

STOLEN MOMENTS:
REST, SPATIAL CHOREOGRAPHY AND WHEEL-THROWING

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2021

Attestation to Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor any material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

9 December 2020

Acknowledgements

To my supervisor, Carl Douglas: this project would not have been possible without you. This was a tough year and in the times I felt like I could not do it, you were there to support me. Thank you for the constant motivation and understanding; for the weekly meetings and persistence in encouragement; for all the words you read and guidance you gave me in rewriting. I've been very privileged to know your kindness.

To the technicians, Harriet, Matt, Glenn, Angus and Harold: thank you for all the work you've put into my projects in the last five years. The joy I've found in making has been fostered by you all and I've been able to try so many different things. You guys make me never want to leave AUT.

To my studio friends, Shiv, Alyssa and Katie: thank you for walking through this course with me. Every word you've spoken into this project has brought me clarity and I've appreciated all the constructive roasts.

To my other friends: thank you for dealing with stressy-me on every occasion she appeared. Thank you for all the kind words and prayers you've offered and for all the grace you've given me in our friendships. I have the strong support network I do because you all have loved me so hard and I'll never be able to thank you enough for being here for me.

To my parents: thank you for every sacrifice that got me where I am today, including coming to New Zealand so we could have the education we got. If I had grown up in Malaysia, I never would've ended up in design, so thank you for allowing me to pursue this path; for never asking me to be in a career I'm not interested in. Thank you for all the late night pick-ups and Carl's Jr. dinners and cut apples. I love you guys a lot.

Finally, thank you to the Lord my God, for the grace and love you've poured out into me. Thank you for the people you've put in my life and the opportunities you've brought. But most importantly, thank you for my saviour Jesus.

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Abstract

In a society where time is valued highly, rest is forsaken daily. Rest must be stolen, for it is too often forgotten and has become an unreasonable source of guilt. Stolen Moments addresses societal-centred rest through invoking rest within the home. Whilst asking what the home is and what rest is, the project understands rest in the home as a place ballet; a routine of actions specific to the home that overlaps with other's ballets. It is this ballet that incites my own understanding of rest, which reveals itself in routines of washing off the day's burdens and in making.

While I learned wheel-throwing, I sought to produce rest within a spatial ceramic practise, which led to the designing of a hand-washing ritual, in the pursuit of stretching out a single moment of rest. The installation invites participants to steal the moment and encourages them to let these moments saturate their routines thereafter.

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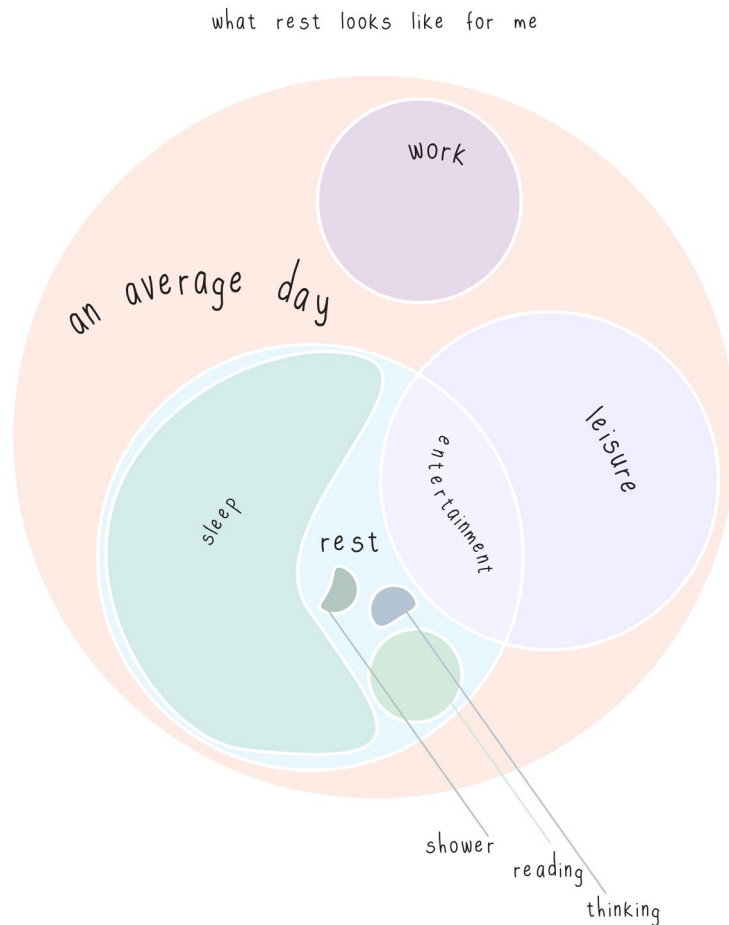
Stolen Moments is a project about *rest*. It is about the moments of rest we must steal within our busy lives; of moments in our homes that exist in the background. Rest is something to be found within complex and personal patterns of routines and interruptions. As a spatial designer I want to understand the way we steal rest as place-making.

Home is a place of routine and repeated actions: shoes off, keys left in the bowl, plug in the phone, collapse on the couch. This ritual performance is what Seamon calls “place ballet”, a kind of dance made up from all the overlapping routines and patterns of place (Seamon, 1981, p.159). It is an unfolding of familiar actions, creating an interpersonal dynamic in which cohabiting people, whether they know each other or not, construct and uphold a sense of place together. As de Certeau says, “space is a practised place” (de Certeau, 1988, p.117).

Humans exist in community, in the interlaced ballets they have formed with those around them. Consequently, people do not exist without home: even in homelessness, your being is tied to the streets you frequent. As a geographer, Seamon considers a characteristic of human existence to be the geographic location to which they pertain to. Their place in a geographical world is not one they can forfeit; though one can specify their home, one may neither change nor avoid their surroundings (Seamon, 1981, p.148). As a bond is formed between a person and their home, emotions, spatial behaviours, and routines form habits. As such all humans will participate in one place ballet or another and all places have their choreography of spatial behaviour.

Rest is necessary for all, but it is how one rests that is what differs from person to person, as is how their rest interacts with their sense of place. For instance, in a study about the constant mobility of Tokyo residents, Ikalovic and Chiesi conclude that a state of rest is found in the public space as “movement is an integral part of daily life” (Ikalovic & Chiesi, 2019, p.110). In another study, an interviewee found herself restless when she was away from the ocean, suggesting her rest was based on an affinity with nature (Vanzella–Yang, 2019, p.251). In yet another instance, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow shared: “Stay, stay at home, my heart, and rest; home-keeping hearts are happiest; for those that wander they know not where are full of trouble and full of care; to stay at home is best” (Longfellow, 1878). While there is much variation in the spatial dynamic of rest, it is indisputable that rest is a basic need and depends on contextual relationships.

What is ‘home’? Cresswell suggests that home is a place that is connotated with a sense of belonging: “my place” and “your place” is a common utterance that indicates ownership (2014, p.7). However, home can apply to places that are not owned, perhaps rented, or even places that are often frequented, such is the concept of a ‘second home’. ‘Home’ seems to imply that while a place is not physically under the ownership of someone, one’s home can be simply a place they feel attachment to, that they can return to on their own terms. As Seamon prompts, it is a place of which you are the ‘insider’, where you can feel comfortable partaking in a routine that is shared among a people. The regularity of your visits forms a habitual connection with the place and its community (Seamon, 1981, p.161). As such, a home does not need to adhere to the trope of a permanent residence. Rather, home is indicated by your personal affinity with a place. My house is the home of my family; my school the home of my classmates; my church the home of my fellow believers; my beach the home of my friend-filled memories. Although not the same, place and community co-exist and are an absolute combination in my mind. It is from this entanglement with a place to which you can say, “*my place*.”



In parallel, writer Lucy Lippard adds: “The lure of the local is not always about home as an expressive place, a place of origin and return. Sometimes it is about the illustration of home, as a memory” (Lippard, 1997, p.23). Home can be the sentiment of a place, as much as it can be the geographical location. It can be a fond memory or derived from the presence of a cherished person or object. One single element can tether a person to that place, and as such, home is a concept more complex than the physical location of one’s inhabitation. For some, their physical location is scary, a place they dwell out of necessity and not choice. Home can extend out into the neighbourhood and community and these elements can feel tense and unsafe: “I want the intimate care I feel in my household nest to be extended across the entire system, but instead I walk through the neighbourhood and spot only the ruptures” (Pendergrast, 2020). The solace that is found in home is sometimes only found because the essence of home is separate from the location of home.

When I talk about rest, however, I don’t just mean sleep (Fig. 2). Rest is an easing of tiredness; a cessation to further accumulation of tiredness. This may be through sleep, but also includes sitting, entertainment and meditation, all of which contribute to avoiding burnout, a syndrome which can indicate commitment and devotion, but also is the result of overwhelming fatigue (Neckel et al., 2017, p.11).

