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WHERE THE  
HEART BREATHES

TĀ TE MANAWA



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## TĀ TE MANAWA

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# ABSTRACT

The rapid rate that consumer culture has us disposing of and buying new objects is not environmentally sustainable. Current sustainable design solutions are mostly material based and superficial, focusing on only the production stage of object lifecycles. In contrast, designing to facilitate emotional bonds with objects can increase a product's overall lifespan. This study specifically explores objects and the feelings of emotional comfort, safety and the meaningful associations connected to them. Working to keep up with constant consumer demand has also created a culture that associates work, money, and productivity directly to living successfully. This hustle culture has devalued and stigmatised rest, and people are burning out because they feel guilty when they are not constantly productive. There is a good opportunity to explore how designed objects can facilitate the opportunity for deeper relationships with objects encourage assigning longer-lasting value to things and slow the rate at which we consume.. Attachment to comforting things stems from a human's "deep-seated psychological need for emotional support" (Bell and Spikins). Feeling supported improves the ability to deal with demanding situations and increases emotional durability. I employ self-reflection and a practice-based iterative design process to develop a piece of furniture that supports the user to prioritise their emotional wellbeing and practice guilt-free self-care. I explore the way that furniture can provide a perception of safe space where a user can separate themselves from their work and give themselves permission to rest.

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# INTRODUCTION

Design school has shown me, as a budding designer, that we can utilise design in the creation of objects that make tasks easier and more intuitive. It has shown me that design can create beautiful things that bring people joy and help people to express themselves and that it is a way to invoke positive change and make a difference in the lives of everyday people.

We often see design being used to do all of these things, but what is also becoming increasingly evident is that design's impact is being diluted by capitalism and rampant consumerism. Design's potential to create positive change is increasingly being out-competed by the drive to sell more. It "has become a practice without content, geared towards surface appearances and financial success" (Chapman 71). Profit is being prioritised over making meaningful change.

When selling more and selling fast becomes the top priority, we see people's object relationships become more fickle resulting in the decreased lifespan of objects. With resource shortages and climate change also becoming a more pressing issue, the things we design in this manner are adding to the problem.

Sustainable design solutions are becoming increasingly more important to consumers, and consequently brands are attempting to respond (Chen 1). Manufacturers and brands promote sustainable materials as the resolution to our environmental issues, and using it as a marketing tool to sell objects at the same fast rate. (Kopnina 615) These 'conscious' products are often still manufactured unethically overseas - because of lack of labour laws mean manufacturing costs can be kept low, which keeps products 'affordable' and profit margins high.

To make a difference we need to design objects that encourage people to consume less by increasing the potential lifespan of products. This is achieved by designing quality items that people can keep and use for longer, and to encourage people to repair things rather than replace them. Reduce, Reuse/Repair, Recycle is ordered by their impact. Recycle is being prioritised, but reduce and reuse, which emotional attachment utilises, are stronger solutions to our resource issues.

Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim explain how having an emotional connection to an object can increase its lifespan. These objects are cherished and well looked after – often even after they no longer fulfil their original purpose effectively. The emotional loss that is felt when sentimental objects are absent means that people are far less likely to throw them away readily; but are emotionally predisposed to identifying ways of repairing these items, or treating them with more care in the first place' (2)

When an emotional attachment with an object is formed, it disrupts the current system by extending product lifespan and slowing the need to consume. Capitalism has rewarded us with financial gain when we design objects that fit into the bigger and better ethos, but I believe that there is just as much potential for design to be used to oppose it. In this study I aim to explore how design can facilitate an emotional bond with an object to increase its overall lifespan and slow consumption habits. Changing the way we design to create the opportunity for more meaningful relationships with objects is a promising way to counter our current throwaway culture.

Within the system of capitalism people are also a resource. To keep up with ever-increasing demand, people are having to work longer and harder, thus are neglecting their own wellbeing. Hustle culture is keeping capitalism thriving by convincing people that their success and worth is directly linked to their productivity (Bellezza et al.). It has stigmatised rest and self-care and created a generation of stressed, anxious and exhausted people. (Dionne)

Objects that we have a special attachment to have a way of soothing and comforting; they can make a person feel safe through only their presence. To rest and regulate our emotions, feeling

safe is essential (Lister 34), however the guilt and shame we feel while resting is stopping us from being able to have a truly restful experience. What if a piece of furniture could aid us in creating a safe space in which we can slow down and practice self-care?

In the following exegesis, I look deeply into the reasons that people form attachments to comforting objects and analyse whether the feelings they elicit could be facilitated and enhanced by specific design decisions. I use this research as the basis for an iterative design process that explores whether furniture can be designed to facilitate feelings of emotional comfort and safety, and whether this could then result in emotional attachment and extended product life. Within the scope of this project, I examine the rest that we require outside of sleep, and the way that furniture and safe spaces can be designed to accommodate it.

*How can furniture be reimaged to facilitate emotional attachment by designing a safe and comforting space that allows people to grant themselves permission to rest and foster emotional balance?*

*PART 1*

# CONTEXT REVIEW

# CONTEXT REVIEW

## *Product and consumer culture*

Consumer culture has us convinced that our possessions govern both our self-worth and our happiness (Ball and Tasaki 157). These objects, both personally and from the perspective of others, represent our personality, aspirations and the direction we want to take our lives (Chapman 42).

The association between happiness and novelty needs to be reassessed in our changing social and environmental context. Our possessions have the potential to bring us long term happiness, but currently we are actually pretty bad at knowing what will make us happy. (Manson *How to Be Happy* 3) Marketing and business have played a significant role in creating and maintaining this culture, in part constructing the association between consumer objects and our perceived worth. Constantly changing fashions and trends keeps us consuming; therefore, it is a useful narrative for markets to promote. Chapman says this is effective because “Consumption is founded on a lack – a desire always for something not there” (41). This lack drives us to repeatedly introduce new things into our lives. Consumerism works as a system of continuous growth because it functions upon the constant changing of human need. The increasing need to acquire more things is comparable to an addiction; the novelty of new things wears off increasingly faster and must be sought elsewhere “just as addicts need more and more of their drug to get the same level of pleasure” (Heller 31).

We fixate on novel pleasure, convinced by mass media that new things create happiness. Materialistic pleasures are superficial and easily obtained. This is what makes ‘Retail Therapy’ so effective, but also so short lived. Novel pleasure and happiness are not the same, novelty is numbing and distracting, happiness takes work.

The idea that success or money can make us happy relies on the belief that happiness is a result, a destination that we can eventually reach. However, Mark Manson theorises that happiness

is not a destination, but is actually more involved with how ‘in control’ we feel of our lives. (Manson *How to Be Happy* 4) So, if we want to live happier, how do we take back our control? Can designed objects assist us in reclaiming agency over our emotions?

While studying, I was taught about the ways I would be able to help people and the planet by using the skills I was working toward mastering. But consumerism has me feeling trapped. I want to design things that are sustainable that also serve the purpose of making people’s lives better, but how is this possible while constrained to the limits of what will be ‘profitable?’ Capitalism often reduces industrial design to an aesthetic endeavour or just the act of producing ‘stuff’, but Bruce Mau stresses that design’s “ultimate purpose” is “Massive Change” (43). It is a methodology for leadership and a strong way to change attitudes. The power of designed objects is therefore underestimated and underutilised in response to big issues like resource scarcity or the environmental crisis. Design research is the perfect opportunity to explore this, as it is an environment that can exist outside of the constraints of capitalism and business.

The constant marketing of ‘newer, better’ objects has made our relationships with objects far more fleeting and we are consuming faster, therefore disposing of more. This system is unsustainable with Earth’s limited resources. Sustainability is increasingly becoming a higher priority for consumers, and designers are also becoming more informed on the issue (Chapman 9; Chen 1). However, the focus is geared toward materials, with no intention to slow consumption habits. While sustainable material development is beneficial for addressing environmental concerns, it is not a fix-all solution and is often used as a band aid to obscure the amount that we consume and the resultant waste. (Kopnina 615)

Objects are not inherently bad nor are they the source of our problem, rather the attitudes we project on said objects forms the basis of our need to endlessly consume. Design has a significant influence on how we live our lives and see the world (Baxter et al.), but it currently fosters a fickle attitude toward things. Therefore, it is probable that by changing our approach to designing objects around the needs of the consumer, we can redefine attitudes and relationships with objects. By demonstrating that profound relationships with our possessions are possible, then we can inspire people to think further ahead than a spontaneous purchase thinking “this will make me happy”. If happiness is dependent on feeling in control, then long term happiness is obtained through personal growth and problem-solving, not our possessions.



(Manson *The Subtle Art* 31)

*“To be happy we need something to solve. Happiness is therefore a form of action; it’s an activity, not something that is passively bestowed upon you.” (Manson The Subtle Art 31)*

The alternative relationship I want to foster in relation to a designed object is “This will help me to grow, so I will be happy.” As cliché as it sounds, life is a journey, so I aim to design objects that support happiness through supporting a journey of personal growth.

I want my practice to reflect inherently people focused sustainable design. When things are designed not just at a functional or aesthetic level but also at an emotional level, they gain the ability to have a lasting impact. ‘Support’ objects become things that are intimately tied to our identity through their contribution to our personal development and the comfort and familiarity that they provide. This is where emotional attachment piqued my interest. Attachment objects assign irreplaceable sentimental value to objects, inspiring people to keep things longer. By recognising and accepting within design that consumers do not always assign value to objects based on rational thought, but rather the ability of objects to elicit specific emotional responses, I believe there is potential to reshape consumer attitudes and habits.

I am using the tertiary study environment as a space separate from consumerism, to explore the way that designed objects, in particular furniture, influences people’s attitudes towards their relationships with objects and themselves.

## *Emotional attachment; comfort and safety*

When we become attached to something, just the thought of losing it is painful (Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim 1). This kind of connection is usually discussed in the context of people – friends and family – but these emotional bonds can also extend to inanimate objects. Objects are given significance through association. They are often objects present during impactful or memorable moments of our lives, and the association we assign to these objects turns them into a “memory container” (Chapman 65). These impactful moments can be both positive and negative, and can manifest varied sentiments, for example nostalgia, pride, or a sense of comfort. The important thing seems to be that the interaction or experience associated with the objects needs to be significant or sentimental.

When we imbue an object with emotional significance, we are much less likely to let the object go. They become irreplaceable when they become entwined with a “symbolic meaning to its owner that is not present in other products even when they are physically identical” (Schifferstein, Zwartkruis-Pelgrim 2). To part with the object therefore, is to also part with the attached personal sentiment and emotions. To avoid the resulting feeling of loss from parting with attachment objects, people are likely to take better care of their things and put effort toward repairing over replacing. Ball and Tasaki map the stages of ownership in 5 stages; pre-acquisition, early ownership, mature ownership, pre-disposal, and post-disposal (160). Emotional attachment extends the mature ownership (owning something long term) and pre-disposal (thinking about disposing) stages of ownership.

Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim discuss attachment as a result of products becoming a self-extension and a representation of our self-image. Objects support these various parts of the self in separate ways. (3). My design practice targets the diffuse self and private self. These two parts look inward and seek pleasurable experience (diffuse self) and personal validation (private self). I want to create space to facilitate growth of the private self. This both validates

the user’s individual autonomy and creates an opportunity for emotional attachment.

I want to approach personal growth through the validation of self-care. Giving yourself permission to heal and taking back control over the way that we interpret and respond to the world is the first step in creating positive personal change (Manson, *The Subtle Art* 90).

Self-care, like rest, is also stigmatised (Dionne) so I want to use design to create a furniture piece that facilitates that first step of giving the self permission, by providing an environment of safety. Attachment objects act as a trigger for an associated emotion. For my study I am interested in how objects can be imbued with the ability to evoke a feeling of emotional safety.

*“We all feel vulnerable, insecure, or anxious at some point in our lives. At these times certain unique cherished objects can often hold a remarkable power to reassure us, to connect us to loved ones and to provide us with a sense of comfort and security.” (Bell and Spikins)*

As humans we can process risk subconsciously and this process manifests itself physically as emotions. “It is the gut that tells people whether they are safe or unsafe” (Mulcahy). This process is called neuroception, and it is the way that the body detects and deals with threats. “Safe can be defined as free from harm or hurt. So, feeling safe means you do not anticipate either harm or hurt, emotionally or physically” (Preisler). These threats can be both physical and psychological. Within the scope of this project, I focus on psychological safety, and how this affects our ability to rest and care for ourselves.

Psychological safety has become a business buzzword. This is indicative of work commonly being a place where people do not feel psychologically safe. We feel safe when we feel able to personally engage “without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career” (Kahn 708). When our self-image and other personal traits become threatened or attacked, we become defensive and anxious about our actions, the same emotions we feel when faced with a physical threat. Working full time in environments that foster these continuous negative emotions is exhausting.

We are often under pressure in the workplace to get work done efficiently, but we are not always at work. Home is supposed to be our safe place, it is the place that we are supposed to rest and take care of ourselves. In the current climate where people are more often working from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the separation between these two spaces is becoming hazy, and people's emotions are becoming unbalanced as the stressful workplace begins to permeate the home space. Furniture in the home has the potential to help foster a healthier separation between rest and work within the home, so that people can remain balanced and happy.

Maslow theorises that “human needs arrange themselves in hierarchies of pre-potency... the appearance of one need usually rests on the prior satisfaction of another, more pre-potent need” (3). In his hierarchy of needs (Fig. 1) safety is categorised in the lower half of the pyramid (Maslow), this is because it is only when we are not threatened, our survival needs are met and we feel safe, that our bodies are able to relax and experience the reflective thought, necessary for self-growth and personal identity. (Lister, 34)

Our attachment to things that comfort us stems from human's “deep-seated psychological need for emotional support.” Our wellbeing, as well as our ability to deal with demanding situations are both benefited when we feel supported, and we are more emotionally resilient. (Bell and Spikins)

## Maslow's Heirarchy of Needs

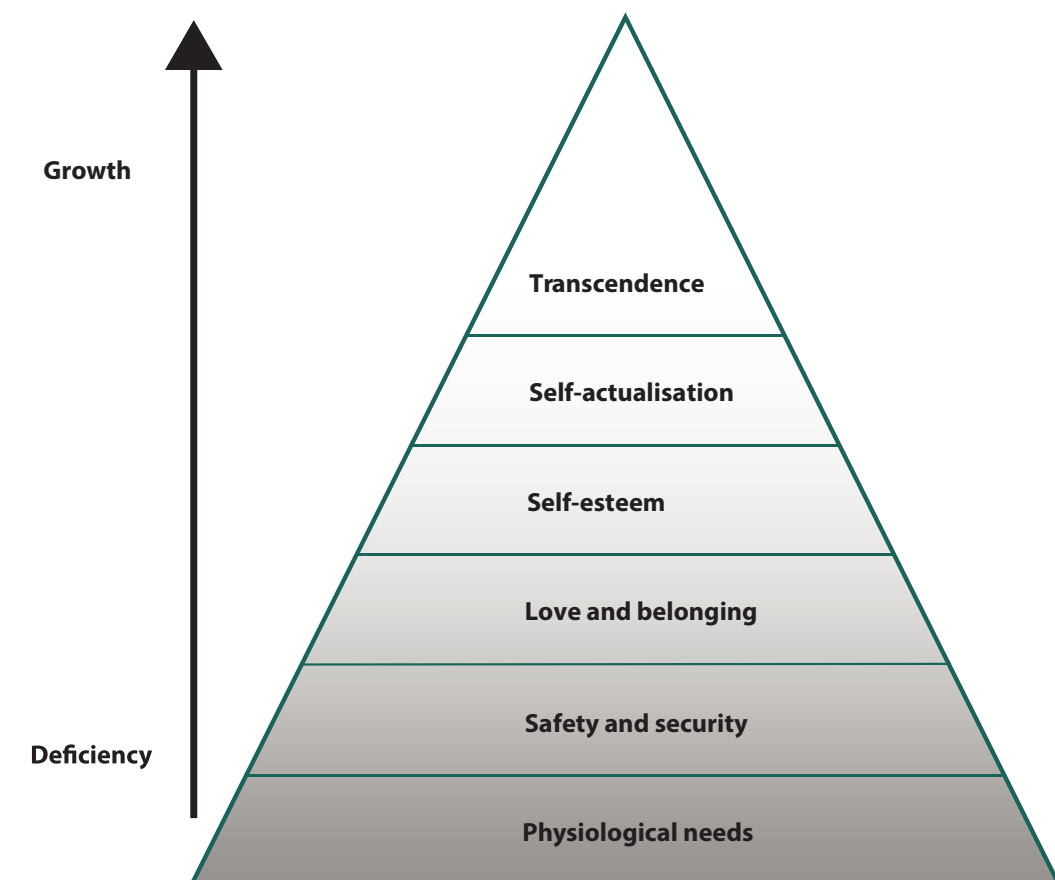


Figure 1 - Adapted from Maslow A. H. *Hierarchy of Needs* [1943], *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396,

## Transitional objects

Safety is an emotion we attach to objects from an extremely early age. Feeling safe is an even higher priority during childhood, since we are still developing our emotional systems, and learning how to read them. Consequently, we learn how to create an environment of psychological safety quickly.

This is often done through attachment objects called ‘Transitional Objects’ (Winnicot, 1953). We bestow objects with the same feeling of comfort as the presence of our primary caregiver to provide a “safe haven” to cope during their absence from our view. (Bell and Spikins 1) We become quickly inseparable from these objects and they often retain their significance into adult life as they become associated with childhood memories . These are our first attachment objects in the context of comfort, and they usually come in the form of blankets, or toys such as teddy bears. It is common to see these children’s toys become worn through excessive use and attachment, often to the point of becoming unfit for purpose and evoke reactions from others as being unhygienic and threadbare. An object in this kind of state would usually be thrown out or replaced, however the emotional meaning and character bestowed upon these objects makes them irreplaceable, and they are often repaired more than once

Because these objects are so present in our childhoods, they become memory containers (Chapman 65) for important developmental moments, as well as being a continued emotional supporter. In fact, one of my childhood soft toys, a plush elephant, is supporting me currently by steadying my laptop as I write this.

If support from objects through developmental stages is so effective during childhood, can this same support be translated into our development as adults? Personal growth, both physical and psychological, happens throughout life, and this can be made easier with supporting beacons, whether that be friends, family, or an object .

I aim to explore how furniture can become an emotional support object by becoming a safe space for self-care. Design has the ability to intentionally construct experiences and influence human behaviour. (Baxter et al.) I want to design a restful and safe environment to build emotional attachment as a support object like childhood transitional objects.



*Figure 2 - Robson, S, Efur Elephant the Pillow Pet, who still lives on my bed. (2013)*

## Balancing emotions: rest

Our emotions help us to perceive and evaluate our environment, allowing us to navigate life and make informed decisions. (Clore and Ortony 6). To be able to respond adaptively to a complex society, we have evolved multiple emotional systems. They direct us by prompting us with both physical and mental feelings (Elkman 46). Our emotional responses are generally split into two main categories, positive and negative affect, each representing different forms of motivation. Therefore, our emotions and the state of affect associated with them form the basis of our information processing system. (Zatura 12) Both positive and negative emotions serve a survival purpose and are integral to our decision making and to keeping ourselves safe.

Both Alex Zatura and Don Norman outline the importance of and difference between each of our emotional affect systems. When we feel positive, our brain function broadens, we are better at learning, and we can produce more creative solutions to problems. Positive emotions foster enjoyment, creativity and personal growth. Negative emotions like fear and sadness are a call for change. Stress improves focus, concentration and our attention to detail, allowing us to solve the problems causing our stress more efficiently (Norman 19; Zatura 122). These benefits apply to low levels of stress and anxiety and are separate from higher level stress associated with anxiety disorders.

Both categories of emotions can be felt simultaneously; this allows us to analyse them comparatively while making decisions. (Zatura 13) For example, before getting on a rollercoaster, we simultaneously feel excitement and fear, but can analyse these emotions together to decide whether we feel safe enough to ride.

Without properly understanding the role of our emotions, people often jump to the conclusion that negative emotions are bad and should not be felt. Healthy amounts of negative affect can be great for focussed, efficient problem solving, and is therefore a beneficial state to be in to

work efficiently. However, because we spend so much of our time working and worrying in environments that do not feel psychologically safe, we end up stuck in a perpetually negative state. This upsets our emotional balance, and leaves us tired, anxious, and burnt out. High levels of anxiety and stress are damaging and painful, so being able to regulate your state of emotional affect is extremely important.

*“We suffer for the simple reason that suffering is biologically useful. It is nature’s preferred agent for inspiring change. We have evolved to always live with a certain degree of dissatisfaction and insecurity, because it’s the mildly dissatisfied and insecure creature that’s going to do the most work to innovate and survive.” (Manson, The Subtle Art 30)*

Richard Lister discusses the importance of moving between states of positive and negative affect in Radical Rest. He refers to the two states as “Fight or Flight” (Negative affect) and “Rest and Digest” (Positive affect). Within the scope of this project, I will be referring to the rest that we require outside of sleep. Both are equally important to our survival but being stuck in either one creates issues (41; Norman 19; Zatura 122). It is often forgotten that our mind and our body are fully connected, and we cannot care for one and neglect the other (Lister, 38). Burn-out for example, while often caused by mental and emotional exhaustion, is also felt physically. Rest, as a preventer of burnout, is an extremely important part of keeping both physically and emotionally healthy.

If we neglect our bodies’ need to rest, then not only do we set ourselves up for burn-out, our fight or flight state will also become less effective over an extended period. Lister explains this through the analogy of bandwidth. If our mental bandwidth is storing things that we have not been able to digest, like unresolved feelings or unprocessed memories, then we disassociate and are unable to focus on the initial stressor. (Lister 79) Fight or flight is not a state we are meant to be in for extended periods of time without a break. Fight or Flight is inherently a safety mechanism and being in this state tells your mind that you are not safe. (Lister 40) This feeling keeps our body alert and ready to defend itself, which makes it close to impossible to Rest and Digest.

