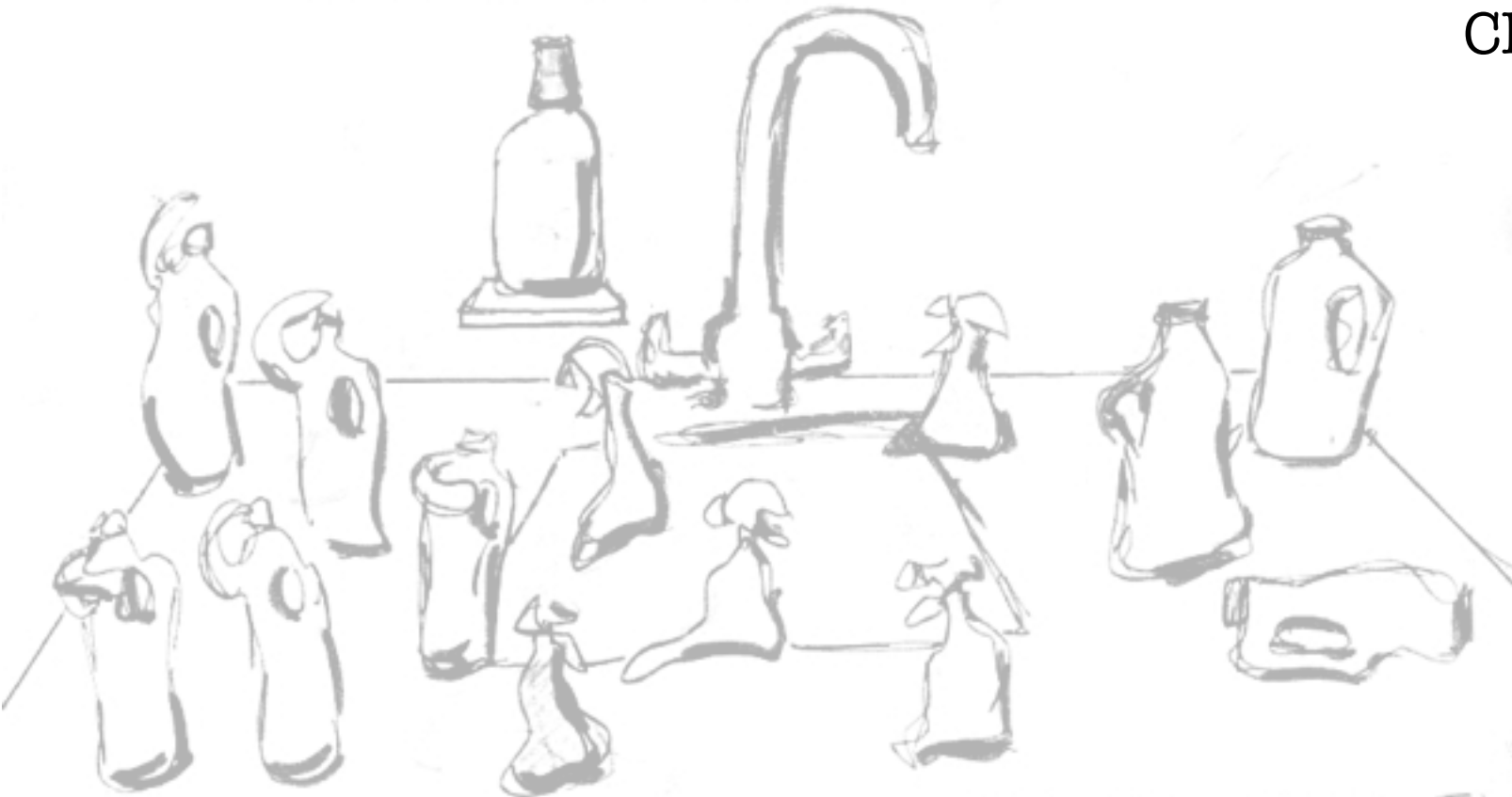




Uncanny Things

Amber Tasia
Christopher- Ward

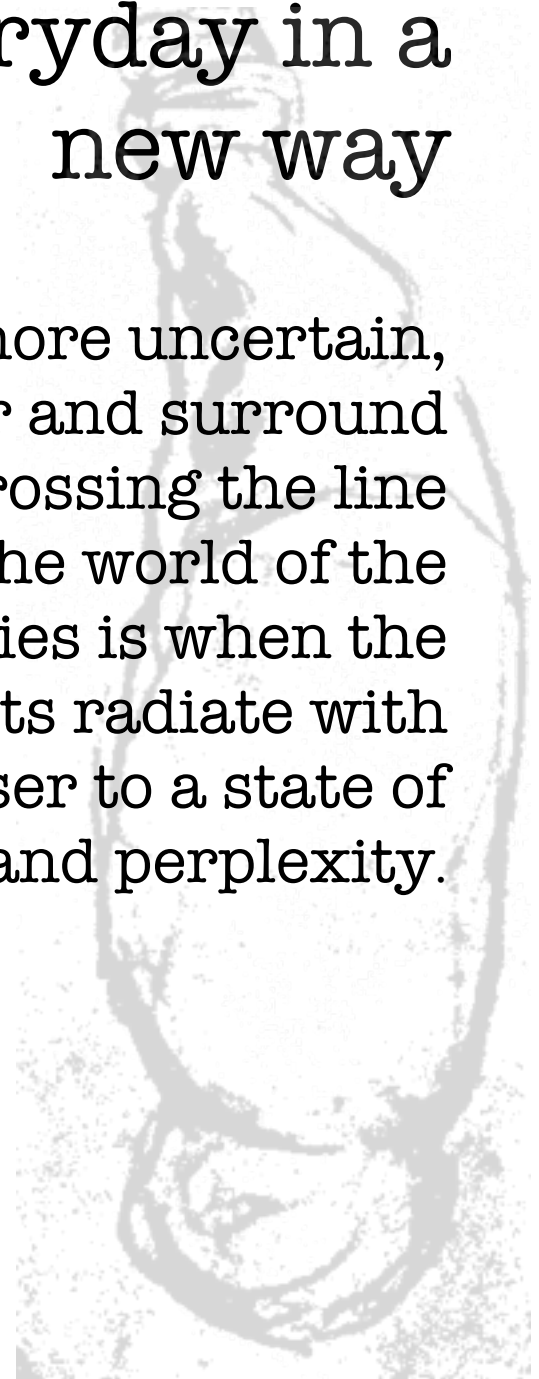
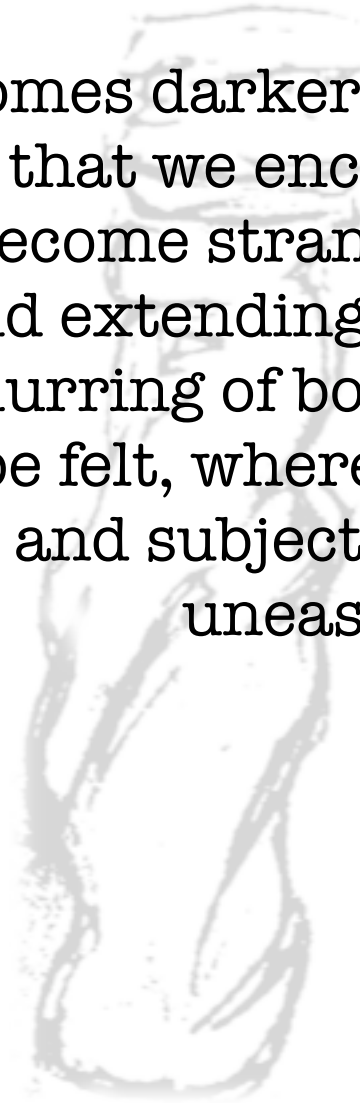


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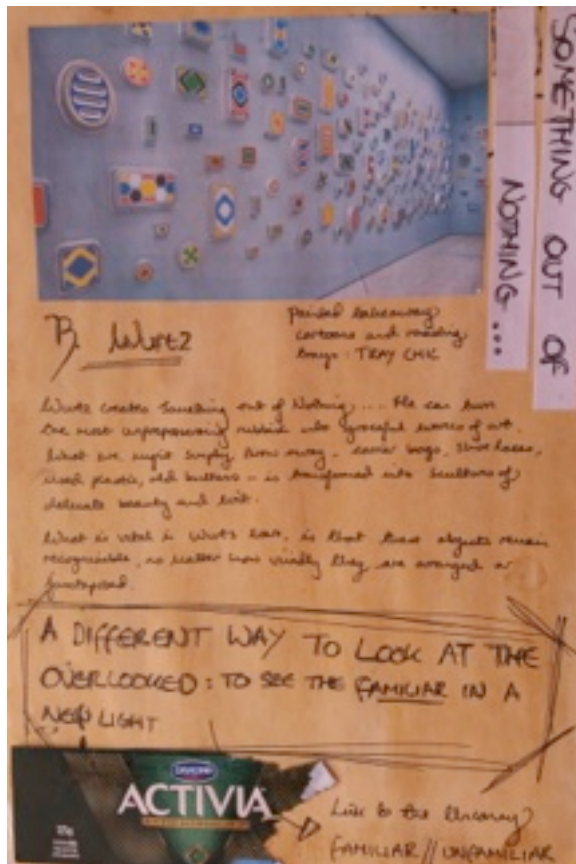
Observing the Everyday in a new way

As the world becomes darker and more uncertain, the objects that we encounter and surround ourselves with become stranger, crossing the line of normality and extending into the world of the uncanny. This blurring of boundaries is when the uncanny can be felt, where objects radiate with juxtaposition and subject the user to a state of uneasiness and perplexity.



The Beginning

I began my investigation with a combination of visual and contextual research, photographing objects that I encounter on a daily basis, and manipulating discarded packaging and empty bottles. I also began to document everyday items that were functioning as something other than their original or perceived function, and thus stimulating thoughts surrounding the purpose of an object and how a degree of anxiety or confusion can arise when our expectations of an object are challenged.



