SHAPING THE AIR INTO SPACES FOR THE MIND
the preciousness and role of intricate details

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After working on my thesis for several months, I understood a lot about how I experience space and value it.

72B Hackford Road was the home I shared with my friend Stella between 2010 and 2012. A flat on the first floor of a Victorian House. You would go up the narrow staircase and get to our door. You would enter, then, directly after you would turn left, go up one step to be able to close the door behind you. It was curious, strangely planned.

The kitchen was hidden around the corner of the living room. A narrow space with almost no storage, just open shelves displaying all our food and crockery. The walls of the flat were not straight. Some had niches where we used to put our precious knick knacks.

The place was far from practical, but it’s quirkiness made it a comfortable and welcoming home. It gave us a feel of security and calm... Like a little nest in the big city...
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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays we have become too busy to be present in our everyday interiors. Spaces are designed to be open to increase the social aspect but we tend to lose our individual connection to it. However, we have to inhabit the space with our bodies as well as with our minds. When I encountered The Poetics of Space written by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard in 1958, it was my first time reflecting on space before studying within the field of interior architecture. Already I started thinking of interiors as spaces for the body as well as spaces for the mind. The idea that a space can be defined beyond the physical walls, that it is also what is contained, the atmosphere, the stories that are shaped within. I decided to define interior architecture as shaping or sculpting air. The book also helped me understand that my way of seeing space and fascination for those intricate details came from a certain sense of introversion and need for evasion.

_Tout coin dans une maison, tout encoignure dans une chambre, tout espace réduit où l’on aime à se blottir, à se ramasser sur soi-même, est, pour l’imagination une solitude, c’est-à-dire le germe d’une chambre, le germe d’une maison._

(p.130)

_Every corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination; that is to say, it is the germ of a room, or of a house._

(p.136)

I want to highlight the importance of small spaces, the intricacy within a room, corners and nooks and the stories they contain and generate. To help me I want to use my expertise and the way I have been trained to look at surroundings. My background in jewellery design has taught me to approach space from its details, such as the corners and nooks towards the rest of the space. I want to use this way of seeing as starting point and way to raise the discussion about the importance of some degree of complexity and details in interiors. Those features act as spaces for the mind to escape into or feel safe and as such facilitate the way one can grasp the larger space. My thesis is therefore an investigation of the nook, using different tools and methods that I will introduce further in this text.
Before diving further into the project, it is essential to establish a setting and clarify some terminology recurring during the project. First of all, the term jewellery, often brings concrete images to our minds: rings, pendants, bracelets, etc. However here it is used in a broader sense and defines the discipline of smallness in contrast to buildings in architecture. Jewellery stands as opposition to architecture but also demonstrates similar ways of building and looking at space. In the context of this work jewellery describes small spatial objects or spaces of another scale; one can hold them in the hand, scrutinise them and only penetrate the space with the eye while fantasising of entering.

Smallness resonates with preciousness; in their book Jewelry of our time: art, ornament and obsession, Helen W. Drutt English and Peter Dormer state that “almost any small thing that you care to value, including a chosen pebble from a beach, becomes precious because it can be held carefully in the hand, and because being small, it can easily be lost and thus it requires you to pay more attention to its ‘safety’ than something large.” (p.80)

In a similar way as a pebble becomes precious in relation to the hand and the body scale, details and intricate spaces acquire the same value in contrast to the room that contains them like a nook or recess in the wall for example.

Both spatial jewellery and architecture relate to the body. They also hold similarities in the ways of designing and constructing space. The construction and details within a jewellery piece are comparable to architectural details; different elements held together form the piece. The smallest elements become the keys that bring character to the object or space and the parts translate into spatial frames. An image I often use to illustrate this idea of preciousness and framing of the space is the Box of Air by Japanese ceramicist Masanobu Ando (fig. 1). This object is an outline of a cube that he himself describes as ‘inspired by the volume of the Japanese bedroom it allows the user to recreate this sacred space by placing a small object in the middle of the square.’ In this piece the outlined cube defines a small space.
As the use of the word *detail* will be recurrent in this work it needs to be defined as well. The notion of details in architecture suggests a number of interpretations. Within the frame of this investigation, it describes the results of assembling multiple parts together: These parts are walls, ceilings, stairs, passages or windows. Assembled together they create corners, angles, bench-like structures, cavities, recesses, sills and other nooks. I choose to define such elements as details due to their size in proportions to the context in which they occur. An example of this is the Holy Cross Church in Chur design by Walter Maria Förderer (fig. 2). Here the details do not stand out for their materiality. They are embedded into the architecture, the main structure.