Positive emotions don’t call for the same kind of specific actions that negative emotions



do. They broaden our perspective, calm anxiety, and allow for true contemplation and deep thought. Therefore, positive emotions can facilitate a truly restful experience without the demand for a specific action, meaning you are free to do anything that feels restful to you, free of external pressure. (Celestine)

The key to finding emotional balance is locating the method that allows you to manually switch off your fight or flight mechanism (Lister 41). Looking into the ways that people rest, and why they struggle to rest, is important because emotional imbalance is in many respects a consequence of the way that current western society views rest. Capitalist society views time as money and profits come before people. Productivity is king, and success is disproportionately tied up in how much money we make and how ‘in demand’ our skills are. (Bellezza et al. 119) Capitalism dictates that our personal value is directly linked to what we own and contribute to society, so forms of personal care like rest and self care are sidelined by the need to make our time feel ‘productive’. The stigma this creates toward rest and the feeling of guilt and inadequacy that we are conditioned to feel during periods of downtime are major reasons that people seek constant productivity. We have been convinced that it is shameful to spend our time unproductively, as it reflects negatively on our perceived self-image. (Kahn 708)

Rest activities are extremely varied, results of the BBC’s *The Rest Test* list the activities most commonly enjoyed by respondents. (Hammond *The Art of Rest*) Rest is both active and inactive, physical, and mental. For something that has so many ways it can be achieved, what is it exactly that stops so many of us from resting?

**The answer is permission.**

Due to the stigma surrounding rest, people do not feel psychologically safe enough to allow themselves to perform the activities they find restful. Some restful activities are more stigmatised than others, in particular the ‘inactive’ kinds of resting, like “doing nothing in particular” or “daydreaming” (Hammond, *The Art of Rest* 114, 57) We need to start giving ourselves permission to rest. (253) Incubation and rest are key stages of creativity and thought processing, but for the sake of busyness and productivity, people are missing this. (Sanders and Stappers, 51).

## ***BBC’s The Rest Test***

### *10 Most Restful Activities*

1. Reading
2. Spending Time in Nature
3. I Want to Be Alone
4. Listening to Music
5. Doing Nothing in particular
6. A Good Walk
7. A Nice Hot Bath
8. Daydreaming
9. Watching Tv
10. Mindfulness

*The Rest Test had 18,000 participants across 135 different countries.*

*Two thirds responded that they did not get enough rest and desired more.*

*(Hammond, The Art of Rest )*

## Solitude

Being alone ranked third in the Rest Test's survey of most popular rest activities. Interestingly, this was consistent across both introverts and extroverts. (Hammond *How Being Alone May Be the Key to Rest*). When alone, you have no responsibility to others, and you are free from observation. In other words, when you are alone you can avoid the scrutiny of the world.

“Although solitude-seeking behaviours may be regarded by some as antithetical to well-being, other important thinkers have argued that time alone might serve an important psychic function.” (Detrixhe et al. 313) Solitude is an effective way to escape outside pressures, and to spend time thinking and tending to one's emotions without fear of judgement. Solitude creates a safe place where we can consider our own wants and needs, without outside pressures preventing us from putting ourselves first; a place to consider your own thoughts and reflect on who you are and how your mind works.

However, many of us are also afraid of solitude because we are afraid of being lonely. It is possible to be alone without being lonely; alone time is positive when we have chosen to be alone, rather than being forced into it. We are also less likely to experience loneliness in solitude if we have strong human relationships to other people. (Hammond *The Art of Rest* 187) Resting is often a vulnerable activity, especially in seeking solitude. The anticipation of interruption is often enough to stop someone's time from being properly restful. (Hammond *How Being Alone May Be the Key to Rest*).

I want to explore in further depth how furniture can facilitate a sense of emotional safety that can encourage people to seek more alone time to reflect and rest.

## Emotional design processing

I want to explore whether a designed experience/environment that elicits specific emotion can facilitate the opportunity for attachment to occur .

Our emotions are a product of our analysis of the world around us. Desmet models his appraisal theory as the variables that contribute to this analysis and consequent emotions – product, concern and appraisal. (Fig 3) An appraisal is generated when a product is evaluated in the context of a specific need or concern, and emotions are triggered by this appraisal. As designers, the variable that we have control over is the product. In response to the concern, we need to design products with stimulus that will inspire an appropriate appraisal and resulting emotion.

In the context of my study, the emotion that I am trying to inspire is safety, and my concern is that rest is needed, but not obtainable. The contextual research dictates that the appraisal I am seeking is that the piece should provide a comfortable, threat free environment. To achieve this appraisal I need to manipulate the variable I have control over – the product. (Fig 4)

Stimulants are received through our five senses: Sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing. Emotions are triggered through our analysis of these stimulants to create a response to our surroundings (Desmet and Hekkert 5). For most people, vision is their predominant sense, and it drives the urge to explore something with more of our senses. Touch is our most intimate sense (Mather 3) and when utilised can be extremely effective at soothing, for example a comforting hug or a blanket around the shoulders. I want to entice the user to engage tactilely with my furniture piece, by using comfortable and safe visual cues.

To understand how to elicit feelings of comfort, safety and rest, it is important to acknowledge how these specific emotions are triggered. Don Norman discusses emotional

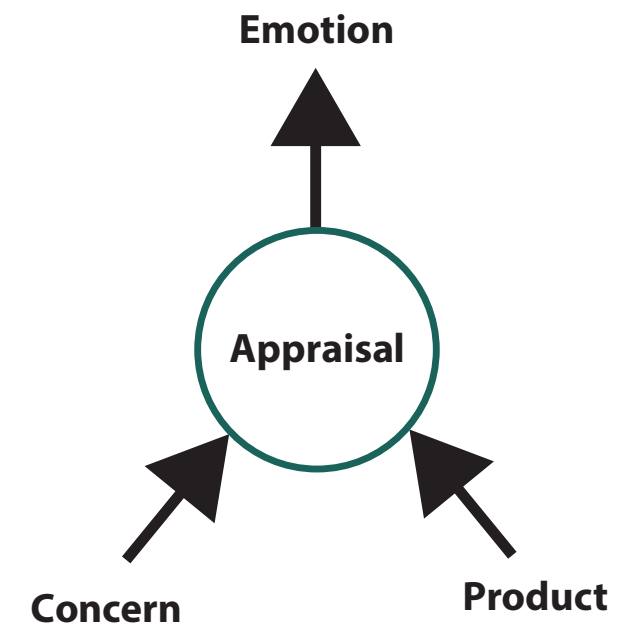


Figure 3 - Adapted from Desmet P  
Appraisal Theory  
Designing emotions  
(2002)

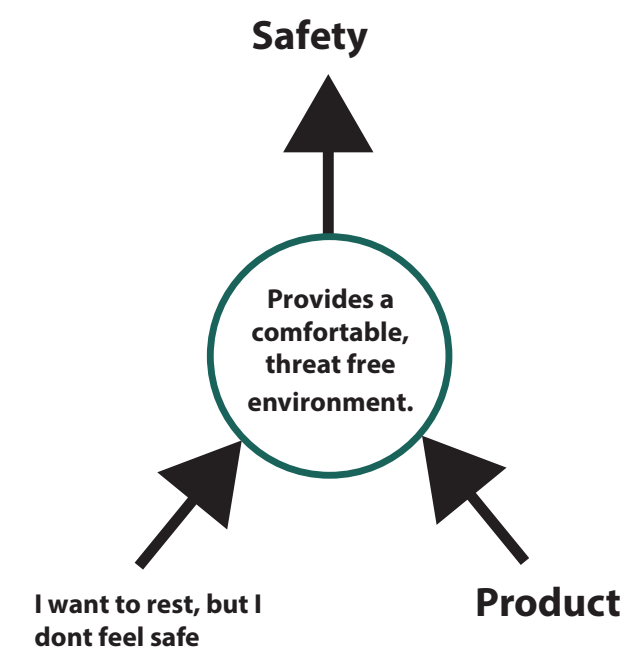


Figure 4 - Adapted from Desmet P  
Appraisal Theory for  
emotional safety  
Designing emotions  
(2002)



stimulation in relation to the three levels of brain processing. These levels each contribute to distinct parts of being a functioning emotional being

The visceral level of processing refers to the instinctual and impulsive part of our brain that reacts automatically to stimulus. This part of brain processing is fast, and reactions are triggered unconsciously, like jumping when something gives you a fright. The behavioural level of processing allows us to consciously analyse a situation and alter our behaviour accordingly. This is the part of us that can figure out the best way to use things and decide how to react. The reflective level of processing is analytical, where the brain can contemplate situations and encounters. This is the home of contemplation, reflection and learning about new concepts and generalisations about the world. This is where we hold things like self-image and morals (21).

Feeling safe and comfortable is strongly influenced by our visceral reactions to our environment and our ability to rest is directly affected by these emotions. People are hardwired to notice certain conditions instinctively with only sensory information. As I discussed earlier, this is to do with how our emotions evaluate our surroundings and the state of affect that results . (Norman 21; Zatura 12) these responses are controlled by the brain via our Automatic Nervous System, (ANS) which is responsible for visceral movement, sensation and reactions.

#### ***Visceral - Automatic - prewired - instinctual***

*Visceral Design is about the initial impact of an object*

#### ***Behavioural - conscious brain process - controls every day behaviour***

*Behavioural Design is about the pleasure and effectiveness of use*

#### ***Reflective - contemplative - intellectual - questioning***

*Reflective Design looks at self image, personal satisfaction and memories.*

(Norman 21)

Emotional safety is achievable when in a state of positive affect. Therefore, these visceral triggers need to be key points of consideration in my design exploration. We must be in a state of emotional safety to rest, so it is important that I consider features that will stimulate this emotional response while designing.

### **Sensory stimulants that trigger emotional affect**

#### ***Visceral: Positive affect triggers***

*Warm places  
comfortably lit places  
Sweet tastes and smells  
Soothing sounds  
Harmonious music  
Caresses  
Rhythmic beats*

#### ***Visceral: Negative affect triggers***

*Extremes of hot and cold  
Darkness  
Extremely bright lights or loud sounds  
Heights  
Looming objects (things appearing suddenly)  
Crowded dense terrain  
Crowds of people  
Harsh abrupt sounds  
Sharp objects*

(Norman, 29)

## *Solitary Safe Spaces; Furniture Case Studies*

The following case studies examine the visceral sensory qualities of solitary spaces designed for comfort and rest; they range from fully enclosed spaces to open areas . I have chosen these precedents because they are spaces within the home that provide a restful and safe environment.

