

*A Chair for [NEARLY]
Every Week of Lockdown.*

BY JOSH COTTON



A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY]
EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN.

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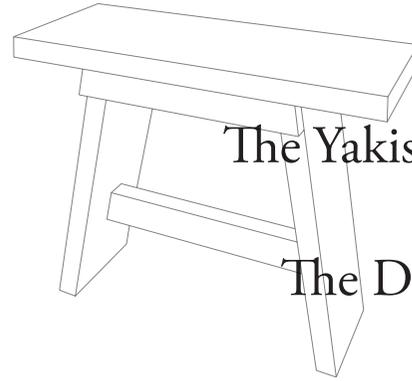
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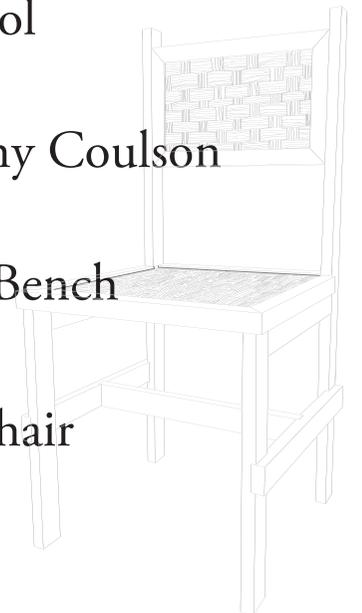
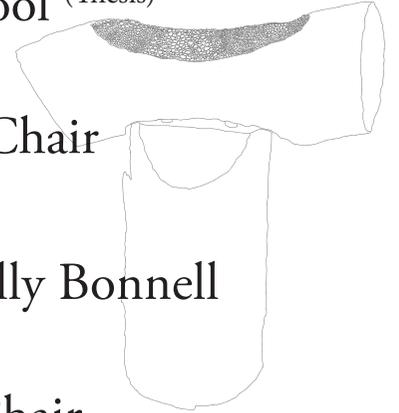
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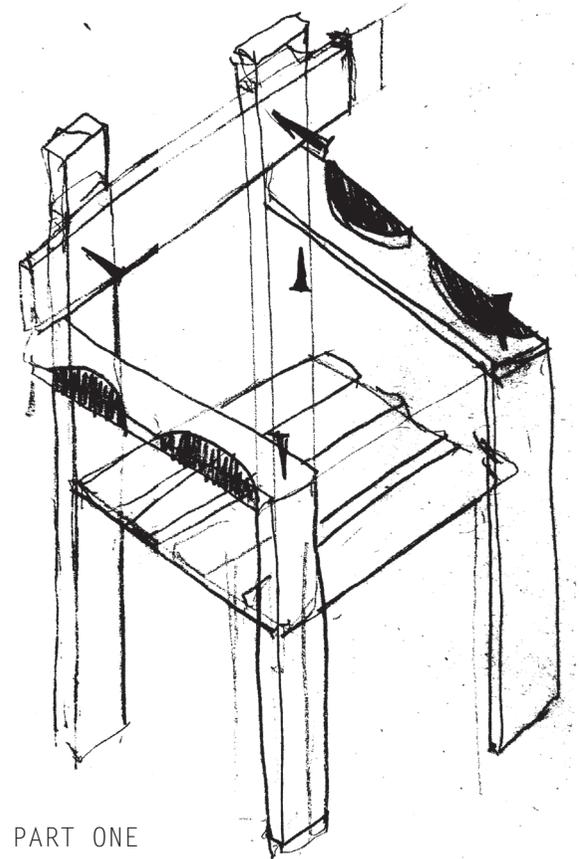
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To some, chairs are merely functional objects but as designers we know that they symbolise the ever-evolving landscape of our craft. The chair is a vehicle through which we can understand a culture, a time in history and the mind of a designer. As the chair has become such a ubiquitous object it can often be overlooked. However, each chair tells the story of the time when it was created, from its form, the material it's crafted from, the type of person it was crafted for and where in the world this person lives. The chair is not restricted to an object with four legs and a seat. In fact, Canadian architect Witold Rybczynski observed how every chair possesses a personality of its own and even has the ability to convey status and power (*Rybczynski, 2016:22*). For example, the throne or the executive's chair at the head of the table communicate the importance of the sitter, whereas the rocking chair

or recliner embodies comfort and relaxation. Writer and former director of the London Design Museum, Deyan Sudjic, sees chairs as a '*microcosm of the world of design*' as they are commonly used to signify how the industry has changed and evolved throughout modern history (*Sudjic, 2007:33*). London based furniture designer Tommy Coulson believes that chairs are the 'nucleus of all furniture' as they can not only be found deeply entrenched within the Anthropocene but also in the natural world; the branch for a monkey, the rock for a meerkat and so on (*Coulson, T. 2020, personal communication, 23rd May*).

Part I of this paper will explore the phenomena of '*the chair*' in design; what it has meant to different designers, what each chair reflects about when and where it was made, and for whom, and the iconic moments in the history of chair design that continue to influence modern practice. Part II will be a journal reflecting on and evaluating the series of chairs that I have made whilst in lockdown due to the global coronavirus pandemic.





Fig.1

PART ONE: 'The Chair' In Design



One of the most iconic chairs ever made was Michael Thonet's 'No.14 Bistro Chair', the first mass produced chair in history. The German cabinet maker spent years designing furniture that could be mass produced and sold at an affordable price and in 1859, he introduced the No.14 Chair. This chair redefined the parameters of chair design, transforming furniture making into a completely industrial process that re-imagined the role of the craftsman within the process of production.

What made this chair stand out was that it was made from as few parts as possible and these parts were standardized, meaning that assembly of the chair was no longer reliant on the skills of a master craftsman. Instead, Thonet created an efficient method of mass producing the parts, shipping them unassembled to an unskilled worker who could then put them together and deliver the completed chair to the final recipient (International Herald Tribune, 2008). Thonet's Bistro Chairs were a huge success; they were cheap to produce, easy to transport and not only a functional but also attractive object (Goethe-Institut, 2008). By investing in industrial mechanical processes and techniques, he could easily and efficiently create complex forms that no longer required the skills and knowledge of a craftsman (Sudjic, 2007:35).

Michael Thonet's chairs perfectly industrialised the process of producing bentwood furniture. This technique involved bending wood that had been heated in a steam chamber to over one hundred degrees Celsius and then bent by hand into cast iron curved moulds by specially trained workers and left to dry at seventy degrees for at least twenty hours. The chair is made up of six beechwood components held together by ten screws and two nuts, designed to be purposefully simple to both produce and assemble. Unlike other modernist products, Thonet's 'Bistro Chair' proved to be extremely fashionable with over fifty million chairs being produced and sold globally by 1930, setting a precedent for the future of furniture

production (*Design Museum*, date unknown).

It could be argued that the No.14 Chair is one of the most popular chair designs in history, even if you don't know who Michael Thonet is, you have definitely seen or even sat on one of his chairs before. Incredibly simple yet beautifully crafted, the Bistro Chair is timeless. British furniture designer Jasper Morrison argued that, as no other designer had ever improved upon Thonet's original creation, the Bistro Chair maintained the 'freshness of a brand new product' (*International Herald Tribune*, 2008).

A clear comparison can be drawn between Thonet's method of industrialisation to Fordism, a system built upon the division of labour (*Thonet Industries*, 1953:6). Instead of a skilled engineer designing and making the car with control and responsibility over each step of the process, Ford cars were produced by workers whose sole focus was on their individual part of the puzzle, such as the tyres (*Edwards*, 1992:126). Here, like with Thonet's production process, the role of the trained craftsman is forever changed and arguably they no longer hold the same prestige they once did. The success, efficiency, productivity and cost-effectiveness of the division of labour in factories cannot be refuted, however its impact on the mental health and degree of ownership felt by the workers has been highlighted by many thinkers, including Karl Marx (*Giddens*, 1973). Mass-production of not only furniture but all consumer products has grown exponentially and is now the norm in our contemporary capitalist society yet, at the time, Thonet was at the cornerstone of a new era.



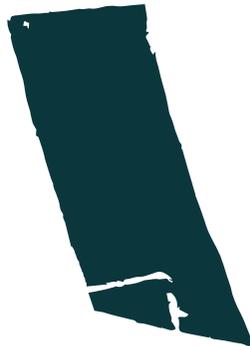
Fig. 2

From Bentwood to Tubular Steel

Thonet's revolutionary work ignited the desire for others within the industry to push chair design forward, exploring new techniques and materials. What was once a field dominated by traditional furniture designers was opening up to 'outsiders', in particular architects. Many of the most iconic chairs in history were designed by architects who hoped to marry the aesthetic of their building designs with the materials and processes used to craft the objects that would furnish them. This was often done in an effort to achieve an all encompassing modern lifestyle where the furniture within the home matched the contemporary design of the exterior (Benton, 1990:104). Architecture and design historian, Charlotte Benton writes that the ongoing efforts to design a modern chair are an 'exemplary allegory of modernism', as designers continue to focus on the evolving needs and desires of the modern person.

One architect in particular who was about to radicalise the furniture industry was a young Hungarian man by the name of Marcel Breuer who, in 1925 just after he joined the Bauhaus, came up with a revolutionary idea that would change the furniture industry forever. This idea was born from Breuer being fascinated by the components of an Adler bicycle that he purchased after joining the Bauhaus, a bike that he would spend a large amount of time riding around the city. Breuer was fascinated with his bikes impressively strong and light weight tubular steel frame. Completely enamoured by this material, he realised that if the hollow steel tube could support the weight of a rider and could be bent into different forms, then it could also be used to make furniture.

After failing to entice bicycle manufacturer Adler with the concept, he approached the steel tube manufacturer Mannesmann directly. Mannesmann had recently developed a process to produce the steel tube seamlessly, meaning that the frame could be bent, welded and bent again without losing too much strength in the material, whereas tubes welded with seams would snap when bent. Breuer had all of the tubes cut pre-bent by the tube manufacturer and worked with a plumber to weld the frame of the chair together. Thus, the Model B3 chair (*later named the Wassily chair after friend and fellow bauhaus member Wassily Kandisky gave the chair*



much praise) was born (Wilk, 1981:37). The Wassily chair was revolutionary within the furniture industry. Breuer took a material that was, at the time, inconceivable to use in the production of chairs. Much like the way in which Michael Thonet industrialised the making process to produce a design classic, Breuer's process of bending tubular steel inspired the future of furniture makers. Architectural photographer Seamus Payne describes the design of the Wassily chair as '*progressive, even in comparison to the world's latest furniture*'. The chair's steel tube skeleton appears beautifully complex, however it is simple in construction, a contrast that has inspired furniture manufacturers ever since (The CoolList, date unknown).



Fig. 3

From Mass Manufacture to Self Assembly

Another person who disrupted the relationship between craftsman and the manufacturer of furniture is Enzo Mari, Italian modernist artist and furniture designer. Mari, well-known for his Communist beliefs, was arguably Italy's most provocative designer, committed to designing functional objects at low cost (Design Boom, 2010). He created objects that praised a 'utopic world' and responded to his theory of quality-quantity, exploring the relationship between people and the objects that they own (Mari, 2002:5)

During his over fifty-year career, Enzo Mari was obsessed with form and functionality. Of everything he designed he asked 'what is essential?' Whether it was a simple yet sophisticated household object or an intricate creation for public display, this design ethos remained strongly at the forefront. On a personal level, he critiqued the division of labour and supported the radical movements of workers and students throughout the 1960s and 1970s. However, as a designer, he

questioned whether mass production and the industrialising of common craft processes could benefit and even liberate designers (Ivison, 2008). As writer Timothy Ivison (2008) says, Mari was '*intent on elevating the industry to an art form*'. He spent his career searching for the perfect relationship between the 'industrial process' and the 'consumer' of his works. Mari's objects always embodied who he was as a craftsman and what he stood for - being sophisticated, affordable and, most importantly, made to last.

In 1968, Mari was asked to design a sofa bed. Initially he rejected the idea as he despised the examples already on the market (*he thought of them as 'vulgar' and 'obscene', taking the effort of a 'surgical operation' to put up and down*). Despite this, he did design a sofa bed, one that could be turned from sofa to bed in an easy fashion. This sofa bed was made for the less affluent consumer who lived in a small flat so it was at an affordable price point that anyone could buy. To Mari, it had to be cheap but at the same time of the highest quality and very long lasting. The sofa bed he designed was by far the cheapest of its kind on the market, however the company who commissioned it did not want to buy it, making it a complete commercial failure.

