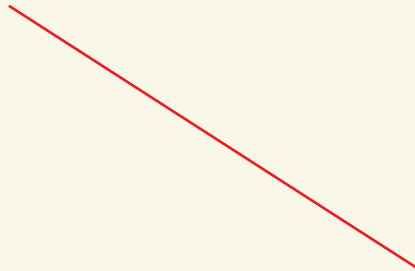


PUBLICATION

PLATFORM 2 Design Products



SPREADING some THOUGHTS
on PRODUCT DESIGN

Published by
Design Products
Royal College of Art
Kensington Gore
London SW7 2EU

Edited by XXXXXX
Text by Eszter Steierhoffer
Design by APFEL (A Practice for Everyday Life)

ISBN XXX XXX XXX



Royal College of Art
Postgraduate Art and Design

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This is a very short introduction to what this is, it will talk about the platform a bit, and who the students are, as well as a future and the value of research too. This is a very short introduction to what this publication is, it will talk about the platform a bit, and who the students are, as well as a future. This is a very short introduction to what this publication is, it will talk about the platform a bit, and who the students are, as well as a future. This is a very short introduction to what this publication is, it will talk about the platform a bit, and who the students are, as well as a future. This is a very short introduction to what this is, it will talk about the platform a bit, and

There are many possible readings of the city. Thinking about design and the city, one first considers its physical and formal dimensions such as the pattern of buildings, streets, squares and parks. The city can be described by the antagonism of its permanence and fluctuating dynamics. It is a place determined by its historical persistence and traditions, however, the city constantly changes, extends and mutates in its form and in its function. Yet the question of function results in another interpretation of the city as a human settlement. Beyond its geographical location and architecture, the city *is* its inhabitants. Considering the city from this perspective suggests other widened anthropological, social, political, economical and cultural readings. However, beyond its concrete formal and functional matrix, the city can be defined through its different representations. It is a place constructed by collective memory and imagination that is preserved and produced by various communities, groups and individuals.

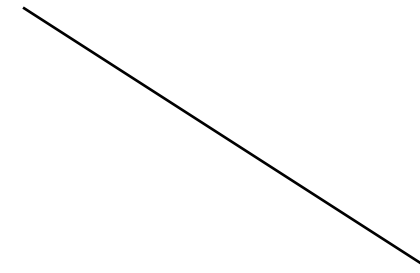
In questions of globalization and cultural hegemony versus multiculturalism and pluralism, communalist readings become more and more important, particularly in giant European capitals such as London. In the 1960s, architectural discourse began to address architecture in relation to the city, at the same time artists turned to site-specificity as a reaction against modernist practices. In the last two decades, once again, cities are facing similar problems described as generic and universal versus specific and local, non places or placelessness and lost identity. At a recent conference on cultural hegemony, Bart De Baere, the Director of MuHKA in Antwerp, made a comparison between the art world and McDonald's as two systems working in the same hegemonic way.¹ However, in recent years there has been a tendency in major international exhibitions to show artists from places once considered as peripheries, using De Baere's metaphor, these inclusions are meant to follow a postcolonialist critique and in this sense they become the "healthy" salad component on a McDonald's menu. Hegemonic culture, as the hamburgers, persists as the main point of reference for the art world. This system stays the same and its structure and goals are unaltered. Adopting different cultures in the same old system is not effective enough to produce a truly inclusive worldview. De Baere's counterexample for his McDonald's metaphor is the small but intensive food production of Chinese cities, where pre-packaging doesn't exist. Not only its substance, but the system itself has to be changed, in order to approach art from dynamically changing and coexisting local levels instead of on a hierarchical and abstract level. The projects presented in this book can be seen as illustrative experimental examples of this.

This book presents the work of four young designers: Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad, So Hyun Kim, Nina Mrsnik and Clemence Seilles, all graduates of the Design Product Department at the Royal College of Art and students of *Platformtwo*. Although they do not work in a collective, their work is linked by an experimental outlook on design which challenges and reaches far beyond its boundaries. *Platformtwo*, led by Jurgen Bey and Martino Gamper, focuses on the public realm. Referencing the collectivity of public spaces, *Design Communalism*, the platform's title, expresses a research interest in communal living and shared imaginaries, the investigation of sharing collective property both mentally and physically, and sharing spaces and notions of common ownership. Approaching design from this viewpoint leads to highly exclusive and specific solutions. Design is seen as a form of research and a way of expression where the experimental seeks to nurture and establish its own rules and guidelines. Their research is informed by reality, its process always originates from unique moments and situations, however, design and the actual process of designing cannot be separated. There is a circular, auto-reflexive relationship between theory and practice. Research is a way to seek theory which reinforces practice while practice is a tool which provides feedback to theory. The work is the process itself that often has a performative character. Thus, the emphasis of the works presented in this book is on the working process rather than the objects/products themselves.

