

# Laura Deasy

AD313 - Creative Enquiry: Research Practice  
2019-2020



The view from my bedroom window

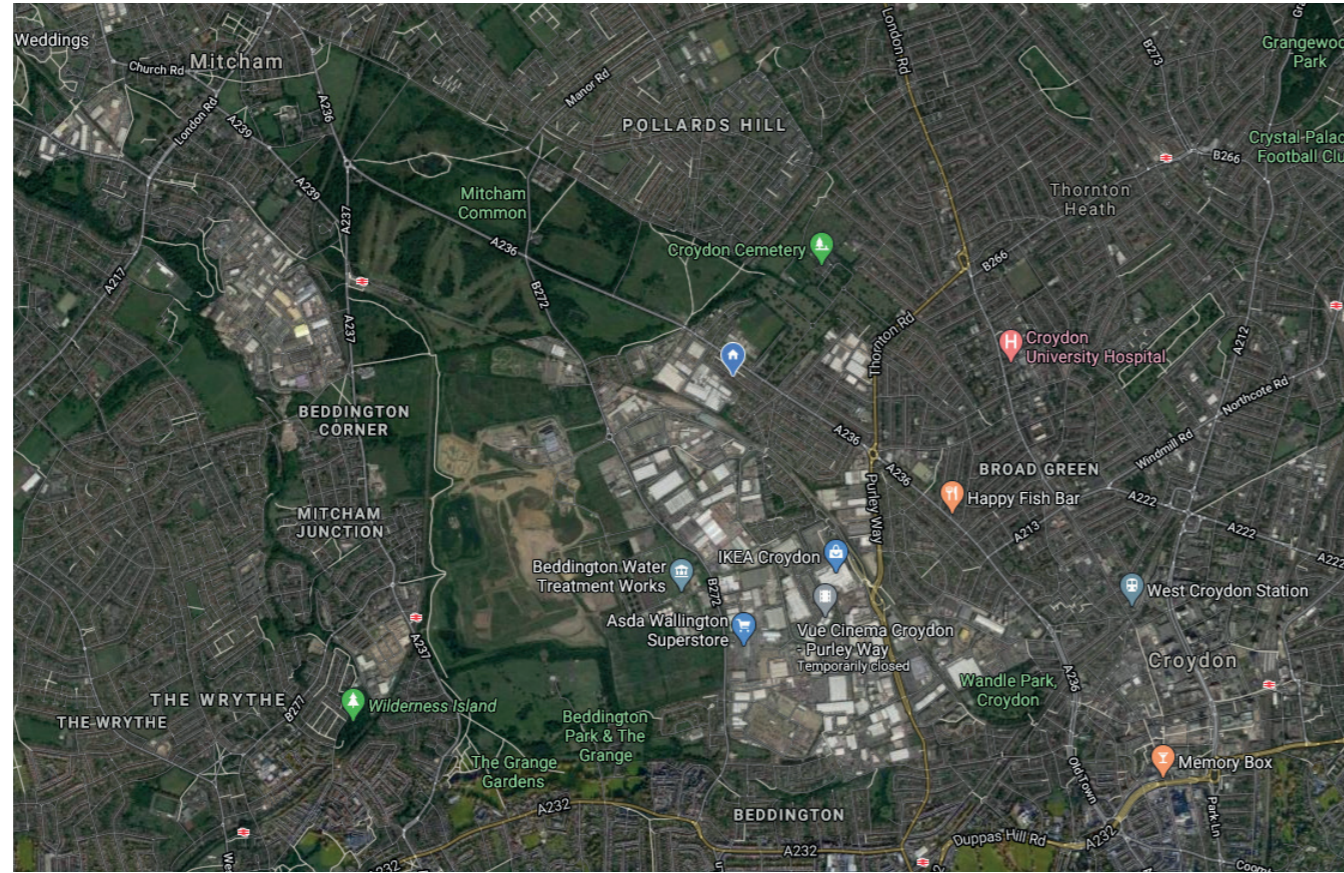
# Nature in London

I noticed that central London had a good spread of natural pockets, from its well-kept parks to roadside hanging baskets. It seemed like the further you went from the centre of London the less greenery you'd see. This helped me realise I wanted my project to focus on highlighting and integrating nature into the more deprived areas of London that exist in the outskirts of the capital. Having grown up in Croydon, South London I wanted my project to celebrate London as a community and a home to locals. My first thoughts were focused on how to go about investigating London's natural history, its character and Londoners relationship with nature.



Despite common conceptions about London being built-up, very urban and a chaotic place, 47% of the city is made up of 'green and blue spaces', including parks, woodlands, rivers and gardens. This got me thinking about what nature exists in urban spaces that may go unseen or is not known about, leading to people thinking about urban landscapes in a way that doesn't quite represent them how they truly are.

# CRO 3AD



'Nature in London' turned out to be a very broad starting point, so I decided to start with my local landscape of Croydon, where I was born and grew up. This landscape turned out to be a perfect example of the contrast in landscapes within London. My home and the surrounding streets represents the urban landscape which many Londoners are familiar with, then this area is sandwiched in between an industrial estate and a 182 hectares of green space, Mitcham Common.



There are three main landscapes I'm investigating, urban, industrial and natural. I want to contrast these areas but also want to think about blending them together to show how these areas live in harmony with one another, along my walk I saw plenty of places where these three different types of areas spilled over into each other. I'm hoping that showing the areas together as one will also demonstrate that nature is an integral part of Croydon though many may not think it.



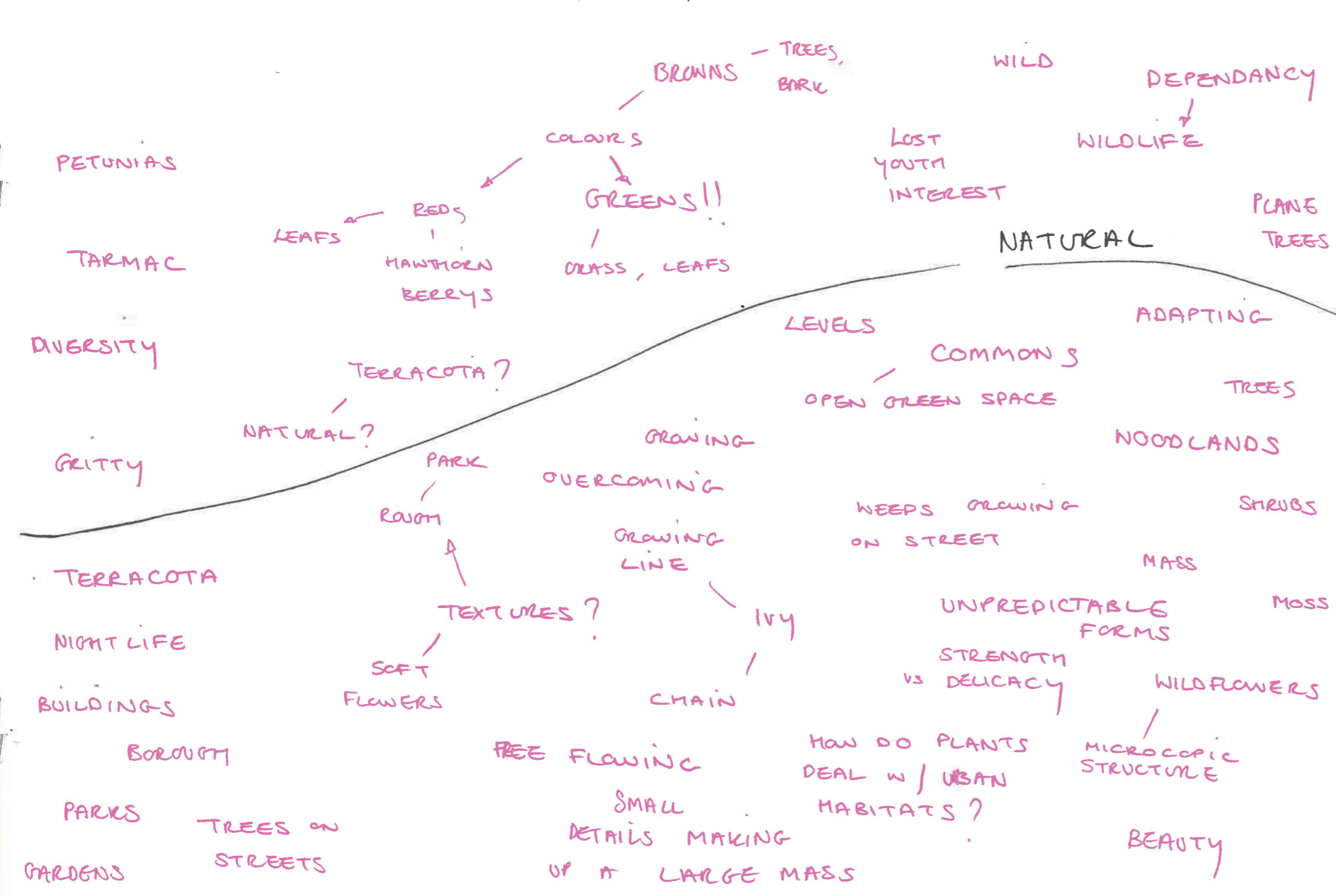
Once I'd refined my hometown as my starting point I decided to take a walk across Mitcham Common, the woodlands just across the road from my house, collecting photos along the way to inform my making going forward. I also used an app called Candide Labels to help me identify plant species I found along the way.



Research questions that came up when exploring what I want my project to investigate mainly revolved around London's connection with nature. Why as Londoners do we relate more so to urban spaces than natural ones, some research I've done suggests it's because we grow up more familiarised with urban spaces as they're where we live, play, go to school and go to work. Though London does have a lot of green space we don't seem to engage with it as much as we engage with the urban areas, in particular in recent years.

These photos of Mitcham Common from the 1920s show people swimming and picnicking, which I never see people doing on the common now, which makes me question how our environmental identity has changed over the years, and why.

TEXTURES, FORMS, COLOURS



PETUNIAS  
TARMAC  
DIVERSITY  
GRITTY  
TERRACOTA  
NIGHT LIFE  
BUILDINGS  
BOROUGH  
PARKS  
GARDENS

TREES ON STREETS

FREE FLOWING  
SMALL DETAILS MAKING UP A LARGE MASS

HOW DO PLANTS DEAL W/ URBAN HABITATS?  
BEAUTY

ROOM

EXPOSED BRICK

SUBURBAN

COUNCIL HOUSING

CITY POPULATION IS RISING  
WILL % OF GREEN SPACE IS FALLING

GOOD FOR MENTAL HEALTH + WELL-BEING

IMPORTANCE OF TREES

IN CITIES

PRODUCE OXYGEN  
SOAK UP + STORE CARBON + CARBON DIOXIDE  
CLEAN OUR AIR

PROVIDE FOOD + HABITAT TO SPECIES OF WILDLIFE

PROTECT US FROM FLOODING

THOUGHTFUL DESIGNED CITIES W/ NATURE CAN OFFER THE STIMULATION + ENERGY OF A CITY PLUS A MEANINGFUL INTERACTION WITH A PSYCHOLOGICALLY RESTORATIVE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

MORE THAN JUST INTRODUCING NATURE INTO URBAN AREAS, PEOPLE MUST BE ABLE TO INTERACT WITH THESE ELEMENTS USING THEIR SENSES.

CITY DWELLERS DISCONNECTION WITH THE NATURAL WORLD

URBAN ECOLOGY

MENTAL ILLNESSES + MOOD DISORDERS ARE MORE COMMON IN URBAN AREAS

REDUCED ACCESS TO NATURE IS A CONTRIBUTING CAUSE

HELPS EXPLAIN INACTION ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

"ENVIRONMENTAL GENERATIONAL AMNESIA"

DESCRIBES HOW EACH GENERATION CREATES A NEW IDEA OF WHAT'S ENVIRONMENTALLY NORMAL BASED ON EXPERIENCES IN CHILDHOOD.

IF SOMEONE DOESN'T EXPERIENCE NATURE MUCH AS A CHILD THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND ITS IMPORTANCE AS AN ADULT

ENVIRONMENTAL IDENTITY

'THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERSONAL SENSE OF CONNECTION TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WHICH IS BASED ON HISTORY, SIMILARITY + FEELINGS OF PERSONAL CONNECTION.'

INTENTIONAL THROUGH DIRECT INTENTION  
E.G. GARDENING, WILDLIFE VIEWING, ADVENTURE

INDIRECT NOT PHYSICALLY BEING PRESENT IN IT  
E.G. THROUGH A WINDOW, PICTURE, FILM ETC

INCIDENTAL EXPERIENCING IT AS A BY-PRODUCT OF ANOTHER ACTIVITY  
E.G. INCIDENTALLY ON A WALK OR JOURNEY IN PUBLIC



HOW TO CREATE MORE OF A PERSONAL CONNECTION BETWEEN LONDONERS + NATURE?

CONNECTEDNESS TO NATURE IS IMPORTANT AS IT LEADS TO CONCERN FOR NATURE. MAYER + FRANTZ (2004) STATE THAT 'IF PEOPLE FEEL CONNECTED TO NATURE, THEN THEY WILL BE LESS LIKELY TO HARM IT, FOR HARMING IT WOULD IN ESSENCE BE HARMING THEIR VERY SELF!'

CLAYTON (2003) STATES THAT BEING CONNECTED TO NATURE NURTURES OUR ENVIRONMENTAL IDENTITY.

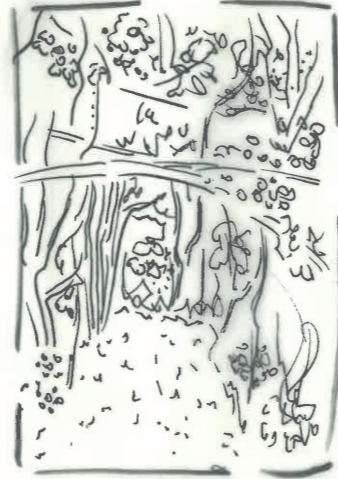
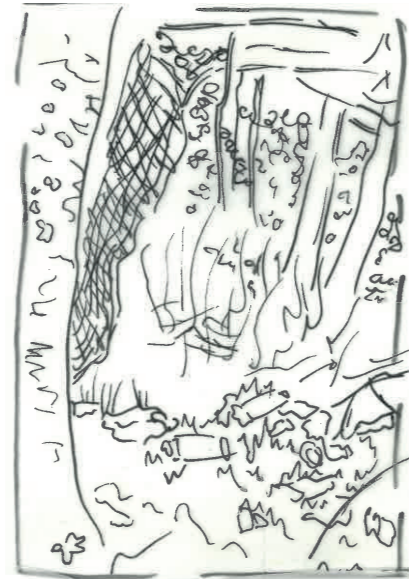
THE INCREASE IN PEOPLE LIVING IN URBAN AREAS + THE LACK OF GREEN SPACES IN THOSE AREAS CONTRIBUTES TO OUR DISCONNECTION FROM NATURE.

THE AREA THAT CHILDREN EXPLORE + PLAY IN AROUND THEIR HOMES HAS REDUCED BY 90% OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS.

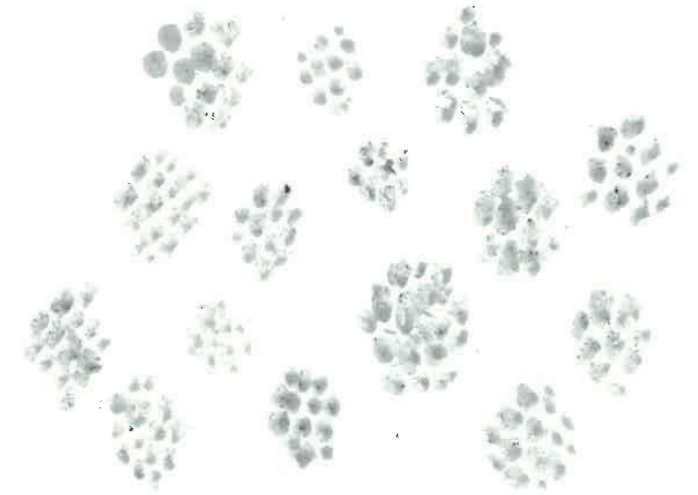
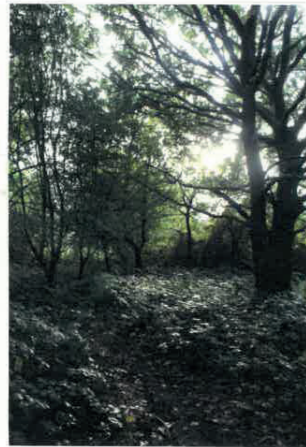
IF CHILDREN ARE CONTINUALLY TAUGHT ABOUT ENDANGERED ANIMALS FROM FAR AWAY ECO-SYSTEMS + HABITATS, THEY RISK LOSING AN IMPORTANT CONNECTION TO THEIR LOCAL WILDLIFE + GREEN SPACE.



OAK LEAVES



BLACKBERRY PLANT



Exploring my local natural environment through collecting, photography and drawing

## A personal project

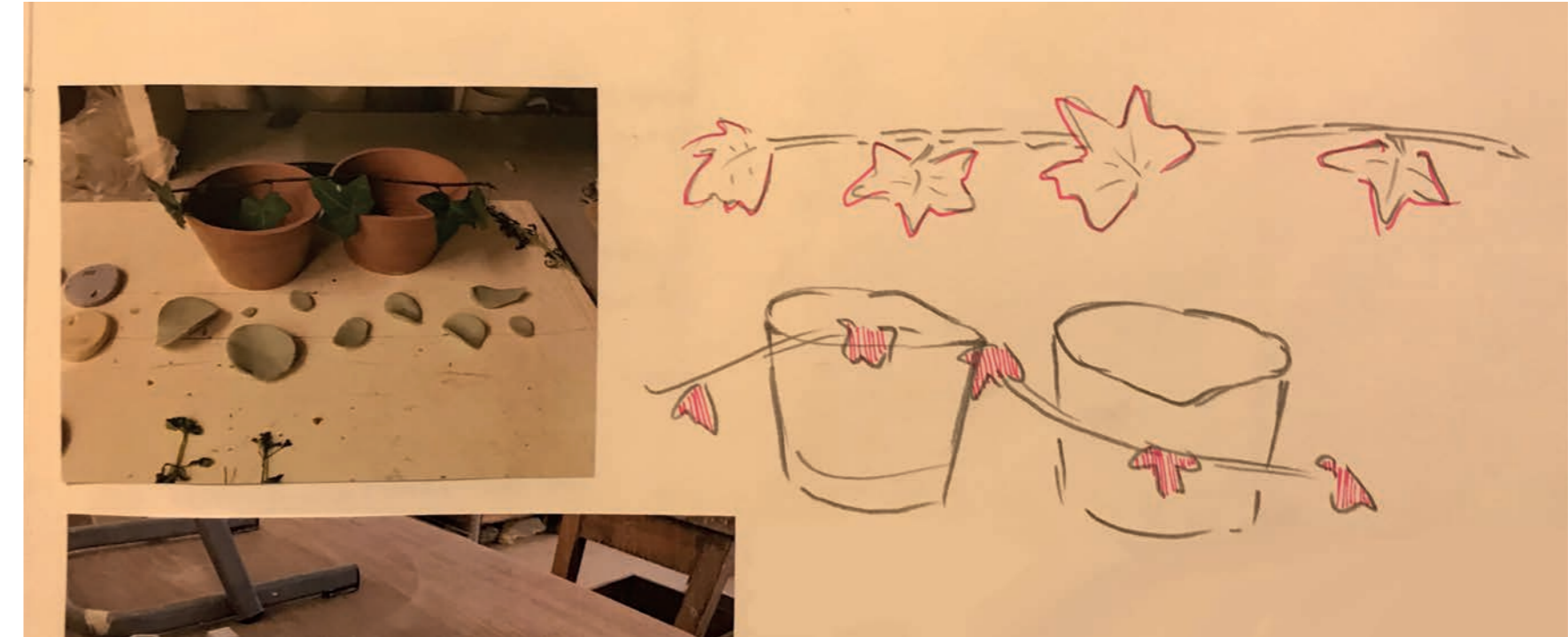
It soon became clear from my initial research that this project would be very personal, investigating the environmental identity connected to my local landscape, presenting my own reflection of it through my work.



I struggled with getting started making in 3D for this project because I couldn't imagine a specific outcome I was working towards developing, whether it was practical or sculptural. So to start me off making I built a model of my immediate local landscape including my home, the surrounding houses and an interpretation of their two surrounds, the woodlands that grows behind one side of the road and the factory built behind the other side.

