OBJECTS IN MIND
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For Kyle
For your endless patience, unwavering support, and unconditional love
I would not have made it through this journey without you
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Daily distractions and interruptions are abundant and often cause anxiety, irritability, and impatience. The world is constantly in a battle for our attention making it difficult to be in one moment. Our continuous motion of both body and mind to combat these constant disturbances cause us to lose perspective, become quick to make judgments, and unable to recognize errors. We no longer take time to fully consider where our thoughts are leading, nor do we allow for a moment to let our thoughts go.

An object can promote open-minded thought by altering our perception or perspective of it, preventing automatic behavior, or letting our minds briefly wander. By engaging in this experience for a period of time, no matter how long it may last, we can briefly escape an overwhelming and overstimulating world. We are able to restore the mind to a state of possibility.
ATTENTION
I recently took a United flight to Chicago, Illinois to attend the wedding of two close college friends. As soon as I boarded the plane and had settled into my seat, I grabbed the SkyMall magazine and began flipping through the pages, waiting for takeoff. This has become a habit of mine in the past few years. I love exploring the mostly useless and unnecessary objects they sell to bored passengers. As usual, my attention was quickly divided as my traveling companion, Kyle, joined in and commented on how that hoverboard could never have enough power to hold a person and this infrared camera watch is only really good for selfies at night.

The next step in my flying ritual was to pull out the travel magazine and turn to the sudoku puzzles in the back. The first few were easy. Each number came to me as my eyes moved from one box to the next. As before, Kyle chose to participate. We worked together to finish the first game. Occasionally, I would completely lose focus as he would point at a space on the grid and call out a number until I agreed to mark it on the page. He grew tired of the puzzles before I even started the ‘medium’ level Sudoku. The next one was much harder. I only entered a few numbers before I needed to stop and strategize my next move. Each digit took longer to find than the last. Eventually, I found my mind wandered to other things. School. The wedding. My wedding. The man snoring down the aisle. How much I like this new pen. My eyes kept focusing back into the puzzle, but it didn’t take long for me abandon the unfinished game and move on to the third exercise to see if it could keep my interest. Again, the numbers flowed onto the page.

Although it was also labeled ‘medium,’ I was surprised at the ease with which I could complete the entire thing. It wasn’t enough to lead me to the fourth and final puzzle. There was only an hour or so left and there were a few things I planned on accomplishing while in the air, so I put the magazine back into its pocket behind the seat in front of me. I took a deep breath and paused for a moment to refocus my thoughts to the new task at hand before pulling a notebook from underneath the seat.
A MOMENT

Attention
Our lives are filled with many distractions and an overwhelming amount of perceptual information, even in a dull and isolating scenario such as sitting in an aircraft for several hours. We are able to cope with this constant input by attending to different levels of attention. According to the clinical model of Sohlberg and Mateer, there are five of these levels; focused attention, sustained attention, selective attention, alternating attention, and divided attention. Each of these states of attention allows us to filter, ignore, or focus on information as needed. In this particular event, my flight began with selective attention, which is the ability to focus on one activity in the midst of several\footnote{1} or “the ability to avoid distractions from both external and internal stimuli.”\footnote{2} As other passengers boarded the plane and took their seats, I was able to ignore their movement and any distracting worries while my thoughts were directed towards the pages of the SkyMall magazine.

\begin{quote}
“WHEN YOU PAY ATTENTION TO BOREDOM, IT BECOMES UNBELIEVABLY INTERESTING.”
\end{quote}

Jon Kabat-Zinn
Selective attention is often mistaken for focused attention which is “basic responding to stimuli,” rather than “freedom from distractibility.” Once Kyle joined in, my attention easily shifted from selective to somewhat divided as I engaged in conversation while simultaneously reading product descriptions, examining accompanying images, and flipping through each of the pages. Through divided attention, I was able to attend and respond to two stimuli at once. Alternating attention is the “capacity for mental flexibility that allows individuals to shift their focus of attention and move between tasks with different cognitive requirements, thus controlling what information will be selectively processed.”

