

Painting & Props

Jevon Jones - 1902309

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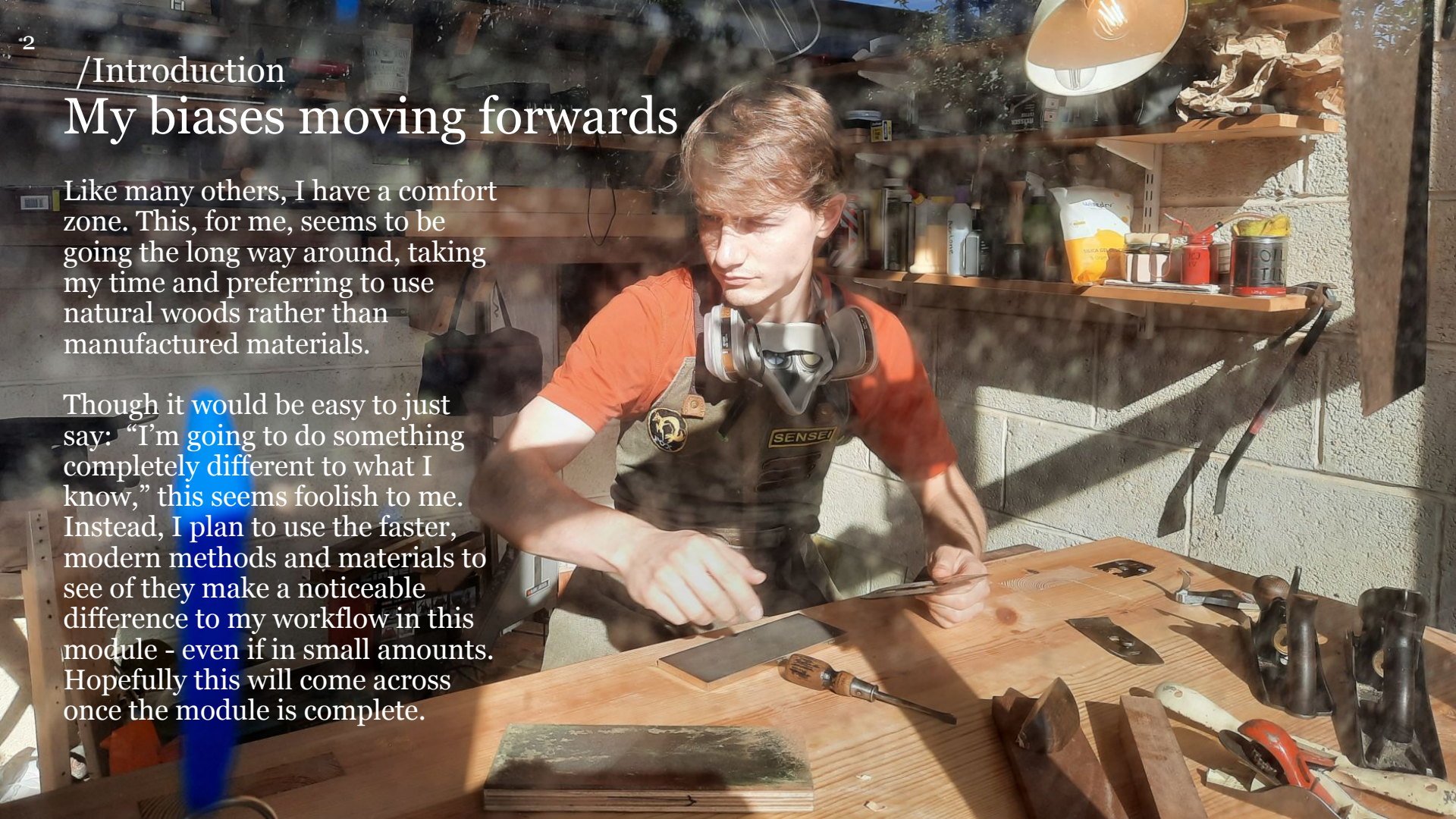
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/Introduction

My biases moving forwards

Like many others, I have a comfort zone. This, for me, seems to be going the long way around, taking my time and preferring to use natural woods rather than manufactured materials.

Though it would be easy to just say: “I’m going to do something completely different to what I know,” this seems foolish to me. Instead, I plan to use the faster, modern methods and materials to see of they make a noticeable difference to my workflow in this module - even if in small amounts. Hopefully this will come across once the module is complete.



/Introduction

Practical task - The three rooms brief

In summary, we have been asked to display the passage of time through a 1950's flat in Britain. This will be done via a set of rooms, no bigger than 3x3 meters and eight feet tall. Once we have been put into groups, further delegation of tasks will take place. Sub-groups will manage the design and production of each aspect of the design itself.

Once briefed about what was asked of me for this task, I started brainstorming for ideas. One idea I found appealing, yet difficult, was having separate rooms still somehow seem like they existed at separate times.

Another defining characteristic of how we approach this task will be if our designed space was once part of a building that already existed, or a newly built one with all the defining visual features of the 50's aesthetic. I will find out about this, as the scope of the project narrows.

Personally, I have mixed feelings towards that era and decade. I can't put my finger on it, but having been around so many relics of that time period due to my parents and grandparents, I can't help but think of an unspoken trauma coming from those generations that suffered the war. I'll admit that it does make me uncomfortable, but I'll try to shelf that bias while I sink my teeth into this first module. I look forward to working with my classmates from last year - and the bits I will learn along the way.

Project brief

You are part of a design team for a medium budget indie film. The director would like to show the passing of time in one camera shot/track of 1950's city flat in Britain. Your set needs to be made up of three 'areas' which interlink and show progression of the flat owner renovating the space.
There will need to be at least one window and one door in your design which allows for the option of green screen.

Each space can be no bigger than 3m x 3m and no taller than 8 feet.

You will be split into three smaller teams to tackle one element of an overall design.

You will present your overall design and processes at the end of the module

You have a total budget of £500 and 6 weeks ....



/Process

Meetings and Budgeting

Every week we started having quick meetings to establish the current needs of the project, and if there were any issues that needed ironing out. It came to serve as a healthy grounding exercise that reminded me of exactly what needed doing. It's strange to describe them this way, but the meetings were also akin to a kind of 'show and tell' that I did in primary school. Perhaps they were meant to emulate such business meetings this whole time? Just being able to tell the group what you were getting up to and the piece of mind in knowing that everybody is listening was a good feeling. It also served as an opportunity to voice any concerns if people felt something was not being done properly.

A major aspect of our project was the specified budget - 500 pounds for the whole project. Initially I mistook this number, as 500 per room. This was supposedly to emulate the real budgets we would face in the industry, especially ones found in indie films.

I can't say what was spent in total, but I know that just the price of wood alone would have cost around three times the initial budget. Despite this, we still operated as if we only had a limited amount of cash, and kept receipts, ect. Much of my main personal project was made with scraps and offcuts, so I consider myself lucky in that aspect. Photo credit of this budget sheet goes to Cara.

Passing of LiverPool: Overall Budget

September 19 - November 16th 2021

6 weeks

Total Budget:	£500
Allocated:	£245
Unallocated:	£0
Total Spent:	£2,047.17
Remaining :	(£1,547.17)

item	Amount	Total cost	From where	By Who	Return
Wood order 1	N/A	£997.08	Prembrokshire building and Plumbing	Dave	N/A
Wood order 2	N/A	£580.56	Prembrokshire building and Plumbing	Dave	N/A
Interior doors	2	£64		Laurie/Dave	N/A
white paint	2	£25	Screwfix	Dave	N/A
Green paint - Deep Ivy	2	£20.00	Wilko	Cara	N/A
Cutlery	N/A	£0.70	Llys Nini charity	Lleucu	N/A
Glasses	3	£0.80	Llys Nini charity	Lleucu	N/A
kitchenware	4	£6	YMCA	Beth	N/A
Plywood	N/A	£300		Dave	N/A
Zinc plated latches 10 pack	1	£2.75	Screwfix	Dave	N/A
kids non-clothing	1	£2.50	Cancer Research Uk - Swansea	Vinina	N/A
home ga t	1	£7.00	Cancer Research Uk - Swansea	Vinina	N/A
household	1	£5.09	British heart Foundation - Swansea	Vinina	N/A
Lining Paper	1	£4.99		Ellie	N/A
Fuel	1	£10.00		Ellie	N/A
Picture	2	£10	Tiger	Vinina	N/A
candle	2	£1.50	Tiger	Vinina	N/A
Charcoal	N/A	£5	Wilko	Vinina	N/A
Green soap	1	£1.30	pwllheli	Lleucu	N/A
Food	N/A	£2.90	Tesco	Lleucu	N/A







Barnwell (2019, p.38) mentions that around ten percent of a film's total budget is spent on the art department, and that the designer is always looking for a way to stretch the available resources. Thus, some strategies to overcome this include borrowing from shops in return for a credit in the film once complete, or better yet shopping at vintage stores with the understanding that the bought items will be returned once finished with.

/Research

The 50's in Britain - A clean slate for design

This decade saw much demand for housing as the population boomed and much of the existing housing had been bombed flat. As a result, Britain had to reinvent itself in many ways, one of them being the way living spaces were built, outfitted, and decorated.

"Council-house building peaked under the Conservative government of the 1950s, when the end of rationing and a growing economy meant that 250,000 new local authority homes a year were being put up." (Elliot, 2014)

Such a vast amount of new housing and people living in them required cheap, quick solutions in regards to the furnishings and personal touches.

"In Britain downbeat utility furniture was the order of the day as far as the government was concerned, to help manage a wartime shortage in timber. And it was these inexpensive pieces that became familiar to many as they grew up" (Blades, 2019, pp.30)



(Cooper, 2020)



(Elliot, 2014)

/Research

The 50's in Britain - Colours and Shapes of Optimism

Despite much of the population still experiencing the trauma of the previous decade, a new optimism was emerging in terms of the colours and shapes of interior design at the time. This could have been a reflection of ending wartime austerity, as well as the newly implemented National Health Service and many other positive aspects of peace time across Britain.

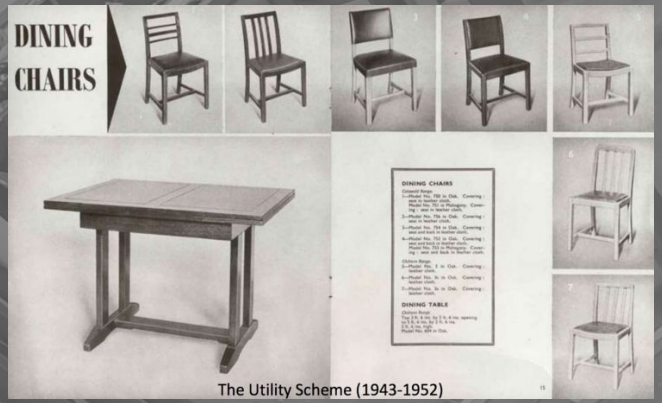
Although more traditional furniture and wallpapers still clung to the fashions of the 30's and 40's, the emerging aesthetic gave way to a simplified look and brighter colour scheme. Furniture brands such as 'g-plan' took influences from simplistic, yet sturdy scandinavian designs. Abstract, modern shapes and forms would become a common sight in architecture both inside and outside the home.

However, this did not mean people were throwing away their old furniture by the droves. The cultural zeitgeist of 'make do & mend' was still rampant from the war, as Jay Blades notes in his introduction to *The Repair Shop*:

"...when they repaired his GEC portable transistor radio, bought for 50 shillings, when he was aged just 22, with his wife to be Eileen in the fifties. Afterwards, the radio went everywhere with them before it became a fixture of family life. When it stopped working for the first time, a repairer replaced the faulty buttons with the rounded ends of toothbrushes" (Blades, 2019, pp.2)

Inspired by American trends, another idea popularised in newer, smaller houses was furniture and accessories that would fold away, or serve multiple purposes.