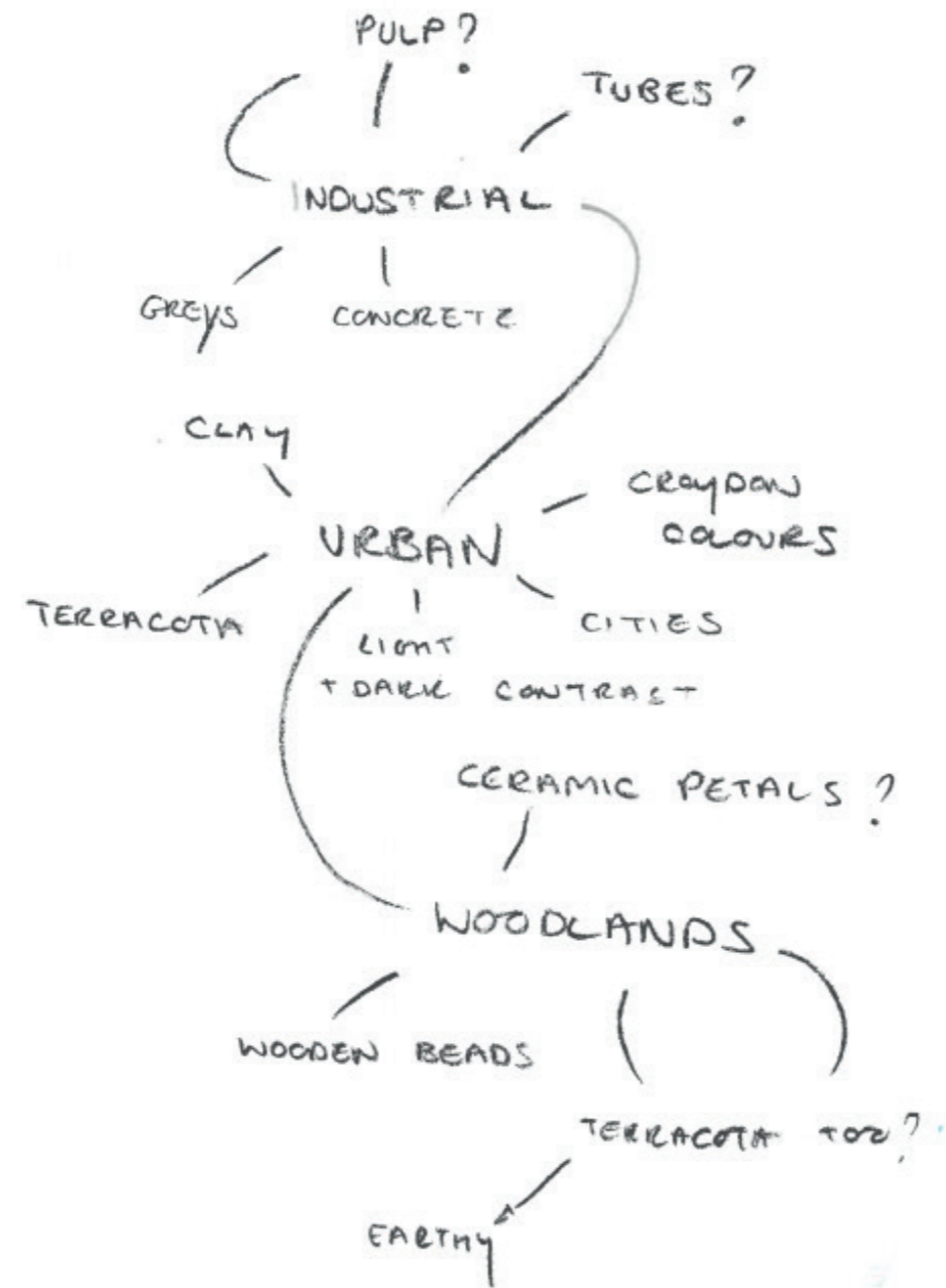
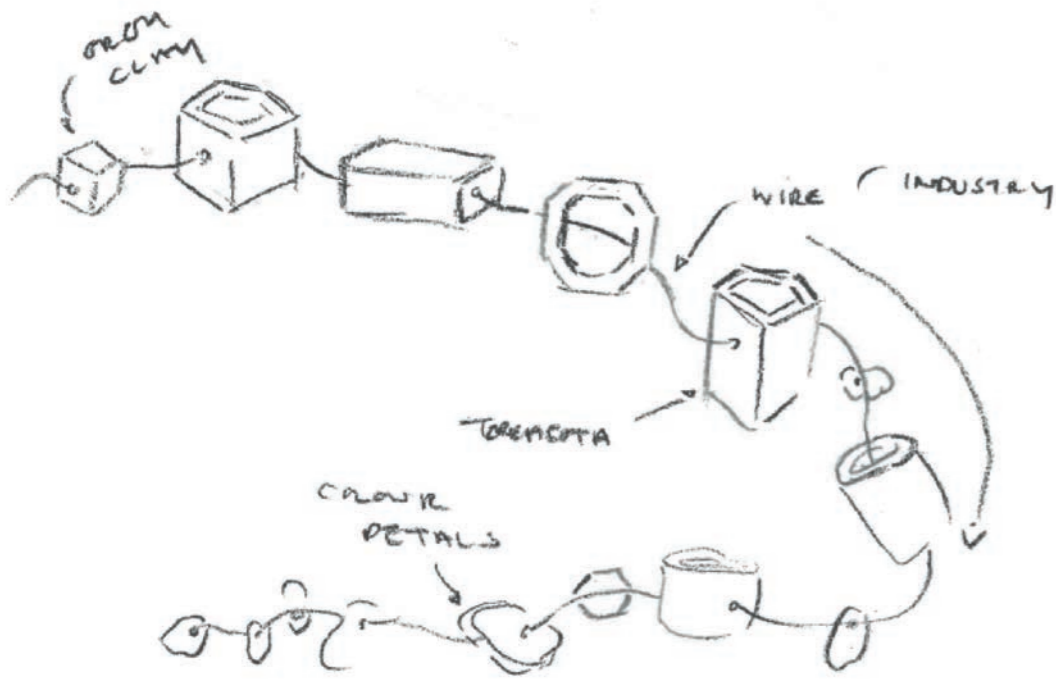
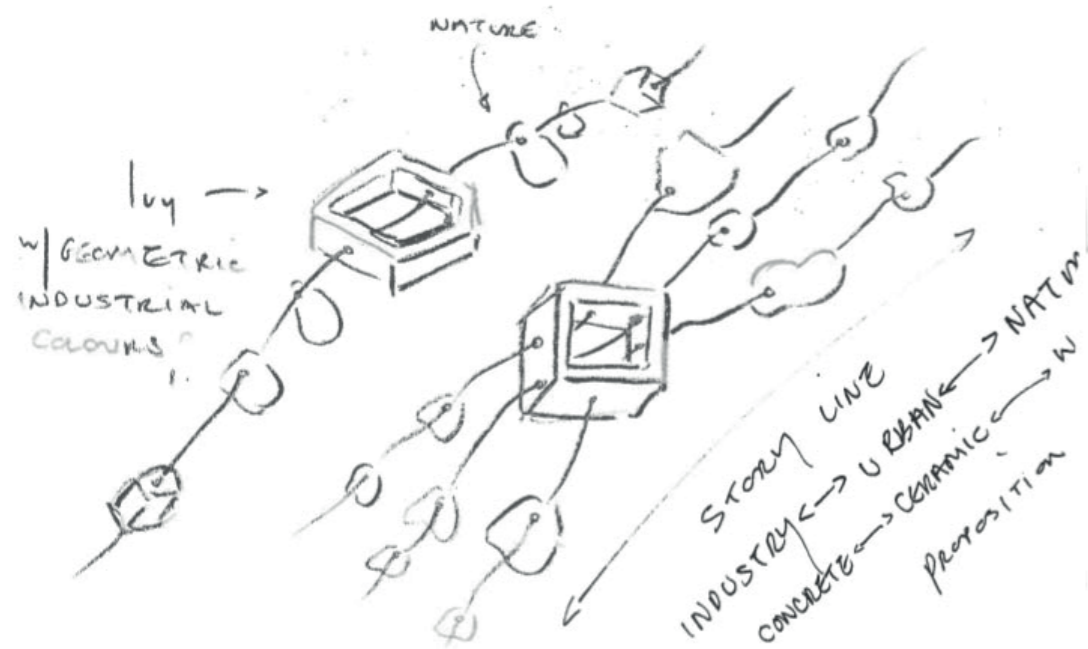






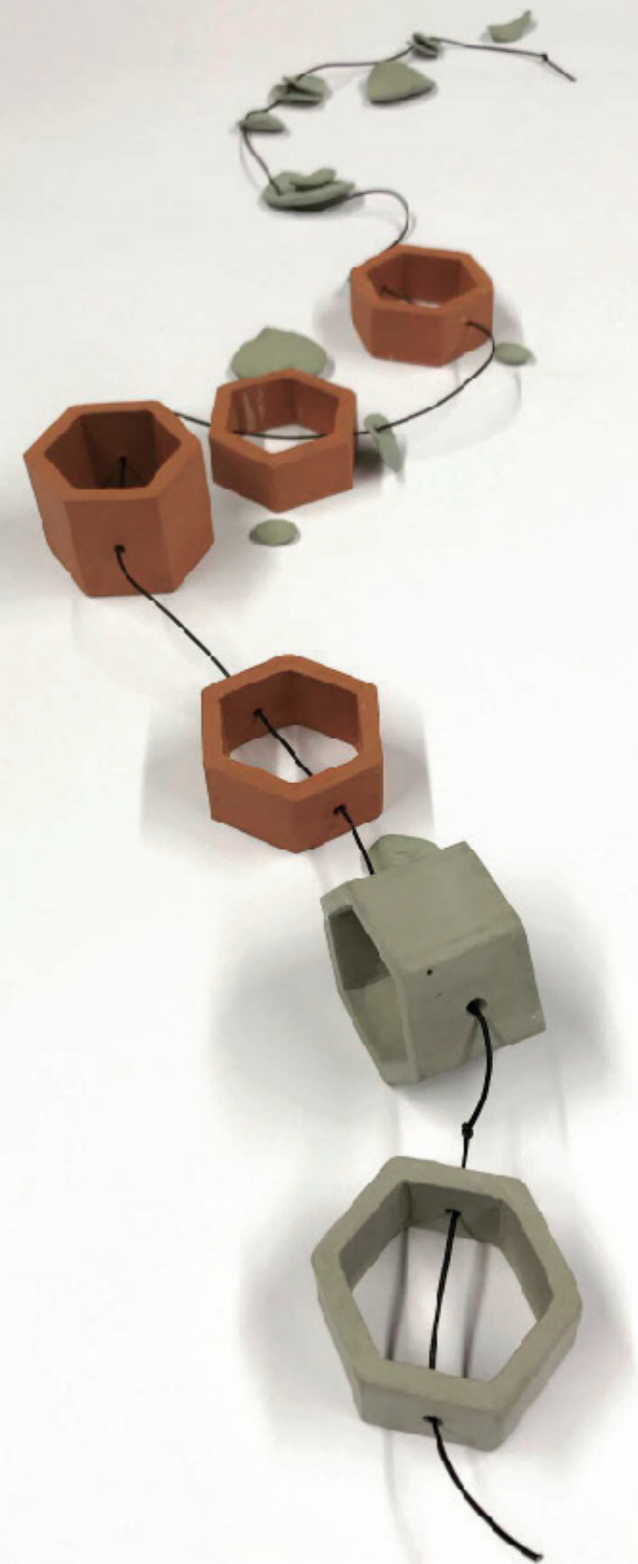
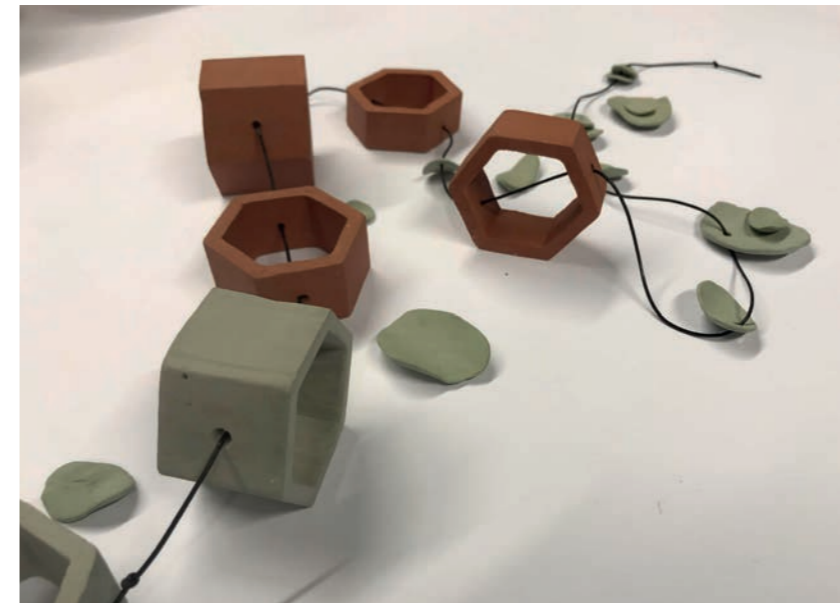
## Landscape Chain

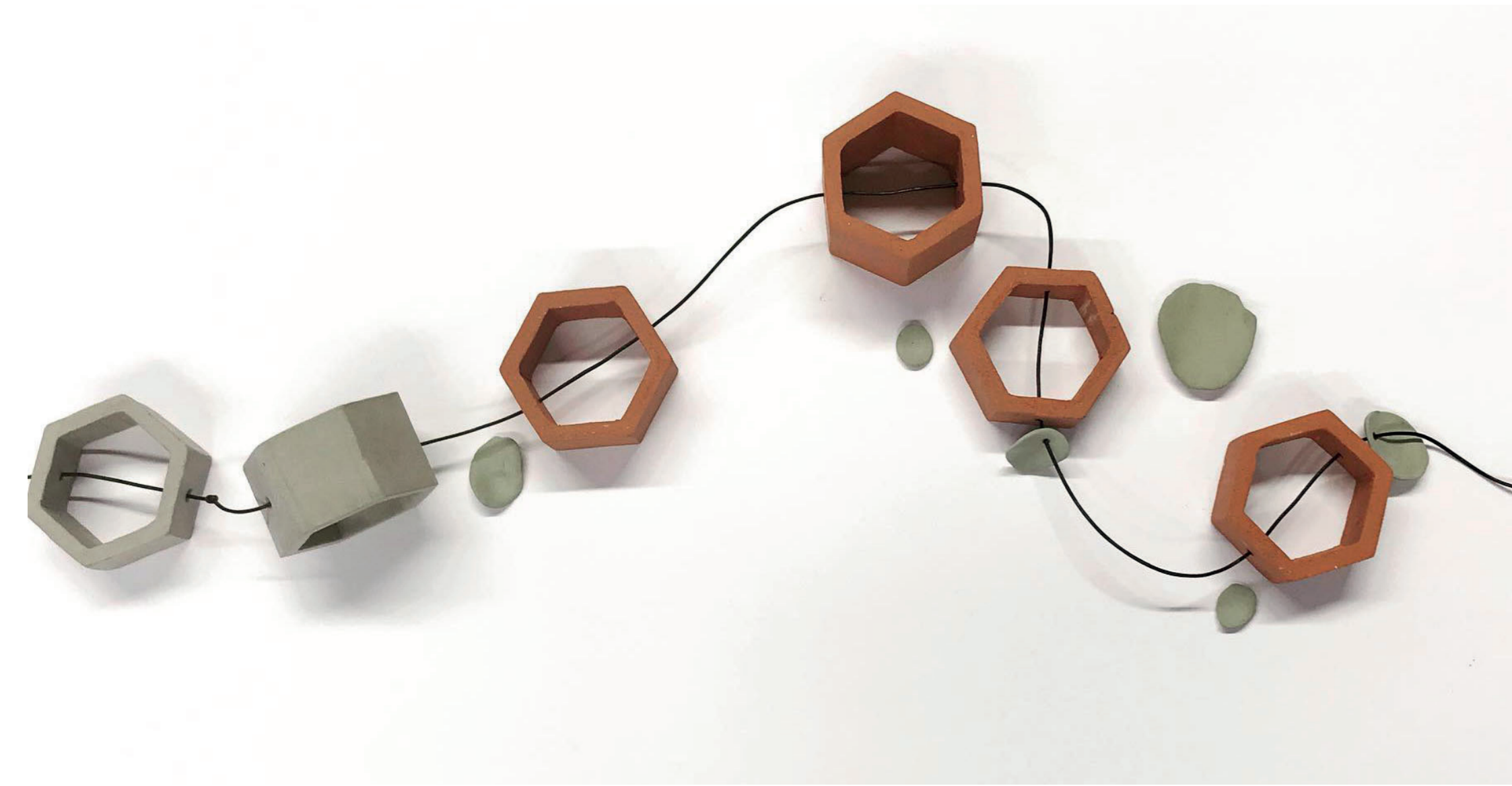
An idea of using a chain as a form to portray the different landscapes of Croydon initially was inspired by an Ivy branch, I thought the idea of a chain could effectively communicate this idea of traveling through a place and bring each different landscape together into one piece, existing harmoniously.

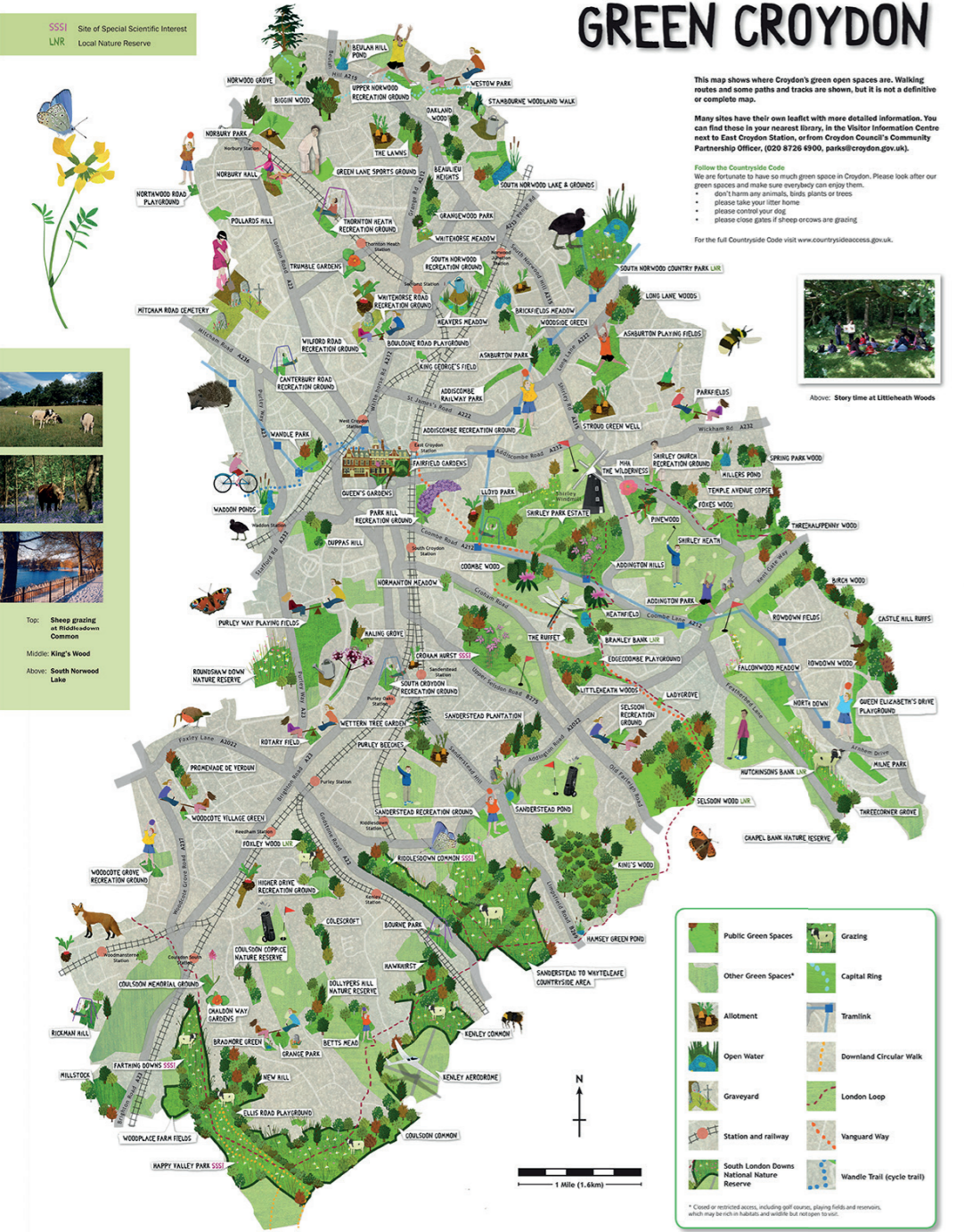


## Landscape chain

This chain outcome was initially inspired by the form of an ivy vine traveling, I want to use that as a visual representation of a storyline or map to show the contrasting landscapes of my home. The grey clay hexagons representing industrial areas, the terracotta representing urban landscapes in the centre of Croydon and then the green clay petal forms showing the nature which begins to trickle down into the urban and industrial parts.







## Stigma of Croydon Croydon, green?

As a place, Croydon has a bad reputation which mainly links to its poor crime statistics and its physical appearance which has been described as a 'concrete mess'. Because of this stigma Croydon has people often don't associate nature to it; despite this Croydon does have more green space than you'd expected, there's more than I even knew about and I live there!

Yarrow wildflower found on Mitcham Common



To develop some of the natural forms I wanted to look at the forms of wildflowers which I identified on the common. For this concept I picked the yarrow flower, a British native wildflower whose centre is made up of several carpel. I wanted to create a set of organic shaped vessels that sit together, each vessel has curved walls that compliment one another when sat together.

# Colours of croydon



To contrast the natural forms I wanted to take colours found around Croydon's urban landscape and use them in coloured slips on the surface of these thrown forms.

Photos taken on a walk around Croydon, searching for colours.



## Project statement

'This project explores contrasting industrial, urban and natural landscapes in London. How can craft be used to celebrate nature and encourage Londoners to interact and care for it?

My project starts at home in Croydon, where I grew up in-between an industrial estate and a woodlands.'

## Reflection

Having tried two different routes, one being the vessels and the other being the chain, I feel like the chain has a lot more potential at being an exciting way of exploring and expressing this idea of environmental identity and urban landscapes. I want to push forward exploring and developing these forms, bringing in more of Croydon's character and history. Through my initial research my project has developed from just looking at green spaces in London to looking more specifically at Croydon, and not only its green spaces but all aspects of its landscapes. My project, at this point, focuses on creating forms that show the towns landscapes living in harmony with one another in order to celebrate its environmental identity. I want to now go deeper researching into Croydon's architectural history along with its natural history, going on journeys both around the urban town centre and into the green spaces that are integrated throughout, developing photographic research and drawings to then explore through my studio work.

## Urban // Croydon

To deepen my research into my local area I began to look in depth at the urban side of Croydon, now that the concept had evolved from focusing just on the natural areas to the town as a whole. To begin with I researched into the history of Croydon's architecture and then took multiple journeys through the town centre to identify where beauty, character and the towns history could be found visually, I then documented these findings through photography and analogue and digital drawings. As the urban environment is our most familiar point of contact with our local area, I wanted it to be a key part of my work and use it to contrast and highlight elements of nature I bring into my work.



# Edge City: Croydon



A National Trust celebration of post war politics, place-making and pride.

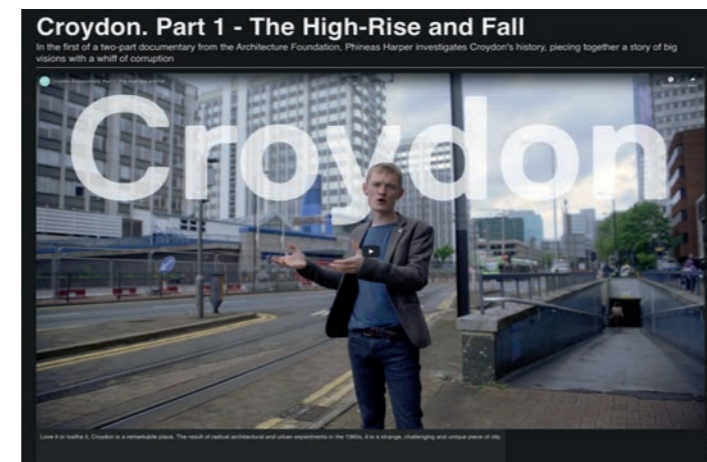
In July 2016, National Trust London explored the contemporary heritage of Croydon and cast a spotlight on the borough as one of the most important examples of the post-war ambition to build a new society. Following hot on the heels of openings of the Balfron Tower and Southbank Centre, the project's aim was to change the perception of heritage from simply country houses and coastlines, and celebrates the real places in which people live, work and play.

Often referred to as an 'Edge City' – a city-sized development on the outskirts of a city – this project is a riposte to Croydon's 'Crap Town' reputation. Everywhere has its own unique spirit of place, and many Croydonians feel tremendous pride for their town. As it begins another wave of regeneration, the National Trust is seeking to spark a debate about what is special and cherished about suburban places like Croydon, which are as awash with heritage, green space and beauty as anywhere else.

Places like Croydon are the ordinary places in which people live, work, and play. The National Trust wants to reveal how they came about, explore how they took their current form, discover what people love about those places, and establish how we can maintain and develop them for future generations.