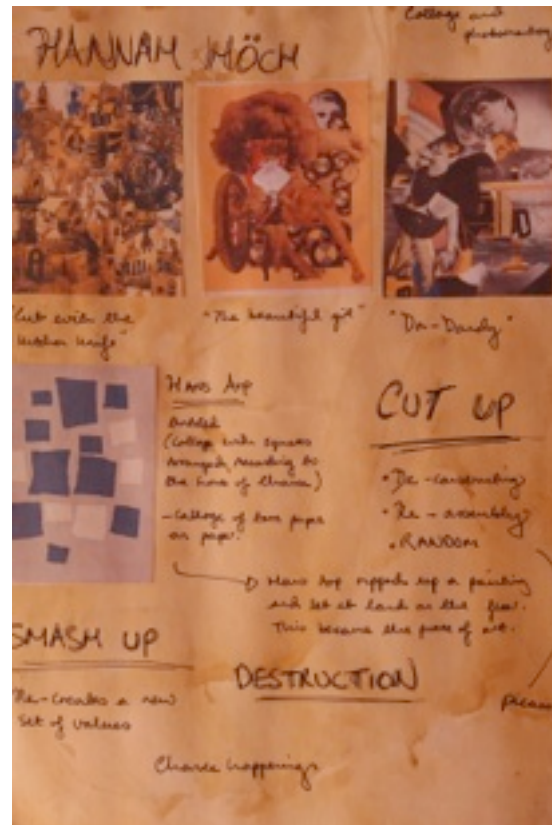
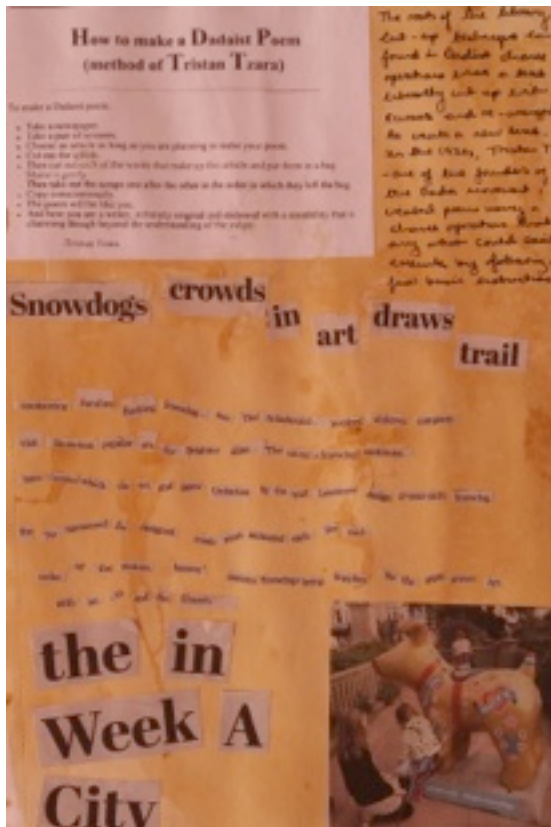


Visual Research: Spain

I took these photos during my time in Spain. Every street was transformed by familiar everyday objects such as hats, coat hangers and detergent bottles. Taking the objects from their original environment challenges the way we think and value them.

Contextual Research: Dadaism

The experimental methodology of Dadaism became the initial reference point to my investigation. Techniques such as cut-up deconstruction, juxtaposition, collaging, and readymades were key components of this art movement, and enabled the dismantling of the mundane opened up a new way of thinking that was absent from conscious control.



I experimented with the Cut-up technique, where words or images as cut-up and reassembled randomly. This introduced a method which relied heavily upon chance and playfulness, and allowed me to begin to manipulate objects in an uncontrolled and experimental way.

GAGA FOR DADA

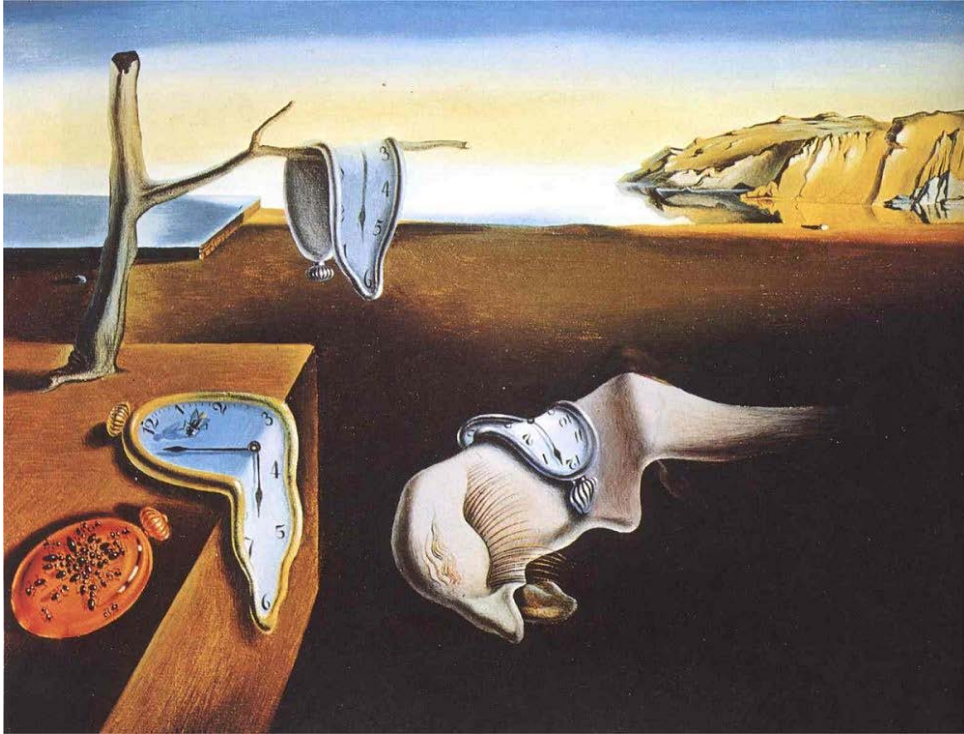
Dadaism was an art movement that explored the boundary between art and the everyday.

It was a battle against reason, a playground of craziness, and a new way of thinking.



The realization that reason and anti-reason, sense and nonsense, design and chance, consciousness and unconsciousness, belong together as necessary parts of a whole - this was the central message of Dada.

— Hans Richter —



- An escape from reality
- Dream-like fluidity
- Melting
- Everyday objects
- Juxtapositions
- Subconscious
- Real/ fantasy
- Colour

Surrealism

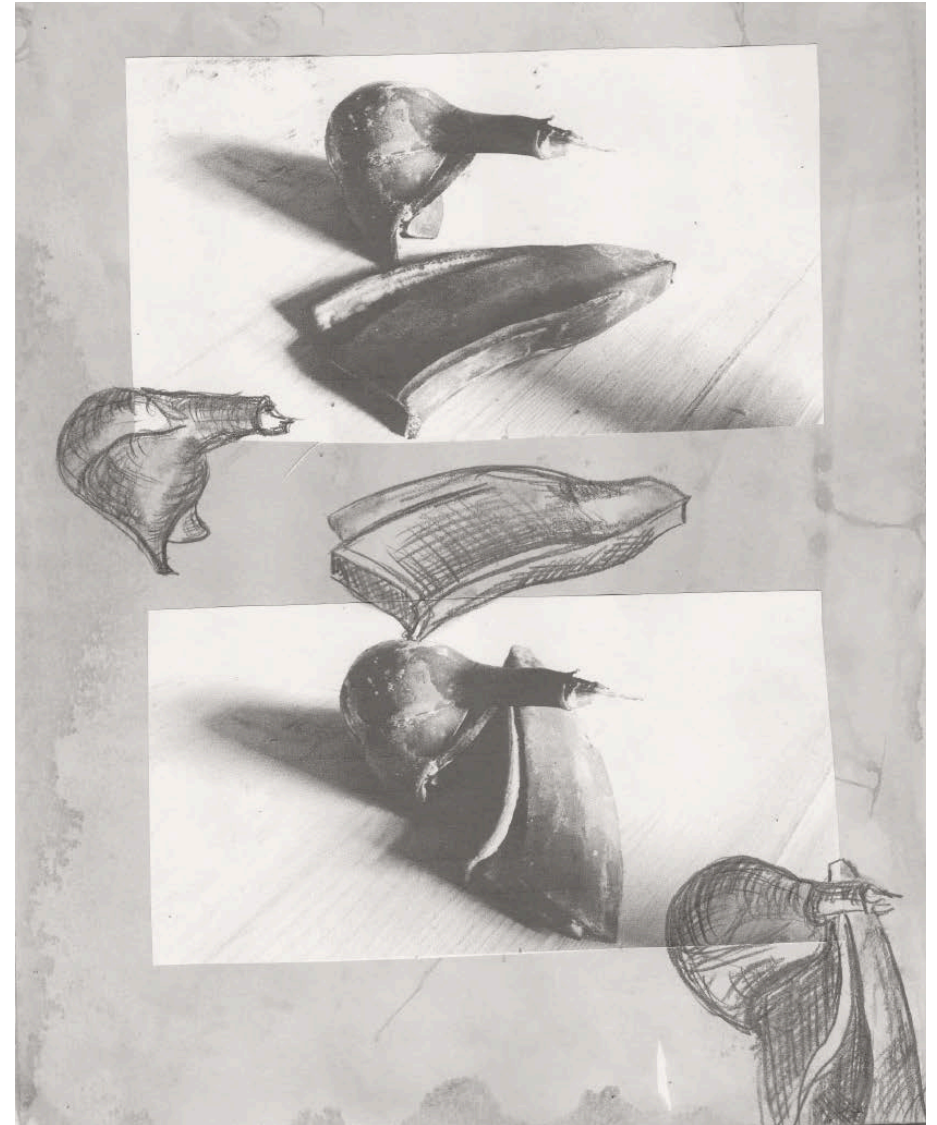
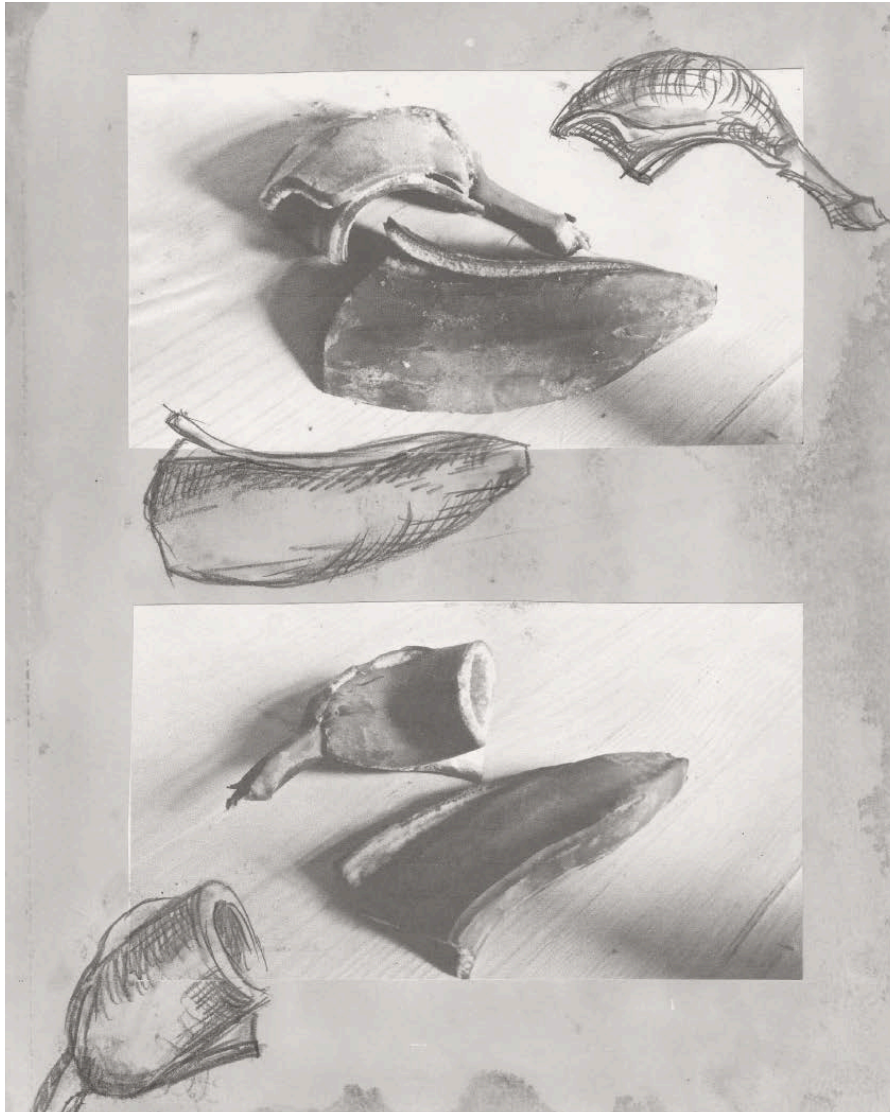
Surrealism was an art movement which extended from Dadaism, and played with unconformity, the expression of pure thought and enabled the uncanny to exist in the world of the mundane.