Ryouta remarks in her article, *British trends in interior design*, "In (the) 1950s, British interior design is typically characterized by modernism, open living spaces and appliances upon appliances for literally anything" (Ryouta, 2015)



The Utility Scheme (1943-1952)

(Anon, 2019)



(Ryouta, 2015)



(Anon, 2017)

/Research

Furniture of the 50's - G-Plan

During the 50's, a select few brand names in furniture managed to become industry icons for their distinct style. The furniture they made, all those years ago, continues to gather value for today's collectors due to it's quality, gracefulness and rugged construction.

"But they, like all their competitors, were not immune to the war time rationing which from 1943 affected furniture as well. It meant that only a small number of oak or mahogany pieces, in a limited range of designs, could be produced." (Mason, 2018)

G-Plan, based in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, are probably the most well-known brand. Established way back in 1898, its founder Ebenezer Gomme and his brother in law began crafting chairs by hand.

As an innovative company, G-plan set the bar high for furniture standards, and had built up a solid reputation by the time rationing devastated almost all UK business in some way. By embracing change and trying new styles and techniques (such as veneer and ply construction ideologies), the company was not only able to survive the war, but thrive into the late 20th century.

Mason (2018) notes how the founder's grandson Donald really changed things up as the lead designer when he announced a new range of furniture inspired by the popular sleek danish/scandinavian themes. This range promoted the idea of having a common visual theme throughout consumers homes, and the style meant that the range would suit most budgets.



(anon, 2016)

/Research

Furniture of the 50's - McIntosh

Based in Scotland, McIntosh was established in 1869 by Alexander Henry. The firm was G-plan's biggest competitor, and that comes as no surprise when you learn that both companies made quality furniture and had solid reputations by the time both world wars took place.

Just like G-plan, McIntosh utilised modern, minimalist, scandinavian designs as well as modern, efficient techniques in order to overcome the timber shortages during and after the war.

"Despite an aesthetic that could be mistaken as Danish modern in the mid-century period, the company marketed itself, both at home and abroad, as proud Scottish firm that utilized traditional processes that employed local, highly-skilled cabinetmakers. The McIntosh label which survives on many 1950s and 1960s pieces, shows the Scottish thistle and crown, a long-time symbol of Scotland. From 1948 until 1983, Tom Robertson worked as head designer for the firm; creating his most notable design, the teak *Dunvegan* sideboard (1960s) known for its sculpted handles." (Anonymous, 2021)

The company still exists today, as a maker of furniture for the educational sector.





(anon, 2021)

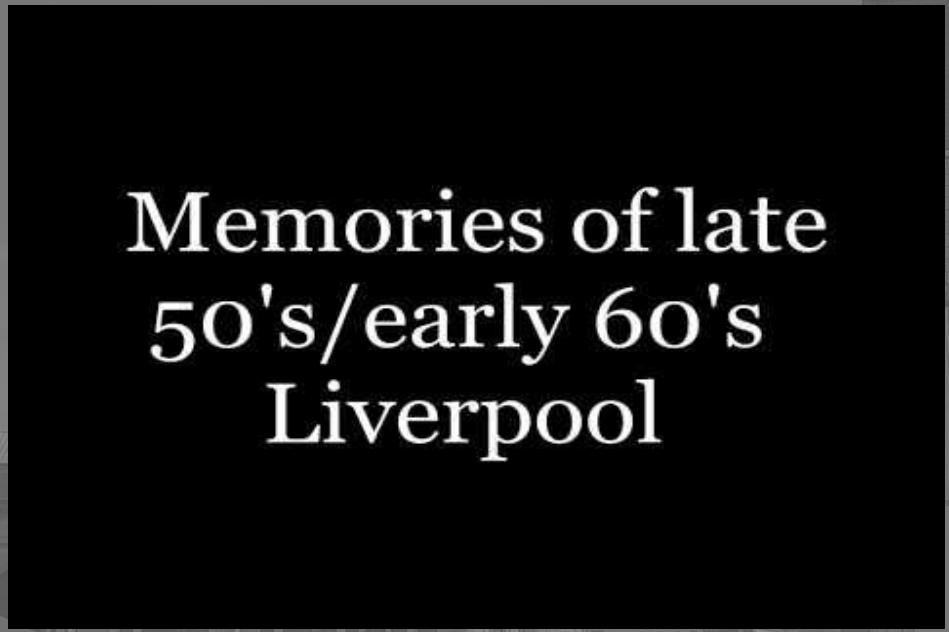
/Research

Talk with my mum

Poverty in Liverpool happens to be a topic that is quite close to home for me. My mother, Patricia, was born there in the late 50's in a working class, terraced home.

Here is a short recording of some anecdotes about Kirby, the royals, Churchill, emerging technologies, furniture and home renovation in the 50's.

I showed this to my sub-group as soon as I had the opportunity. Even though it was not directly influential or useful to the project, I think that they definitely appreciated hearing some real stories about the place we are making a film set based on.



https://youtu.be/7m9suzafiSA

/Development

Mindmapping

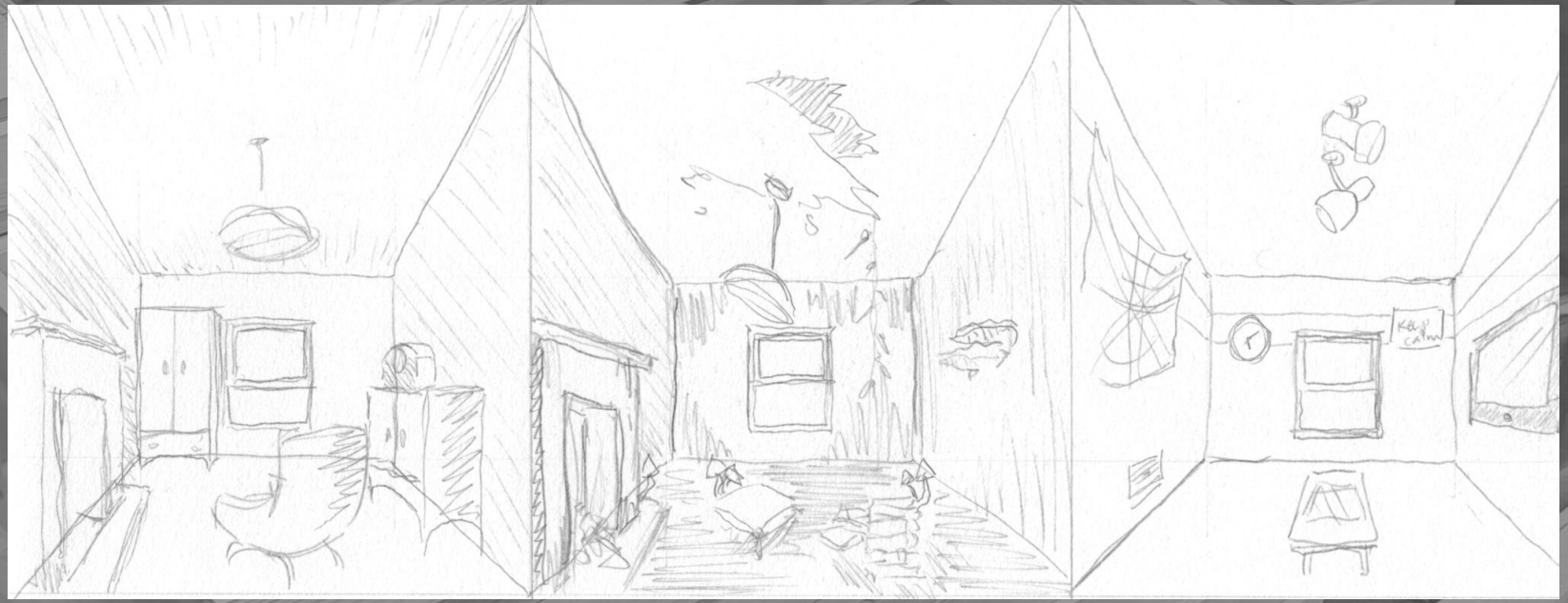
When I started mind mapping possible ideas and configurations for this set of three rooms, what immediately struck me was what unspoken rules I could ‘break’ in order to make my ideas more unique and striking. What I mean by this is, what if one of the described residents is not even human? What if they are an animal, or plant?

I also thought of how big a leap I could take through time, but then I imagined how difficult it would be to convey that these corresponding spaces are the same building. Thus, I figured it would be interesting and very easy to convey the same space if all three rooms were the same room - but at different times.

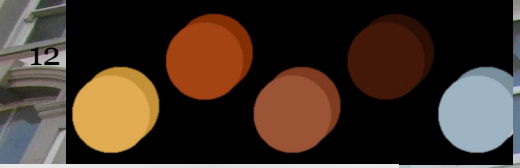
If I was not only restricted to Britain, I thought it would be interesting to do something based in a different country, i.e. America or Germany. Perhaps telltale signs from the little details in these rooms could both evoke safety in familiarity, but also an unsettling, unspoken dread of historical events that only a modern audience knows are about to unfold?

/Development

Same room through time



With this first idea I thought about a middle-class family's lounge space being overtaken by decay after being abandoned. In the subsequent iterations, the flat would being to be fixed up by modern day residents who would trying to recapture the essence the flat originally had. However, their notions of what the 50's looked like would be skewed by misconceptions of the cultural zeitgeist (i.e notions of how patriotic and pro-royal britain used to be). Thus, this initial idea could have featured three 'residents' who all had ideal conditions for the same space over time. The next slides feature mood boards for two of the rooms sketched above.





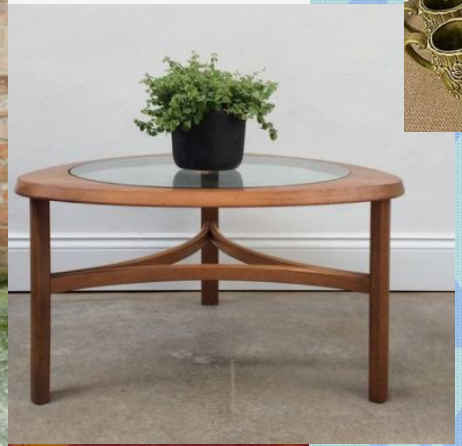












Mood board one:

1950's british lounge /study

Mood board two:

Fungal decay of mid century decor
















/Development

Our sub-group's ideas

Once we had been put into our smaller groups, Cara had all three groups immediately decide on some loose constraints that we could all follow, and out of pure luck we settled on liverpool being the setting. This immediately made me think of my mother's side of the family - who are all from there.

My sub group met up to discuss how we could add depth to our versions of the room we would be given, whatever space that may be.

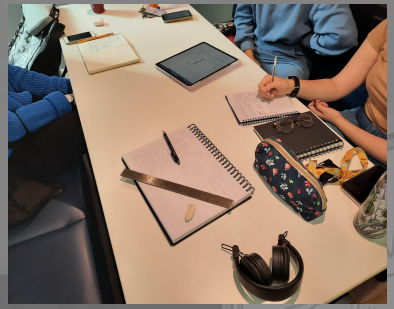
For the connecting space, we thought it would not only be accurate but also interesting to feature a balcony like the ones found on 50's flats. This would give us the opportunity to depict a unique shape, as well as a lot of space for a green screen/sky background. Additionally, the narrative possibilities for a balcony are plentiful. One example we thought of was: a wife being left alone after her husband had died during the war, and then how her passage from the kitchen (symbolising all she has ever known in adult life) through to the balcony and then into the living room reflects her beginning to renovate and move on.

Speaking of the kitchen, our idea for that space was to make it the smallest of the three. We thought that this would hammer home how, historically, it was seen as the wife's space and therefore was only designed for one person to occupy. This would resonate with themes of systemic misogyny, as well as show how mentally the wife character was stuck in a small dark corner of the universe until adversity forced her to venture out and live her life as a single mother.