Once I was fully immersed in the first Sudoku puzzle for a period of time without allowing outside distractions to break my focus, I was using sustained attention. According to the clinical model, sustained attention, also known as concentration, occurs when a person is able to “maintain a consistent behavioral response during continuous and repetitive activity.” As the numbers became more difficult to find, the novelty of the game wore off along with my motivation and this form of focus was gradually lost. The sounds on the plane, personal stresses and worries, Kyle’s occasional movement in the seat next to me. Each of these elements of involuntary attention accumulated until my concentration was broken. Although my attention could have been renewed on the puzzles, a change in the activity or context would need to occur for any focus to be long-standing.
I DON'T GET IT. I just need to sit in here & focus. Tears are welling up. Something's off.

I remember... "Prove it!" Someone's going to give me shit for leaving. I was just like, "Prove it!" I used to get up around 4. They figured that out. Takes care of everyone else. Your dad sent these to you. We would push ourselves until we pass out. I don't know.

Oh, okay. Did she get punished in any way? They don't usually go down that path. Do you want to tell me something? It's really should be a little bit. He brings all these different animals.

You're very busy. So we know where she might be now? They may have eliminated those that were less... Well I'll tell you something.

I've done it. When the weather gets good.

Last night I was thinking. I imagine there is a strict limitation. We don't really know that much about her past. Least that's what he told me. 80's is sooo... new. International friendships nudged.

More time on one subject. You're not going to notice.
As I sit in a small, cozy cafe on the corner of Thomas and North Main on cloudy afternoon, I find it difficult to ignore the constant chatter throughout the room. The continuous conversations from each of about a dozen tables, the sounds of clanging dishes and rattling silverware in the kitchen, the shuffling of hurried feet past my table, an occasional ring from the register as each customer completes their order. The sounds of the world melded into a confused unity and I quickly became overwhelmed and overstimulated, preventing the search for a moment of balanced focus on one thought, one conversation. With a deep breath I actively shifted my attention from its division amongst the abundance of noise and movement and directed it towards the individual conversations held beside me. Once I had complete control of my attentional capabilities, interesting words, phrases, and conversations made their way to the surface.
The Piega Cabinet by Katrina Ennamorato is a visually engaging cabinet intended to fool the viewer with mysterious, captivating forms. A variety of facets cover the piece, simulating the appearance of crumpled paper. Selective attention is triggered as the eye moves between a series of “folds, creases, and overlayed forms,” each one feeding into the illusion of the next.

With a shift towards a more directed attention on the object, a seam becomes evident, breaking up the smooth, even surfaces, and leads towards a hidden drawer pull, formed by what appears to be an opening between two pleats. A thought-provoking interaction between user and object is created as each of these subtle details create a stimulating and satisfying object without overwhelming its appearance and confusing its nature.
Piega Cabinet by Katrina Ennamorato
I spent one warm, Saturday afternoon this past summer exploring Block Island by bicycle where I discovered Mohegan’s Bluff, a 150 foot cliff located near one corner of the island, just shy of the South-East Lighthouse. At the bottom of several winding staircases on the side of the precipice, I found a popular, white, sandy beach. A variety of rock formations were scattered around the shoreline and sprinkled into the water. All across the cove, visitors had piled pebbles onto rocks onto boulders to create small towers that protruded vertically from the ground. There was one spot in particular that seemed slightly out of place, an area where thousands of small, colorful pebbles had been gathered and piled onto the picturesque beach.

There were so many of them and they were so small that each time a wave washed over the collection, a few were nudged loose and dragged by the water across the others. With this came a wonderful, mesmerizing sound, reminiscent of a rain stick I used to play with as a child. I could hear each pebble flow with the water and hit one after the other. Occasionally, a wave would be strong enough to push the tiny rocks as it came in only to pull them back as it retreated into the ocean. The combination of this sound with the crashing of the waves in the distance was captivating in the way leaves gently rustling in the wind keep my attention far longer than expected. Although the beach was covered with close to a hundred visitors, each engaging in a range of activities, I was completely immersed in this satisfying and peaceful moment created by the simple pleasure of pebbles dragging in a wave.
A MOMENT Attention
There are several ways in which attention can be restored on a task. However, the most beneficial method of recovering any attentional capabilities is merely taking time to let our focus go. According to the Attention Restoration Theory, through soft fascinations and periods of involuntary or effortless attention such as the mesmerizing sound of the pebbles on the beach, we are able to concentrate more effectively on future tasks by essentially restoring our attentional capabilities. This psychological theory was developed by Rachel and Stephen Kaplan in the 1980’s to explain the benefits of spending time in nature, which is abundant with the prospect for peaceful moments. Their research in ‘The Experience of Nature: A Psychological Perspective,’ explains that attention is separated into two categories; involuntary attention and voluntary or directed attention. In involuntary attention, effort is not required and our attention is captured by “inherently intriguing or important stimuli,” whereas in voluntary attention, we are engaged in a sustained or directed attention.