A background of Surrealism and its focus upon dreams and the unconscious began to help me dismantle the everyday.

The juxtaposition found within Surrealist work allows the boundary between the real and the imagined to disintegrate and thus harmonizes juxtaposing objects within a dream-like imagery.

play

Stimulating investigation with the everyday:
Frozen banana skin

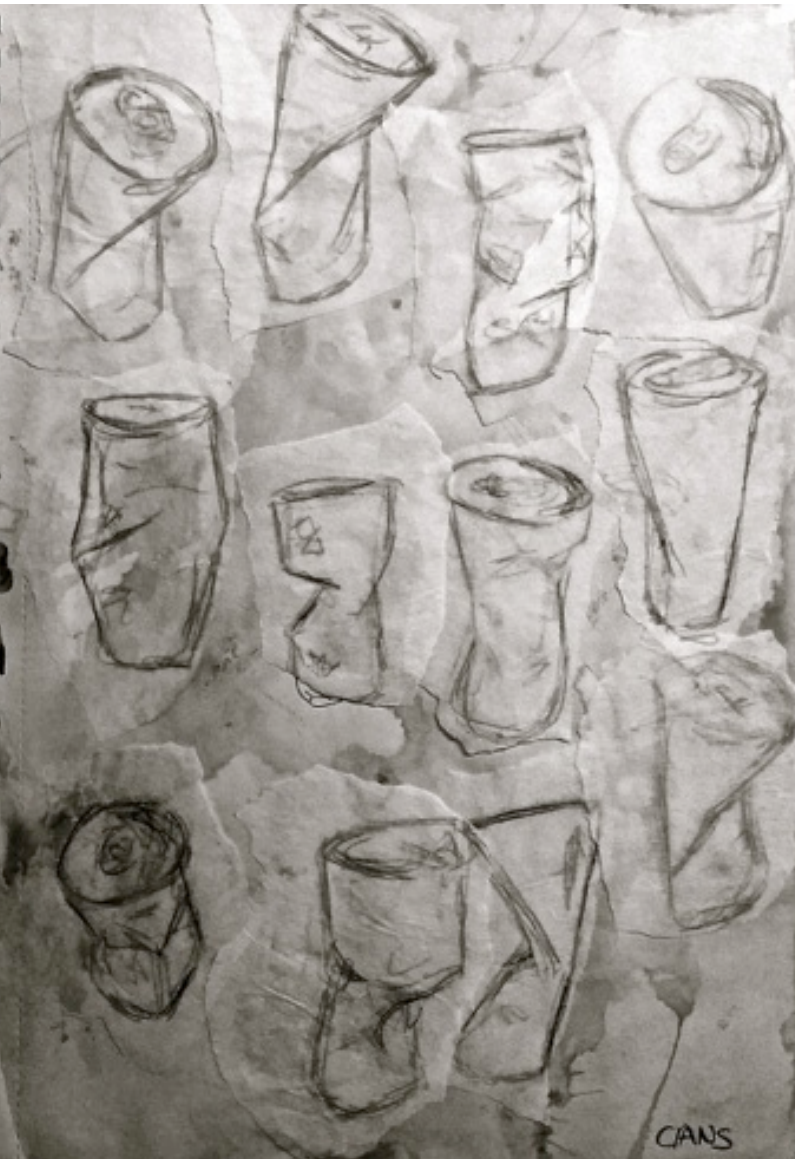




readymades

collage

Manipulating existing objects:
Cans, Bottles, Packaging

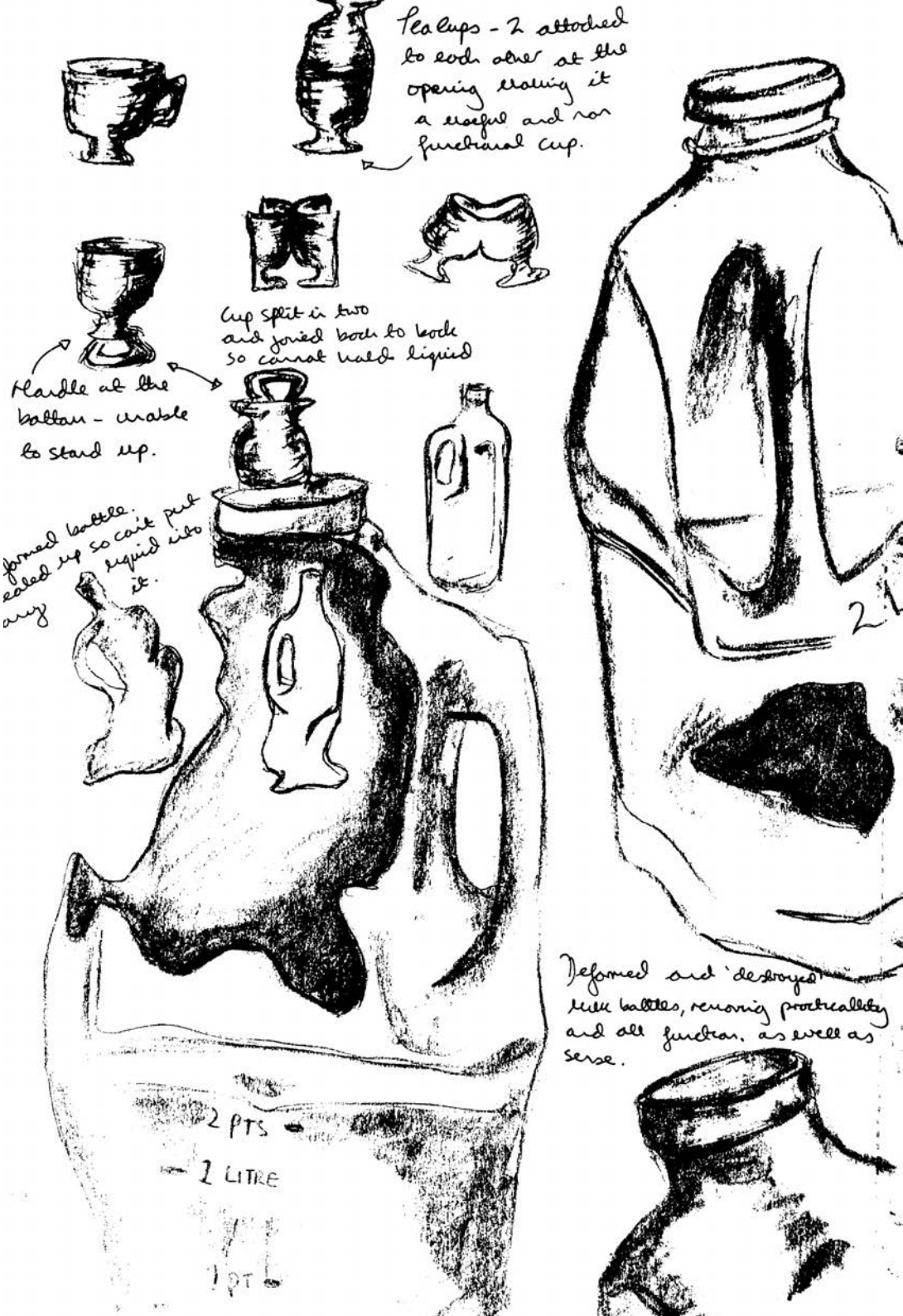




The milk bottle: 2D to 3D

I had never cast a milk bottle with plaster before, so I had no idea whether it would work. I made the plaster and poured it into the hollow bottle. I moved the bottle continuously until the plaster began to set and form a skin under the plastic.