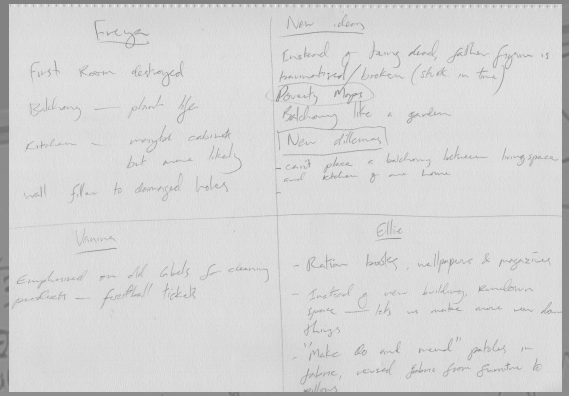
Finally, we liked the idea that for the living room we could have signs of renovation - i.e. rolls of wallpaper and paint tins, but a strange 'bubble' of untouched furniture and objects in one corner where the husband used to reside when he was alive. Objects such as an empty armchair with a photo of a man in an army uniform could subtly hint at this.

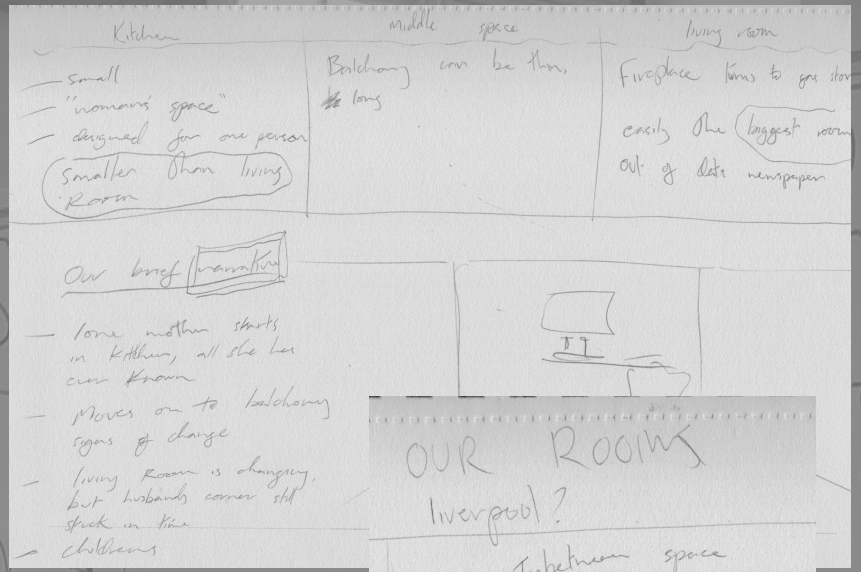
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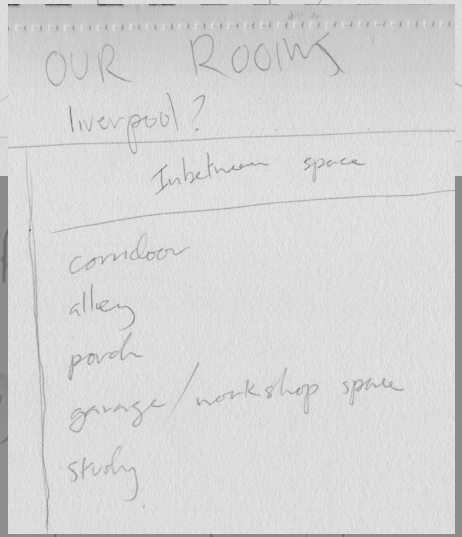
Our meet-up

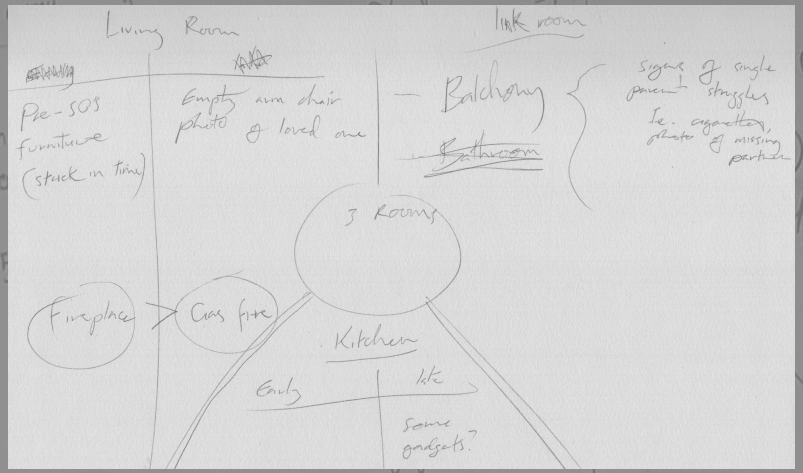












/Development

A possible living space

Were we to be assigned to it, this is a sketch of a living room that fits within what we envisioned for the space. I have been doing quite a bit of very quick, detailed perspective drawing recently and I am enjoying it very much.

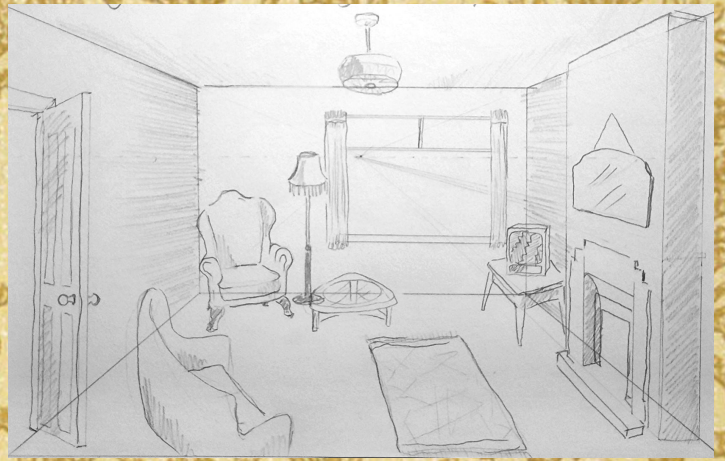
This mode still adhered to the singular use living room, i.e. not the double use living room AND bedroom.





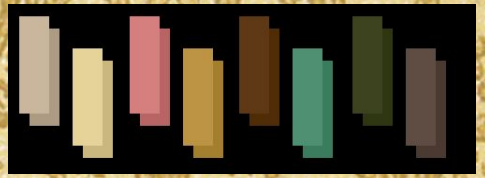












Mood board three:

1950's british living room











/Development

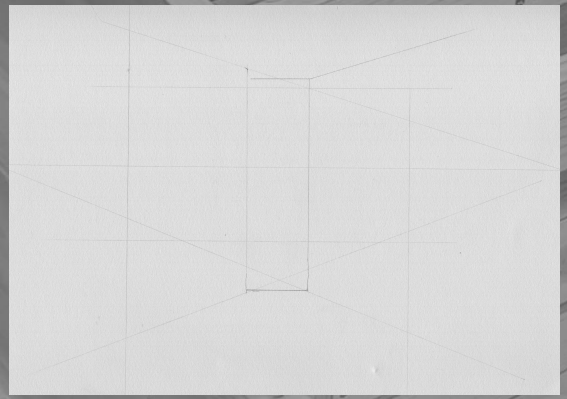
More possible ideas

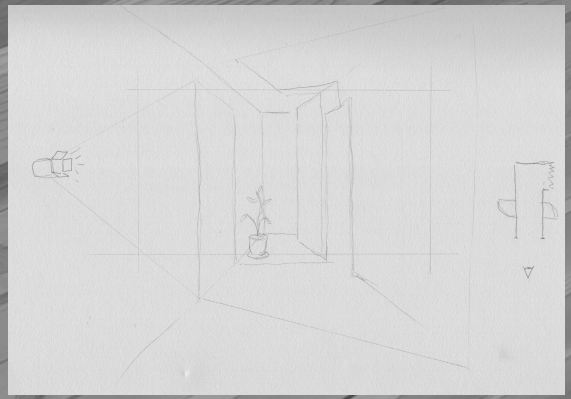
After our initial meeting and the subsequent talks over the internet, I was really hoping we would get the ‘inbetween space’, as I saw so much potential in it as a spooky corridor. After exploring the idea of the balcony (which I also really wanted to make), we found that the massive chunk of green screen space would be problematic. Consequently, I wanted to go in the opposite direction and restrict the amount of light allowed in to the corridor. Inspired by an image Vanina had showed me (right), I imagined how I could follow the rules set out in the brief, while still pushing the envelope as to what was technically allowed.

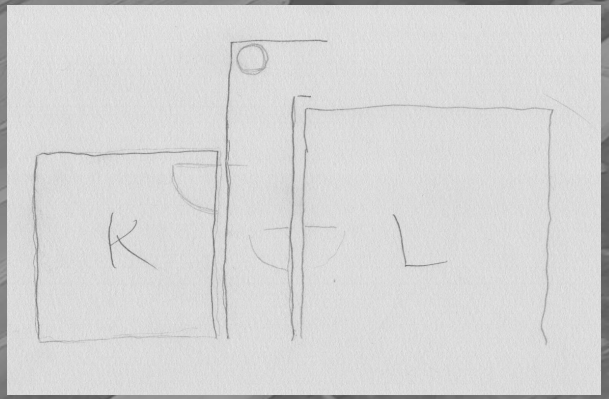
By having the two beginning and end spaces be about the consciously living parts of life, I thought I could have an in between space represent those spots in time where people’s plans never bear fruit, as instead they are strapped in for the journey - weather they like it or not.

(anon, 2009)









/Research

Pre-war poverty, and other compromises

Over the 19th century, Britain's population grew massively. This spike was party due to the nature of the industrial revolution. People on the bottom of the economic ladder suffered very squalid conditions - and as the populations in major cities grew, so did the problems with housing conditions.

In 1842, Liverpool's council passed the Sanitary act. This was an attempt to improve the working and living conditions of the working class members of that city. Unfortunately this just meant that many buildings were demolished with no supply of new housing to replace them; thus those living there simply had to suffer even more as a result:

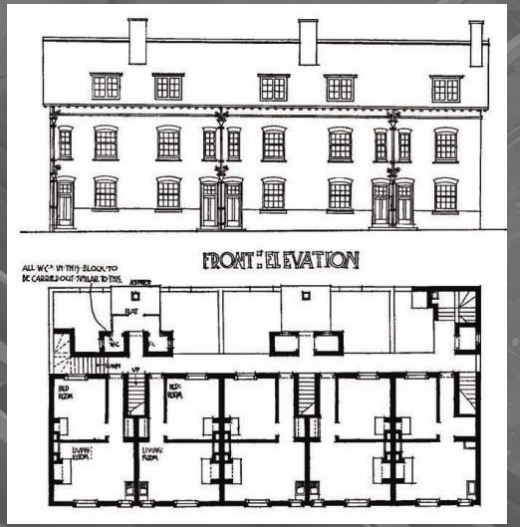
"As usual they took their responsibility seriously and as a result a considerable amount of insanitary property was demolished. This action was necessary, but it reduced the number of houses available for the poor and increased overcrowding elsewhere; it is not surprising, therefore, that the health committee were soon urging the council to: 'instruct the finance committee to five every facility for the erection of model cottages on land belonging to the corporation'" (Tarn, 1973)

And so, sets of flats were built to house the poor. One such historic building was St. Martins Cottages, Liverpool (top right), built in 1869. In 1903, another notable set of flats were built on Adlington street (bottom right).

These buildings were basic, with very simplistic layouts and small rooms. Despite their age, many of these buildings survived both world wars. The aforementioned St Martins Cottages was only demolished in 1977.



