera
Pre-compose...
Track Camera
Warp Stabilizer VFX
Track Motion
Track Mask
Invert Selection
Select Children
Rename
Reset
Anchor Point...
Position... Ctrl+Shift+P
Scale...
Orientation... Ctrl+Alt+Shift+R
Rotation... Ctrl+Shift+R
Opacity... Ctrl+Shift+O
Flip Horizontal
Flip Vertical
Center In View Ctrl+Home
Center Anchor Point in Layer Content Ctrl+Alt+Home
Fit to Comp Ctrl+Alt+F
Fit to Comp Width Ctrl+Alt+Shift+H
Fit to Comp Height Ctrl+Alt+Shift+G
Auto-Orient... Ctrl+Alt+O
Full
Active Camera
1 View
0:00:00:06
Layer Name
Fish
Position
Rotation
Opacity


1000 px/sec
500
0
-500
-1000

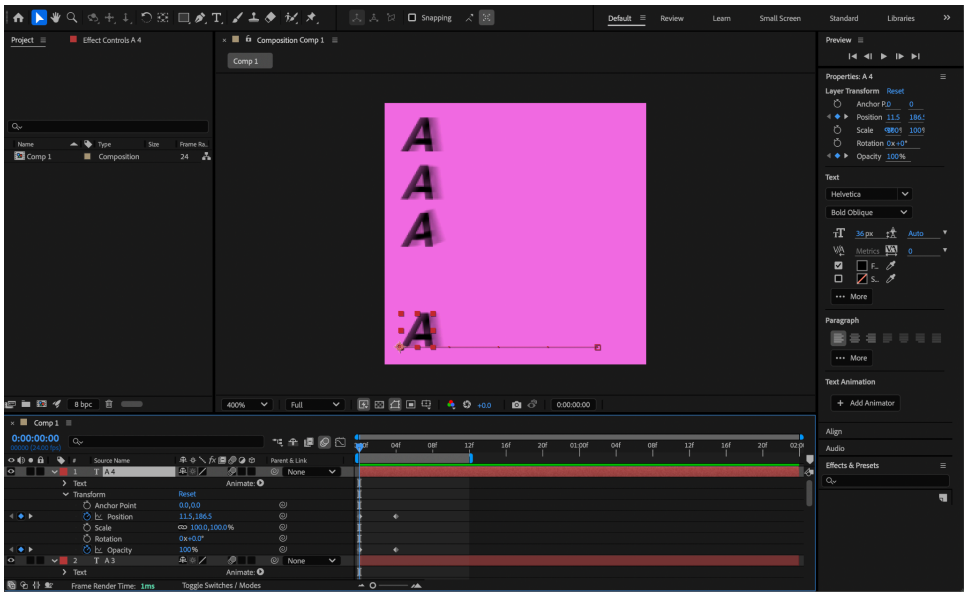

Project
Effect Controls fish
Composition Comp 1
Comp 1
Preview
Properties: fish
Layer Transform
Reset
Anchor P
Position
Scale
Rotation
Opacity
Layer Contents
fish
eye
flipper 2
flipper 1
body
Align
Audio
Effects & Presets
Composition
Contents
Path 1
Stroke 1
Fill 1
Transform: body
Transform
Frame Render Time: 0ms
Toggle Switches / Modes



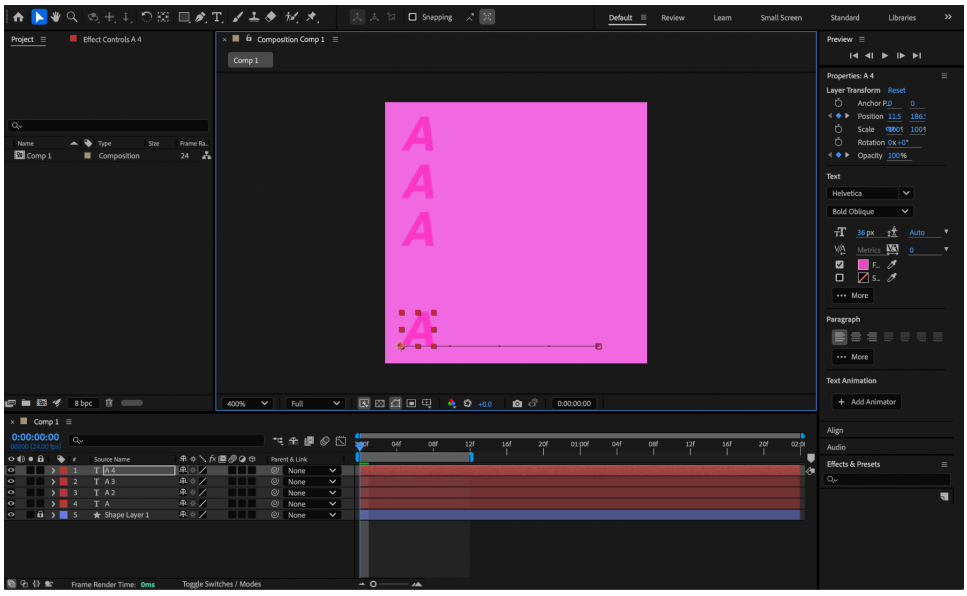
Iteration 2: Use Motion Blur to generate new letterforms