## Research into Croydon's urban landscape

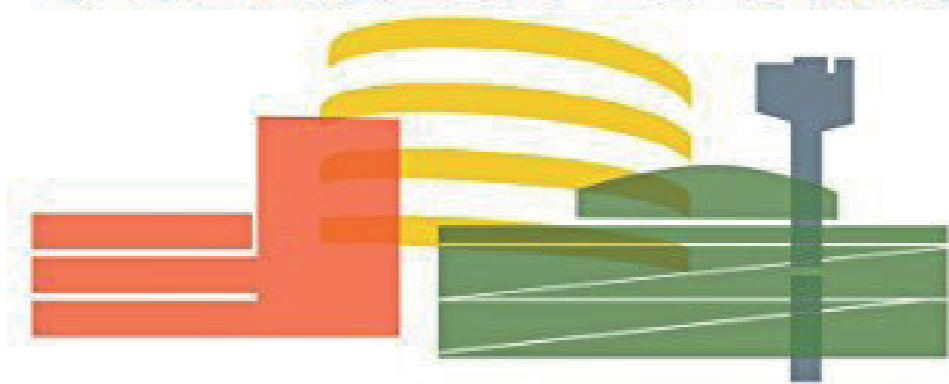
This article from the national trust about a project they ran called 'Edge City' in 2017 really reflected similar themes that I was trying to achieve and explore through my own work. It spoke of how they wanted to highlight places like Croydon, a real place that people live and work, an ordinary place branded as a 'Crap Town', but instead of highlighting what may be wrong with the town celebrating its heritage, unique character and the green spaces among it. These ideas re-framed and verbalised a bit of what my work aims to explore.



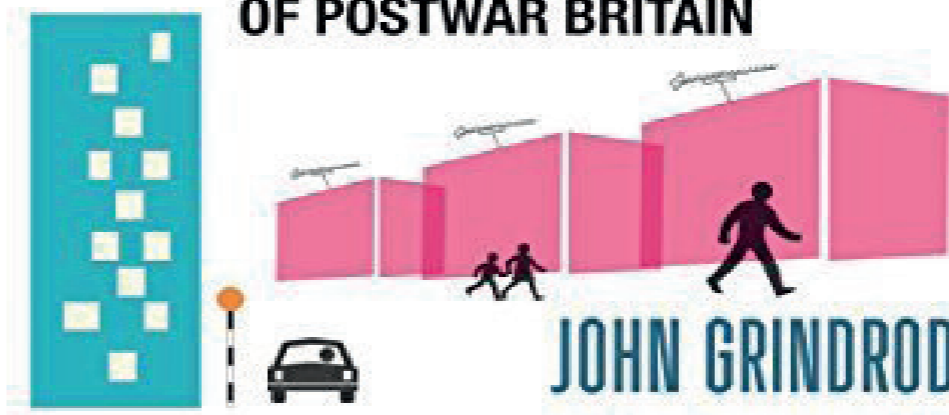
'Timely and pertinent . . .  
delightful and perceptive'  
SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

'Wonderful . . . a new way  
of looking at modern Britain'  
INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

# CONCRETOPIA



A JOURNEY AROUND THE REBUILDING  
OF POSTWAR BRITAIN

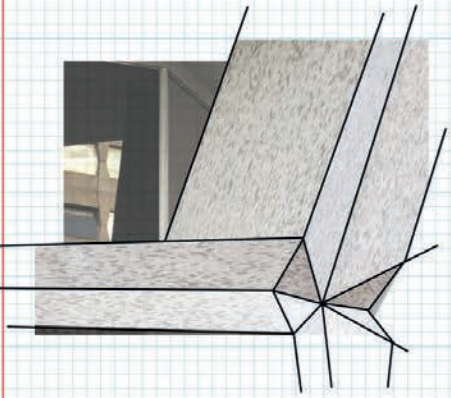


## Reading: Concretopia

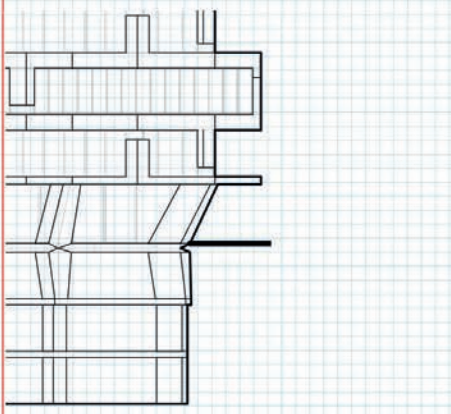
John Grindrod explores postwar Britain and the towns that saw huge architectural change come about at the time, with the creation of thousands of prefabricated homes and estates, and challenged the consequential 'crap town' stereotypes places like Croydon were burdened with due to this rapid rebuild. Concretopia also explores the history of Postwar architecture throughout Britain whilst also questioning the negative narrative these towns and cities are labelled with. This was a really interesting read regarding my project as it gave me insight into what made Croydon what it is.



The building consists of 22 repeated floorplates in the shape of a square with chamfered corners, with the top floor being a symmetrical octagonal, making it a 23-storey building. As the building goes up, each floor offsets by 45 degrees, creating a sense of cylindrical twisting. The building is raised out from a very rustic brutalist concrete base, giving a very contrast view against the very smooth mosaic tiles. Perhaps, it's Seifert's intention to make the building stand out more.



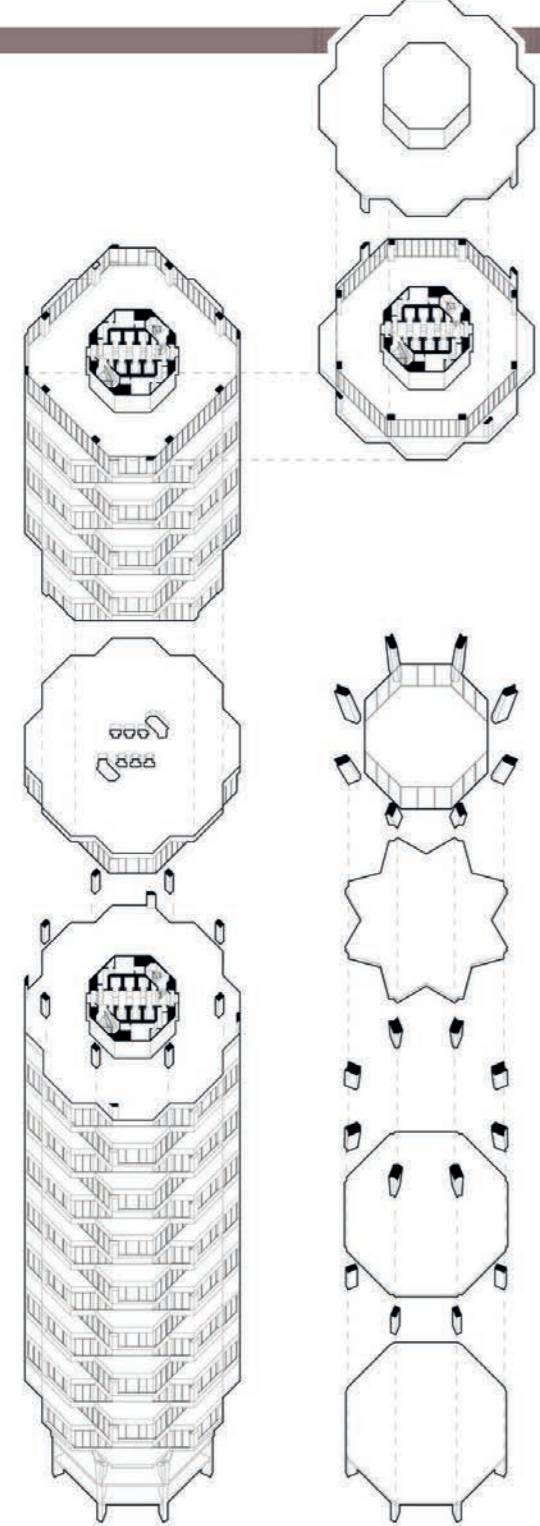
Again, the whole building has a finished look of white mosaic tiles on it's outside, giving a very bulky, yet archaic look. The tower is supported by jazzily-angled pillars, projecting outwards from the ground floor.



Drawing 1 (left):  
 - Building's supporting columns elevating section relating to the ground floor

Drawing 2 (middle):  
 - Exploded axonometric view of full building  
 - Typical floor plan (exploded axonometric)  
 - Top floor plan (exploded axonometric)

Drawing 3 (right):  
 - Exploded axonometric of three basement floors  
 - Each floor plan shown  
 - Exploded columns



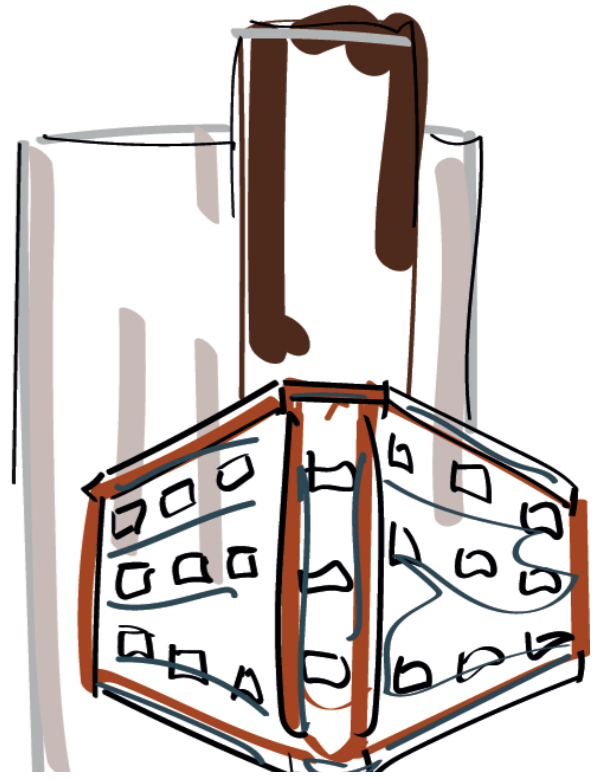
## No.1 Croydon

No.1 Croydon stands 24 storeys high just outside of East Croydon train station. The building is constructed of 22 square shapes floor-plates with chamfered corners, giving the impression of an octagon. Each shape is offset at 45 degrees to the plate below which gives it its twisting, kinetic shape. The building was designed by Richard Seifert and built in 1970.

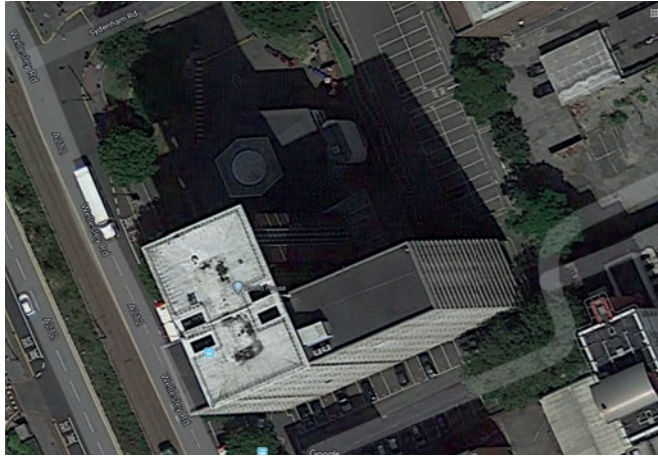


## Apollo and Lunar House

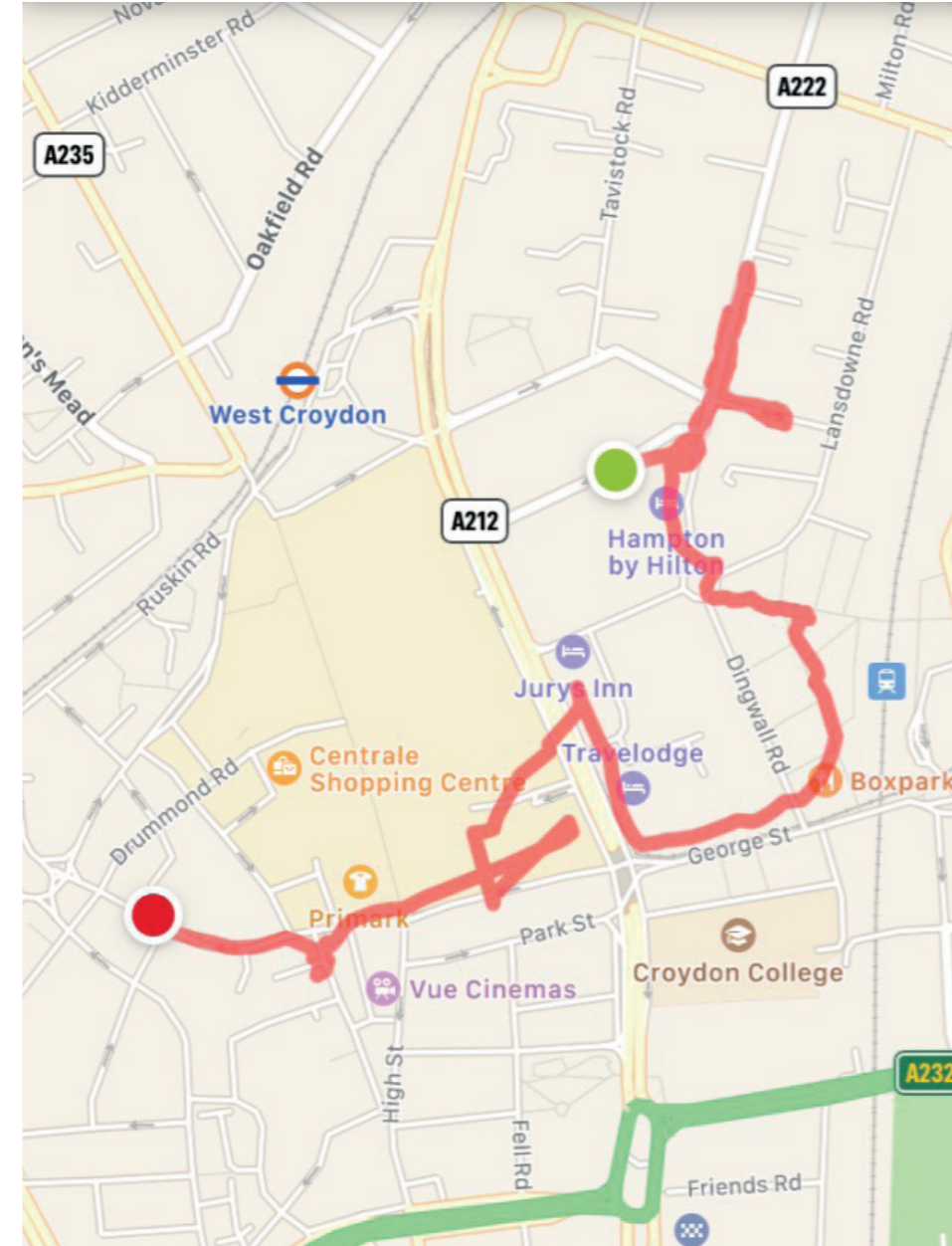
Built in 1967 and 1970 and designed by Denis Crump and Partners, these two neighbouring buildings are highly inspired by the Space Race at the time, particular the Apollo Lunar Module which landed on the moon and went on to inspire the hexagonal pods attached to both of these buildings and the wing details on their roof.



## Shapes and forms in Croydon's urban landscape



I wanted to explore Croydon from a bird's eye view to see what non-square shapes I could find, starting with the two hexagon pod attached to Apollo and Lunar House.



## Exploring the Cronx Walk 1

I went on walks around the town centre in order to generate inspiration for forms, colours, texture and a general feel to my work. I had no set route in these walks, I tried starting off at a point that I was familiar with and then wandering around town down pathways and roads I would not normally go down, tracking the walk using a GPS app and through photography. This helped me gain a different perspective of Croydon, the place I grew up in and thought I was so familiar with, yet by exploring routes I did not know I was able to see and appreciate the landscape and architecture from a new perspective.







Reflecting textures from the streets of Croydon on geometric forms



Initial tests using coloured crank clay and a concrete texture sprig mould plus road surface marking inspired slip experiments on terracotta.

## Process: colour

To achieve fuller colours I wanted to use coloured clay as opposed to glazes.. I've experimented a little with this process in previous projects and wanted to continue developing it throughout my current work. To do this the chosen clay is cut into tiny pieces to then be dried out, then once bone-dry stains and oxides can be added to the clay at any percentage from 0.1-15%. This allows for endless colour combinations, allowing me to achieve variation in tones of chosen colours dependant on the clay I use and the percentage of stains.



## Welcome to LDN

In November Adidas partnered up with Creative Debuts to host an exhibition dedicated to celebrating London through the work of several emerging artists in the capital, whose work is rooted in exploring London's culture, landscape and people.

Audrey Krako is an East London based photographer who's work focuses on capturing places and moments that may go unseen by by-passers in their everyday life. She focuses on colour as a way of portraying beauty in scenes on the streets of London. In the exhibition zine she says

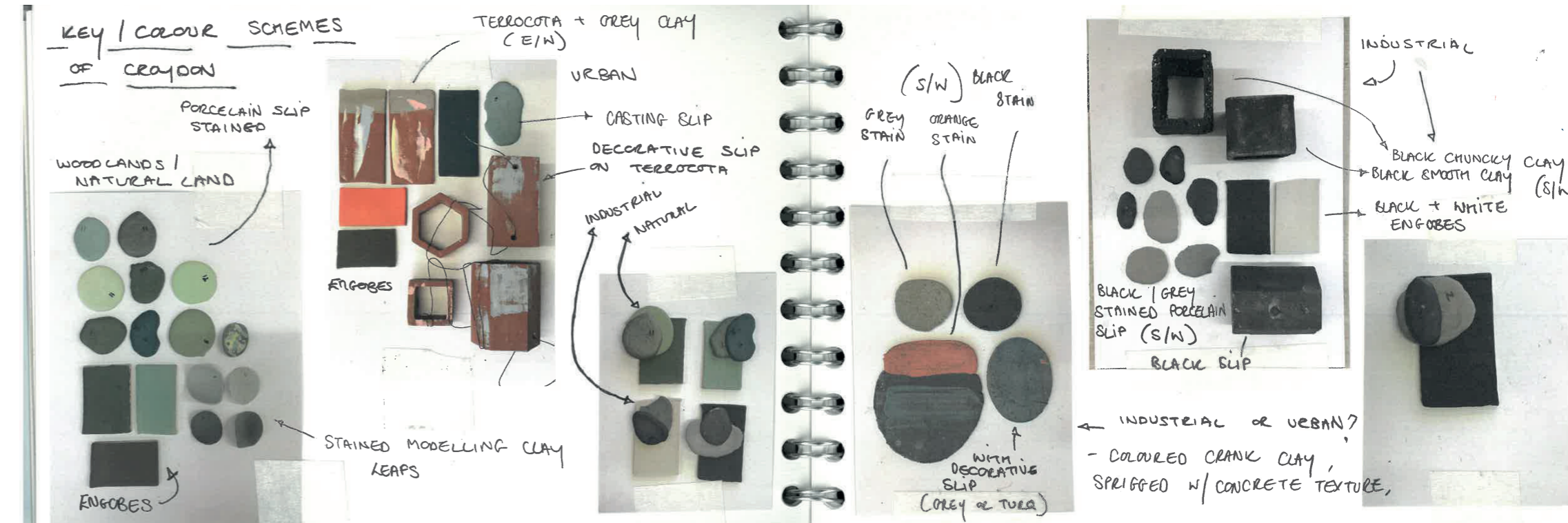
'I think it's easy to get caught up in the fast paced lifestyle and everyday routines living in London. I feel like after a while you stop noticing and appreciating your surroundings but it is very much there. You just have to stop and look up to see just how amazing it is'

This idea of becoming aware of the environment that exists around you that we've often become so desensitised to because of its familiarity is something I wanted to bring into my own work, striving to seek out a new perspective of my own local environment and translate that into my work.