(Tarn, 1973)

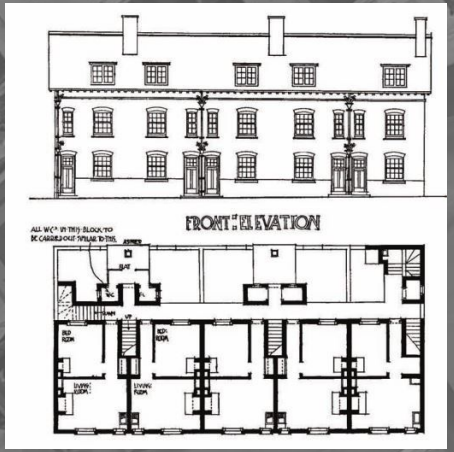


(Anon, 2013)

/Research

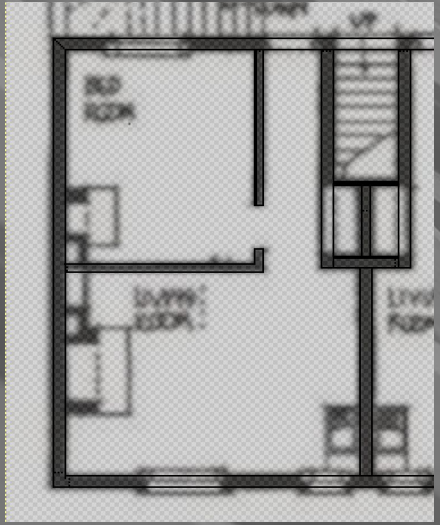
Digitally enhancing the past

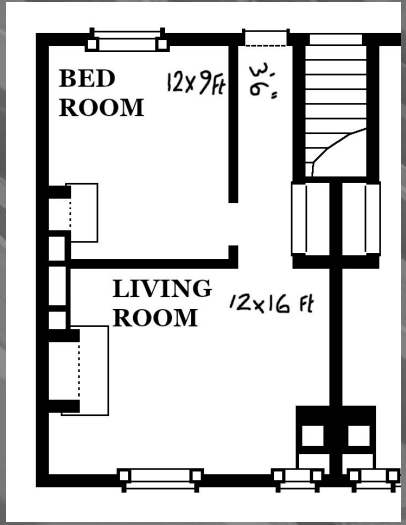
The Adlington street floor plan is an exciting peek into a real place that housed real people. Unfortunately this layout plan is very low resolution, and the internet cannot seem to assist in finding a better quality image. So using digital image editing software, I created a clearer version. By changing the transparency of the floor plan, and then tracing over that in a new layer, I can more accurately see where lines begin and end.



(Anon, 2013)







As an added bonus, by using a method of referencing the standard size of victorian/edwardian sash windows as four feet, we can crudely use the pixel ratio to calculate the rough dimensions of each room. It's by no means rocket science, but I think it's a fantastic means of getting a general idea as to how small these flats at Aldington street were.

/Research

Fireplaces - Robert Adam

Born in 1728, Robert was the son of the architect William Adam, and soon became one himself. Some of his crowning achievements include Pulteney Bridge, in Bath (Right); and Kenwood House, in London.

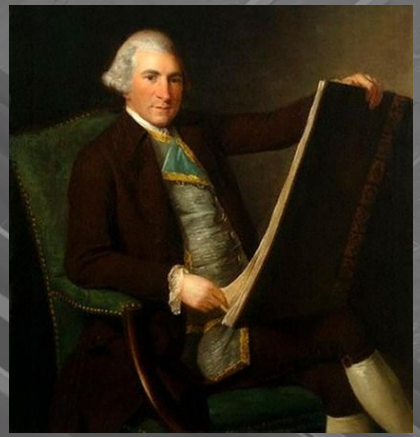
Robert spent much time visiting and studying famous buildings within the south of England as a young man, including Wilton House - designed by Inigo Jones. His artistic vision really took off however, during his tour of Europe during the mid 1700's. Though many of his contemporaries of the time found themselves bound within the Palladian movement, his understanding of Greek and Roman architecture allowed him to transcend the current styles and fashions, and become a historic pioneer of architectural design.

"The 'Revolution' which Robert Adam sought to champion after returning from his Italian grand tour in 1758 was rooted in his ambition to transform taste throughout society. While he and his brothers quickly established themselves as leading architects to Britain's wealthy aristocracy, they also cultivated a belief that good design had a wider civic purpose. It was the family's mission to democratise taste, and as a result, the family can now be credited with producing the world's first 'International Style'" (Black, 2021)

Indeed, Adam's work and influence can still be seen in many interior fireplace designs made today. His methods of production and design practice would go on to dominate much of the Victorian and Edwardian eras.



(Maja, 2011)



(Black, 2021)

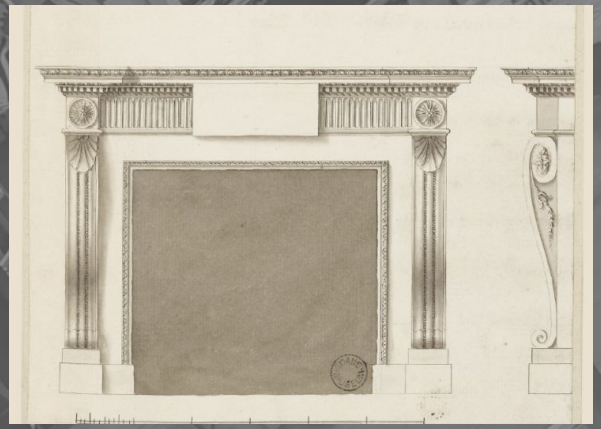
/Research

Fireplaces - Robert Adam cont.

Like any good success story, Robert and his brothers overcame a notable challenge of their time. Black (2021) describes how the exponential growth of construction during the late 18th century in Britain meant it was very difficult for the carvers of ornate marble and lime wood mantle pieces to keep up with the demand. This shortage of each hand made product drove the prices up further for consumers.

Adam saw this as an opening in the market, and developed a system of casts and moulds to make faux fireplaces that resembled the more expensive hand made ones. He did this by having a special secret recipe - referred to as 'Adam's composition'. Essentially a specialised mortar, it was cast from copper or boxwood moulds and then finished to look like any material desired and fastened to wooden frames. This could be made quickly and at a fraction of the cost as a real hand carved one.

"It was a hand carver's style whose motto was "*je ne sais quoi,*" a phrase that suggested individuality and a certain lack of control. While generally keeping rococo lightness, Adam's ornament was almost always strictly symmetrical, stayed within its allotted boundaries, repeated itself endlessly, and was of low relief. Adam's style lent itself well to casting and mechanical production, and he pursued to this end not only compo (the mortar recipe), but also **metal casting** and porcelain" (Reinberger, 2003, p.9)



(Anon, 2021)



(Knowles, 2019)

/Research

Fireplaces - Primary research

Some of my friends still have intact fireplaces. On top of that, a second hand shop near me sells fireplace parts for great value. Here are some of the specimens I found in the wild:

It is worth noting here that for the prices on some of those mantelpiece surrounds, I could have saved a lot of time and effort. But I'm still glad I went through the whole process from scratch, as it gave me more time to craft the exact object I had envisioned. This shop is also where I bought the tiles I would use to decorate my model.







This cast iron fireplace has very obvious visual influences from the Adam style - with its ornate, yet symmetrical relief carvings throughout. The angled parts of the legs show a strange empty space that would be perfect for some colour and decoration, but this one lacks tiles.(Notice the slate hearth)

Below that we have a much more minimalist, Art-nouveau fireplace - with the iconic tiled sides.

I had always planned to utilise tiles in my design, as the Edwardian era saw many fireplaces feature such decorative effects, as part of the arts and crafts movements - which in itself was a response to the machine made visuals of the Victorian era.

"Edwardian period from 1901 to 1910 was short and heavily influenced by The Arts and Crafts Movement. The movement promoted simple design and an appreciation for the handmade in retaliation to mass production in the Victorian age" (Mason, 2019)





/Research

Fireplaces - further visual inspiration

To supplement the photos I took myself, it felt necessary to collect additional photos of Edwardian fireplaces. Of those I found, these two stuck out the most to me - I can't put my finger on it but its like they both had the same original idea, and slightly modified it to arrive at their final pieces. I didn't notice this right away, but you can actually see a set of iconic G-Plan nesting tables in the first photo.



(Anon, 2020)

This photo on the left was the most pleasing cast iron fireplace that fitted the era I could find, in my opinion. The ratios pleased me, so it's no surprise that I took most inspiration from this design.

"At the beginning of the Edwardian period most fireplaces; particularly the cast iron insert fireplace designs were focused on having tiles on as a feature. - Fireplaces in the Edwardian era were typically made from cast iron and as the period progressed fireplaces became taller and slimmer, the decoration became simpler and less complex than designs seen in the late Victorian period." (Anon, 2018)



(Ryan, 2021)

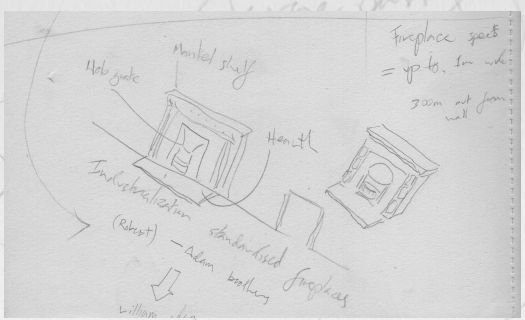
From what the previous image on the left omitted, I substituted with the abundant information found with this one.

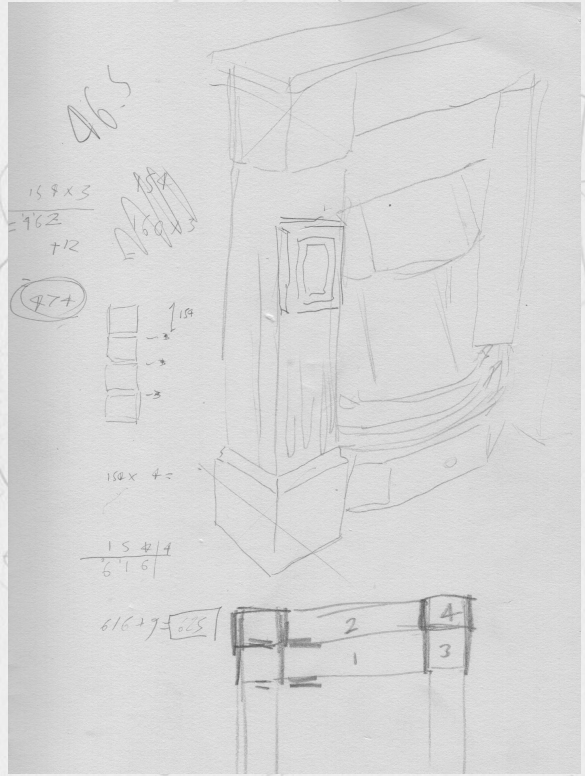
As it was being sold on a website that specialises in fireplaces, and the page associated with this cast iron fireplace claims it to be a restored Edwardian piece, with its original hand painted tiles.

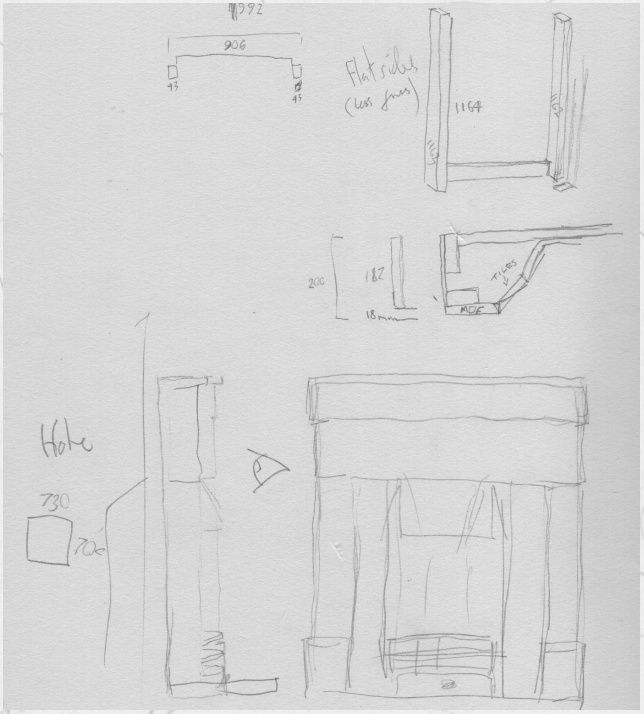
I was thankful for the dimensions included on their page.