¹ Bart De Baere: *Addressing Progressive Social Values*, In: *Conference 3: "Inside Out: Reassessing International Cultural Influence"*, location: The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu, Hawaii, dates: 9-15 July 2004, organized by apexart. See: <http://www.apexart.org/conference/hawaii.htm>

Non-places and the generic character of the contemporary cities evoke images of architecture: train stations, abandoned underpasses, busy airports, petrol stations, wide highways, shiny shopping malls, empty office buildings and franchised services. Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad's work is engaged with a similar phenomenon, but he is approaching it from a contrary side. He is looking at standardised human behavior in the public realm of the city. The architecture of the city and its inhabitants are two sides of the same coin, but it is impossible to say which originates from the other. This paradoxical, möbius-like question is one of the numerous issues inspiring Hashemi-Nezhad in his research as a designer. He is looking at city dwellers' gestures and behavior with the curiosity of an outsider and the rigorous and analytical attention of a scientist. In doing so he reveals the hidden realities of urban life. Hashemi-Nezhad works as a photographer in the role of an explorer, attempting to reveal the unseen but not hidden; the overlooked of quotidian life. Works in public space, but instead of choosing nodal points, static sites or monumental squares, he is interested in transitory places like smaller streets or corners where people never stop but just pass by. In this circulation of movement these places are almost invisible. However, the coziness of this intangible state renders their natural behavior even more traceable. Hashemi-Nezhad's photographs portray alienated people in typical, everyday situations. Despite one's first impression of the spontaneity of his photographs, there is a manufactured rhythm, which is the result of a subsequently constructed composition. He takes his photos from a fixed point on the street, capturing passers-by, waiting for an exact moment and gesture. Rather than keeping the original background, he projects his subjects into the same picture frame. They exist in the same place, but in a compressed time as multiple layers of behavior in a spectral simultaneity. However, the photographs are seen here as a tool, they are also engaging in their aesthetic quality. The elimination of time, and the synchronization of different people's simple but characteristic gestures – such as talking on a mobile phone or drinking take-away coffee – fills Hashemi-Nezhad's photographs with a sense of monumentality. Positioning coins on the observed footpath brings a new element to his work. In Japanese, the word *copy* corresponds to *learn*. Analogous to this, Hashemi-Nezhad's observation becomes a design tool. He starts to interact with a reality so far only observed: he organizes and composes human behavior. Stimulating and animating human actions can be read as a way of public planning as well as a way of raising awareness in a form of statements, that is, his photographs.

ORDERLY CONDUCT



Bahbak
Hashemi-Nezhad



Looking through from pavement
to a private house



Covered



Public Construction

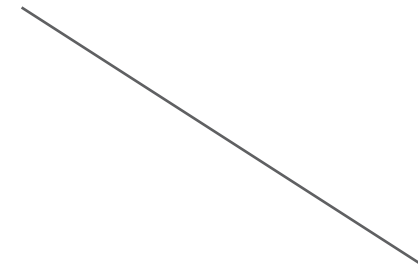


Public Construction

In Jean-Pierre Jeunet's popular film, *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*, the film's young protagonist devotes her life to fulfilling other people's wishes, bringing joy and giving faith to them. Likewise, So-hyun Kim's ongoing collaborative project produces a fictive character named "Super W" who personifies Kim herself. Donning a futuristic suit, Super W begins by interviewing people on the street and documenting their wishes. The 'wish collection' is then woven into a story in which interviewees become protagonists.