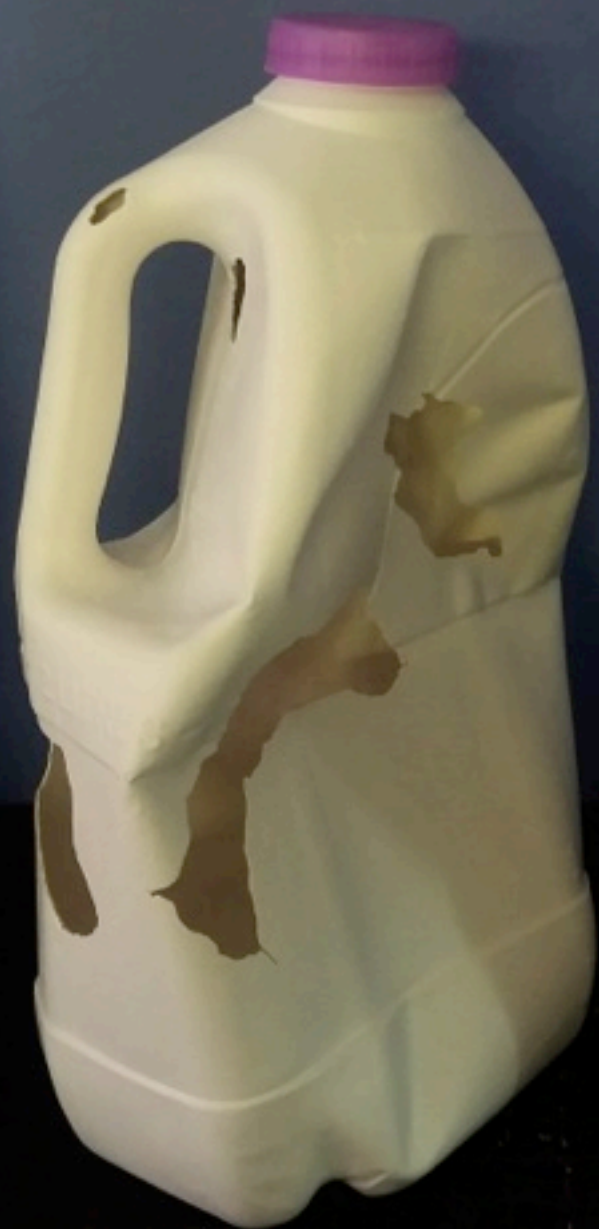
chance



Plaster Casting:

The milk bottles and drink cans that I used to create the maquettes were crushed and manipulated before I poured the plaster into them. This allowed me to recreate the original everyday object in a way that it remained recognizable and familiar, but had an oddness to it which started to play with the mind. Retaining the plastic bottle tops added to the perplexity which was beginning to emerge, as the objects both revealed something that was familiar, yet oddly unfamiliar. This is where the uncanny begins.

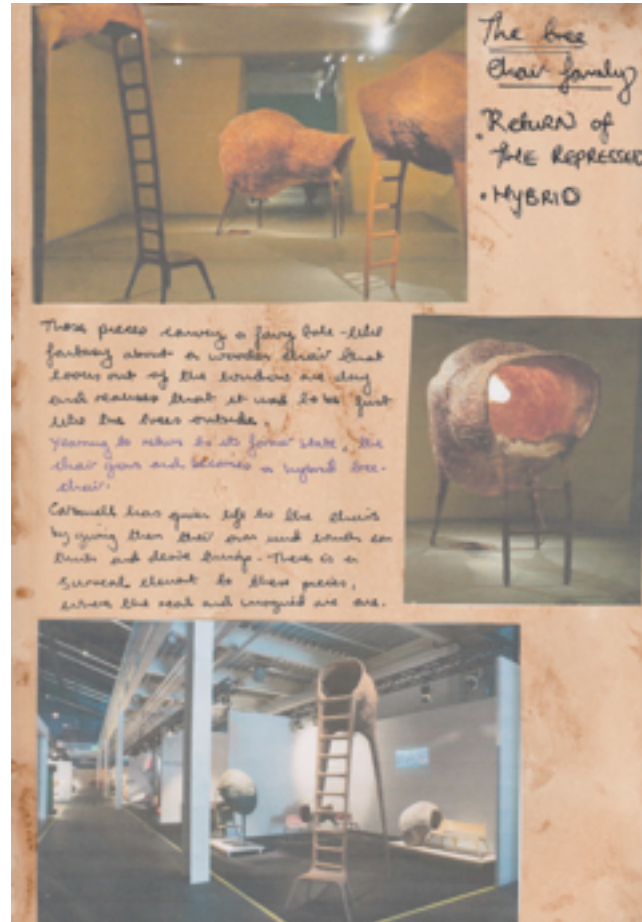




Prototypes



Escaping Reality with Surrealism



Surrealism and its ability to transport us from reality to fantasy is found within the work of Nacho Carbonell. His everyday furniture pieces evolve into living organisms, with their own story and their own ability to think.

Their elongated structures provide the escape route from the mundane, whilst the foreign attachments provide the juxtaposition of the familiar and unfamiliar, and thus becoming strange.

The Emergence of The Uncanny

The Home / Domestic is the focus for my object selection.

• What do we use daily?

The uncanny is found in the everyday
Not the exotic

For the unfamiliar / uncanny to arise,
there needs to be a sense of the familiar.

Challenge what we consider harmless / useful / the purpose of an everyday object (which is defined as being useful and aiding our everyday).

In a time of uncertainty where society is shifting, uncanny things have evolved as a route to disengage us from conventional life and reconnect us with the lost innocence and wonder of our former self. Through my dissertation I took the Uncanny as a concept and unravelled its complexity, going beyond its basic connotations of disorientation, strangeness and uncertainty that are assumed to be a result of experiencing something foreign or unknown.

I have been able to expose the underlying foundation of familiarity in the uncanny, bringing to light the necessity for the known to be present for the effects of the unknown to be experienced. Contradictions and double meaning direct the body of research, and it is when these two opposing forces converge when the comforts of the domestic experience are challenged and rendered anything but comfortable.

The Uncanny:

German term; Unheimlich

Heimlich, adj.: I. Also *heimelich*, *heinielig*, belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, comfortable, homely, etc.

II. Concealed, kept from sight, so that others do not get to know about it, withheld from others, cf. *Geheim* [secret]; so also *Heimlichkeit* for *Geheimnis* [secret]. To do something *heimlich*, *i.e.* behind someone's back; to steal

double meaning

The Everyday made Strange

The utilisation of the German term for uncanny, *unheimlich*, enabled me to inquire deeper into the concept and generate alternative territories to explore beyond a feeling of the strange through the merging of real and fantasy. Sigmund Freud developed the meaning of the uncanny through the use of the term *unheimlich*, which reveals how the uncanny is not something new or alien, but in fact something which is known and familiar, but has been repressed, or kept hidden. Thus, it is when something familiar has undergone repression and returns in a transformed shape that it is rendered strange.



The everyday
Made Strange



Bitta Beschwendtner



THE UNCANNY

- The unsettling and contradictory
- The familiar made strange
- Something familiar which has been repressed, and returns in a transformed shape, rendering it strange.

Ralph Ball

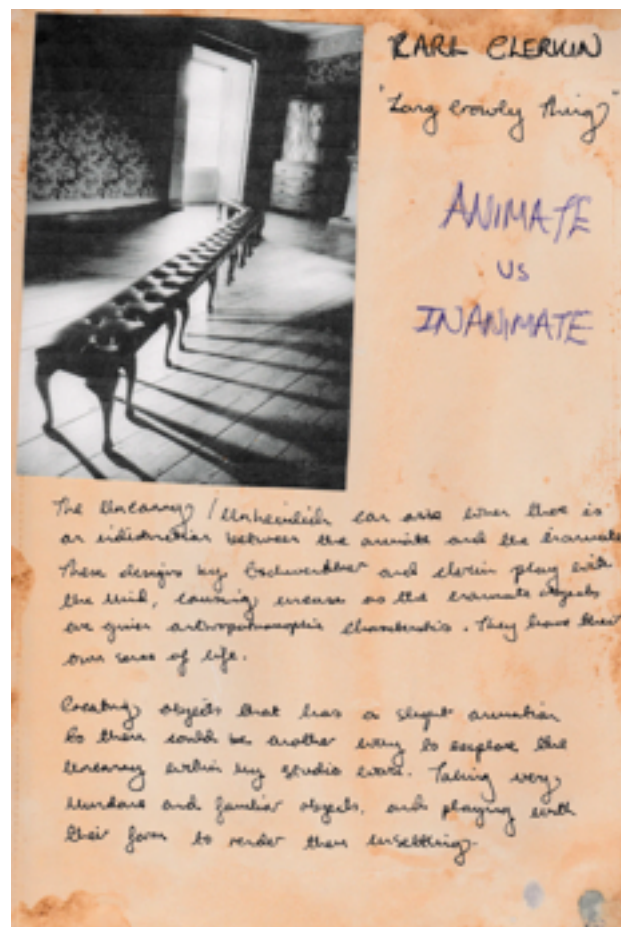
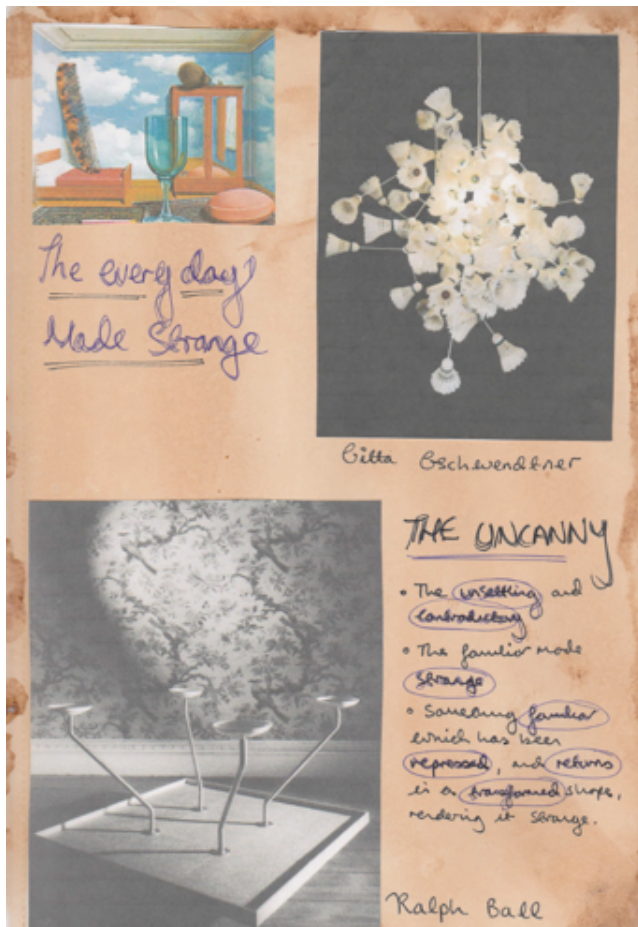
Transferring Concepts into Objects