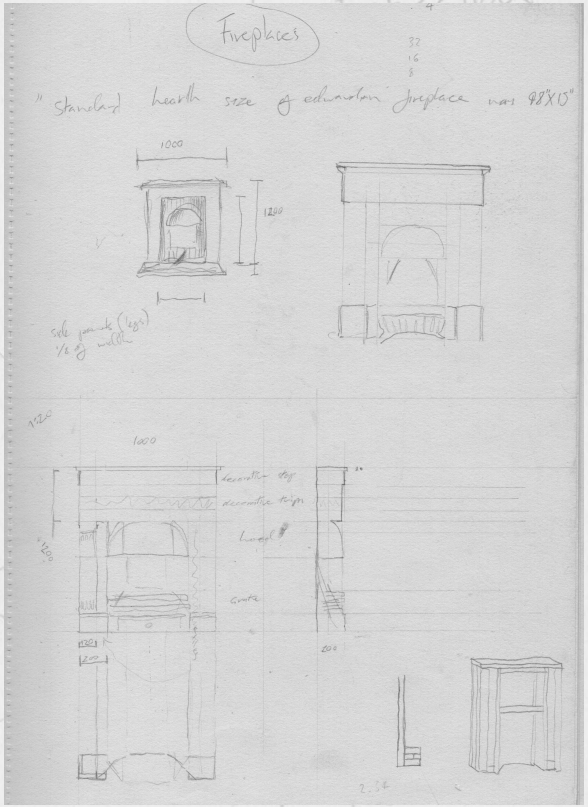
/Process

Fireplace Design



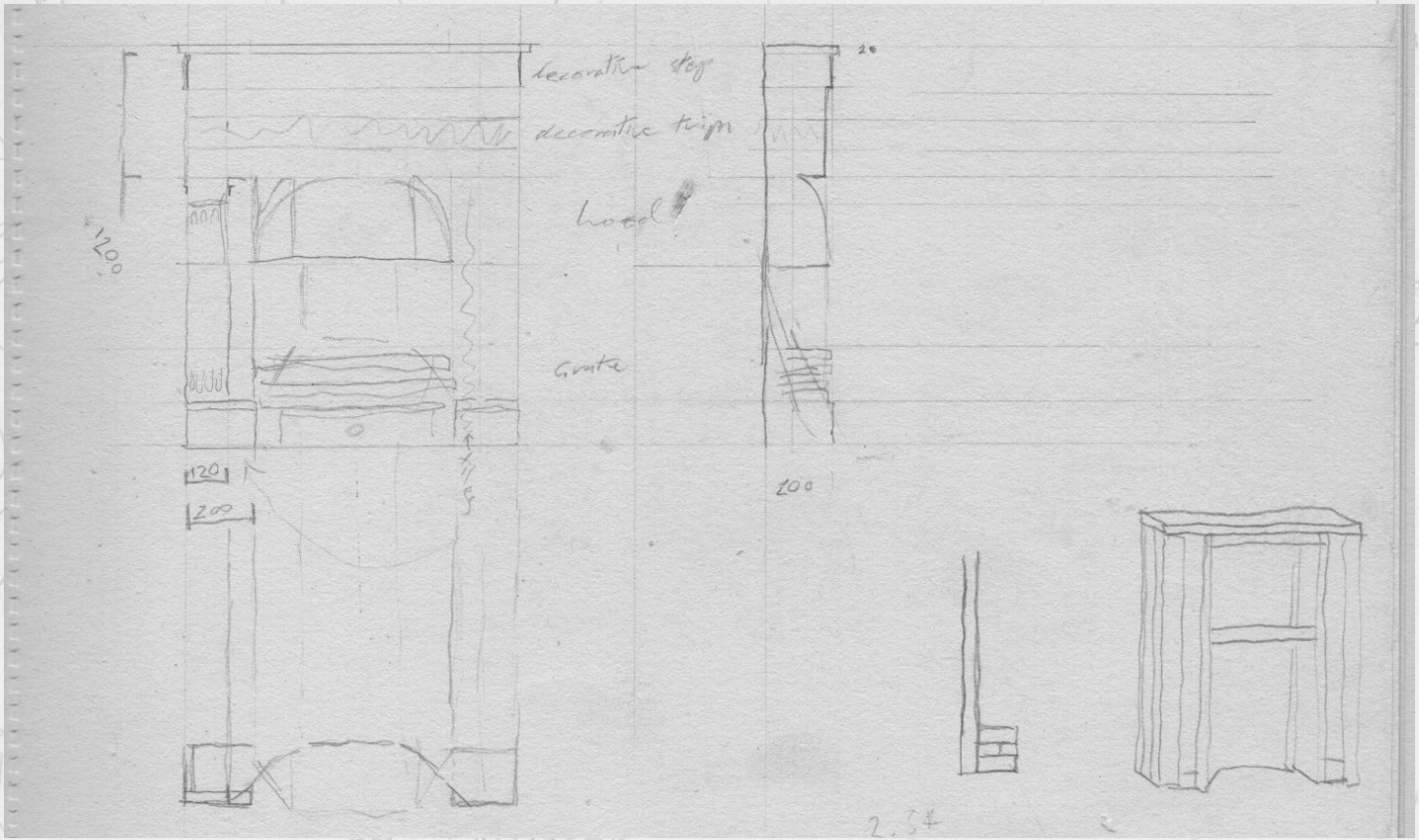






/Process

Fireplace Design continued



/Process

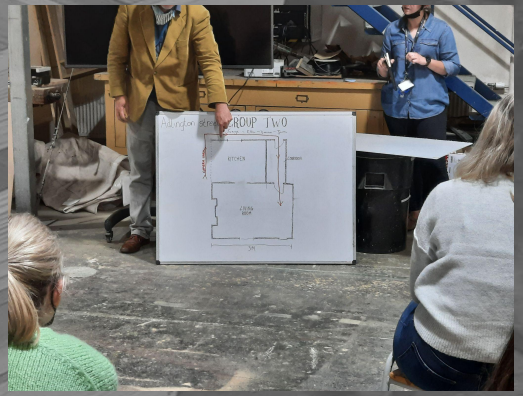
Room allocation and further dimensions

All three groups had to present their ideas to each other, and from that input the lecturers assigned each room to each group, based on our idea's strengths and weaknesses. As we had taken heavy inspiration from the Liverpool flats we had researched, I roughly copied that layout and drew it on a whiteboard to accompany the presentation and our mood boards and sketches.

This was the first time we stood by the idea of the rooms being not one after the other - like a dollhouse or TV set, but rather more realistically packed next to each other like a real building. I'll admit that part of me wanted the lecturers to reject that idea due to the complications that three interlocking rooms presents compared to the former idea, but to our credit, they liked it. Then again, we were not the only ones to copy the floor plan layouts found in the iconic edwardian flats in liverpool. More like a unanimous vote?

Soon we were told that the room our sub-group would be working on the living room, this was a genuine surprise to me - but one thing I did like about the living room design at the time was how it had the most architectural props in it. This (at the time) included two sash windows and a fireplace.

However, they did find issue with some of the specifications of the drawing we did (Which became the chosen format), starting with what rooms and details would do well where. At first I was a bit upset that we were not following the historical layout. But in retrospect I now see that in the real film/tv industry, one has to make compromises to aid the narrative of what is being portrayed on screen. By this I mean, we have to make it easier for the cameras and such to perform optimally within the space we make. And that means it can't always be a carbon copy of whatever the real thing was.





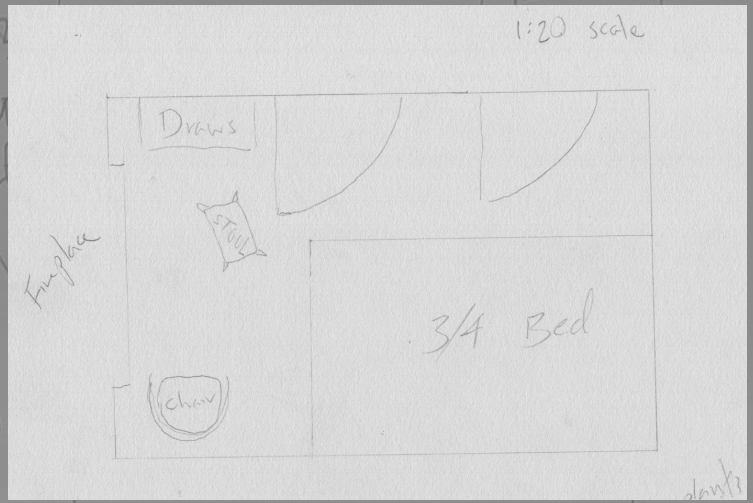
/Process

Our semi-finalised idea

So, with all of the aforementioned meetings, debates, delegations, and such; me and my group had to adapt the previous narrative we had. Instead of a missing husband and a lone mother, we would still have both parents present, but it's like the husband is so damaged by the war that its like he is stuck in time, and does not do his share of the housework. Being stuck in this situation, the mother figure works even harder to sustain their lives. We could illustrate this with showing how many side jobs she pursues in our room, along with making her chair by the fireplace the much less fancy one - as the husband still maintains the patriarchal status as the dominant figure in their relationship, and lives.

We settled on the idea that the family (mostly the mother), having come from a wealthier background, would still have some of the nicer objects from their previous lives. This is how we could justify certain props, but still have the signs of absolute poverty - aside from the glaring fact they are living in such a desolate place.





/Process

Floor tape layout and alterations

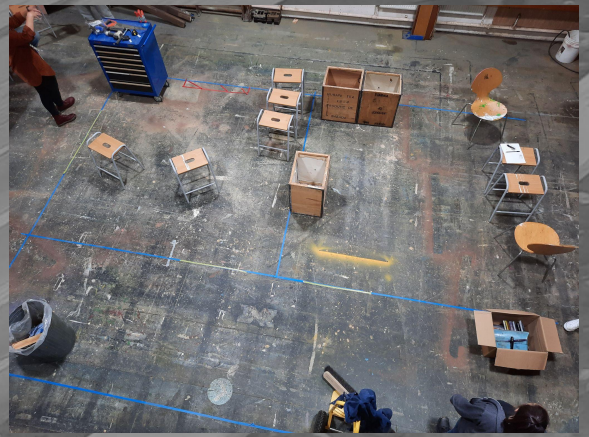
As soon as we had settled on that flat layout, we used the floor of the theatre workshop to accurately lay out the dimensions of the walls with tape. The seams in the floor proved extremely useful to maintain some semblance of accuracy here!

This would reveal itself as one of my *shooting myself in the foot by wanting to stick to history's ratios while also trying to follow the rules of the brief* moments, as I had tried to make the shape of the floor plan still resemble the one of the real building, but the rule of *no room being bigger than 3x3 meters* meant I had made the kitchen *extremely* small. At the time I was still angry over not following the historical space in its entirety, but I now see that it was stubborn of me to feel that way, especially when one factors in real budgets and labour costs on what is supposedly an 'indie film'. I was wrong, and that's okay.

Once alterations were made to make the kitchen and living room the same size, we put various placeholder furniture pieces in each room to see how the space felt. We also swapped the window from the living room to the kitchen, to equal out the workload on each group. Additionally, we took away a wall from the two aforementioned rooms, to cut down on labour and timber costs. I enjoyed this activity, as it was like a very efficient way to 'feel' the space and what would go where without having to build anything.







/Process

Perspective drawing and AutoCAD

John kindly reminded everybody how to draw perspectives in our study room. I thought I'd remember everything and didn't need the refresher, but I was pleasantly surprised by what I had forgotten in the way of the tips and tricks he presented.