## *Sensory swing*

A sensory swing is a piece of furniture that is designed to separate the user from their surroundings by eliminating visual feedback and activating the sense of tactility. This is a form of chosen solitude to aid people when they are feeling overstimulated. Safety is achieved through isolation of the senses and the ability to focus only on the self, separate from too much outside stimulation. The space is small and there is only room for the self, so interruption is less likely. The stretch fabric is soft on the skin and envelops the body in an artificial embrace, all of which are viscerally soothing (Norman 29)

This is an extreme of chosen solitude that is a very soothing and effective way to deal with being overstimulated. This degree of separation is more than I want for my design, but I am intrigued by the intimate way that the fabric cradles the body and the elevated, stretchy shapeless form that moves with the body. This synergistic relationship between user and furniture is something I would love to explore further.



Figure 5 - Unknown [Sensory Swing] Little Nation (2022)  
<https://littlenation.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Grey-TherapySensory-Swing-for-Kids-%E2%80%93-Large-150cm-x-90cm-1.jpg>

## Blanket fort

A blanket fort is another form of chosen solitude a space built by the user as a form of escapism. Like the sensory swing, blanket forts separate people from their usual surroundings, but not from their whole environment, instead creating a unique environment designed to facilitate rest.

Rather than fully eliminating visual feedback, a blanket fort utilises ambient lighting, often lamps or fairy lights, and soft textures of the blankets and cushions to soothe the user. These soft textures also sooth the user's sense of touch and are viscerally safe and comforting. A blanket fort is an informal space, space built by the user as a form of escapism. Blanket materials like wool and batting are also good sound dampeners. Drowning out the sound of the outside world really helps to create a truly separate new world within the fort.

The act of building a blanket fort is a ritual in which you prepare your space for rest. This ritual validates the need for rest and in turn helps the user to give themselves permission to rest. A blanket fort also often allows for the choice to include others in the rest space and activities. It reminds me of building a nest around yourself ready for new growth. This would be interesting to explore within my design practice.



Figure 6 - Smwright [Blanket Fort]  
Flickr (2009)  
(CC BY-NC 2.0) <https://www.flickr.com/photos/shnnnwrght/3463193384/in/album-72157617360085870/>

## Reading nook

A reading nook is an example of a space designed specifically and permanently for restful activities. Unlike the blanket fort, the user does not need to build this space every time rest is needed. The separation in this case is less literal, as the space is still open to the home, however the purpose of the space means the transition to rest is complete simply by occupying the space. I want to explore the way that a reading nook is able to give the feeling of an enclosed space, without physically separating people from the rest of their house. I want to consider how material and spatial composition can achieve this atmosphere.

These spaces are not enclosed like the sensory swing or the blanket fort. They do however share the same capacity for visual and tactile comfort. They are often ambiently lit and are furnished with soft textures. They keep the objects necessary for the form of active rest – in this case books – close at hand to eliminate the chance for disruption.

A purpose-built space within the home validates the need for rest in the first place. Within my practice I am interested in exploring the way that materiality can be used to make spending time in a space desirable, increasing the value of the rest time spent there.



Figure 7 - Borba, J [Reading nook].  
Unsplash (2019)  
(CC BY-NC 2.0)  
<https://unsplash.com/photos/9BuVYEwgyXE>

*PART 2*

# METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

# METHODOLOGY

## *Self-reflection, action research and heuristic analysis*

This project looks at how design can respond to and cue certain emotions, however the understanding and analysis of emotions is extremely intimate and will vary between people. My own emotions are the inspiration for this research, with the foundation for my contextual research established through analysis of my own desire for more restful experience. Heuristic investigation is a phenomenological research method that centralises personal qualitative information like emotions, as they are intrinsic to how we experience the world (Moustakas 38). Using my own emotions allows me to quickly respond to and analyse my design decisions throughout every step of the process. This meant I could more intimately reflect on my iterative design process.

My design practice follows an iterative design process, which consists repetition of the following steps: formulate, test, evaluate. By using critical self-reflection to inform and evaluate this iterative process, my project becomes practice led 'action-research.' Action research is a kind of study done "by the self, into the self" (McNiff 23). It encourages practitioners to critically reflect not only on their design outcomes but also their design process. It is I have been critical of the current consumer culture and the design processes that support it, so it is important to me to also reflect on how I am changing and reprioritising emotions within my own practice.

\* Iterative design diagram\* - adapted from universal design methods

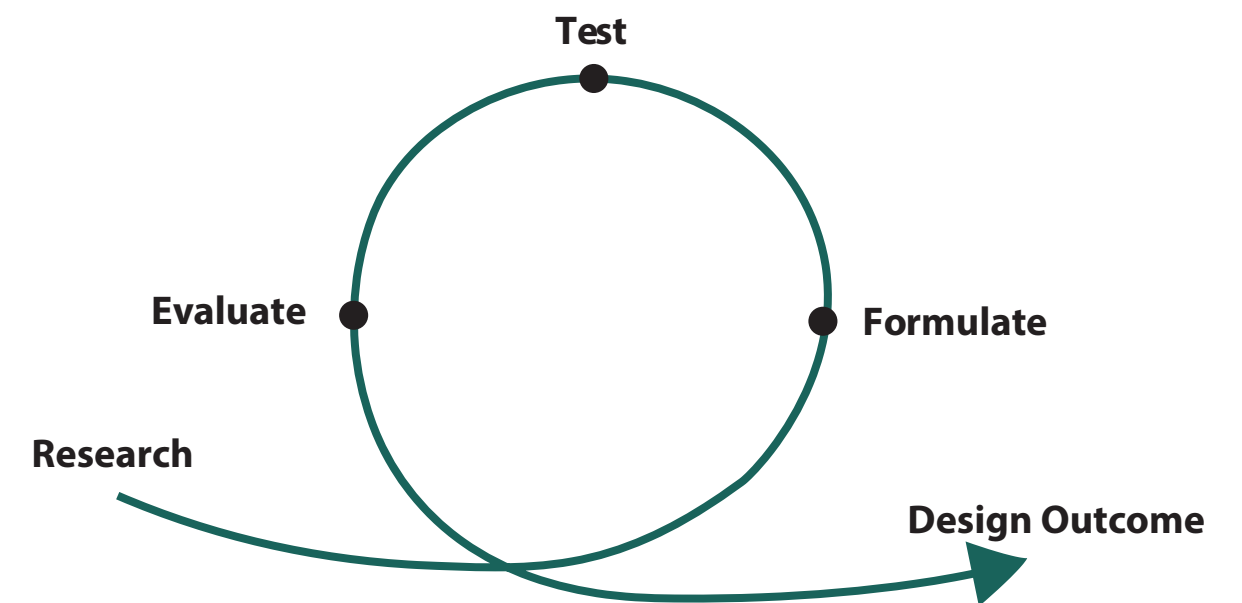


Figure 8 - Adapted from Milton and Rogers  
Iterative Design Process  
Print - Research Methods for  
Product Design  
(2013)



# PROCESS

## *Designing comforting furniture*

Furniture has the potential to provide so much more than just a place to sit. Drawing from my contextual research, I explore how furniture can provide an atmosphere where people themselves to rest and balance their emotions. I aim to encourage the association of this piece with a feeling of safety to facilitate emotional healing, therefore increasing the potential for emotional attachment to the piece to occur.

The issue with rest is largely to do with attitudes and societal pressures. Design has a direct effect on how we see the world, which means it has significant potential to incite and inspire change (Mau 43). I want to explore the ability that the objects that we surround ourselves with have in reshaping our attitudes.

The goal of this research is not to create the next big thing that everyone wants to buy. Instead, I aim to utilise furniture's potential to create an intimate and restful experience, using my own lived experience to inform my design.

I explore how furniture can;

- Provide comfort through visceral sensory details
- Facilitate chosen solitude
- Separate work and rest

The following design process investigates the ways that a piece of furniture can be designed to be an intimate and nurturing safe space. Beginning by analysing my own emotions, I hope to prove that a designed space has the power to validate the need for rest and to help people learn to value and care for the self without guilt.

*Needing to rest is not a weakness.*

## *How do I rest?*

Reading Fiction

Writing

Quizzes

Social Media

Drawing

TV Shows/ Documentaries / Podcasts

Learning handicrafts and sewing

Listening to music

Going for a drive / exploring a new place.

I produced a series of brainstorming sessions with Ashley, a fellow master's student. (Figs 9-10) This helped to increase the depth and breadth of the brainstorming sessions through discussion and also drew attention to the parallels in our experiences – in particular the negative feelings of guilt.

What I found from these brainstorming sessions is that I seek rest very separately to my work, and that when I rest I like to escape the pressure of judgement and time through reaching the flow state. My experience is truly restful when I can let go of the pressure that time puts on me. I am a very time anxious person and experience a lot of stress regarding lateness and deadlines. When flow state is entered, I can let go of that tension, and I am able to rest and recharge.

Flow state relates to Csikszentmihalyi's theory of optimum experience. Flow is reached when an activity is so encompassing that you do not even detect time passing, as if what you are experiencing is outside of time. (Hammond 241; Csikszentmihalyi 49). This also means that the flow state exists separate to societal expectations, so restful activities that reach this state can be done guilt free. It does not stop people feeling guilty post flow, however, so escapism is not enough in this case – attitude change needs to happen.

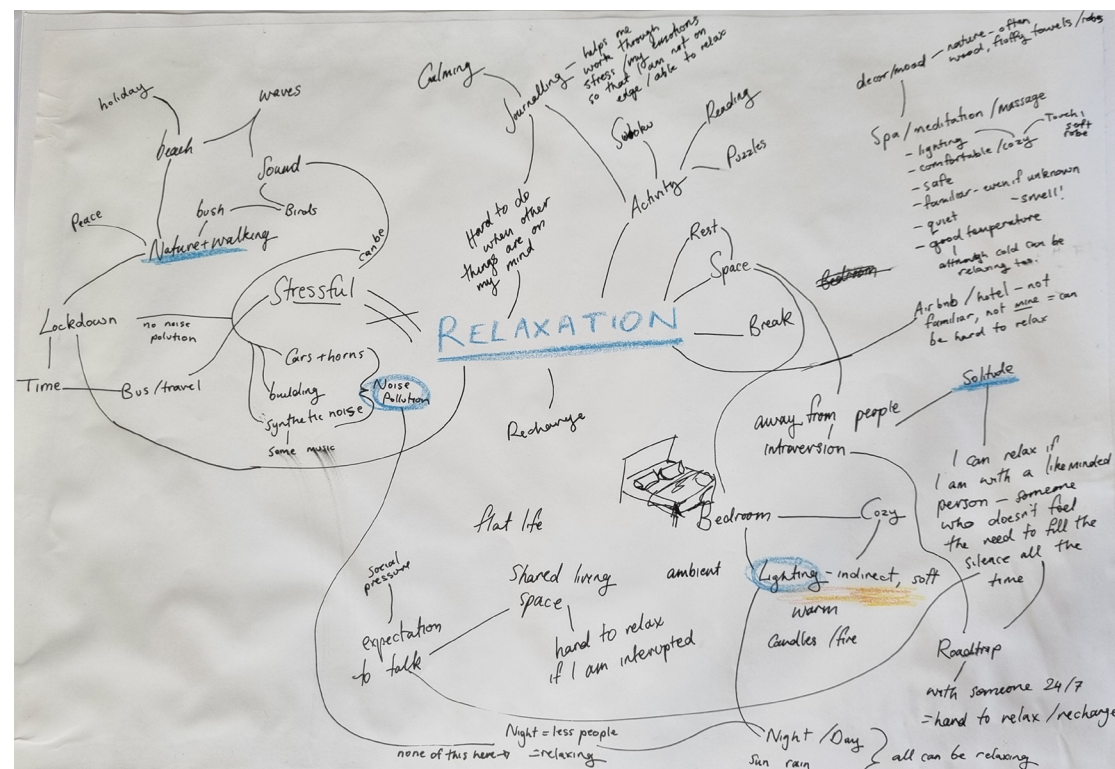


Figure 9 - Oswin, A. Rest Brainstormed (2021)

*"To overcome the anxieties and depressions of contemporary life, individuals must become independent of the social environment to the degree that they no longer respond exclusively in terms of its rewards and punishments. To achieve such autonomy, a person has to learn to provide rewards to herself. She has to develop the ability to find enjoyment and purpose regardless of external circumstances."*  
(Csikszentmihalyi 16)

Many of my favourite restful activities would be considered productive rest, but the current push to monetise hobbies and to create a side hustle means that by doing something only for rest becomes seen by others as ‘unproductive’ even if it involves the acts of skill acquisition and self-improvement. This creates an additional layer of pressure - to enjoy a productive hobby, I feel like I must be good enough at it to monetise in order to feel it’s justified. I cannot feel restful while doing many of my hobbies while in certain environments, because I feel self-conscious or ‘not good enough’. This applies particularly to drawing.

