

Mindfulness

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Communicative Objects

Objects Communicate through their form, materiality and colour as we scan them for meaning or function.

I call this communicative period between person and object the Silent Conversation.

This process of interrogating an object to determine its worth is sub conscious when the answers we find are repeated or obvious.

Information gathered from the aesthetics of an object are combined to understand it. When I see multiple legs topped with a large flat surface area, I understand it's a table. I have seen a table countless times so will process this information sub consciously.

I am interested when confronted with objects which challenge me.

Prolonging the Silent Conversation.

Causing me to be conscious in the present moment which can lead to more profound

interaction and experience.

This project begins with the opposite to obvious. Forms of ambiguity which challenge the user in the aim to prolong and change interaction with commonly used objects.

Silent
Conversation

Interaction

Ambiguous

Challenging

Participation

Expectation

Conscious

Disruption

The image shows a close-up of the Mona Lisa painting. The word "Ambiguity" is written in a large, black, sans-serif font across the center of the painting, partially obscuring the woman's face. The background of the painting is a hazy, atmospheric landscape with a bridge and buildings in the distance.

Ambiguity

- the quality of being open to more

Ambiguity leaves more choice to the viewer or user. It allows the user to project more of themselves onto an object.

This is the opposite to the role of a conventional product designer whom will design to eliminate ambiguity.

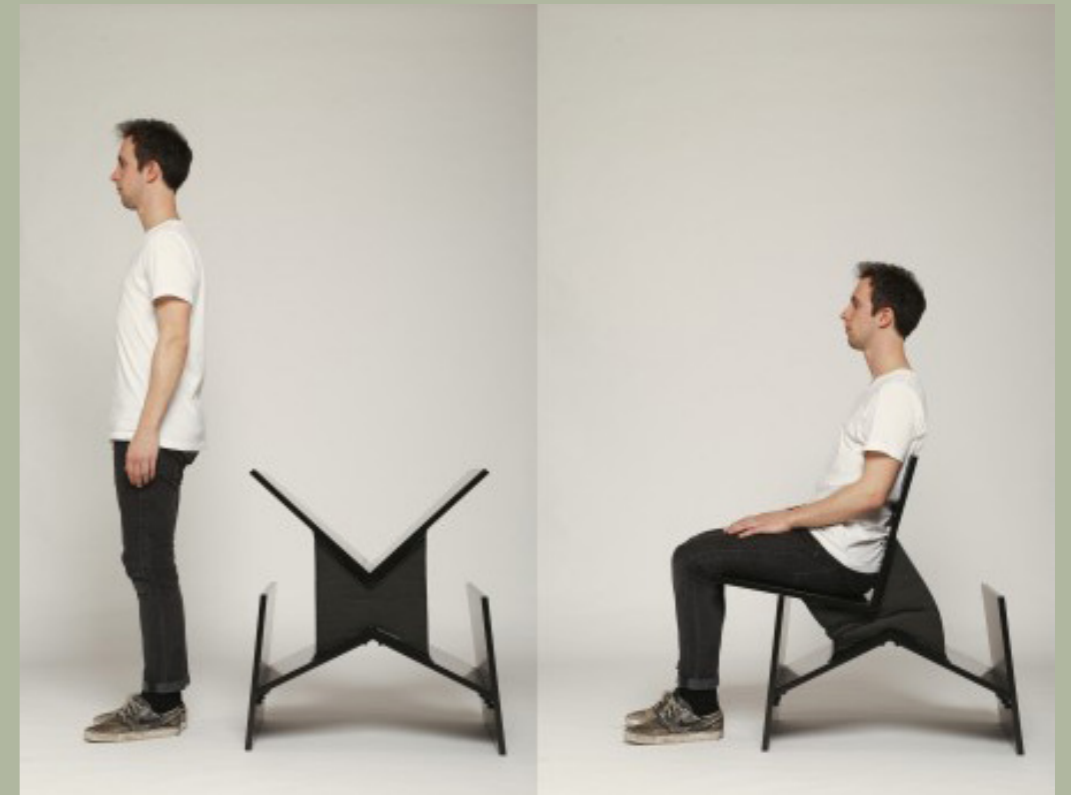
This makes perfect sense for objects of safety, for example a fire extinguisher or an escape sign. Although lack of ambiguity can prevent a product from having a multitude of functions. Also, this disables the chance for an object to have a personality and can have a knock-on effect that reduces the emotional durability of an object.

The Mona Lisa is a good example of an artist using ambiguity. Arguably the painting is famous because of its ambiguity. There is a huge curiosity around the piece because of the lack of knowledge about who she is. Also her expression is very ambiguous. The mouth is painted with blurred lines which leaves the viewer to complete the image in their imagination.

This is of course art which is often about the viewers interpretation and evoking a reaction to the piece.

This suggests that ambiguity is an artistic approach and consolidates that a conventional product designers approach is the opposite. Design is often a means to eliminate ambiguity.

There are designers however that blur the boundaries and take a more artistic approach to design.



Giovanni Marmonts Ambiguous series has an artistic sculptural appeal. Incorporating transformation the resting stance of this piece disguises its true function. The form is initially challenging, in the sense that it is not familiar.

After thought I can relate the form to Ettore Sottsass book case but without the vibrant colours. For some the disruption cause by the unusual form would warrant further inspection.

Interacting with the piece you discover its ability to bend.

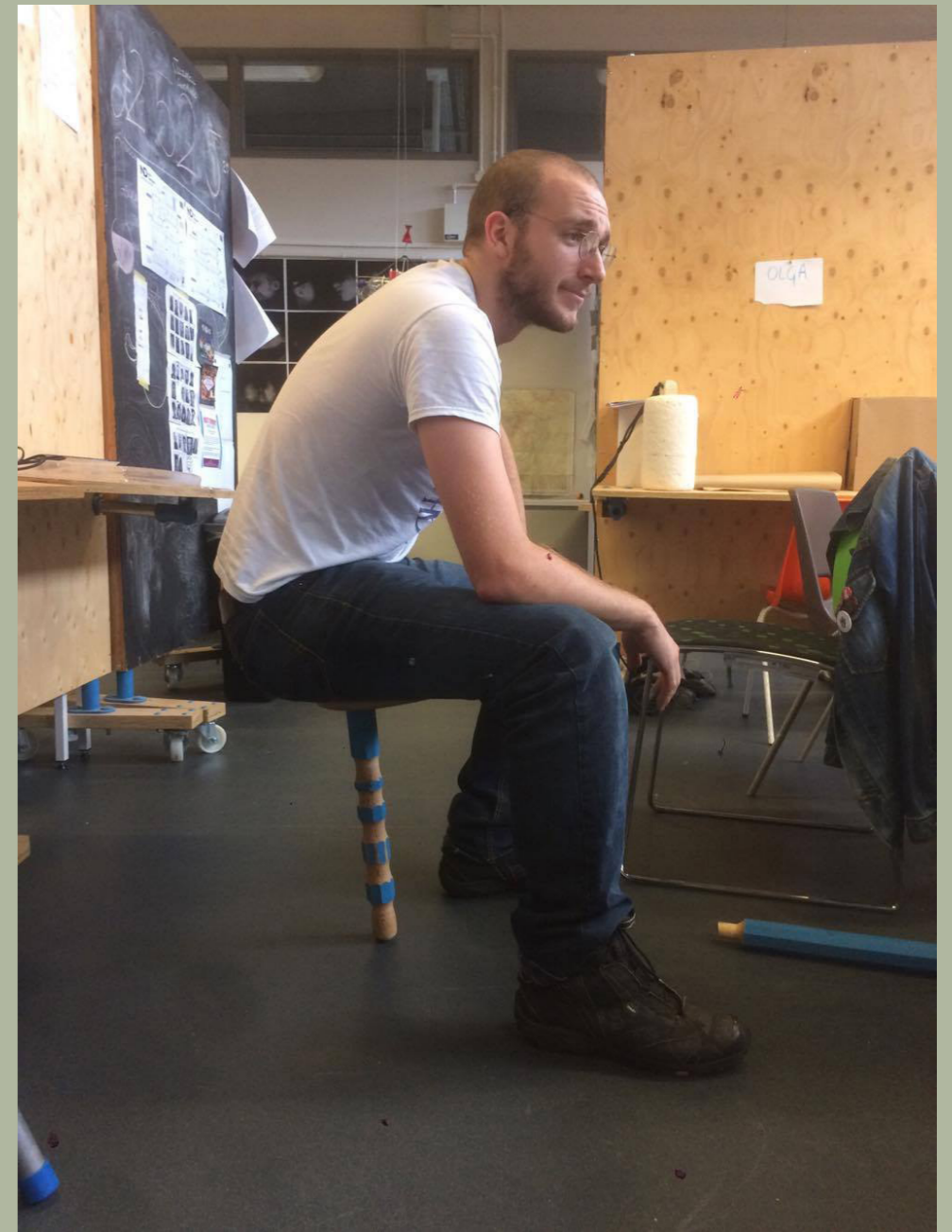
The inconspicuous 'V' shape bends clockwise or anti clockwise to form an 'L' shape. This for communicates instantly as a chair.