His philosophy seems to be that no matter how advanced the computer technology components of architectural design become, one should never forget how to use a simple pencil and paper to quickly and accurately portray a three-dimensional space; I can get behind that idea.

Meanwhile, Dave was also giving refresher sessions on the use of AutoCAD, which I was equally grateful for. I still opted to use my scale ruler and pencil when we all drew more definite scale drawings of our flats and the rooms inside them.

Since all later versions of that scale drawing would be done digitally, and my laptop is too old to run AutoCAD, I finished my 1:20 scale drawing on the grey card and made sure to label it 'alpha 0.1', along with the label of 'outdated!'.







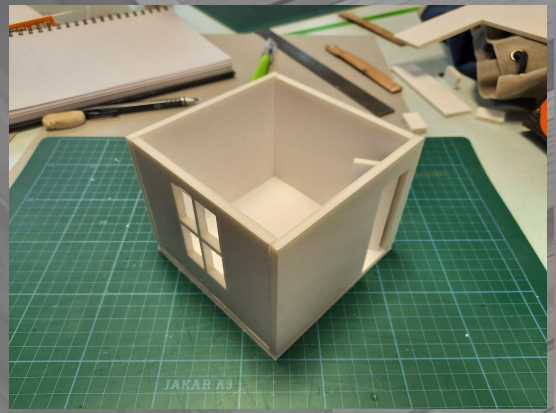
/Process

Scale models for the living room

I had been looking forward to something more hands on since the task had begun, and now was the time to make some miniature models which we could visually reference if we needed to. As the living room was my group's room, I chopped out a scaled down 3x3 room with a window, a fireplace, and a door. I'm happy with the model itself, but I was definitely rusty - I forgot the importance of holding the scalpel blade perpendicular to the cut being made. Thankfully I bought a pack of hundreds of new blades with me this time, so I was never working with a blunt edge.

In no time at all, the other two rooms had been made by their respective groups. Together they provide a great reference for our finished project. It should be noted however, that the walls and windows had not yet been finalized in their positioning when these were built. It was very rewarding to see multiple groups come together and use the new model as an anchor to discuss how the real thing would be made, and it allowed for much clearer communication.

The fireplace model was going to be my major task, so as well as a model for the little room, I also made a larger more detailed one for myself. I used different materials to show different aspects of what the finished product would look like. I imagined that once the real thing was being built, I could take liberties where I saw fit; and that is why I'm so glad I made multiple models beforehand. Having a visual aid on the ratios and sizes of components helps my making process greatly.









/Research

Paint brands

A massive part of theatre, cinema, and much of the art world, painting is an integral skill in prop and set making. This is because colour plays such a huge role in how we emotionally perceive everything.

“Much critical thinking around colour in moving image has been inherited from painting, inhabiting similar territory in terms of its emotional impact on the viewer” (Barnwell, 2019, p.152)

In the UK, some notable industry brands included Rosco, Mylands and Bristol.

Catalogues like the one by Flints™ feature a wide array of these brands with exceptional choice, and a very endearing sunny disposition.

Bristol
Established in 1919, Bristol paint specialises in pigment based, pre-mixed, water based, intermixable matt finishes - for film, television and theatre. It is also known for not peeling or chipping, even after several layers, making it great for re-used spaces like theatre floors.

“You’ll have noticed that Bristol Paints are a little unusual in that instead of selling their products by volume (L), they are sold by (kg). There is an extremely good reason for this though - it’s because they focus on how much pigment is being included in the paint, and that’s the expensive bit!” (Anon, 2021)

Myland
The oldest paint brand in the UK, Myland was established in 1884. Their main selling point is that their paints are hard wearing, suitable for both interior and exterior applications.

Rosco
Another well known paint brand founded in 1910, Rosco notably specialise in paint for green and blue screens. Their paints are also very strong - designed to be diluted to at least 1:1 with water.

“The company now offers products in more than a dozen categories, including LED Lighting, Backdrops and Digital Imagery, Window Control, Image and Effect Projection Equipment, Staging Products, Projection Screens and Flooring products for dance and television studios.” (Anon, 2021)



(Anon, 2018)



(Anon, 2021)



(Anon, 2021)

/Technique Research

Painting methods

In order to better understand how these diverse brands of paint behaved and mixed, it was necessary to experiment with some scraps. Our room would hopefully have a wooden floor, so we looked into methods of creating texture using specialised tools - like the pictured ‘wood-grainer’(?). I was very surprised by how well it worked to convey wood grain, and I will be purchasing one for myself.











/Technique Research

Painting methods continued

Using a combination of sponges, brushes, that weird grainer tool, I observed how different textures could be obtained - and how the best painter is the one who leaves no sign of the tools they used! In trying to obtain a matt surface, a brush should adhere to the same brushing direction throughout.

Cara (or as she was quickly becoming, my greatest asset) helped me asses what layers of colour and hue would be necessary to portray the cast iron. Cara wanted a slight purple undertone, with dark grey on top. I just wanted jet black. I'll admit that I doubted her at first, but I was wrong. Again.







/Development

Scavenging for props

Before we even began construction, we browsed the campus prop stores to see if they had anything we could use - and therefore save precious budget spending on.

I was pleasantly surprised by the volume and oddly period correct props Carmarthen campus had. Of all the objects I saw in these stores, an old radio seemed to be best for what I had envisioned.

If it were not completely shot, I would genuinely like have a radio like this at home. Its old form factor is definitely a reminder of how big a role the radio used to play in people's living spaces. I really feel like this object tells so much of a story on its own.









/Development

Scavenging for props, pt.2

Next, I looked at the objects I owned to see if anything would fit the bill. Thankfully some things really did, including my old broken down windsor chair, an old tea flannel, a crochet blanket and my war time great coat.

For one reason or another, not all supposed possible props can make it into the final rendition. But that's okay, as these object do have much sentimental value to me, and I feel I would worry too much if I had to leave them at the mercy of a set for too long.

To me these objects already tell stories, but to a new pair of eyes they can tell an entirely different one.









/Development

Scavenging for props pt.3

During one of my days off campus, while browsing a second hand shop, I happened across an old chest of draws. It was painted white, like a modern ikea piece, with fake metallic silver handles. If it was not for the ornate mouldings around the edges I probably would have dismissed it. Upon further inspection I realised it was actually solid wood.

But the real surprise (aside from the cost of £15), was that the draws contained a small treasure trove of old photos and newspaper. The dates on them were of the early to mid 60's, which was close enough to be perfect. My sub group also wanted me to buy it once they saw the photos I sent them via whatsapp. They seemed pleased.

A few days later, I saw an old armchair on the pavement a few blocks away from where I live. I took the opportunity to snap that up too, and brought both items of furniture to Carmarthen next time I had the opportunity.

Truly, I felt very good about these finds. This kind of scavenging and searching is quite primordial to me, it's hard to explain. That hunter/gatherer mindset?







/Development

Scavenging for props pt.4

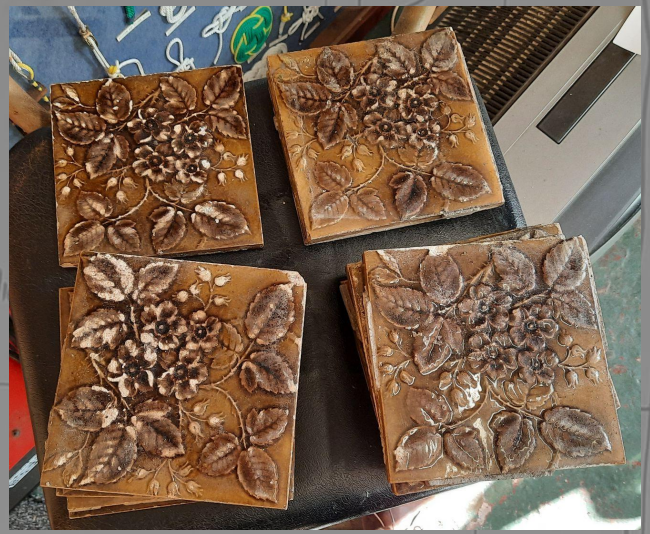
My fireplace would need tiles that fitted the aesthetic, so I searched facebook marketplace and found some nice red ones that looked promising. They were £5 for a pack of 60 or so. I talked with the seller for a while, and through being honest about me wanting only a few of them for a student project, they offered some for free! But not the red ones shown. On top of this, they were located quite the ways out north of Carmarthen. Not a major issue, but rather a means of comparison to these other tiles I luckily saw.

While looking in another second hand shop in Swansea, I asked about tiles, and they presented these to me. Though some of them had minor damage and wear, the design was just right in my opinion. For £1 a tile I couldn't go wrong!









/Industry Examples

S4C Rugby show set

While we were building our flats, we were lucky enough to be able to have a talk with the set designer (David) for a rugby talk show hosted on S4C, that was housed in the building next door to us! It was pretty exciting to see a real set, and all the camera people setting up for the day.

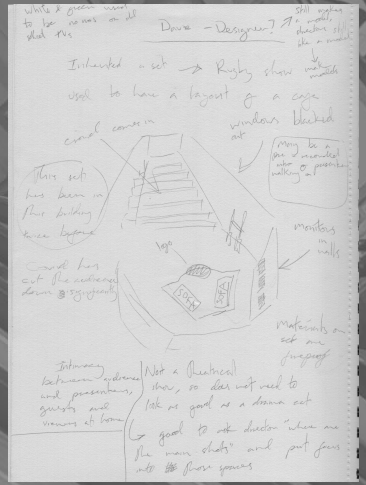
We were able to see the set from above, and also see the floor plan too - it was pretty cool the transition process from 2d to 3d as well.

David emphasised that the set itself, though small, was designed to evoke intimacy between the viewer and the people on camera - like the vibe of a coffee shop or small cafe.

As per expectation, all the walls and flooring had been fireproofed. I only understood the importance of this when I felt the heat coming off of some of the lights at my local theatre a few years ago.

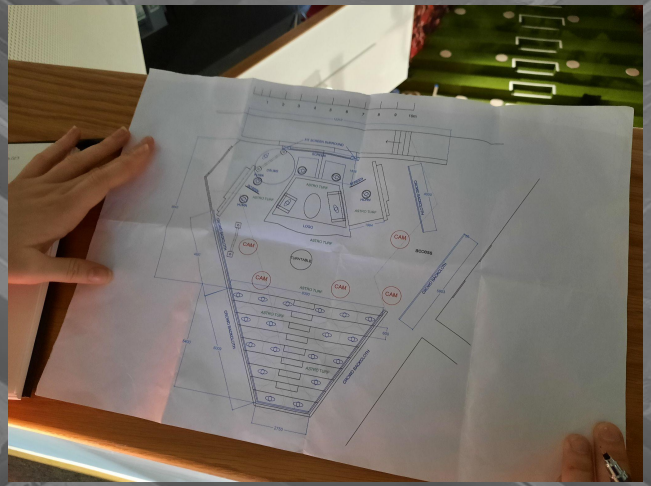
It was interesting to see the reduced audience sizes as a result of covid. But also how the set itself was quite old, it had been installed in this exact building twice before!

David also answered our many questions and seemed very encouraging about us being able to obtain jobs within the industry. I appreciated his optimism and I'm thankful for his time.









/Skills in practice

S4C Chair

The S4C building located on the Carmarthen campus recently opened a new community allotment. They asked if any of the construction students would like to contribute in the means of making some kind of seating for people to use outdoors.

I lept at the opportunity, partially because I thought the possibility of somebody from S4C seeing my work would be nothing but helpful to my future career aspects.

Though I tried to complete it within my lunch breaks on campus, I simply did not have enough time to achieve it without taking it home and completing it in my little workshop.

I used strong half-lap and housing joints, reinforced with dowels to achieve what would hopefully be a strong seat that could last a while outdoors. Time will tell.









/Development

Talk with Beth Tearle

During many of us stayed in the workshop to push on with the deadlines, Beth Tearle was kind enough to host a zoom chat where she answered any questions relating to painting and props that she could shed some light on. I represented my sub-group and asked a few questions, mainly relating to ageing and weathering of surfaces.