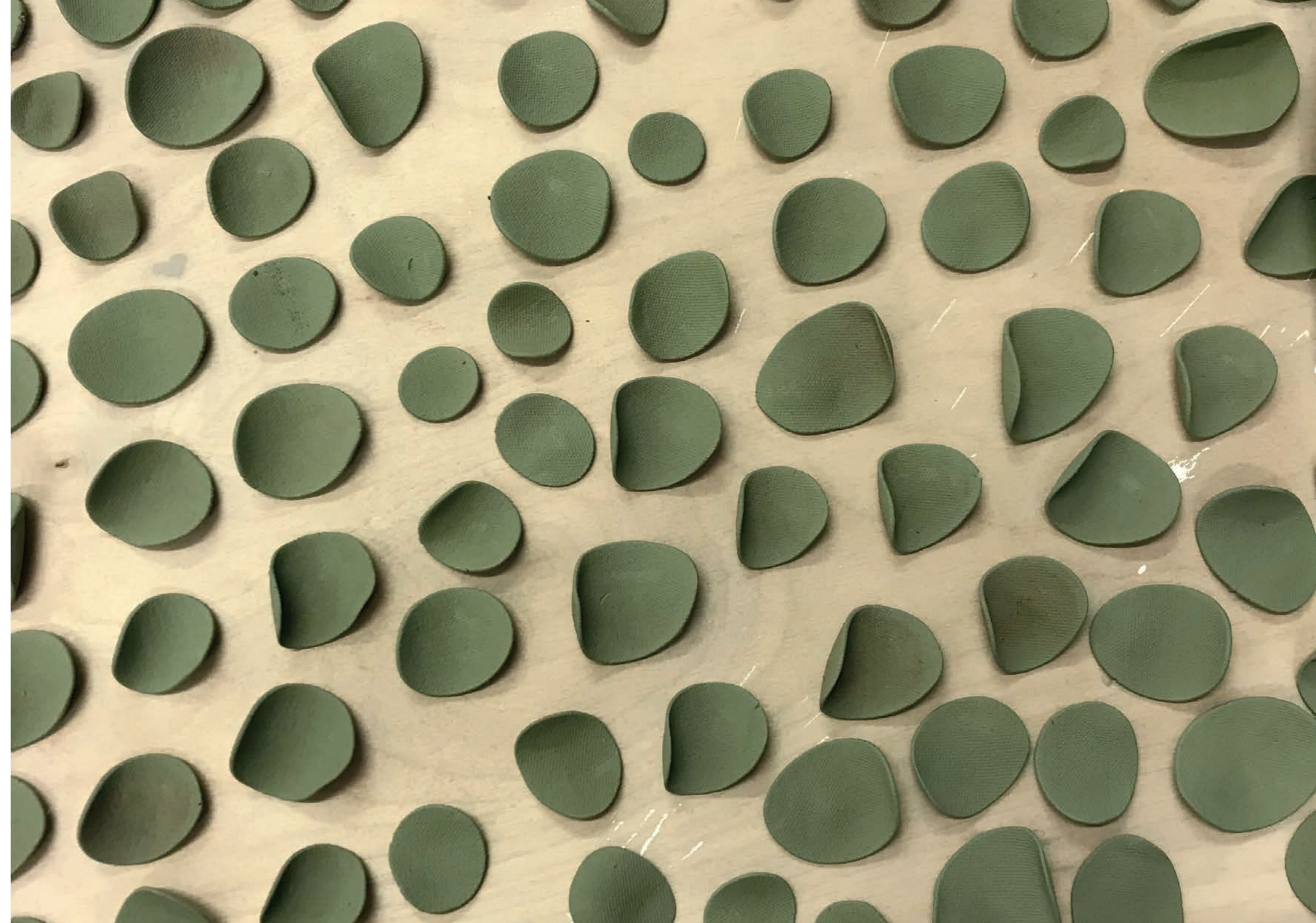
## Developing a key

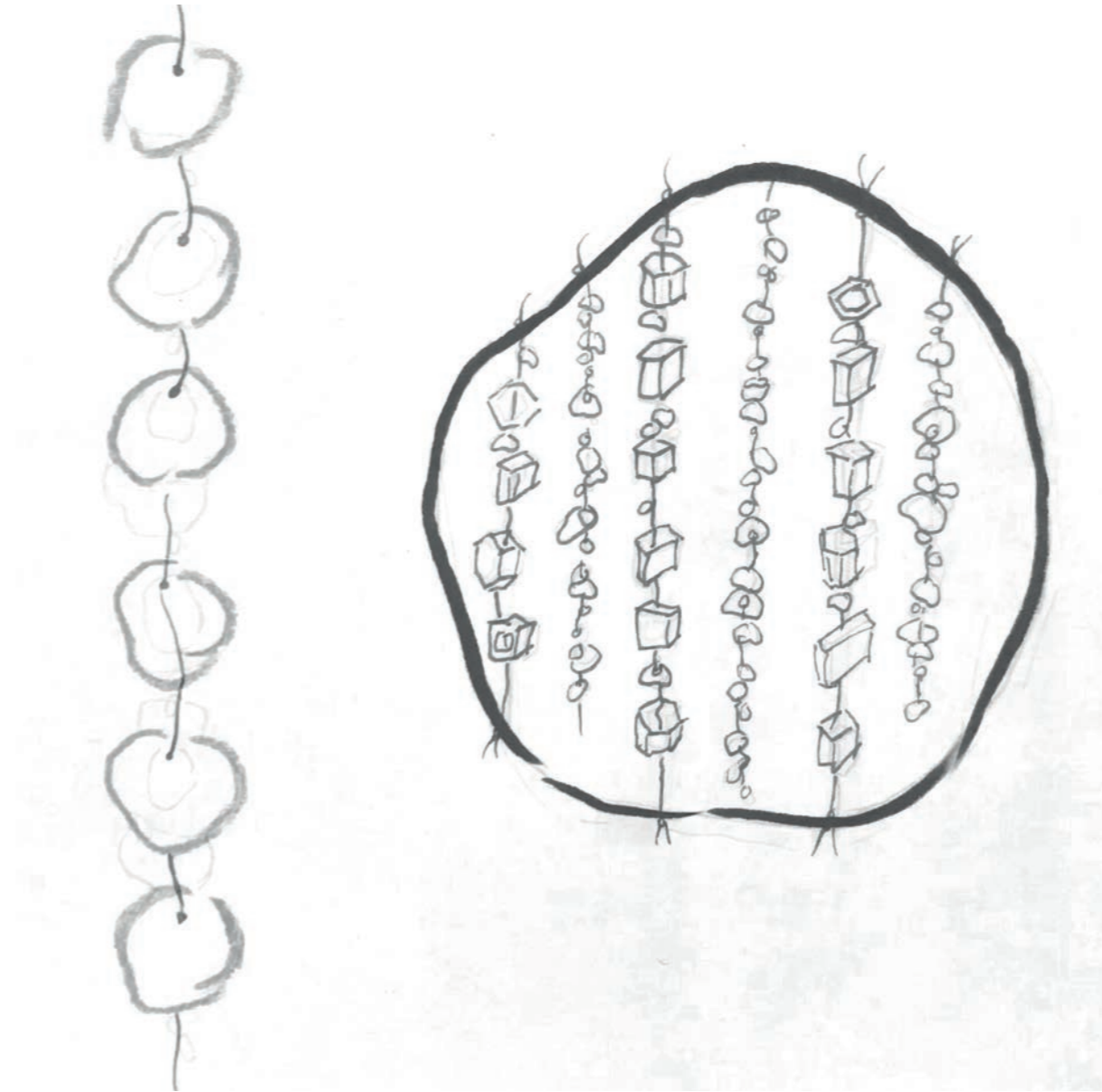
Through the technique of colouring clay and using sprig moulds I began to develop a key of my local area, separating each of the three landscapes (natural, industrial and urban) through colour, textures and shapes. This helped me develop the visual language of my work more to then move forward to translating this onto forms.



# Local flora

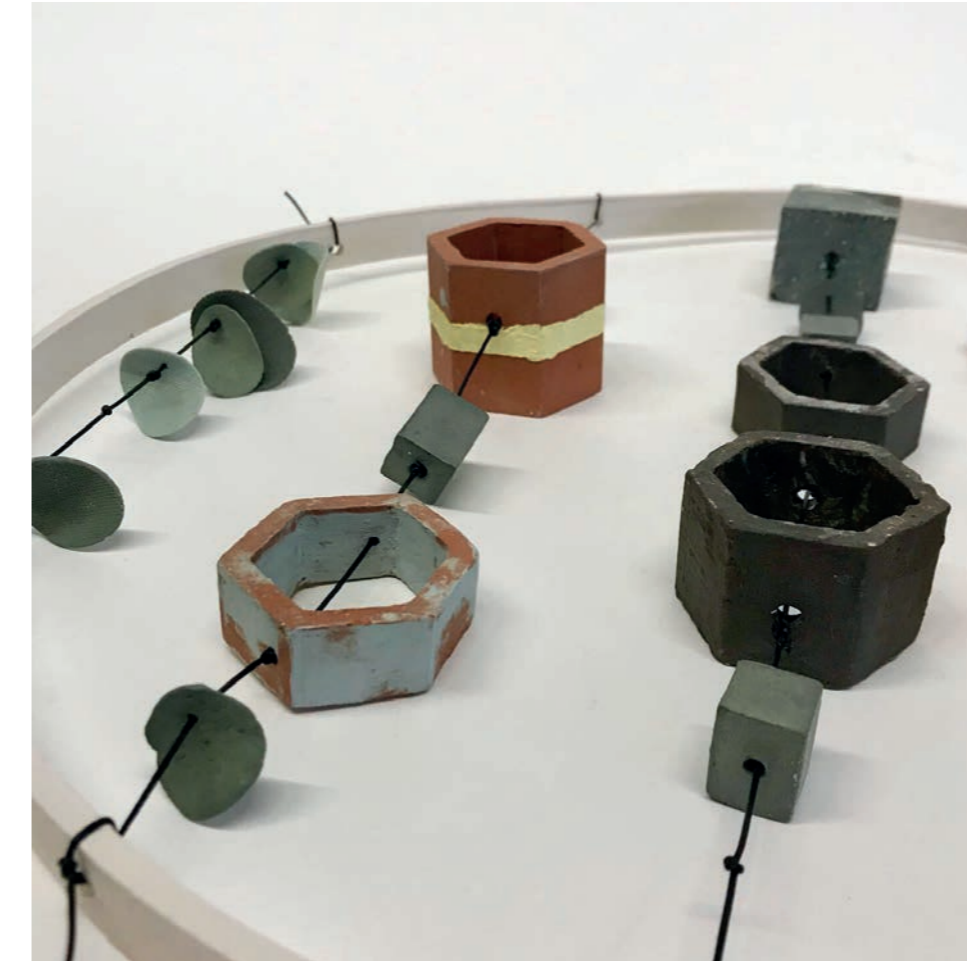
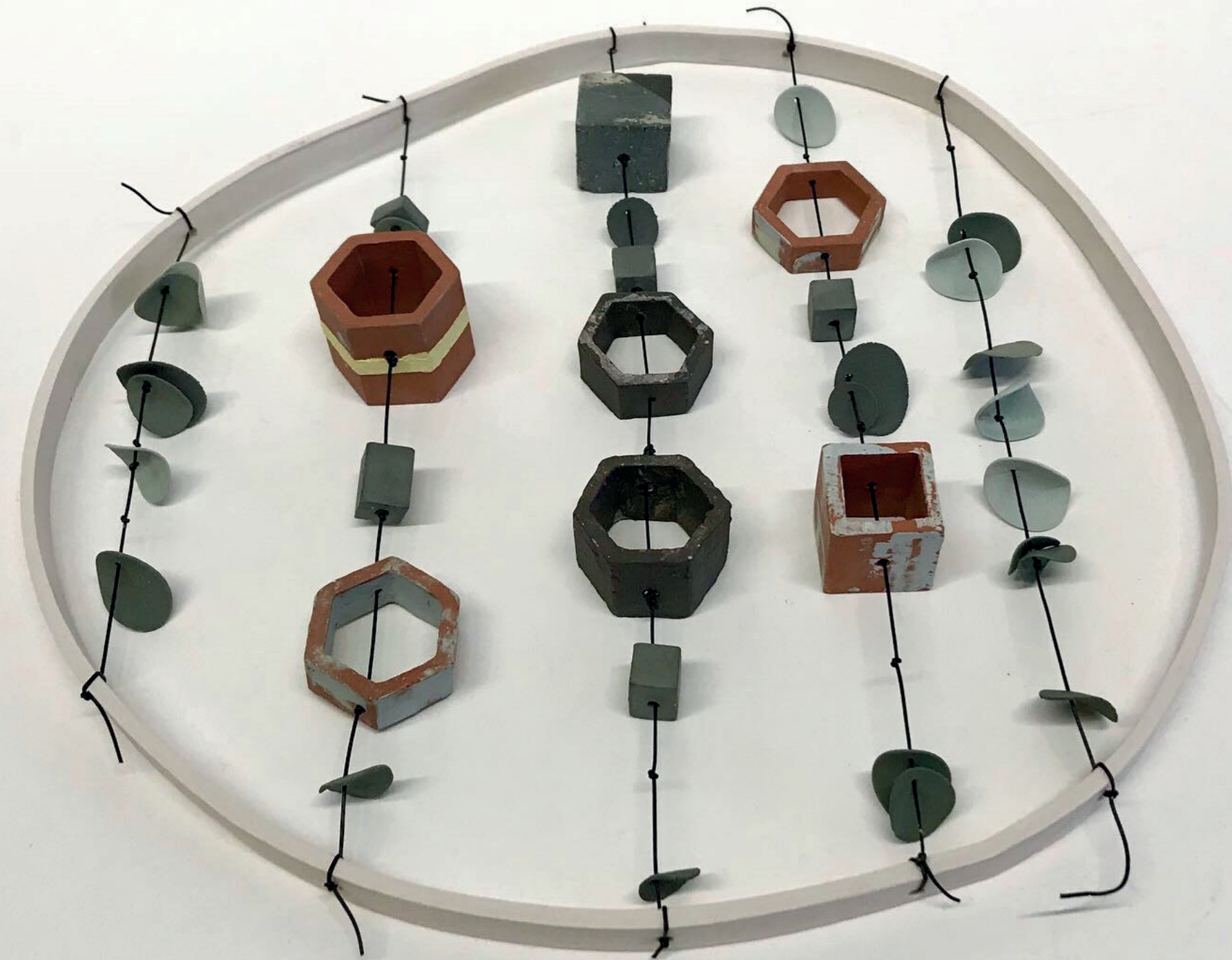
Looking to plants I crossed on my street, particularly these suckers growing from the base of a Balsam Poplar tree, I began to explore forms of petals and leaves using paper and coloured clay, making multiples of these small elements lead me to think about using several components to make larger scale work, like the individual leaves making up a plant.





Following the theme of landscape throughout my work, I wanted to explore mapping to create an outcome that utilised the key of different forms, colours and textures relating to each of the three landscapes: urban, industrial and natural. The idea of a ring that connected all the forms together into a wall hanging/mobile piece came about, utilising different forms in different sections of the mobile to reflect where each landscape is in relation to my local area.





## Mapping Mobile experiment

This piece reflects the key which I created while exploring my hometown, the black clay geometric forms at the centre of the piece symbolise the large industrial core of my local area, then spilling out from this comes the suburban surrounds, our neighbourhoods and town centre represented in terracotta and decorative slip inspired by street markings. On the outer edges are the petals forms, representing natural land that often on the edges of towns but often trickles into our urban spaces too, shown in the few petals present on the urban lines.

## A poem by Sydney Taylor-Smith

London. That's the place

Home

Croydon is home

Between grass

Between brick

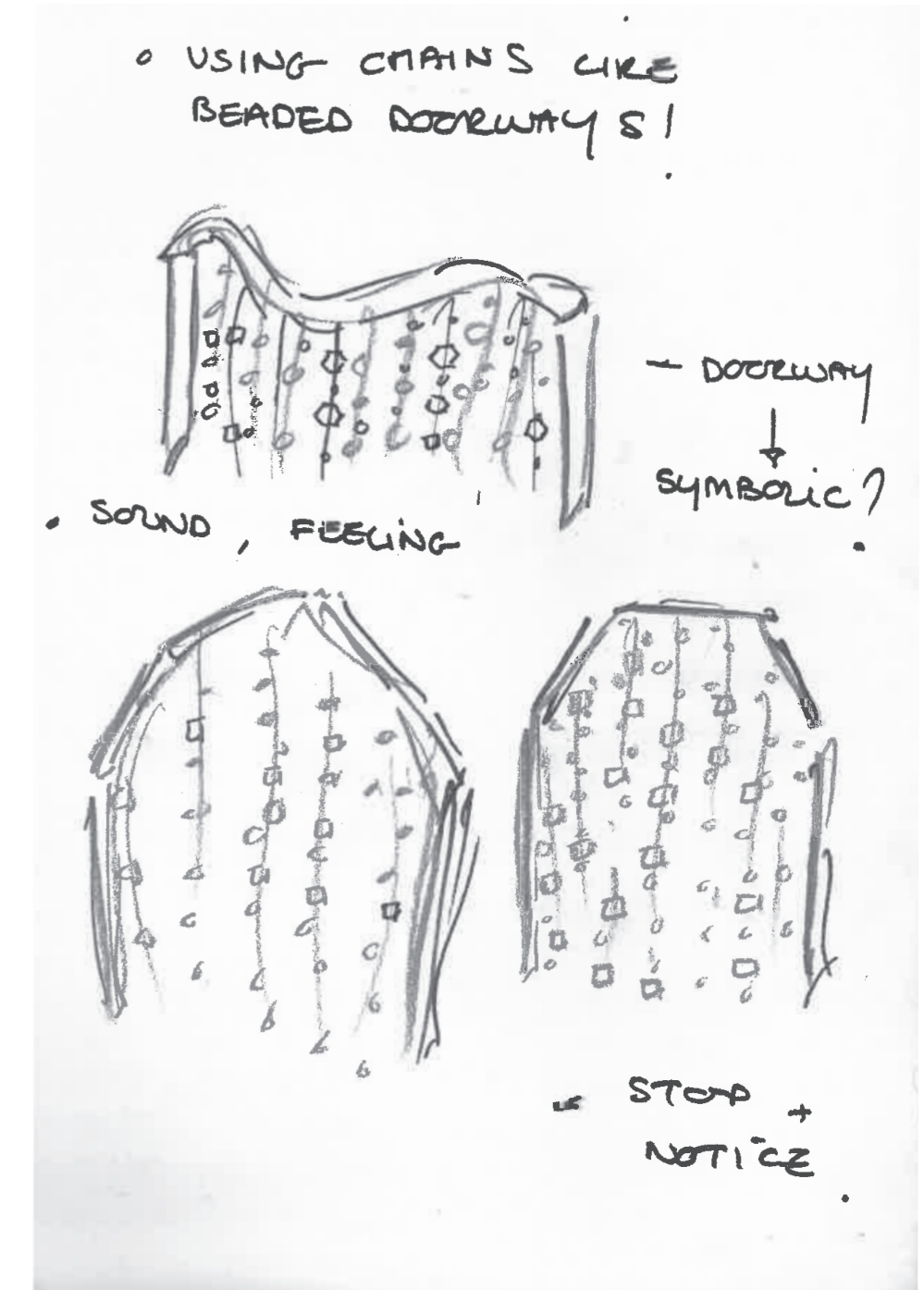
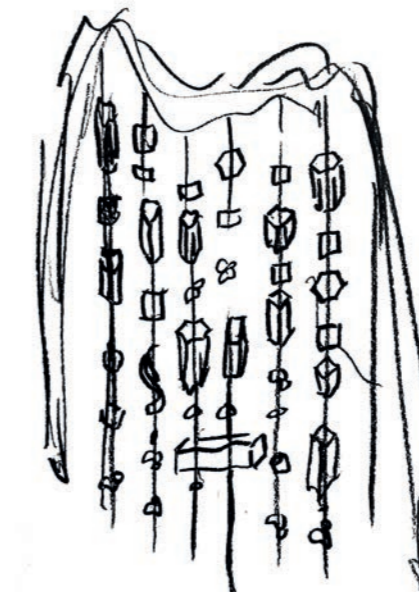
Croydon is home

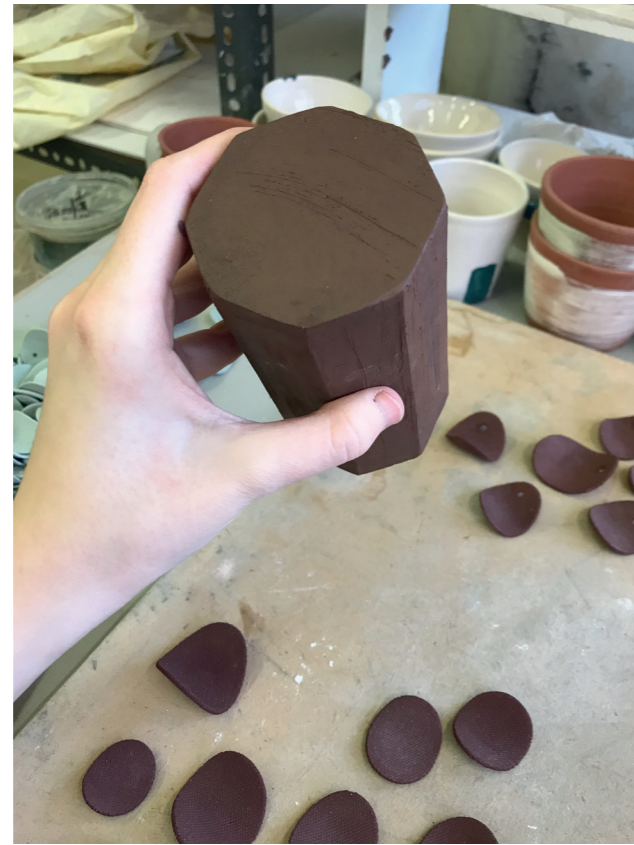
Let's celebrate



## New beginnings, new perspective

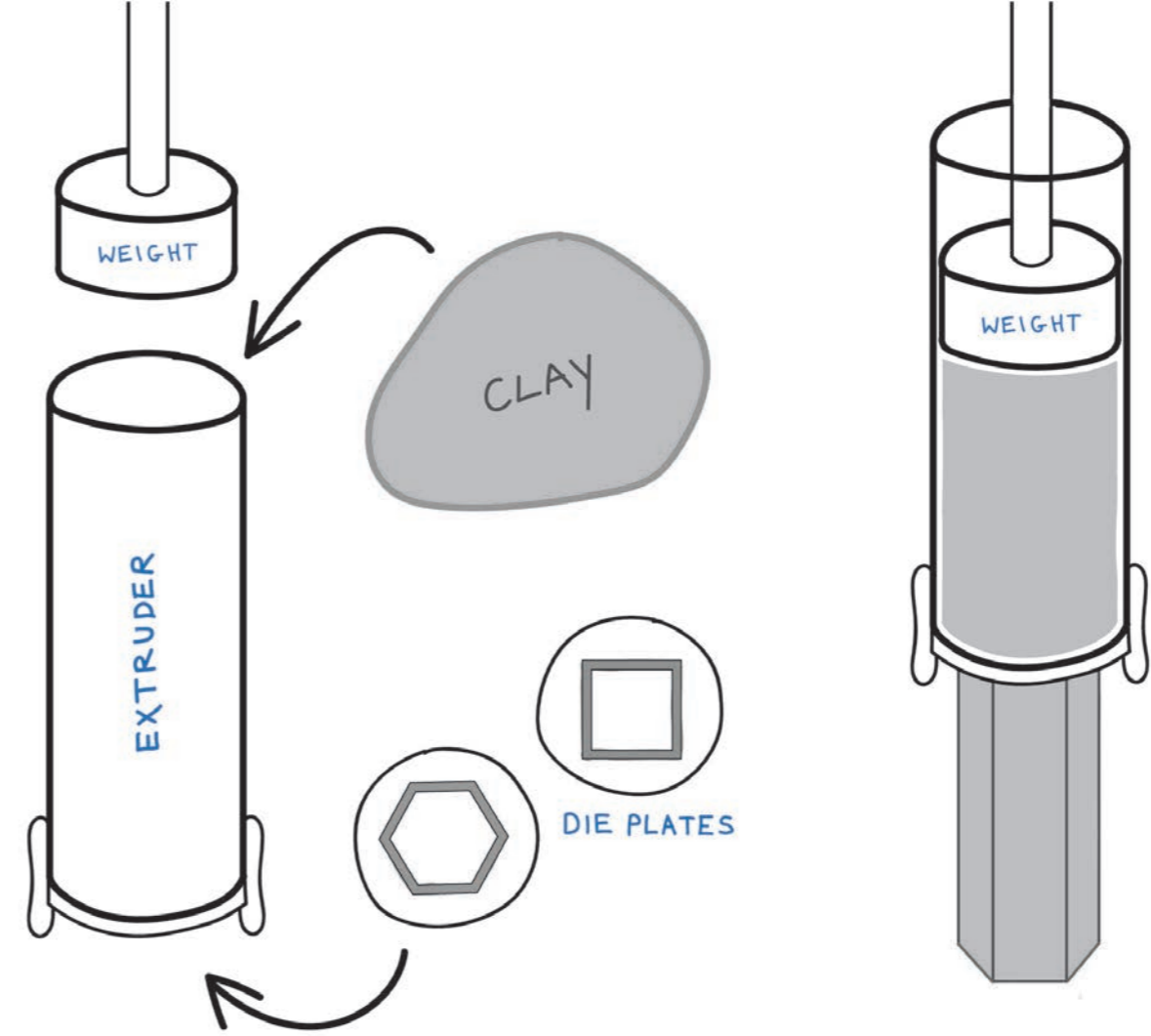
Following on from the small mobile experiment, I began to think about taking these stringed together elements onto new forms and a larger scale. Starting with imagery of a archway, symbolising a a new beginning or gateway to change. As the context leading my work has changed towards investigating the environmental identity a place carries, in particular looking at how negative perceptions can lead to beauty within our daily lives and surrounds going unnoticed, I want the form of my work to adapt to this change. In this idea of an archway of ceramic beaded threads hanging across it the delicate nature of the ceramics forms would trigger the user to stop and notice the forms before continuing to walk through the archway, which encapsulates the idea of encouraging Londoners to celebrate their local landscape.