There are several states within these categories including directed attention fatigue, effortless attention and restored attention. Using voluntary attention on a task requires mental effort and concentration. After a prolonged period of this focused state, we tend to experience directed attention fatigue which can cause easy distractibility, irritability, impatience and less effectiveness at the task at hand. However, when a task is fascinating or intrinsically motivating, it calls on involuntary attention. Through exposure to involuntary attention, such as rustling leaves or babbling brooks, our voluntary attentional capacity is allowed to recover as we are removed from the distractions involved in day to day life.
A GATEWAY
We cannot move into a new state of mind without some form of motivation or stimuli that causes this shift and focuses our attention. In this book, the objects presented act as a gateway themselves into different possibilities of thought. Each piece exhibits particular elements that make it possible to create this pathway, including simplicity from overwhelming distractions and a connection with the user through familiarity, satisfying tactile elements, and visual cues.
It is often assumed that in order to draw attention, an object should be loud, colorful, multi-functional, extreme, eccentric, never been seen before, technologically advanced, unusually big or abnormally small. Several companies and designers seem to have chosen to reject the importance of clarity. They develop products with a myriad of non-essential features or bizarre and unfamiliar forms in order to be labeled as cutting-edge or innovative. James Dyson has a habit of covering his devices with extraneous, plastic parts that appear to serve no truly beneficial function. Karim Rashid coats his organic and unusual forms with a vibrant and almost neon palette that could never be ignored. Even legos have gone from simple blocks consisting of only a few colors and shapes, to elaborate sets of anything from a ranch style family home to the Portal of Atlantis complete with over 1000 pieces.
In a world where everything seems to scream, “look at me,” combined with an abundance of multifunction, a pure and direct object can be even more captivating, one that states what it does, where it belongs and who it belongs to in a reserved, but clear voice. There are many past design movements that have been a reaction to this recurring problem. One of the most notable being in the 1980’s when Dieter Rams became concerned with “an impenetrable confusion of forms, colors and noises” and wrote 10 well-known principles on good design. While I wholeheartedly believe in the principles he set, in the context of this book, the simplicity found in each object is in service of eliminating distractions, both visual and functional, in order to create a path or gateway to open-minded thought.

Many similar movements believe that a simplified aesthetic should be created for the purpose of utility, however here it refers to the same modesty in an object that is familiar and logical in order to engage the audience’s senses. In this context, an attention is requested through simple yet captivating elements of familiarity with a tactile or visual twist to create a moment of mindfulness that would not otherwise be found. An awareness emerges by the absence of distraction and complexity with the presence of fascination and clarity.
“THE CANVAS ISN’T EMPTY. IT’S FULL OF WHATEVER YOU IMAGINE IT TO BE FULL OF.”

Jared Kintz
The ultimate form of simplicity that we come across everyday is the basic, blank, white sheet of paper. It does not demand any extra attention nor is it burdened by excessive features. However, it promotes a freedom to explore, question and create.

What would the object equivalent of this look like? Perhaps it is simple, understated and appears unfinished. It is plain, without extra frills and its function is clear upon first glance. It is effortless and almost fades and disappears into a room. There is not much conversation to be had because it is so agreeable, so familiar, so bare. It is nothing.