The forms of rest that I need help to facilitate are the ones that I can do sitting in one spot. I feel like the movement and effort that comes with things like exercise, sewing or exploring helps to validate the activity and I can more easily allow myself to enjoy the rest.

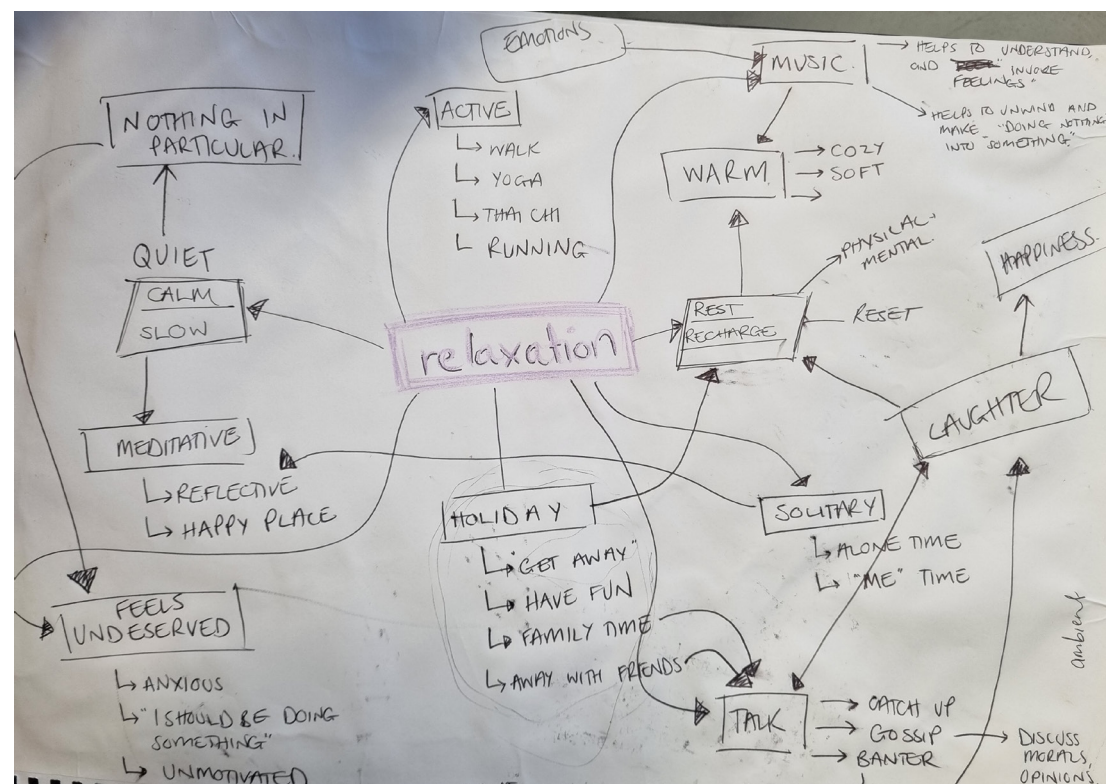


Figure 10 - Robson, S. Rest Brainstormed (2021)



## *Small cozy spaces*

I began using mood boarding and collage to visualise my 'safe space criteria', which allowed me to visualise the places that feel comfortable and explore associated places and

I used this framework to search visually for things that I was drawn to and by creating this collage, I was able to expand on the basic criteria I made for myself.

It became evident that I was particularly drawn to:

- Soft textile-based tactility
- Connection to nature
- Natural lighting
- Small warm light sources – like candles
- Allowance for more than one way of sitting
- Muted and natural colours
- Block colours – minimal

I am drawn to small spaces where I can curl up and be by myself. In open spaces, there is a sense of vulnerability and it is easy to feel small and insignificant. (Young) In small spaces the self is centralised; closing your horizons eliminates external distractions and facilitates an environment that allows you to prioritise yourself or your rest activity in the moment. I find it becomes much easier to listen to yourself and focus on your own self-care and personal growth when away from the eyes of others



Figure 11 - Robson, S. A Collage of Comforting Spaces (2021)



## Initial concepts

I entered the design phase creating miniatures by ideating directly from my initial analysis of rest, especially targeting the concepts of chosen solitude, flow activities, and opportunity for multiple ways of sitting.

During the initial stages of ideation, I realised quickly that wool is a material that paralleled with a lot of my criteria. It is not only warm, soft and cosy, it's also a sustainable, natural material that I have a very personal connection to. I grew up on and around sheep and wool farms in Southland, and so the material holds a familiar and nostalgic place in my heart. Wool, to me, is associated with warmth, love, family, and security. Because of this I want to use its materiality to inform my design. Each of the following concepts uses wool as its base material,

## Concept 1 – Chosen solitude

This design responds to the idea of chosen solitude. The 'petal' panels on the chair are made from felt and are woven together at the base. The 'petals' can be left open, allowing the user to connect to the space and people surrounding the furniture, or they can be shut by fastening the points together above the head, which shuts out the outside world and allows the user to separate themselves. Because of the sound dampening properties of wool, the pod will also help to block out background noise and minimise the likelihood of being interrupted.

I can see the petals of this chair being heavy and cumbersome and being difficult to fasten at the top. The idea of a constructed space, however, does relate back to the blanket fort case study and the folding felt aspect is an interesting opportunity for exploration.



Figure 12 - Robson, S. Chair Petals Open (2021)



Figure 13 - Robson, S. Chair Petals Closed (2021)

## Concept 2 – Provided flow activity

Flow state is facilitated through a chair that looks like a ball of wool, who's outer layers can be unwound and knitted using large needles into a large chunky blanket (Fig 15).

Knitting is an ideal activity for the flow state, as it is repetitive without being too simple, and has a clear outcome resulting in accomplishment. I tested this by learning how to knit myself a sweater. I was able to lose myself in the repetitiveness and the learning process, and it was a wonderfully relaxing way to rest that allowed my mind to wander - without the guilt of seemingly doing nothing. The simple act of creating something allowed the restful experience to feel less

The downside of this kind of activity-based chair is that when the blanket is finished, the potential for the novelty to wear off is high. The knitting could potentially be unravelled and used to create something different, like trying a new type of stitch or crocheting instead, but I think that it is unlikely that people will be keen to rewind the yarn back onto the chair – an activity that is more tedious than relaxing.



Figure 14 - Robson, S. Knitting Chair (2021)



Figure 15 - Robson, S. Chair Knitted (2021)

## Concept 3 – Floor sitting

This concept explores the floor as a space for lounging. It provides a collection of configurable 'clouds' for supporting the body in different ways in a floor setting. The way of sitting is left open to the user. I like the personalisation aspect of this design and i think that it provides a sense of ownership the space when it is self constructed.

I do not often sit on things in the way that the designer intended. I am a restless sitter and like to change the way I sit while I am resting. Many chairs designed for rest cater only to reclining, the opportunity for alternative ways of sitting in and supporting the body for rest is something I would like to explore in relation to my own ways of resting.



Figure 16 - Robson, S. Ground Cloud (2021)

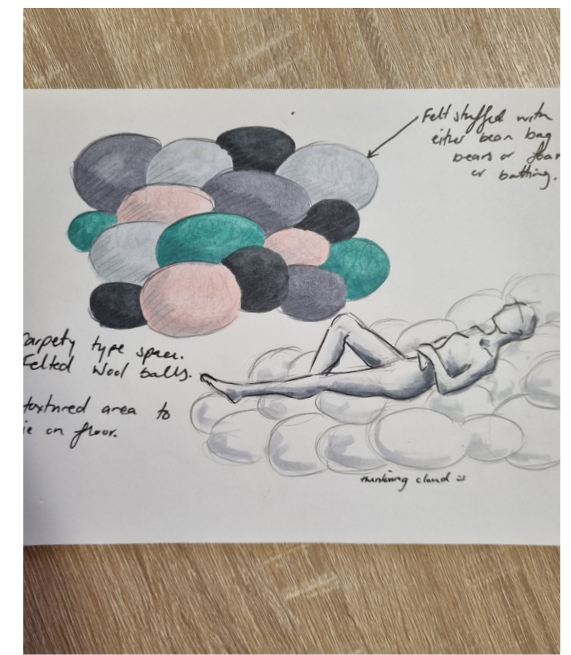


Figure 17 - Robson, S. Ground Cloud Sketch (2021)



## *Alternative ways of sitting and the floor*

Of course, there are already chairs that are designed for resting, however these chairs often focus on a single way of sitting, reclining and are heavily cushioned, so you sink into them. They focus on rest as stationery, passive, and closely related to sleep. Though it is restful to recline, this only focuses on one very limited way to rest. Rest can be much more active and may involve crafting like knitting drawing or reading. When limited to one sitting position these types of activities can put strain on different parts of the body – particularly the neck, which can lead the user to become restless sooner, and rest being interrupted. When I discuss uninterrupted rest, I do not mean staying motionless for hours. I am referring to the uninterrupted state of flow.

Personally, and I am not alone in this, I cannot sit in one position for long, whether I am resting or working. I become restless and will often search for other ways to sit, which is often difficult on recliners due to the way that you sink into them. I do not often sit on furniture in the position intended. I am more likely to perch on the arm of a chair, sit with my legs crossed or curl up somewhere than to recline in a chair. I am most comfortable when given the opportunity to move around and change my position and am drawn to spaces that present opportunity for moving.