The situation threw Mari into a great state of depression as, in his words, he had '*come into first hand contact with the naivety of the approach to the low cost, well designed object*' and that the audience whom it was designed for completely rejected it. This was the event that ignited the '*Autoprogettazione*' project (Vimeo, 2010). Mari believed he needed to respond to an enlarging pressure for designers to mass produce objects for consumers who didn't fully understand the value of the products themselves. He wanted to design furniture that would teach the consumers to appreciate its value through the process of making it themselves, rather than simply buying the finished product and ultimately encourage a paradigm shift away from the idea of '*design as industry*' (Culture Trip, 2016). So in 1971, the Autoprogettazione project was born. A collection of blueprints for

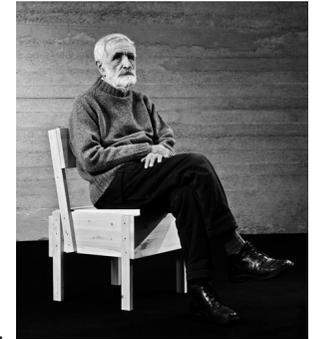


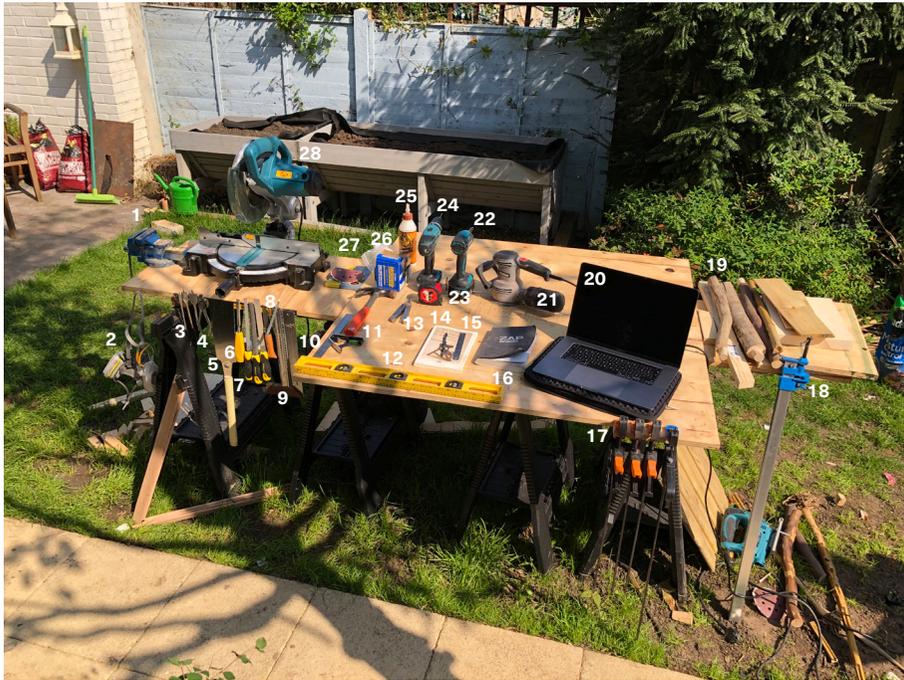
Fig. 4

nineteen furniture designs that could be self-assembled by anyone with nothing more than a hammer, nails and standardised planks of wood available from any saw mill. This was a turning point in the history of furniture production. Mari had created a provocative alternative to the capitalist phenomenon of mass, passive consumption. Conceived as a '*democratisation of design*', the Autoprogettazione project was created for consumers to build their furniture as they required (*Cucula*, date unknown). Autoprogettazione translates literally as auto - '*self*' and progettazione - '*design*'. However, Mari explains that to him, the word '*design*' represents a '*series of superficially decorative objects*'. Instead he defines autoprogettazione as '*an exercise to be done in order to improve one's personal awareness of the honest reasoning behind the project*' (Mari, 2002:5) Mari had always believed that '*design is only design, if it communicates knowledge*', in this case the knowledge being the fact that the true value of the object can only be understood through process of making it yourself. This philosophy that is perfectly exemplified by the Autoprogettazione project (*The 189*, 2012).

By standardising the materials required to construct the furniture, Mari aimed to make it as easy as possible for people to assemble the designs for themselves. While Michael Thonet standardised the components of his bentwood chairs so that the process no longer required the skills and knowledge of an experienced designer, Mari disrupted the idea of the craftsman further. He wanted to eliminate the passive consumer and instead give them the power and understanding to become the maker themselves. The Autoprogettazione project was didactic by nature and he hoped that by making the furniture themselves the consumers would understand its true value. However, when the prototypes of the collection were made, Mari was critiqued by many of his colleagues within the design world who accused him of being a fascist. They believed that a designer should create objects that make life easier and to them, Mari was making the non-designer do more work (Vimeo, 2010).

We can see parallels between Enzo Mari's Autoprogettazione and the phenomenon of IKEA flat pack furniture which has arguably become the norm of the modern person. Interestingly, IKEA seems to have combined the two concepts

explored by Thonet and Mari, not only standardising the components of furniture to allow for mass manufacture, but also giving the power back to the consumer by requiring the furniture to be self-assembled. This is the ultimate nod towards Mari's design ethos; celebrating the pedagogical philosophy of the Autoprogettazione by carrying out the act of making your own objects and thus learning something from the process, but on a mass scale that lives and breathes the capitalist ideal. Each of the '*designers*' work explored above has influenced the project I have embarked upon during one of the most surreal and unsettling times in modern history. It brings great comfort to be able to look back with nostalgia and curiosity on the history of chair design at a time when nobody knows what lies ahead. The next part of this thesis will detail my first foray into chair design, a craft I have come to love and depend upon during this period of uncertainty.

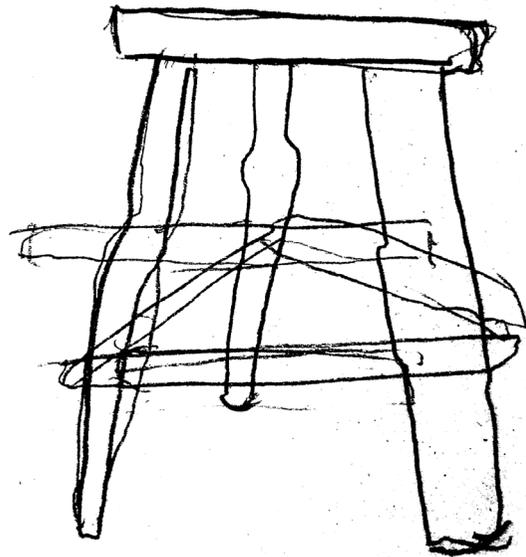


- (1) Vice (2) PPE (3) Drill Bits (4) Pliers (5) Japanese Saw (6) Chisel (7) Files (8) Opinel Knife
 (9) Set Square (10) Adjustable Square (11) Hammer (12) Spirit Level (13) Leatherman
 (14) Martino Gamper – 100 Chairs (15) 150mm Ruler (16) Sketchbook (17) Clamps
 (18) Big Boy Clamp (19) Future Chair Legs (20) Laptop (21) Orbital Sander
 (22) Makita 18v Impact Driver (23) Tape Measure (24) Makita 18v Drill (25) Wood Glue
 (26) Screws (27) Sanding Discs (28) Makita Chop Saw

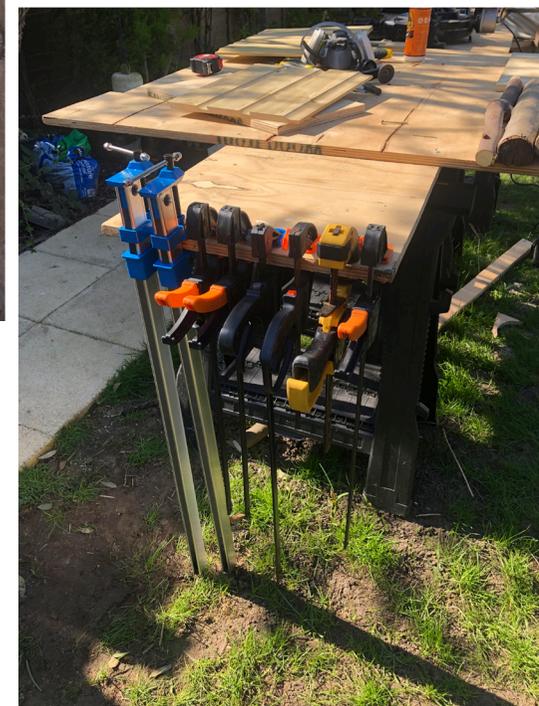
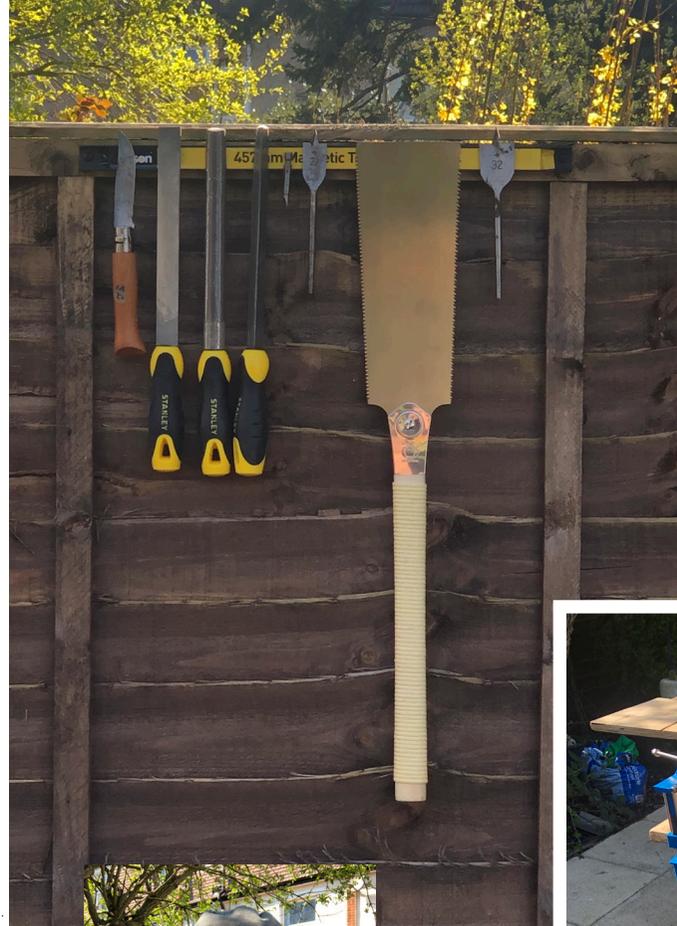
The [GARDEN] Workshop

The creation of my Heath Robinson-come-Robinson Crusoe sprinkled with a little bit of Scrapheap Challenge ‘*garden workshop*’ is the result of a being thrown into lockdown with little notice. When you are forced to carry out your ‘normal’ ways of working in an unknown environment stripped off all your resources, your ‘normal’ gets thrown out the window. Initially, everything becomes a bit ad hoc, pulled together as you try to adapt to a new set of uncertain circumstances. Adhocism is a philosophy of problem solving, often through a process of adapting to unusual circumstances. Instead of going to the well-equipped wood workshop in Central Saint Martins that is flooded with knowledgeable technicians on hand to offer advice, I am walking out my back door and into my home workshop. Accompanied by my dad who has fifty years of DIY experience and has spent hours of watching Tommy Walsh celebrity builder on the telly.

The first few instalments in my series of chairs were made as a way of testing the waters of my skills in producing chairs. I have never made a chair before, however I have put together light work framing for outdoor structures numerous times. In this case of this garden chair, my first ever chair, I wanted to approach the materials in the way that they are typically used by carpenters and builders. As the inaugural chair both in the series and my career, my main priority was to produce a chair that could hold the weight of a person and also look like an object that could become and permanent feature of my garden furniture.



A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



*From The [WORKSHOP]
to The Garden.*

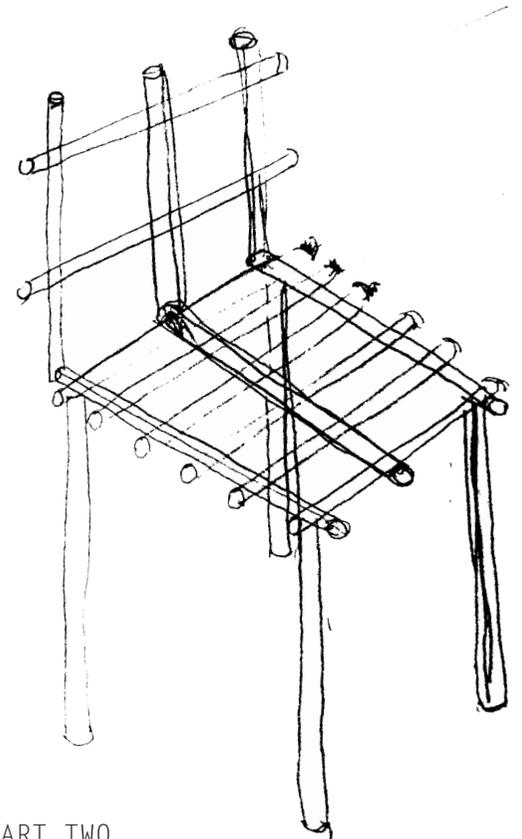




Fig. 5

PART 2: From the Workshop to the Garden

When lock down began, I set out to create a series of chairs that explore the different areas of craft and design that inspire me. I was drawn to chairs in particular as they are a ubiquitous and highly fetishised object, taking on different forms and evolving over time, as detailed in Part I. Each instalment in the series explores a concept or idea that can be easily understood through a chair, be it the use of locally sourced waste materials or a response to the government's social distancing measures. Thus I hope that each chair will tell a story and hold a meaning that goes beyond its physical form.

The chairs in this series were produced in my garden at home, in a time of uncertainty, with a limited amount of materials and tools at my disposal. Luckily as a craftsman by training (*or at least I would like to think of myself as some sort of craftsman*), I have started to build a collection of tools and gadgets that I hope will assist me in this potentially mammoth task of trying to produce a chair every day (*or every two days*) during my time in isolation. I have turned my garden into an ad hoc outdoor workshop that even Robinson Crusoe would even be proud of.