On the other hand, maybe the object is exciting and stimulating. It is begging for someone to interact with it, to alter it, to transform it into anything else. The potential is endless and paralyzing. It could be a chair, a table, maybe both. It is completely open to interpretation, customization, imagination. It is anything and everything.
Forming a bond with an object is an important aspect in affecting mindsets. Without a connection between user and object, without an interest in engaging with the piece, a gateway can never be revealed. For this reason, each of the works contained in this book are functional objects designed to live in the home. They are created to be interacted with on a daily basis so as to become an essential part of everyday life. An object can then have the most connection and impact because it becomes familiar, accessible, and relatable. In any other context, such as a gallery, we have certain predetermined ideas about how we should be viewing or interacting with the piece. We are already in a heightened state of awareness. In that condition, we are expecting to have our mindsets shifted, whereas in the home, we are generally complacent about the objects we live with. In the same respect, when constantly in a state of directed or focused attention, as in a gallery, we cannot achieve a level of effortless attention that allows us to let our thoughts go.
As a level of interaction or engagement is crucial for a connection to be formed, so are visual cues. Without a discernible language that invokes invitation, the possibilities of engaging with the object may be ignored and its value inadvertently overlooked. This visual communication and intuitiveness of an object is an important aspect of design that is often neglected.

Another way to connect with the user is catering to the never ending quest for moments of enjoyment. Many people create these moments through adrenaline rushes such as skydiving and bungee jumping, whereas others find it in reading a book, playing a game, or spending a night on the town. While these are all gratifying experiences, a sense of pleasure can also be found while engaging in small, satisfying, tactile occurrences. The sensation of opening a zipper, feeling each tooth as it separates from its mate. Flipping a warm pillow onto the other side to feel the refreshing, cool, soft touch against bare skin. These gratifying instances bring us closer to a moment. They engage us and allow us to briefly toss out distractions or interruptions. For this reason, satisfying elements are crucial to creating a “gateway.” When in an object, they produce a moment of connection through joy.
There is a familiarity in the horizontally spaced vertical lines of the simple barcode pasted on the opposing page. It can be found on almost everything, often going completely unseen. But on this blank page it is mysterious, exciting, and unexpected. It is clearly a language, an explanation, but it is unknown. A message for someone else at another time. It could be a request to explore, a memo left behind, or the key to unlock untold secrets. It is a visual cue that there is more to this plain sheet of paper than meets the eye. It is a bridge, a gateway, a proposition to reinterpretation, imagination, and wonder.

The works in this book have their own ‘barcodes,’ recognizable elements as subtle invitations to search for an interaction. These mysterious hints corral different levels of attention and give permission to investigate and analyze the object without overwhelming the viewer with something completely unknown. They calmly ask for consideration and request inquiry. They promote a new mindset in the viewer by creating a moment to reconsider perceptions and perspectives while opening the mind and allowing it to wander into new places.
MINDFULNESS
“WHEN YOU NOTICE NEW THINGS, WHAT HAPPENS IS THAT IT PUTS YOU IN THE PRESENT—ODDLY, EVERYBODY SAYS WE SHOULD BE IN THE PRESENT, BUT WHEN WE ARE NOT IN THE PRESENT, WE ARE NOT THERE TO KNOW WE ARE NOT THERE. THIS IS THE WAY TO BE THERE. YOU NOTICE NEW THINGS, THEN THAT MAKES YOU MORE SENSITIVE TO CONTEXT AND PERSPECTIVE.”

Ellen Langer
Our lives are often stuck in fast-forward. Our minds are constantly jumping from one thought to the next, never taking a moment to stop and reflect. We feel the need to put everything on a stopwatch, filling every moment of every day to avoid being classified as lazy and useless. This constant movement of mind and body is a hindrance to our productivity and our ability to digest new information. Without taking time to look around and be in the present, we miss important details. We are overwhelmed, overstimulated, distracted, and impatient, causing us to become quick to make judgments and unable to recognize errors.

By living a more mindful life, we become more aware of this rush. We are able to slow down and take time to actively pay attention to the present moment, allowing us to form a stronger understanding of our perceptions, the perspective of others and context. Ellen Langer, who is often referred to as the ‘mother of mindfulness,’ has defined one of the dominant Western approaches to the concept she refers to as the psychology of possibility. Although it was originally a Buddhist practice, she considers mindfulness to be a psychological state that can be achieved without the act of meditation or yoga. In her approach, she describes it as a “heightened state of involvement and wakefulness.” It is “the simple act of noticing things.”