Modern society is constantly attempting to find ways to rebel the norm of rest. Jonathan Crary asserts that in a capitalist world, “the denial of sleep is the violent dispossession of self by external force, the calculated shattering of an individual” (Crary, 2013, p.10). Whilst we can admit sleep to be natural, we fight the necessity of it, and decrease the value of it in favour of valuing time and all that can be done with time. In many societies, it is even criticised for rest to be snatched back at the expense of the corporate workplace, as it is thought that rest is not deserved unless at the point of collapse. Humans forsake sleep for the promise of productivity and can feel guilty when sleeplessness hastens their exhaustion of life (Crary, 2013, p.15).

Fig. 2 En Torng Sung. *What rest looks like for me*, diagram, 2020.

I personally struggle with rest being a guilty pleasure, and though I recognise I don't seek it nearly enough, I have inner-conflict with allowing myself rest, in the fear that the productivity I have built up in my routines will be impossible to retain when there is momentary pause. However, time and time again, I have pushed myself to the brink of exhaustion in my pursuit of satisfaction through work and social success.

Through Stolen Moments, I advocate for the necessity of rest as a moment that must be seized, despite its cost. I address a societal-centred rest, rather than a human-centred rest. We are stuck in unhealthy patterns of rest that become an interweaving dance of overwork fuelling further overwork. I aim to discover how I can, as a designer of spaces, break these patterns by encouraging patterns of rest with an intervention of spatial, haptic and visual composition.

Bringing a specific material focus to this intention, I ask how rest can, within the context of the place ballet of home, be articulated through a spatial ceramic practise and participatory installation?

Making can be an unwinding, and my creative practise revolves around making ceramics by wheel-throwing. As I seek to deepen my spatial design practice by learning to throw pottery on a wheel, I find the act of throwing to be a dance, as graceful as a ballet. While an active dance, it is also a dance of rest. Throwing involves a rhythm of rest and work, as it is an active, engaged process, while requiring the waiting of drying and firing: potter Sean O'Connell testifies that, "the repetition of [making in] multiples is akin to so many other things we experience like language, music, and movement — it's about rhythm and interval, repetition and refinement" (O'Connell, 2014, p.14). Vessels of tender touch and repetitive movement are created in an intensive physical unwinding, but each piece will go through several instances of needing time apart from touch.

In a world where we like to preserve as much as we can, ceramics gives you the opportunity to build a moment by hand, creating the embodiment of a time, space, object or feeling. I am using the expression of ceramics to evoke the notion of rest through these pieces of both active and dormant energy. As vessels tend to be used as natural breaks within an exhausted life in the form of tea, coffee, and alcohol, I would like my ceramics to be vessels of rest in how they are to serve as a reminder for rest; whether they are to sit upon one's desk facing their overworked owner or are to be drank out of every morning as one battles drowsiness.

I set out to design an installation that gives an opportunity for rest using the aforementioned ceramic artefacts, creating a pause in one's day and a reminder that rest is a gift that should be stolen. Ultimately, this installation became an invitation to participants to come and wash their hands with warm water. The running of their hands under this water is a simple act of stepping out of their day to choose rest. The serenity of the space is welcomed to be interrupted by conversation where those partaking in the ritual can either cleanse in silence or converse about their personal moments of rest. Once they have taken this moment to rest under the warm water, they can dry their hands off and choose to reset the ritual for the next participants. Participants will then leave with a gift of a vessel to take into their own lives as a reminder of their participation and to encourage the importance of stealing their own moments of rest habitually, of which they can post about on their social media, adding to the depository of #StolenMoments.

The crux of this research is not in the debating of the importance of sleep or in the characterising of ceramics; rather, it is in the understanding of how the need for rest manifests in the space and time of everyone's lives. The moments of rest, or lack thereof, sprinkled throughout the lives of many could be seen as a cacophony, an out-of-practise dance, as it is easy for the mind to let go of the need for rest when there are uncompromisable urgencies. Commitments, work and worry can easily bleed into the time that was once reserved for rest. Rest is a practised routine, and conversely, unrest is the practised routine that leads to burnout (Neckel et al., 2017, p.11). Therefore, there is necessity in finding the ballet of rest that leads to a well-versed performance of balance; where rest does not have to be stolen but is seized as deserved.



Fig. 3 En Torng Sung *Throwing practise*, photograph, 2020.



Slowing Down: Tea ceremony

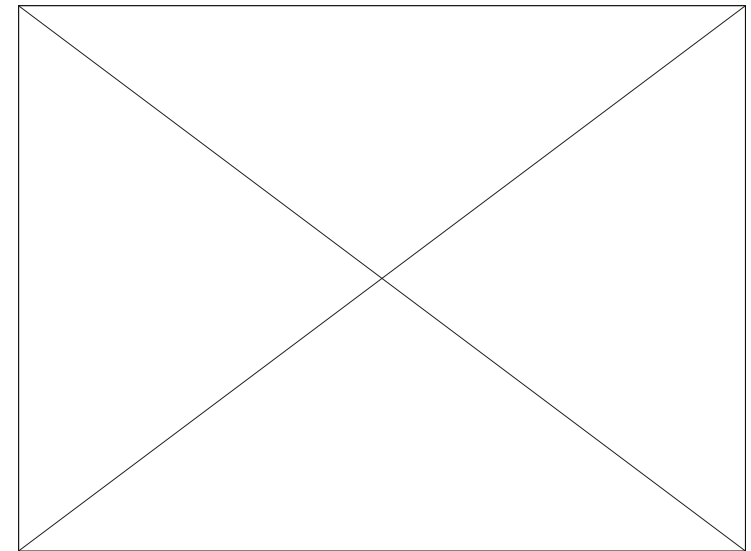
Cha Dao, derived from the Chinese philosophy of Daoism, is a practise of tea drinking in an attitude of mindfulness. Daoism is “intensely engaged with life yet not being attached to the outcome of any endeavour” (Towler, 2010, p.11). In *The Way of Tea, Tea as a Way of Life*, Towler explains the act of drinking tea to be far more than slapping a tea bag into a cup of boiling water, but to be the slowing down of a present moment.

“This means not drinking it while driving down the road, talking on your cell phone or listening to the radio. Instead, allow yourself enough time to really enjoy your tea... going slowly is the key to being a healthy person. By rushing around, guzzling high caffeine coffee all day, many people come home at the end of the day and just collapse in front of the television, a soul-deadening practice, and one that leads to becoming disconnected to real life.” (Towler, 2010, p.15)

The tea ceremony is an illustration of a practise that could be the simple consumption of a liquid but could also be an unhurried deliberate process that gets us out of the terrible feeling that we must use every waking moment efficiently.

The Daoist tea ceremony (Fig. 5) is focused on energy. Towler describes a temple teahouse in a cave outside Chengdu, and the atmosphere set by a nun playing the qin and a monk administering the incense (2010, p.123). In front of them was a small table, on top of which was a large bowl with a teabag floating in it, a lidded teacup and a small towel. On the walls surrounding them were five panels, each explaining a different step of the ceremony and the essence of the step. Participants are to first wash their hands in a basin, to be dried with a cloth; burn a lit stick of incense; meditate on the washing away of desire in the mind and heart; meditate in forgetfulness and stillness; and finally, lift the lid of the teacup and let the “essence of the tea permeate [the] entire being” (p.127). From here the tea master led the participants to drink their bowls of tea in three swallows, their bowls being refilled twice after. After the third bowl was drunk, the music on the qin stopped, the incense was put out and the master left so that the tea could continue to be consumed more informally.

Attention is paid to the laying aside of past and future concerns so that the body and mind can focus on the present moment. There is even the request to forget about all other areas of life for this single moment. Amidst these moments of tea drinking and the resting of mind is the evidence of how one lives each single moment, each individual an amalgamation of their lived moments and their presence in such ritualised moments. The tea ceremony shows how we can elevate a simple daily action through ritual and place-making.



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Fig. 5 Solala Towler. Cha dao ceremony, still image, 2010.



Fig. 6 Lee Mingwei, *When Beauty Visits*, installation, 2017.
Photo courtesy of Lee Studio, photo: Anpis Wang.

Fig. 7 Lee Mingwei, *When Beauty Visits*, installation, 2017.
Photo courtesy of Lee Studio, photo: Anpis Wang.



