

For my research trip I visited papabubble in Amsterdam, a company reviving the ancient artisanal process of candy making. I wanted to go to a workshop where I could watch a handmaking process but something that is not exactly the same every time it is done. There are lots of variations including size, colour, and shape in candy production. I was interested in sweet making due to the rigorous and complex process and the variety of possibilities including pattern, colour and layers. papabubble specializes in hard candy and I was able to watch the process of making a batch from start to finish which was around 2 hours long, it was an extremely exciting experience.



The shop was clean and ordered with an opening area displaying a colourful selection of their candy, leading down into the kitchen/workshop area which was open and visible. It was enlightening to see the workspace and I was shocked by the simplicity of it. Another intention for my visit was to explore colour and what is expressed through the colours used in design whether intentional or random. However, the selection on show was not extensive as it was more of a production workshop rather than a sweet shop. Although the colours used in the process I saw were very contrasting with white and black along side vibrant blues and greens.

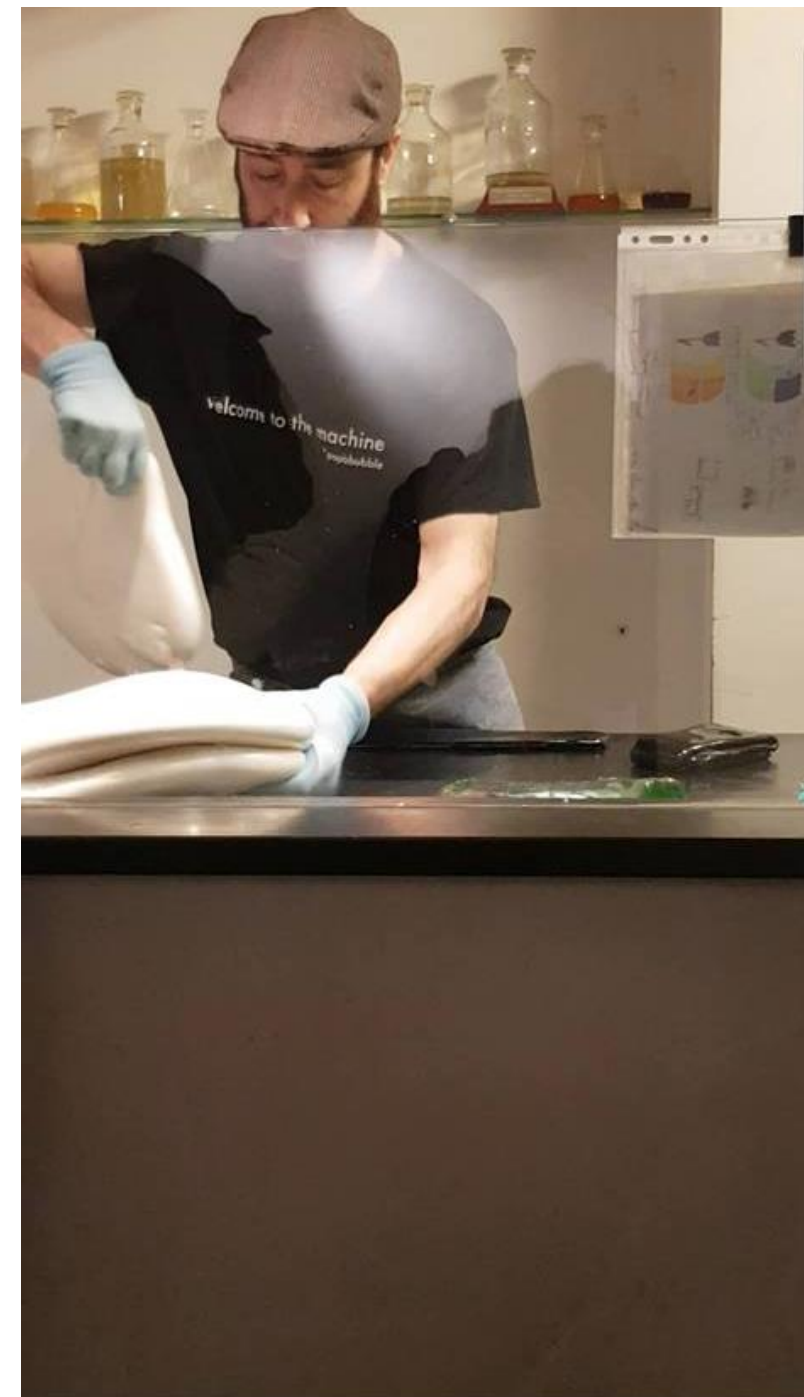
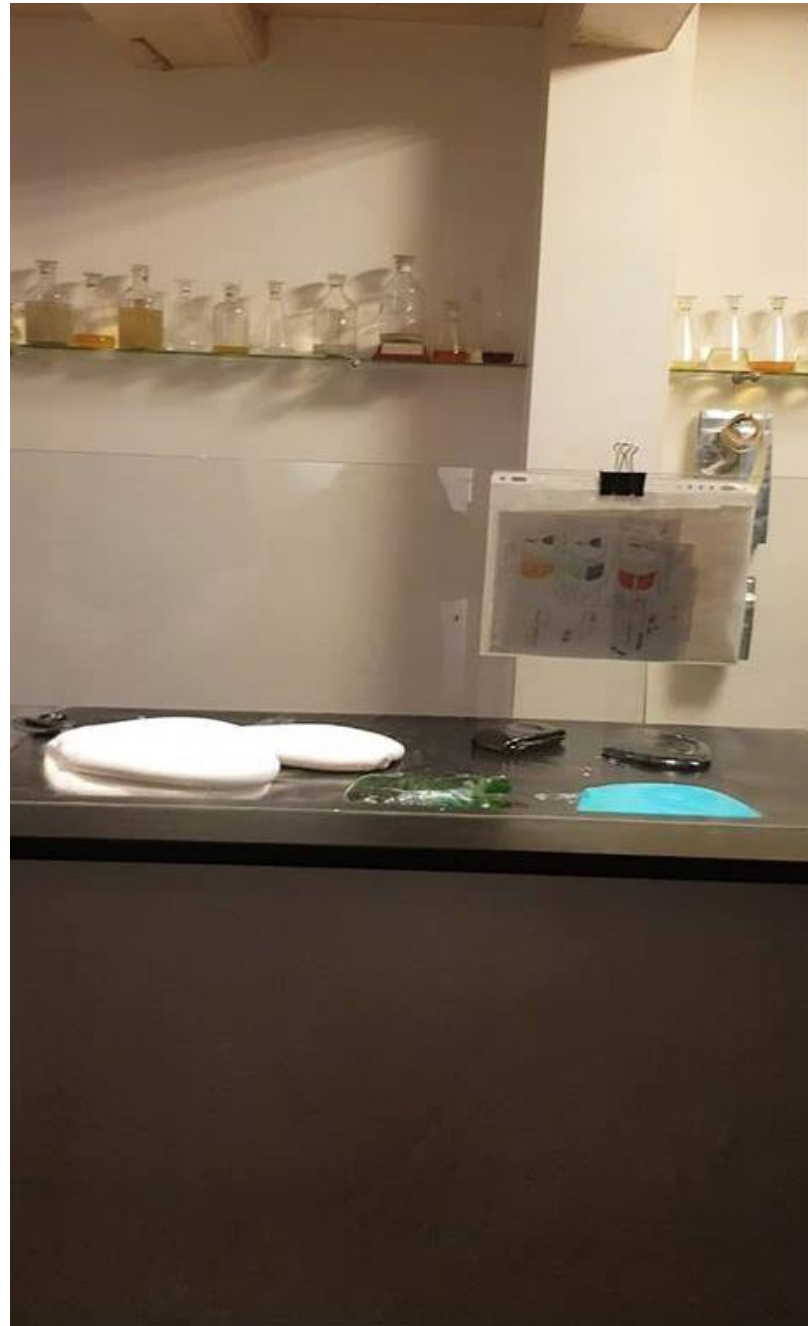


The process began by mixing sugar, glucose, and water, along with any particular food colouring necessary. The mixture is heated and then poured out on to a metal table where it cools and begins to become solid. Once in a solid state the makers can begin to work the candy slab by rolling stretching and twisting. The key is the heat as if it becomes too cold it will harden too much and be impossible to work so it has to keep moving and turning or in some cases heated for a short time in the oven. This sort of quality is similar to that of plastic which I am working with in my project relating to the heating and cooling and ability to manipulate and mould and this gave me some ideas relating how to work a material.