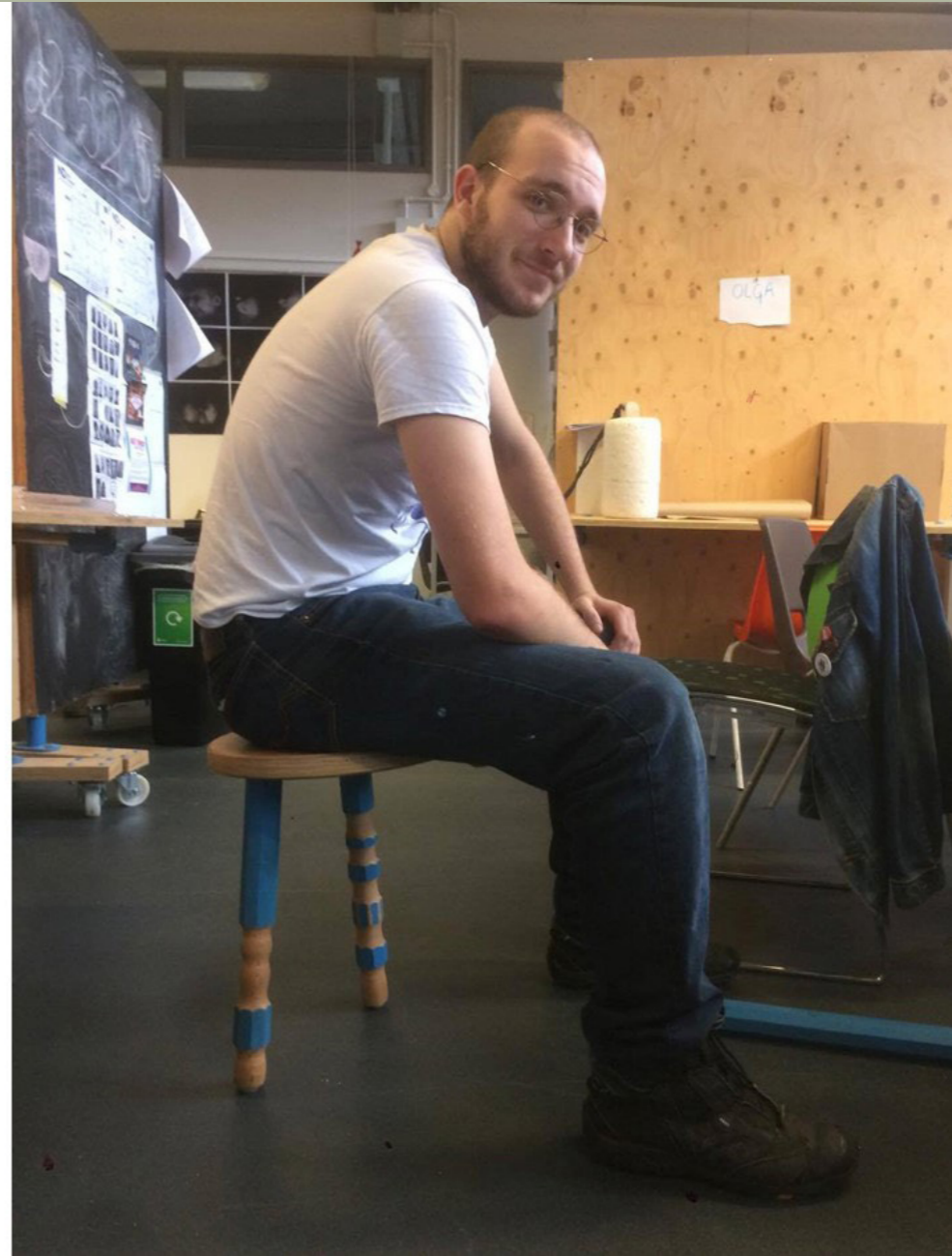
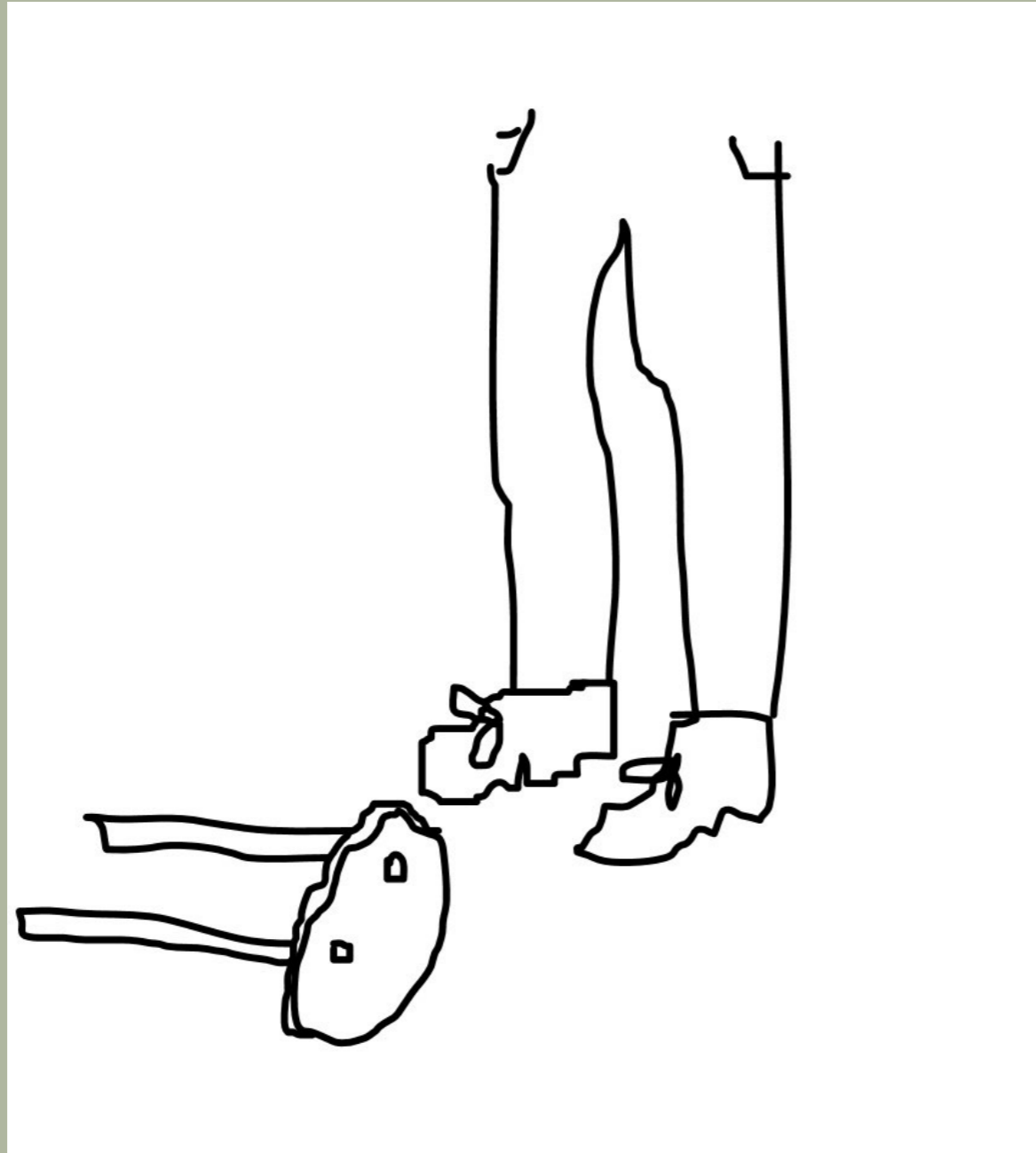
Once the sitter leaves the seat the piece returns to un assuming stance for the next viewer to be challenged. The process and interaction of sitting has been reinvented. The beauty for me in this peiec is the reward in discovery, however this cannot be repeated by a particular person. The form will cease to be challenging.



Learn to unlearn

Collection of work by Limoko, consisting of objects of function which perform mundane tasks that have been reinvented. They are recognisable to their former selves but entirely different. Demanding an entirely new way of interacting with them. As the forms are new to the viewer there are no reconceptions of how to use them. The user is engaged in conscious interaction to learn how to use them. New ways to perform traditional tasks.