Here I decided to work with the first letter of the alphabet: A

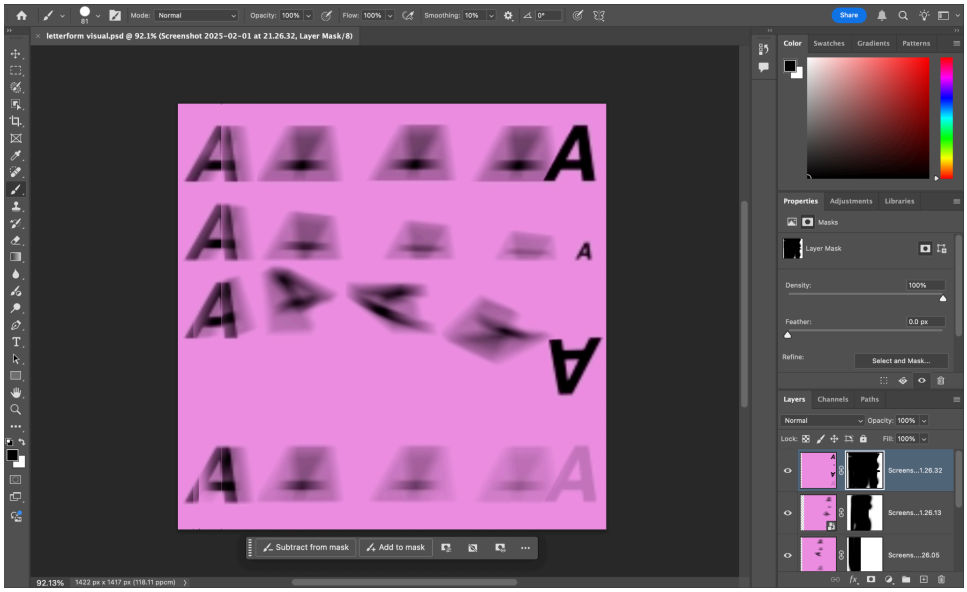
I changed one property from each object (Position, Scale, Rotation, and Opacity) per line and animated them moving from one side to the other. I then added Motion Blur effect to ech object to capture the transition between each frame of the animation and the cool forms the letter took.