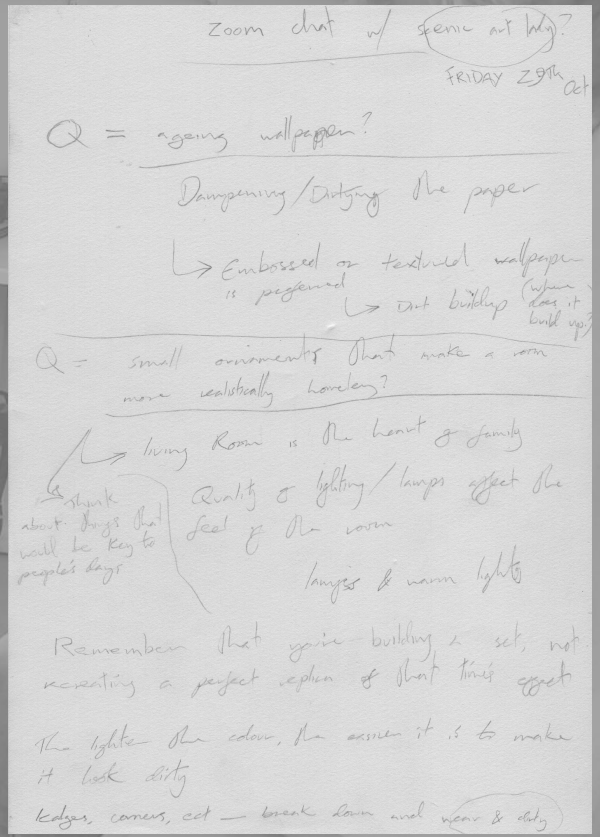
In regards to wallpaper, Beth recommended embossed or textured wallpaper, as it picks up darkening techniques very easily, lending itself not only to a weathered and old look, but also the fact that textured wallpaper is an archaic means of decorating walls in this day and age. Additionally, the lighter the colour of any given object, the easier it is to make it look dirty.

On the topic of what objects that make a prop set feel like a real home, Beth said that our room especially would be the heart of a family's daily interactions. Therefore we ought to think about the object that would be key to people's everyday lives.

Light was also paramount in Beth's opinion, she emphasised how warm light would make all the difference in establishing an atmosphere of homeliness. Therefore lamps and lampshades are important for us to source and utilise.

Amongst other questions, Beth made a good point of reminding us that we need not to rip our hair out over every little detail - we are building a set, not a carbon copy.

I was grateful for her time, and I would be even more grateful for her in-person tutoring in the coming weeks.



/Industry Examples

Trip to the little theatre, Swansea

Over reading week, Cara and I took a trip to the Little Theatre, in Swansea. I offered to show Cara how to get there when she mentioned she would be talking to one of the head-honchos. It was a strange day, as this theatre is how I got into scenic arts - I used to volunteer here every week with the shows they would put on.

It was really strange to come back as somebody academically versed in theatrical design ethos, but still being the same old volunteer they knew me as. We got to see all their prop stores, some of which had changed dramatically since I was there. We also were told about their practices in terms of prop sourcing and renting.

It was really nice to have the excuse to go back there - I've been out of the loop as they have not been able to carry on with business as usual since Covid. I plan to go back to volunteering with them as soon as possible.





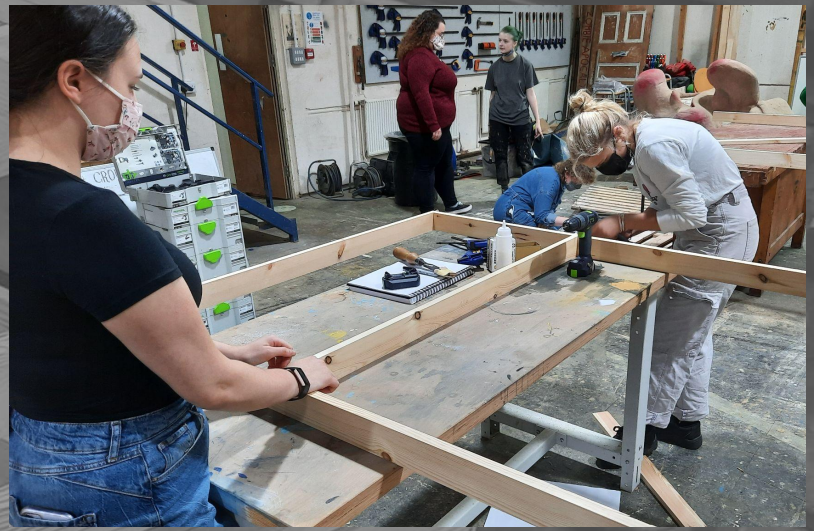
/Process

Building flats

Once the room dimensions had been thoroughly debated and agreed upon, we set about constructing the many flats required to execute the project - in the *hollywood* style, naturally. Though we had learned how to make flats last year, this would be our first time making flats that would actually be used by us. Therefore, it was important that we made them well.

Because the sheets of ply come at a standard 8x4 feet, we changed the dimensions of the rooms (initially planned in metric meters) so that we could best optimise each sheet.

I bounced around many of the groups during this stage, as we had recently lost two people from the course. The group I was initially part of was the largest one in terms of body count, so I used that to justify my traveller tendencies. On top of that, our individual groups had to act as one large group in order to get enough physical work done.





/Process

Building flats pt.2

Though many of the flats were identical in size and shape, some of them were unique for geographical objects like doors and windows.

We used the electric router to ‘trace’ around the plywood sheets once they had been stapled onto the frames.

This was the second time I would get something wrong and it come back to bite me further down the line. I could have saved myself lots of trouble designing around it had I just had a clearer design of the fireplace at this stage.

You see, my group (the angels that they are) kindly built the fireplace flat for me, and requested a dimension for the hole I would require in order for the rear of the prop to recede through it. I gave them a dimension, and they executed it well. This however locked certain aspects of the limitations into place, though I didn’t know it then.

Had I just asked for a higher dimension, the fireplace as we know it would have had a slightly different appearance, and a much easier installation.





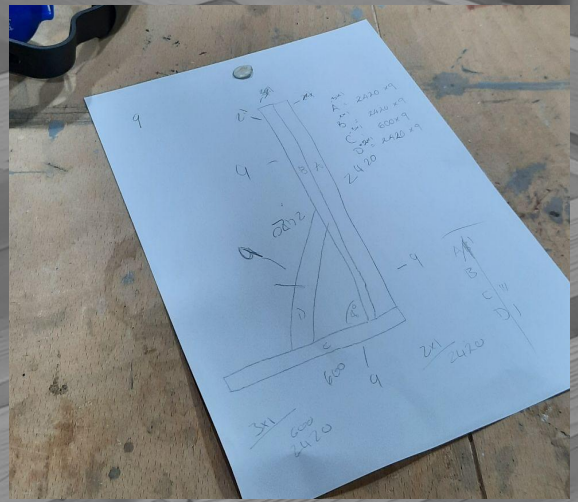
/Process

Building flats pt.3

With many of the flats complete, we also had to build supporting strut things. I did this with Rebecca.

It's strange to think about, but I definitely work better with people who I have had time to work with and observe before. If I know they do things a certain way, I can get used to that. However when somebody keeps surprising me with their methods it often throws me off. I probably have that effect on others too, in retrospect.

Perhaps too, it could be that because Rebecca and I had the chance to genuinely disagree over something last year, and clash slightly. I think that this made working with each other easier somehow? Or, at least, I hope so.







/Process

Building flats pt.4

Once mostly complete and cladded, the flats were ready to be raised and fastened to each other. This seemed simple in concept, but in reality it was a bit of a logistical nightmare.

David showed us a new piece of tech, a special toothed nut that allowed for flats to be bolted together. As opposed to regular nuts and bolts, this fastener allows for very accurate placement of the bolts, as opposed to a loose hole in the wood on its own. Using these special bits of hardware, we could marry each flat to its respective neighbour, fasten them together once flush, and then be able to take them apart and still have them come together in the exact same way they had once been.

One of the major problem solving activities for us was the application of these fasteners. Somebody had to hold the framer's square to the floor, while somebody else held the flat itself and somebody else again would have to use the drills and such. The difficult part was communicating once a few of these had been put up, as the flats themselves were blocking our voices! If I was to do this again, I would have some mutually agreed upon terminology to assist our communication.







I just want to say how much I like what is happening in this photo. Vanina has taken a photo, while somebody took a photo of her photo taking, and I took a photo of the two of them photographing each other by accident!

/Process

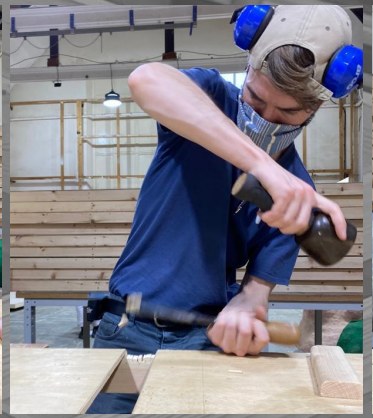
Building flats pt.5

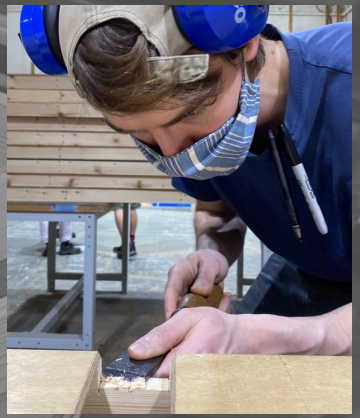
On a side note, George and Laurie designed a dado rail into their hallway, so they had to edit many flats in order to facilitate the facade using a moulded trim. I took part in this, as I have chisels and because I like doing joinery in any way shape or form.

They would use the rail saw to cut out the central strip on an angle, and I would come in and cut the notch for the moulding to fit into.

I felt very proud to be somebody that people thought of as useful enough to approach for a specific task. Additionally, I tried to be quick and efficient, and not waste time making surfaces pretty if they were not to be seen once complete.





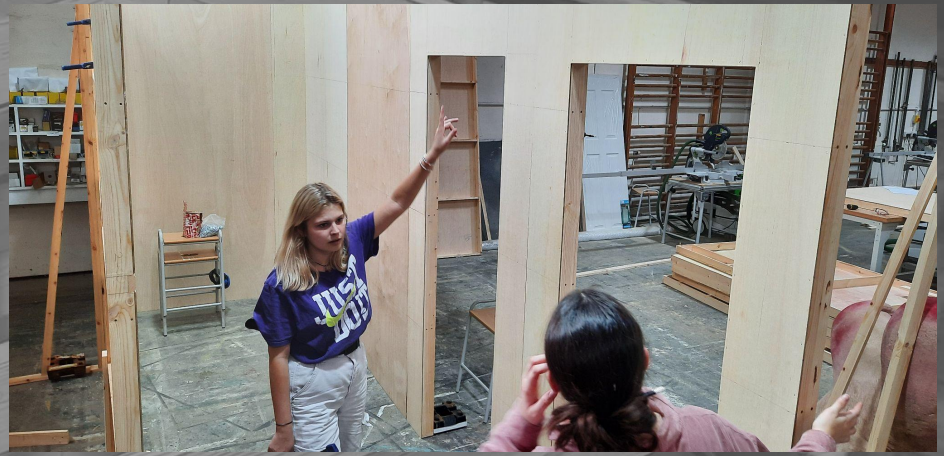




That's a confirmed double thumbs up from Cara, the overseer of this project.











/Process

Collaborative Tidbits

I try to help whenever I can, especially if it's not only a means of offering manual labour, but also imparting some knowledge that can greatly speed up the process. I like to imagine that when somebody else offers such knowledge to me, I am not reluctant to learn.

When Ellie was working on her toy alphabet blocks, I suggested she glue the two bits of scrap wood together to obtain the necessary cuboid - as opposed to cutting each one individually like she had planned. By utilizing this method, she was then able to use the jig attachment on the mitre saw to cut several perfectly identical cubes.