The creation of my Heath Robinson-come-Robinson Crusoe sprinkled with a little bit of Scrapheap Challenge '*garden workshop*' is the result of a being thrown into lockdown with little notice. When you are forced to carry out your '*normal*' ways of working in an unknown environment stripped off all your resources, your '*normal*' gets thrown out the window. Initially, everything becomes a bit ad hoc, pulled together as you try to adapt to a new set of uncertain circumstances. Adhocism is a philosophy of problem solving, often through a process of adapting to unusual circumstances (*Jencks, 2013: 23*). In this sense I am trying to solve the problem of finishing Material Futures without the use of extensive workshops and the ability to acquire virtually any material on the planet by setting up a makeshift workshop in my garden and indirectly destroying my mum's freshly laid lawn. Instead of going to the well-equipped wood workshop in Central Saint Martins that is flooded with knowledgeable technicians on hand to offer advice, I am walking out



my back door and into my home workshop. Accompanied by my dad who has fifty years of DIY experience and has spent hours of watching Tommy Walsh celebrity builder on the telly, I set out to finish my Masters.

Perhaps this project is worth more than just chairs, perhaps it is driven by methodology of making and keeping busy during a time of lockdown when we are stopped from carrying out our usual routines with the abundant resources that we are used to. Perhaps I am doing this project to keep myself sane while I isolate with my parents. I am someone who understands learning through doing, making, feeling and having a first-hand relationship and experience with the objects and materials that I am working with. I am not the person who will happily spend the next few months of self-isolation sitting in my room, researching and conceptualising my project. I need to be physically busy and I don't think I am alone. I believe that many of my designer-maker comrades are the same as me; struggling with not being able to make things, not being able to be in their respective studios or workshops and, most importantly, not being able to interact with their peers. So perhaps this project will become a guide for makers, designers, creatives, frankly anyone who likes making stuff on how to turn local waste into meaningful valuable objects. With a nod to Enzo Mari's *Autoprogettazione* project of self-assembly furniture, I am creating a process in which people can ease potential blues by finding their own materials and making a simple stool or chair. Studies have shown that the process of making as a form of therapy can greatly improve one's mental health and wellbeing. For many who are locked down unable to practice their usual creative outlets, the process of simply making anything can act as a form of remedy for potential creative withdrawal (*American Art Therapy Association, 2017: 1*). In an interview with London based designer and Kingston University lecturer Dom Johnson, he explained how his mental health is negatively impacted during prolonged periods of idleness when he is between projects or unable to continue with his usual craft, like during lockdown. (*Johnson, D. 2020, personal communication, 23rd May*) Similarly, materials designer Molly Bonnell highlighted how the physical act of making has taken on heightened importance during lock down when her social interactions are now restricted to the digital world (*Bonnell, M. 2020, personal*



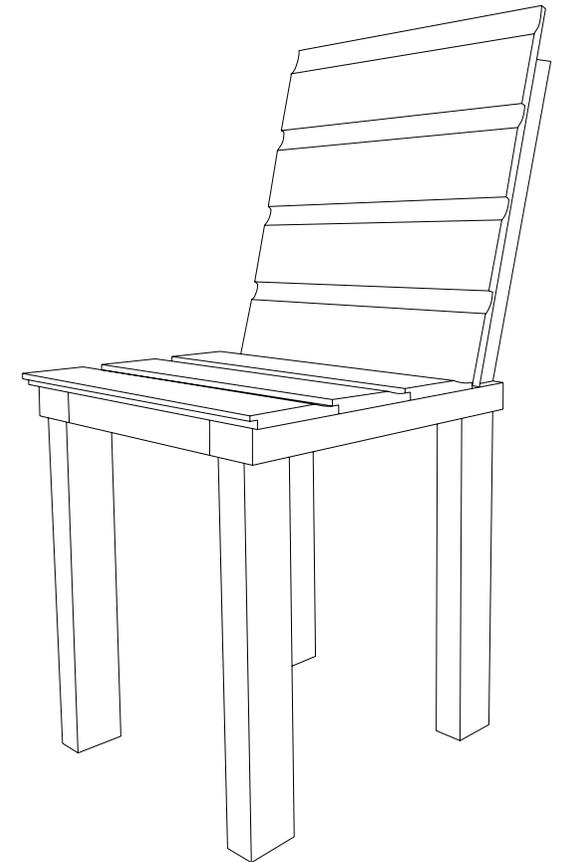
Fig. 6

communication, 22nd May). Whether you are interested in chairs or not, there is something pleasurable about following a predetermined process that satisfies a need or craving to make something in an environment that could be described as a creative vacuum.

Upon reflection, I realise that the project that I was working on before COVID - 19 (*an investigation into reusing the sawdust made from craftspeople and finding an alternative to MDF*) lacked the playfulness and risk that I love about my practice. I was undertaking a project that was unknown to me, an area of research that I had not experienced before in great depth before. As a result, I made it my mission to perfect the composite board through rigorous non-stop testing and experiments. However, these experiments were always structured and a tad dry, I was so insistent on perfecting ratios and recipes that I forgot who I was as a designer and the reason that I love making things. I had lost that feeling of jeopardy that comes when testing different things: will they work? Will I fail spectacularly? Does it matter? Will something exciting be born from that mistake? I wasn't really learning from any major mistakes, I was keeping everything safe and simple, but that isn't me. I had stopped looking at what other designers were doing, I didn't have an aesthetic, I had my blinkers on and could only see a brown composite board, known to my colleagues as '*weeetabix*.'

I am continually inspired by furniture designer Max Lamb and his approach to making objects. He describes himself as being constantly hungry to find other modes of working and producing objects, and never being content when he finishes a piece. I admire his passion and excitement for the making process, a nonstop exploration that is never satisfied with one result, but must carry on and investigate something new. Every single chair he makes, he observes as a learning curve. This is something that I want to employ in the production of my chairs. Max Lamb Interview (*YouTube*, 2015). Much like how the aim of Enzo Mari's *Autoprogettazione* project was to make people aware of the value of furniture by having to make it themselves, I hope that each chair will be a journey of discovery that I want to share with others (*Mari*, 2002:5).

The Garden [FENCE] *Chair.*



The Garden [Fence] Chair

The Garden [Fence] Chair is an outdoor garden chair made from recycled shiplap, a wooden cladding commonly used for outdoor construction as well as garden fencing. The profile of the wood is machined in such a way that each panel of timber can be slotted into the next creating a water tight surface that protects itself from the elements.

Shiplapping is a medieval technique used as a method of boat building. Known as 'lapstraking' or 'clinker built' was a process where the wooden planks that were used to construct the hull of the boat overlapped. Originally developed as a traditional Nordic boatbuilding technique, lapstraking was used for centuries to strengthen the hull of the boats as well as offer more watertight seams that could better stand to the elements than other planking techniques (*Danenberg Boatworks*, date unknown). With the oldest evidence of a lapstraked boat being dendro dated back to 320 CE, this useful and widely available material has proved that it can stand the test of time (*Archeurope: Early Medieval Archaeology*, date unknown). With this in mind, using shiplap for outdoor furniture seemed like a perfect fit and once the wood was finished with a preserving oil, it would need very little maintenance.

Combining this shiplap with a single length of 2 x 4 stud-work timber that was left over from a previous project produces a chair that not only speaks of simplicity and compromise, but also of on material sensitivity and awareness. 2 x 4 is a standard cut of



Fig. 7



wood typically used by carpenters to create the skeleton of a building construction, also known as light work framing. Before the American Lumber standard was created in the 1920s, the sizes of wood were decided locally, meaning that the size of cuts and subsequent prices of wood would differ from saw mill to saw mill nationwide (*Popular Science*, 2018).

One of the reasons that I wanted to reuse this waste 2 x 4 timber as the structure of my garden chair is because it is such a universally applicable cut of wood, used by builders and craftspeople worldwide, and there will always be waste from it that is just waiting to be reused.

This chair exists not only as an object that allows the user to relax and enjoy the afternoon sun in the privacy of their garden but as the start of a process; a process of individually made, highly crafted objects produced in a makeshift workshop. This chair started out as dirty waste fence panels and cheap 2 x 4 construction stud-work, but through a process of simple garden workshop manufacture, these recycled materials have been turned into a potentially valuable object.

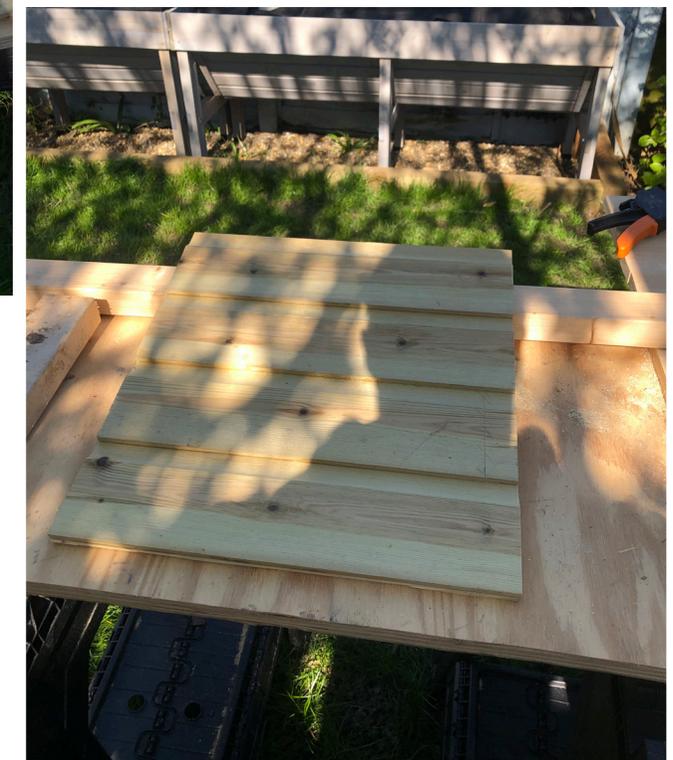
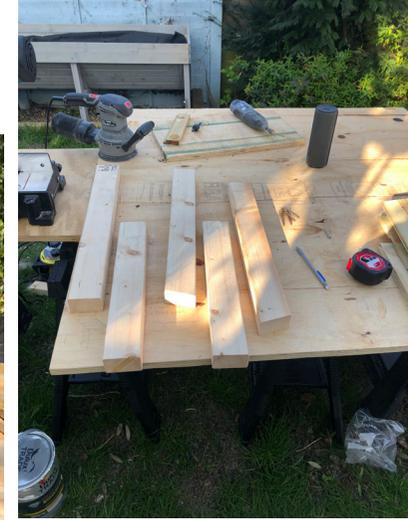
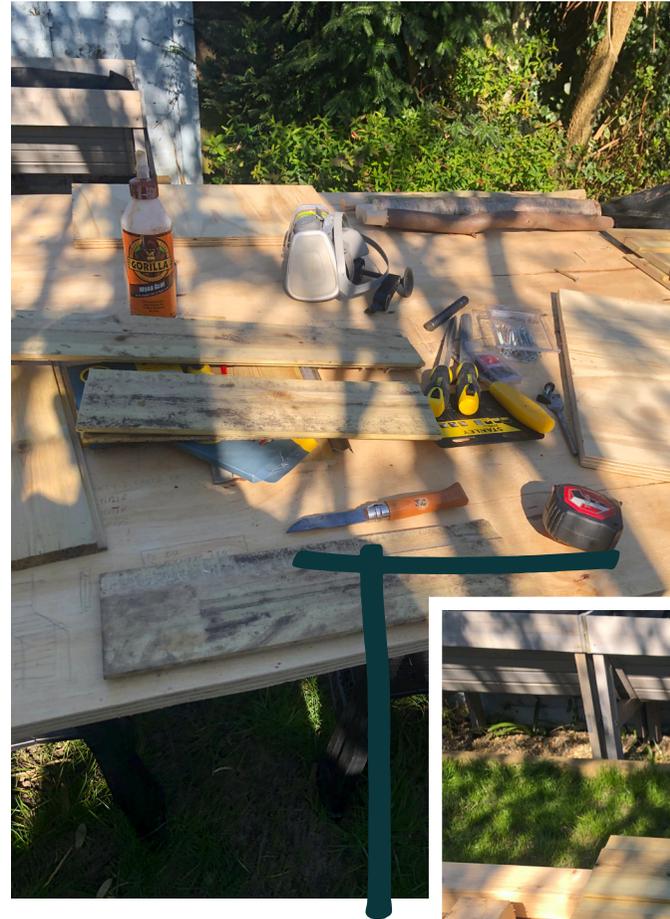
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The Garden [FENCE] Chair

The Garden [Fence] Chair is an outdoor garden chair made from recycled shiplap, a wooden cladding commonly used for outdoor construction as well as garden fencing. The profile of the wood is machined in such a way that each panel of timber can be slotted into the next creating a water tight surface that protects itself from the elements.