Ritual: Lee Mingwei

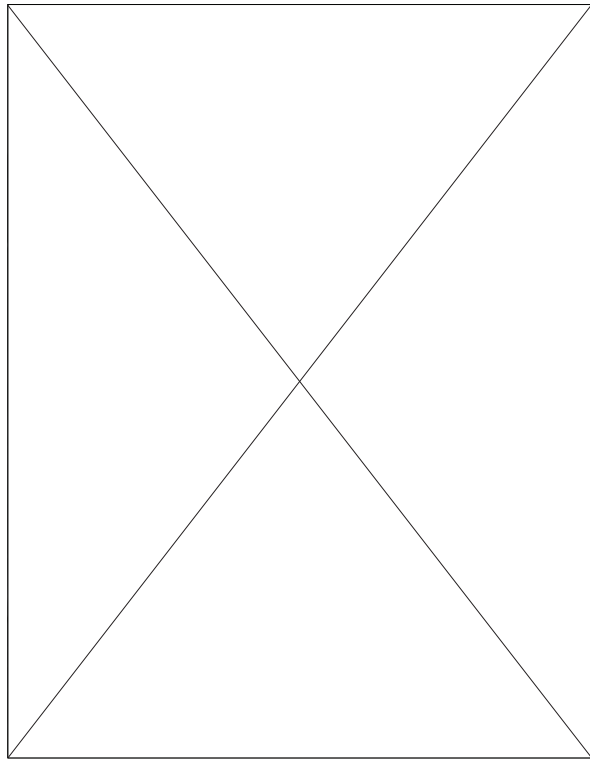
While the tea ceremony is a traditional blend of culture and ritual, rituals also bleed into modern art. Contemporary artist Lee Mingwei uses ritual in his participatory installation, invited by La Biennale di Venezia's curator Christine Macel to exhibit for the The 57th International Art Exhibition, titled 'Viva Arte Viva'. While he exhibited his more famous Mending Project, he also made a work for the Scarpa Garden: *When Beauty Visits* (Lee, 2017).

This project (Figs. 6, 7) was rooted in the tranquillity of the Scarpa Garden, in which participants were selected to be invited into this special garden. The intention behind the project was to be quiet and underwhelming, with the experience being contingent upon the garden itself. The ivy wrapped around the walls would shimmer in the wind and the fountains boasted colourful goldfish. Once invited in, the participant would sit alone in this peaceful environment. After a few minutes of unattended serenity, the host would return to present the guest with a gift: a letter containing a stranger's encounter with beauty. Each letter had been written by one of Lee's friends. Most were "about relationships between people, rather than about beautiful objects. It's very much about love and desire" (Lee, 2018, p.70). The guest is instructed to open the letter when they next encounter their own moment of beauty. One participant found her moment of beauty to be in a grand opera house, to the melodious piano playing of child prodigy Sokolov. She opened her letter and read about the moment shared with her: "[The writer] watched an old man and a young boy laughing joyfully whilst they played a game in a small piazza in Castello" (Beckerling, 2018). Two beautiful moments overlap.

When Beauty Visits manifests in three stages: the collection of stories or moments of beauty from Lee's friends; the inviting of participants to enjoy the beauty of the Scarpa Garden and the gifting; and finally the moment the participant next encounters beauty and opens the letter to read of another beautiful moment. This thread of beauty builds a connection among participants and through time. These moments of beauty are intimate moments to which Lee hopes to be privy to in some future retelling of the story. Lee recounts:

“There was the story of the man who began to cry when the church bells began tolling at 12 noon, because it reminded him of his wedding, and his wife.[...] Just twenty-four hours before [he] received the gift, when the church bells tolled, that's when he had scattered his wife's ashes into the canal. Twenty-hour hours later, he was invited to come sit, and the church bells tolled again. When we gave him the gift for him to open whenever he next encountered a moment of beauty, he said that for him, this was already a moment of beauty, although his wife was not physically there. He told us that it was a way for his wife to say good-bye and to let him go, after thirty-four years of being together – so that, for me, was a tremendous gift.” (2018, p.68)

To accept the invitation into the private Scarpa Garden is to shift from the role of a viewer to a performer in its “highly personalised and intimate ritual” (Lee, 2018, p.69). The installation is a ritual of gift-giving, where only so few viewers are *invited* to partake in this particular project and only those so fortunate to be chosen are given a gift; ephemera that exists doubly as a future-minded responsibility. It is of no consequence to anyone but the participant whether they decide to complete the task. Rather, it is a secret for them to consume if they wish. The project is very much on the participant's terms and relies on viewers being intrigued enough to step into the garden, accept the gift of the letter and enjoy the shared moment of beauty as it is encountered. I was fascinated by the way ritual extended beyond the moment of the event to create a shared space and time of contemplation and rest.



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While Ming-Wei's work is quiet, almost silent; ceramicist and performance artist Nina Hole produces rest as a dramatic climax. Her *Fire Sculptures* (Hole, 1995-2015) works were church-like structures built over one or two weeks (in sites across the world), designed to become their own kilns (Fig. 9). The sculpture was wrapped in refractory fabric for two or three nights once a fire was lit inside it. Thrown off for the peak of the performance, the sculpture was revealed in all its glowing glory, flames filtering through the gaps as seen in Fig. 8. To prolong the wonderment of the moment and slow down the cooling of the piece, observers are given sacks of sawdust to throw at the sculpture, igniting a flurry of sparks.

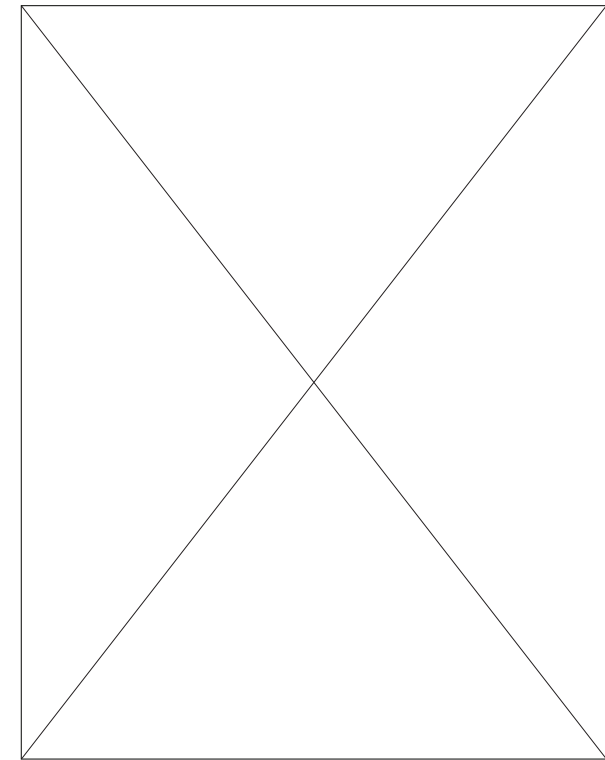
The final iteration of this project was after Hole's passing. Her assistants and Purdue University students worked together to realise *Repose* (Purdue University, 2016). The design for this sculpture was based on the church where she was buried. Those who worked on the project found sentiment in the significance of a piece of her resting place to be given to the university. Hole's work with ceramics had always been themed around houses and particularly Danish architecture, so even in her passing, her final sculpture was able to act as a personification of her life. Hole had written, "I think of buildings as urns, containers for human beings, not in any morbid way, but in terms of a kind of anthropomorphism. Buildings can express a range of different personalities" (Brown, 2001, p.52).

Fig. 8 Nina Hole. *House of the Rising Sun*, performance installation, 1995.

The purpose of Hole's sculptures was not in seek of eternity, or even a long-term future, for she knew the way in which she designed them was not to sustain them. On the contrary, she leaned into the performative potential of the pottery, knowing "the field of ceramics is rife with lists of pitfalls that must be avoided" (Lancet, 2005, p.33). Had her objective been the crafting of perfectly structural forms and surfaces, she would not have allowed the sculptures to undergo the thermally stressful conditions they endured, as the temperature change would have made the pieces susceptible to cracking. In fact, Hole emphasised this:

"When the weather takes them, it's part of the process; they have a sort of life cycle," she explained. "I think that's kind of nice, because the world is already filled up with things. There's a beauty in that kind of breaking down." (Brown, 2001, p.52)

Although Hole's pieces began as clay sculptures, their firings were momentous transformative performances, attended by crowds. Somewhat like a campfire, people were drawn to the orange peeking through from under the refractory blanket, fiery tip glowing in the night sky, the performance complete when the blankets were removed. It is a performance that drew in strangers from all over, uniting them over the spectacle of drawing out this single climatic moment in all its illuminated awe. Hole's sculptures are an example of a ritual performance that brings rest in its breathtaking nature; that causes onlookers to pause, take in its immensity and celebrate its creation.



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Fig. 9 Nina Hole. *Lizard Tower*, performance installation, 2001.

While Hole's sculptures are an explorative assessment of the materiality of clay, they seek rest through their performative aspect. However, in his book 'On Weaving a Basket', anthropologist Tim Ingold uses the materiality of basket weaving to describe the process of crafting as rest.

Ingold describes the making of a woven basket to question our assumptions about form (2000, p.341). Typically, we might imagine form is applied to a material from a preconceived idea. If a maker wants to make a surface out of timber, he will cut, laminate and sand his material to make his surface. However, Ingold points out that while the basket-weaver may have a form they would like the basket to take, the basket has its own tensile structure that dictates where the fibres bend: "The form of the basket is the result of a play of forces, both internal and external to the material that makes it up" (2000, p.342).