… the fluent merging of constituent parts into an endlessly variable whole, amounts to the organisation of continuous difference, resulting in structures that are scale-less, subject to evolution, expansion, inversion, and other contortions and manipulations. Free to assume different identities, architecture becomes endless.

(Greg Lynn cited in Wigley p. 84)

There is no hierarchy in the materiality but the presence of intricacy.

Intricacy is the fusion of disparate elements into continuity, the becoming whole of components that retain their status as pieces in a larger composition. (...) intricacy involves a variation of the parts that is not reducible to the structure of the whole. The term intricacy is intended to move away from this understanding of the architectural detail as an isolated fetishised instance within an otherwise minimal framework.

(ibid, p.83)
The meaning here is that the details - within the frame of this work the nook - is part of its context and cannot be isolated. These details are spaces that one can grasp more easily than seizing a spacious room at once. In architectural human scale they can be spaces experienced with the whole body, where to feel sheltered and curl up. The Girls’ Dormitory in Disentis (CH) designed by Gion A. Caminada shows this clearly. The space provides ambiguity and frames everyday activities such as sitting and reading by the window (fig. 3 a-b). But they can also be smaller volumes where to place objects (fig. 3 c) to frame precious possessions and give them a new meaning and status as we just saw in the example of Masanobu’s work. Although some small spaces, resulting of the assemblage of the parts are sometimes unusable recesses or angles, their presence alone allows one to be more aware of their surrounding space. Their smallness in relation to the whole space and qualities as details offers the possibility for the mind to escape and trigger stories. Their scales evoke safety, comfort, intimacy and preciousness.

It is also interesting to dig deeper into the term nook and its possible origins. After a quick search online, various results came up. The notion of corner and angle appears from Middle English and Scots. In Scandinavian languages the word is associated with hook or bent obejct. Finally in Old English gehnyncned the word could be connected to drawn, pinched, wrinkled. The range of different etymological origins even if they vary slightly all lead to the idea of something intricate, something unperfect, with some sort of relief which would relate the the architectural elements of alcove, hidden spots or poché.
Both architecture and architectonic jewellery work with composition and focuses on tension and harmony in the assembly of parts. Architectural jewellery puts emphasis on the composition of the forms and lines as well as the interaction of volumes and the spaces they create as an example. The work of the jeweller Peter Skubic unquestionably shows a lot of spatiality, so much that he blew up his small jewellery objects into larger scale wall and space pieces reproducing the same proportions as the original small spaces. The same can be said regarding architecture primarily using shapes and composition as a way of designing space. The Japanese architect Kazuo Shinohara designed individual houses in the 70s and 80s. He created what he named *naked* spaces focusing on proportions and light to *sculpt a space which the human body had to adapt to.*

*What jewellery brings albeit on its small scale, to qualities that are sculptural or spatial, is the further quality of preciousness.*

(English & Dormer, p.76)

I have mentioned the preciousness of small framed objects through the work and words of Masanobu Ando, *The Box of Air.* Their tendency to frame also relates to the notion of intimacy. Within a vast space these frames become like shelters. On a larger scale, spatial intricacy facilitates the way we occupy the space and connect to it: one tends to like sitting in a nook rather than in the middle of a large room, in a café for example and particularly when alone.

Based on the definition of details as *smaller parts or smaller volumes of air assembled into a whole,* I have approached interior from those smaller volumes, looked at the composition and tension between the parts that form the space. I wanted to zoom in, study how they relate to their context and where they become detached from it. I tried to explore what they trigger and evoke to the mind and used my own experiences as the red thread to help me progress in the exploration, remaining open and seeking the viewers’ interpretation to the space while facilitating a way for them to perceive it.
Regardless of its size and scale, for me space remains space. What is essential is the balance and proportions. The composition and how the tension is created between the whole to its parts. Borrowing the language and construction methods from my former experience designing jewellery, I want to use smallness as a tool to investigate the intricacy within spaces. To be able to do so it was essential to have a space, a site. As I did not want to select a site, I decided to come up with my own spaces, fictional space. What is implied with the term fictional will clarify itself as I explain the process I used to create the spaces in the next part of this text. Those spaces can trigger the mind and be seen as large or small depending on the imagination but in my world they remain scale-less. They were designed with no relation to a site or program and therefore leave it open to the viewer to relate them based on their experiences, expectations and thoughts.