Disruption



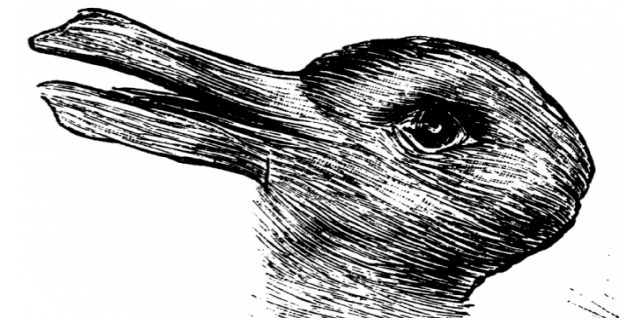
Transparent Table

Disruption can be easily cause by a new form or aesthetic.
Disruption of routine which can encourage conscious thought.
Ralph Ball and Maxine Naylor have produced a series called Archaeology of the invisible.
The series explores how familiar products become invisible to us. The chairs are constructed to make them visible again.



Grey Stack





Binocular Rivalry

Wittgenstein's Rabbit duck.
It is possible to see a rabbit or a duck from this one image.

Is it the pre-existing concepts or assumptions of the viewer which determine what the image is of.

Pascal Anson has created a balance chair which acts like a chair but can stand in a disruptive position balanced on one leg.
Cut angle allows for it to suspend itself in space as if frozen at a tipping point.
The chair itself is familiar but transforms into something different.
In Anson's words ordinary turned extraordinary.
In balance the object is striking and can cause the viewer to pause and question.
The appearance is rich although it does not add to the experience of the piece.
It is known that it is a chair and must become ordinary to be in use. In fact, it is only a disruption when it cannot function.



Participation

Offering a product without all the required information embed into its design, leaves the user to fill in the gaps.

The user can warp a use or meaning to connect with them on a more personal level. This is shown in examples of ambiguous and disruptive furniture.

Another way to do this is to offer product which is in complete in its form or components.

Chopping the foot off a chair caused it to sit at an annoying angle, annoying for any sitter.

I left the chair in the workshop and found that Till had temporarily repaired the chair using a wedge.

Later an unknown person screwed on a more permanent fixture.

I enjoyed watching the chair develop and transform and progressively hacked of bits over the course of a month...







Do Hit chair by Marjin Van Der Poll arrives in a simple form. The user participates in creating their own comfort (if any) by smashing a more ergonomic fit. Becoming its co-designer.

Although emotionally durability is not at the forefront of my research it has a strong strand through the work.



Jurgen Beys Do Add chair has one of its four legs shorter than the rest. The function of the chair is severed. It requires repair.

One way to repair is using books which in fact adds to the functionality. The chair now has an incorporated library. Any manner of things could be used which can change keeping the aesthetic new. This gives the chair personality.

Upon arrival the chair has a vulnerability which can be removed. This gives the user a unique experience before they use it for its proper function.

Mindfulness



My own aims are to challenge the user to engage them in conscious interaction. Kristina Niedderer writes about mindfulness as a state of awareness and attentiveness. This has links to my previous research and will focus my project from this point.

'Liberation cups' is a collection of glass's with various holes in.

The holes require the user to plug the holes with their fingers. Making the user aware of their hand and glass.

'social cups' is a similar collection which requires the user to be conscious of how the cups are put down to stop them falling over. I think the mindfulness could be short lived and I don't like how the cups seem to punish you for being careless or apparently mindless.



The journey for efficiency within product design can produce a lack of stimulus in our environment.

The repetition of forms can push us into a mindlessness. This is what I call auto pilot. Your routine is repeated and unvarying to such an extent that you leave the present and begin to miss cues and signals.

I'd argue the first time you use something new, you will engage with it in a mindful way. This is because you are very conscious when interacting with it. For most common existing products this mindfulness is short lived. I want to prolong this experience in some way, to continue to make you the user aware of what you are doing.

A lack of choice and constant repetition will put us in a mindless state which causes a variety of psychological problems. In extreme cases such as living in a submarine which is a stimulus free chamber. Our brain isn't fed any new information, this in turn can result in your sensory system shutting down.

Here are some case studies carried out by Ellen J Langer, professor of philosophy.

This first study explores the problem of the single perspective. An actor pretends to have a sprained knee, and calls for help. Specifically, she asks for an Ace bandage from a nearby chemist.

Previously the chemist is told to tell anyone that they are out of this kind of bandage.

A stranger volunteers to help and agrees to buy an ace bandage. In the chemist they are told as instructed that there are none available. The helper simply walks back to the actor empty handed.

25 times a helper walked into the chemist but not one inquired about different aid for the injured person.

FINAL FOLIOS SEEM TO RESULT FROM
YEARS OF DUTIFUL STUDY OF TEXTS
ALONG WITH YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC
EXPERIENCE.

Please read it again but count how
many (F)s there are in the sen-
tence.

There are 8 'F's. When counting,
your mind can cling to one rule, a
single perspective, that the word
must begin with the letter 'F'.
This is because the first two words
you read, Final and Folios automat-
ically create a rule. Your brain
can neglects to see an 'F' in a two
lettered word.

FINAL FOLIOS SEEM TO RESULT FROM
YEARS OF DUTIFUL STUDY OF TEXTS
ALONG WITH YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC
EXPERIENCE.

Langer along with Judith Rodin also
created a study "effects of
decision making and responsibility
in the nursing home"

The experiment began with two
groups of 47. The control group,
were told that they need not
worry about anything, and the
nurses would take care of them.
Plants in their room would be
watered and routines would be given
to them.

Experimental group were given more
responsibility. If a visitor was
coming, they could choice a
meeting place within the nursing
home. They also got to decide
between different days in the week
to watch a film. They were given
a plant and told to look after in
whatever way they would see fit.
18 months later all patients were
monitored for health.

The experimental group improved.
In fact, shockingly after this
18-month period, 30% of the control
group died compared to 15% of the
experimental group.

There was no common disease between
the deaths.

Measure of Mindfulness

Three Points of Inquiry

Process -

has the process of completing a task aided with an object been changed or prolonged.

Change in process allows for more varied routine.

Awareness -

how aware does an object make the user of their actions when in use.

Engages our mind in the current situation.

Choice -

Does the object afford choice. Is it open to interpretation or variation of use.

Improves motivation.

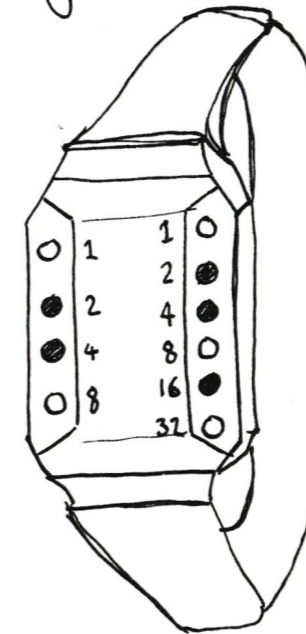


Process

-Has the process of completing a task aided with an object been changed or prolonged.

Change in process allows for more variant routine.

