Dear Data

Dear Data is a year-long, analog data drawing project by Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec, two award-winning information designers living on different sides of the Atlantic.

By collecting and hand drawing their personal data and sending it to each other in the form of postcards, they became friends.
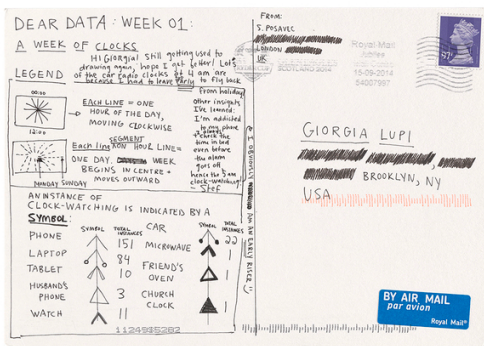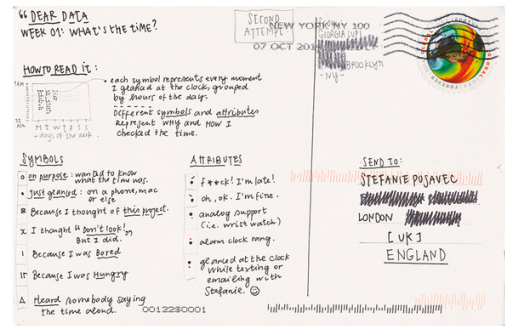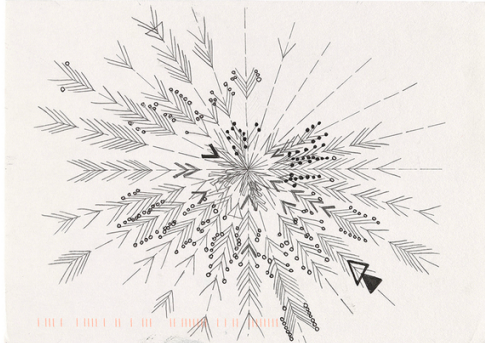
Dear Data is now also a beautiful 300-page book

Each week, and for a year, we collected and measured a particular type of data about our lives, used this data to make a drawing on a postcard-sized sheet of paper, and then dropped the postcard in an English "postbox" (Stefanie) or an American "mailbox" (Giorgia)!

Eventually, the postcard arrived at the other person's address with all the scuff marks of its journey over the ocean: a type of "slow data" transmission.
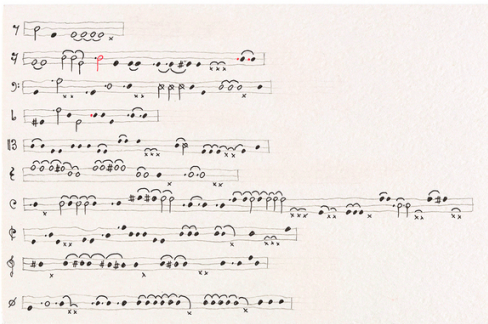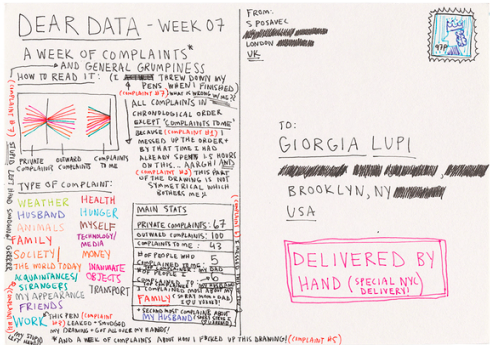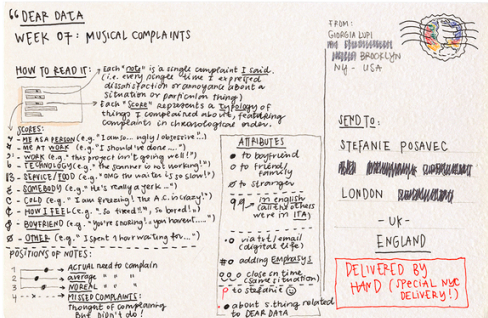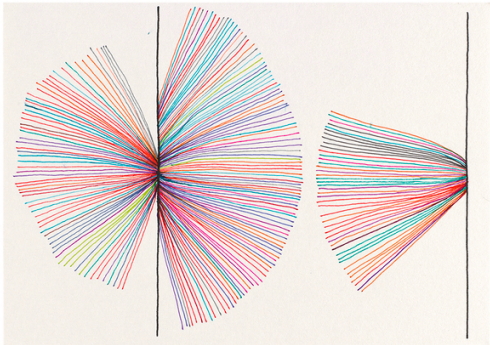
GIORGIA — week one