The interview or survey, as a method of breaking anonymity in public spaces, is a common practice of different peer support circles and group-building therapies. It is the method which Kim borrows from psychology and applies to her work as a designer, aiming to make the urban environment a better place. In order to respond to the 'wish collection', Kim also creates small objects. "*Time-Machine*" is one of these objects, answering to the commonly expressed wish to be somewhere else, as well as responding to wishes about the future. The object is a rotating hourglass equipped with an inbuilt neon tube. The shifting sands of the hourglass obscure the neon tube in accordance with the time of day: it is brightest at noon while completely dark at midnight. Other objects react to more specific, single wishes, such as the blue teddy bears, the pillows wishing for better years ("*I Like Tomorrow*") or the white mugs with wishes inscribed inside them. Kim returns these custom-made objects to the individuals who inspired them, but also distributes them in the neighborhood of South Kensington, where she first met her interviewees. The actual objects produced are important elements of Kim's work but acquire significance only through the collaborative and performative elements of her project. To speed up the dynamics of the city, Kim approaches it and its communities from the small and intimate, rather than the monumental scale. Creating new connections and new communities on a micro level, her use of design explores an alternative way of city planning.

SUPER-W
MAKING WISHES COME TRUE



So-hyun Kim

I was in the temple where people try not to wish, and try not to want to have anything. They were strongly training themselves. I was confused. I was more wondering about the world outside. I wanted to know what people think and what they are looking for. Actually I wanted to know what kinds of things I should think about.

One day I decided to ask the people about their wishes directly. I decided that I will think about their wishes. We will solve them together.





Not to be here in
the cold - go away
to a hot country
on the beach

I've got
no wish.

I wish
a blue
Teddy Bear.

TO travel more!



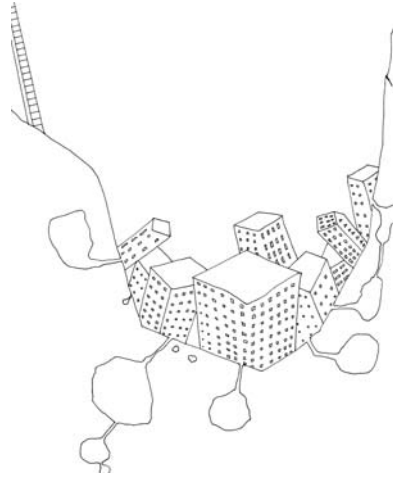
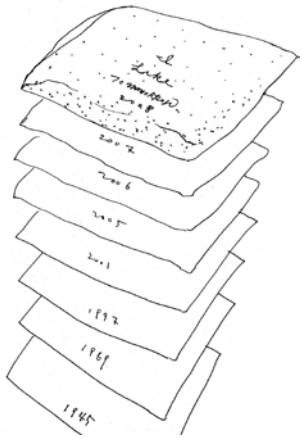
nice sunny day

nice beach

and Relaxing

More sunshine
& less aggressive
people!

Wish for better
year



blue bears picture here

Dear _____

This will be a letter which is a response from So-Hyun to the people making wishes, it says what she does and maybe what the first projects are...Works display an apparent longing for a lost past. His expertly created facsimiles of historical objects bear the false patina of a specific time that could deceive even the most observant viewer. These recreations started small – with bus tickets and postage stamps – before he moved on to larger-scale copies such as Wagon (2002), a 1:1 recreation of a 1940s railway car. In Paris–Luxembourg.