As explored in fig 16/17 Ground cloud, the floor provides an open-ended space that can allow for lots of different ways of sitting, especially in tandem with objects like cushions and blankets to support the body. The floor presents the most open opportunity for alternative ways of sitting, but at the cost of support – if I want to sit up, I must hold or prop myself up against something, which is not always very comfortable. The floor is also an open area and, can leave me feeling open and vulnerable if in an unfamiliar environment. Safety and separation, is more easily sought in an enclosed space



Figure 18 - Robson, S. *How I Sit* (2019)

## Folding felt furniture

Folding is commonly incorporated into the design of furniture for utility. It is often to hide something away or incorporate multiple different ways to use a space. An interesting example of this is Fig \_ "land peel" by Shin Yamashita. This explores the creation of a multipurpose floorspace through folding. I want to explore folding less as a utility and more as a ritual that can help people to choose to be solitary in order to rest.

Reminiscent of the blanket fort, I explore the ways a safe space can be constructed (folded up). While I was iterating my folding, I initially thought that the piece could be transformed by being folded up when solitude was desired. This would become a ritual to prepare the self for rest, like a bedtime routine, and help people to make the active decision to rest. However, I decided that the effort and time needed to prepare the space could become tedious and a deterrent for spending time there. The piece will still be manually folded, but I have incorporated this into the initial set up of the piece instead. It will still symbolise the preparation for rest, but in a more wholistic way, as the first step taken toward valuing rest and the first step in their journey of personal growth and change in attitude.

I began folding in paper as a fast way to explore form. I then moved into scaled fabric and felt to explore materiality, and finally moved to full scale, to explore ergonomics and visceral comfort.

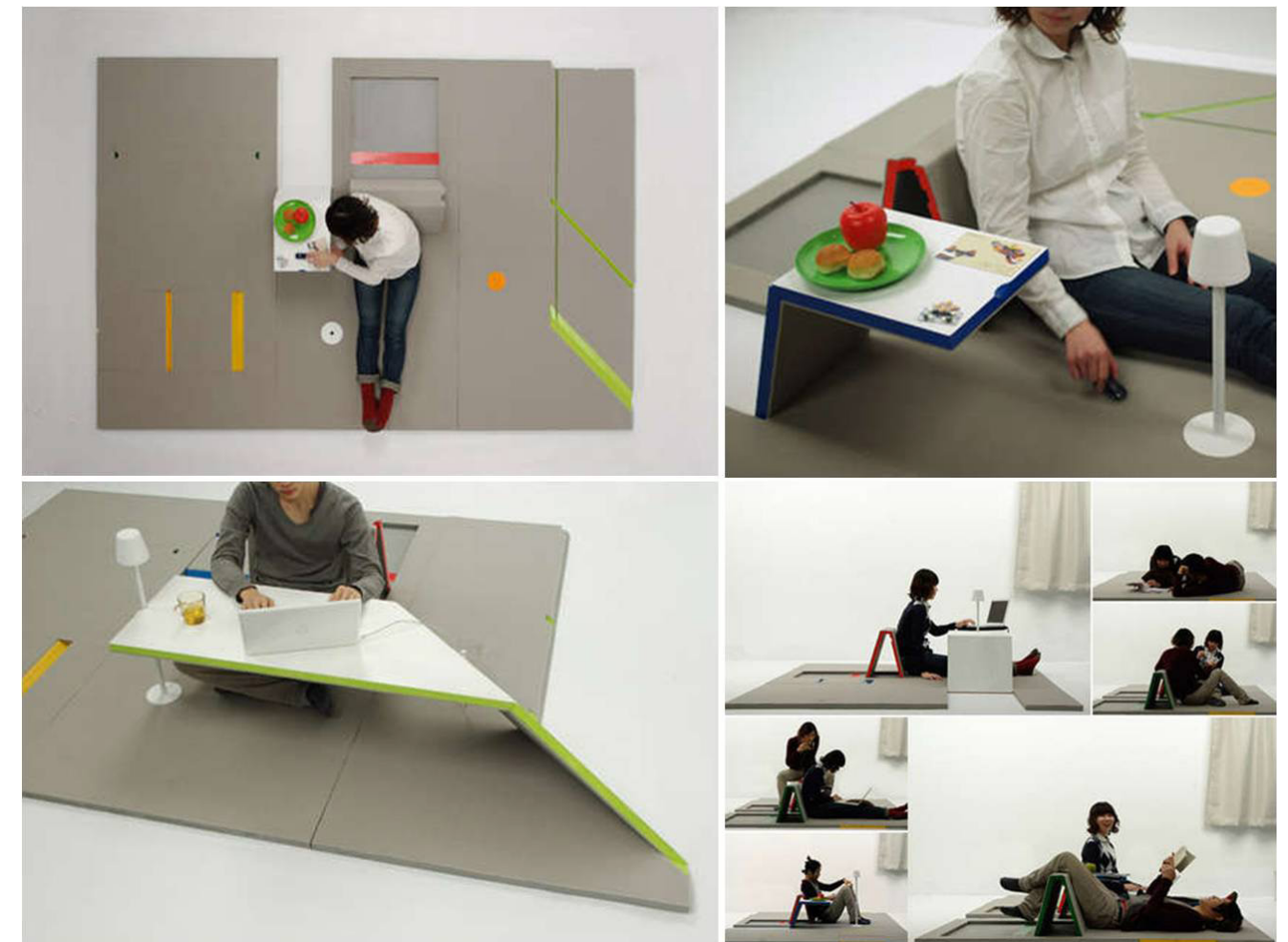


Figure 19 - Yamashita, S  
Land Peel (2010)  
[https://shinple.com/projects/0002\\_land-peel.html](https://shinple.com/projects/0002_land-peel.html)



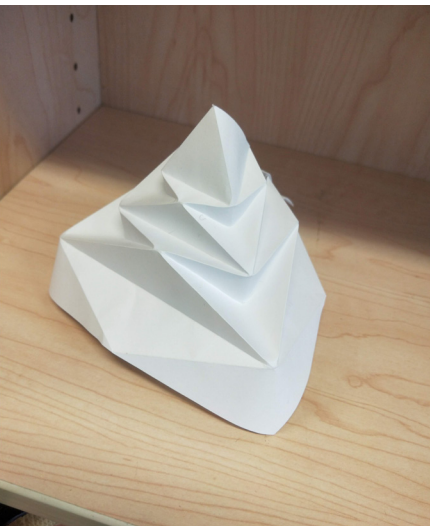


Figure 20 - Robson, S. Paper pyramid side (2021)



Figure 23 - Robson, S. Paper cone side (2021)

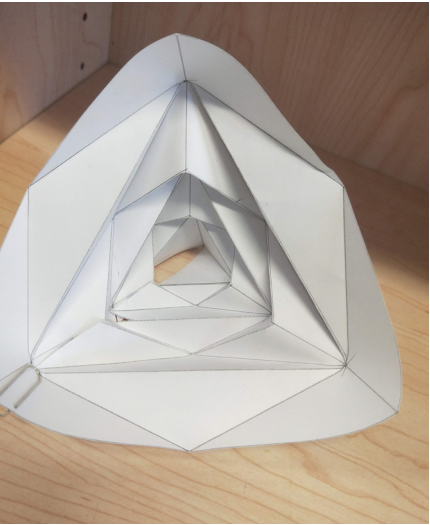


Figure 21 - Robson, S. Paper pyramid top (2021)



Figure 24 - Robson, S. Paper cone top (2021)

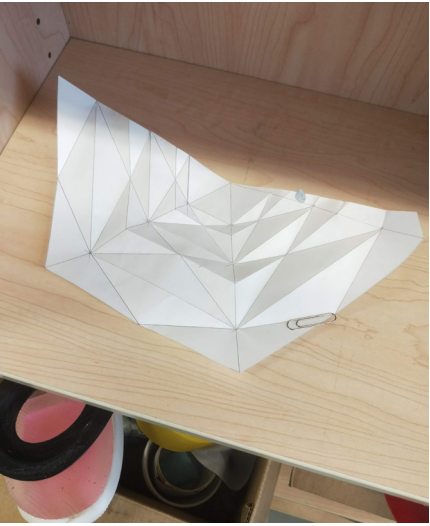


Figure 22 - Robson, S. paper pyramid open (2021)

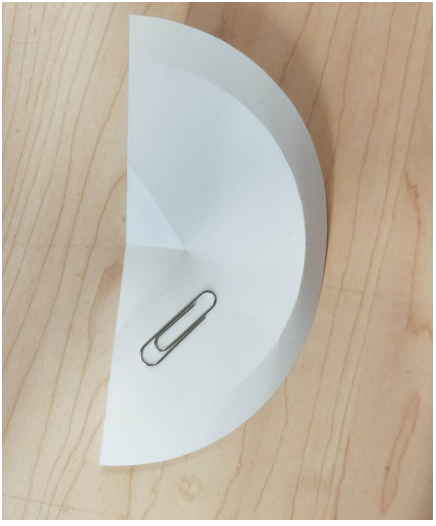


Figure 25 - Robson, S. Paper cone open (2021)



Figure 26 - Robson, S. Paper wave closed (2021)



Figure 27 - Robson, S. Paper wave open (2021)



Figure 28 - Oswin, A. Full scale paper cone front (2021)



Figure 29 - Oswin, A. Full scale paper cone side (2021)



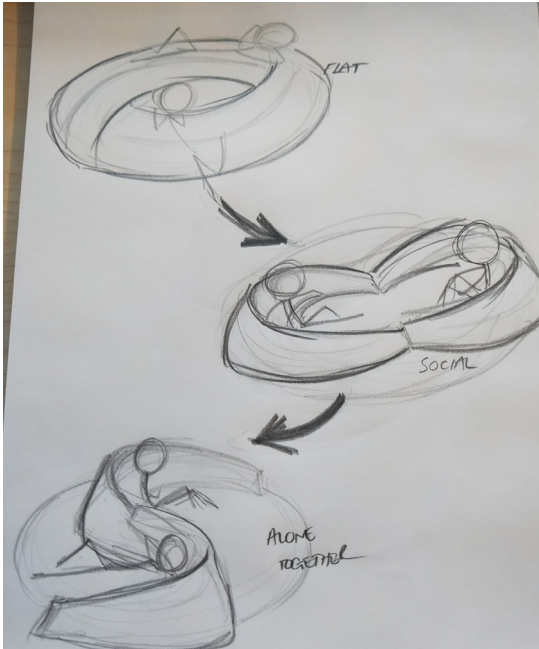


Figure 30 - Robson, S Alone together sketch (2021)



Figure 32 - Robson, S Alone together V2 (2021)



Figure 31 - Robson, S Alone together V1 (2021)



Figure 33 - Robson, S Alone together V3 (2021)



Dumpling  
folding

Dumplings wrappers are a more open ended and flexible medium to try folding. Traditional dumpling folding uses techniques more commonly used to shape fabric, like tucks and folds. All the folding methods shown originate from the same flat circle.

The Dumplings are much warmer and more organic than paper, and they are a food associated with warmth and comfort. I love the soft curves and folds that dumpling folding creates, and I would like to translate this form language into my design. In my next iterations I explore a mixture of linear and soft folding techniques inspired by dumpling folding.