The weaved artefact is a "form [unfolding] within a kind of force field, in which the weaver is caught up in a reciprocal and quite muscular dialogue with the material" (Ingold, 2000, p.342). This too can be said about the artefacts that tend to allow for a more controlled form, like pottery. The potter is caught up in a dialogue with their clay, in which the material will be pushed and pulled with force towards a form. The inexperienced potter will find it to be a careful practise that does not allow much room for mistake and while they may feel like they have or are gaining control over the material, in reality the clay will lead the potter either into triumph or ruin. In describing the skill used in basketry, Ingold brings to attention three points:

"First, the practitioner operates within a field of forces set up through his or her engagement with the material; secondly, the work does not merely involve the mechanical application of external force but calls for care, judgement and dexterity; and thirdly, the action has a narrative quality, in the sense that every movement, like every line in a story, grows rhythmically out of the one before and lays the groundwork for the next." (Ingold, 2000, p.347)

Ingold asserts that the craft of a practise is determined by how the maker engages with the material, the mindset they have about their making and the narrative that is written with each movement of the material. Ingold finds that the making controls the maker as much as the opposite is true.

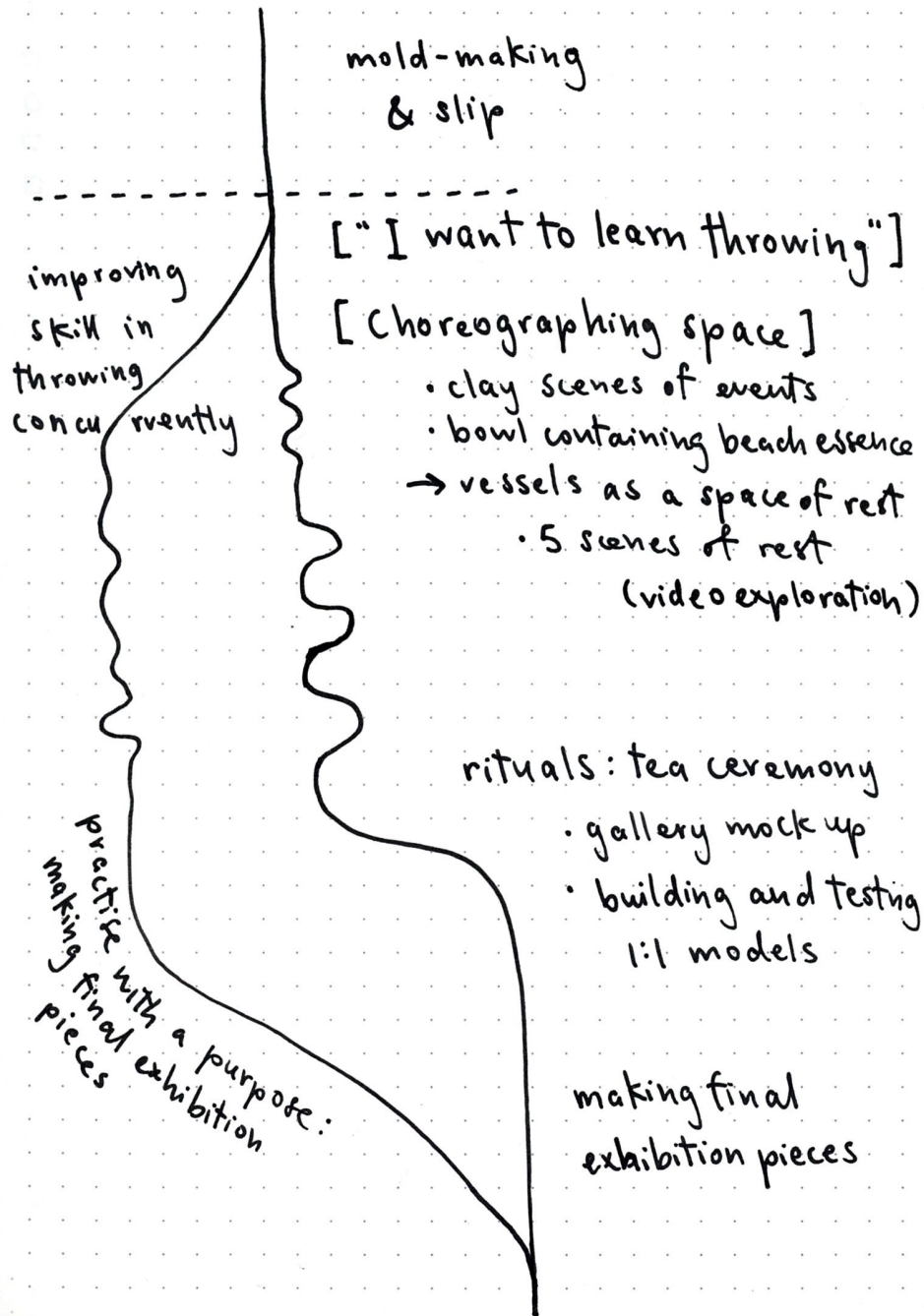
The frustration with craft is often based around uncontrollable materials, machinery or inexperience. As a maker dialogues with a material, however, crafting becomes a restful practise, in which there is potential for the desired shape or object to be realised. The ritual itself of gaining this tacit knowledge can often be a laborious and time-and-energy-consuming task, yet passion can mature into gratification with the resolution to know a process deeply.

In recognising the restfulness of craft, it's important to note that while rest can certainly be found through the plateau of energy at the end of the day, it can appear in varied forms and there is no single encompassing form of rest. It can be found in activities that are restful for the mind to engage in, while also in activities the body can relax in. As I consider my own rest, I find that the habitual practise of a craft tends to be a restful exercise in my ballet of rest, as it becomes a ritualised component to look forward to within my everyday living.





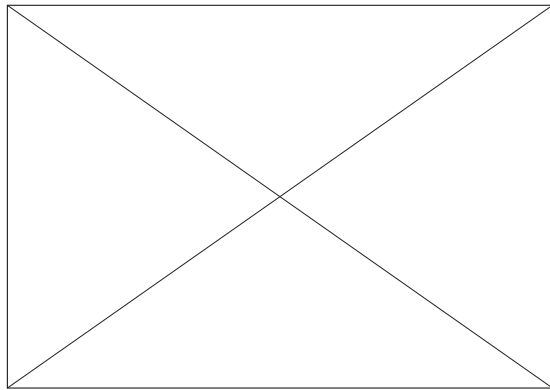
A Practise Overview



As a spatial designer, my practise approach is to wrap experience around people, starting from a significant feeling. What does it look like for a space to carry feeling? For me, it involves looking closely at the people inhabiting the space, the context, objects and textures within the space, and the way it arouses our senses. However, we cannot force any particular experience or feeling into any space; it arises through activity.

Having identified my interest in the activity of rest, and the home as a key site of rest, I sought to a methodology based on experiences of rest through routines articulated by furniture and objects. As in the tea ceremony, peace is not found in the walls that make up the room but in the objects and routines that make up the ritual. Any space I made was not to emulate a conventional domestic setting, but to unpack the critical moments within a home that made it restful. By slowing down and elaborating on a commonplace activity, I choreograph a ritual ballet of a ritual around them.

The basic routine of my design process is an iterative cycle like one developed by engineer Alice Agogino (Dubberly, 2005, p.51; Fig. 13). Agogino's cycle of design-build-test, includes testing to find fabrication and design errors, each leading respectively back to the build and design stages. I have worked similarly (Fig. 12), cycling back and remaking when I hit complications within the practise, represented by the divergence from the straight line in Fig. 12. Sometimes these complications led to rethinking the process, which would lead to a new stage of design to start the process at again.



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There were two main overlapping movements in the project: learning to throw pots on the wheel, and experimentation with how to use the ceramics I made to activate a space of rest. Although the project began with my desire to learn a new way of making rather than through the desire to make anything specifically, the concepts of rest and home ultimately took shape, narrowed and tightened through the repetitive process of becoming proficient at a new skill.

To use these objects to create space meant that they were not defined by the walls they sat within, but rather every other object around them – every material choice and furniture specification was vital in contributing to the experience of the space. Looking at Lee's ritual of the gift of beauty, the serenity of the Scarpa garden adds to the enchantment of the ritual, but the heart of the project is the artefact of the letter, in which beauty can be found in any space, among and outside of the four walls of any room. The holistic experience of the space certainly found the garden as a crucial component but the artefact was the necessary ritual that made the space extraordinary.

The synchronous practises of throwing pots and choreographing restful spaces informed one another. This was not a linear journey because I was concurrently figuring out how these two processes were tied together with the integral concepts of home and rest. It helped that I identified throwing itself as a dance between movement and rest.

Wheel-Throwing

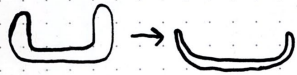


Fig. 14 En Torng Sung. *Throwing practise*, photograph, 2020.

Wheel-throwing is a ceramic process involving the use of a pottery wheel. ‘Throwing’ describes the motion of clay being adjoined and centred to the wheel and encompasses each motion on the wheel as it spins, until the finished clay piece is sliced off (Fig. 14). Clay can be shaped using an array of processes but wheel-throwing is a particular dance that needs to be learned and practised repeatedly to develop the kind of dialogue described by Ingold. Clay is a temperamental material that needs to be kept damp. While throwing, the potter adds water so that the immovable lump can be shaped as the wheel turns. Strength is necessary: arms, legs and torso must be tensed and each muscle in the hands must be poised to apply the appropriate amount of force to a concentrated section of the clay. If the clay is handled in a feeble manner, the machine will spin the lump uncontrollably off-centre, or it may even fly off the wheel altogether.