The texture and look of the mixture at this stage looks very similar to plastic through the shine and colour. At each stage I was attempting to envisage using plastic in the same way and thinking how I can incorporate certain techniques and ways of working the candy in my own work. Once in slabs the candy was ready to be shaped and prepared into the final outcome, it is a long and repetitive process with a fair amount of trial and error in getting the material to do what you want. The makers began rolling and flattening the mixture whilst adding water to keep the outside moist so it does not stick. Each process and motion was repeated many times due to the tough nature of the candy.



This shows the next step which is the mixing of the colours, this is done by applying heat and allowing the two mixtures to melt together becoming one. This was interesting for me as it is not like a usual mixing of colours like you would see with paint, instead the colours don't mix instead it creates patterns of alternating colour fused and made solid. This was intriguing as it in a sense not controlled what pattern or fusion you may get instead it is left to the materials to react and relate with each other. This was an exciting and relevant process for me as it relates to my ideas of humans not having full control and allowing the materials to react and flow in their own way.







This process of stretching the candy allows for it to become a lot easier to work and manipulate as it is breaking down the solidity of the material making it lighter and softer. This process is also repeated throughout as the mixture is left too long and again comes too hard to manipulate. The repetition of process is something also relevant to my ideas and I learned here the forgiving nature of certain materials such as candy and plastic as you can always reheat or work and manipulate as many times as you want until you get the desired results.

The Candy is then layered up and moulded and positioned into the shape on the inside cross section and wrapped around with the coloured candy. It is then rolled repeatedly into a rounded shape and the ends sticking out are cut off. The rolling method softens the candy slightly in preparation to be stretched in to small circular pieces. It is interesting at this point because it does not appear to be very sweet like and I almost forgot that it was sweets that were being made. This was an important point for me as it shows the large and single form which is about to be divided in to many smaller pieces, it's a multiplication and a division at the same time and this was an exciting idea for me.



The final working of the candy is pulling from one end and stretching the shape into a longer and thinner one. Once thin enough at the end pieces are then cut off and are the finished candy pieces. The cutting process is very repetitive in motion however the size and cleanliness of each cut varies as it is done quickly without measuring. This process resonates with my ideas of repetition and imperfection and almost gives each sweet more character and individuality.





The photo on the right shows the hundreds of small pieces cut from the original large and stretched piece and the process of chopping each piece off individually. The shop gave me a range of different sweet samples, showing the various possibilities concerning colour and pattern as well as the imperfections and different sizes of each piece. What I also found interesting was the flavours, usually colour is associated with a flavour but with these sweets the flavours of each one did not taste as I had expected or fit the association of flavour to colour.



After visiting the sweet making workshop I decided to make some relating and inspired pieces. I experimented simply using sugar and water and heating the mixture in the oven until solid just like how sugar cubes are made. I then used coloured plastic detailing on the sugar shapes to create a sweet like look. I am interested in possibly creating edible work and also work that can be affected by heat and other factors such as water. I am also going to pursue the idea of interchanging candy and plastic and using them in similar ways as if the same material.





In addition to my trip to papabubble, I decided to visit some sweet shops as Amsterdam has an abundance of colourful and exciting ones. The rows of colours ordered in to sections and tones were vast and there was a great selection of shapes and shades of each sweet. I was interested to see how the colours would make me feel or view the sweet and I found that all the colours were rather uplifting I feel this may have been because of my knowledge and memory of the the sweet taste. The colours however again did make me associate them with a certain flavour.





I was intrigued by the layout of the colours and which colours suited each other and worked well next to each other and integrated within other colours, and there was a huge range. I was thinking about what I feel or think when I look at my own work relating to colour and also texture and shape as all the sweets were different. The layout of the sweets behind plastic and the blinding colour also took away the sweet element and allowed me to view the range as simply coloured shapes. The visit gave me pointers and opened my eyes to the effect of colour and texture as well as an interest in experimenting with different shades and tones of a colour.