Binary Watch



Time =
 $2+4$ - hours
 $2+4+16$ - mins

6:22

① - $\frac{6}{10}$

② - $\frac{5}{10}$

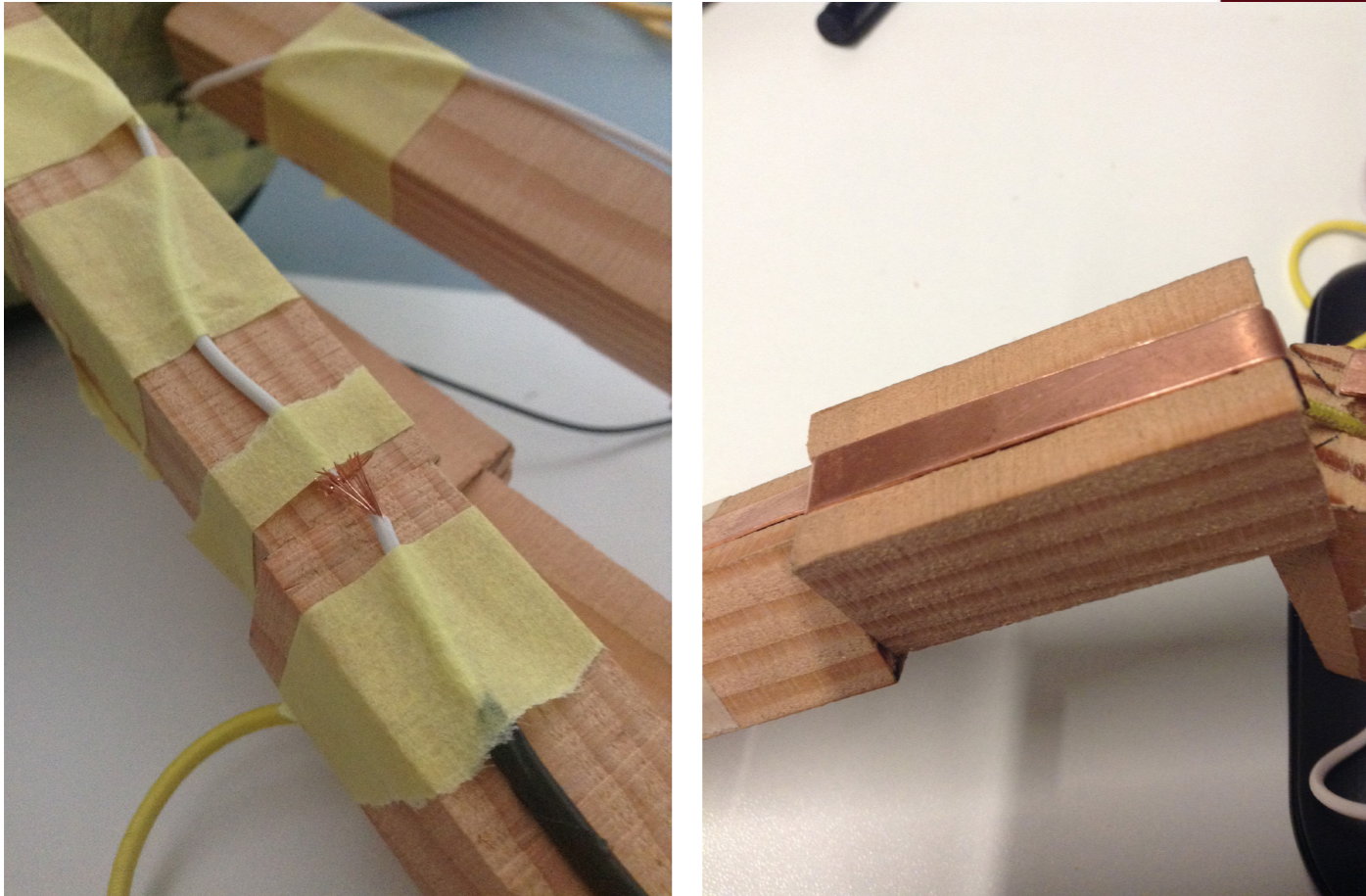
③ - $\frac{1}{10}$

Argue - N/A

- Added process
 - prolonged interaction.
- Only one ^{choice} use but the function is to measure time.

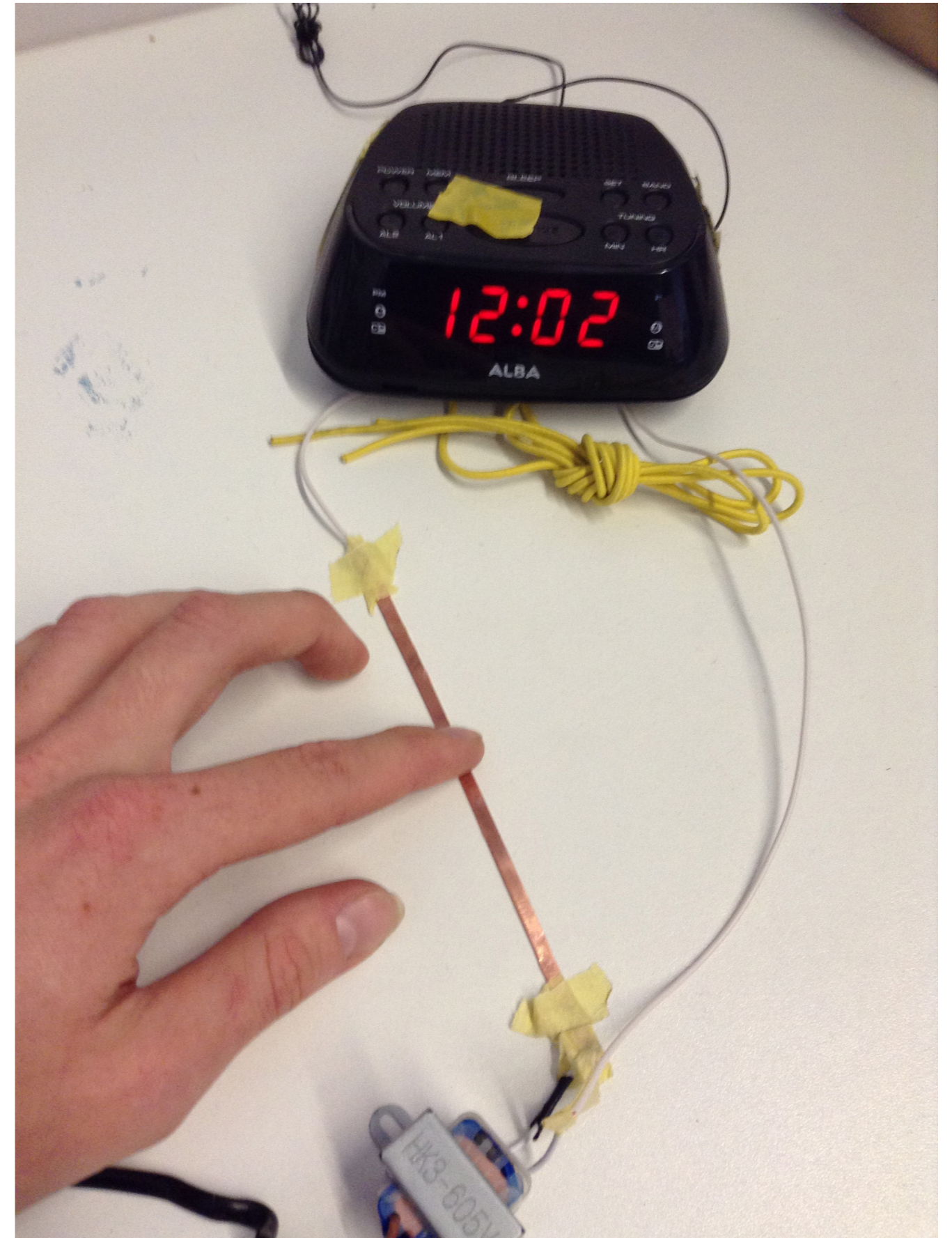
Binary watch changes how to read time. Maths is involved to add minutes and separately hours.

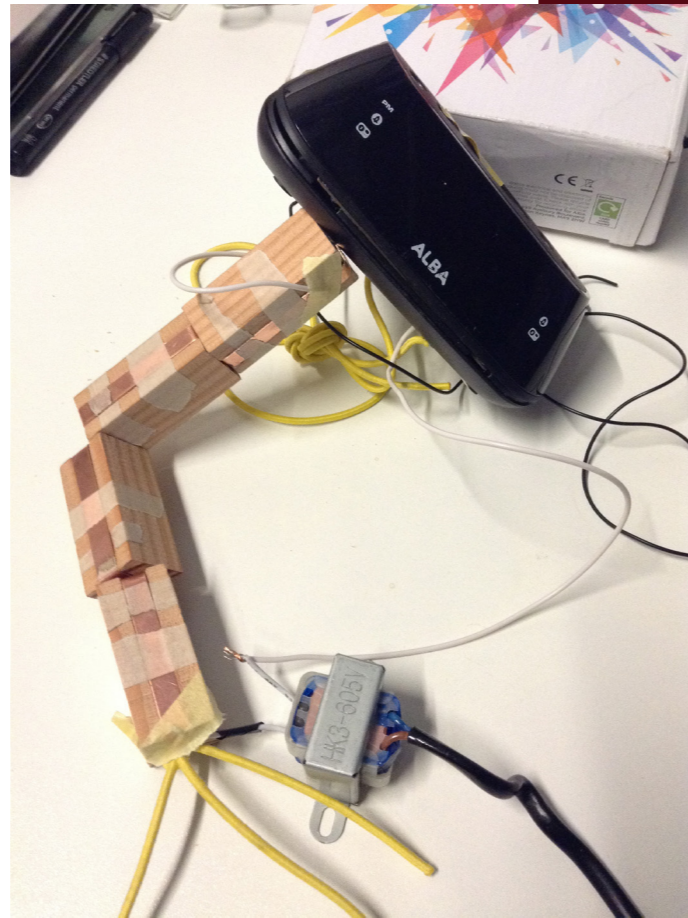
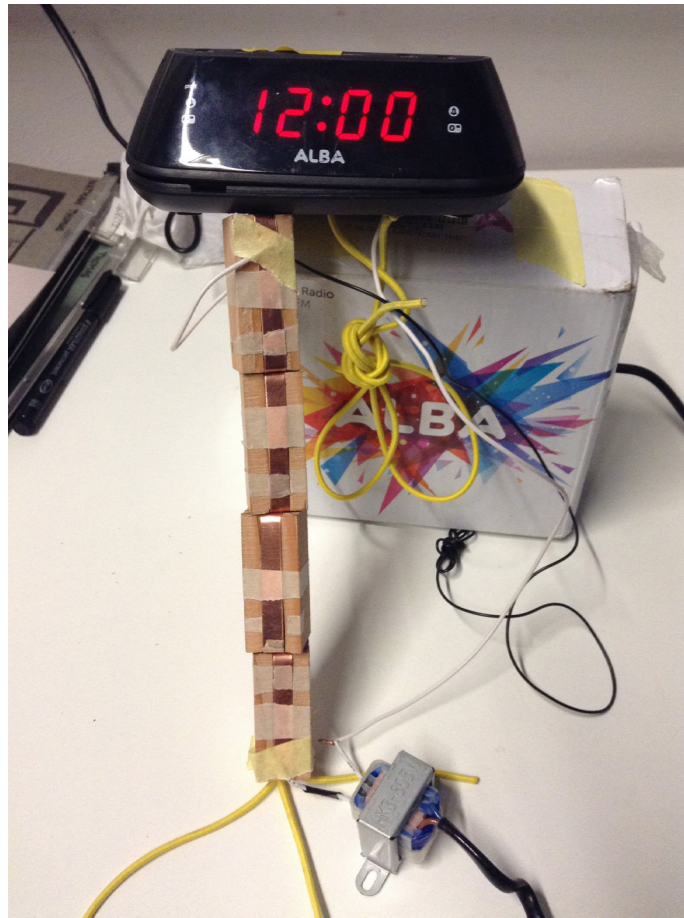
Re Designing an Alarm Clock



The common switch is a mindless component within electrical devices.