Yours Sincerely,

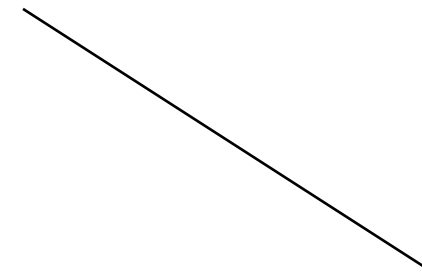
Super-W

Super-W
Royal College of Art
Kensington Gore
London SW7 2EU

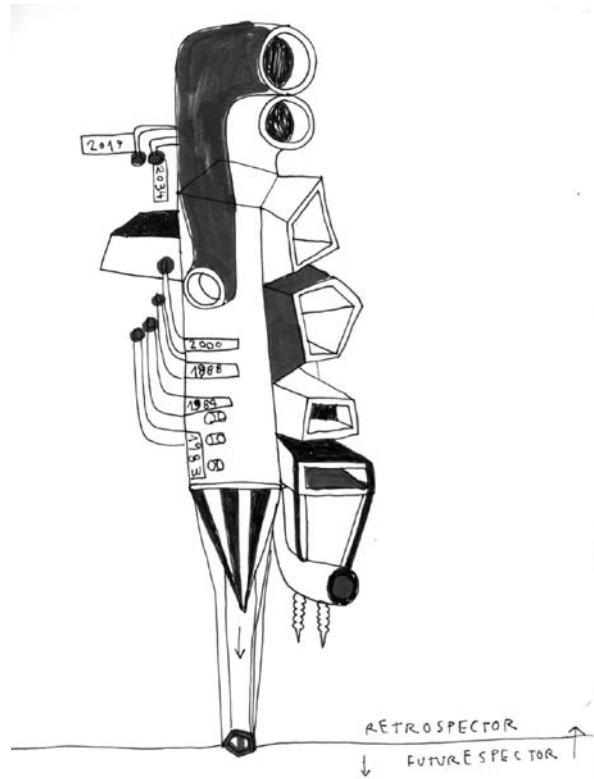
Nina Mrsnik's research is a continuous contemplation about design, and the purpose of design; an attempt for a justification of its existence. "I want to question design and myself, as a designer: Do we need more objects? How to fulfill the need for making objects? How do I come to the point when I can make formalist decisions? How to justify myself as a designer? How to limit my choices? How to be more specific?" Mrsnik's project is about finding her own personal approach to design. Her work shares much with that of an illustrator. In an animation called "The Rolling Wardrobe: A Film for an Object" Mrsnik investigates the value of objects from the perspective of design. "The Rolling Wardrobe" is a fictive story about an imagined training camp where, over the course of twenty days, participants arrive at an advanced "postcapitalist" understanding of and appreciation for their surrounding environs and the objects found therein. By depriving these objects of commercial value (expressed in money), the objects then return to a purely functional valuation. Mrsnik has created the term "Objectual Socialism" to describe an utopist future where all objects are valued equally.

In her graffiti-like drawings of chairs around the borough of South Kensington, Mrsnik applies some of the ideas explored in "The Rolling Wardrobe" to the public realm. These scribbles onto the three-dimensional urban environment resulted from Mrsnik's observations of people, and their use of public space. Mrsnik's theme is the chair, as archetypical design object. However, instead of taking an object as her subject, Mrsnik looks at people's behavior. Mrsnik records her observations through drawings of chairs on walls, or on the cornered edges of stairs; she designs chairs without really building them. When people sit on a chair, the action actualizes the function; the chair is already there. Mrsnik's drawings therefore exist rather as notes or proposals projected onto objects. As in "The Rolling Wardrobe", her urban interventions become manifestos, statements about design. An experimental and dreamy way of finding one's way back to the origins of design. In her urban drawings, Mrsnik's attempt is to rediscover and – through communication, and sketching up her drawings – open up new possibilities which reside in found objects and places.