I first learned how to make cylindrical vessels, as this process teaches you how to do every other step of throwing. As I did, I became interested in vessels as a form; as a resting place. Vessels are a resting place for drinks and came to serve as a metaphor for rest. The last sip lingers at the bottom of a cup; a cup of tea is used to steal a moment away from work; one nurses a glass of wine to wind down from a long week. As vessels became the ideal artefact to represent rest, within my making I continued to challenge myself to make bigger, taller, wider vessels. This became increasingly difficult and I recalled Ingold: “the form unfolds within a kind of force field, in which the weaver is caught up in a reciprocal and quite muscular dialogue with the material” (2000, p.342). The entire process of handling pottery can also be seen as a dance in and of itself. The potter flits between wheel, wedging board, kiln and sink, pausing and resuming the performance at the whims of the clay body’s drying rate. A single artefact can be tended to continuously for weeks before it is complete.

1. 1.8 kg. ~1 hr.



- Smaller base? This one was quite wide and ended up being a shallow bowl.

2. 2 kg. ~40 mins

- Base is way too thin, split when cut off.
- Shape is bigger, wider though.
- Relatively even walls.



• Cracked after broke a tiny bit.

3. 2.1 kg. ~40 mins

Failure.

- Really thick in some places, ended up ribboning.
- Maybe centered badly, especially bottom part.
- Good thick base though.



4. 2 kg. ~30 mins

Failure. Wouldn't centre.

- Maybe wedged wrong.
- Went down to ~600g.
- Couldn't take walls up.



5. Started 1.8 kg. ~40 mins

- Started off with really bad centering. Came together after that was fixed.
- Sides are still a bit low. Need more than 2 kg.

• Cracked after broke



6. 2.1 kg. ~1 hr



- high walls! walls are ~~strong~~ uneven thicknesses, but thick enough base.
- My centering changed on this wheel.

7. 2.4 kg. ~1 hr.



- kinda quite thick base & walls
- But higher walls! uneven lip.
- Needs turning probably.
- No more basin form. Will cut acrylic piece.



8. 2.4 kg. ~1 hr.

Fail.

- too thin, flopped over.
- very uneven walls, probably too wet.



9. 2.4 kg. ~45 mins

- Not a fail completely but not great.
- Went down to ~2 kg or less.
- ~~Very~~ Quite shallow and thicker walls.
- Maybe stop trying to thin out walls too much.
- Very uneven.
- Centering was really weird. Couldn't stop hole in middle so got lots of air bubbles probably. We'll see.



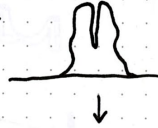
10. 2.5 kg. 40 mins.

- A rare fortune. Best one yet!! Maybe time pressure is good for me.
- Centered well and even thickness all around.
- Good shape and height but could be wider.



11. 2.5 kg. 45 mins

- Failure. Just really bad.
- A lot of air bubbles, got the hole thing when centering again and just couldn't centre it.
- Very thin walls and uncentered meant it was not in shape and air bubbles popped up at the end.



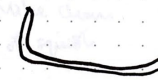
12. 2.6 kg. 35-40 mins.

- Really big, really good!
- Another time pressure one but shape just turned out well and even wider than the last good one. Good thickness of walls.



13. 2.5 kg. 50 mins

- Even wider and thinner but about the same size.
- Changing up drying process for less cracking.



14. 2.8 kg. ~50 mins

- First throw after 2 weeks.
- Also, new clay. It's a bit firmer so pulling up walls and out is easier but tends to rip/split easier and harder to knead.
- Went really well but pulled walls too thin and then pulled out too far, went over edge of the batt. Couldn't hold itself over the edge.
- Also wasn't centered super well in the middle.

Turned it into a plate but base was too thin when I cut off.

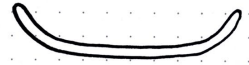
15. 2.8 kg. ~45 mins.

- Really ~~good~~ nice thick walls but base was too thin, so had a hole.
- Centering was so hard and when I tried to pull out it sloped and wouldn't go flat. The whole thing must have been wildly uncentered.



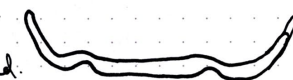
16. 2.8 kg. ~30 mins.

- So perfectly shape - very wide and thin.
- BUT! So many air bubbles. Many explode in kiln? But so perfectly shaped! So! WIDE!
- Maybe need to cut off top and bottom after kneading? Or different clay.



17. 2.8 kg. ~35 mins.

- Went back to production note and found it very easier to center and shape. Very soft ~~but not~~ and just resistant enough to hold shape.
- Has a bit of a dip in the sides, and base is a bit thick but can be trimmed.
- Maybe need thickness rather than too thin so it doesn't flop. It's got good shape, perhaps too shallow though.



18. 2.85 kg. 30 mins

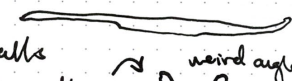
BIG!

- Came out very wide, but base was too thin. Could be cut off but base cracked over next day.
- Better to make thicker base, then trim.
- Was using the rubbery clay: was easy enough to throw but centering felt a bit hard. ~~Maybe~~ It did keep a nice low wideness though.



19. 2.8 kg. 30 mins.

- Fail in
- Turned into a plate.
- Maybe didn't pull out far enough because walls were thick and hard to pull up.
- Base was also too thin.



I kept a log of my attempts (Fig. 15), recording every bowl thrown with notes to analyse what went well and what went wrong. I was mostly self-taught, although I did have assistance from ceramicist and workshop technician Harriet Stockman (of art collective Public Share; 2014). I followed the cycle of make-record-analyse-repeat, seen in Fig. 12, giving myself room to discern the potential issues I could fix or areas I could improve my technique (in Chapter 4 below, I show some examples). Learning a craft is a repetitive, defeating, slow process, in the same sense that designing can be. Space-making tends to be laborious and abstract, requiring the asking of sometimes discouraging questions. One might believe that they have created a space that truly strikes the heart of the issue they are attempting to fix; yet find that other humans form completely different conclusions. Or people may refuse to interact with a space in the way it was designed for. There are countless sensitivities that must be accounted for when it comes to choreographing a space of rest, and wheel-throwing became my conceptual model for working with them.

Fig. 16 En Torng Sung. *Home and Away*, part of sequence of images, 2020.



Choreographing Space

My parallel foray into space-making began with minor explorations in creating scenes based around the beach and home. With my limited array of lockdown materials, I used watercolour paint and air-dry clay to imagine scenes of a birthday party, giving a nod to my very own birthday party on the beach (Fig. 20). The question was this: How is the 'place-ballet' of a shared meal formed by the vessels that facilitate it?

Then I brought the beach home. I filled a greenware bowl with sand I had collected. I imagined this bowl sitting near the front door, at the beginning of my place ballet on returning home, reminding me of the open expanse of the beach (Fig. 21). This concept soon developed into following my rituals of home — my place ballet — and the spaces where I unwind. To create a dialogue between spaces and objects, I formed vessels to represent each of these domestic spaces of unwinding, made to evoke the shape of certain actions, like slumping down on a couch, or shaking off the day's troubles at the door.

I planned to exhibit these to see how others could relate to my experience and this made me curious about how I could get people to participate. Exploring time-lapse video works, I set up a short section to loop seamlessly so that it could serve as an instructional video teaching a ritual action. While testing this avenue of installation, however, I found that the focus of the project was put on the vessels' forms and technicality of the video work. I felt quite dissatisfied with this because my attentions were placed in perfecting areas that didn't direct participants towards rest.

What did I want people to experience? I discovered that the work I had done was a commentary on rest but not necessarily *restful* to be involved with. This led me to wanting to be able to articulate one aspect of rest, and to invite participants to take something home in a way that reminded them to slow down. This is when, from the various restful domestic situations I had considered, I decided to design a ritual specifically around handwashing.

Considering Cha Dao, the Japanese tea ceremony, I realised it closely resembled the type of mindfulness that I wanted. It compelled me to take each step of the process and consider how each moment could be stretched out and elaborated. Handwashing typically takes only a few seconds, but I was looking to make it such a practise that was memorable and raised questions about participant's lives. In choreographing the space of this ritual, I purposely designed it as a place ballet that was lengthened in every aspect – in the whisking up of a soap foam, in the sitting down for conversation and in the inviting people to set up the same ritual for the sake of the next participant. I felt that if people entered the space and left it again within a couple minutes then they have not grasped the understanding of rest that the project is trying to exude; instead, if people choose to step out of their days to participate within the dialogue of the project, then they are defying the demand for constant production and making my project purposeful.

The intimate relationship between handwashing and throwing as expressions of rest began to materialise within the design of the ritual, much as Hole's posthumous performative piece was both practically active as a kiln and symbolically active as her resting place. Both in routine and posture, the two parallel practises, developed through their own separate but interlinked iterative cycles, required consideration of intention and tactility. While the movements of throwing are tense and those of handwashing are fluid, they are both ceremoniously routine – action flows from action until the performance is complete. While the two activities are not intrinsically connected, they are intertwined as methods of productive rest within my paradigm.