Figure 34 - Robson, S. Dumpling Folding (2022)



Figure 35 - Robson, S.  
Dumplings  
(2022)





Figure 36 - Robson, S. Felt dumpling folding (2022)





Figure 37 - Robson, S. Felt folding tests miniature (2022)



## *A partially enclosed space*

When I began folding, I was searching for a way to create a piece that fully enclosed the person within it. I wanted to fully block the view of the surrounding room to create a very literal separation from the outside world. However after reconsidering my desired relationship to the space, I found that this is not quite the right direction.

A fully enclosed design provides total isolation which is effective in separating a person from interruption and fear of judgement, The Hush Pod designed by Freyja Sewell shown in Fig\_ is a good example of the warm enclosed safe space that I was envisioning, however, I worry that this has the potential to foster an object dependence rather than a supportive relationship. An enclosed design separates your work and rest life for you, it does not encourage you to learn to do this for yourself. I worry that I would use this space as a passive escape and miss the opportunity for growth within the space. (how does design facilitate

I have decided to keep the space more open. I must learn to separate myself and change attitude toward rest, the chair should only create a comfortable and safe environment in which to do so.

Opening the space also has the benefit of being able to utilise natural lighting, use a smaller volume of material and take up less space.



Figure 38 - Reproduced by permission of Sewell, F. Hush Pod (2011)  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CQs6bdgl4Re/?hl=en>

## *Full scale folding and ergonomics*

The ergonomics of chairs is very well researched, but very focused on reducing stress on the body while still for long periods. However, I have decided to approach this project differently. Chairs are mainly designed to accommodate a certain way of sitting, but I want the method for sitting on this chair to be more open ended. I want to encourage people to shift and change the way they sit more often.

The flexibility of the felt opened the opportunity for me to explore how the shape of the furniture can be designed to adapt to the way that a person sits in it, rather than the furniture indicating how it should be used. I moved away from the structured form language of a regular chair, and explored how create a cosy space to afford ended range of uses.

Because of this I approached ergonomics through a method of physical testing. While folding in full scale, it was important that ways of being present and positioning oneself within the space was explored in parallel with the folding iteration. I tested this both on myself and my fellow masters students, Ryan and Ashley. While this is a space primarily designed in consideration of my own comfort, I know that my experience is not unique, and this project also could help others who also would also like to accommodate rest within the home. It was also interesting to see how others engaged with the space. Ashley and Ryan's perspective came without the bias of my own expectations, and their input helps to bring forth some unique ideas and observations. (see Figs 44-53)

The folding configurations I have been experimenting with are heavily reliant on material properties and behaviour, so it was important to move into iterating full scale in the real material. At full scale, the 6.4mm thick felt is much heavier and denser and behaves differently to the smaller felt I have been using to experiment until now. The felt had less structure than expected and it could not hold some of the more rigid shapes of my previous testing had

utilised as separation and for a back support.

It also did not keep its shape as well as the small felt did when folding curves and tended to slump due to the fabric weight. I was initially frustrated by the heavy felt. However, while testing, Ashley and Ryan pointed out the beauty of the way that the felt fell in folds and flowed around the body. I realised that I needed to be designing around this rather than fighting against it to really utilise and celebrate the beauty of the material.

I looked at securing fabric to create tension as an alternative way to support the body. This created a curve that caressed the back like a hammock. While testing this I found that if this support sat along the back of my shoulders, it formed a very warm and comforting support that reminiscent an embrace.



Figure 39 - Robson, S. *Industrial Felt* (2022)





Figure 40 - Robson, S. full scale fold V1 (2022)



Figure 41 - Robson, S. full scale fold V1, Shoulder drape (2022)



Figure 44 - Robson, S. full scale fold V2 (2022)



Figure 45 - Robson, S. full scale fold V2, shoulder drape (2022)



Figure 42 - Robson, S. full scale fold V1, user testing a (2022)



Figure 43 - Robson, S. full scale fold V1, user testing b (2022)



Figure 46 - Robson, S. full scale fold V2, blanket (2022)



Figure 47 - Robson, S. full scale fold V2, hideaway (2022)





Figure 48 - Robson, S. full scale fold V3 back (2022)



Figure 49 - Robson, S. full scale fold V3 front (2022)



Figure 50 - Robson, S. full scale fold V3 upright sit (2022)



Figure 51 - Robson, S. full scale fold V3 cradle (2022)



Figure 52 - Robson, S. full scale fold V4 test front (2022)



Figure 53 - Robson, S. full scale fold V4 test back (2022)





Figure 54 - Robson, S. full scale fold V4 variation 1 (2022)



Figure 55 - Robson, S. full scale fold V4 variation 2 (2022)

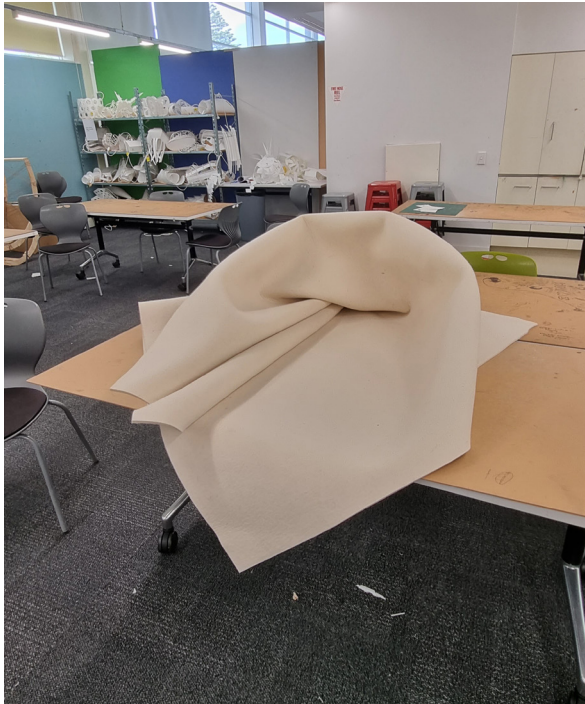


Figure 56 - Robson, S. full scale fold V4 variation 3 (2022)



Figure 57 - Robson, S. full scale fold V4 variation 4 (2022)





Figure 58 - Robson, S. Final folding shape (2022)



Figure 59 - Robson, S. Final folding shape back support (2022)



Figure 60 - Robson, S. Final folding shape left view (2022)



Figure 61 - Robson, S. Final folding shape right view (2022)



Figure 62 - Robson, S. Final folding shape front view (2022)



## Adding structure

Because the piece is floor based, opening the design up extended the base area out onto the carpet, making it feel exposed. Raising it off the ground added a new degree of separation and limited the area of the space to make it feel more enclosed.

Raising the piece added the opportunity to add a slight recline, which makes the design feel more relaxed and less rigid, and you are able to lean into the folds of it more naturally. To keep the curved collar swaddled around my shoulders, the felt also needed to be secured slightly higher, so I explored having a back rest style piece that could support the felt at its highest point. This rigid piece can be leaned against, so also opens up opportunity for even more ways of sitting,

The felt required fastening at certain points to create the tension in the collar. I explored a few different ways to achieve this, including pegs, clips and ties. I decided on a toggle because of they gibe the piece a simialr vibe to a big warm jacket, which extends the narrative of warmth and comfort, while also being a familiar and widely known process to people.



Figure 63 - Robson, S. Base structure side (2022)



Figure 64 - Robson, S. Base structure front (2022)

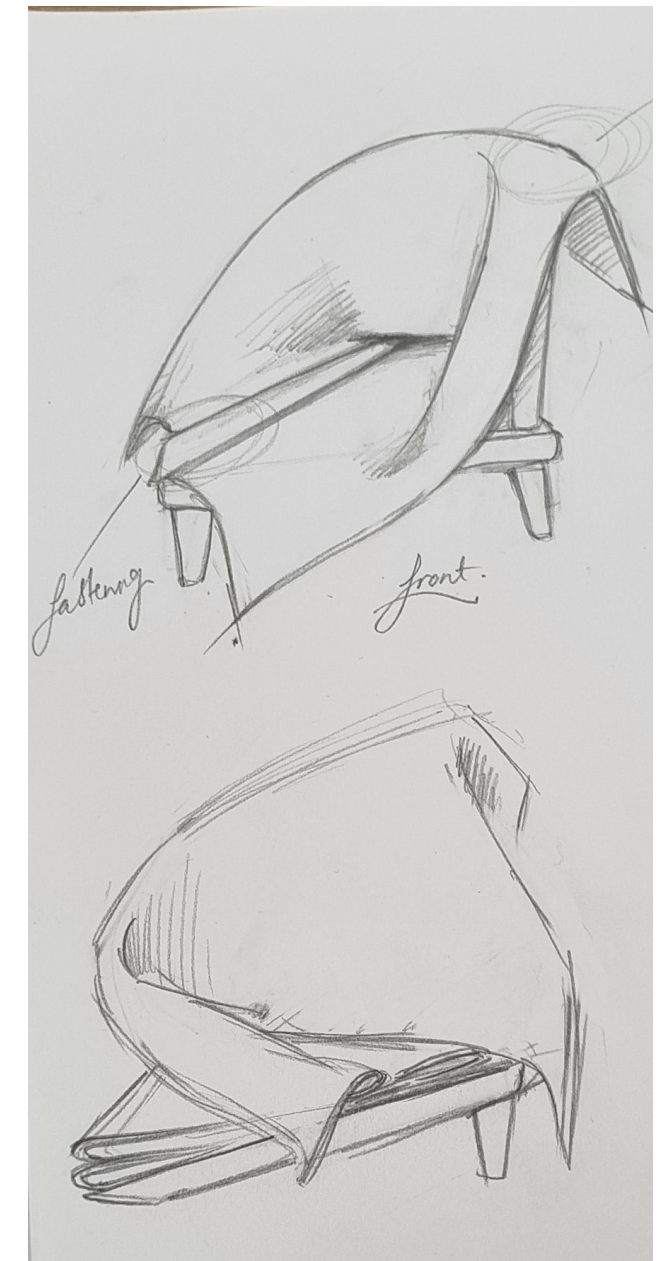


Figure 65 - Robson, S. Base structure sketch (2022)





Figure 65 - Robson, S. Base structure testing (2022)



Figure 66 - Robson, S. Base structure testing above (2022)



Figure 67- Robson, S. Toggle testing (2022)



Figure 68- Robson, S. Form refinement (2022)



## Communicating folds

Because the construction is done by the user, it is important that the way the felt folds is communicated well. The felt itself is scored along the edge of each fold so it would sit flatter and fold along the correct line more easily. I marked along each fold using wool stitching.

I tested a few different types of stitching, deciding I needed a separate stitch to communicate mountain folds and valley folds. To inspire this, I looked at origami and other paper folding instructions, and saw that a mountain fold was usually marked with a solid line, while valley is marked with a chain line. I used this line code because it is familiar and easy to read. I used a blanket stitch (Fig 70) to represent a mountain fold and a running stitch (Fig 69) to represent the valley stitch. The button holes for the toggles are also marked with an edge blanket stitch so they are easy to see.