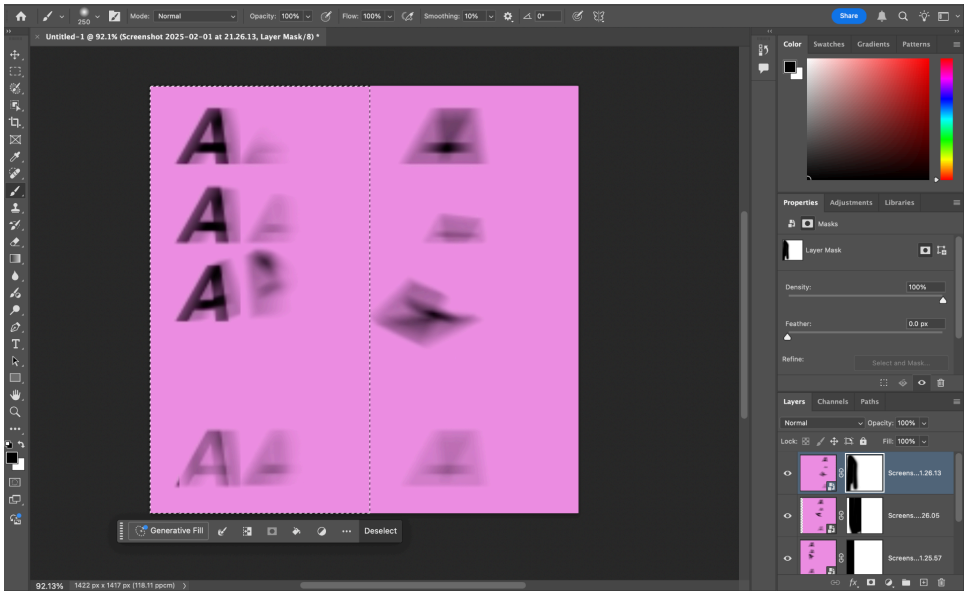


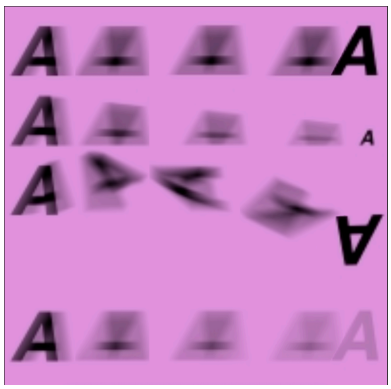
Then I took off the Motion Blur effect and changed the fill colour of the letter to create a new animation.



I then took screenshots of each frame and brought this into photoshop to create visual Images.


letterform visual.psd @ 92.1% (Screenshot 2025-02-01 at 21.26.32, Layer Mask/8)
Subtract from mask
Add to mask
Color
Swatches
Gradients
Patterns
Properties
Adjustments
Libraries
Layer Mask
Density:
Feather:
Refine:
Select and Mask...
Layers
Channels
Paths
Screens...1.26.32
Screens...1.26.13
Screens....26.05


Untitled-1 @ 92.1% (Screenshot 2025-02-01 at 21.26.13, Layer Mask/8) *
Generative Fill
Deselect
Color
Swatches
Gradients
Patterns
Properties
Adjustments
Libraries
Layer Mask
Density:
Feather:
Refine:
Layers
Channels
Paths
Screens...1.26.13
Screens....26.05
Screens...1.25.57