The Uncanny key words:

- Things that are familiar
- The everyday
- The mundane
- The comfortable/ uncomfortable
- The useful/ un useful
- Real/ imagined
- Juxtapositions
- Domestic
- Critical (challenges our perceptions and assumptions, which causes the anxiety reminiscent of the uncanny)
- Playful

HEIMLICH	UNHEIMLICH
Homely, home-like Familiar Intimate Comfortable Domestic	Un-homely Unfamiliar Uncomfortable Eerie Strange
Secret Hidden Concealed Withheld from sight	No-longer Secret Unhidden Revealed The Hidden exposed

contradictions



Five different approaches + five different domestic objects

1. The return of the repressed: familiar made unfamiliar
2. Animate vs. inanimate
3. Childhood complexes: playful and critical design
4. Surrealism: merging the everyday with the fantastic
5. Useful/ un useful: comfortable made uncomfortable


Imagination

CRITICAL APPROACH: Challenging Assumptions

Narrative

Bas Van Raay
I AM FURNITURE

I AM FURNITURE appears to be a series which imposingly allocates an electric heater as a piece of furniture. Most of us have defined furniture as a table, a chair, or a bed, but who said that furniture isn't any movable article within a room or an establishment that make it fit for living or working? Bas van Raay, identifies the objects of I AM FURNITURE, with the freedom of his thoughts and his mind. I AM FURNITURE is composed of four electric heaters - Little Sister, Big Brother, Siamese Twin, and Parents.

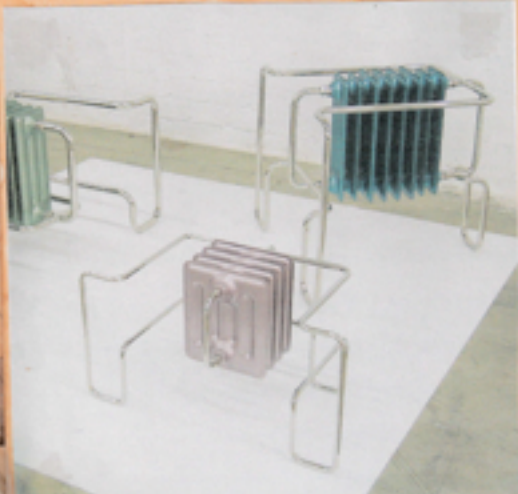


A CRITICAL APPROACH

- Challenging our assumptions
- How do we consider / define an object as?
- child-like imagination where 'anything can be anything'
- familiar but foreign

↳ Recognise abstract form of chairs, almost like an outline.
But challenged by the large cold-colored heater placed in the center of the design.

- Comfort of a chair removed.
- Idea / statement preserved.



Katerina Karponi
THE UNCOMFORTABLE SERIES
(lll_spoon_003)




A familiar everyday object has been modified ever so slightly by a copying of the spoon head. This creates frustration in its use. The success is made through the retaining of the object's familiarity. This is what the Uncanny series.

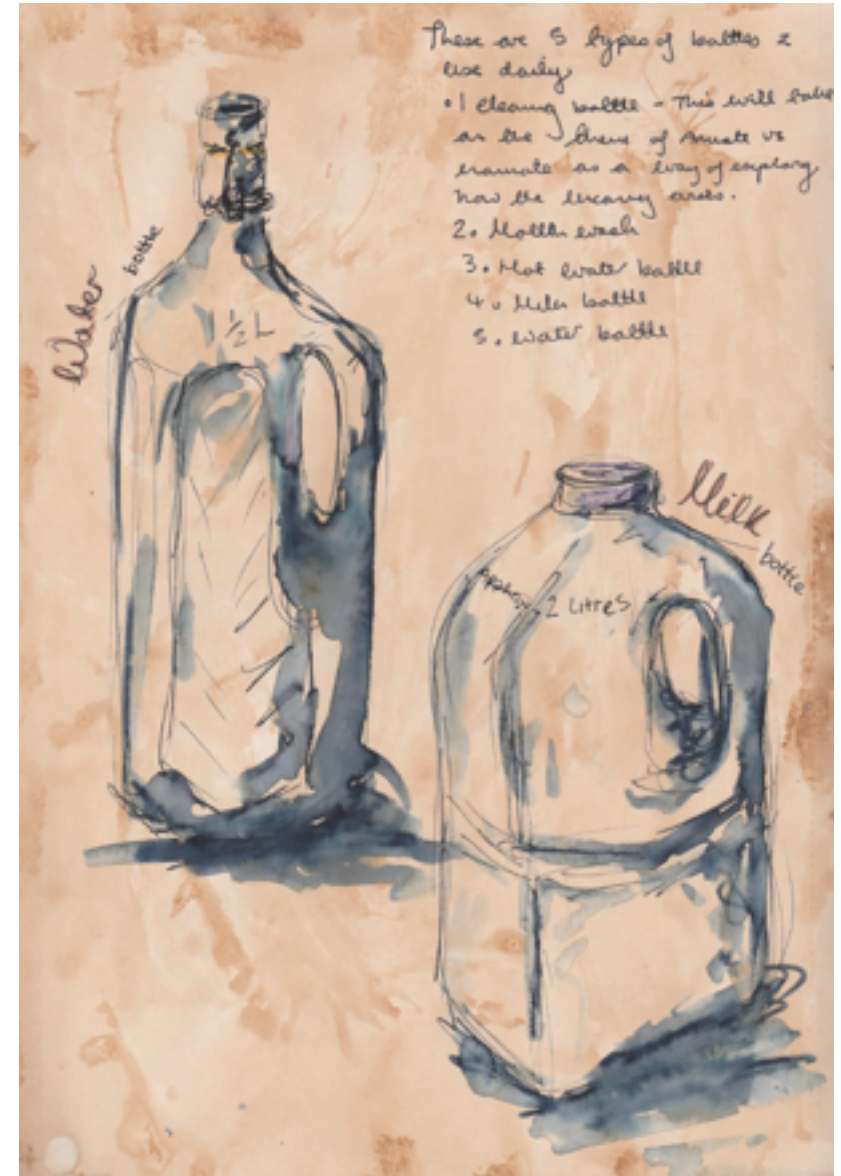
The useful - Not so useful...

Jergen Bay
DO NOT SHORT LEGS' CHAIR

This chair has substantially been rendered 'useless'. Without the addition of a pile of books or other structure, the chair is uneven and wobbly, providing little comfort and making strange a mundane, familiar everyday object.



5 Domestic Objects: Focusing. Selecting. Initiating



1. Animate vs eranimate

Keep plastic lid

JUXTAPOSE



Make a mould of the body

Silica with fessomite case?

Animalistic

fessomite and dust / dirt ?? Tumble dryer

① lid
furry with fluff / dirt?

② wax - wrap and twist to create an animated body

① FURY



②



JESMONITE ANIMAL



WAX

Melting
Morphing
creature like

UNCANNY
1

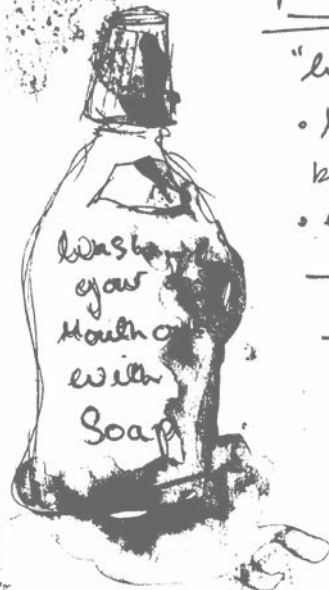
2. Playful / Critical

Soap

SCENT

"Wash your mouth out with soap"

- Make a mould of the mouth wash bottle
- cast in Soap with mint essence
- play on words and material
- Subversive



Mouth Wash Bottle

Uncanny
2

3. Surreal
Blur between Real and fantasy

FORM

Jesmonite



familiar but unfamiliar



Dali Melting

- fill milk bottles with Jesmonite and swirl until set. Distort milk bottle first.

Milk Bottle

uncanny 3

Initial Ideas

- Spray Bottle
- Mouthwash Bottle
- Milk Bottle
- Hot water Bottle
- Water Bottle

I selected 5 different bottles that I use on a daily basis. Each one will reflect an element of the uncanny, whether that is a direct expression or less obvious (through process/ colour palette..)

The plaster milk bottles became the prototypes for the final Jesmonite milk bottles that I created, as follows.

Ceramic?