MACHINES, CHAIRS AND OTHER QUESTIONS

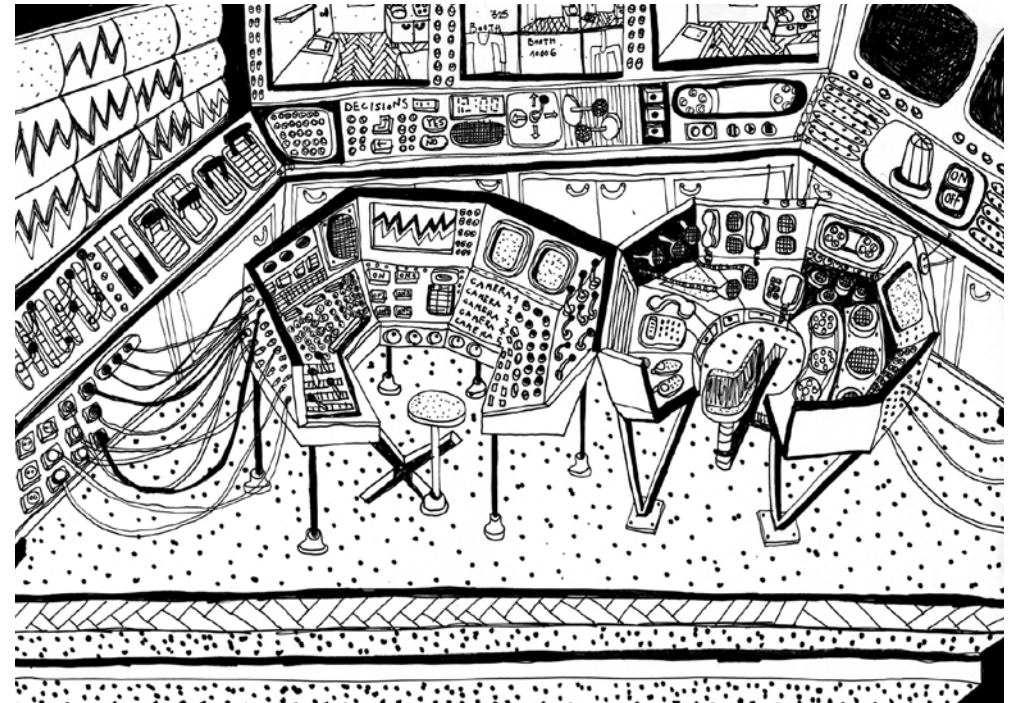


Nina Mrsnik

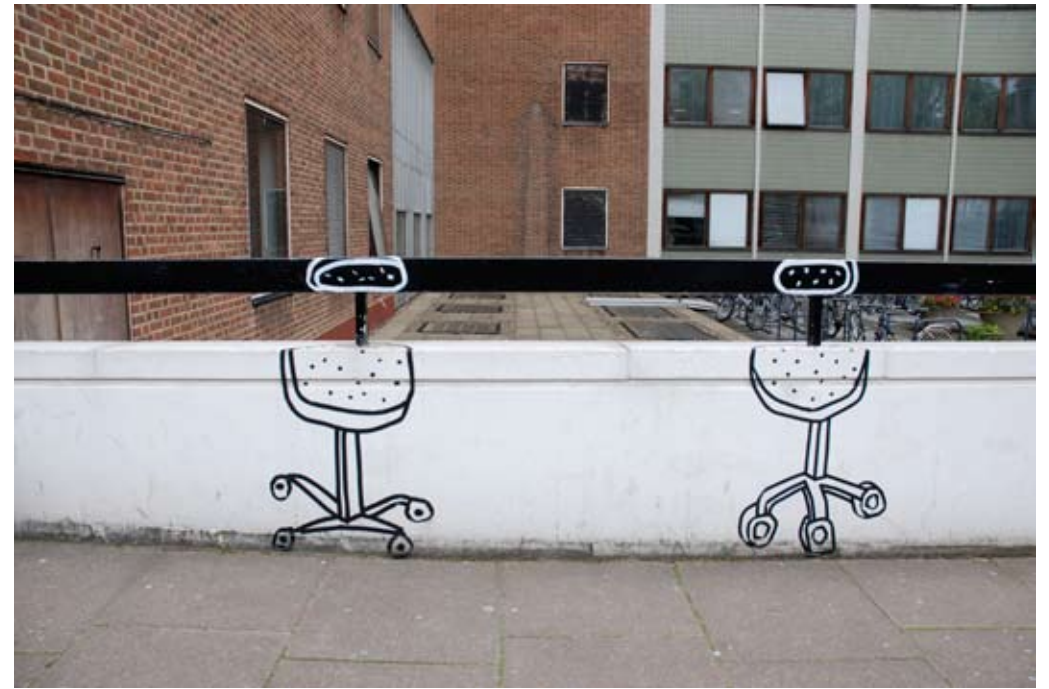


To me that's the starting point. I mean, I do it because I want to make something. I think that's a desire, you know, or a need. I think that I recognize that I want to make something, and so I try to make something. But then you get to think about it and that's where the problems starts because you can't help thinking about it, wondering whether is good or bad.

