



Small objects of desire

Are you sitting comfortably?

THEO ZAMENOPOULOS:

I have a rather active life, but nevertheless, a large part of my day involves some form of sitting. In Western societies, we rarely sit on the floor. Sitting is supported by various forms of structures, chairs, stools, benches, or bean bags. Sometimes it is very hard to imagine all the various places and locations where I sit during the day. It is indeed very hard to work out how much time I spend sitting down.

Block 1 explores various types of chairs, or seats, but only as an entry point in this vast world of designs and design processes. Let me say a few words about the content of this block by describing my favourite seat.

I really like this bench. It is just an old trunk that has been carved quite ambiguously into a seat, but, also, it is a sculpture. The shape of this seat really reflects the shape of my body, creating a comfortable feeling and supporting quite well my back. It is also very thoughtfully placed in this location, so you have a very nice view.

The core design idea, which is a cross between a bench and a sculpture, with these nice animal forms on the side, make clear association with nature around us but also triggers emotions and feelings of playfulness and innocence. Maybe the material itself, the wood, contributes to this warm feeling.

This is the beauty of design. We relate to designs physically, as we touch them or rest on them. But we also relate to design psychologically as designs trigger our emotions, feelings, and sometimes memories. And that is through their form, their colours, or materials. In fact, designs are cultural objects. For instance, in societies like Japan, sitting on the floor is much more common.

In this block you will learn how to look around you with a critical and inquisitive eye, trying to discover all these little factors that influence the creation of design, whether these are related with the human body, psychology, culture, or indeed the engineering of the object. This is the main message that I would like you to take away from this block.

But in order to develop this inquisitive and critical eye, you will need another skill. You will need the ability to think not only with your brain, but also with your hands. And this is the

second but equally important lesson from this block. In this block you will learn how to develop this ability to turn ideas and thoughts into drawings, sketches, and models. And indeed, this is one of the most distinctive design skills that you will develop throughout the module. You don't need to be an artist. You just need to be able to think and communicate your ideas through these tools, models, drawings, or sketches.

So why don't you just relax. Follow the module materials and let the module guide you through these skills.