To propose my mindful project in an object I have aimed to change the process of interacting with an alarm clock. Focusing on changing the snooze button.





I have extended the circuit of an existing alarm clock.
 Passing current from a three amp fuse through copper plate.

Splitting the legs into smaller components with elastic in the middle allows for bending.
 The copper can disconnect breaking the circuit and so cutting the alarm sound.



The altered alarm clock changes its original process of use. Its more mindful than I was but it has a danger of becoming mundane again.

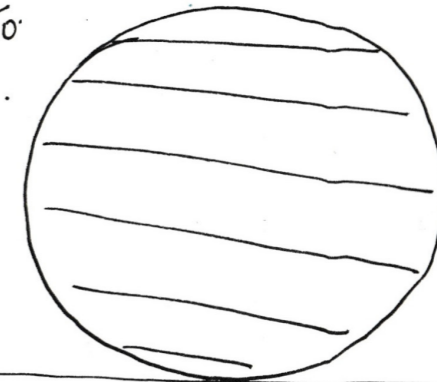
Looking back at my three criteria I think that awareness has the best potential to produce designs which will encourage a mindful state for a prolonged period of time.
 Before I analysed a gym ball.
 Due to its instability it constantly responds to the user's actions.
 Next I will focus on making furniture, using awareness as the main aim while designing.

Awareness

how aware does an object make the user of their actions when in use.

Engages the mind in the current situation.

- ① - $\frac{3}{10}$
- ② - $\frac{10}{10}$
- ③ - $\frac{7}{10}$



Gym Ball - chair.


- Constantly responsive to users actions.
 - Its unstable
- The form is free of assumptions.
- Massive amount of choice and variation

The form is free of assumptions.


Constantly responsive-
Cycle of Human action and
object response.

Prioritising Awareness in the design

Developing Mindfulness in




① - $\frac{1}{10}$. Same every way you sit.
 ② - $\frac{2}{10}$.
 ③ - $\frac{1}{10}$.




① - $\frac{1}{10}$.
 ② - $\frac{1}{10}$.
 ③ - $\frac{2}{10}$.

Two legged stool.



① - $\frac{3}{10}$.
 ② - $\frac{5}{10}$.
 ③ - $\frac{1}{10}$.

IS LESS
More




Adds a process by the object needing completion.
 Makes you more aware offers choice of seat.

Seating products

Carl Clerkin.
Dutch design School

one legged stool?




① $\frac{3}{10}$.
 ② $\frac{6}{10}$.
 ③ $\frac{1}{10}$.

Double ended plungers

OR provide a selection of seats.

How to increase choice?



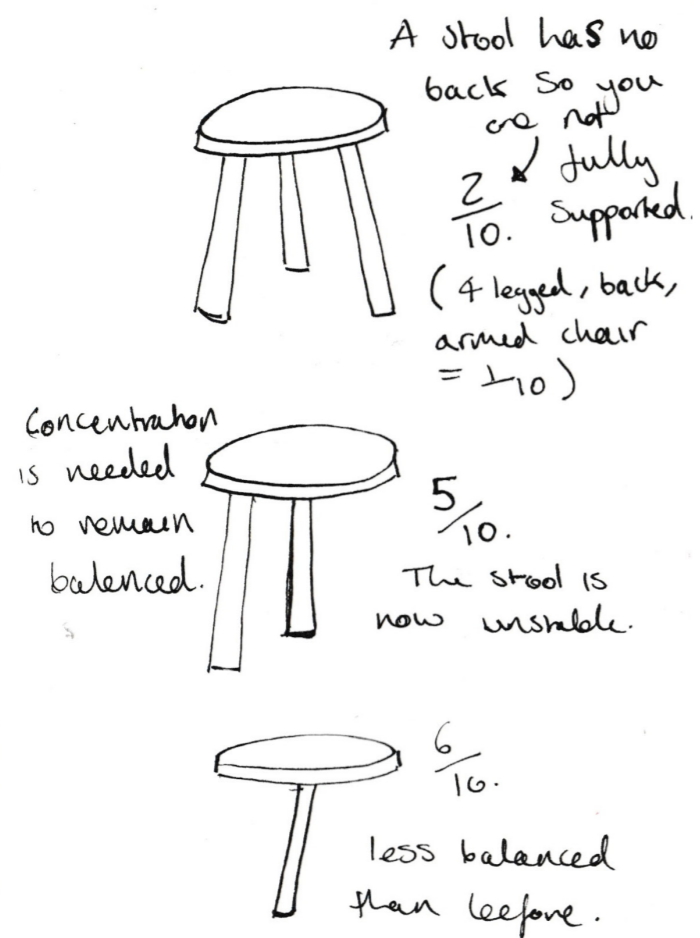
Please Add Seat

① $\frac{5}{10}$.
 ② $\frac{7}{10}$.
 ③ $\frac{5}{10}$.

of surroundings for a new seat.

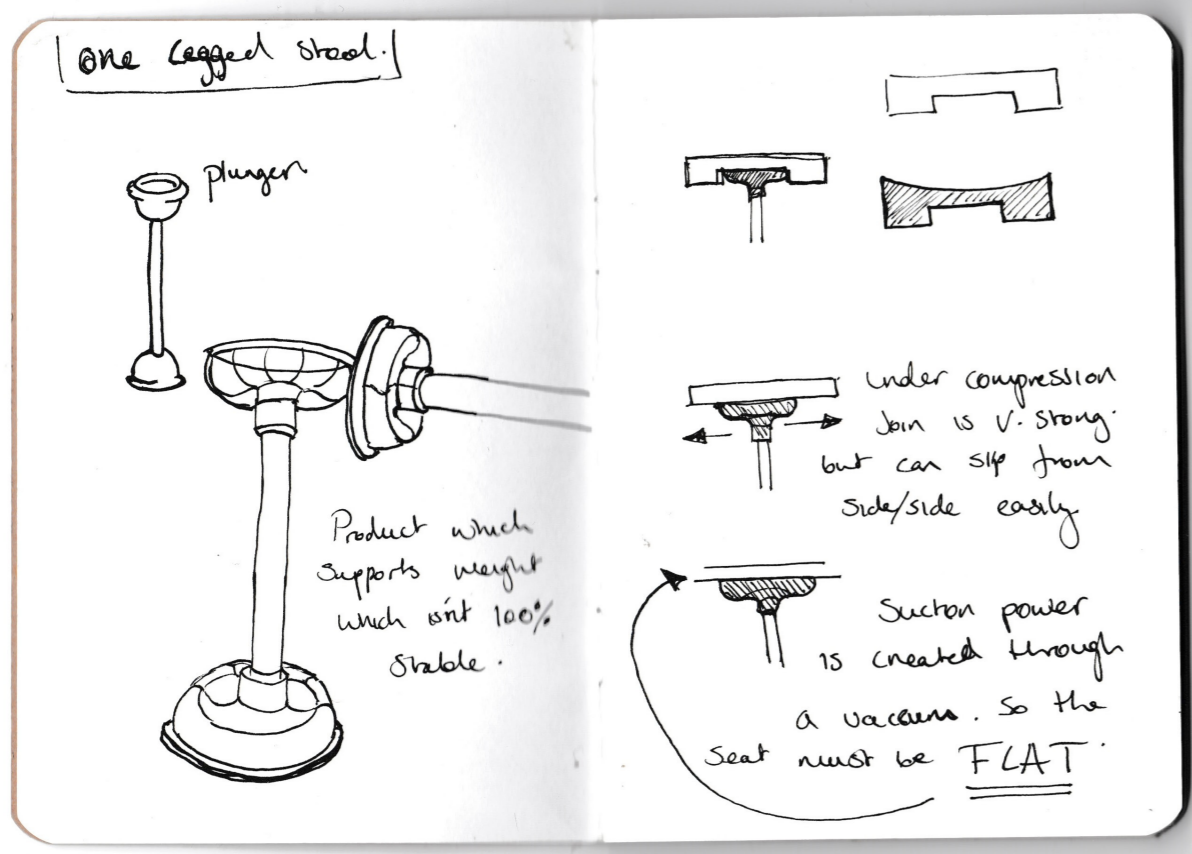
Reducing the number of legs to a stool, increase the awareness it demands. Due to the balance required to sit.