Previous projects

In a previous exploration I looked into the content of a space. I worked from a plan drawing composed of layered and intersecting rectangles. This representation was the result of a previous investigation of stories in a space, it became an abstract representation of the complexity of space and the many layers of information it contained (the movements, stories, smells, sounds, etc) (fig. 4). The drawing was given volume and transformed into a three-dimensional structure (fig. 5). The many layers of this structure offered interesting meetings and joints to zoom into. I grasped the complexity of its composition and the fact that each piece relied on all the others to stand. This was a key understanding in relation to the balance of an interior and the many parts it is made of: all elements that compose a space depend on each other.
The pictures above (fig. 6 a-c) show the development how certain wooden components from the model (fig. 5) started suggesting small spaces related to nooks. These little spaces held similar qualities to niches encountered in domestic interiors (fig. 6 d and e).
Building with paper from templates, folding and gluing the flaps to create corners offered the possibility to understand the space created. It enabled me to build hollowness in contrast to the solid wooden pieces it had originated from and concentrate on the air between the different walls.

The small studies that resulted from this short inquiry were intentionally not given a scale or were simply considered as 1:1 (resulting in models of fragments of the space, about the size of the hand) (fig. 7 a-d).
Besides the construction, the small models generated very interesting comments from people especially after it had been photographed, and the images sometimes slightly edited (fig. 8 a+b). The size and material of models became hard to define from what was visible on the pictures. The volumes and voids also became hard to grasp and defined differently depending on the angle of the camera.

Playing with the visible construction on the model and making it invisible through photographic representations was a very interesting aspect. Isolated from other elements and its context, this nook lost its potential bring meaning and comfort to the larger space or structure. However, when viewed in a wider context and surrounded by other parts it then carried its role of intimate frame. The exploration therefore continued by looking at parts within their contexts and not withdrawing them. Moreover, it was also pointed out that the choice of colour of the paper had played an important role in the perception of the models and photographs. Colour appeared to distract and trick the viewer into a false interpretation of the models, away from the initial wanted effect. More neutral or textured papers were the best to use in comparison to pastels or mixing two colours together; these were then used later on.
Based on the conclusions drawn from the previous nook studies, I zoomed out again and put the details back within a wider spatial context and in relations to each other. To study the subtle play between mass and void I had to create intricate spaces. I used the initial plan drawing (fig. 4) and followed the same procedure as before: first isolating a part of the plan composed of up to seven intersecting rectangles of various sizes and extrude each of them into volumes of different heights. I then placed them higher or lower in relation to each other carefully considering the balance of composition before using the boolean operation. The result of subtracting them from each other was a solid complex unit that I could start working and building from. The advantage of this sequence of operation as a method to design was that my only decisions were regarding height and to rearrange the composition a little, but the nooks just occurred organically as a result of the method. This is a critical aspect of the process as I had observed that the nooks artificially designed do not convey the same emotion. A nook resulting from the construction or history of a place becomes a curious element of charm and quirkiness. The intention was to achieve volumes that held what I assessed to be a good degree of tension between the parts. The spaces were created with no hierarchy between the parts, simply as volumes. During this stage, I used my knowledge and own sense of aesthetic developed throughout my artistic education to assess the composition of the volumes.
This process quickly became mechanical and intuitive. A first series of four models was created. Built in a 160 gsm neutral light grey card paper, each element of a model was constructed from a printed template, cut, folded and glued together to form one single unit (fig. 9 a-d). The shell shaped the air and the exterior informed both the construction and the interior due to the choice of a thin material. The decision to carry working with paper was due to its ability to shape air without carrying too much thickness. In digital form, the walls with no thickness besides the weight of the line. But materially, paper allowed me to create the solid, visible and tangible structure to frame the space, it bounced light, and became an air container. Since my purpose was to focus on the shape of the interior; it was the thinnest material with a certain degree of strength to suit my needs easily. The size of the models was chosen to suit the limitations of and sturdiness of the material while making it big enough for the eye to penetrate and navigate inside. Those were my fictional spaces, with no relation to a site and no program, simply spaces with no scale. The models were considered as models, 1:1 spaces, rather than representations. It aimed to leave the viewer to wonder and add their layers of interpretation.
Result of the series 1.
The four models from above and elevations.
Some technical questions came up as I was designing and making, such as how to allow light to penetrate into the interior and how to be able to look into it. I decided to remove some walls at the ends of certain small volumes and cut out some larger openings into wider sides. The decisions were taken with the intention to enable as much of the interior as possible to be grasped with the eye and yet to create subtle indirect light in some parts. The exterior of these models gave away the shape of their interiors. Still, the discovery of the reversed space inside and the atmosphere composed by the mass and voids created a feeling of surprise. The openings and light penetrating produced nice moments, and corners or hidden parts triggered curiosity.