This chair exists not only as an object that allows the user to relax and enjoy the afternoon sun in the privacy of their garden but as the start of a process; a process of individually made, highly crafted objects produced in a makeshift workshop. This chair started out as dirty waste fence panels and cheap 2 x 4 construction stud-work, but through a process of simple garden workshop manufacture, these recycled materials have been turned into a beautiful sleek looking

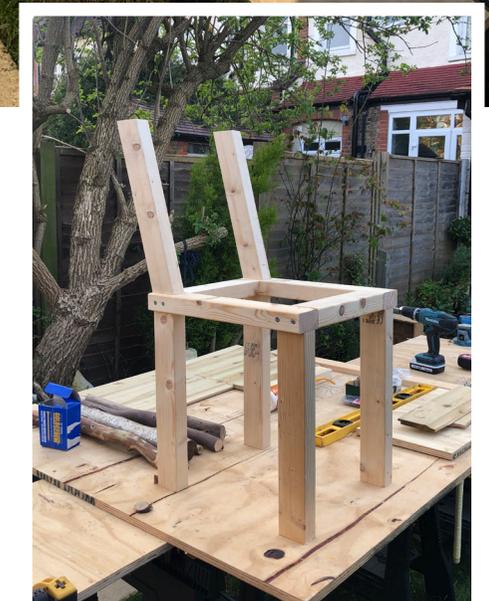
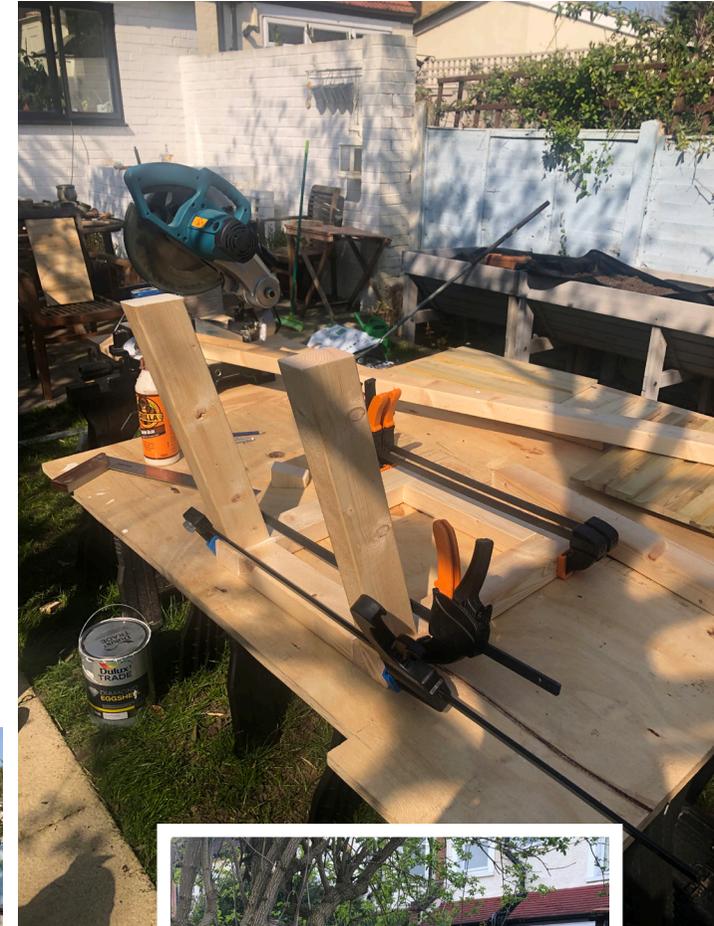
A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



chair. I find it useful to render objects in Rhino before fully constructing them to really understand the scale and form. Although that being said, it is important to me to handle the materials and components first to get an idea of their weight and strength and how they will perform together. Rendering the chairs was incredibly useful as it allowed me to make changes to the design very quickly without committing to a design and potentially wasting time and materials.

I originally rendered this chair to have a lower front panel which I initially thought looked good in my head, but I realised that it just looked clumsy. By taking this front panel off, I think that it produced a more sleek and interesting chair to both look and to sit on.

Combining this shiplap with a single length of 2 x 4 stud-work timber that was left over from a previous project produces a chair that not only speaks of simplicity and compromise, but also of on material sensitivity and awareness. 2 x 4 is a standard cut of wood typically used by carpenters to create the skeleton of a building construction, also known as light work framing.



THE GARDEN [FENCE] CHAIR

One of the reasons that I wanted to reuse this waste 2 x 4 timber as the structure of my garden chair is because it is such a universally applicable cut of wood, used by builders and craftspeople worldwide, and there will always be waste from it that is just waiting to be reused. This means when If I were to release an instruction blueprint on how to make this chair, the materials will be easily accessible.

A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



As the aim of this collection of chairs was to re-use locally sourced and waste materials, I needed to re-think the traditional methods of finishing chairs made of wood to find an alternative to classic chemical-based varnishes. Wood preservatives and paints like Cuprinol have become synonymous with painting fences, but I wanted to produce a stain of my own that embodied the garden workshop and my experimental approach to subverting traditional methods of production. I wanted to find a way of using a by-product of a process in the garden that could produce a source of material to stain the chair with. By chance, my dad was mowing the grass in the garden whilst I was trying to figure out my stain, so it made sense to try and use the grass cuttings to create a stain for the Garden [fence] Chair. From this point it was just a case of extracting the green pigment from the chlorophyll in the grass to stain from the chair.



THE GARDEN [FENCE] CHAIR



A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN

INTERVIEW WITH THEO BRADER TAN



JC: *What form does your making usually take? i.e what areas do your practise explore – e.g woodwork, film, sound, graphics etc..?*

TBT: Mostly work with fabrics and leather. Casting precious metals and mould making is increasingly what I'm spending my time doing.

JC: *How does your making/creative process fit into your daily routine?*

TBT: It is pretty much my daily routine. I tend to have multiple project on the go at once – as many processes require time to be machined/time to soak and I often need time away from a task and with 'solve' it having doing something else for a bit.

JC: *How has the COVID-19 affected your making/creative practise? e.g not being able to access workshop /studio/tools etc..?*



@_theotan

TBT: Much of what I do, I have the tools in house - sewing machine, a few power tools a small CNC router. Working from home has distanced me from all the work I had lined up – however it has enabled me to work on a number of projects that I had been thinking about but never AHD the time. Further, being able to work from dusk till dawn without having to travel and without social engagements has been really productive. On the negative side, not having that distance between where you work is problematic with dust, grime and general mess – but of course also headspace.

JC: *If being locked down has changed or constrained your normal creative processes, how have you had to alter/re-imagine them?*



@_theotan

TBT: I'm spending a lot of the time educating myself on how to correctly work with a CNC. Without lockdown I would've done this in a workshop, relied on technicians time and had to use very expensive machinery with very limited time. Because of this lockdown I invested in a very small CNC machine. The process scales down very well and it has been really liberating to learn at my own pace, make my own mistakes and not rely on technicians, workshop time and expensive machinery.

JC: *Are you aware of a relationship between your creative outlets and your general mental health and wellbeing?*

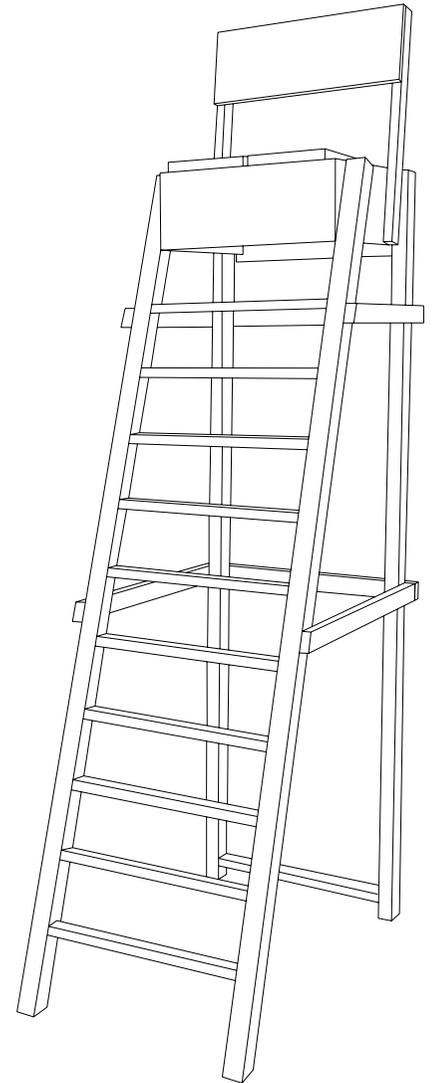


@_theotan

TBT: I am so fortunate that my practice is able to cope with the current isolation. It gives me structure to the day, reachable objectives and purpose. Further, the act of making, having something physical to show for time spent is consistently rewarding. Creative outlets severely influence my wellbeing for the better.

THEO BRADER TAN is a London-based designer working in a range of materials from calico, leatherwork, precious metals and more. His practice investigates the de-physicalisation of the world and questions the effects on the human psyche of a world where objects are no longer in touch with the source of the raw material or the process that creates it. His working process often involves a deep understanding of existing craft skills to the point that he is able to misuse and re-appropriate age-old techniques in new unconventional ways. www.theotan.com

The Social [DISTANCE]
Chair.



The Social Distance Chair

As this series began during the outbreak of COVID - 19, I wanted to produce a chair that responded to the new limitations put in place to stop the spread of the virus. One constraint in particular that has been put in place across the globe is the practice of social distancing. The virus is highly contagious and spreads through small droplets, primarily from the mouth and nose, from one person to another. In order to slow the spread, the government has enforced social distancing measures, meaning that people from different households must stay two metres apart from each other (*World Health Organisation, 2020*).

We are all living in a strange time of uncertainty where social distancing has become the norm and, if you are brave enough to leave your house, you'll see people moving away from you on the street (*a similar feeling felt by notorious cowboys riding into town in a western movie I'm sure*). Now that I am living in this kind of Shaun of the Dead style new way of life, where I might have to battle a zombie with a cricket bat just get a pint of milk from the offie, I wanted to make a chair that responded to all of these new measures that are being put in place.

For someone who thrives on human interaction and is energised by bouncing off of my peers, the idea of isolation and social distancing is very odd for me. So, I set out to create something that simultaneously still allow me to interact with people and adhere to the government's lockdown rules. Using Enzo Mari's Sedia 1 chair as my inspiration, I imagined what it would look like with two metre long legs, instead of the 44cm ones on the original chair. Sitting at a height of over two metres, I would easily be able to converse with anyone below, I could even look over my garden fence and see what my neighbours were up to! Luckily, we were still very early into the COVID - 19 outbreak and businesses like B&Q were still debating whether to keep their stores open and carry on delivery, meaning that I could order any necessary timber supplies I need to construct this Enzo Mari goliath. It was important to me to make sure that any of the chairs in this series that weren't made

from waste materials were made from standard cuts of wood instead. That way, anyone could obtain the necessary materials from a hardware store and make the chairs themselves. For the two metre legs, I used some inexpensive, rough sawn 2 x 4's that came in a 2440mm length as standard. The remaining components, including the seat, ladder struts and other structural elements, were made exactly to Mari's original Autoprogettazione specifications, using all of the standardised planks of wood that he chose to make up the chair.

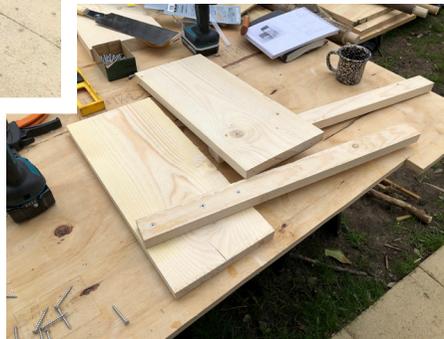
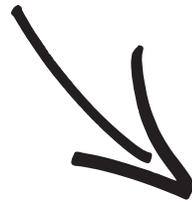
I began by rendering the chair in Rhino, so that I could plan out the form and structure of the chair to ensure perfect stability, as a fall from two metres could end up with unwanted damage of both chair and user. Stability was going to be a big factor with this chair, not only would the user be sitting at a great height but they would also have to climb up there without the whole structure quivering from the movement. I wanted to put a ladder on the front of the chair to give the structure a 'watch tower' presence than just a chair. The structure bears resemblance to tennis umpire and lifeguard chairs from which you have a vantage point and are set apart from those around you, while ensuring that you can participate in social interactions from a safe distance.



Fig. 8



A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



The [SOCIAL] Distance Chair

As this series began during the outbreak of COVID-19, I wanted to produce a chair that responded to the new limitations put in place to stop the spread of the virus. One constraint in particular that has been put in place across the globe is the practice of social distancing. The virus is highly contagious and spreads through small droplets, primarily from the mouth and nose, from one person to another. In order to slow the spread, the government has enforced social distancing measures, meaning that people from different households must stay two metres apart from each other.

For someone who thrives on human interaction and is energised by bouncing off of my peers, the idea of isolation and social distancing is very odd for me. So, I set out to create something that simultaneously still allow me to interact with people and adhere to the government's lockdown rules.





A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



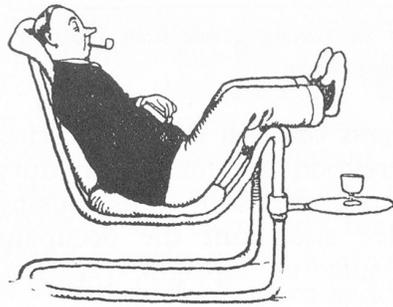
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It was important to me to make sure that any of the chairs in this series that weren't made from waste materials were made from standard cuts of wood instead. That way, anyone could obtain the necessary materials from a hardware store and make the chairs themselves. For the two metre legs, I used some inexpensive, rough sawn 2 x 4's that came in a 2440mm length as standard. The remaining components, including the seat, ladder struts and other structural elements, were made exactly to Mari's original Autoprogettazione specifications, using all of the standardised planks of wood that he chose to make up the chair.