A number of psychological studies on the effects of mindfulness have proven that it can help alleviate pain and anxiety as well as aid in coping with depression and drug addiction. Through practicing mindfulness, we become more in control of our thoughts and therefore less stressed, more focused, and more understanding. We can tune out unnecessary distractions and focus on what is truly important. Mindfulness is recognizing how we unconsciously process information and finding a way of managing our inner chatter. It is “the process of actively noticing new things, relinquishing preconceived mindsets, and then acting on the new observations.”
One recent evening while sitting at home, complacently perusing various websites from our comfortable couch, Kyle asked from across the room what I would like for brunch the next day. As is routine with most couples when confronted with this question, I responded with “I don’t know... what do you feel like?” He paused for a moment, considering the options, and replied, “what about a vegetarian pizza covered with fried eggs and bacon?” I immediately gave him a befuddled look, trying to imagine one of the Digiorno pizza’s from our freezer topped with savory eggs and bacon. It sounded so unusual. Why? I had heard of breakfast pizza before and was not one to shy away from new food experiences. I was in a mindless state at that moment. I was briefly unable to see past the categories I had subconsciously placed each of those food items. That particular pizza was supposed to be for dinner. Eggs and bacon are for breakfast and brunch. Why would you ever mix the two? Had I continued with this mindless train of thought, refusing to remove these predetermined labels and experience what seemed alien at that moment, I would have missed out on what turned into a magnificent meal.
“ONCE YOU’VE SEEN THERE IS ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE, YOU CAN NEVER NOT SEE THAT THERE’S ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW.”

Ellen Langer
In order to fully understand mindfulness, it is important to be able to recognize its counterpart, mindlessness. Mindlessness is a powerful and destructive state defined as “an inactive state of mind characterized by reliance on distinctions and categories drawn in the past.” Ellen Langer has described three ways in which we enter this state that are crucial in understanding the nature of mindlessness.

The first aspect of mindlessness is “entrapment by category.” Categories or distinctions are an important aspect in our knowledge and experience of the world. They are a way of formulating a picture of what we know. Masculine or feminine, success or failure, young or old. While these classifications are an important part of life, they are generally too heavily relied on. The inability to look beyond categories or to create new ones is a mindless act. We are trapped by what we think we know to be true.

A second cause of mindlessness is automatic behavior often caused by repetition or routine. There are two ways in which this transpires. The first occurring when we have acted through the same routine long enough that our minds switch to ‘autopilot’. The process has become so familiar to us, that we have become numb to them. The second way is by becoming an expert and have learned a skill until it becomes second nature so that it no longer requires directed attention. While engaging in these automatic behaviors, because we are not consciously paying close attention to our actions, we are not engaged in the moment and miss important signals, leading to errors.

The final form of mindlessness is when we are acting from a single perspective or context. This facet is similar to the first in that it is caused when we are trapped by what we know or a rigid set of rules. Different exposures to the world has given each of us particular mindsets. We become mindless when we lock ourselves into those mindsets and a single understanding of information. Through this entrapment, we are unable to identify an alternate perspective or context.
There are many ways in which an object can promote awareness and possibilities of thought, including changing our predefined perception of a material. One example being the use of vinyl blinds in a floor lamp. By presenting the material in an unconventional fashion, the viewer is forced to reconsider fixed ideas. If trapped in a state of mindlessness, still controlled by predefined distinctions, they may only ever consider blinds as blinds. When experienced in only a single context with one, unconditional label, materials and objects become stagnant. They have no other existence but the one that is known. Once taken out of that context and certainty, their potential can be limitless. By relocating the familiar vinyl slats from a set of window blinds to an engaging lamp, the assumptions previously made about not only the original object itself, but the material it uses, are broken down. This in turn invokes a mindfulness in other objects and surroundings.
AN EXERCISE

Mindfulness
Through a delightful tactile experience and a short moment of ‘aha,’ Annie Evelyn’s Squishy Chairs embody mindfulness by creating a connection with the user and evoking a new sense of perspective. Before physically touching the seating surface, it looks unpleasant and uninviting. However, a moment of surprise arises when the user first sits, realizing that the chair’s harsh appearance is a facade and it is in fact ‘squishy.’ What appeared to be unforgiving actually gives way to the sitter’s weight to reveal an unexpected comfort. The use of small pieces intricately placed together on top of an elastic material create a satisfying, tactile experience while forcing the user to reconsider their assumption of the object.
AN OBJECT

Mindfulness

Squishy Chairs by Annie Evelyn
THE WANDERING MIND
As I sit at my once white studio desk, I can hear the hum of city traffic through the large, gridded window behind by back. Every few seconds a couple clicks and the scrolling of a mouse emerge from the silence. The sounds of rustling paper and tapping keys subtly fill the air. The occasional rolling of a chair or opening and closing of a drawer disrupt the white noise and bring my awareness back into this space.