### Process: Mould making

To begin working on a larger scale with suspended individual forms I made a set of three moulds by sledging three different geometric forms that could be connected together after casting to make one whole form.



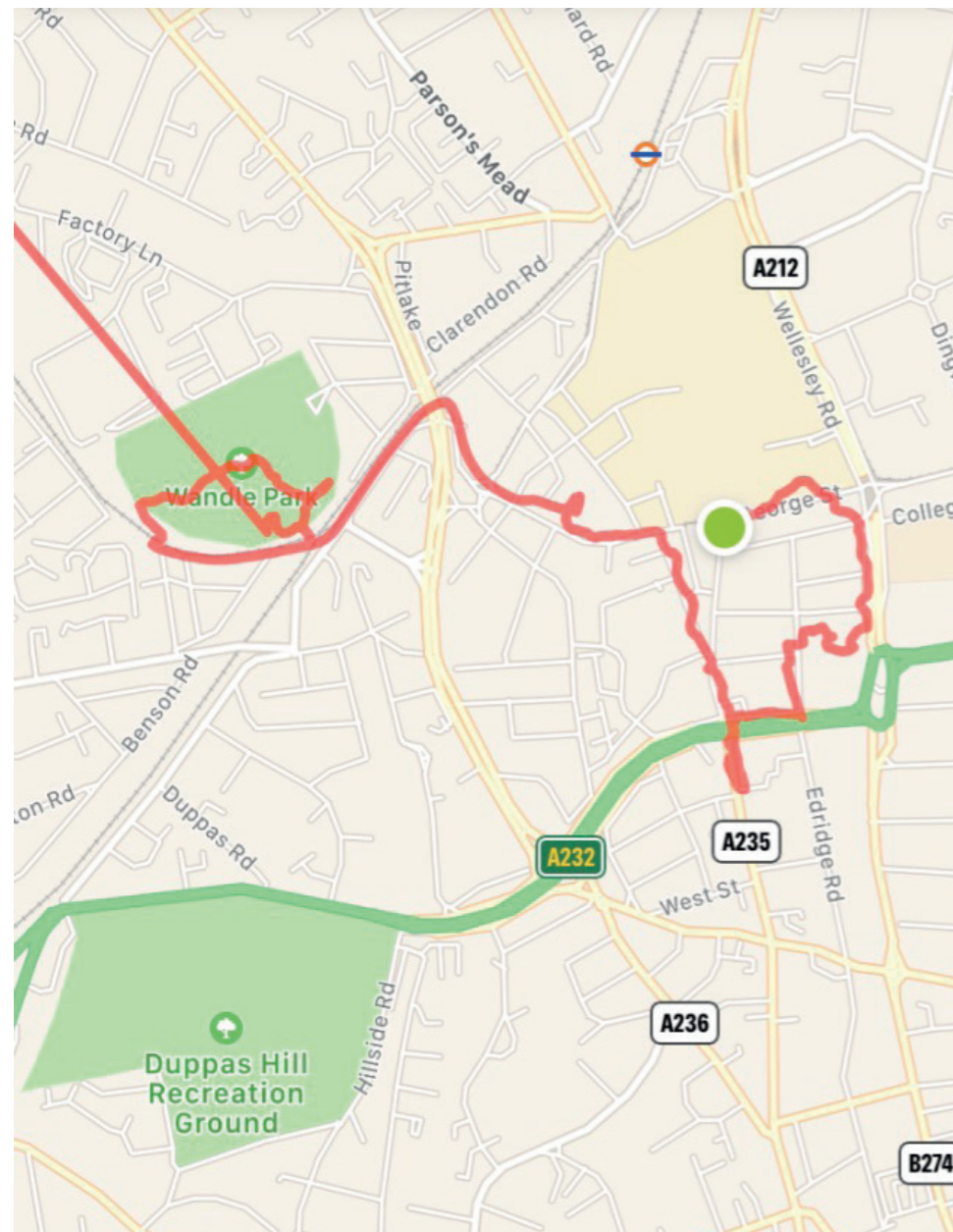
### Process: Extruding

Using the extruder to create much longer hexagonal and cubic shapes by increasing the amount of clay extruded in one round, smoothing each face of the pieces to create a slick form.



## Colourful Croydon

Often most of the colours I, and most people, related to urban/industrial areas are very monotone, thinking greys and browns. So on my second walk I went searching Croydon for specks of colour that stood out from the standard black and grey colour scheme you would expect of Croydon. I still searched for routes that I often wouldn't take around town, but also visited a few spots I was familiar with but may not had considered what beauty lays there before. This photo was taken on a bridge that the tram I have taken thousands of times goes under.









Wandle Park

## B&Q Research trip

In January we were asked to take a research trip...for mine I was band from going anywhere in Croydon unfortunately. So for my trip I went to B&Q, a place that sells construction materials in a very industrial feeling building but is also a garden centre, and tried to look at it as a microcosm of Croydon – a place that combines industry and nature in the same place. When I arrived at the outdoor gardening section the shelves were empty, the area in general felt very neglected in comparison to the well stocked industrial hardware section of the shop. To me this reflected how Croydon does have a lot of available natural spaces, but in general they are neglected and forgotten, overshadowed by the overwhelming urban feel of the town centre. In my drawings from this visit i chose to abstract and highlight the small bits of natural beauty I did find. Aiming to take something unseen and forgotten and create something new from it.



## Croydon guided tour

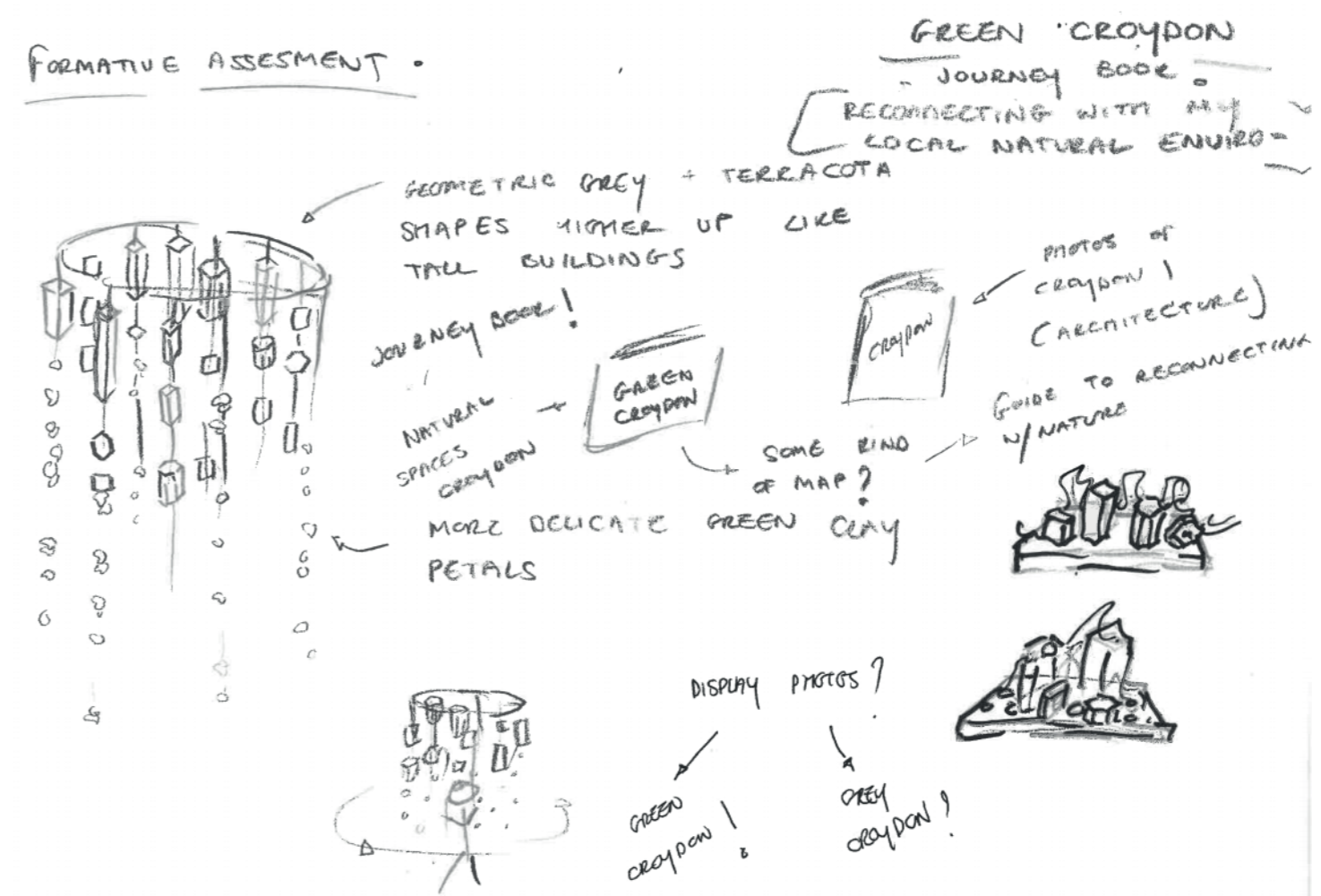
On February 13th I attended a walking tour of Croydon called Polaroids of Croydon lead by John Grindrod the author of Concretopia and Charles Hollands, an architect currently working on a large regeneration project surrounding the Fairfield halls in Croydon. The tour took us around well-known buildings in Croydon, highlighting the history that lays behind them. Grindrod spoke about architect Richard Seifert, who designed Corinthian House and No1 Croydon, and how he tried hard to not use the right angle in his forms aiming to move away from block buildings. Grindrod also spoke personally about how he felt Croydon was once frozen in time and now it seems like its transforming rapidly, reinventing itself time after time.





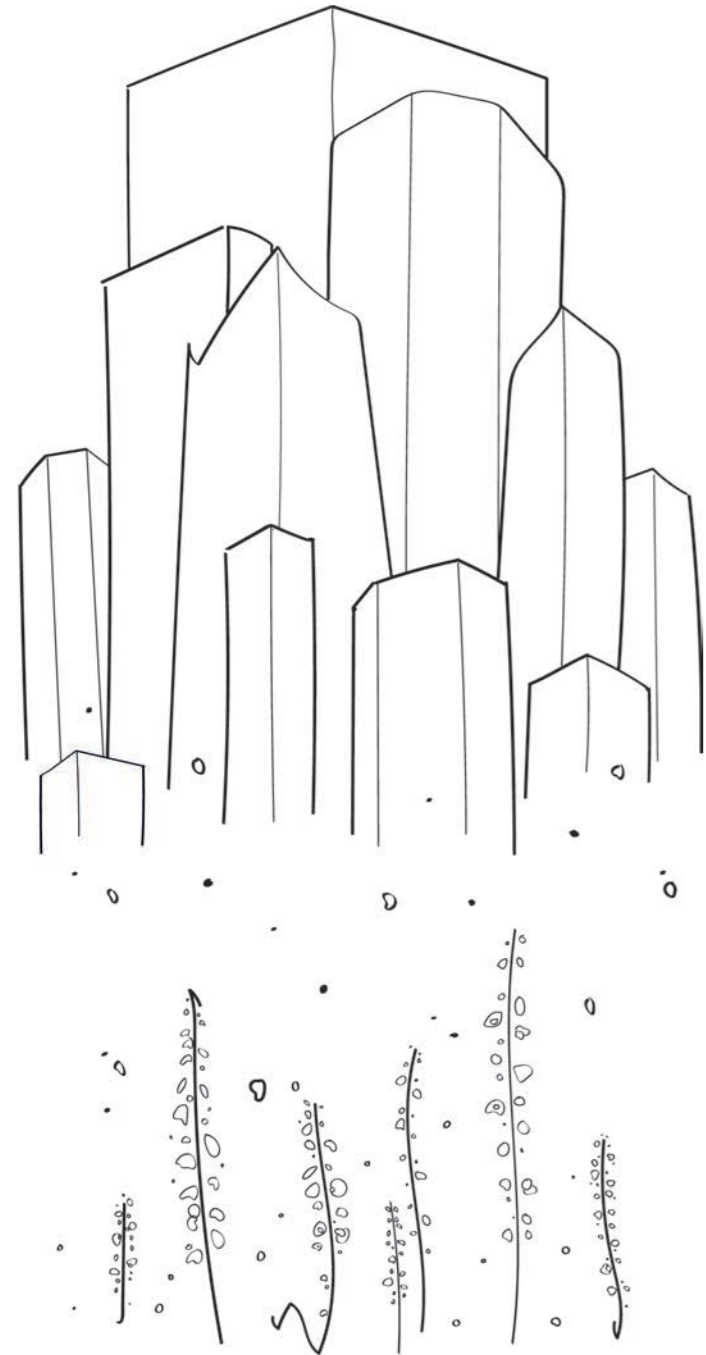
## Connecting with the community

An important part of this project for me was to personally reconnect with the nature that exists in Croydon and to begin to celebrate its beauty in my own life so I could then reflect that in my work. I reached out to The Friends of Mitcham Common and The Conservation Volunteer's group within Croydon. Through these connections I participated in a litter pick on Mitcham Common with a small group of other volunteers and also went Hazel Coppicing in King's Wood with The Conservation Volunteer's group where I was taught about the importance of biodiversity within the woodlands that the volunteers work helps. These experiences illuminated the importance of increasing community awareness and engagement with local green spaces.



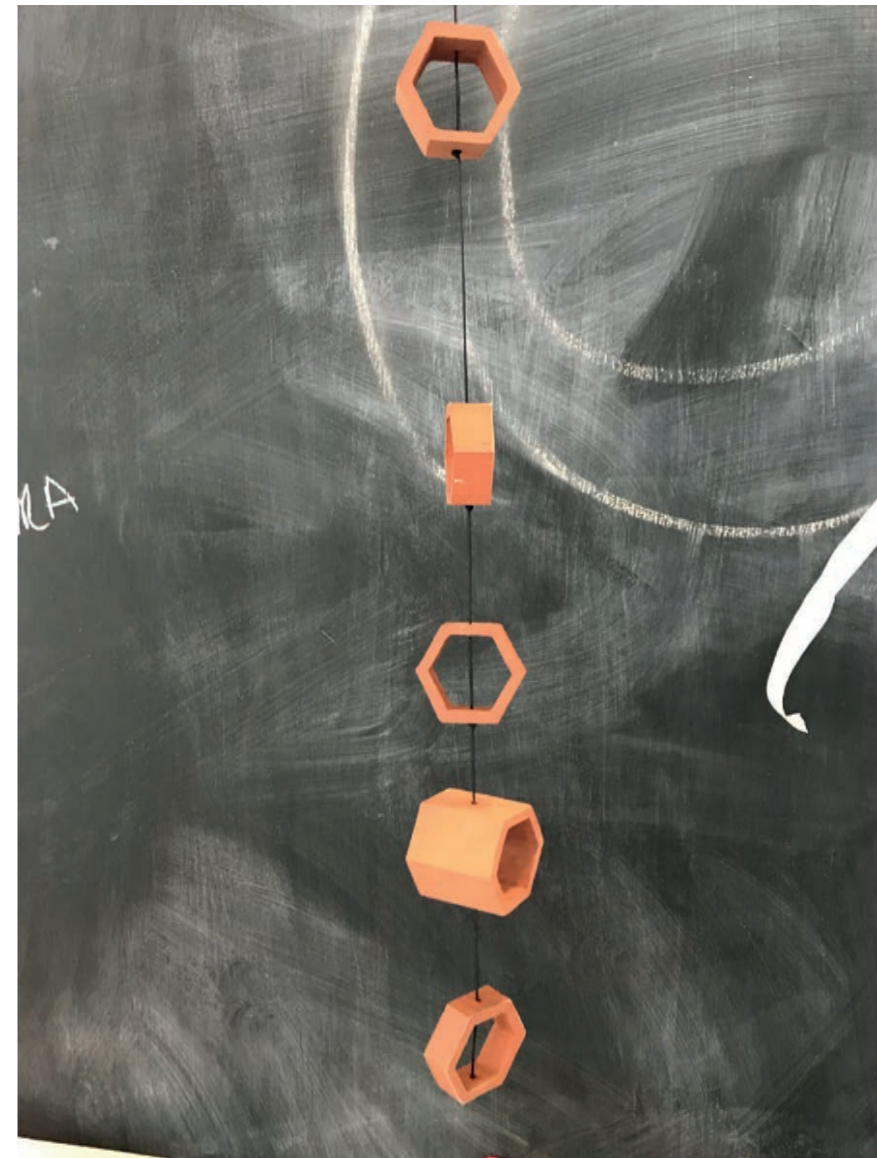
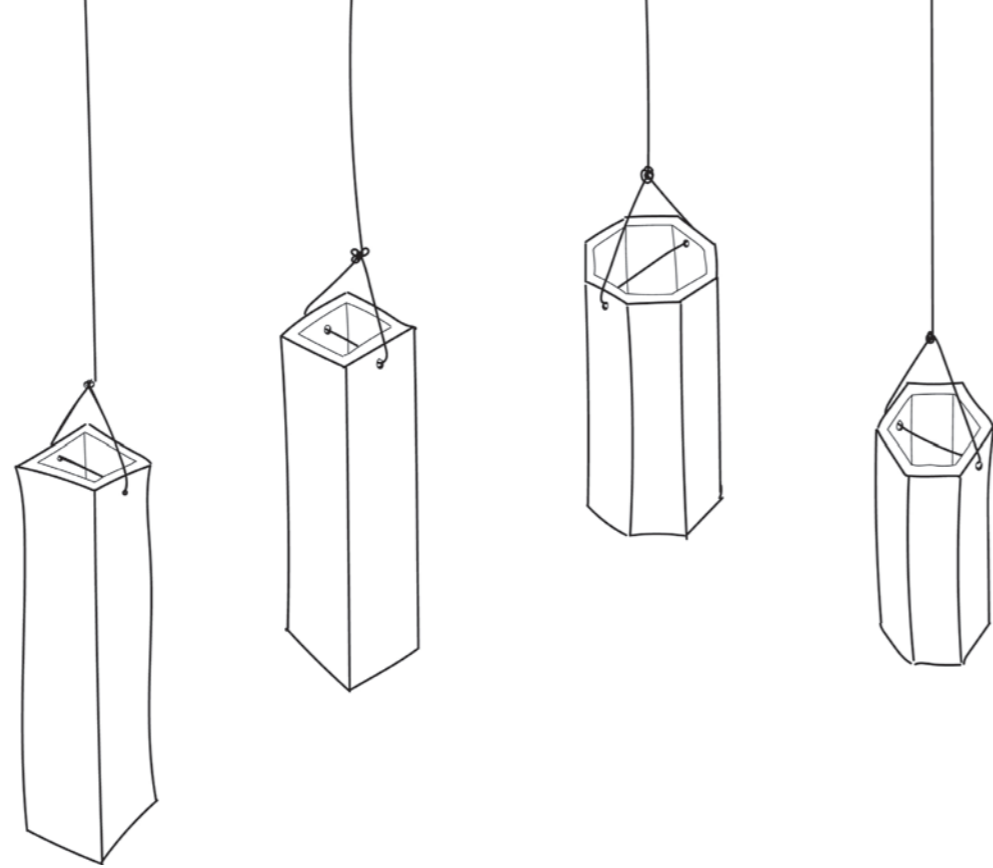
## City mobile

Developing on from the mapping wall hung mobile and the archway idea I thought of creating a suspended mobile, with each beaded chain hanging down from a ring to form a curtain of geometric and natural forms which someone could step into, combine the two worlds of the natural v urban and industrial town centre. The mobile form allows for subtle movement and sound to be created between each suspended ceramic form, creating an experiential installation with the geometric forms at the top reflecting the towering, busy city/town centre growing above our heads whilst the naturalistic forms lay lower on the mobile and spread out onto the ground. The colours used in this installation will reflect my original key along with colours found in my recent walk of Croydon.