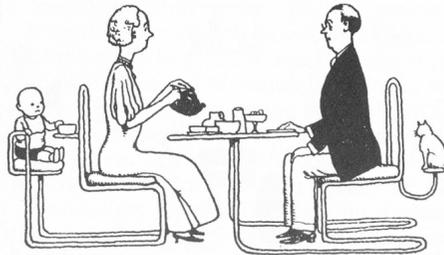


ON HEATH ROBINSON
HOW TO LIVE IN A FLAT BY HEATH ROBINSON

A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



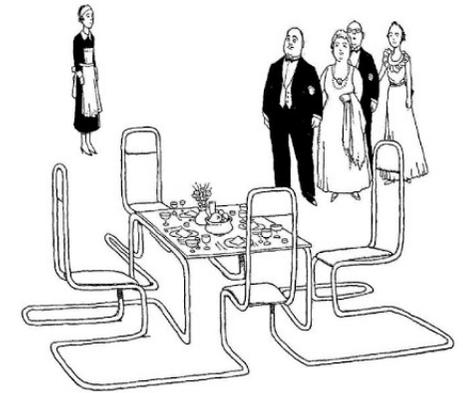
W. Heath Robinson and K.R.G Browne
Duckworth & Co, London, 1976.
'Designs in Chromium'



W. Heath Robinson and K.R.G Browne
'Designs in Chromium'.



W. Heath Robinson and K.R.G Browne
'Parrot Chair'.



W. Heath Robinson and K.R.G Browne
Hutchinson & Co, 1936.
'The One-Piece Chromium Steel Dining Suite.'

HOWTO LIVE IN A FLAT by HEATH ROBINSON. These illustrations by English cartoonist Heath Robinson perfectly embody this project and my experimental and adhoc approach to traditional furniture design. The illustrations are taken from his book 'How to live in a flat', a collection of his classically whimsically elaborate chairs that allowed the user to use the space in a small flat more efficiently. Like the creation of my garden workshop, Heath Robinson's contraptions were used as temporary fixes of ingenuity, using whatever was to hand to solve an immediate problem.

INTERVIEW WITH DOM JOHNSON



JC: *What form does your making usually take? i.e what areas do you practise explore – e.g woodwork, film, sound, graphics etc..?*

DJ: I'd predominantly call myself a maker – I studied graphic design BA but moved towards three dimensional mediums as a means of communication nearer the end of my degree. Since then I've taken jobs in product/furniture/spatial/interior etc. as well as more standard forms of visual communication. Most recently I've enjoyed working with / learning about various hardwoods.

JC: *How does your making/creative process fit into your daily routine?*

DJ: Ordinarily I would be teaching design two or three days a week, as well as working as a tech in London gallery. I'll spend my days off working on self led stuff or commissions. I moved into an unfurnished flat 6 months ago and have been enjoying slowly making furniture for it since then.

JC: *How has the COVID-19 affected your making/creative practise? e.g not being able to access workshop /studio/tools etc..?*

DJ: Not having workshop access was initially a pain, but working with restrictions is always beneficial and often leads to more interesting results, so I've tried to adapt to making from home. I am lucky to have a load of materials I've stockpiled over the years and tools which

allow me to keep making, but I've missed the heavier machinery. Something that cannot be emulated from home, I've found, is a sense of studio culture or workshop ambience. As is the case with our social lives, it's a sense of connection – creatively, professionally – which is being missed I think. Even although I tend to work on build jobs alone or with my OG partner [@jakemartin4359](#) – I've missed the things that come from existing in a busy studio or workshop. To combat this myself and a friend started releasing regular design briefs for friends and peers to have a go at, including ourselves, on instagram [@_homeassembly](#).

JC: *If being locked down has changed or constrained your normal creative processes, how have you had to alter/re-imagine them?*



[@domj0hnson](#)

DJ: Certainly – this notion of working with limitations has been, materially, super healthy I think. I've had to work around certain processes, which allows a closer relationship with the tools I do have access to. In many ways it's been a lot of problem solving – e.g learning to use a circular saw as a table saw or router. This has no doubt forced me to think more about process and I feel more capable with the tools I do have access to. I've also tried to use the additional time at home to learn a few new processes, as the current situation seems to facilitate all those things we often say we'd like to try given a bit

more free time. In my mind there's an element of 'no excuses' for me to not be active. I bought a budget set of spoon carving tools online when lockdown began and have attempted two spoons in some leftover beech.

JC: *Are you aware of a relationship between your creative outlets and your general mental health and wellbeing?*



@domj0hnson

DJ: This is a good question and one I've wrestled with - and become acutely aware of - since quarantine first set in. I'd count myself in a large number of creatives/makers/anybody who need to feel like they're being proactive to stay sane. I struggle with being idle, and prolonged periods without a general purpose or routine are often when I find my mental health is affected most. In the past I've found low points to occur after a large endeavour comes to a close: a job delivery, a big hand in, a project ending - these moments often bring about a sense of 'a void'. Without fail I've found that this void can most easily be filled with other creative endeavours, and specifically with tangible making exercises. (It would take somebody more qualified than me to tell if this is a healthy way of dealing with things or not).

Having been furloughed from the tech role and the academic year rounding to a close, this void has been more vividly existent than usual, and making has become an almost means

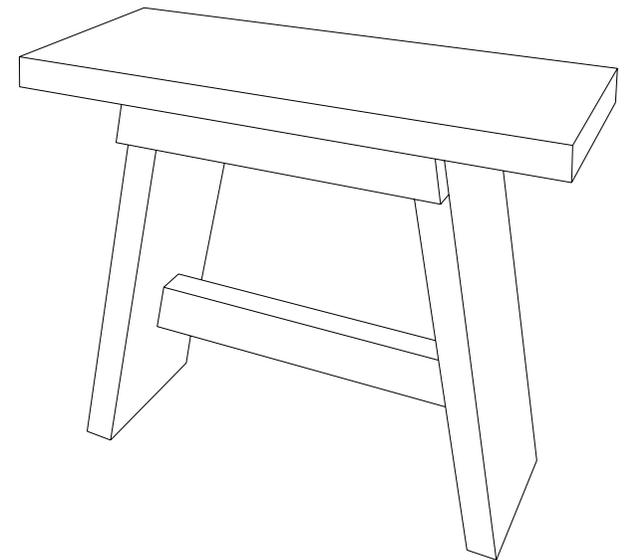


@domj0hnson

of coping with everything. I have a long and unoriginal iPhone note list of ideas for projects, as well as the home improvement and furniture jobs I can be doing, and I've had to be quite stringent with myself in working through these things. I'm aware of not wanting them to feel like chores, whilst also being fully aware of my need to be busy. Like many things it is certainly about finding a balance. Something I do know is that I almost always feel better at the end of the day if I can hold/touch/sit on something I've made since waking up.

DOM JOHNSON is a designer, maker and lecturer based in South London. His work tends to draw influence from the nuanced ways in which humans behave and interact, and often takes the form of three dimensional / interactive design. He calls himself an advocate for the importance of the handmade and strives within his work to forge an alloy between the conceptual and the constructed. It is within this middle ground - wherein the idea and its creation are granted equal consideration - that he believes is where his best work falls.

The Yakisugi [**STOOL**].



The Yakisugi Stool

The Yakisugi stool is the product of my interest in traditional Japanese woodworking and Japanese culture. I have always had a fascination with Japan: the landscape, the food, the culture and especially the traditional craft techniques. For thousands of years Japanese woodcraft has evolved and connected many different extraordinary woodworking techniques. From traditional joinery to unique ways of preserving wood, Japanese carpentry takes many forms but, in my opinion, it is always beautiful (*Japan Woodcraft Association*, date unknown). With a love for the aesthetic of Japanese wooden furniture, I wanted to make a chair that was inspired by traditional forms and techniques. I used the traditional Hinoki bath stool as a starting point, a simple yet elegant stool that I wanted to riff off of and make more accessible for the home.

These stools are generally synonymous with bathhouses across Japan and are a big part of the bathing ritual where the bather will sit on the stool and wash themselves with a bucket made of the same wood before entering the 'furo', a Japanese bath also made of wood (*Bartock Design Co.*, date unknown). The bath stool is commonly made from Kiso Hinoki, an ancient species of cypress wood native to central Japan. Hinoki is one of Japan's most sought after trees for as it extremely durable and naturally possesses excellent waterproof and anti-bacterial qualities, making it the perfect material to use for bath house furniture. The wood also gives off a scent of citrus when wet, which is believed to have cleaning and purifying qualities for the bathers (*Native and Co.*, date unknown). The Hinoki used in the making of this stool is usually rift sawn, which is an extremely costly and labour intensive method of processing that ensures every piece of wood has a beautiful straight grain. This reflects the attention to detail given to Japanese wood craft (*Lacrosse Flooring*, date unknown). Of course during a time of global lockdown, I didn't have access to high quality timber let alone Japanese Kiso Hinoki, so I needed to adapt my designs with the materials that I have to hand.



After making the Social Distancing chair I had a few lengths of 2 x 4 timber left over that I wanted to use, so I glued a few pieces together to create a thick plank that the entire stool could be made of. The wood I was using was cheap construction timber that is heavily planed to achieve a regulation of finish, this meant that the grain was very random, not particularly interesting yet perfect to explore an exciting finishing technique. From the moment the idea of making a bath stool was conceived, I knew that I wanted to finish it using a traditional Japanese method of preserving wood called 'Yakisugi'. Yakisugi is a process of preserving wood by charring the surface of it with fire to leaving behind a black layer of carbon that effectively protects the wood. A technique that has been used since the 18th century Yakisugi was originally began as a practical process, it was used to clad rural homes and store houses containing valuable items such as rice that families wanted to protect from the elements. The carbonisation of the wood makes it resistant to fire, makes it waterproof and prevents it from bacterial rot. This preservation technique has many practical functions used by builders across the globe, however it has become extremely popular amongst the more bespoke, artisan makers to add the mark of the human hand that made it (*The New York Times Style Magazine*, 2017). Strangely but perfectly, by not being able to access the wood that is traditionally used to make these bath stools that is naturally waterproof and resistant to rot, by finishing my stool with the Yakisugi process I have created a stool that could withstand the environment of a Japanese bathhouse.

Moving forward, my aim for this series is to continue to make chairs that explore different craft methods, are inspired by influential and radical furniture designers and to adapt and work from the materials I have in my environment. None of us know how long Covid - 19 will continue to impact our society, how the lockdown measures will tighten or ease, or how easy it will be to gather and obtain materials, but I hope to respond to the evolving situation through this series.

In conclusion, the chair remains a significant element of the furniture design industry. The evolution of chair design is evident through a number of key iconic chairs that continue to inspire and influence the work of craftspeople around the

world, including myself. From Thonet to Mari to Breuer and to Lamb, each of these designers have disrupted, improved upon and forever changed the way in which we as craftspeople view the parameters of chair design: what is possible and what rules we can break. The series I have created during lockdown, at the start of my chair-making career, has been an eye-opening process into the significance of the chair in our industry and in understanding the true value of the final object when it has been made by oneself, particularly in a restricted home-workshop.

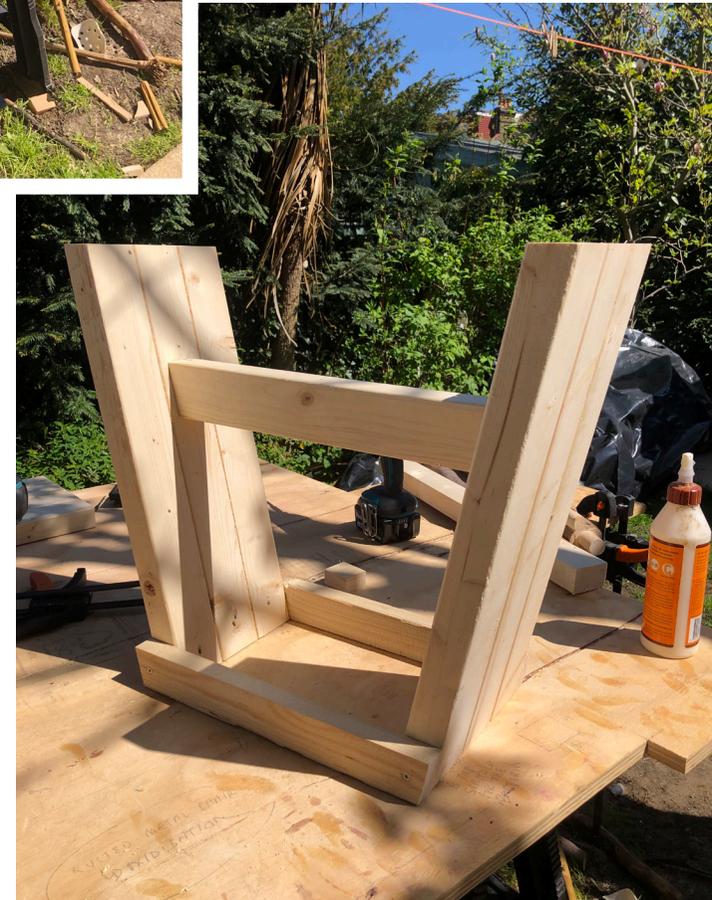
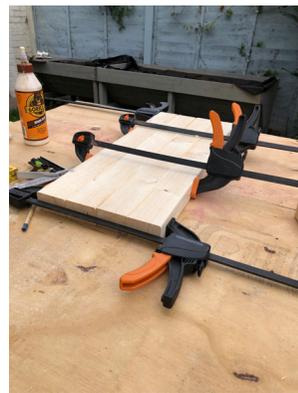
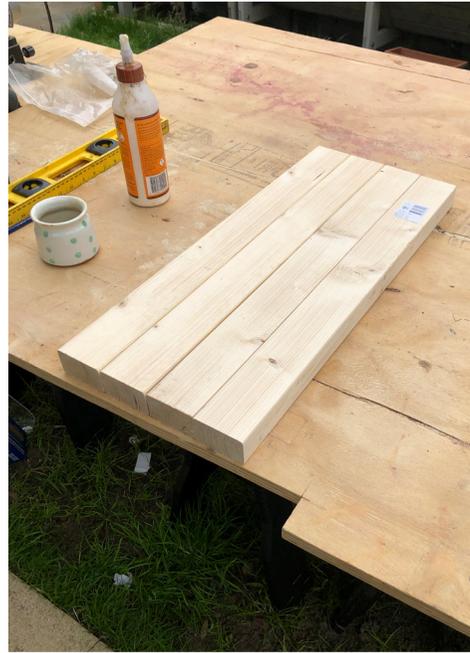