As I will mention later in this text, the models visually reminded the viewer of modernist houses. The relation between inside and outside is interesting in relation to this. In his chapter The Inside and the Outside, Robert Venturi discusses the tension between interior and exterior and different ways to conceive space: from the outside in or the inside out. In my spaces, there is no contradiction between the outside and the inside. The exterior is the shell, the container. It results from creating the interior. Everything is revealed and can be imagined from the exterior. There is no lining and almost no thickness, only points of entry. Venturi quotes Le Corbusier (p. 82): ‘The plan proceeds from within to without; the exterior is the result of an interior.’

The exterior of my spaces are the result of the plan as Le Corbusier states and their aesthetic may hold Modernist characteristics. However, the result and thoughts differentiates from modernist ideals. The spaces are not designed with ideas of functionality, and the search for intricacy and nooks contradicts the ideal of a large functional open space. In these models, the large space leaks into the smaller surrounding spaces, the design is constructed with limited control to let intricacy occur, not striving for functionality.
Moments and atmosphere: the nook as trigger

Je mets un tableau sur un mur. Ensuite j’oublie qu’il y a un mur. Je ne sais plus ce qu’il y a derrière ce mur, je ne sais plus qu’il y a un mur, je ne sais plus que ce mur est un mur, je ne sais plus ce que c’est qu’un mur.

Perec (p. 77)

I put a picture on a wall. Then I forget there is a wall. I no longer know what there is behind this wall, I no longer know there is a wall, I no longer know this is a wall, I no longer know what a wall is...

Perec (p 39)

Since I first read this short passage from Species of Spaces by Georges Perec it has struck me: we become blind and unaware of our everyday spaces. The smooth walls of the bedroom become invisible, however they shape the volumes we experience. The shell is the essential starting point leaving room for stories and life to unfold as it slowly fades away with time. What is fascinating is when the built meets other elements such as light. This coming together creates moments, an ephemeral atmosphere. Views are framed. Thus moments and frames encourage and stimulate the mind to evade into new realities.

Through her photographs, the artist Uta Barth\(^6\) highlights the invisible, the moments and details that surround us in our every day environment. This is how she describes these details:

(...) it is so visually familiar that it becomes almost invisible. One moves through one’s home without any sense of scrutiny or discovery, navigating it at night, reaching for things without even looking.

(...) how can I make you aware of your own activity of looking, instead of losing your attention to thoughts about what it is that you are looking at.

Uta Barth (p. 125)

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6 see examples of Uta Barth’s photographs in Appendix 6
Perception and scale

It was intriguing to follow people’s reaction to the completed models and how they interacted with them. The development of the models purposely disregarded the notion of site or program. The most recurrent comments were associated to domestic interiors. From the outside they looked like Japanese houses, homes for miniature people, beautiful villas or typical modernist houses. Some of the details inside became windows, doors, benches, or even a dressing room. I went back to Bachelard’s text and understood that we tend to try and make sense of space and relate it to our bodies.

*Tout espace vraiment habité porte l’essence de la notion de maison… l’imagination travaille dans ce sens quand l’être a trouvé le moindre abri: (…) l’imagination construit des “murs” avec des ombre impalpables, se récomforte avec des illusions de protection - ou, inversement trembler derrière des murs épais, douter des plus solides remparts.*

(pp.24-25)

All really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home… the imagination functions in this direction whenever the human being has found the slightest shelter: (…) the imagination build ‘walls’ of impalpable shadows, comfort itself with the illusion of protection - or, just the contrary, tremble behind thick walls mistrust the staunchest ramparts.