In this chapter, I reflect in more detail on a selected sequence of moments in the evolution of my project. I have divided these into four stages. In 'Setting the Stage' I show my initial explorations with clay. I also analyse the theme of place ballet and how my own place ballet is both a system involving other members of my family, while having a personal relationship to other meanings of home. In 'The Practise of Wheel-Throwing' I wander through my journey learning to throw pots on the wheel. In 'Spatio-temporal arrangements' I show how I set scenes using my thrown vessels through installation and video work. And in the final stage 'Orchestrating ritual' I settle into the preparation for my final space: the furniture, objects, and actions of a handwashing ritual. This research was not linear nor direct, and in my journey these moments were significant turning-points.

Fig. 19 En Torng Sung, *Slip-cast fragility*, still image, 2020.



Setting the Stage

In the very beginning, I explored slip casting. I made a three-part-mold in the shape of a wave tessellation, and then made 21 of these slip-casted waves (Fig. 19), recalling the beach. I intended to record the breaking of these pieces as a commentary on the fragility of rest. However, the university was shut down soon after I made these pieces and in the time I was in lockdown, my attention turned inwards, towards home and the way other spaces, like the beach, became homely. In particular, I settled on the memory of a birthday party held at the beach, imagining scenes of celebration (Fig. 20) that had punctuated my life and imagined how others might have encountered their own scenes of celebration.

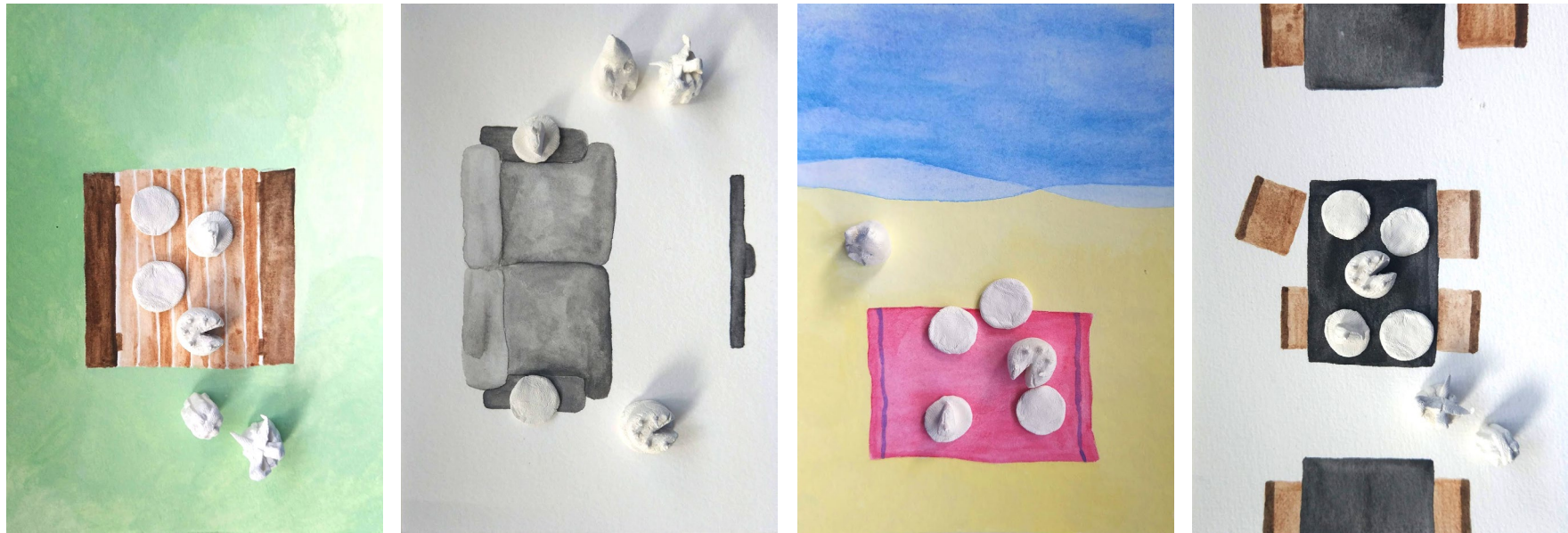


Fig. 20 En Torng Sung. *Scenes of Celebration*, sequence of still images, 2020.

‘Home’ becomes strange once you consider spaces outside of your domestic setting. At this point, the homeliness of the beach was an important motivator. To this end, I wanted to find a way to bring the essence of the beach home so that it could be within my routine place ballet. I did this by hand-moulding a shallow bowl out of clay and filling it with sand borrowed from the beach (Fig. 21). I placed this bowl in the entranceway of my home, as a prompt to pause in my routine and consider the way essences of home leaked into each other. The bowl was an object of empathy that intercepted my family members in their own ballets and sought a shared bond.



Fig. 21 En Torng Sung. *Bringing the beach home*, still image, 2020.

Fig. 22 En Torng Sung. *Place ballet of home*, pen and pencil illustration, 2020.



The Practise of Wheel-Throwing

As I transitioned back into the university environment and resumed working with ceramics in the Wet Lab, I brought with me the concern for the domestic setting. I considered objects that might fit into and disrupt the conventional place ballet of home like my bowl did. I imagined strange objects such as a cylinder stretched out across the stairs or clay lining the interior of a shoe.

As I learned to throw larger vessels, I encountered various problems and complications. There were countless cracks, thin bases, warped walls, slumped walls and off-centre forms (Figs. 25-30). The frustration I felt with throwing in this time mounted far quicker than when I was throwing at smaller quantities. Sometimes a long-worked vessel would be rendered unusable due to one wrong push or pull. My log (see Chapter 3 above) became the tangible representation of the narrative quality of materiality (Ingold, 2000, p.347), of the constantly evolving dialogue between a maker and things made.



Fig. 23 En Torng Sung. *Throwing practise in lockdown*, photograph, 2020.

Fig. 24 En Torng Sung. *First four attempts*, still image, 2020.

In this time, I found that many of my issues would begin with my wedging or centering, which would appear in the form of cracks days later. For it all to then be unusable due to one wrong push or pull felt extremely unsatisfying and really brought to the forefront of my mind the constant volatility of the material with its seemingly untamable nature.

There were also many unresolved issues, as the reason behind every failure would be based on an educated guess. There was nothing that could tell you your guess was right, so I had to base each subsequent thrown off of that assumption. Sometimes this meant I changed the way my fingers interacted with the clay, or that I changed the clay I was using altogether.

The attempt log I kept throughout this time was essential in reviewing why anything went right or wrong. When cracks showed up or when the walls seemed to slump unfavourably, I could look back on my log and find that the reasons could be based on the thinness of base or wetness of clay or sloppy wedging or a change in clay. This log became the tangible representation of the narrative quality of materiality (Ingold, 2000, p.347), of which Ingold discusses the constantly evolving dialogue between a maker and the making, and was a primary developer of my technique when confronting difficulty.



Fig. 25 En Torng Sung. *Throwing failure: pulled too far*, photograph, 2020.

Fig. 26 En Torng Sung. *Throwing failure: base too thin*, photograph, 2020.

Fig. 27 En Torng Sung. *Throwing failure: warped form*, photograph, 2020.

Fig. 28 En Torng Sung. *Throwing failure: warped form*, photograph, 2020.

Fig. 29 En Torng Sung. *Throwing success: satisfactory size*, photograph, 2020.

Fig. 30 En Torng Sung. *Throwing failure: cracked base*, photograph, 2020.

Spatio-Temporal Arrangements

As I built up my skill and strength in throwing, I concurrently considered the forms these vessels would take, seeking to make a stronger connection between vessels and domestic situations. The slumps and failures of my vessels reminded me of the way I collapse into a chair at the end of a day, or the way my house is fitted to my own body and needs. I thought of the slump of a couch or resting a hand on a handrail. I threw vessels then pressed them against handrails, shoes, corners and tables.

I mocked up a domestic scene to test these vessels in, with a couch, table and plinths to emulate five common domestic spaces: living room, dining room, bathroom, desk and playroom. Derived from my own experiences of home, this scene was built upon the idea that the ceramic pieces were indicators of where rest gets scattered within a home.



Fig. 31 En Torng Sung. *Slumped vessels drying*, still image, 2020.

Fig. 32 En Torng Sung. *Home and away*, Part of sequence of images, 2020.

Fig. 33 En Torng Sung. *Home and away*, Part of sequence of images, 2020.

Fig. 34 En Torng Sung. *Stealing moments of rest*, scene setting, 2020.