4. a) Useful / unuseful
 ↳ last with slip?
 • Make plaster mould?
 • wrap over hardened slightly?
 = odd to touch ceramic

OR / . ?

b) Wax
 • Dream like melting -
 As if the treat is melting - playful / eerie



Wax? ↳ write down dreams and tear up - mix with wax?
 lavender scent? = sleepy = dreamy

uncanny 4

5. Hidden / Surrealism // Heimlich
 LAYERS
 ↳ Surrealism colour palette

Ceramic
 ↳ Coloured layers of slip → hidden
 ↳ familiar repressed + returned

uncanny 5

jesmonite final pieces





Water Bottle Mould



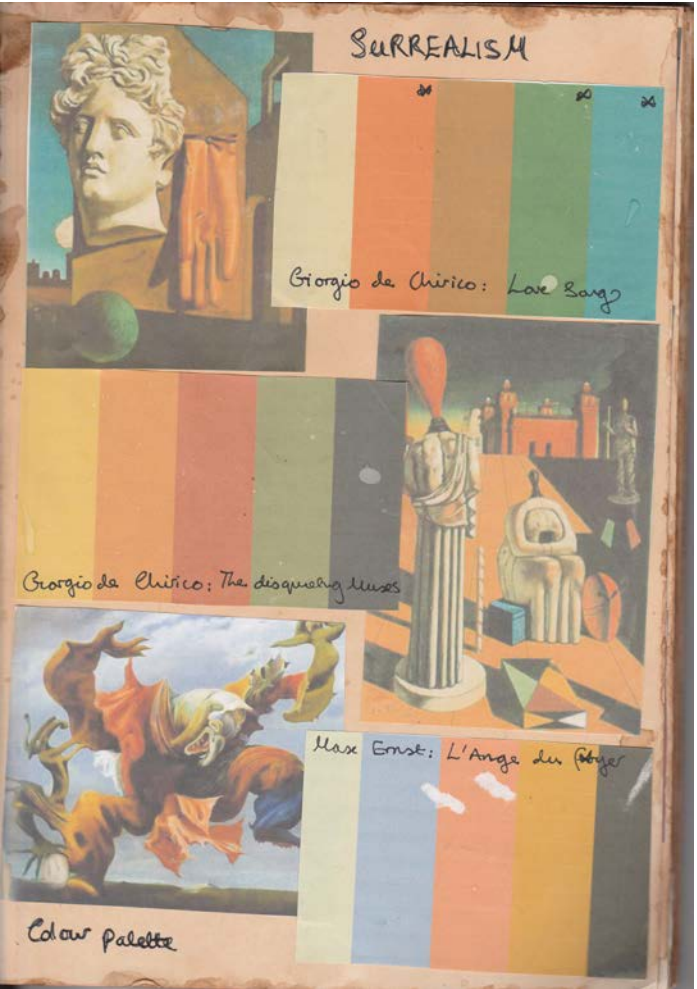
Hot Water Bottle Mould



Ceramics: Mould making



Colour Palette



Surrealism Colour Influence

Analysing Surrealist art, I noticed that within Surrealism a recognisable colour palette is used. I selected a variety of paintings from artists such as Dali, Tanguay and Magritte, and isolated individual colours to create colour charts. I then selected stains to colour the semi-porcelain slip, and thus allow me to mix up tones which reflect the Surrealists work. The stains that I chose included Egg Yellow, Turquoise Green, Lime Green, Azure Blue and Flesh Pink.



Coloring the Slip

I chose to colour the slip so that I could have greater freedom in the mixing of colour and the application to the surface of the bottle.

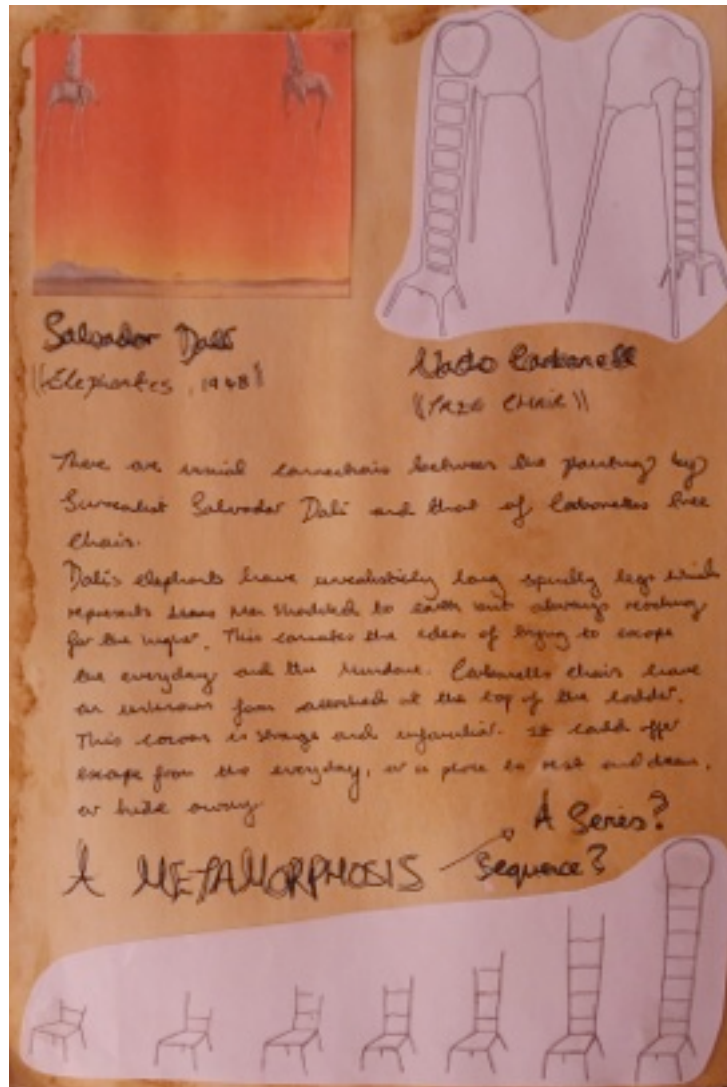


First I tried casting a plain bottle and then hand painting onto the leather hard surface. Secondly I tried painting and layering different colours onto the mould before pouring in the slip. This proved to be more experimental and I did not know what the outside surface would look like until the cast was removed from the mould.

first cast



Playing with Form



Both Dalí's and Carbonell's work have obscure extensions or foreign forms attached to something which was once a familiar and everyday object. For example, Carbonell's Tree Chair demonstrate how a domestic object can be made uncanny by the addition of a dream-like element, which enables the user to temporarily step outside of normality. The familiarity and comfort of the chair is juxtaposed with a surreal elongation of structure which has a foreign attachment of an unknown form.

Transforming my familiar objects with foreign attachments became my next experimentation in the creation of uncanny things.









Bisque Fired Semi- Porcelain







Manipulating Form

For this bottle I manipulated the form by squeezing with my hands, cutting of sections and reassembling to create a new composition. I then attached the extra handle, giving the bottle a new life.



Earthenware Glaze

I continued experimenting with colored slip, giving each bottle an individual pattern which was created spontaneously in order to utilize Dadaist technique of chance. For the purpose of my work, it is important to be playful with the pieces and form, connected as much as possible to subconscious thinking.









Display Idea: Saluting Soldiers?

The bottles began to look like saluting soldiers, each with a unique and individual personality. They were really beginning to come alive. I reflected back on some Surreal imagery to help generate ideas about display, how I could position and arrange them to give the impression that they are communicating with each other.





Hot Water Bottles

I made the hot water bottles simultaneously with the water bottles, following a similar technique of colour application, but also experimenting with layering and texture which I created by using decorative tape on the mould.



Layering

Despite the success of these pieces once fired, it was when the two types of bottles were considered beside one another that I realized that they were too similar, and needed to be distinguishable as well as part of a collective and coherent group of uncanny things.









Reflecting Upon the Ceramic Pieces



After considering the hot water bottles and water bottles together, I decided to modify the appearance of the bottles. The water bottles will remain earthenware and glazed, and the hot water bottles will be stoneware and unglazed. By not glazing the hot water bottles, the objects retain a visual materiality that is more closely linked to that of the original rubber form. This consequently elevated the degree to which the bottles demonstrated both familiarity and unfamiliarity, and thus playing with our perception and injecting a sense of the uncanny.

Emphasizing the Original Details



Bisque Fired: Creating the Collection



glazing



Among the Everyday

Photographing







Hot Water Bottles (2)

I focused on a smaller range of colours from the Surrealist colour charts for the new series of hot water bottles. I also decided to limit the experimental detail and pattern making within the water bottles, and cast these pieces in a single







Animate vs Inanimate: Wax Spray Bottle

The spray bottles aim to reflect the animalistic characteristics of uncanny objects, where objects begin to come alive. In order to create this effect, the familiar melting imagery of the Surrealists has been used. Each bottle will have a personality, and they will all communicate together.



Research Trip:

To stimulate the imagination, I visited a park and entered the site with my mind open and with a childlike wonder I explored the area and began to make the inanimate animate..

Photography. Sketches. Collage.