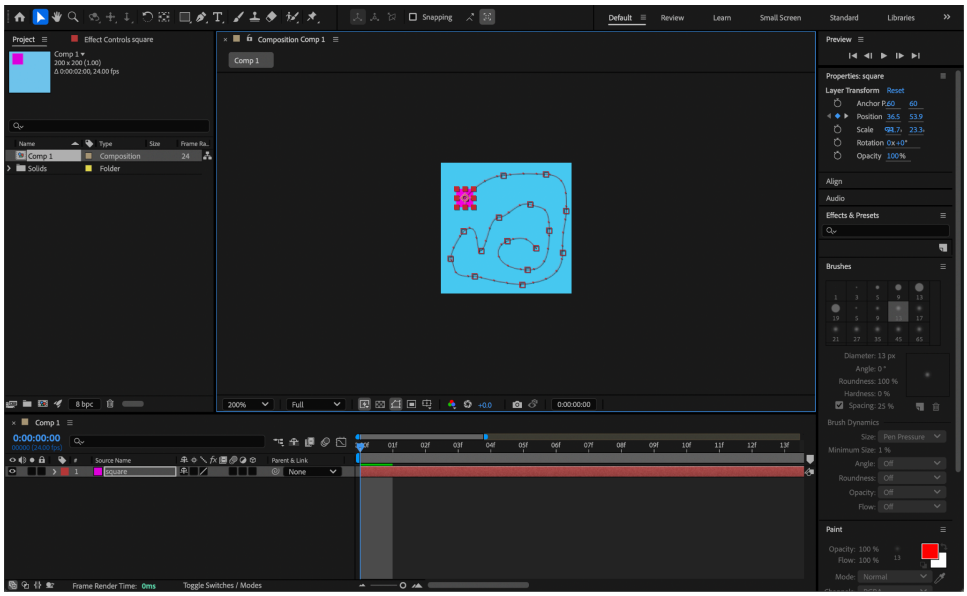


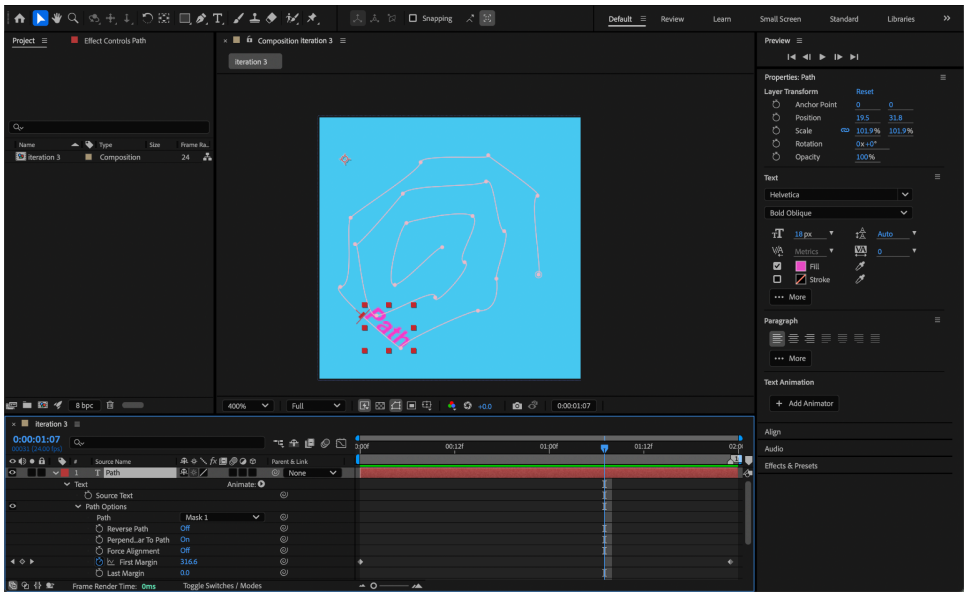
Iteration 3: Create a mask path animation to generate a visual image

Tutorial on getting an object to follow a masked path:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HEbnR3QEWg

Tutorial Notes:

- See how meaning of text changes with motion (movement, shaking, size, orientation)
- Perhaps text can become image or moving image? (Concrete poetry references)





Draft 2 of writing

Raymond Queneau's *Exercises in Style* (Queneau, 1998) is an imaginative piece that demonstrates how a single narrative can be transformed through variations in style, form, and perspective. The book presents a story retold in numerous ways, revealing how changes in language and structure shift perception. This approach provides a lens through which to analyse my project, which explores unconventional uses of Adobe After Effects by repurposing the digital animation tool beyond its intended functions, engaging in an iterative creative process that closely mirrors Queneau's method of stylistic experimentation - using text animation as the primary visual element rather than traditional images or objects.

Queneau's work challenges the assumption that meaning is fixed, instead dictating that "(language) must free itself from the conventions which still hem it in, (conventions of style)... and then it will soar like a butterfly" (Queneau, 1998, p. 13). My project similarly interrogates the boundaries of After Effects as a tool by subverting its traditional applications. Initially, I experimented with using the software's mask path feature to draw, an approach that is unconventional in motion graphics but opened up new ways of thinking about digital line work, and in another iteration, I used the same mask paths to animate text following dynamic paths, reinforcing the idea that form dictates function in digital composition.

Next, I want to shift toward animating concrete poetry, an art form in which textual arrangement visually represents meaning. This step further reflected Queneau's ideas, as concrete poetry itself plays with form to reshape linguistic interpretation. One of my key experiments will involve animating each word of a poem to appear sequentially, forming the outline of its subject - an approach that directly engages with Queneau's notion that reconfiguring a narrative's structure alters its reception and perhaps makes it more interesting. As Queneau suggests, "His purpose here… is a profound exploration into the possibilities of language. It is an experiment in the philosophy of language. He pushes language around in a multiplicity of directions to see what will happen" (Queneau, 1998, p. 14). By reinterpreting After Effects as a tool for poetic visualization rather than for conventional motion graphics, I expand the software's expressive capabilities in the same way that Queneau expanded the expressive potential of a single narrative "without boring the reader at all" (Queneau, 1998, p. 15).

Viewing my project through Queneau's lens has reinforced the importance of constraint as a creative catalyst. Just as he imposed strict stylistic parameters in *Exercises in Style*—from reducing the story to a mathematical sequence to reimagining it through exaggerated literary devices—I imposed the constraint of using After Effects in unintended ways. The experience has led me to consider how I might further push the boundaries of digital tools, perhaps by incorporating additional constraints such as limiting animation to a single function or creating still graphics from motion graphics.

Ultimately, Queneau's approach has deepened my understanding of iteration and reconfiguration in creative practice, especially in my project, much like *Exercises in Style*, which reveals how formal variation transforms perception and makes text more exciting. By continuing

to challenge the intended uses of digital tools, I aim to further explore the intersections between motion, text, and non-traditional storytelling.

References

Queneau, R. (1998) *Exercises in Style*. London: John Calder. (Original work published 1947), pp. 13-15.