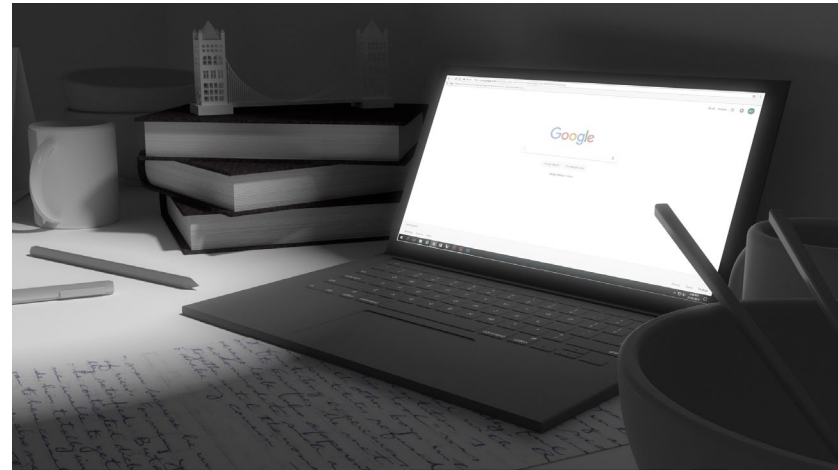


Fig. 35 En Torng Sung. *5 spaces of rest*, sequence of pre-conceptualisations, 2020.

Fig. 36 En Torng Sung. *Stealing moments of rest*, sequence of images, 2020.

I then thought of how others might participate in these scenes. I set up a time-lapse camera with the idea that participants could move the artefacts freely to indicate their own inclinations towards rest. Designing for the camera, however, was challenging. I struggled with scene composition and editing a captivating space.

As I made more iterations of these videos, they improved in their production quality and composition, but still struggled to have a defined purpose. I reflected that what I wanted this installation to do was to *produce* rest, whereas I had been using these scenes and videos to talk about various forms of rest. I settled on a new direction to follow: creating a space that itself would be more like Lee Mingwei's beautiful moment: an emotional breath of fresh air.



difficulty notes:
 • easy to make
 • medium
 • hard to make

bright hand tools

bright white

bright brass hooks

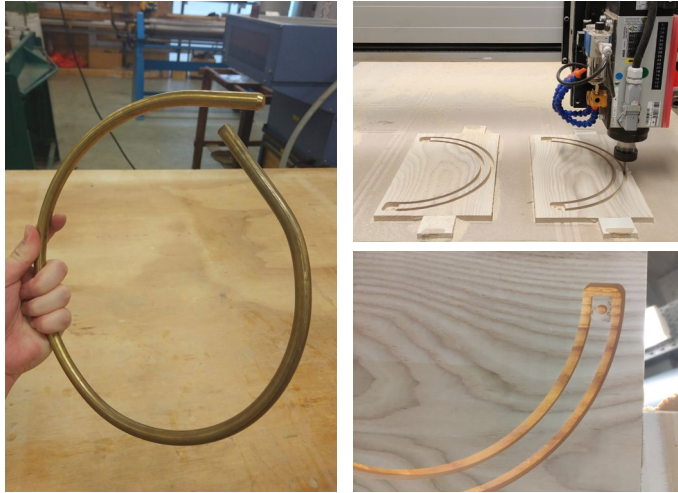
sandy clay will break to brass beginnings

cnc

Fig. 37 En Torng Sung. *Collection of objects*, sketched illustrations, 2020.

I started a visual inventory of the various elements I would need to design, make, or acquire (Fig. 37). As I worked, I updated the inventory to show the design of each object. This helped me to build a consistency around the collection. I also made rough 1:1 scale tests (Figs. 38-40) to navigate the tactile component of the project. The way each material chosen spoke to the others and the overall scene became critical. I learned, for instance, that an MDF stand for the porcelain bowl had an entirely different visual and tactile language to an American white ash version, especially when it was paired with brass legs.

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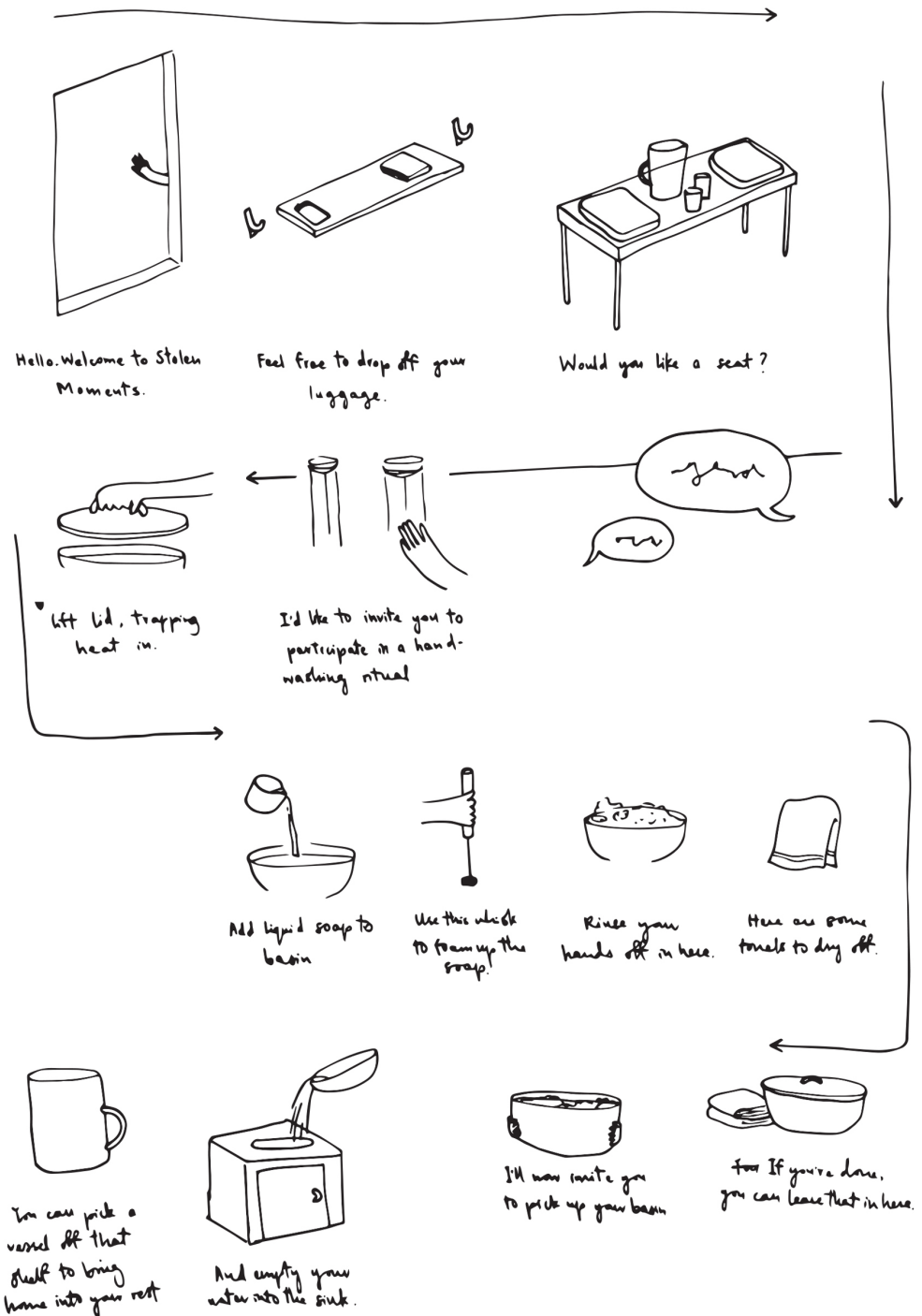
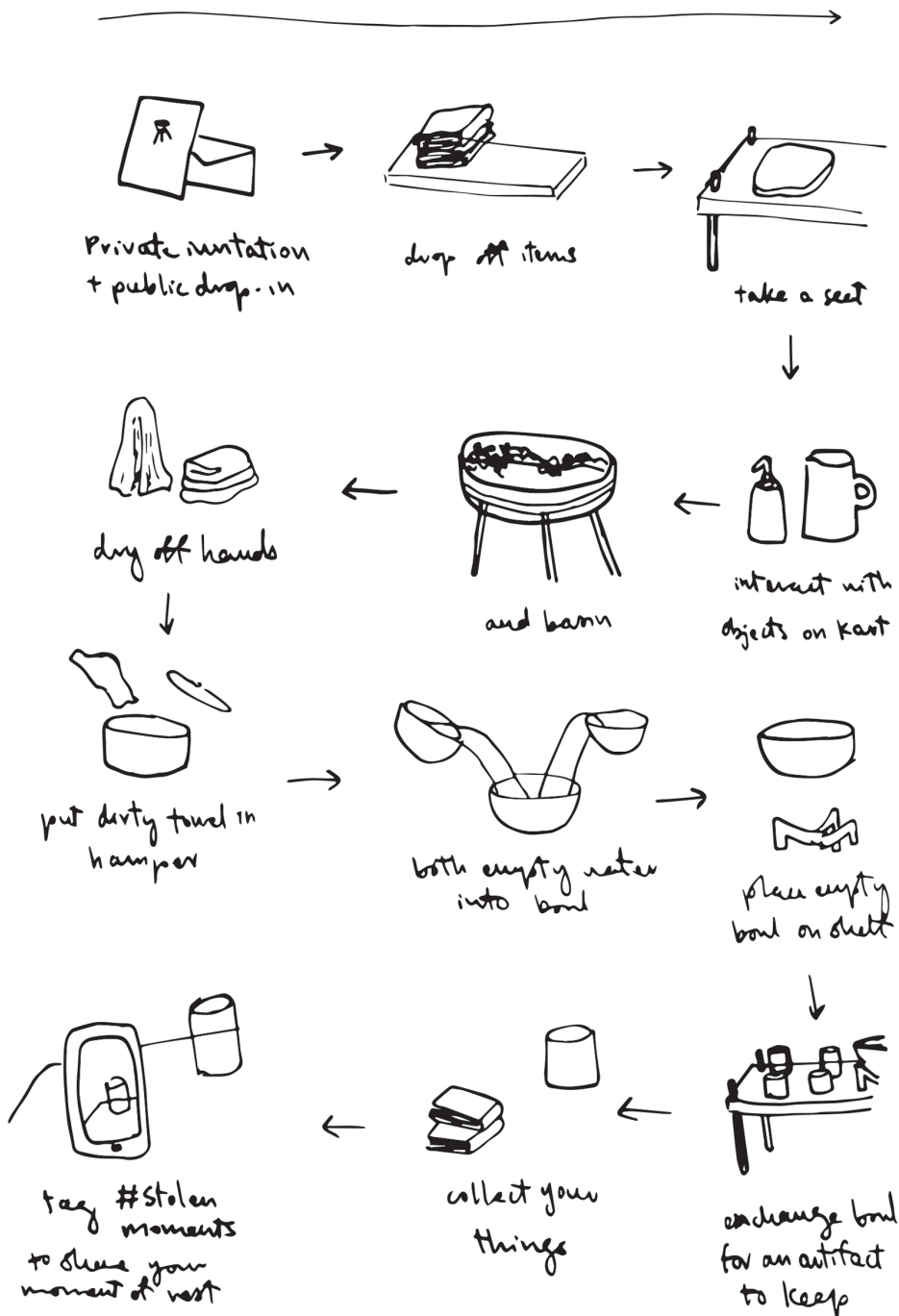
As I hadn't had much exposure to using brass, it was a material I had little knowledge about. As I talked to workshop technicians, I realised it was a material far harder to use than I had initially expected, as it needs to be annealed before it can be bent. I would have to find an alternate material or design to my basin stand if I didn't want to work with the material at its level of difficulty, and it is this intimate knowledge about materiality that showed me I had yet to discover much about material qualities.