The light in the room shifts ever so slightly as clouds pass in the sky. I am reminded of the unfinished project sitting next to me. An exploration in the shadows created by blocking light emitted from a round, clear bulb. In this early state, I am working with a store bought table lamp whose body is decorated with a variety of turned, metal parts. Earlier this week I had attempted to remove these distracting frills, but discovered they were essential to connecting everything together. So now, the vertical element on which the bulb is secured leans dramatically to the side. My mind begins to jump through different possibilities and opportunities for the now distorted lamp.

Someone walks in, their heels clicking on the linoleum floor. I listen as the door shuts and they begin to walk through the room. Their steps are soft but quickly increase in volume with proximity to my desk. The clicking halts just three spaces from mine and I hear an enthusiastic, “hi!” I place my hands on the edge of the table, lift my feet off the floor and push back.
A MOMENT

The Wandering Mind
“I AM NOT ABSENTMINDED. IT IS THE PRESENCE OF MIND THAT MAKES ME UNAWARE OF EVERYTHING ELSE.”

G.K. Chesterton
So what happens when your mind is not present? When we are not “actively noticing things,” where does it go? A constant heightened state of awareness of the moment and the world is unsustainable. In the past, mind-wandering has been regarded as unproductive and infantile, but according to Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert and Matthew A. Killingsworth in their study including 2,250 volunteers, we are engaged in this state approximately 46.9% of the time. For nearly half of our days, we are not occupied in this world, but rather our thoughts are somewhere else. As it turns out, this process is much less mindless than had been originally thought.

Based on recent research, there is a strong correlation between mind-wandering and creativity. A study conducted by Jonathan Schooler showed that individuals who are consistently engaged in this process also tend to score much higher on tests measuring creativity. He notes that “mind-wandering seems to be very useful for planning and creative thought. It seems that allowing people an incubation period in which to let their mind wander, really helps with the creative process.” When our thoughts are not allowed time to wander, to reflect, it causes errors in mindlessness. We are unable to recognize insights and possibilities of thought.

The mind can wander many places, taking us through mundane activities or deep into imagination. This act is not only beneficial as a process of restoration, but also a form of combating mindlessness, providing a new sense of perspective and context. The objects presented in this book explore moving the wandering mind into a wondering one.
“AHA MOMENTS DON’T COME FROM A DIRECTED AND PARTICULAR FOCUS ON A TASK, BUT BY LETTING YOUR MIND WANDER AND OPEN UP TO OTHER POSSIBILITIES.”

Scott Barry Kaufman
Although allowing our minds to wander for a period of time can stimulate creativity, it is only beneficial if we are able to recognize that we are disappearing down the rabbit hole. Another study conducted by Jonathan Schooner revealed that those who were unable to perceive their own mind-wandering do not show an increase in creativity. It is important to maintain a sense of meta-awareness, or being conscious of awareness, so that we can take note of the moment and any ingenuity that may come. We should to be able to recognize a new sense of mindfulness when it is presented.
The ‘Display Away Cabinet’ by Stine Krudsen Aas is a unique adaptation of the ‘display’ cabinet. Rather than using clear glass to present the objects inside, it features a frosted glass front to abstract them. As we no longer put as much emphasis on traditional housewares like fine china in today’s society, this cabinet is a compelling way to take a familiar, conventional furnishing and transform it into something much more relevant. By simply altering the materials used the items placed inside create an interesting and mysterious composition.

The treatment of these objects, reminiscent of abstracted shadows cast by a soft, ambient light source, emphasizes their form and gives them a beauty that may otherwise be overlooked. The cabinet allows the viewer’s mind to wander by providing a new perspective on ordinary, everyday items that rarely gain such directed attention. The door almost seems to create a gateway to an alternate reality where commonplace is beautiful and unexpected.
OBJECTS IN MIND
It starts with an experience. One that draws new thoughts to the surface, chosen from a memory or a sparked moment of attention. A remembered childhood game, a sudden change in light, the unintended use of an object, or even a wobbly chair. From that instance of inspiration, questions emerge. What about this moment draws attention? Can it be dissected and recreated? Where does it lead us? When are such experiences most valuable and how can they be applied to our lives?