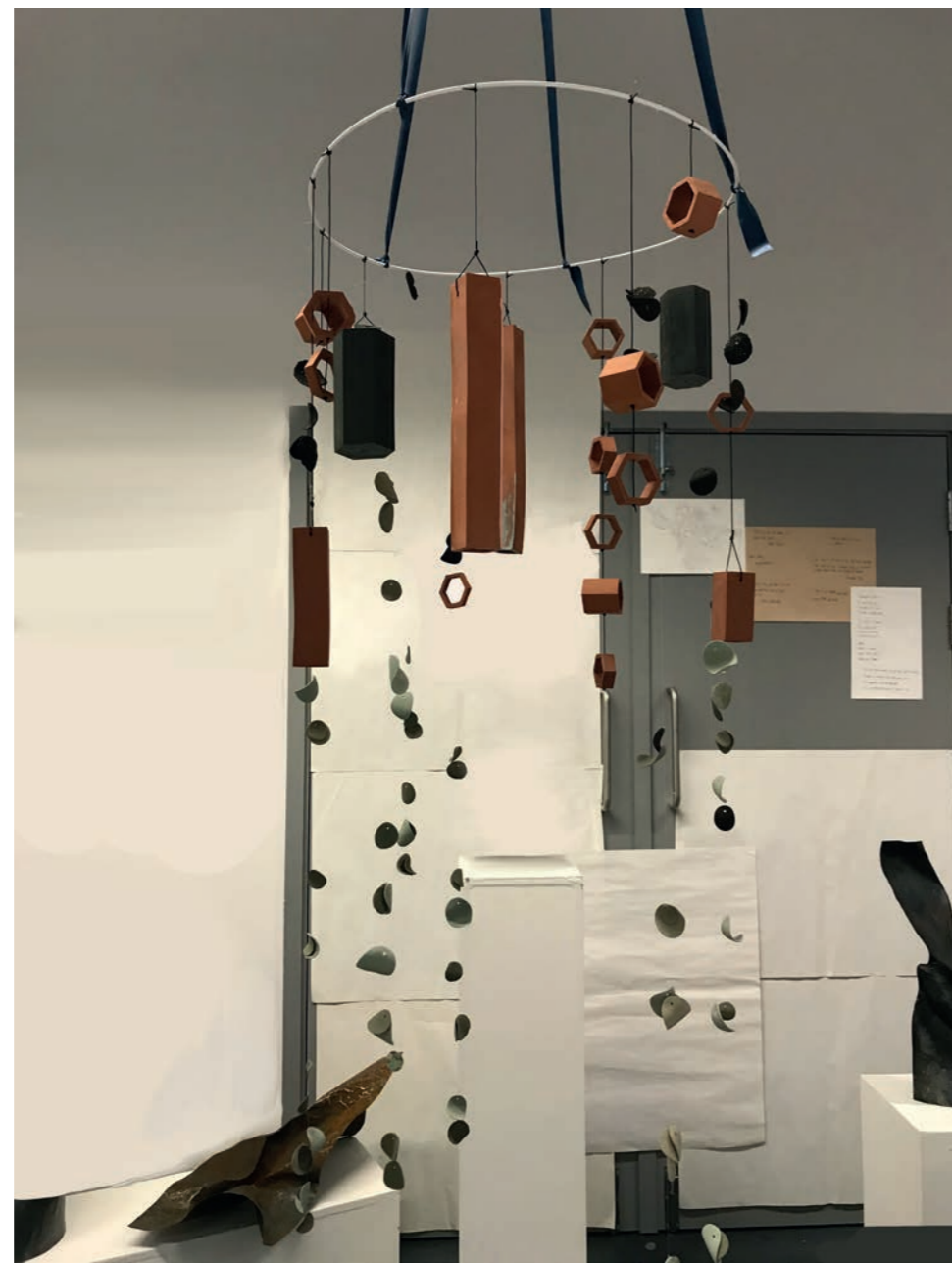
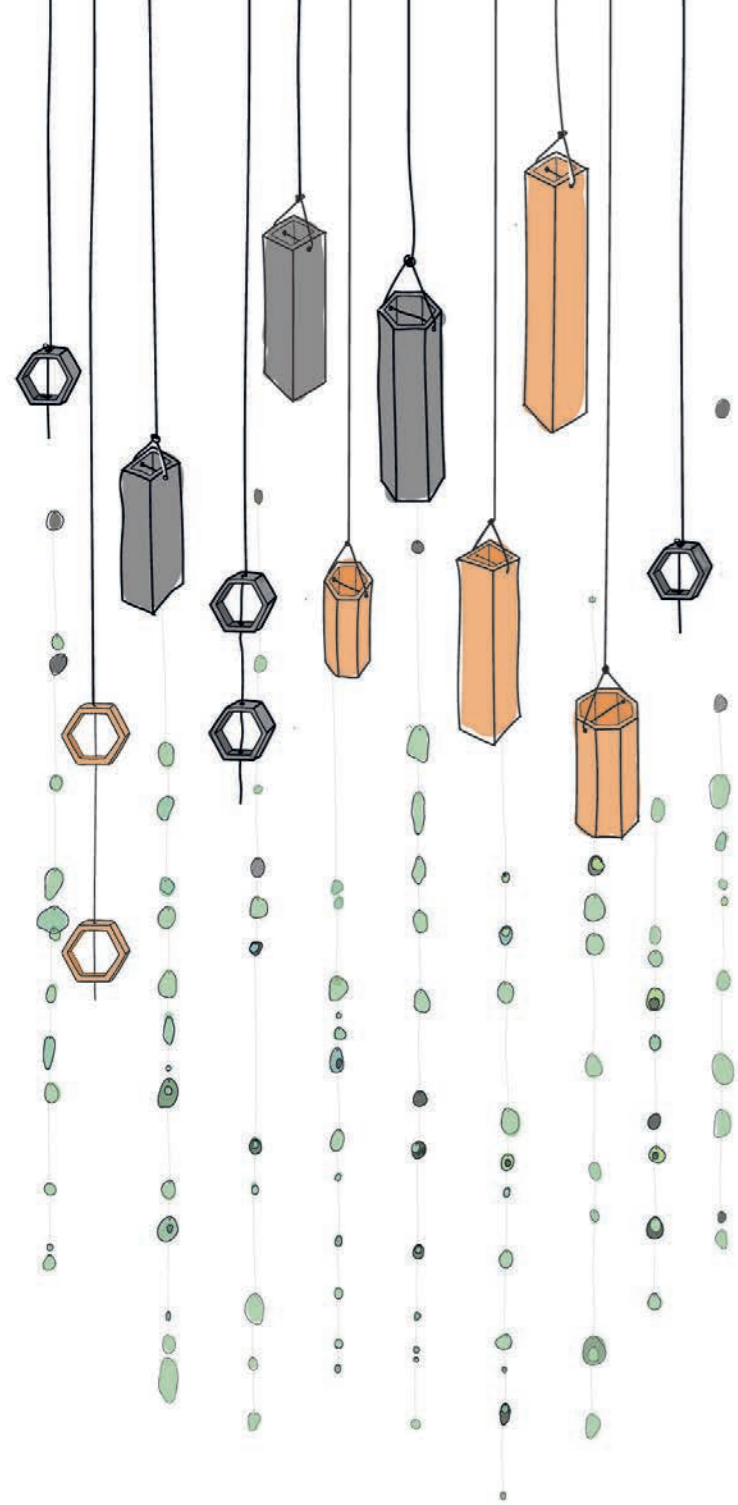


Drawing to explore how to suspend longer cylinder beads

Illustrating the idea of two worlds, natural and urban, meeting and existing as one.

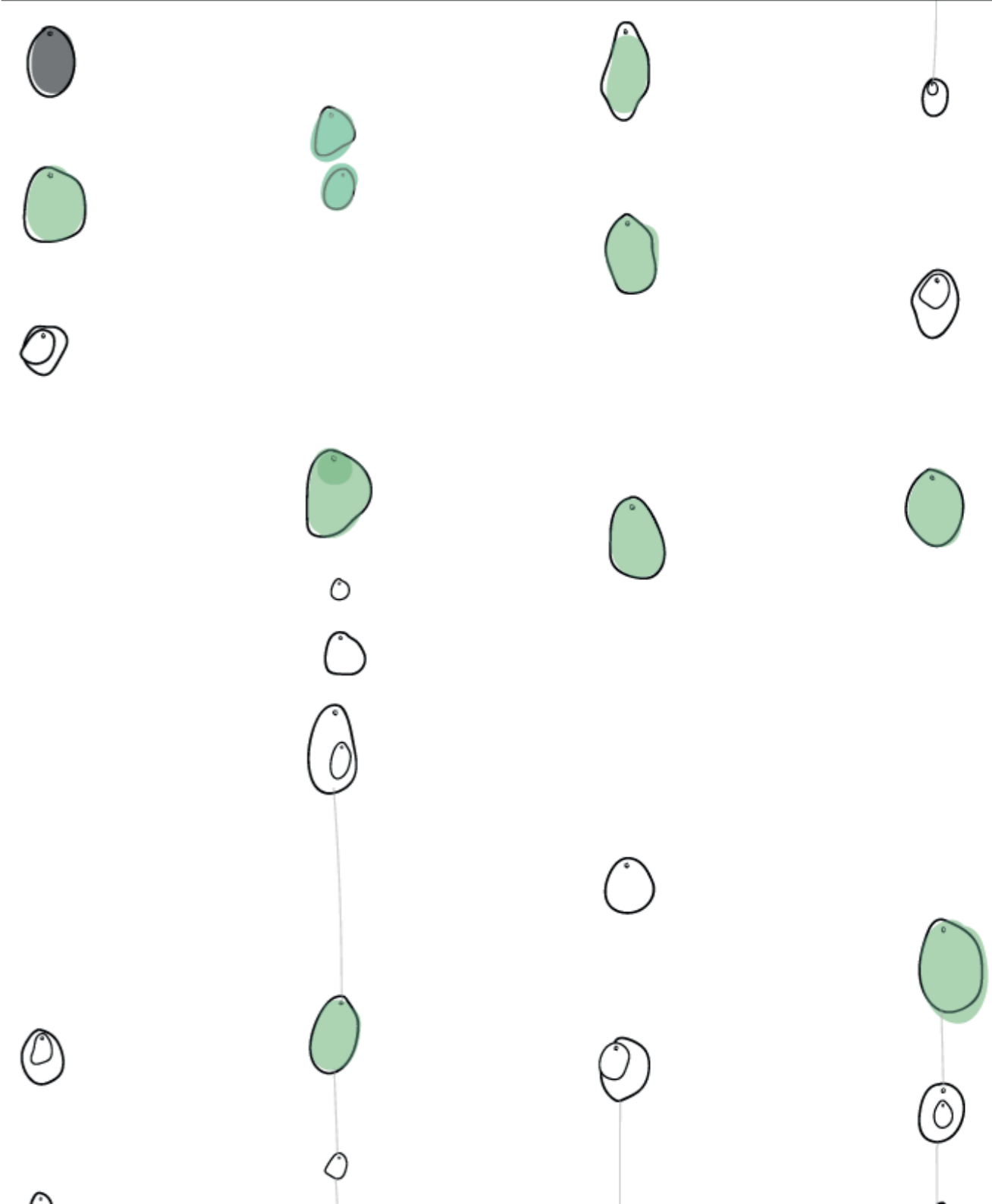


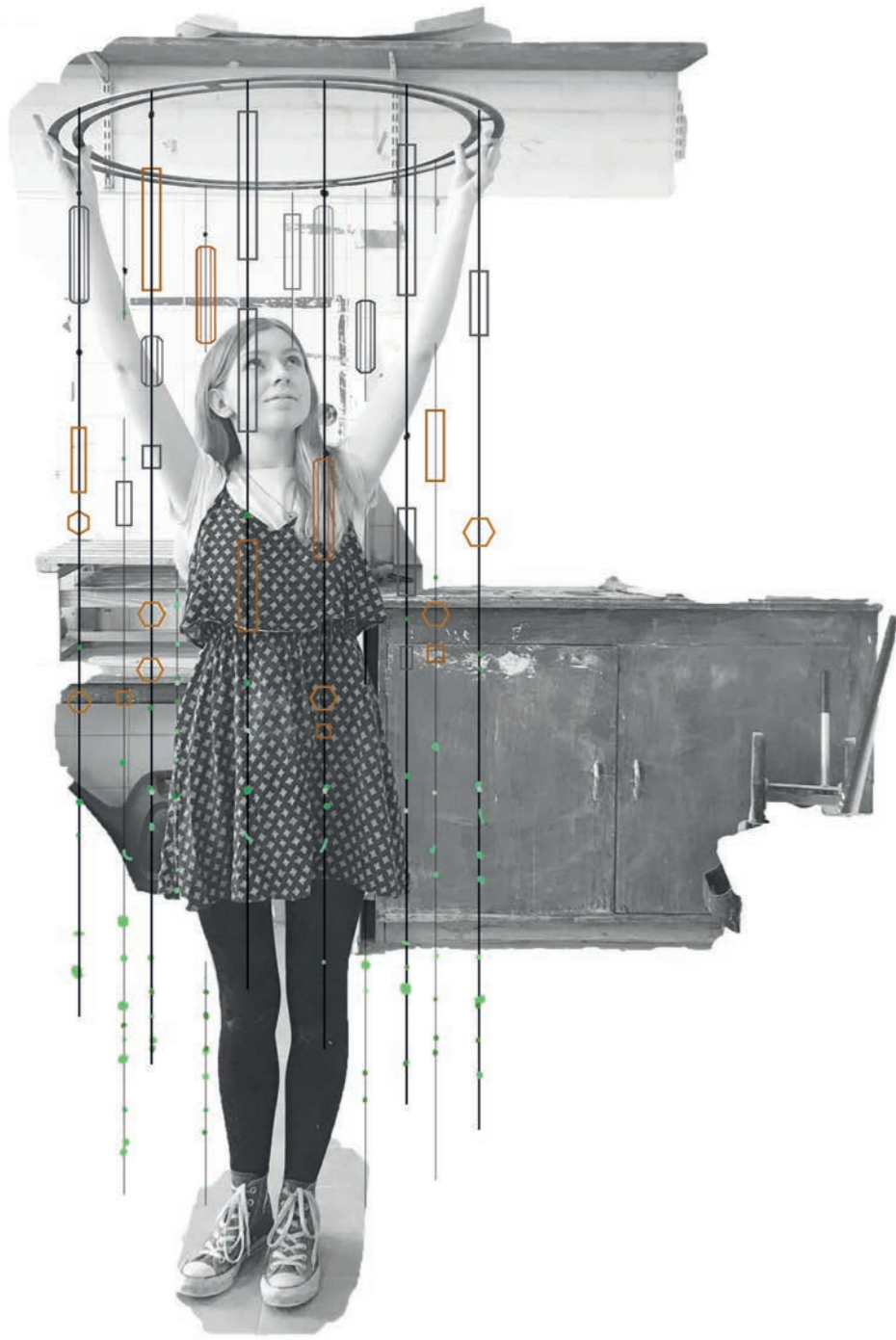
Testing suspended geometric forms



First mobile experiment

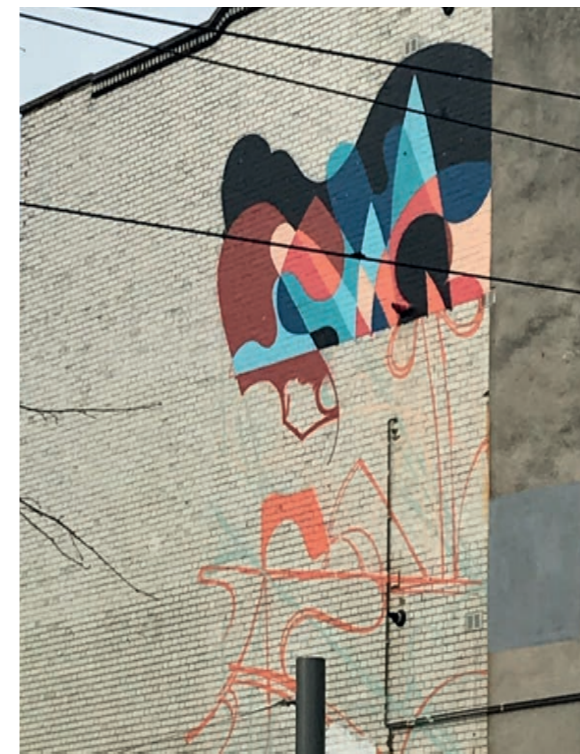
Doing this initial mobile taught me a lot that would help me move forward and make a better final outcome. The natural forms work well at adding that element of subtle sound I wanted to create to encourage the person experience the exploration to feel a playful curiosity to notice little details in the pieces. Higher up on the mobile I added occasional black clay petals to show the natural forms slowly transitioning into the urban space of the mobile. From this piece I now know the ring holding them together will need to be stronger and bigger to allow the piece to be safe and secure if people are to walk into the middle of it. In the next mobile i want to add more little details that reflect things I've seen on my walks around Croydon, particularly colours and textures in the urban spaces plus colours and forms that reflect certain plants that I've found, for example bringing in some small red/purple beads that represent the berries on Mitcham common and white porcelain beads for the Yarrow flower, a common British Wildflower that I also came across on the common.





Plasma cut steel ring for final mobile

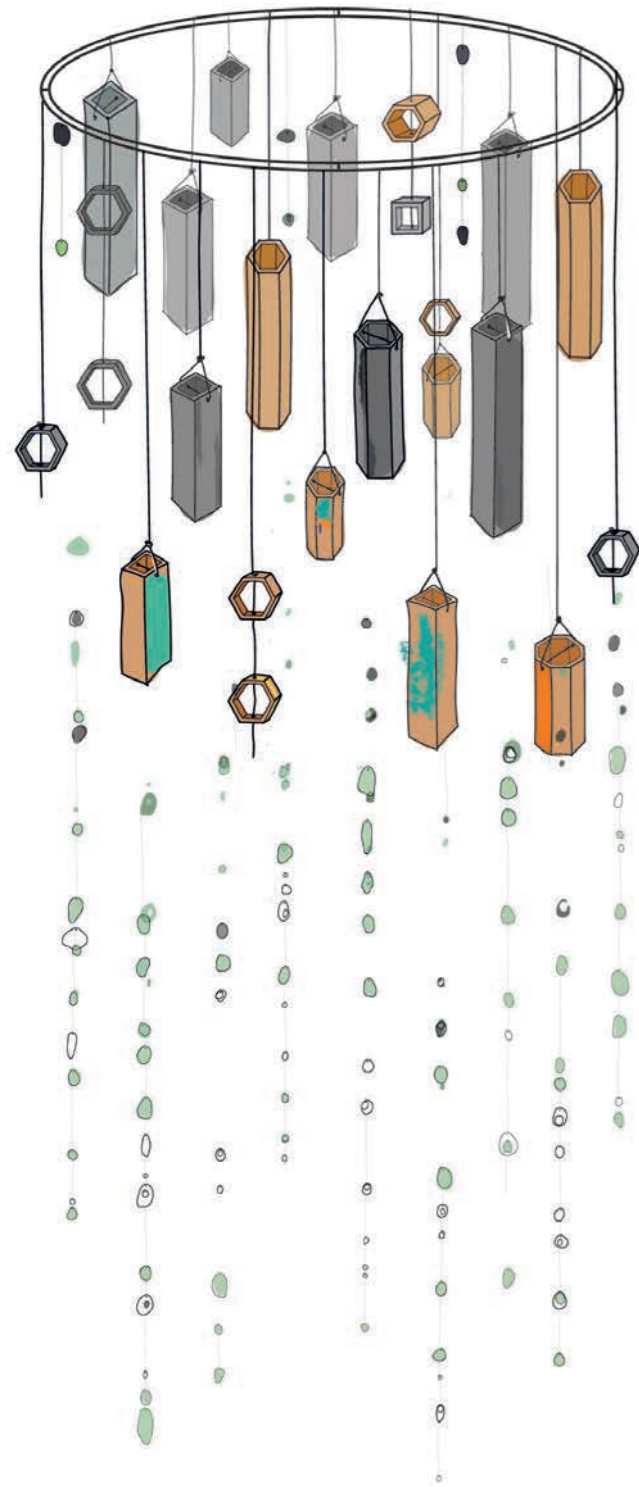
The frame I had plasma cut from steel is now strong enough to hold the weight of the beads securely whilst also being wide enough for a person to step into. I designed an additional inner ring for this frame, on the first mobile prototype I had most of the petal forms strung together separately from the urban geometric shapes, this inner ring will be specifically for the natural forms to hang of to highlight them slightly, with them being closer to the person inside the mobile. A subtle detail which illuminates our close proximity to nature despite living in cities.



I wanted to add some small details into the geometric forms that reflect elements of urban beauty I found in Croydon town centre, particularly this graffiti found by East Croydon station. Incorporating the colours from the graffiti as a nod to Croydon's urban landscape and its street culture.



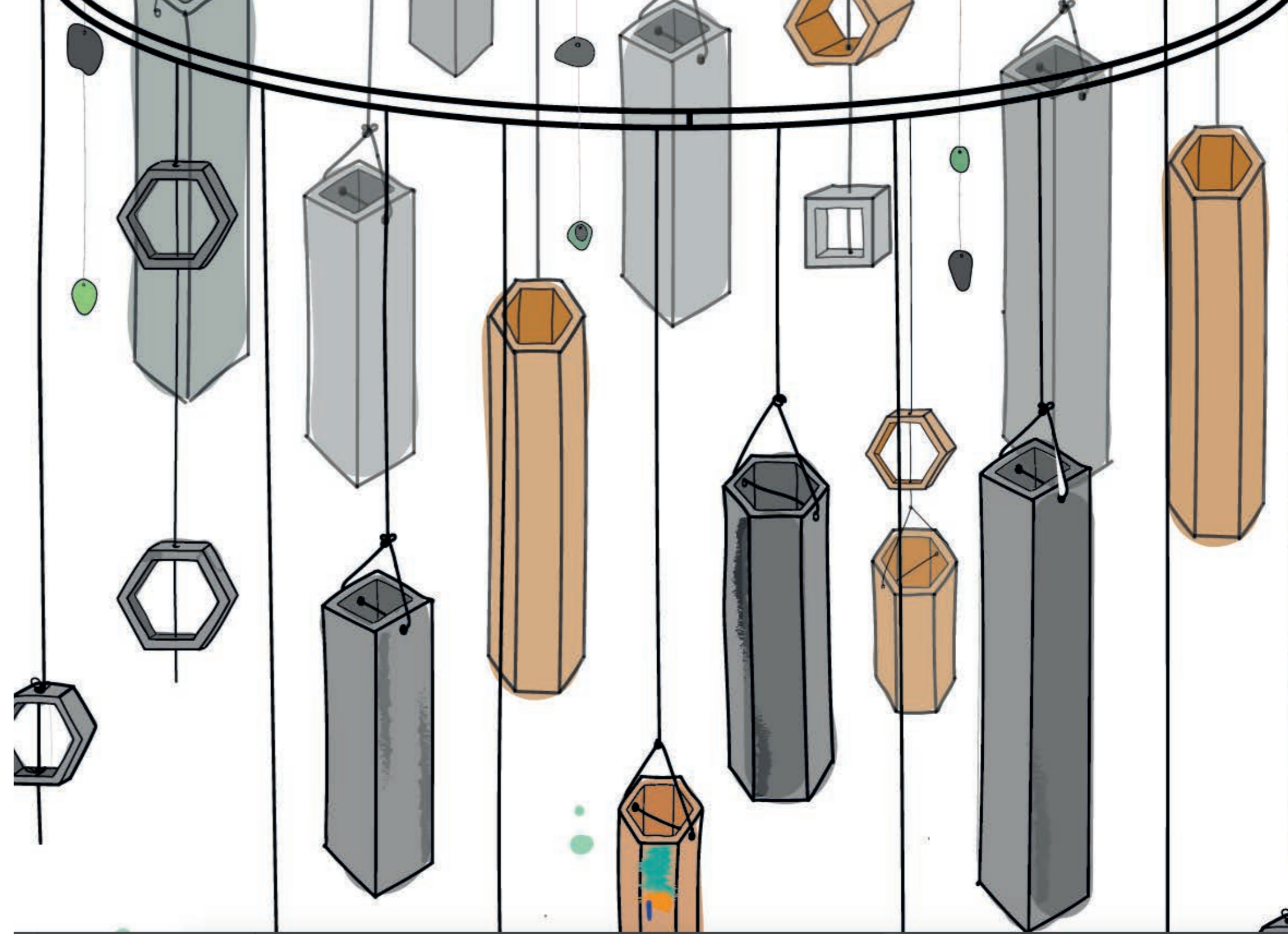
Unfired terracotta beads with cobalt, orange and turquoise green slip decoration



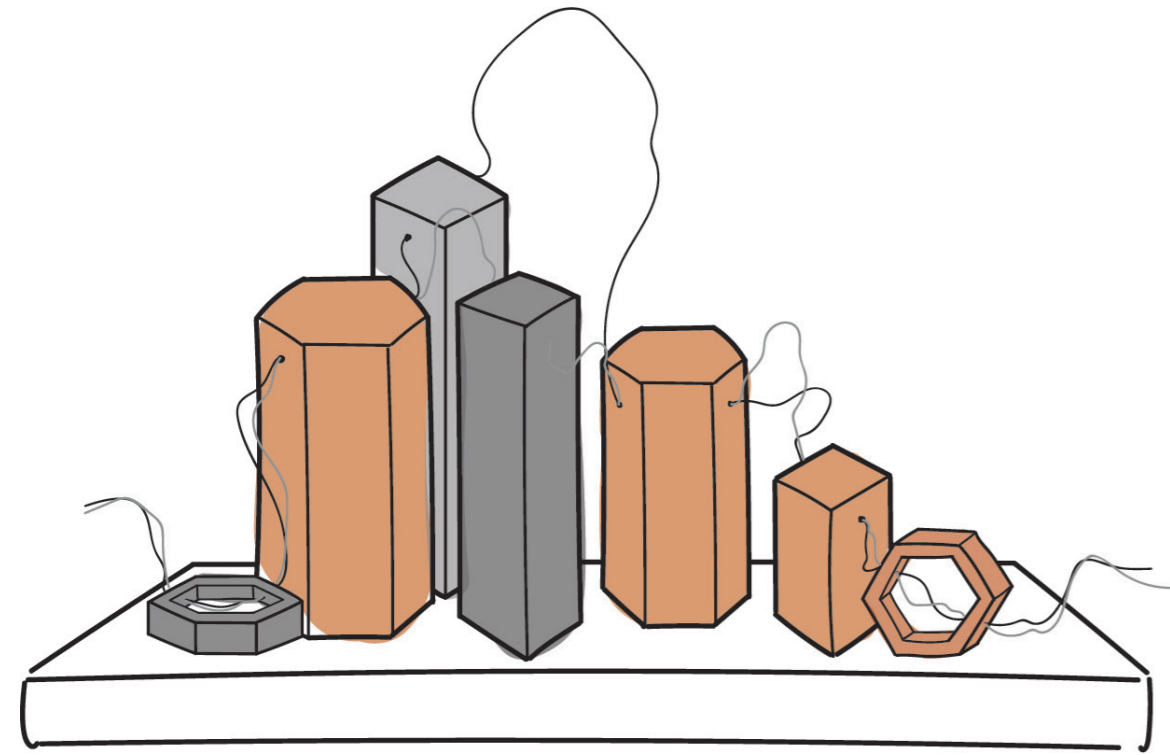
## Poplar

### Final idea

This illustration shows what I imagine the final mobile looking like as I never got to complete it due to unforeseen circumstances. I was excited to finalise little details in the mobile, for example introducing of white porcelain for the petal forms, which spoke specifically to my personal experience of Croydon's hidden urban and natural beauty. Reflecting back I think the form of a mobile was something I pushed forward continually throughout my work as it added an almost fantasy like sense to the forms which emphasised the joining of two landscapes to exist in harmony with each other, contradicting common perceptions of a place. The name 'Poplar' stems from both natural and urban landscapes, a sucker growing from a Balsam Poplar tree on my own road was the original inspiration for the natural forms in the mobile, whilst in Croydon town centre Poplar Walk is the name of the road where I began my first research walk exploring Croydon. The aim of this piece was the generate that feeling of being within an urban city setting but with an emphasise on small details of beauty, added to by the subtle sounds and motion created by the mobile. This piece presents both the urban and natural world existing together in harmony.