When folded, these lines of stitching highlight the shape of the piece and how it folds, as well as being a communication advice.



Figure 69 - Robson, S. Running stitch test (2022)



Figure 70 - Robson, S. Blanket stitch test (2022)

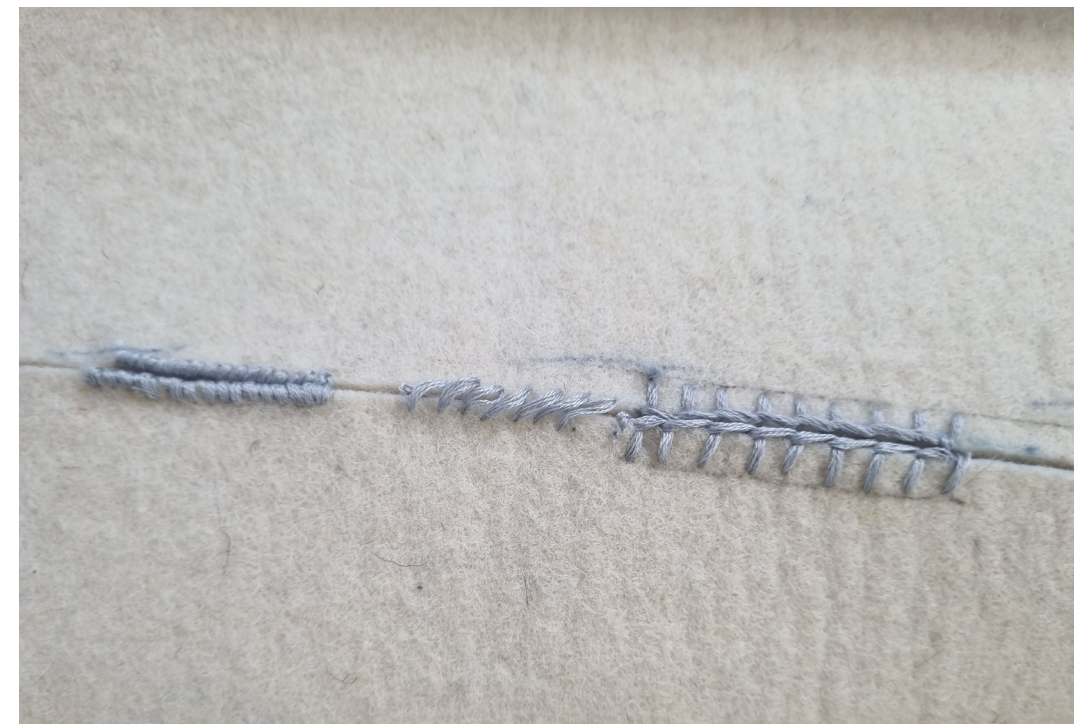


Figure 71 - Robson, S. Stitch testing (2022)



*PART 3*

# FINAL DESIGN







Figure 73 - Greer, R. Upside down (2022)

# FINAL DESIGN

## Manawa

The self-reflective nature of this research allowed me to respond intimately not only to my design outcomes but also to my design practice. (McNiff 23) By continuing to research and develop my goals alongside my iterative design process, I was able to create a space that can facilitate a much more empowering and intimate experience than I would have first thought. I originally began tackling this task by aiming to design a physical escape from the world. However, by critically reflecting on my process and researching deeper into the reasons why I might want an escape, I realised that I actually was more in need of a healthier attitude toward my enjoyment of my chosen restful outlets, rather than just creating somewhere to escape my feelings.

When designing for others, it is easy to take an approach that aims to problem-solving for them rather than facilitating the opportunity for people to change themselves. Instead I learned to using myself and my own motivations and reflections, these guide the design development to an outcome which can then be open for others to interpret and respond to themselves. connect to deisgn feature

The responses I have had toward Manawa have really validated the importance that I gave to incorporating the form language of visceral comfort. Many people exclaimed immediately that they wanted to curl up in it and that it looks cosy and warm. This proves that despite designing this primarily for myself, I have managed to create something that also has the potential to appeal to others. This was possible through the self-reflective aspect of my methodology. I didn't simply design in response to my initial feelings, I first reflected on my emotions and researched theoretical work on emotions and rationale for how that manifests. In particular I referred to Norman's visceral level of processing and the Listers' *Radical Rest* to inform my decision making.

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Figure 72 - Robson, S. Manawa (2022)



Manawa's form is inspired by the materiality of felt and the folding of a dumpling. The natural colour of the wool is celebrated by the soft folds and accented by stony brown and grey blanket stitching in yarn made from New Zealand wool. A blanket stitch allows the piece to share the form language and comforting associations of a vintage New Zealand wool blanket, which is a comforting staple for winter in many kiwi homes. The blanket stitching also adds texture, and by running hands along the felt edge, restless hands can be tactilely engaged, allowing the mind to continue to wander uninterrupted.

Despite raising it off the floor, the design remained slightly more exposed than I wanted. This is great for facilitating many ways of sitting; however, it does take away an element of cosiness and intimacy. The foot pocket was inspired by the way I wrap a blanket around my feet or put on big warm socks to keep them warm and tucked away safely. The pocket also serves as a place to hold objects close to the self, like a special blanket or soft toy, a cosy hot water bottle, or the book I have not quite finished yet.



Figure 74 - Greer, R. Fold details (2022)



Figure 75 - Greer, R. Blanket stitch (2022)



Figure 76 - Greer, R. Cradle (2022)



Figure 77 - Greer, R. Perch (2022)



The large curve wraps the body like a warm wool jacket. The folded collar acts as a support for the body to lean against, but is soft and fluid enough to move with you. The base is a backbone that keeps the design grounded and contained. Where the felt folds and moves to swaddle and comfort, the base acts as a solid support structure. Manawa pushes the form language of an occasional chair. It does not imply or encourage any single way of sitting, rather it provides opportunity for many ways. The collar seeks to inspire the act of curling up within or leaning back to have it wrap your shoulders. The wooden structure can be leaned against, and the wide base accommodates for wider sitting positions like crossed legs. Manawa remains low to the ground, and so it can even be leaned on while sitting on the floor. It invites the user not to sit, but to simply exist within it.

The process of constructing the space represents the next steps of the journey that Embrace hopes to facilitate. The folding of the felt represents the changes in the way people value themselves, beginning from a flat plane, transforming into someone who recognises that their



Figure 78 - Greer, R. Lean (2022)



Figure 79 - Greer, R. Upside down II (2022)



Figure 80 - Greer, R. Hammock (2022)

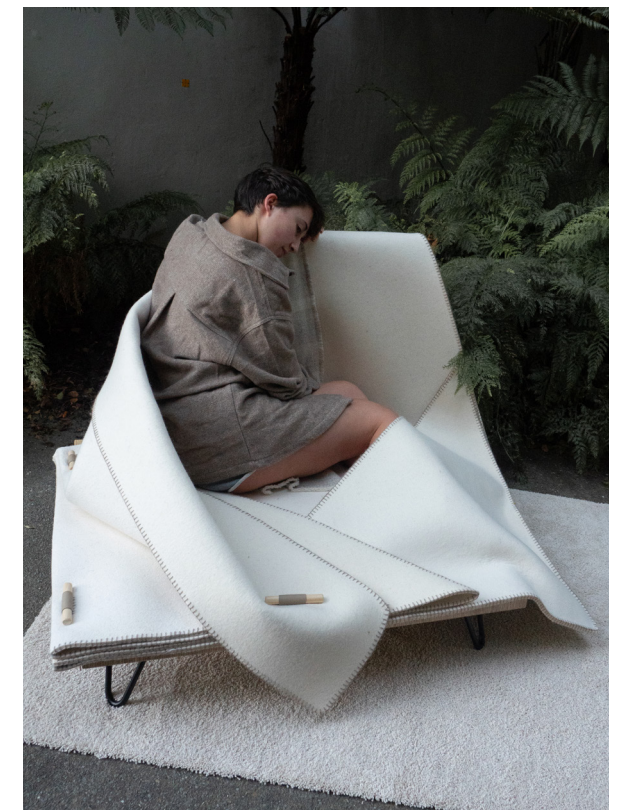


Figure 81 - Greer, R. Pocket (2022)

worth is multidimensional, determined by much more than one aspect of their lives. The fastening of the toggles symbolises the securing of these new folds and attitudes into a shape that is both beautiful and strong and resilient. One should construct this space themselves, and then the space will support them in reconstructing themselves. The blanket and running stitches represent mountain and valley folds respectively, which communicates the way that the felt blanket should fold similarly to origami instructions.

Manawa is a space for doing what makes you happy and learning to value the self. A space where the heart may breathe.

*Final Photos by Ryan Greer and Ashley Oswin  
Accompanying Blanket woven by Mackenzie Skeen*





Figure 82 - Greer, R. Cradle II (2022)



Figure 82 - Greer, R. Happy (2022)



# CONCLUSION

The objects that we surround ourselves with have the power to shape our worldview and attitudes. Rampant consumerism results in short-lived object relationships. As designers, we are the composers of objects, and can create things that have a longer lifespan by designing to support people's need for emotional comfort and safety. This also provides the opportunity for people to grow and change as both individuals and as consumers. Manawa can act as a supporter without judgement, fostering an environment of emotional safety. It offers support through difficult personal change and becomes a memory container for important decisions and progress made. This creates the opportunity for association of sentimental meaning that can result in a strong emotional attachment. By putting more focus on facilitating meaningful relationships with objects, we can slow down consumption.

I hope that we can begin to design things differently, with more care for its extended use. The process I have followed in response to this research and the resulting furniture provides a case study to demonstrate how designing for personal, visceral emotions can create objects imbued with deeper meaning and longer lasting value. Manawa was derived from my own need for rest, for myself and for others who seek safety and solitude within furniture. Industrial design often discounts designing for the self in favour of reaching a large audience, however I think there is an intrinsic value in the reflection of personal experience, especially as designers work so closely with people, and are people themselves. By first cultivating self-awareness and creating a process of understanding one's own feelings, it becomes easier to approach understanding and designing for the emotions of others.

Emotional attachment to Manawa can only be measured with the passing of time. Going forward, I want to experience this design in situ in my home. Manawa aims to be a reliable sanctuary, to be returned to when need arises. I am excited to see how Manawa develops over time with my use. The felt moves and supports me while I sit, will it slowly stretch and change

as it grows familiar with the ways I prefer to sit; will this make it comfier? Will parts need repairing or replacing? What kind of narrative will this piece represent after 5 years? As I seek to grow within its embrace, will it in also turn grow slowly with me?

This project has helped me discover the kind of designer I want to be. Sustainability has always felt conflicting and shallow within my practice, but throughout the course of this year I have reflected and reconsidered the way I approach it. It is a multifaceted issue which requires multifaceted solutions, of which facilitating emotional attachment is only one. The rich and beautiful observations and designs that can come from the intimate study of emotions is inspiring, and I will continue to explore this in my future work.



Figure 83 - Oswin, A. Cosy (2022)







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