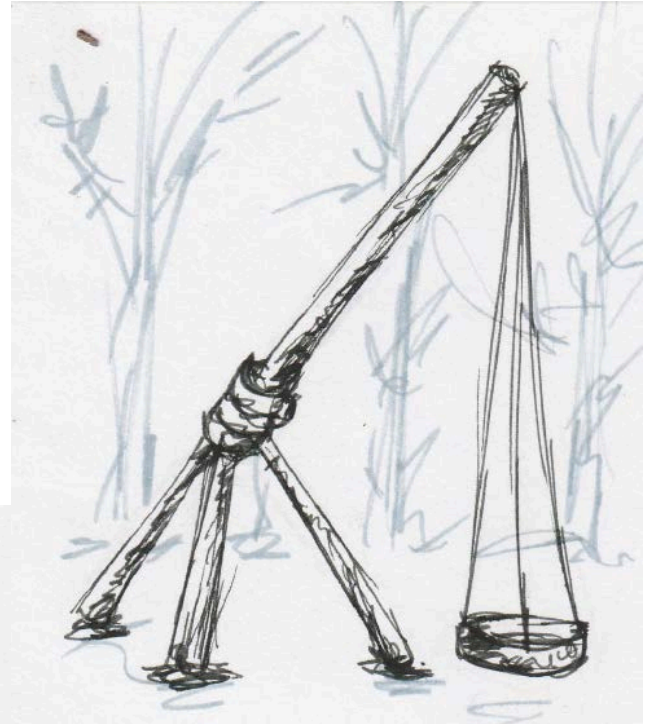
Children's Park turned Jurassic Park

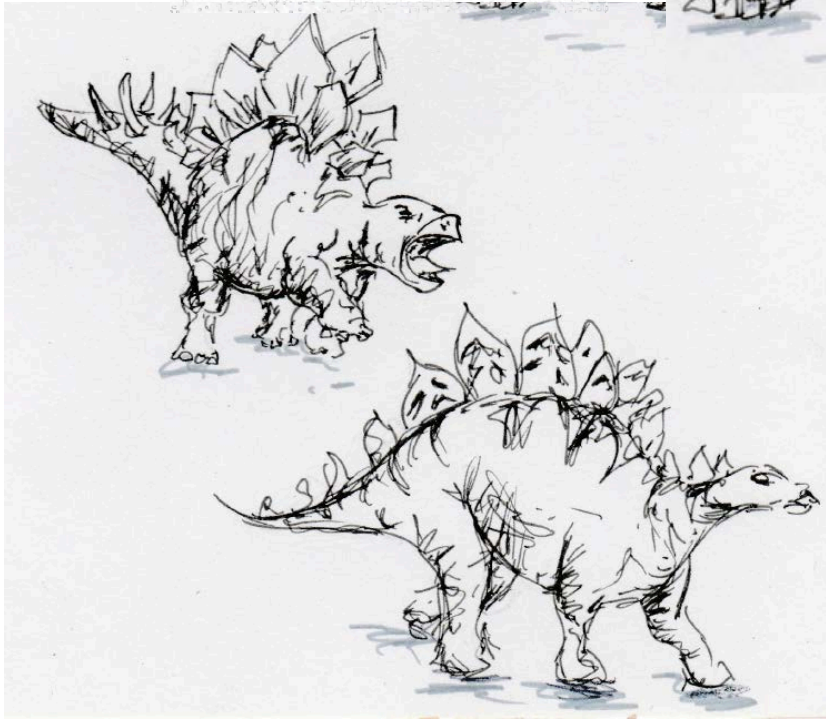














Polymers: Mould making

I made the spray bottle and mouthwash bottle at the same time in Polymers. due to the silicone curing time. Wax will be used for the animate spray bottles and scented soap for the Critical mouthwash bottle.



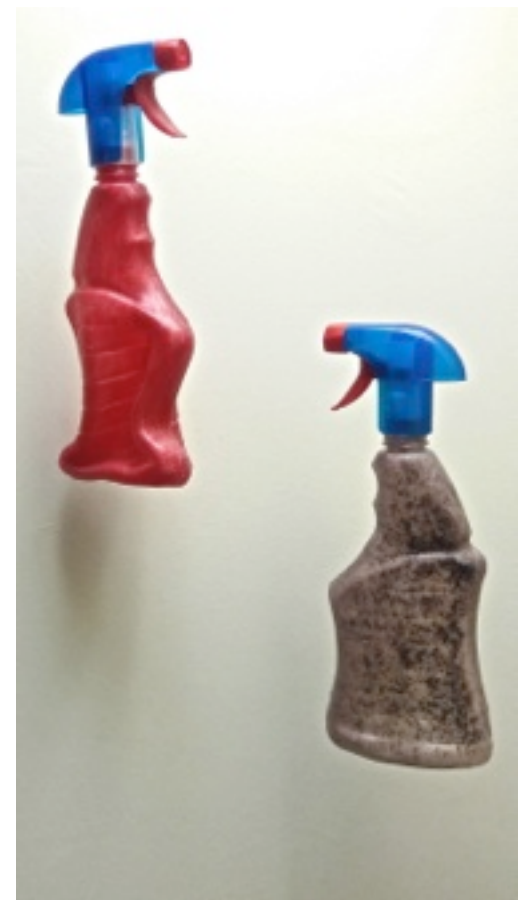


Wax Spray Bottles

These were the first experimental casts of the spray bottles. Before the wax had fully hardened, I remolded it and squashing it with my hands to warp the form. Placing the original spray tops really gave them an animalistic feel.



Hanging?





Process to Realisation







The Domestic: Photographing within the home











Soap Mouth Wash Bottle: Critical

The idea for this bottle is to play with the senses, our perception, and have some fun with the quote “Wash your mouth out with soap”.

For this reason, I made a mouth wash bottle mould to be casted with soap, which has the addition of peppermint essence in order to stimulate the senses and link back to the original mouthwash object. It should cause a little confusion for the mind, when the rigid associations with the form and smell of the mouthwash is met with the unusual materiality of soap.





First Cast: Primary research

Using the first cast, I decided to play even further with the object and the quote which it originates from. So I took a bite out of the corner.. Surprisingly it did taste like mouthwash in the mouth. Similarly to the other objects that I have made, I am keeping the original top to help retain the familiarity of the object.

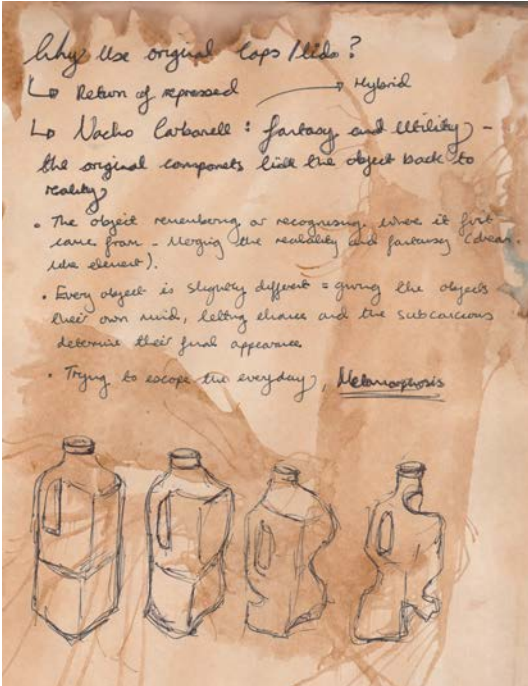


“Wash your mouth out with soap”

Uniting the Uncanny

For the display of my objects, I want to keep the groups relatively collected whilst also allowing them to communicate with each other. I will need to create an element of the domestic for the context of my objects, as the home (a place of familiarity and comfort) is where the uncanny is more intensely felt.

I played around with a few ideas through sketching. I considered hanging the spray bottles and even creating a surreal backdrop with references to Dalí's 'Persistence of time'. However, a conclusion was reached in which the simplicity and subtlety of a kitchen backdrop would complement the objects extremely well whilst also not distracting the eye away from the pieces on display.

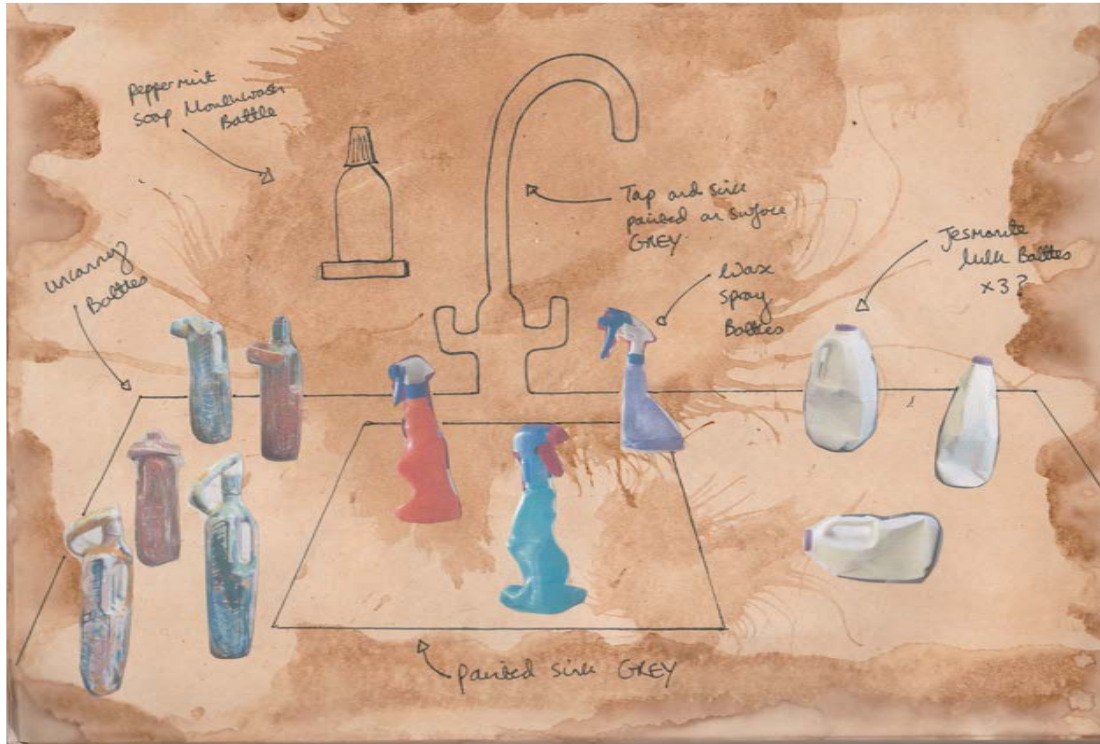


Seeing is Believing

First I brought the objects together in the workshop and started sketching to visualize them in a space.