Drawing her first postcard, Giorgia had an idea for her whole collection: from now on every time she tracks something related to Stefanie, or to *Dear Data*, she uses a special pen to represent it!

• pink ink pen!

a week of clocks — Stefanie

This week Giorgia and Stefanie tried gathering data in small notebooks (tedious), but soon switched to making notes on their phones (much easier). Stefanie's favourite clock to capture: a bell tolling the time in a town in Devon.

GIORGIA — week seven

What better visual reference than a musical score to show the repetitiveness of Giorgia's protests and the "level" of complaint: whether they are justified or totally out of place.

a week of complaints — Stefanie

Note the hand-drawn stamps: these postcards were delivered in person in New York!

Over the fifty-two weeks, the collecting of data about our lives became a kind of ritual. We would spend the week noticing and noting down our activities or thoughts, before translating this information into a hand-drawn visualization.

On the front of the postcard there would be a unique representation of our weekly data, and, on the other side (in addition to the necessary postage and address), we would squeeze in detailed keys to our drawings: the code to enable the recipient to decipher the picture, and to fantasize about what had happened to her new friend the week before.

We prefer to approach data in a slower, more analogue way. We've always conceived Dear Data as a "personal documentary" rather than a quantified-self project which is a subtle — but important — distinction. Instead of using data just to

become more efficient, we argue we can

use data to become more humane and to

connect with ourselves and others at a

deeper level.

Giorgia realized that when she was undecided she felt better if she told someone. So she added that data as further information.

Stefanie drew indecision as a twisting, ruminating line. The only decision she regretted this week: her poor selection off the menu while eating at a restaurant.

When data-gathering gets in the way: Giorgia laughs and then has to report it. So, is she fully enjoying her cheerful moments as they pop up?

Stefanie was banned by her husband from gathering data at her birthday dinner in a posh restaurant (for obvious reasons). Hence the "data void".