Incorporating plungers into the piece allows for quick customisation. The user can use a flat surface at hand to act as a seat involving choice. Making the user participate in the design.



In use it becomes difficult to move your feet as they act as legs. There is need for safety legs which can act as temporary pivot points.

Developing this I have designed and made a stool with four legs. Adding an additional middle taller leg to a three legged stool offers these pivot points while still requiring the user to balance.





As the middle leg will need to withstand a persons weight I have increased its width. I have then tapered the leg so from standing view all legs look the same.



The stool is now able to stand on its own accord. The stance is disruptive because the seats angle is not perpendicular to the floor as one might expect.

Expectation

One reason why a person can become mindless or sun conscious is that we encounter familiar products. It is easy to trust something because we have used it before.

We expect what has happened, to happen again.

The chair in a public space, will support our weight.

There is no need to question it.

I want to play on the expectations we have of furniture and with my next stool cause the user to pause before sitting.

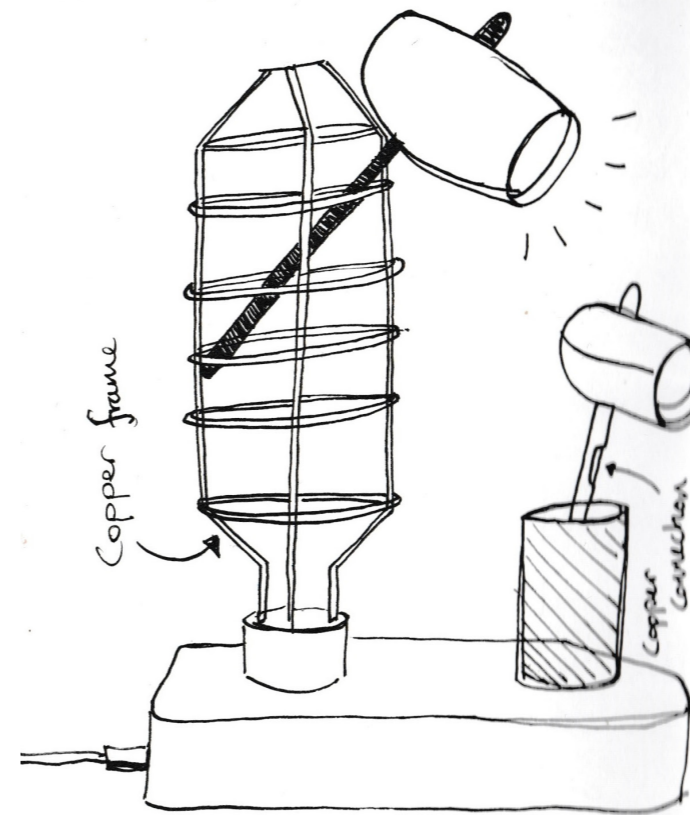
This will encourage a conscious mind.





Does the object afford choice.
Is it open to interpretation or variation of use.

Standard table lamp
Knauf and Brown.



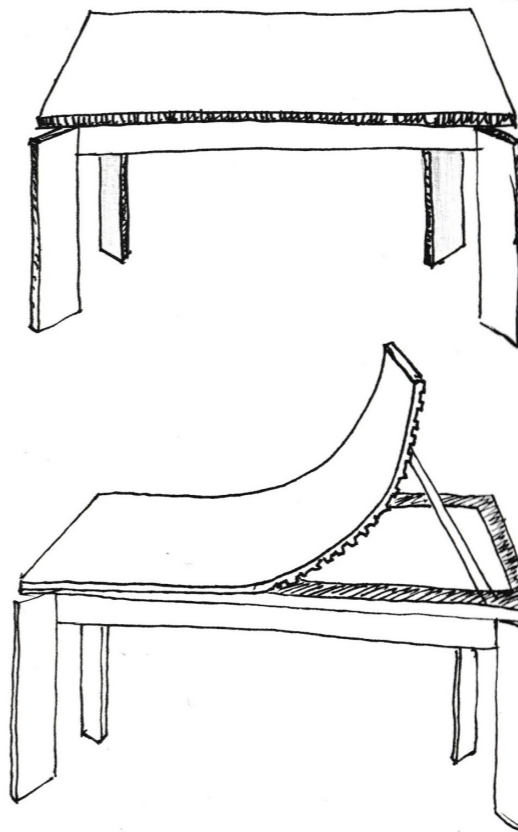
Notches add structural integrity. And allow electricity to conduct turning light on.

- ① 5/10
- ② 5/10
- ③ 7/10

Mindful

- Product allows variation.
- None choice.
- Prolongs interaction to completing a task.
(turning the light on)

Paolo Ulian Cabriolet/occasional Table.



WHY GOOD?

- The table is no longer static and is willing to serve another purpose.
- Allows choice.
- Clever in the way it enables behaviour. People sit on tables when they don't have a chair.

Prioritising Choice in the design process

Initially my own designs prioritising choice had strong links to multifunctional products. Similar to how a swiss army knife operates.

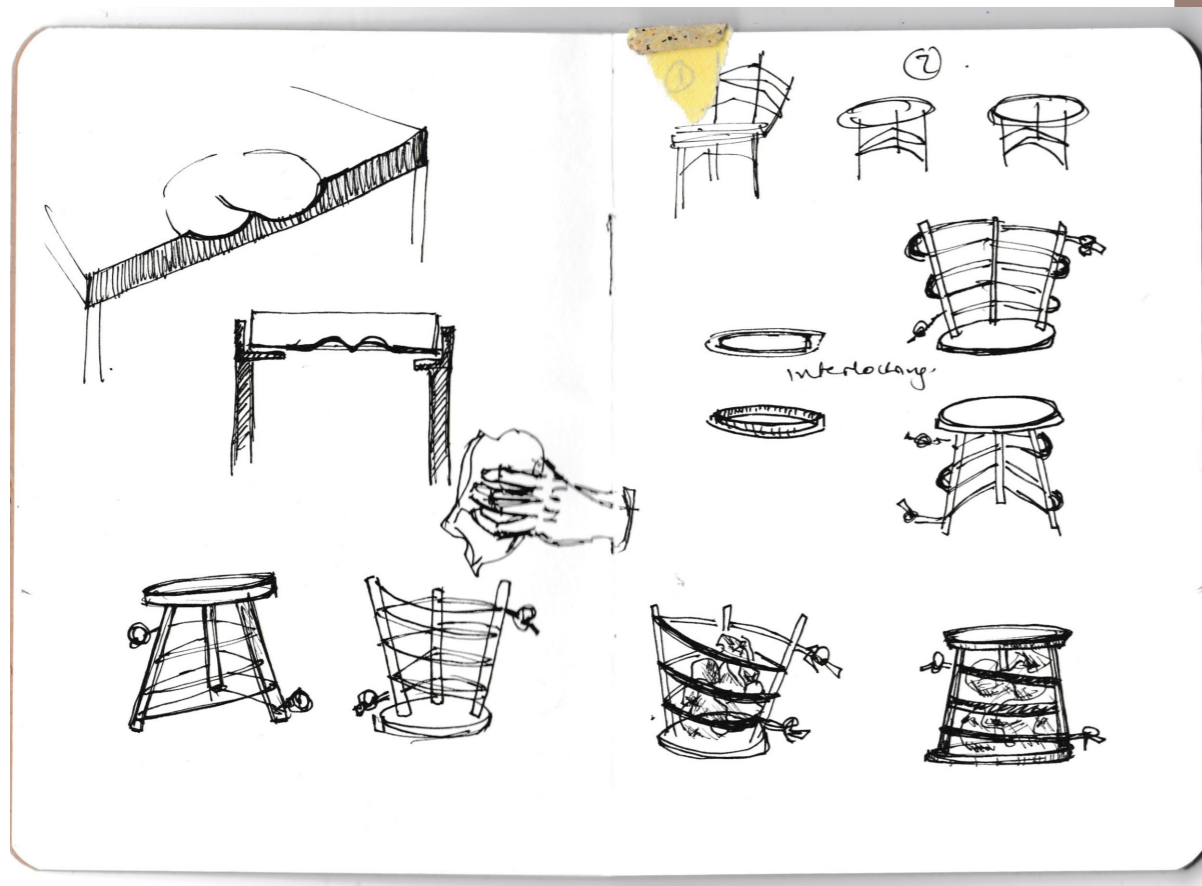


Table which top isn't fixed to its frame. It can be flipped to reveal an ergonomic butt print. Tables are used as chair anyway. This is more of a comment on behaviour.