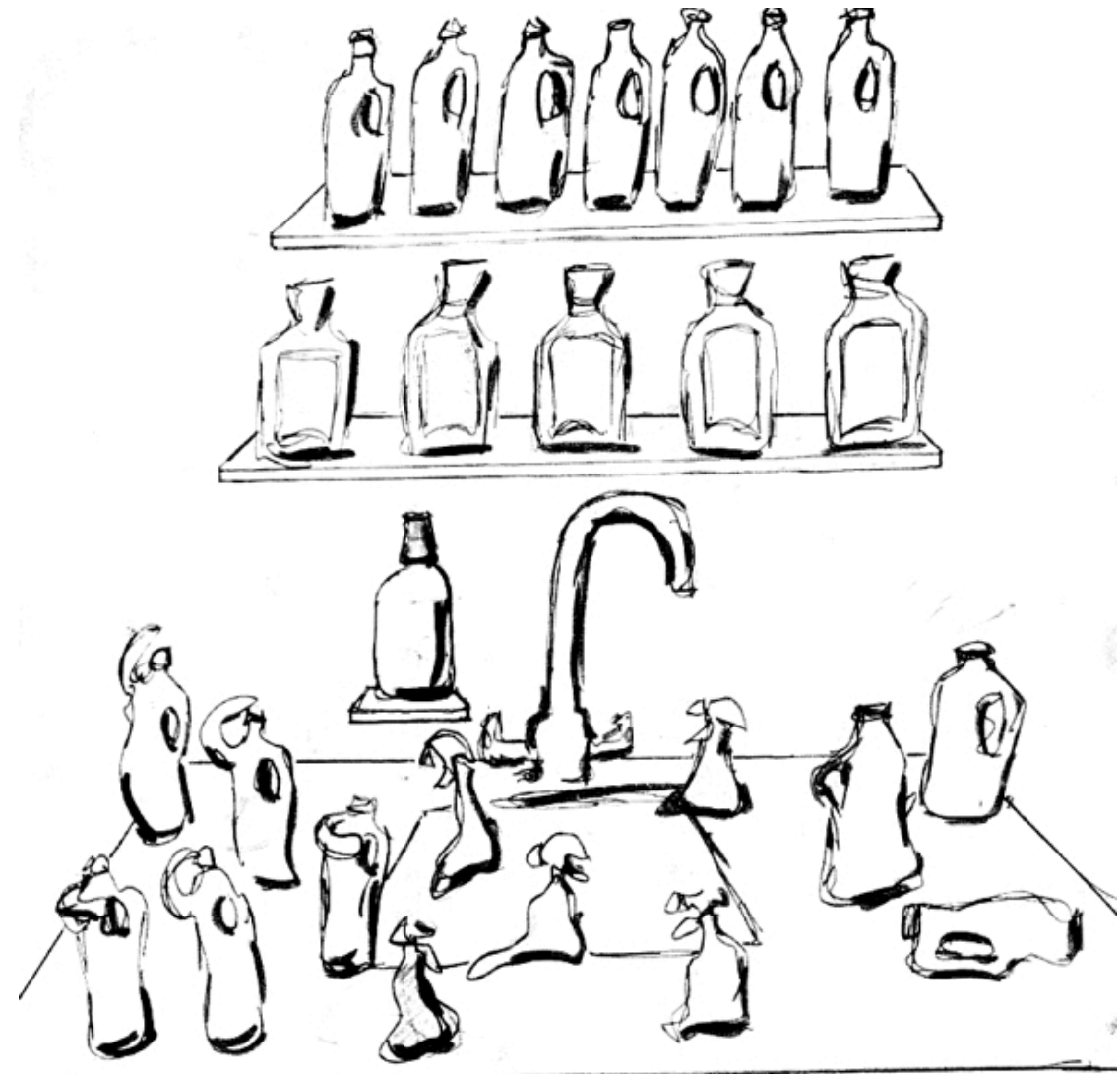
Initial sketch



collage

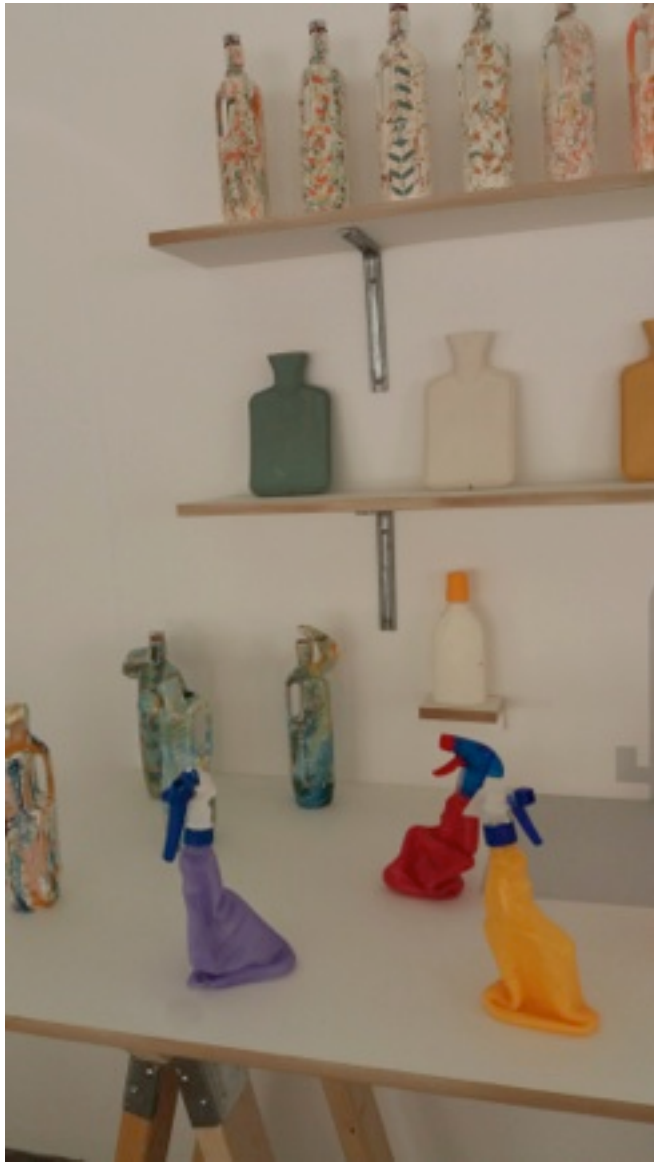


sketch



creating the space





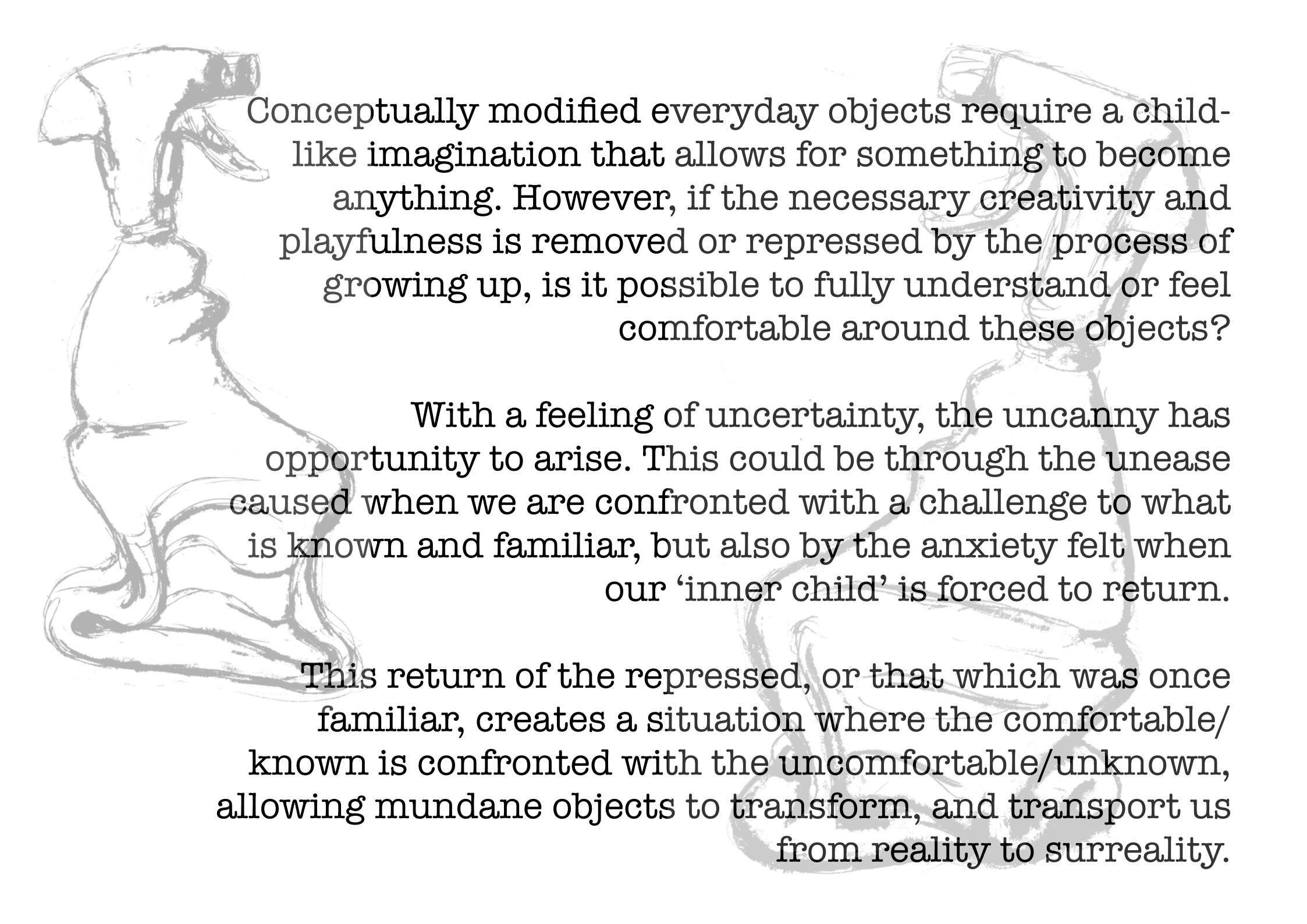


Uncanny Things

The final display presents a narrative of everyday objects that have been transformed and rendered uncanny. Embodied within them are processes, techniques and concepts which I have gained access to from a deep and critical analysis of the uncanny, beyond its surface level.

A kitchen table top, with a pale grey painted sink and tap set the scene for the story.

Here, instead of being grounded to reality and escaping vertically into fantasy, I have reversed the focus and brought the dreamlike and most transformed objects to the lower level. As the eye extends upwards, the objects become more structured, ordered, rigid and mundane.

The image features two pencil sketches of spray bottles. The sketch on the left is a standard, simple spray bottle. The sketch on the right is a more complex, conceptual drawing of a spray bottle with a human-like face, including eyes, a nose, and a mouth, rendered in a sketchy, expressive style. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Conceptually modified everyday objects require a child-like imagination that allows for something to become anything. However, if the necessary creativity and playfulness is removed or repressed by the process of growing up, is it possible to fully understand or feel comfortable around these objects?

With a feeling of uncertainty, the uncanny has opportunity to arise. This could be through the unease caused when we are confronted with a challenge to what is known and familiar, but also by the anxiety felt when our 'inner child' is forced to return.

This return of the repressed, or that which was once familiar, creates a situation where the comfortable/known is confronted with the uncomfortable/unknown, allowing mundane objects to transform, and transport us from reality to surreality.