Big Bang Data: Dear Data

Dear Data, video created by Somerset House, London

Eyeo 2015 – Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec

from **Eyeo Festival**

53:27

2015, Eyeo Festival, Opening Keynote

Giorgia Lupi & Stefanie Posavec - Dear Data: A friendship in data, drawing and postcards
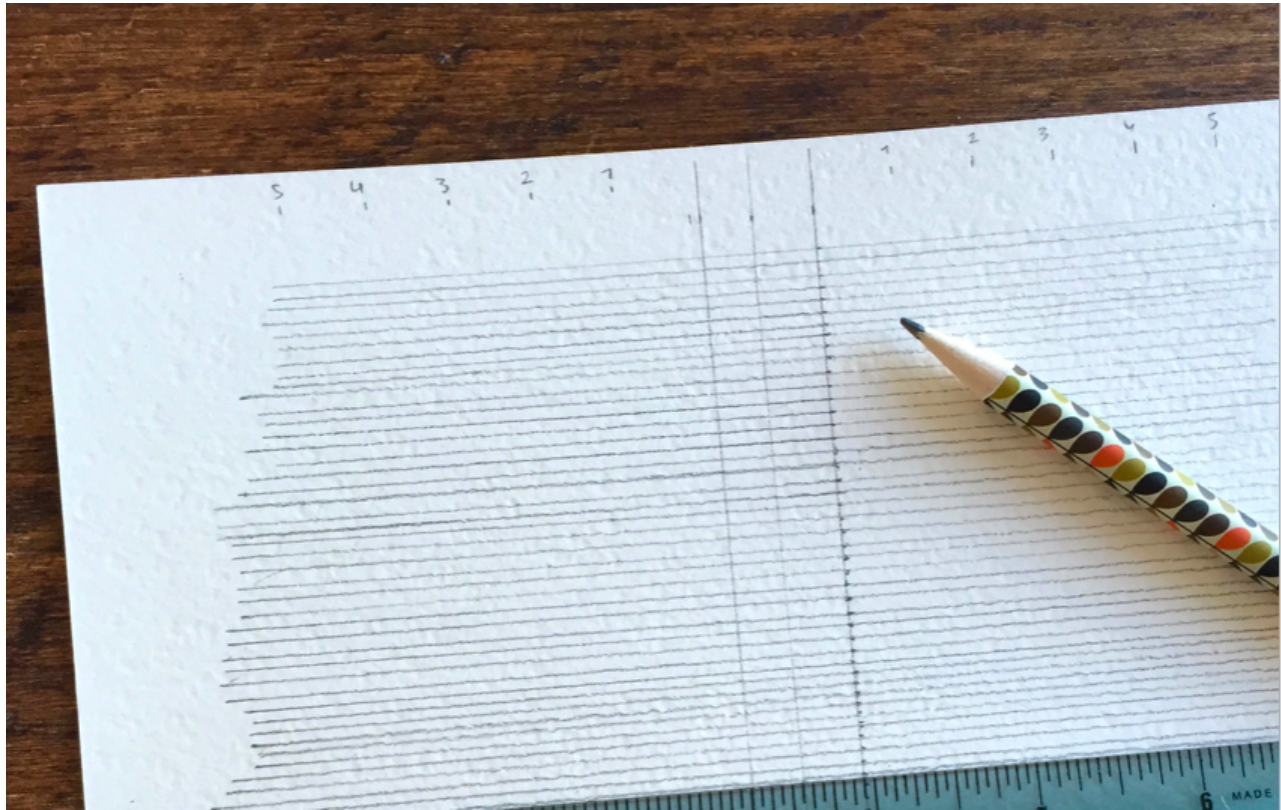
from **VISUALIZED**

23:10

2015 - VISUALIZED, closing keynote

IT'S YOUR TURN!

Dear friends of Dear Data,

We're incredibly happy to say we've received so many messages from enthusiasts people of different ages and backgrounds who are drawing their data.

This section is for you.

1. **Are you or your students already drawing your data?**

   Email us! We will be opening a gallery shortly to showcase all of your artwork.

   However, we will only accept artwork where your and your pen pal's home addresses are blurred/covered (and surnames / full names blurred for children, as per your school's or their parents' preference), as we would prefer to keep your details private.

2. **Are you a teacher and interested in using the Dear Data format with your students?**

   Subscribe to this mailing group and introduce yourself. You will be able to share your experience, learn from others and find data pen pals for your students.

3. **Are you looking for a data penpal?**

   Subscribe to this group and introduce yourself.

We believe there is a

huge potential to use this method to inspire students and non-data experts to start working with data, or as a simple way to meet a new friend while also connecting with yourself at a deeper level.

All we kindly ask is that you to keep us posted (haha) on how your experiments are going! Please send us scans or pictures of your (or your students) postcards for our research and for our records! We'd love to share your data artwork with the world (so long as you give us permission).

All our best and thanks for your support in Dear Data,
Giorgia and Stefanie

PS: looking for clues on how to collect and draw your data? Check the bottom of this post on Five Thirty Eight where we gave some suggestions!

🔊 Dear Data Deliveries RSS

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