Fig. 9

The [YAKISUGI] Stool

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traditional Japanese method of preserving wood called ‘*Yakisugi*’. *Yakisugi* is a process of preserving wood by charring the surface of it with fire to leaving behind a black layer of carbon that effectively protects the wood. A technique that has been used since the 18th century *Yakisugi* was originally began as a practical process, it was used to clad rural homes and store houses containing valuable items such as rice that families wanted to protect from the elements. The carbonisation of the wood makes it resistant to fire, makes it waterproof and prevents it from bacterial rot. This preservation technique has many practical functions used by builders across the globe, however it has become extremely popular amongst the more bespoke, artisan makers to add the mark of the human hand that made it.





A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



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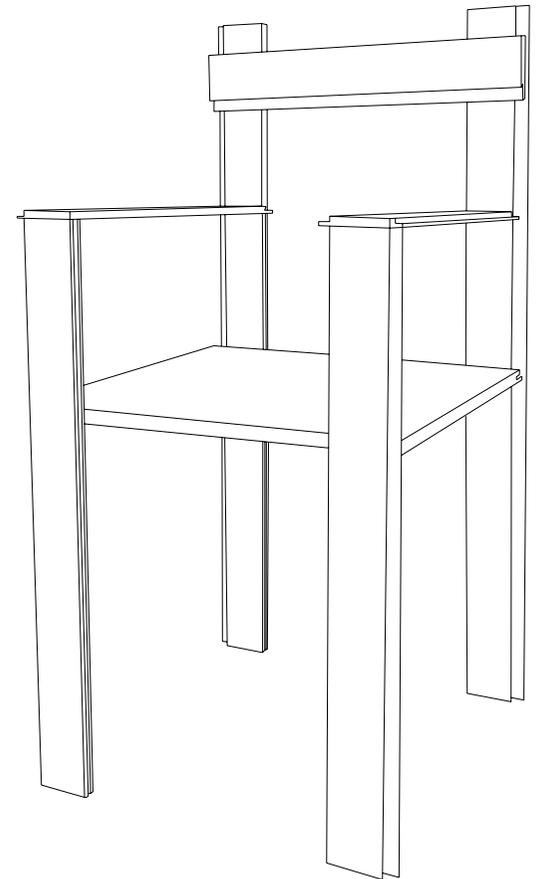
THE YAKISUGI STOOL



A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



The [DEWALT] Chair.



The [DEWALT] Chair

The Dewalt Chair was the first in the series that reused waste materials that couldn't be reused and would end in landfill or be burnt. The chair is made from some Dewalt industrial framing panels that I found in the skip of an electrical shop near my house that me and my dad go to. These Dewalt panels are made from MDF with some kind of hard plastic top, this means that unless they are reused there literally cannot be recycled. I felt that it was important to get these materials destined for a newer death that will only add to the environmental destruction of the earth and turn them into a functional object that's beauty told a story of the journey that they had been on.

I wanted this chair to speak of it's industrial roots and the journey that these wasted materials had been on. The chair needed to feel industrial and rough round the edges with still a sense of elegance and sleekness. The chair was very simply put together with brackets bought from the electrical shop whom the waste Dewalt materials came from, a factor I felt solidified the journey of the chair. It is a an uncomplicated

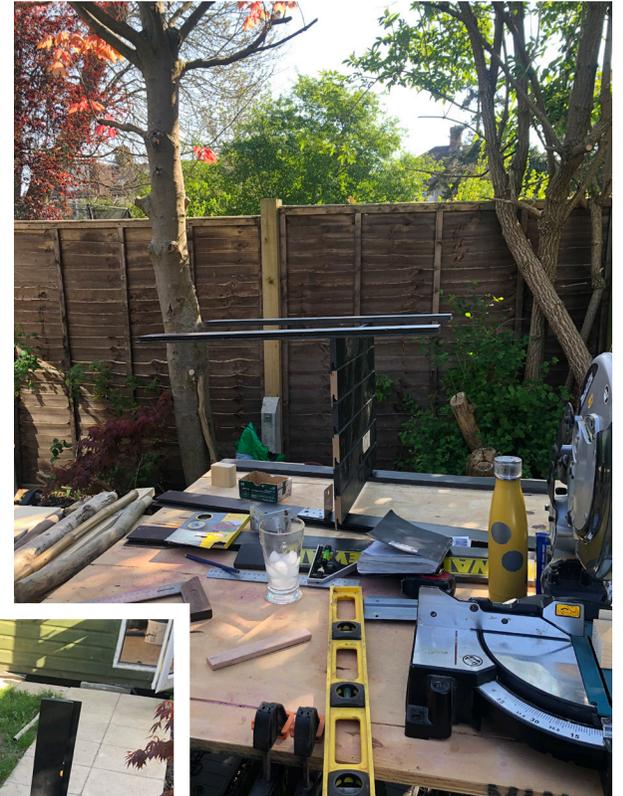
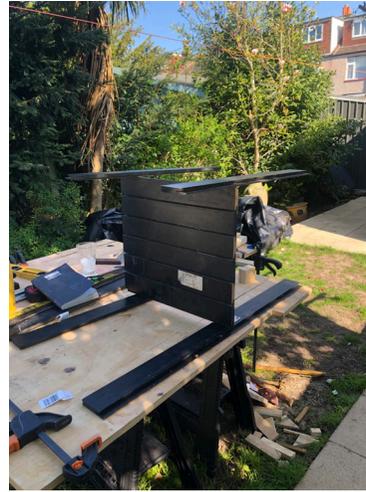
A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN

arm chair feels vulnerable yet mechanical that I believe perfectly embodies the idea of revealing a new value in waste materials, especially ones that cannot be recycled and are destined for landfill.





A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



THE DEWALT CHAIR



A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



INTERVIEW WITH MOLLY BONNELL



JC: *What form does your making usually take? i.e what areas do your practise explore – e.g woodwork, film, sound, graphics etc..?*

MB: My practice takes quite a research-based approach which allows my making to take many different forms and explore different mediums. I am currently working on a project about how healthcare and medicine have changed in lockdown, and the use of glassblowing techniques with sugar to craft objects that explore this idea.

JC: *How does your making/creative process fit into your daily routine?*



@molly_bonnell

MB: I think that centering my days around making, especially in quarantine, has been a very grounding exercise. There is something comforting in knowing I have a project to come back to every day, and using the progression of the project as a way to mark the time passing. In lockdown, I have had to completely rethink my way of working to a much more adhoc, lo-fi approach as my bedroom has been forcefully shifted into my studio.

JC: *How has the COVID-19 affected your making/creative practise? e.g not being able to access workshop /studio/tools etc..?*

MB: Because I am shielding, my relationship with materials has drastically changed. The only materials that I have access to are those in my living space or things that I can afford to get delivered, so I have turned to my existing waste



@molly_bonnell

streams (like cardboard from emergency food parcels) as my main source of raw material. With so much of our mobility being restricted as we are confined to our homes, the movements that we do while making take on a greater significance. I am much more aware of how I am moving when I am working at home verses the studio and workshop environments that I am used to. If I want to sand something, I can't just turn on the airtable and overhead extraction. I have to climb out my kitchen window onto the roof, make sure that I haven't forgotten anything inside (because I'm self-isolating alone and there's no one to pass me out that one thing), and hope that it doesn't rain.

JC: *If being locked down has changed or constrained your normal creative processes, how have you had to alter/re-imagine them?*



@molly_bonnell

MB: More than ever, I am extremely conscious about making things with the least waste possible in order to conserve resources, which makes everything I make feel much more precious. I also think that the things that I've made in this period of lockdown have a much stronger narrative than if I were to have made them outside of my home. All of these objects, funky and wonky as they may be, quite literally have bits of my home and life built in to them. I think that embracing this new aesthetic has been a valuable tool for me to create narratives

through design.

JC: *Are you aware of a relationship between your creative outlets and your general mental health and wellbeing?*

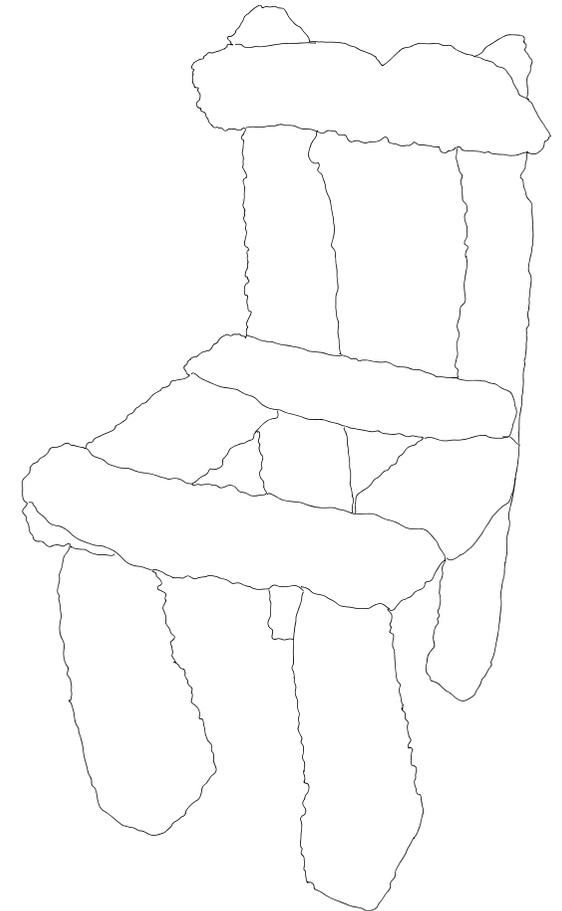


@molly_bonnell

MB: As lockdown has meant we are all spending so much more time staring at screens, with most of our interactions digital (*especially if you're living alone*), making has taken on a heightened importance as the most energizing and inspiring part of my day. We've had to build new routines for ourselves in lockdown, and I do find it comforting that there will be a project waiting for me to throw all my energy into each day.

MOLLY BONNELL is a multidisciplinary designer based in London. Through her critical and research-based practice, she believes that design can be a powerful tool to question the status quo. Fascinated by healthcare and medicine, she is interested in exploring the ever evolving relationship between society and the human body. www.mollybonnell.com

The [CRUST] Chair.



The [CRUST] Chair

For some unearthly reason, my mum doesn't like eating the crusts on her toast – I don't know why and I never have but hey ho I thought – those aren't my mum's crusts about to go into the bin! Those are the structure of a new chair! The reason I am making these chairs is to explore different ideas and concepts within craft and design and one area that I am interested in using bio/natural materials to make a chair. So with this in mind I set out to create a toast crust 'scaffold' to try and grow some household bacteria on. I am hoping that in the right conditions I will get some 'hyphae' filaments growing on the surface that will hopefully create a network of spores that will encase the crusts creating a solid seat across the structure. I am still waiting for a coverage of fungus to attach itself to the scaffold so for now I have made a predictive illustration of the future of the chair.

A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



THE CRUST CHAIR

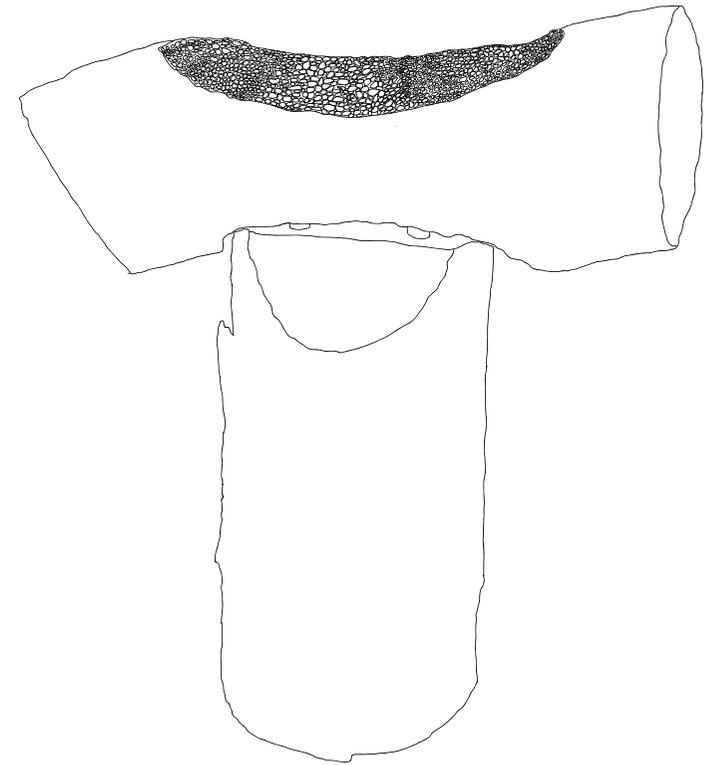


A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



With Bacteria Upholstery

The [LOG] Stool.