When George and Ellie were tasked with cutting the recesses for hinges in the doors, I showed them how to use a sharp chisel to do so. Also, by assembling some scraps into a notch for the door to seat in, I showed them how one could easily work on a door without a workbench. I hope this helps them out one day if they find themselves in a pickle with hanging a door.

On the day of the assessment, Laurie asked if I could whip up a small wooden cross for her. I obliged, as I was waiting for paint to dry at the time. I used a half lap joint on a scrap offcut - probably the thinnest half lap i've ever cut. Laurie did a spectacular job of ageing it, I must say. I think the little touches really make a difference when it comes to set decoration.











/Process

Fireplace build

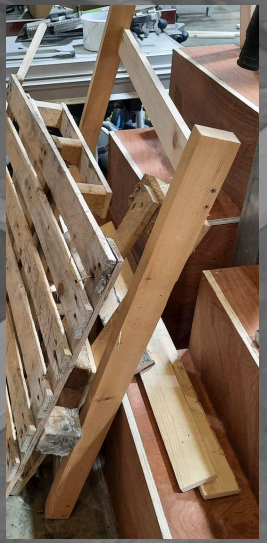
To start with, I made a simple wooden frame. When I made this frame, we had yet to have our first delivery of timber for the flats, so I had to scavenge around a bit in the workshop. Honestly, things felt pretty hopeless around this point.

Even after I whipped together the frame, I still had no clue how to move forwards with it. The frame was easy to execute as I knew the total dimensions and only had to skim the thickness of the cladding I planned to add later.

I managed to turn actual work into procrastination by consistently avoiding my own project while helping every other subgroup. You can see that it took me so long to actually make some head way that my frame got put to one side and additional abandoned projects were laid on top of it!? Not my proudest moment. Thankfully I did get ‘back in the saddle’ soon enough.







/Process

Fireplace build, pt2

After Freya confronted me about our total lack of fireplace, I could no longer avoid it and just jumped head first into trying to establish some basic shape.

The first major change to my original design was the depth of the mantlepiece, as I realised I could have a shorter hearth and still look good, if the legs and shelf were shallower. So that made my life easier, I no longer had to make the frame any thicker.

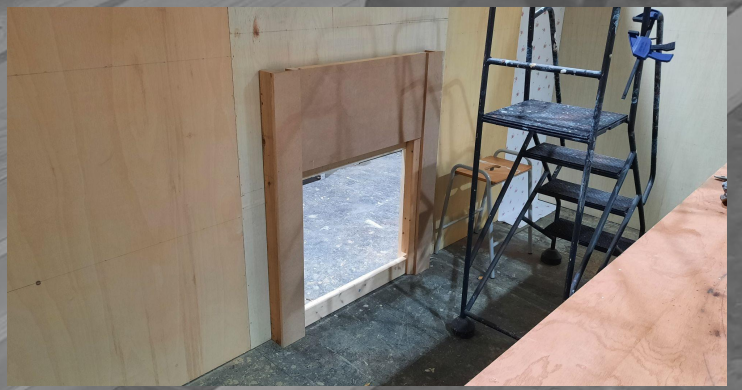
I ripped down some thick stock on the table saw to have a consistent angle that fitted the angles on my diagrams, and kept building up the skeleton into something I could clad ASAP.

Using different thicknesses of MDF sheet scraps, I covered the front. And just like that, the project became so much more approachable.













Using the electric router, I was able to execute some lovely grooves in the legs. I did this by utilizing the depth stop and the foot guide. For consistency I would cut the first cut on the first leg, then carry out the same maneuver on the adjacent leg. I must admit that MDF does work well as it lends itself to being shaped via machines.

By using a different router bit, I cut some lengths of MDF into mouldings that I then cut with precise angles to create the moulding trim around the top edge. This is probably the fanciest part of the whole prop in my opinion.

I've learned that I always need more moulding stock than I think I will.



After learning how to better operate the table saw, courtesy of Dave, I was able to do special cuts by taking away the riving knife. I needed to do this so that I could make cuts that did not protrude all the way through my timber, so I could create a reverse-fitting piece for the ‘feet’. This was necessary to have the moulding rest upon without being flimsy.







Now a freestanding object (almost), I could start dry-fitting the fireplace into its hole in the wall, and assembling the inner 'rib cage'. I simply cut some thick stock to be angled on both ends, and used screws and glue (and Cara's help) to fasten it together.

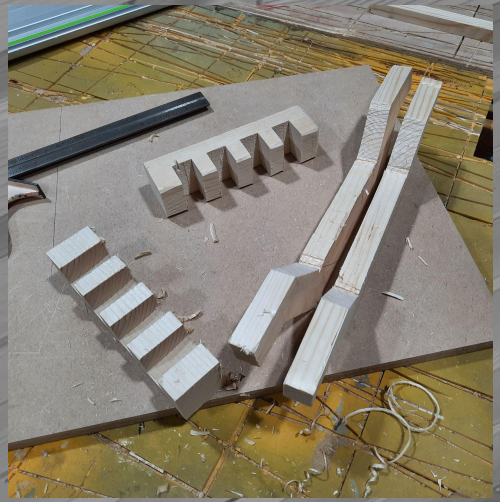
Once it was also clad with plywood, I set about trying to obtain the curve I was hoping for around the bottom beneath the firebox. This was stressful, as I have never tried bending sheet goods before. I blew through several different kinds of ply before I finally got something close to what I wanted. I clad the top with some more ply, but with a large hole cut into it, so that any light fixtures could be installed without fuss.

I also whipped together a quick grate, based off of the photos taken during my research phase. By employing Cara's helping hand (again), I was able to achieve this very quickly. And time was ticking.













The shelf and hearth were relatively simple and similar components, except the former needed mitred mouldings and the latter did not. This is because plywood on its own does not easily take a nice edge.











I cut some scraps down into strips to use as a trim for the tiles, and then tackled the most frustrating part of the build.

By using compound angles on the mitre saw, I cut some scrap wood into a very specific pyramid, that I then trimmed down on the table saw so I could use it as a means of obtaining an angle for the hood.

Then, by using trial and error, I cut bits of card down so that I could get just the right fit in the corners of the hood. This was not a straightforward process, and honestly I'm just glad it worked - I usually don't rely on trial and error in my work (honest!)





Before Cara and I could paint the fireplace, we sanded and filled in the holes left behind by various fasteners… and any gaps left by the cladding process.

This was a massive relief for me to do, as for a while I felt like I would not finish in time. I didn't want to let my group, or my class down.





/Process

Fireplace build, pt 9

With only a few days to go before the project had to be finished for review, Cara and I teamed up to paint the fireplace. Beth kindly lent a hand to show me some painting techniques, especially with the hearth - which to her credit turned out fantastic in my opinion. Since the tiles had to be fastened on with silicone, we would have to paint it first, as you can't stick anything to silicone except silicone.





I am massively thankful to Cara and Beth for helping me with the painting aspect of this project. Without them I am certain I would not only have missed the deadline, but also it would be to no way as high of a standard.

I'll admit that I was very proud of how it was coming together at this point.







/Process

Fireplace build, pt10

The hearth was a simple piece of plywood, with a mitred trim of pine to hide the endgrain.

With Beth's techniques of dragging a splintered flake of softwood along a heavy coat of the paint, we were able to achieve texture with minimal effort. Once that had dried we did what I can only describe as a 'dry brush' with darker and lighter hues. It's not perfect, but I think it's a great attempt at a slate effect.

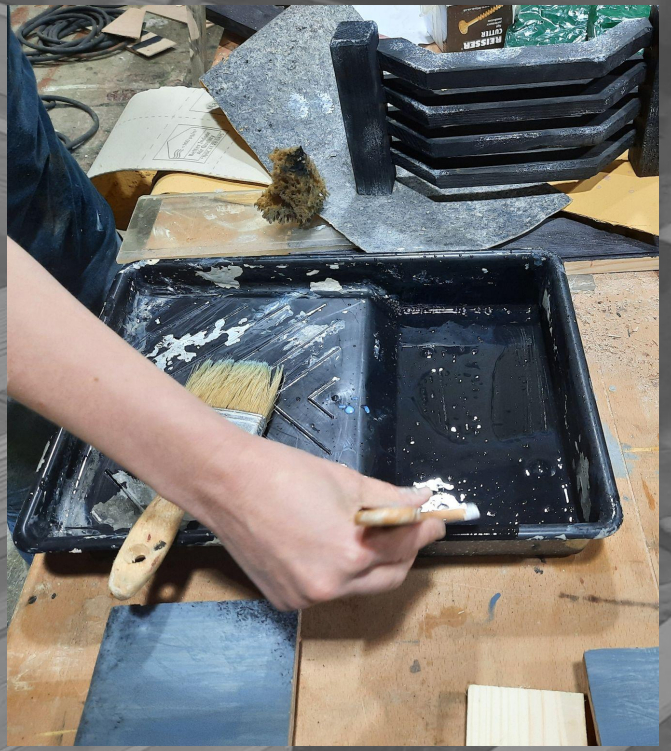
Another tiny detail I can proudly say I had the foresight to include, was the heavily bevelled edges that slate can have once machined. It's not the same as my source material, but I think it helps.



(Anon, 2021)







Beth showed me this product I unfortunately can't recall the name of, but she described it as a 'sophisticated PVA' - and we used it to make the surface of the hearth more uniform in its matt qualities. I feel like I've learned so much about painting in the two days I spent painting with Beth. Thank you.

/Process

Fireplace build, pt11

I siliconed the tiles into place, and painted the back of the firebox a beige tone to make it resemble firebricks. Beth gave me another great tip in the form of using a sponge to dab light and dark tones very sparsely to imitate ash, which I found very useful.

However John soon suggested I burn some paper in a metal bin outside to get real ash, and simply dust the hearth and firebox with it. I did just that, and I'm super pleased with the result. The way it looks once applied and then swept away astounds me.







Once in place, the fireplace looked great except for my use of beige. I felt it was too bright to accurately resemble look of aged firebricks that I was going for.

Only half an hour before the deadline, Stacey suggested I grey it down a bit, and the difference is staggering. I'm glad I did, and the finished product is one I'm proud to have made, especially since it was very much a collaboration between myself and my fellow classmates. And that's something I'm not normally known for taking part in.









Reflections

This project has been a behemoth of a task, for all of us. I am by no means any kind of professional, but the act of working with so many people has left me feeling much more competent. But above all else, I just feel grateful that I was able to partake in such a wonderful outcome, even if its only purpose was to challenge us, and allow us the opportunity to pretend we were making something that would really make it into a real film.

The most difficult part for me, was **committing** to the construction of the fireplace after I had built the initial frame. My group seemed so confident in me before I had made any of it, and though I know it came from a good place, the pressure kind of got to me. I know it was all in my head, but still. Another aspect I found incredibly difficult was understanding colour mixing with the paint. This probably comes as no surprise to some, as I've generally never dealt with mixing paint colours before. Next time I'll ask for help if I find myself struggling - I'm still so used to working alone from my previous construction projects and old habits die hard.

If I was to do this again, I would have been more open with my designs and plans. It did not seem like an issue when I began building, as the fireplace seemed like something I would exclusively be working on. However, I was wrong yet again, and like many things it was in fact a **collaborative** effort. By not sharing my ideas and drawings, Cara had to assume how things would go; leading to misunderstandings such as us having to paint over parts that had already been painted, ect. In future, I would also label my notes with dates, as that would have helped me piece together events much easier than having to read photo metadata.

During the whole project, the most rewarding aspect was seeing my contributions in other people's work- and knowing that their contributions were part of my work too. In the next project I would like to keep offering help, and perhaps be less reluctant to take help for myself. I need to remind myself that being a perfectionist can sometimes be an asset, but otherwise it just shuts people out of what can potentially be a much more fun, rewarding and diverse outcome.

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