Questions must continue to be asked when creating an object intended to alter a sense of awareness. It is a vital step in guaranteeing a greater connection with its future audience and ensuring its intention is not lost. Once the object is created, if done correctly, the questions are never ending. They leave the viewer to reconsider the object, what it does and what it could do.
A neutral and calming charcoal fabric envelopes the cushioned seat of an asymmetric lounge chair. Slight eye movements are suggested across the surfaces by a subtle straight-grained texture embedded into the textile. Each upholstered piece curves over the separate arms and back, creating a comfortable sanctuary within the external wooden cradle.
A gap appears between the pillowy forms, just inches above the seat, perfectly sized for the end of a foot to peek through. One lowered armrest and a little extra width implies a particular flexibility within the chair. Both legs may be effortlessly flung over the side, folded in the center, or comfortably tucked underneath. Such a freedom from restriction allows the embrace of an undisturbed moment of restoration where thoughts are free to flow and worries are left behind.
An X marks the spot. Clearly placed in the center of the stool. Four legs are joined together directly beneath the seat before separating and splaying out at a playful angle towards the ground. They meet and intersect once again at the base of the stool, reflecting the cross from above. Each element is clean, precise, and straightforward, creating a light, inviting form with a vague familiarity. The top leans ever so slightly to one side as if to suggest this is no ordinary seat. With a light tap, the entire form rocks from side to side and an alternate function becomes evident.
Several facets located at the base allow for an unusual, but satisfying tilt and pivot as weight is shifted around or away from the center. The gentle sway is noticeable at first, reminiscent of the wobble in an uneven chair or a childhood toy. Gradually, the motion becomes soothing, meditative, and effortless, leaving the outside world in its place.
A room is divided, separated by a network of flat surfaces and energetic colors. The array of various shapes reaches high and wide, filling the space with familiar geometries found in the form of skewed squares and six-sided polygons. Each end of the formation consists of a series of leaning wooden panels colliding into one another at opposing angles. Their shadows form the facade of a column of folds as they are cast beneath the facets.
The structure appears to be separated into a pattern of hexagonal compartments, outlined by intersecting beveled edges and intended to create a space for display. Each section perfectly fits with those beside it, bringing to mind the process of laying a series of bricks or the tessellations of a geometric puzzle. They appear to have been stacked together, allowing a variety of configurations and color combinations to alter the framework's created environment.
With a closer look, the illusion of a familiar three-dimensional form appears within each six-sided segment. The cubic guise is further emphasized by an opening in the back of each section, peering through to the other side. A space that is often overlooked, that within a shelf, is set in a new light, no longer ignored. The visuals created by simple and recognizable forms and colors give this seemingly ordinary object more consideration and depth.
Four square tubular legs lead vertically from the ground to an unusual wooden top, partially inset into the satin steel structure. Several containers hang underneath the architecture, each a different size and depth. Thin acrylic rectangles of a slightly opaque white are tiled onto the horizontal surface, held in place by a frame of pale ash. Five mysterious pops of light blue hazily emanate through, seeming to implicate something hidden beneath.
With a gentle push, the pieces slide, glide, and shift in a sequential pattern, creating a sensation reminiscent of a childhood puzzle. As a space is filled by one rectangle, consequently a new one is created. Each move is different, leading to another arrangement, another opening, another possibility, and removing any prospect of automatic behavior. A variety of shapes and compositions are created, dependent on the position to which the pieces are relocated.
As a series of calculated moves push the tiles into the right position, a square chamber is revealed beneath them. Just as it seems each secret within the object has been discovered, another compartment revealed contains more than meets the eye. A deeper cavern is exposed, altering assumptions that had already been made of it and leaving the viewer to reconsider their previous thoughts and actions.
Matte, white, ceramic shapes protruding and tiled upon a wall. Each one carefully placed beside the other, composing a pleasant gridded pattern on the underutilized, vertical surface. The shadows stretching over the organic curves emphasize their forms, allowing a familiarity to emerge. Ordinary everyday objects have been sectioned off and veiled, as if by a blanket of snow. As their bodies seamlessly blend into the flat plane behind them, they are forcing a closer look and a deeper consideration. Are these forms emerging from the wall, stretching to escape, or are they fading in, disappearing and allowing their details to slip away and dissolve into the background?
An opening is located within each tile, just where you would expect, reassuring that even though the familiar vessels are not what they once were, they do not forget their intrinsic purpose. The objects’ distortion of comforting forms raises questions about a dichotomy between the familiar and the unknown, the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional, the vague and the specific.