The [LOG] Stool

My fascination with chairs was originally driven by a love of trees as living organisms and wood as a material that can be processed to achieve an orchestra of different outcomes. All of the chairs in this series that are made of wood were produced using standardised cuts of wood that were procured from either DIY shops or timber merchants. However, by the time the wood arrives in my workshop, you would have never known it ever came from a tree. I wanted to make a chair that honoured and celebrated a log for what it is, uncut and unplanned in its natural form. Since lockdown started, I made it mission to acquire tools that I had wanted but never been able to justify their purchase. One of them was an angle grinder, a tool that can be used for various different uses, one of which is very quickly turning a big hunk of wood into a tangible object through the use of a wood carving disc. It would have been very romantic and poetic for me to employ traditional techniques and tools such as an axe and froe to split the wood down the grain preserving the natural structure of the wood.

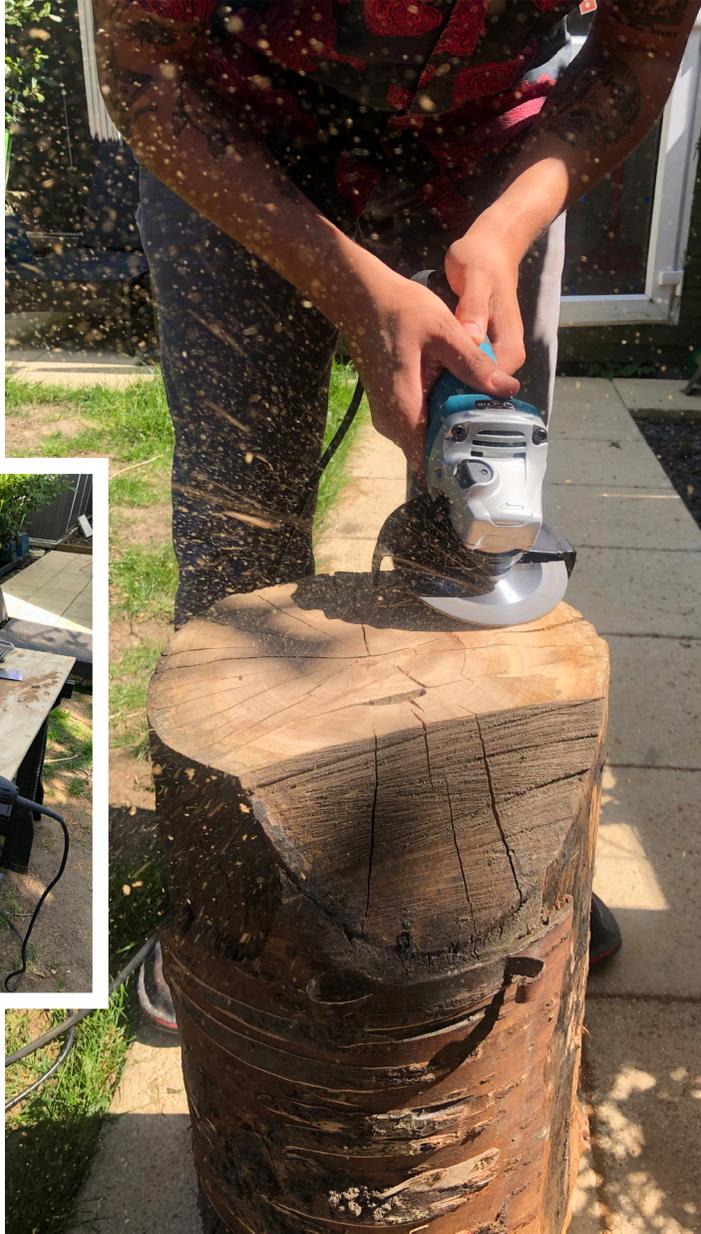
A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN

However, I wanted to subvert this idea of a woodworker working with hand tools, my idea of how this chair was going to happen involved attacking it with electric powered machinery.





A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN





I usually walk my dog in a large park that connects to a forest near my house. In this park there is a huge pile of logs that have just been dumped in the middle of the park, most probably felled from the nearby forest. So, one day with the help of my dad and girlfriend we schlepped a couple of logs home without being caught by the parky (who my dad claims back in the day was someone you did not want to mess with). As soon as I got them back to my workshop, I was playing around with the composition of the logs, questioning: did they need to be broken down, if so how much (bearing in mind I wanted to them to remain as close to their original form as possible). I decided to strip my ideas right back to the bare bones and design the chair as two logs, one on top of the other, but in a way that was elegant and beautiful. By carving a seat into the top log using my angle grinder and finishing it with a faceted texture carved out with a Dremel I have created a seat that shows off the natural qualities of the wood whilst still honouring the form of the log. The top log is attached to the vertical log simply with two dowels and the log chair is born.

THE LOG STOOL



A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



INTERVIEW WITH TOMMY COULSON

A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



JC: *What form does your making usually take? i.e what areas do your practise explore – e.g. woodwork, film, sound, graphics etc..?*



@tommy.coulson

TC: My practice predominantly focuses itself with woodwork, experimenting with new processes and interesting forms. I aim to create work which is visually stimulating influenced by natural contrasts found across a nexus of irreversible reactions (*i.e. combustion, erosion*). During which time I attempt to control these reactions to a point of order.

JC: *How does your making/creative process fit into your daily routine?*

TC: I would normally be working in my free time to draw up ideas that I can eventually transform into tangible bodies. This would be in evening, weekends and days off from my occupation as a carpenter/woodworker/tree surgeon.

JC: *How has the COVID-19 affected your making/creative practise? e.g. not being able to access workshop /studio/tools etc..?*



@tommy.coulson

TC: The social effects of the pandemic have actually benefitted my creative process. As a relatively neophyte designer/maker, I have been able to dedicate more time to my creativity. I was previously commuting to London and working long hours which happened to be taking up a considerable amount of time and energy, however, during the 'lockdown', I have had time to organise my space and move forward with the construction of my studio. This did however

change tides again as I was unable to access the materials needed for the build due to restraints on access and the large demand from the nation carrying out home projects.

JC: *If being locked down has changed or constrained your normal creative processes, how have you had to alter/re-imagine them?*

TC: I suppose it hasn't constrained it at all, in fact it has given me the encouragement and thrust that I needed to get my projects rolling. I have had to consider different approaches to sourcing the materials for my work however to more private companies, as they haven't been as bound my regulations as some of the larger, more vulnerable (*by mass of employee assemblage*) companies.

JC: *Are you aware of a relationship between your creative outlets and your general mental health and wellbeing?*



@tommy.coulson

TC: I am, strangely I have felt more relatable to everybody as we have all been chucked into the same pot. I live in a very quiet part of east England and so it was easy to feel isolated. Through this, I have felt more familiar with the nation and, in turn, have found myself thriving in a world that has screeched to a stop. My fear is that as everything slowly picks up pace, I will begin to feel isolated again and so my battle will be with keeping my momentum in a world that gradually grows more connected again.

JC: *What interests you about chairs, why do you make them/have made them?*

TC: I think chairs are the nucleus of all the furnitures. They are the one that we interact with the most and I believe to have the most variety of forms. They are found everywhere within the anthropogenic civilisation and can also (*when reduced to their core function*) be found within the natural world I.e. the branch for the monkey, or the rock for the meerkat etc.

JC: *Do you have a favourite chair, perhaps one you own or wished you owned and what do you love about it?*



@tommy.coulson

TC: Off the top of my head, for its pure comfortability, leisure and sentimental value. It has to be the barca lounge that is found in my parents conservatory. It was bartered off of my friend and is forever in a dispute as to who owns it. I've tried to sit uncomfortably in it and it is neigh on impossible. It was the only seat my Dad could sit in after an operation, it has been the source of many peoples rest, sleep and (*sometimes*) arguments. It is leather, has a fold out leg which switches into a lying down position with years of were and tear but a lot left to go. It isn't visually stunning but it serves its purpose expertly and so I think it is a good staple of inspiration for what a chair should strive to be.

JC: *Do you think a chair does more than just offer a space for your butt, can you see a story through the form / materials?*

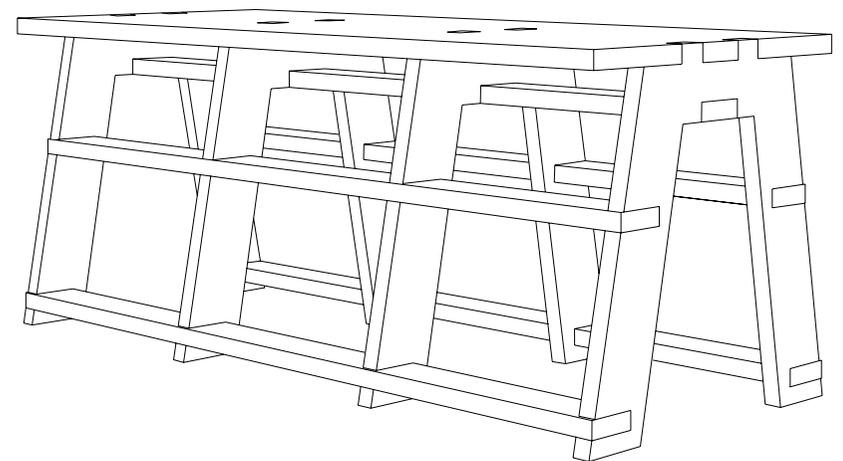


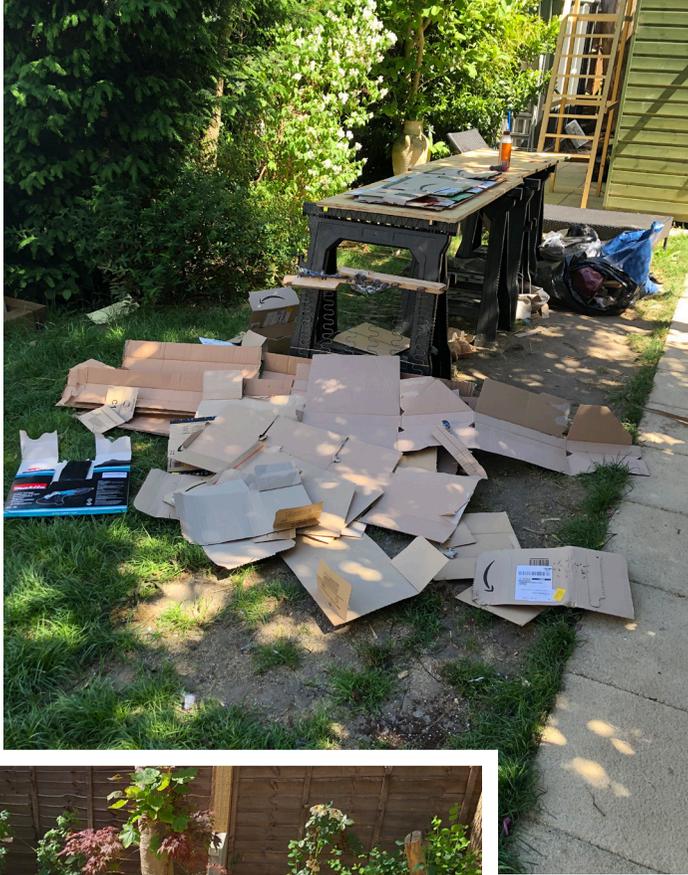
@tommy.coulson

TC: Absolutely, chairs can hold character and stories tailing back through history, and around the globe. Take Michael Thonet's Konsumstuhl Nr. 14, or coffee shop chair no. 14. This was the first chair to be mass produced, using a simple technique of formers to batch produce a considerable amount more than their predecessors. When you look at it, you can see a revolution in the way things were made, and how the shift of thought was changing within the industrial revolution. The chair isn't just another thing for your bum, it's an alternative way of thinking that was, well, revolutionary during the time. I think all objects hold powerful connections to their origins not only in functionality but also in style and something as intimate and abundant as chairs can easily be bypassed. There's a chance to look through the eyes of makers and designers that are alike ourselves and also so vastly different due to their chronological setting. Who knows, maybe there will be a chair that can detect you have COVID-19 just by analysing your bum fluff.

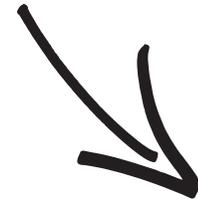
TOMMY COULSON is a furniture designer interested in the ways in which materials interact with natural elemental conditions such as fire and water. His practise is deeply entrenched in a hands-on approach to making and forming connections with the natural materials that he is working with. He is currently researching Scandinavian history of which he has a personal family connection through material explorations and process driven work.