—Martin Creed



rolling wardrobe pics



chair #2
cast concrete
square section metal beam



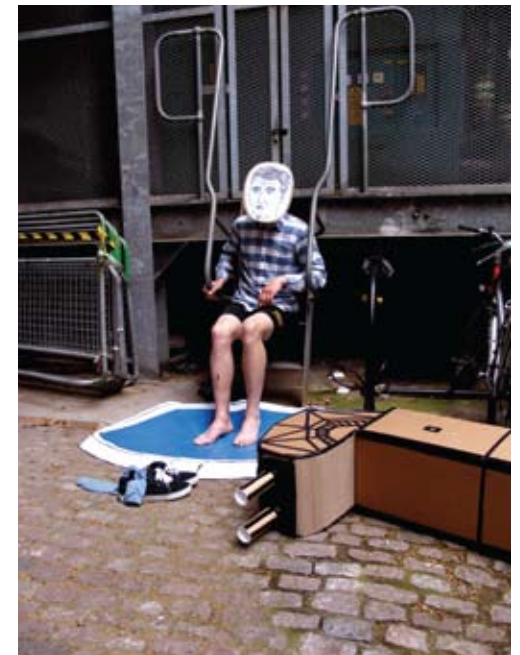
chair #4
oak wood



chair #3
concrete blocks
black tiles



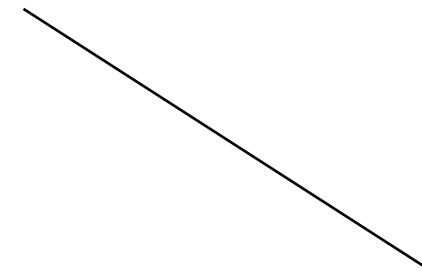
chair #5
cast concrete
bricks



A small action becomes bigger by repetition and might make every corner of the city the best place to sit.

I first came across Clemence Seilles's work in the RCA galleries. She was building a reading area for the second year curating exhibition. I joined her in the construction and helped to cover the benches and bookshelves with white and yellow tape. She used simple materials: precut beams of soft wood, tape and wire. The construction was simple; the building process was relatively fast. The result was striking. The structure adapted to the preexisting site as a living organism. It followed arbitrarily the architectural forms and small details, the curves and corners, sneaking up on the stairs under the window. The benches and bookshelves went against the ostensibly rigid and rough materials employed and visually appeared almost painterly as the transparent tape evoked fresh paint. This simple furniture was made by the big bay windows of the Henry Moore Gallery, to fulfill a specific yet temporary role – to be destroyed or eventually adapted to a new situation, in a new place. It was determined by its site, the structure's designation set by its role in the exhibition, and also by time – the time available to build it, as well as the temporality of the justification of its existence. In this installation, as well as in Seilles's other projects, the work process as improvisation and performance is a crucial element. *The Reading Area* and *The Sleeping and Living Units* built in her temporary studio, or in her home, are all short-lived, transitory creations. The results are objects which fulfill precise needs and exist in their own temporality, acquiring the vindication of their existence right in their death, as in a Heideggerian sense. However, the process of building is also heavily linked to time as the builder herself exists, lives and works under its demands. The *Made In Time* series highlights best the performative element linked to the notion of time in Seilles's work. A chair made in 8 minutes differs in its form to a chair made in 20 minutes. Time – just as much as function, place and material – is physically shaping the objects, according to the amount of time spent on making them. The themes of effectiveness and spontaneity return in Seilles's interest in temporary constructions of the city: *Adaptation Generates Invention*. Building is necessary for living; the faster it happens the more effective it is. Seilles, to make her work more efficient, explores different ways of sketching in her drawings, in spatially extended versions with scaled up wires, and also in her use of material with the tape technique. Her work method can be described as extended sketching, a technique which prevents delays and in-between states in the working process, and allows for a greater degree of fluidity. Seilles's draws inspiration from Aldo Rossi in that the initial sketch "is exactly like the finished building". But while for Rossi a site-specific approach stems from the historical permanence of form, for Seilles it arises from dynamic changes in function.

DESIGN THROUGH ADAPTATION



Clemence Seilles

ADAPTATION GENERATES INVENTION



How much can you go into details and create something unique because you are not allowed to destroy, only preserve. How much adaptation generates invention.

ADAPTATION GENERATES INVENTION



£99 MILLION FLATS FOR 99-SECOND OBJECTS

In Knightsbridge there will be the most expensive lot of residences of London with a starting price of ...£99 million.

the flats are luxuriously furnished before being sold.
the flats are de-furnished when they are sold.
the flats are luxuriously refurnished when they are occupied by their owner.

It is not about reevaluating the way we live in our environment, it is about reevaluating how fast and much more we want and whether we think we need this in our environment.