Another instance of ignorance was when cutting the white ash circle using a CNC cutter. As the grain kept splitting, adjustments to the process and a little extra hand finishing were necessitated. This was yet another reminder of the unpredictability of material. Before I began, I imagined this process would feel quite routine – I would just send through a file and have it cut, ready for use. However, being made to cycle back in my process brought an awareness around making as a practise that rarely has an A-to-B narrative and forewarned me to account for the other countless errors and interruptions that could occur in any premeditated routine.

Fig. 38 En Torng Sung. Material qualities: brass bending, photograph, 2020.

Fig. 39 En Torng Sung. Material qualities: CNC attempt two, photograph, 2020.

Fig. 40 En Torng Sung. Material qualities: White ash 1mm skin, photograph, 2020.



In designing the ritual, I also had to decide how I wanted people to interact with the artefacts I was presenting them with. I tested my ritual with friends to widen my perspective of how people should and would experience it. I discovered that there was quite a disconnect between how I expected others to react and how they actually reacted. For example, I had originally intended the basin to be one in which participants rinsed their hands after soaping up. However, when I handed my friends the soap, they proceeded to pour it into the basin and stir it up to create a foam. Inspired by this interpretation, I changed the design for the ritual so that participants could add soap to their basins to whisk up, after which they would rinse by trickling water over their hands out of a jug.

The four moments of this chapter were each critical to my research. Each built on both the successes and failures of the former. Each stage led to the next and central themes developed out of incidental happenings. What started as an interest in clay developed into the pursuit of the space-making of the routine of rest.





Fig. 43 En Torng Sung. *Ritual test*, photograph, 2020.



Fig. 44 En Torng Sung. *Ritual test*, photograph, 2020.



Fig. 45 En Torng Sung. *Ritual test: seating iteration*, photograph, 2020.



We flit and spin through life, twisting and swaying around the ceaseless events of our days. *Stolen Moments* will be a participatory installation seeking to steal a moment from your day. It invites you to go slowly; to put down your belongings, unwrinkle your brows and wash your hands with me.

My research asks: how can rest within the context of the place ballet of home be articulated through a spatial ceramic practise? How can I help people to form restful habits, to steal back small pieces of their own lives from relentless overwork? *Stolen Moments* responds to this question by stretching out a single moment of pause.

Participants will be invited to join me in the gallery, where they will be met with wheel-thrown hand basins and taken through a deliberate ritual of handwashing. On arriving, they will sit for a conversation. I will ask what rest looks like to them, how they find rest in their own homes, and what kind of practises of rest they perform regularly. I will then excuse myself to prepare the handwashing ritual, giving them a moment for contemplation. When I return, I will invite them to join me at the basins, whisk the soap to a foam, wash and dry their hands. Afterwards I will lead them to a sideboard, where we will pour out the water from the basin and I will invite them to assist with the set up of the ritual for the next visitors. To conclude I will offer a gift: a vessel to take and use in future restful moments. The vessels will be marked with an Instagram handle, and participants will be invited to photograph the moments these vessels sit within, to be submitted to an online depository of *Stolen Moments*.

While my project turns on evoking home, it is focused on the homeliness of restful rituals, rather than the particular houses. The space-making of the ritual is not determined by the walls it sits within but the collection of objects that build the ritual. My measure for the success of this installation is not how much attention it gets on social media or any praise it might get for its design. Rather, it is that it is restful; a moment that pulls someone out of the constantly circulating routines of everyday living.





Previous page: Fig. 47 Steven Park. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2021.
Fig. 48 Steven Park. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2021.



Fig. 49 Steven Park. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2021.





Fig. 50 Shivneel Prasad. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2021.

Fig. 51 Shivneel Prasad. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2021.



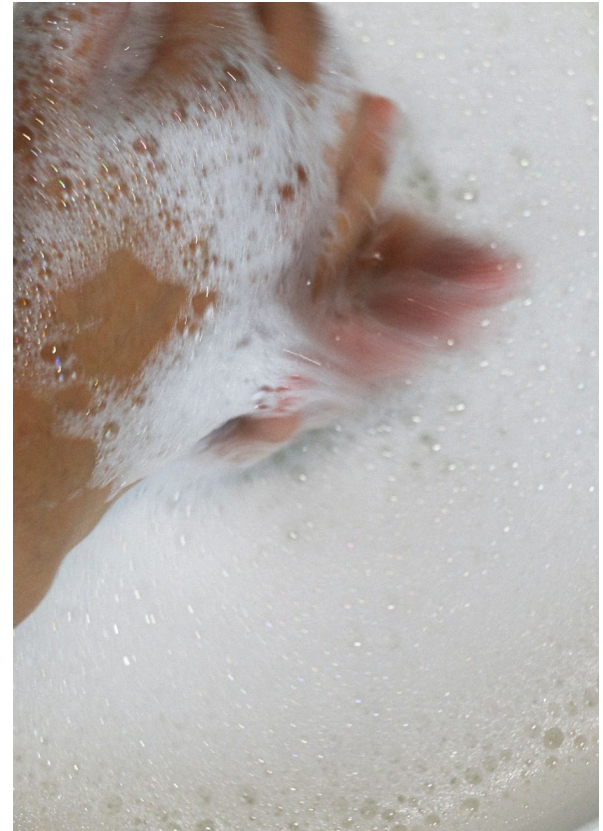


Fig. 52 Shivneel Prasad. *Final Installation*, sequence of handwashing, 2021.

Fig. 53 Shivneel Prasad. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2021.

Fig. 54 Steven Park. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2021.



Fig. 55 Steven Park. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2021.
Fig. 56 Steven Park. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2021.



Fig. 57 Steven Park. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2021.



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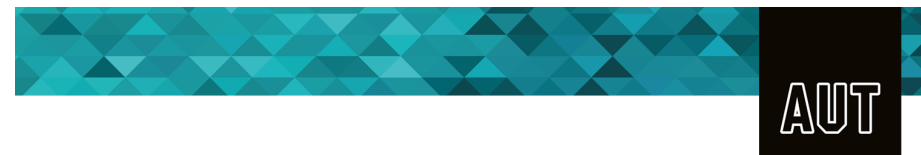
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En Torg Sung
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02/09/2021

Lee Mingwei
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Dear Lee Mingwei,

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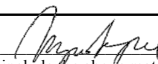
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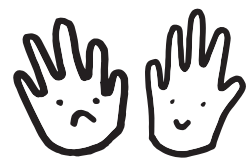
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