The [PLY] Cardboard Bench.





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The [PLY] Cardboard Bench

Although we already live in a capitalist society of mass consumption of products and materials, lockdown has altered consumer behaviour. Since we can no longer casually peruse our favourite shops in person, we have been forced to turn to the internet to satisfy our retail cravings. As if mass manufacture and consumption wasn't enough, we are now faced with a new problem, being inundated with cardboard packages from all of the internet orders being placed. I didn't consider myself a high consumer before lockdown but suddenly living in a house of 4 there seems to be 2 to 3 packages arriving at our door every day! Now considering that my household is receiving 18ish packages give or take in a week, imagine how many cardboard boxes are being shipped around the country and around the world!

Admittedly, I predicted this sudden cardboard influx would happen and it gave me the perfect opportunity to design a bench using all the cardboard that my household has had delivered. I wanted to work with the cardboard in a way that could produce a chair

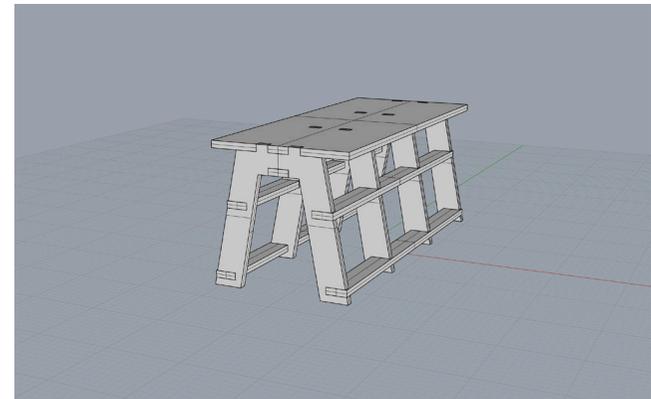
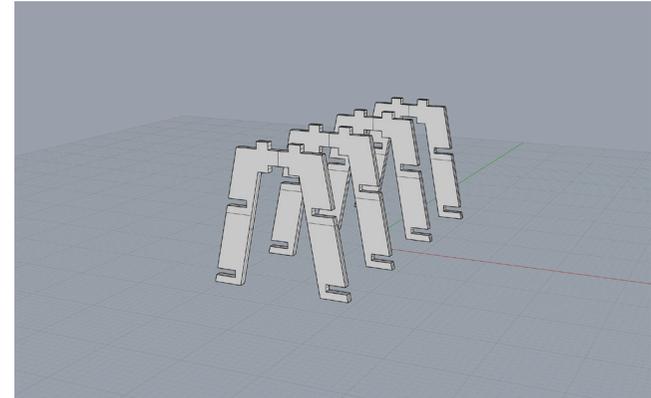


A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



that was as strong as its counterpart made of wood and at the same time use traditional wood working techniques. I am interested in wood joinery, so wanted to use this cardboard bench to explore a few different joints but seeing what I was able to pull off using cardboard rather than wood. I built a press to laminate the cardboard into 'Plycardboard' as if each layer of cardboard were of veneer making up plywood. Laminating the cardboard into plycardboard improve the strength of the material drastically and processing the material in this way meant I could build up layers of smaller pieces of cardboard to create a single sheet rather than relying on big sheets of cardboard.

I 3D modelled the bench on Rhino to create a profile of the interlocking pieces of plycardboard so that I had a template to work from for the more complicated mortise and tenon joints. After laminating 3 large sheets, I cut the material with a jig saw as if it were wood and slotting all the pieces together to create a bench made up of all of the waste cardboard that I have amassed so far during lockdown that you can actually sit on.



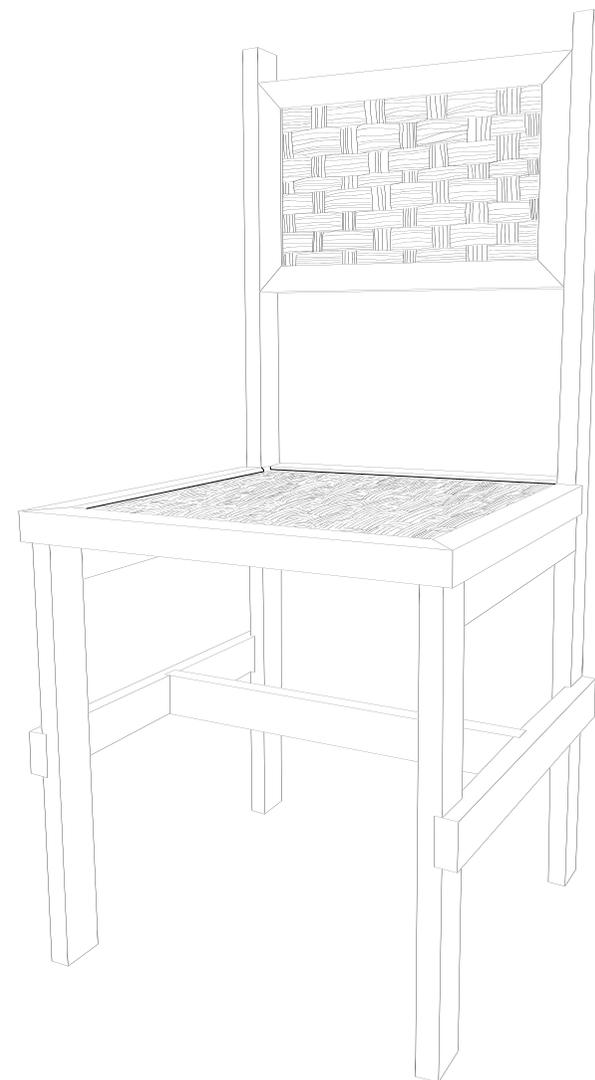
THE PLY CARDBOARD BENCH



A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



The [WOVEN] Chair.



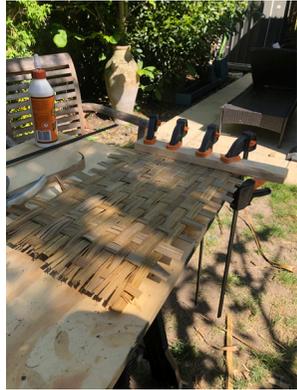
The [WOVEN] Chair

The Woven chair appears as a classic Rattan or woven wicker chair, however it is much more. It speaks of a journey through exploring, testing and innovating waste materials to far beyond their original potential. The seat and the back rest are made from woven palm leaves that naturally fell of the palm tree in my garden. From the start of this collection of chairs, the aim was to make some of the chairs out of waste materials found in my local area that I could, through the process of making them into a chair, give them a new life and new value. When the palm tree sheds its lower leaves, they fall onto the ground where they dry up and eventually rot. When fully dry, the leaves have a surprising amount of tensile strength, a quality that would be useful in creating a strong seat for the chair. What started out as crusty looking piles of leaves has become a beautiful woven material that tells its own story and holds its own value. In the early stages of this chair's development, I decided that I wanted to get as much use out of these palm leaves as possible, but at the same time being sensible about the ways in which

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the leaves could be utilised to make a chair that could actually be used. The structure of the chair has a red and blue Rietveld feeling about it, with its clean angles distinct lack of curves contrasting pleasantly with organic nature of the woven panels.





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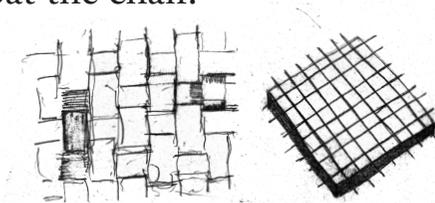
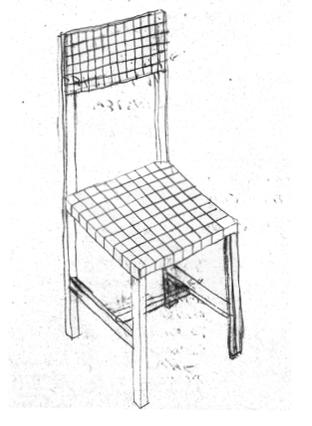
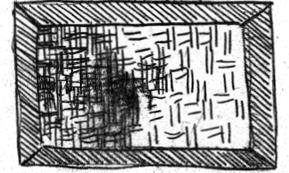


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The beautiful caramel colour of the palm leaves further contrasts with the soft pine framing that houses it. Once the waste leaves are woven, they play not only a functional role but are exquisitely delicate in their own right inviting the viewer to further explore its beauty. Part of the intrigue of this series of lockdown chairs is a desire to finish them naturally without the use of chemical based varnishes or shellacs. On one hand taking a fallen leaf destined to rot into the earth or landfill and put it through a series of processes to discover a new use for a waste material is a valuable journey. I was aware of that fact that, through the process of finishing the weaved panels, there are offcuts of the palm leaves created which ultimately takes me back to square one. So, I wanted to find a way that these palm tree offcuts could be given a further value by integrating them into the finishing the chair. By blending the leaves and boiling them over many hours in water, I was able to extract the cellulose from the fibres of the leaves in the form of a brown stain that would eventually coat the chair.

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THE WOVEN CHAIR



A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN



IMAGE REFERENCES



Fig.1



Michael Thonet's No. 14 'Bistro Chair', MOMA, (Viewed - 15/04/20)
<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/110615>

Fig.2



The bending process in the Thonet factory, Thonet Industries,
(Viewed - 16/04/20) http://en.thonet.de/fileadmin/media/meta/presse/214/Thonet_Biegemaschine_Foto_Credit_Thonet_Claus_Setzer.jpg

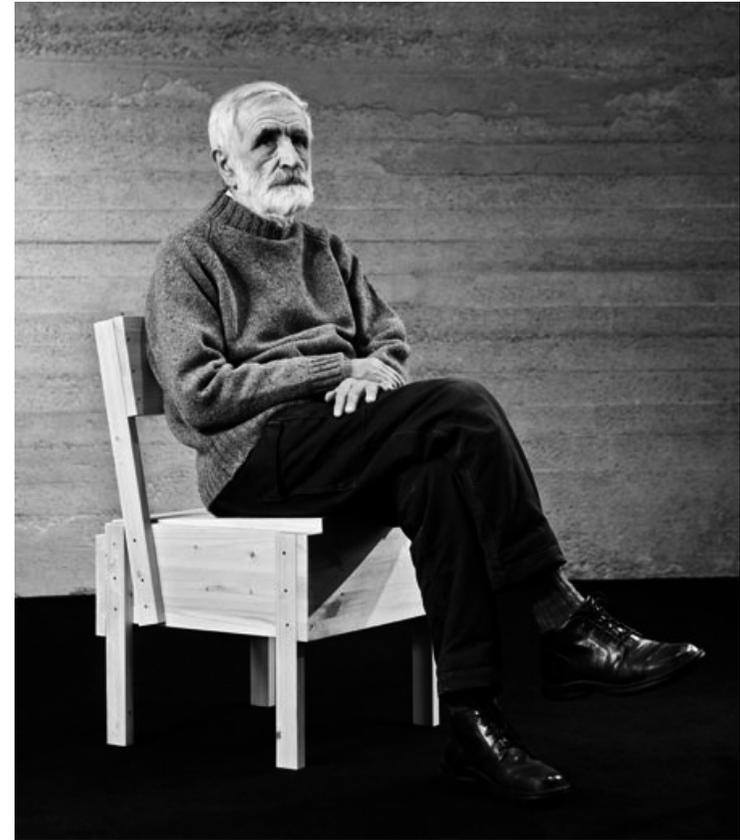
Fig.3



Marcel Breuer's 'Wassily' Chair, MOMA,
(Viewed - 16/04/20)
<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/2851>

A CHAIR FOR [NEARLY] EVERY WEEK OF LOCKDOWN

Fig.4



Enzo Mari sitting on his 'Sedia 1' chair from
his Autoprogettazione Collection, Artek,
(Viewed 17/04/20)
<https://www.dezeen.com/2010/04/16/sedia-1-chair-by-enzo-mari-for-artek/>

Fig.5



The blueprints for the 'Sedia 1' chair from
Mari's Autoprogettazione collection, Corraini Edizione
(Viewed 17/04/20)

https://www.corraini.com/en/catalogo/scheda_libro/62/autoprogettazione

Fig.6



My 'Garden Workshop' during the COVID - 19 lockdown, Josh Cotton
(Taken - 01/04/20)

Fig.7



The Garden [Fence] Chair, Josh Cotton
(Taken - 01/04/20)

Fig.8



Me, observing my surroundings on the Social Distancing Chair, Josh Cotton
(Taken - 03/04/20)

Fig.9



The Yakisugi Stool, Josh Cotton
(Taken - 15/04/20)

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About [JOSH COTTON].

Josh Cotton is a multidisciplinary designer / maker exploring the future of the human's relationship with objects and process in a society that currently lacks material sensitivity.

His practise is extremely processed based, often underpinned by a strong narrative that investigates the ways in which, we as earth's primary inhabitants are informed by the environment around us. Focusing on material innovation and the desire to subvert existing manufacturing processes, his goal is to understand the future relationship between person and object. Furniture is a completely new territory for him as a designer and maker, so his approach is more experimental rather than traditional, accompanied by an interest in subverting common techniques and hacking classic chair designs.



(1)Log (2)Dewalt (3)Fence (4)Woven (5)Yakisugi (6)Social Distance