# Landscape chain revisited

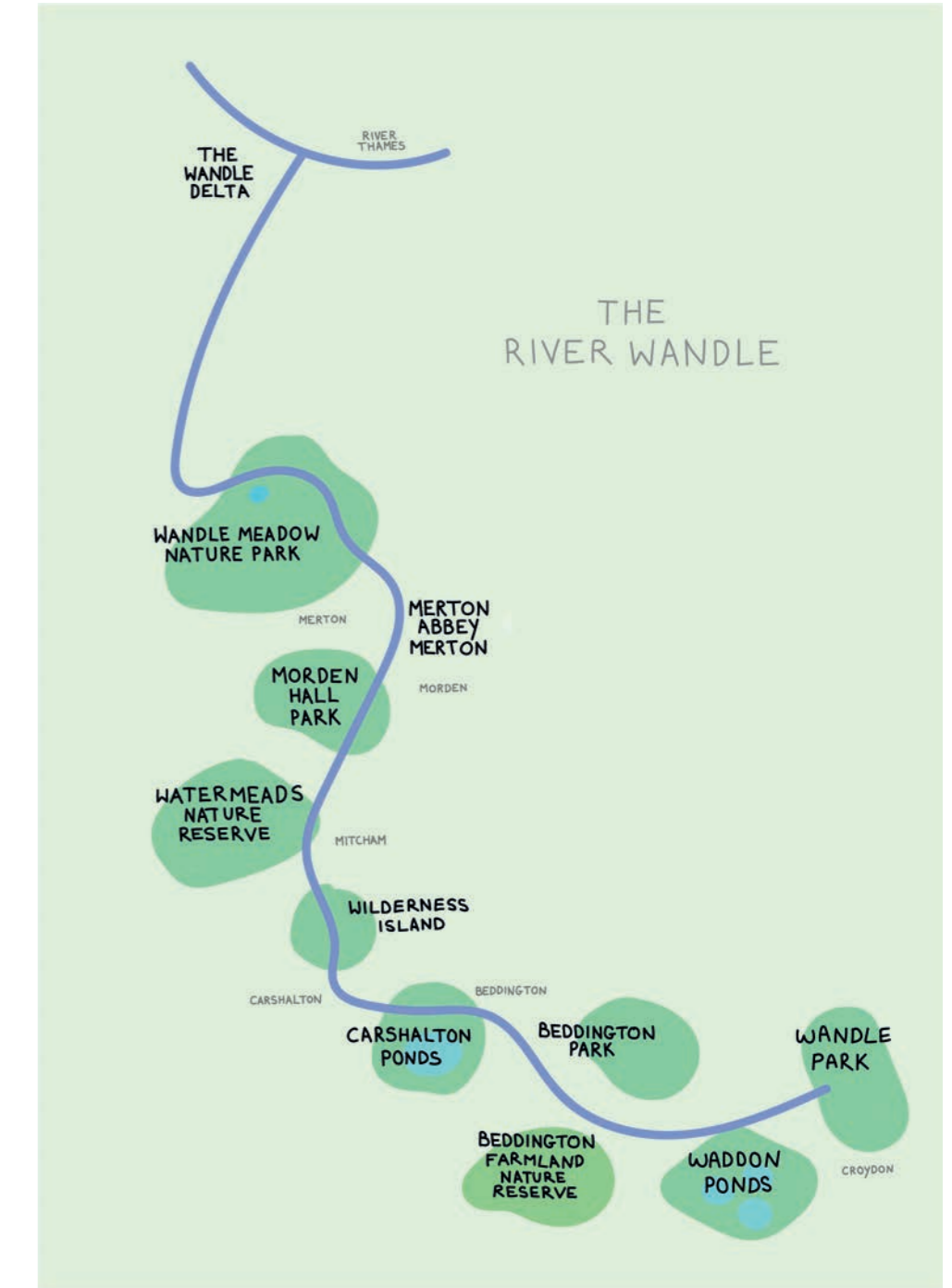


Coming towards the tail end of this project I wanted to revisit the idea of a chain, one of the experiments I did at the very start of this project, I really loved the simplicity of the forms and chain imagery threading the three landscapes I was investing together as one piece. I also found myself wanting to highlight the natural beauty of London as my research has focused more so on the urban landscape.

## The River Wandle

The River Wandle is a tributary to the River Thames, flowing north from Croydon its travels through the south of London to Wandsworth. During Victorian times, this chalk stream was one of the hardest working rivers in the world, with 90 mills along its length; however, by the mid twentieth century it became overused by industry and declared a sewer. Today, organisations such as the Wandle Trust are working to restore the rivers biodiversity.

This bit of natural history at the heart of South London that connects our city's natural environment with its industrial past to the point where the nature is now beginning to recover really stood out to me, especially as it looks like a chain travelling through South London connecting different nature spots, similar to my initial landscape chain.



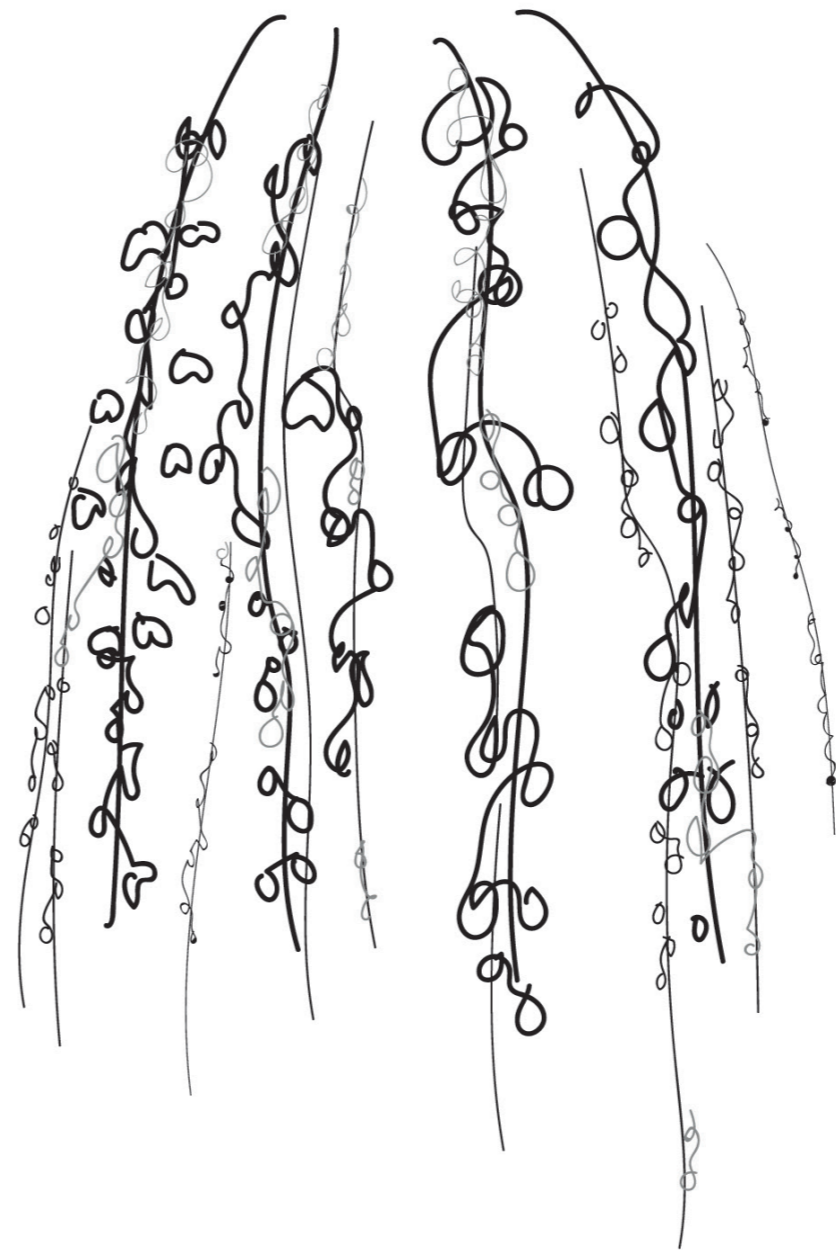


## Wilderness Island

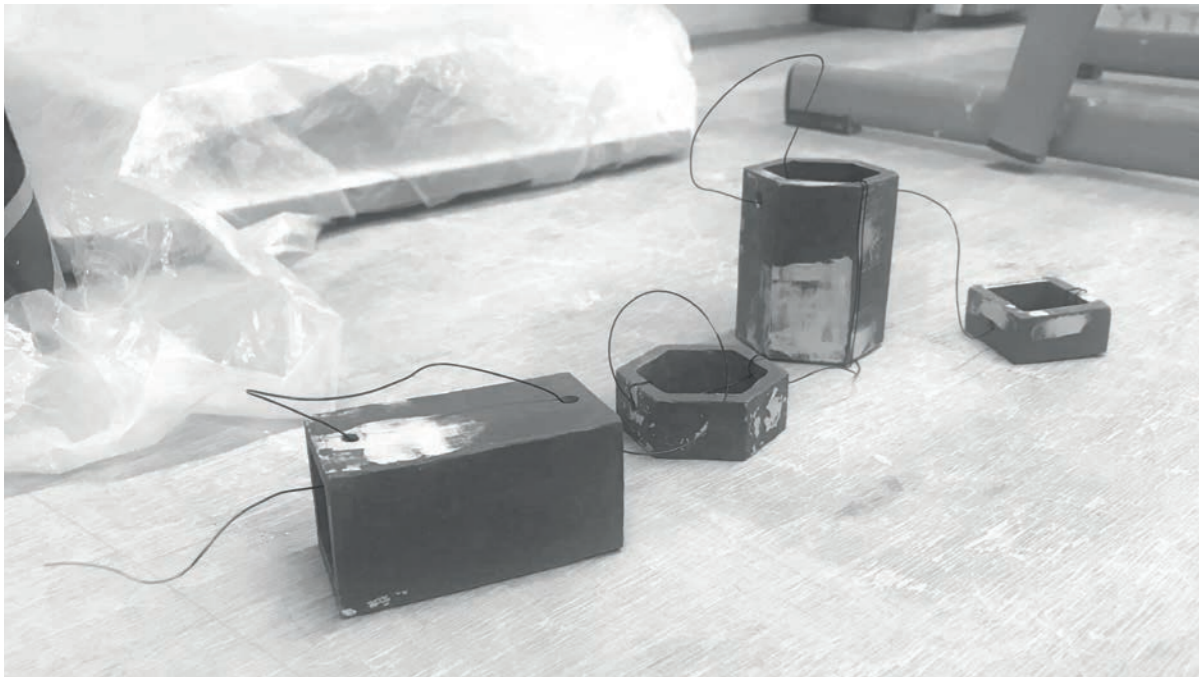
I visited Wilderness Island, one of the points at which the River Wandle surfaces, to help develop some ideas for natural forms.



Cow parsley



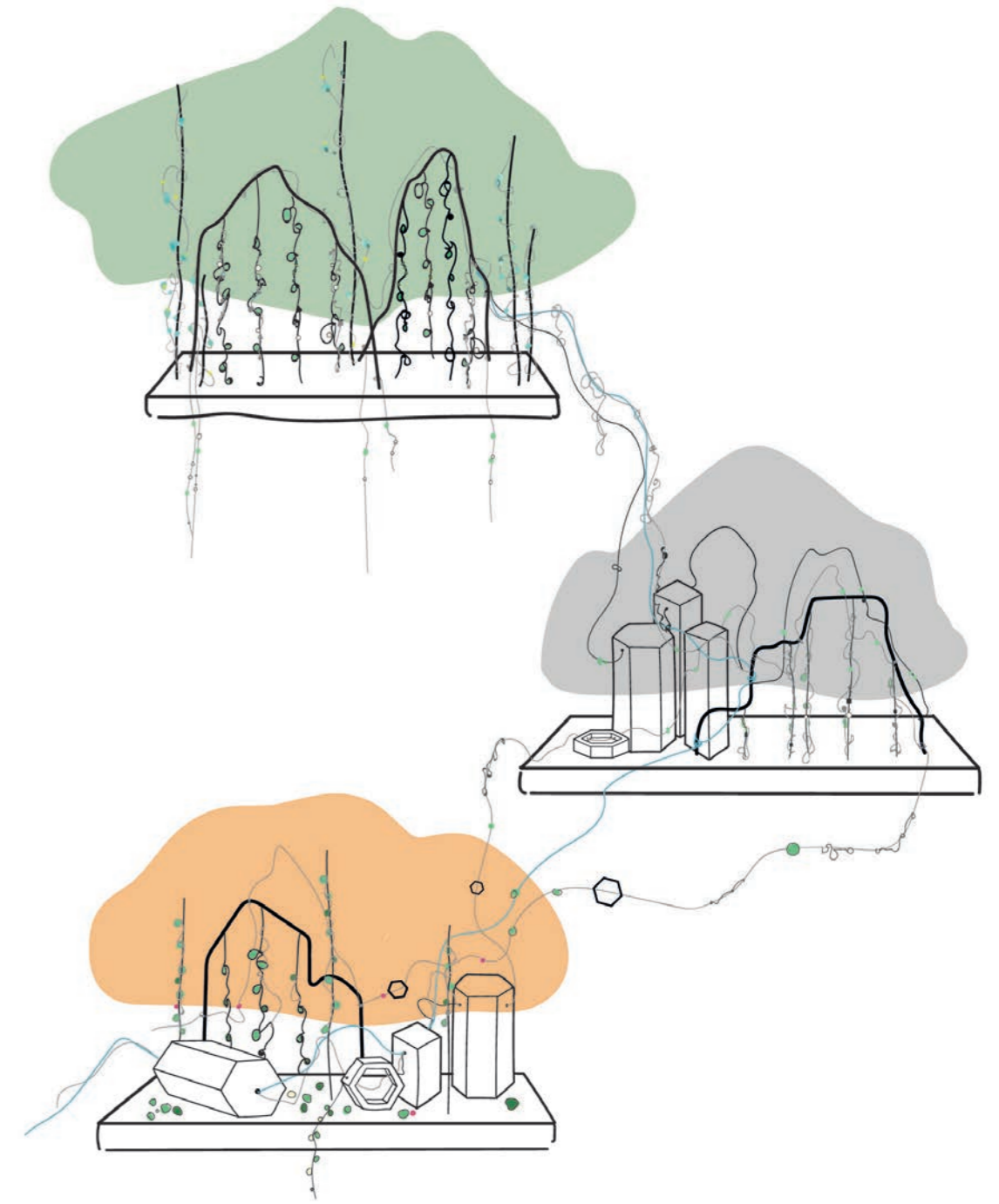
The Island had a very wild and untamed feel to it, as if nothing was pruned or perfected by humans, the nature existing on the Island has taken control of the landscape. This gave everything an overflowing look to it, different vines and branches intertwined with one another. From that sense of overflowing I wanted to look experiment with using wire to string together different forms, stringing together different natural forms



Wire and layout experiments, including urban forms

## Final idea

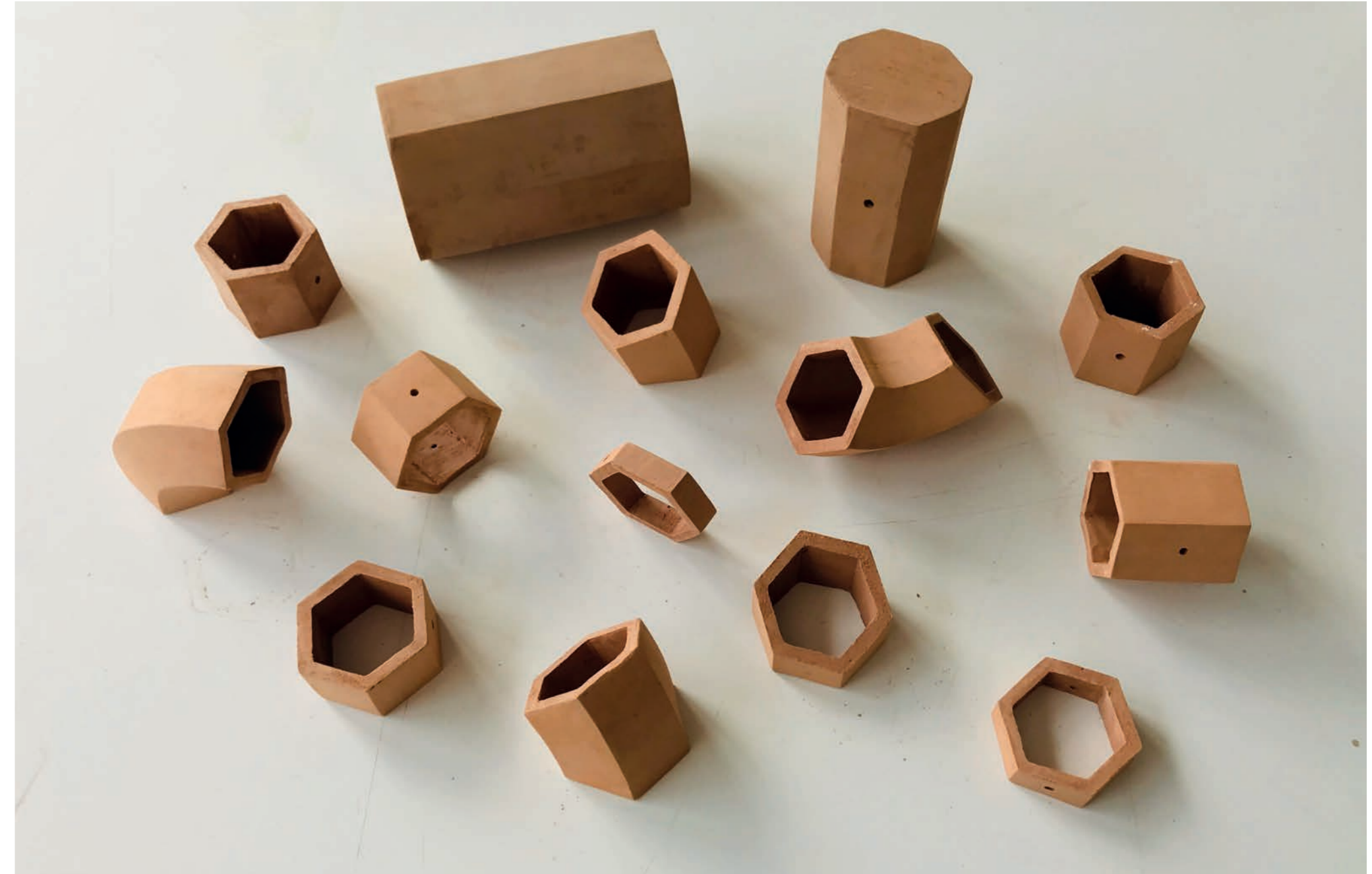
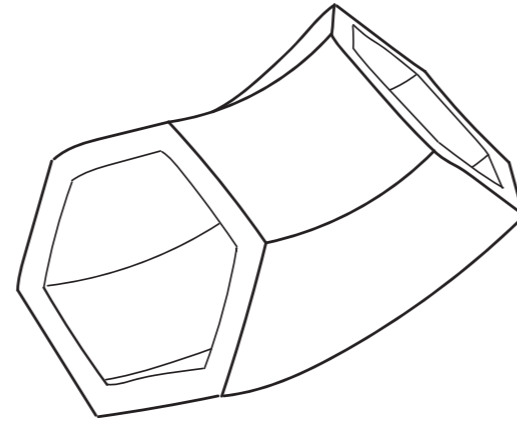
Though this outcome never made it into 3D after our workshops closed this sketch shows what I believe it would have turned out like, using three separate wall mounted tiers to represent industrial, urban and natural landscapes. Each section is connected by various wires, one of which being blue toned to symbolise the River Wandle, entangled with ceramic petal and leaf forms which travel throughout each tier to show the overgrowing nature that exists throughout South London. Each section has a small arch like form which I imagined would be plasma cut from steel, an industrial material to representing the River Wandle's industrial past.





## Hexagon vessels

One thing that was very apparent to me when I went walking around Croydon was that so many of the buildings have a strong individual character, not many of the buildings actually fitted to the 'grey, concrete, square' stereotypes of urban towns. Reflecting back on my research throughout this project, focusing on the idea of celebrating the real, ordinary places in which we live in order to reveal their hidden beauty I realised that this idea extends further than Croydon, though this has been my staple case study throughout. I wanted to create a set of vessels that encouraged a new perspective on the everyday, in particular the paths we cross in our local area in order to reveal the sense of character a place can hold. Moreover, exploring the idea of noticing beauty in our everyday lives.