DESIGN FOR A RANDOM OCCUPATION



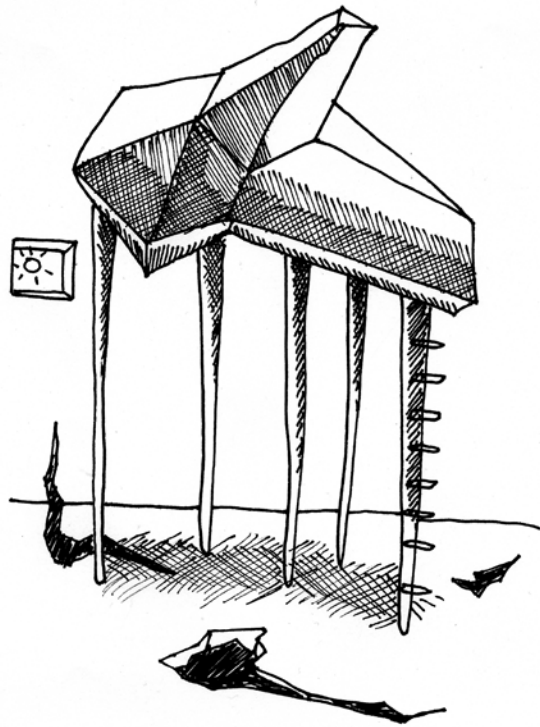
unoccupied



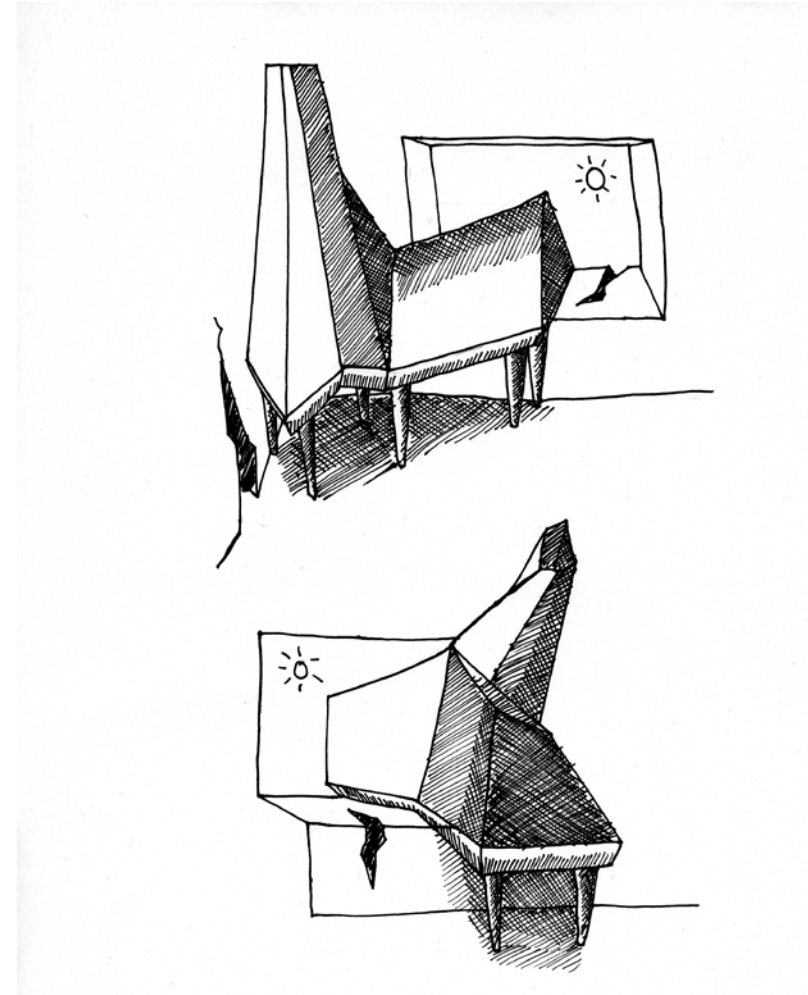
occupied

The student decides to take residence in the abandoned hairdressing salon at 33 Thurloe Street. The building is occupied once again.

The student decides to sleep in the depilation room. A functional layer is added and a sleeping pod is built.



According to Aldo Rossi, the most important moment in creation in architecture is the birth of the idea. The initial sketch 'is exactly like the finished building'.



DESIGN FOR AN ALTERNATIVE PLACE



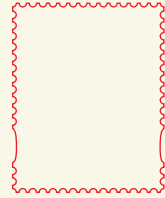
WHAT DO I NEED?

The time becomes shorter and shorter. There are two weeks left. I need to produce, to live, to get to transport, to eat, to think, to sleep, to plan and so on.

Let's pack it all together to make the object of my living for this small amount of time left.

This is about a moment of life that takes place at once.

This is not about surviving.



PLATFORM 2 DESIGN PRODUCTS



ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART



LONDON SW7 9EU