Stool which is an upside down laundry bin.

A chair which can be rolled over to suit a different occupant.

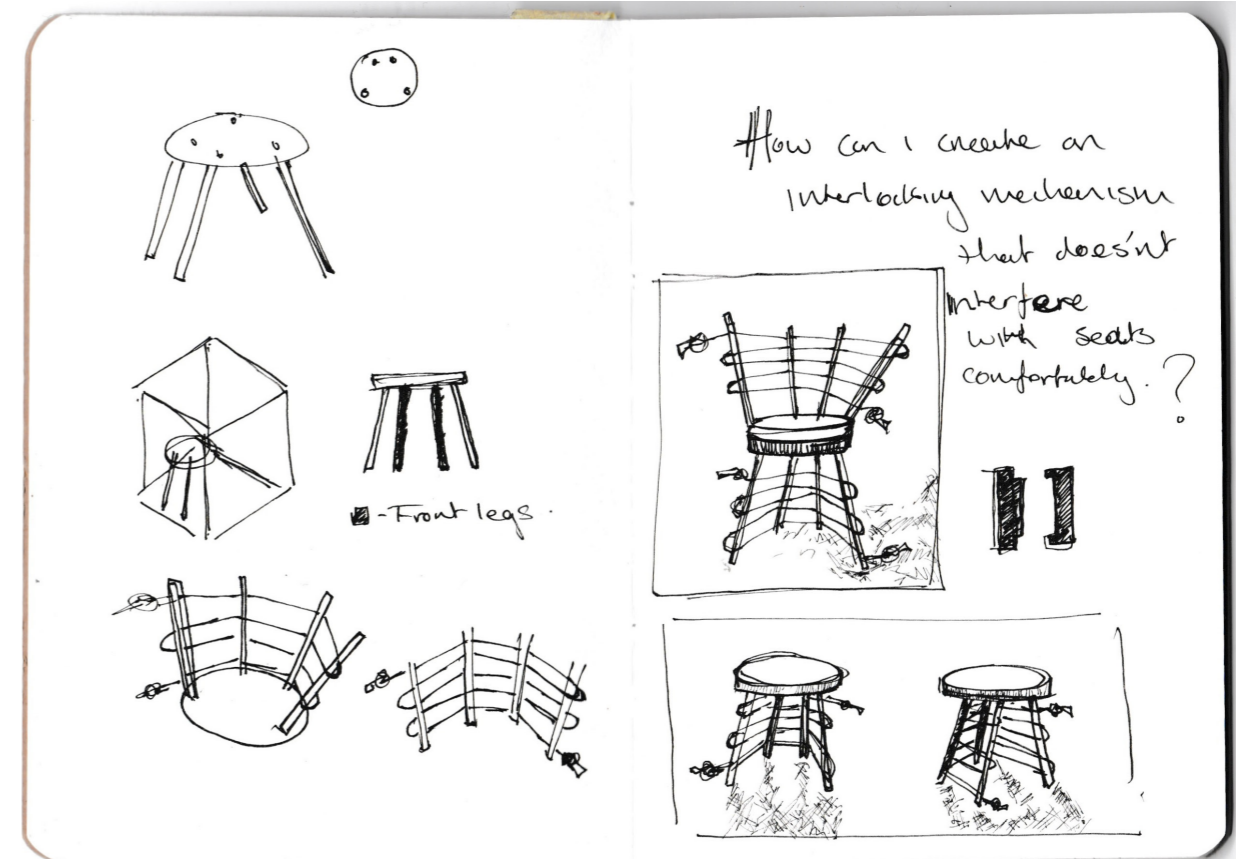
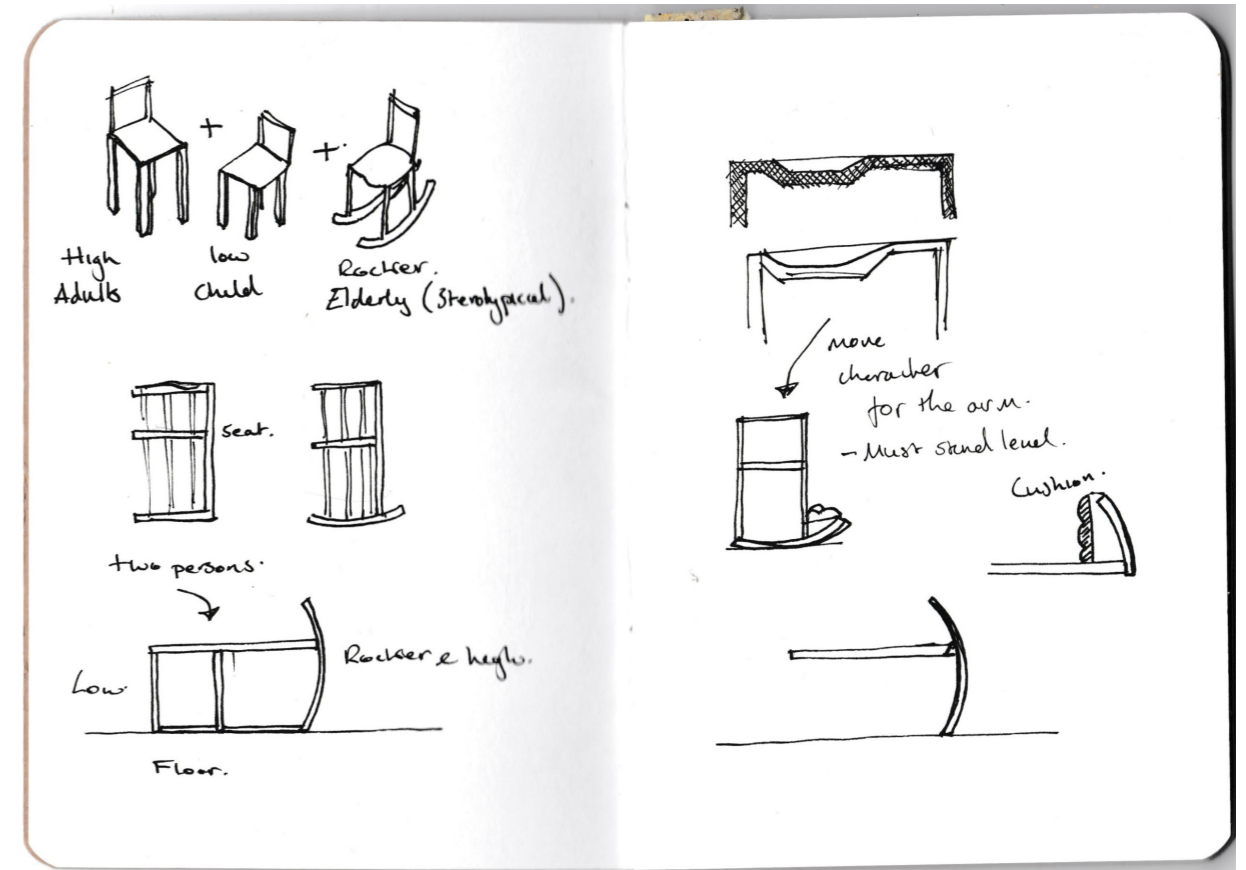
Small chair (child)

Tall rocking chair (adult)