Initial extruded experiments

## Introducing a curve

Having noticed the unique variation in character that can be found in the architecture of Croydon I took the straight hexagon and square extruded forms I'd been working with and began curving and bending them slowly as they were extruded. This curve highlights how urban landscapes can defy the stereotype of being dull and rigid in the same way that marks of beauty and brightness can be found in the everyday when looked at from a new perspective.

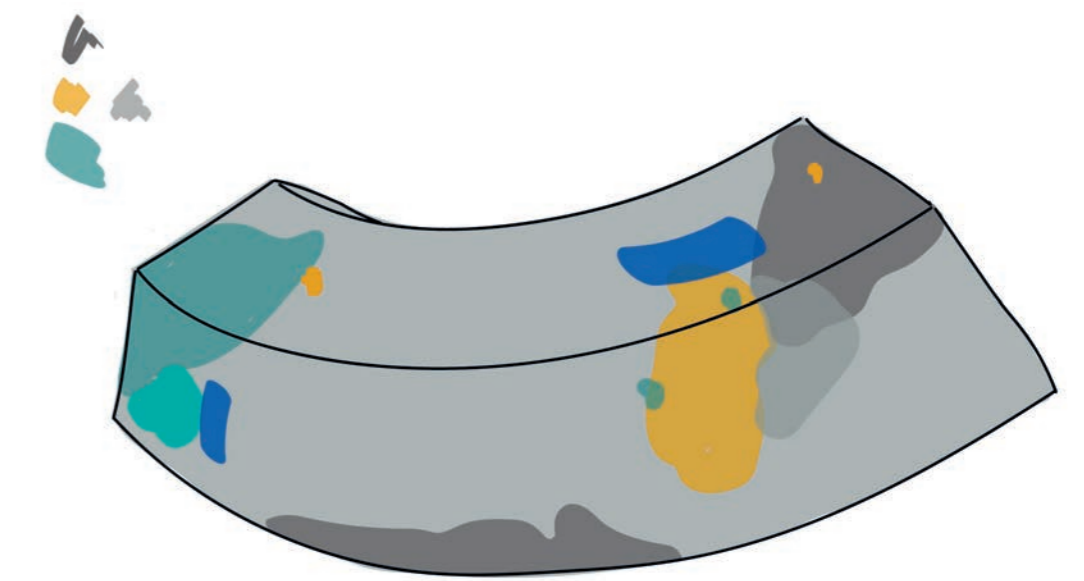


James Rigler's work has a similar industrial feel with a mix of colour. The way his work pictured above travels in the location was influential when considering how my own curved shapes may be displayed to follow a certain pathway.

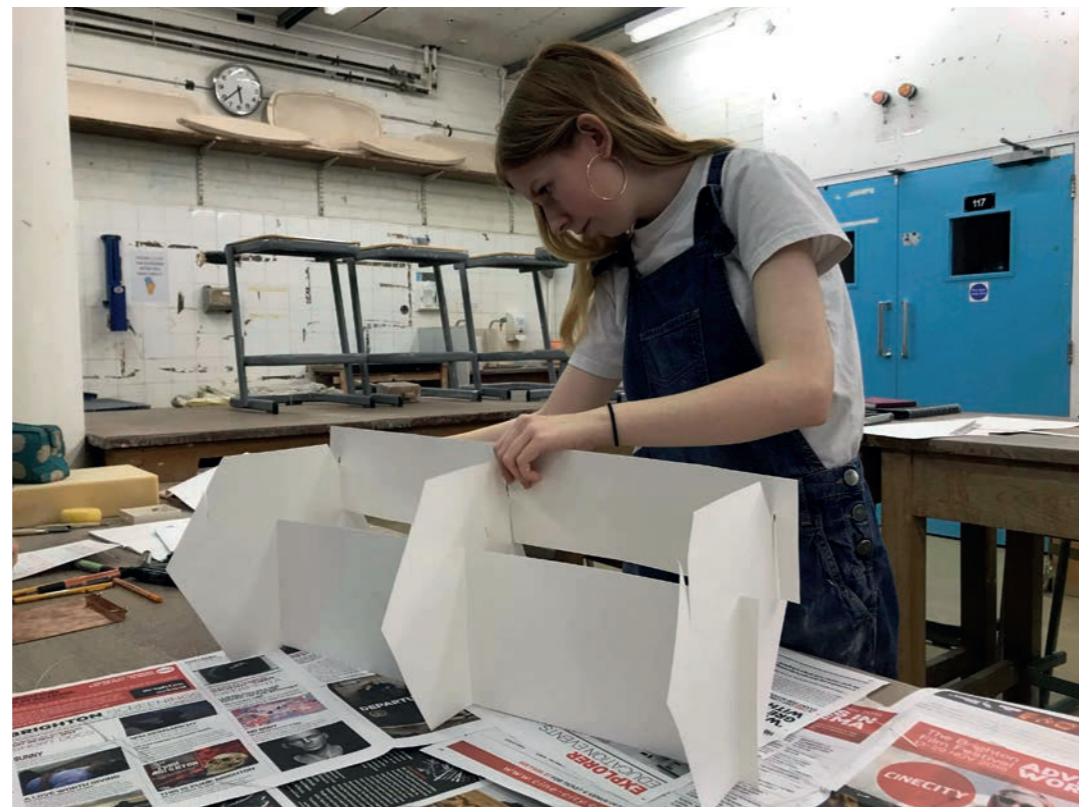
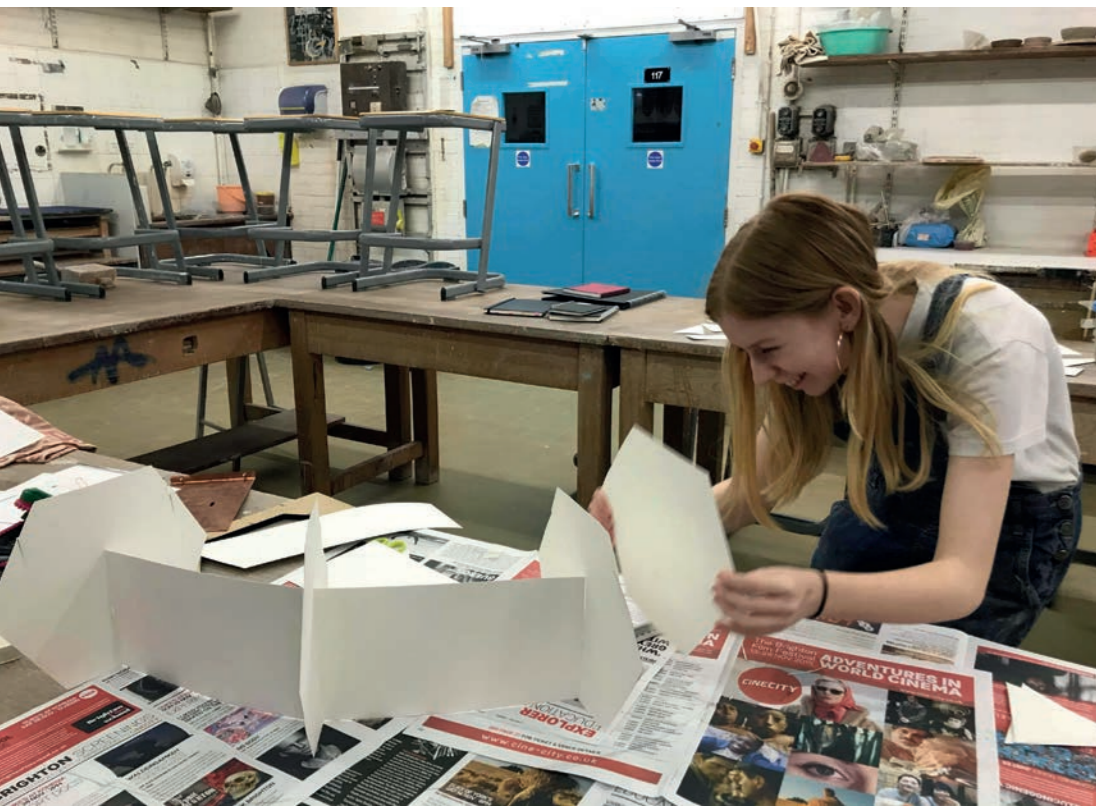




Colour scheme: Translating colours from Croydon into my work



These stoneware test pieces were created using a range of stains and crank clay. I took a pinch or two of each coloured clay, grey, black, orange and turquoise, and then rolled it into a ball before using the slab roller to flatten them into these tests. I found this process was a way of reflecting my drawings, that abstract colours and details found on my walks, in my ceramic work. Ideally I'd love to try this surface texture on a large scale by slabbing into a mould.



Model making to test scale and shape of vessel

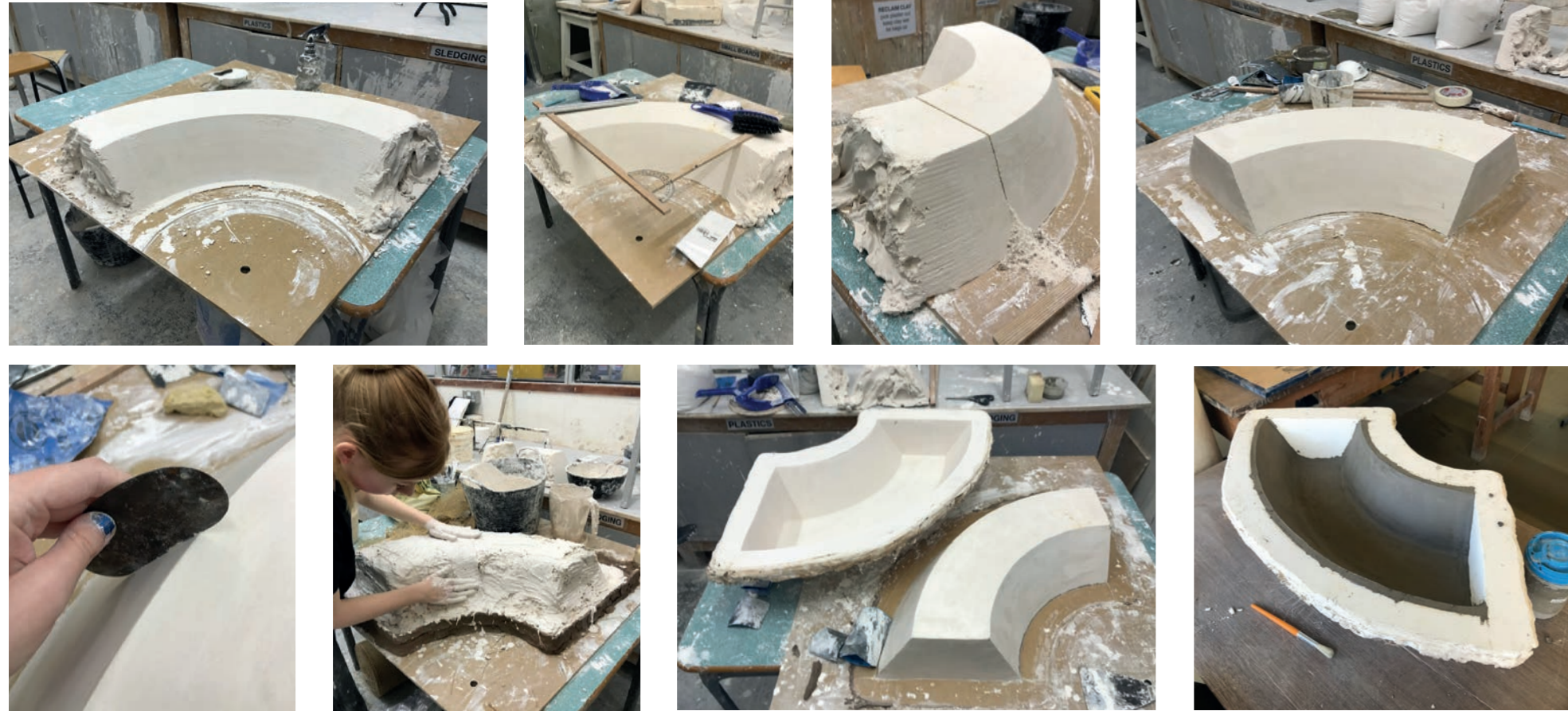


## Process: Big sledging

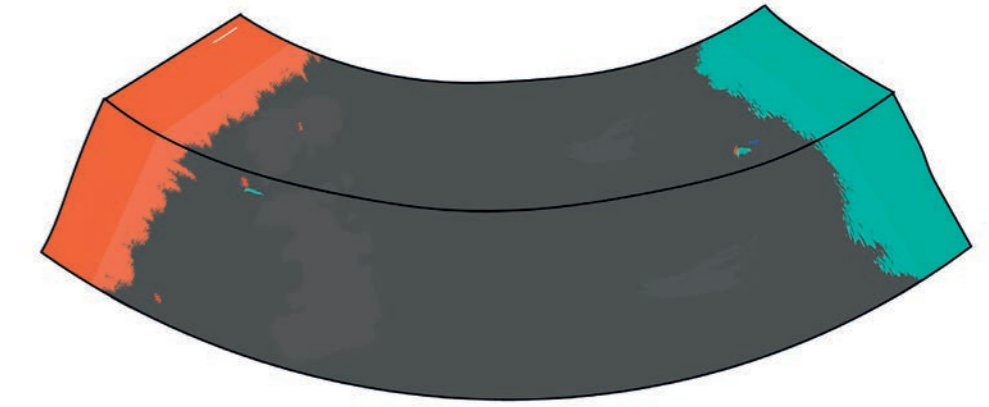
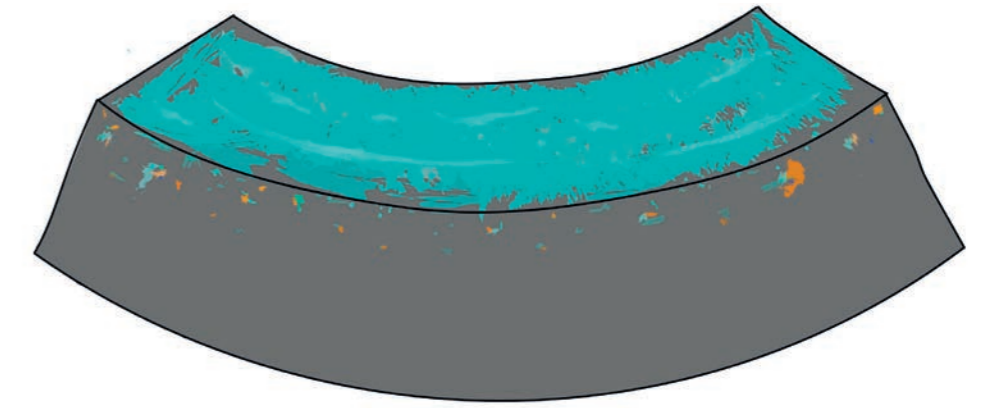
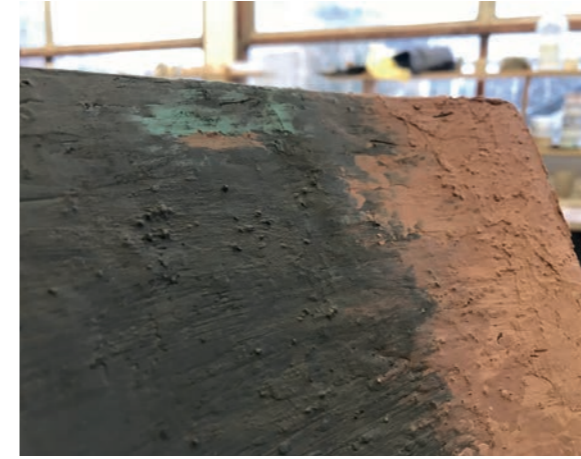
Wanting to go large scale with these curved hexagon form led me to investigating sledging. Creating a shape that is both geometric and curved could only be done by sledging the former using a metal arm which the plasma cut profile of half the desired end shape could be attached to. This metal arm then has a metal pole going through it and down through the surface that the master will be sledged onto, this allows for the arm to be moved at a 90 degree angle, allowing me to sledge a geometric curve.



## Process: Mould making



The mould making process was long and challenging for this piece, after sledging 18Kg of plaster over the reclaim clay core the rough edges had to be sawed off whilst ensuring the ends to the shape were straight and to a 90 degree angle, for this I used a protractor. The ends of the shape then had to be filled in with plaster, whilst the whole master had to be smoothed using wet and dry sanding paper along with going over the edges with a metal kidney. To minimise the weight of the mould I used scrim netting fabric in layers which reduced the amount of plaster needed whilst increasing the strength of the mould.



Texture and colour ideas for the first two vessels. The orange and turquoise are both colours I found unexpected in walks around Croydon whilst the small royal blue details in the top design comes from the Croydon flyover sign, a colour many Croydon dwellers would pass everyday. The textures reflect the road surface markings and concrete. The little specks of colour coming through the grey represent noticing and appreciating small forms of beauty and brightness in urban settings.

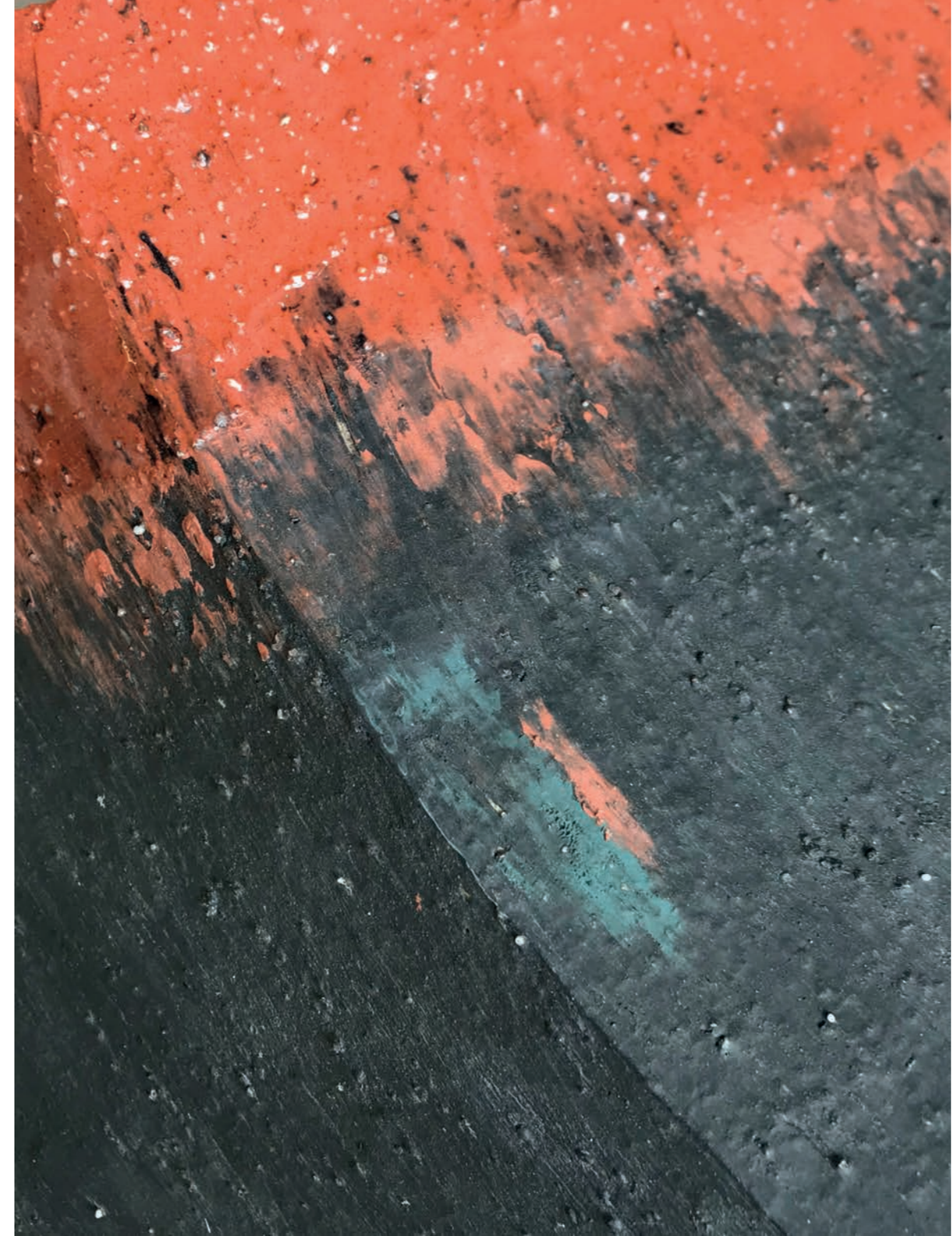
Ji-In for scale!



Clear glaze tests over black and orange crank slurry plus turquoise green decorative slip onto crank clay body. The vessels used so much clay, roughly 9Kg each, that using coloured clay for the whole body was unaffordable. So to achieve a similar affect I painted coloured slurry onto the crank vessel



A kiln survivor!



## Cronx

This large curved vessel named after my hometown explored the idea of exploring and seeking new perspective on the everyday, ordinary urban landscape many of us live in. The hollow nature of this piece hopes to encourage people to look into and around the vessel, embodying this idea of exploring for before unseen beauty within our everyday life.

# Reflections

This project has transformed from investigating urban green spaces to studying the idea of Environmental Identity within urban landscapes, aiming to celebrate the beauty that can be found in these spaces along with the unseen nature in them too. This idea of noticing and appreciating your surroundings then extends further into discovering an appreciation of the everyday. By focusing on my hometown Croydon I was able to introduce the historical, social and architectural character of Croydon into my work. By going on walks as a main method of research I was able to document colours, forms and textures found in Croydon through photography and drawing to then translate into my ceramic work. By connecting with the community through environmental volunteer groups I saw first hand the importance of appreciating and helping our local landscape in a practical sense, particularly our natural spaces, which then spurred me on to embody that message within my work. Researching and visiting exhibitions that related to my own body of work, like Edge City: Croydon and Welcome to LDN, helped me crystallise what my work was aiming to say which is essentially to appreciate the character and beauty within our ordinary, local surroundings and to celebrate these once unnoticed details in our everyday lives. There is so much to rediscover within the landscapes we are so familiar with when we slow down and look.

Personally, my technical skill-set has grown a lot during this project as I've learnt more about processes and materials. Going large scale with both the vessels and the mobile came with big learning curves but having that technical knowledge enabled me to be more ambitious in this body of work in comparison to the past. This project has been a very personal one for me, I've really enjoyed rediscovering my hometown and being able to creatively express my findings. I'm excited to continue this body of research and my skill-set further in the future.







## Epilogue

For the last two months during lockdown I've been back in Croydon. Though times at the moment seem fairly bleak and sorrowful, I've been trying to take my own advice from this project and look for the good that might otherwise go unnoticed at the moment. I've noticed people have become much more grateful for the time they are allowed outside, now that this time is limited. People are actively seeking out spots of nature that they can discover and explore for the sake of their own well-being. Mitcham Common is in full bloom and it's clear that more people are appreciating the natural landscapes in their local area that before may have gone unnoticed.

So although there's not too much to be joyful about at the moment, at least nature is getting its turn in the spotlight.

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