As a series of moves pushing the tiles sequentially into the right position, a square chamber is revealed beneath them. Just as it seems each secret within the object has been discovered, another compartment revealed contains more than meets the eye. A deeper cavern is exposed, altering assumptions that had already been made of it and leaving the viewer to reconsider their previous thoughts and actions.
The silhouette of a traditional pendant light hangs down from a round, wooden dome. A sparse array of thin, white strips curve and bend to outline an open volume at the end of a brushed aluminum rod. A warm light fills the form and pours through the open spaces. A small wooden knob caps the end and solicits an interaction. As the handle is turned, each delicate strip twists and tightens around a central axis, perfectly synchronized. They begin to squeeze together and as what was once the broadest point closes, the light is wrung out of the object, dimming the room. With the simple twist of the wrist as the spaces close and the warm glow darkens, the revolved body is completely inverted and closed into the form of an hourglass.
If it were the light of a candle, one would fear it smothered out, but with a twist in the opposing direction, the form swells and expands as if inhaling. Dilating, the spaces between the strips expand, allowing the light to once again escape and fill the room. Such a slight interaction causing an unexpected and drastic metamorphosis challenges perceptions and awareness; that simply turning a knob can effectively stoke or smother the glow.
At first glance it appears to be a simple, stand alone unit with a unique, decorative pattern carved into the face and sides. The angled lines wrapping around the form are unusual for a traditional piece and entice a sense of curiosity, the need for further investigation. A small, triangular tab protruding from the front appears as though the door has been folded down at one corner, hinting towards something familiar, a conspicuous handle. A small moment of uncertainty arises when the door seems to bend and break as the wooden flap is pulled open.
With each gentle tug, a new layer peels back and releases from the body. The surface treatment swiftly reveals its true nature. As the segments gently fold, one on top of the other, they are stopped every forty-five degrees by the beveled edges. A small, but functional shelf is revealed in the interior as the door wraps around one side and is held in place by a light magnetic pull. As the sections are softly unraveled from the right side, all seven distorted geometric shapes create a satisfying click as they are pushed back into place on the front of the cabinet. A short, melodic scale is created by the changing tone of each piece as they decrease in size and snap onto the frame.
For a fleeting moment, a directed attention is guaranteed on this object. Through an unexpected and satisfying tactile experience, the original assumptions of the piece are proven false. Day to day distractions are briefly blocked from thought and the investigator is left to question how and why. The mind briefly wanders away from the object, into the moment, and into wonder.


5 Cognitive Rehabilitation: An Integrative Neuropsychological Approach edited by McKay Moore Sohlberg, Catherine A. Mateer

6 ibid


10 “Hard fascination is very intense, rivets one's attention, and leaves little room left over for thinking. Soft fascination has two components. First, its intensity is moderate, sufficient to hold attention effortlessly but not so intense as to preclude reflection. Second, settings that evoke soft fascination are aesthetically pleasing...” Herzog, Thomas R., Andrea M. Black, Kimberlee A. Fountaine, and Deborah J. Knotts. "Reflection And Attentional Recovery As Distinctive Benefits Of Restorative Environments." Journal of Environmental Psychology 17.2 (1997): 165-70. Web.

12 ibid


18 ibid


21 ibid


24 “The point is that it's not enough to simply daydream. Letting the mind drift off is the easy part. What's much more difficult (and more important) is maintaining a touch of meta-awareness, so that if you happen to come up with a useful new idea while in the shower or sitting in traffic you're able to take note; the breakthrough isn't squandered.” “The Importance of Mind-Wandering.” Wired.com. Conde Nast Digital, n.d. Web. 05 Feb 2015.

25 ibid