Two persons bench

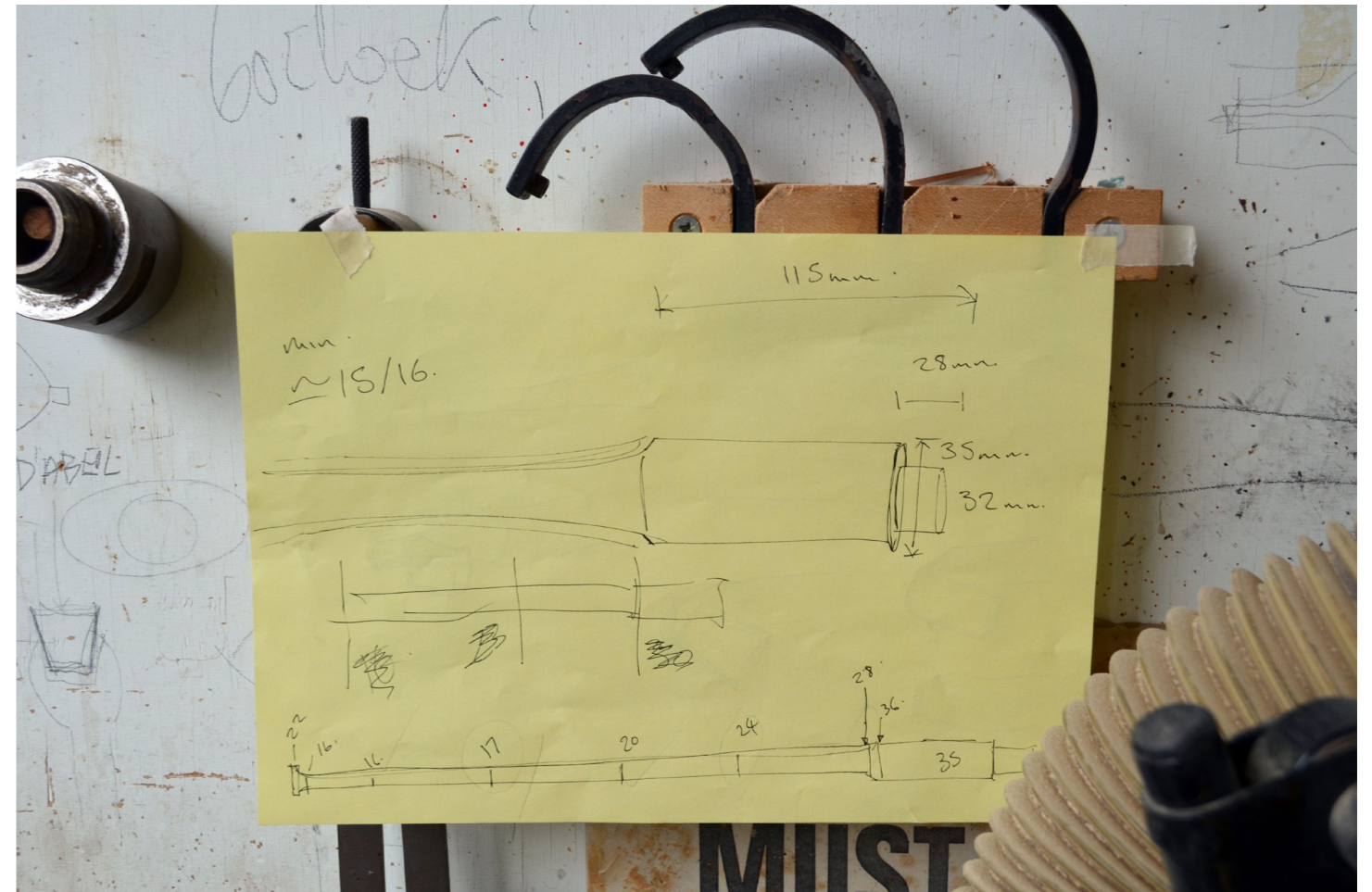
I wasn't fully satisfied that having more choices was particularly mindful.

Instead I designed with intent to offer one choice.

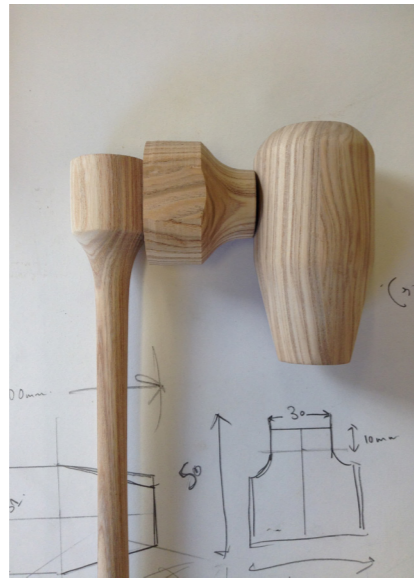
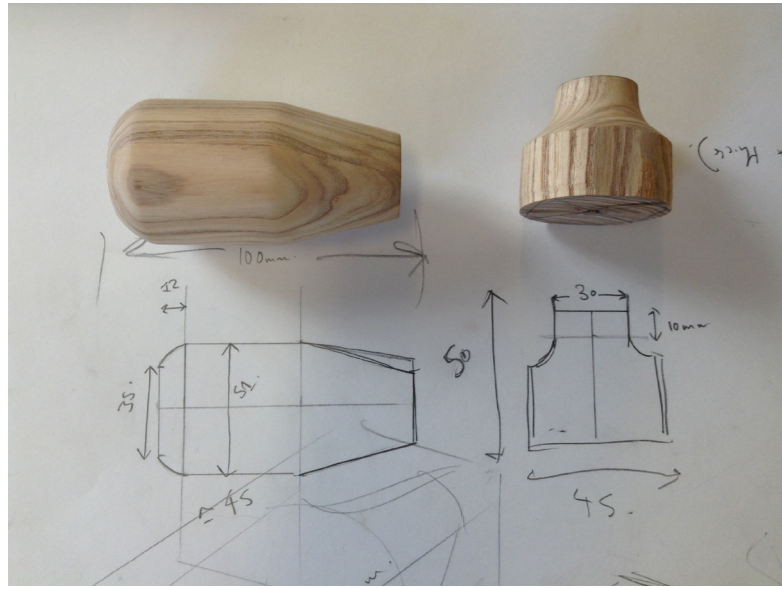


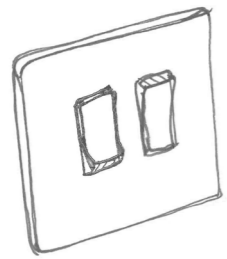


I frequently clutter free table space I have at home. Often unnecessary things which seem necessary. My next piece is a mindful table. Limited space emphasises the importance of the choice you make placing an item on it. It elevates the importance of what is on it.





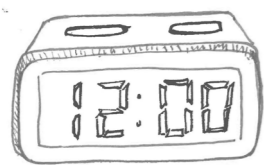
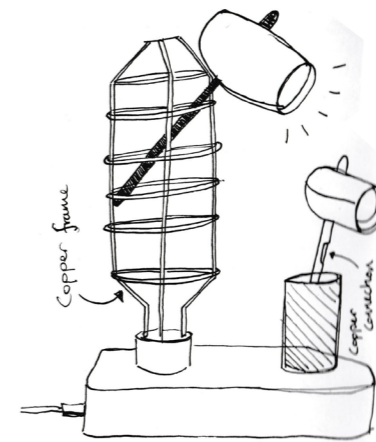
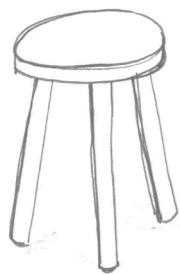
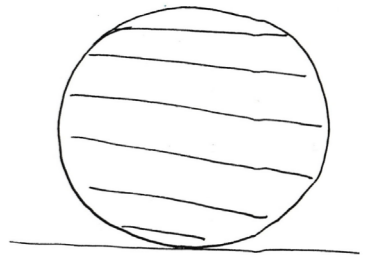
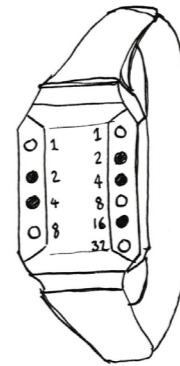
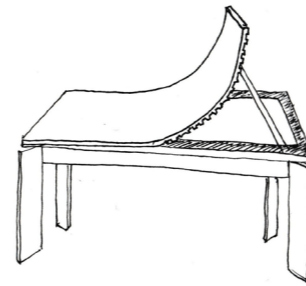
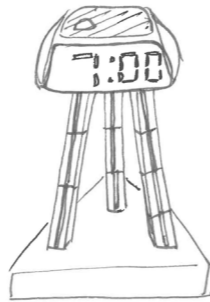
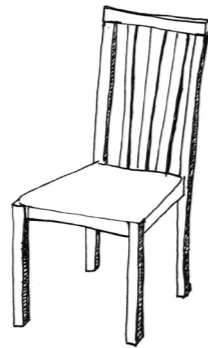
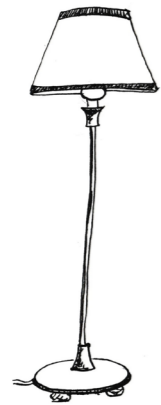




Mindless



Mindful



Summary

The concept that objects communicate is very powerful in my opinion. Although I think that much of design takes advantage of this to favour ease of use. I don't think this is a bad way to design or the wrong way to design. However, I believe that there is room for more adventure when designing.

A lot of my project was spent on developing my project title to mindfulness. Although there are common themes in the work from start to finish. I enjoyed the process of focusing my own thoughts after reading into critical design, design poetics and becoming hugely inspired by Droog's collaborations. It was a challenge to design mindful objects as it is such a broad topic and many people have different views. One of my aims was to challenge and change routine which has proven to be difficult because everything eventually is leaned and becomes mundane, however I believe I made a good start.

There were dangerous points along the way. I feared the alarm clock could suggest a novelty item. However, as a proposal piece allowed me to talk about my project more easily with others.

My balance stool turned into a success with people who meditate mind-fully as it allows for movement which most chairs do not. Its stance also suggests meditation because of its angle. Also, this keeps the user's waist above their knees which is good meditation position.

The project was initially inspired by the way in which I view the things within my environment. As this project is personal to me I believe mindfulness will play a part in my future work. I want to continue to experiment with latheing and steam bending metal inside wood. I think there is potential in a series of mindful table lights, and chairs which alter expectation.

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MINDFUL COLLECTION 2018
BY IEUAN BRYNMOR EVANS