(p.5)

This is how he sets the subject in his book and explains how we are somehow predisposed to relate everything to dwelling and the image of the house, for our minds have been trained that way. In the context of this work the first instinct was to look for clues and the proportions of the elements inside became the keys to make up the scale, from the fictional, neutral space, to imaginary scales. The sight was grasping the interior and the mind was transporting the body in.
CASE STUDY : model 1.3

I also selected one of the first four volumes, Model 1.3 to further investigate how its nooks could be understood and find a way to demonstrate their potential as spaces for the mind. To do this, I chose a view that allowed me to seize a large part of the interior (fig. 10).

Tools and process:
photography - scale-lessness

For a long time photography has enabled me to frame spaces and helped me express new or specific feelings from sections of spaces. Here it allowed me to isolate a view, erase the surrounding noise around the model and obtain the result I wanted: seamless and scale-less space, the shadows draw the space. By erasing the surrounding noise it made it possible to eliminate most of the idea of scale (fig. 10). As stated before, the model has a size, it is not a representation of any particular object of any scale or building. As all models from both series, Model 1.3 measures about 20 x 12 x 8 cm, this is due to the possibilities in the strength and limitations of the material. It was also essential for the interior to be accessible with a small camera. To demonstrate my point, that space is space no matter its size, and that it remains architecture (architecture refers to building but a building can be of any size, it applies to physical structure and does not imply a size) I decided not to make this series in a bigger size.
A nook is a carrier of meaning, *preciousness*, it manifests itself in different ways in the mind and the body. At different levels it can be intimate, safe, poetic, precious, or a combination of those things. Peeking in, entering with the sight and slowly observing the angles, the views, the levels, sequences... Observing the model as well as its photographic representations, I wrote stories; different scenarios suggesting different scales. Story writing was a technique used in a very early phase. Inspired by *the Powers of Ten* directed by Ray and Charles Eames in the seventies, I divided the different levels of scale:

**The Eye**, here the object can be penetrated with the gaze, held between the fingers on laid on the palm of the hand. (fig. 11 a-b)

**The Hand** or **Arm** is able to invite itself in and experience the interior through touch. (fig. 11 c-d)

**The Body**, the structure is big enough for one to walk inside and feel the space by being in it. (fig. 11 e-f)

**The Super Space** (not yet explored). Here the structure is extremely large in relation to the body and one explores the largess through walking or running or climbing.

The stories were turned into visual representations. The quality of these collages related to the fictional character of the stories as imaginary plots where everything is possible, a way to communicate the stories visually. Based on the levels of scale described above I added visual clues to translate the size of the space and the feeling of each story.
In these collages, we are zooming in and out. The human remains the same size but the space changes. As with the first series of models, it was interesting to get a response to the illustrations. One particular comment referred to the collage with the eye peeking in as *a giant looking into a house*. It then struck me that for some, especially those trained as architects, the full-scale space remained traditionally the scale of a house, despite the neutrality of the interior, absence of program or any domestic elements. In this specific case it appeared to make more sense for the eye to belong to a giant rather than for the space to simply be smaller, just like in the story of Alice in Wonderland.

Talking about scale suggests questions of thickness, material, structure and corners. These are important aspects of interior architecture, and bring up new levels of detailing. The question of material will be discussed further in the text.

Through story writing and illustrating them in the form of collages I gained understanding of my process and way to consider scale. I was almost ready to start investigating new materials but first needed the right modelled spaces to take the task further.
Following the reactions and observations on the first series of models I went on and produced more compositions to look into. The idea was to defy the immediate association with houses. I understood it was an inevitable phenomenon but wanted to try and delay it by confusing the mind with more unclear combinations of elements that would let the mind wonder for longer. The aim was also to hold a range of models to compare to each other and help me decide how to push the work further.

The repetition of the design process informed me on my way of making decisions and confirmed my own definition of interiors as sculpted air. The repetition of the operations was meditative and I embraced the introversion with the possibility to isolate myself into a world where the completion and combination of each volume started triggering ideas of atmospheres and spatial characters.

The second series consists of 11 models developed digitally using the same process as in the first series. Nine of the models were then built in the same paper to be able to compare them to earlier models. The paper also gave them the status of tests rather than refined design which I tend to find useful in my design process (see page 21).

outcome

As a result, the models were very different, as I composed them, I moved further away from the initial volumes that were strongly associated to the aesthetic of modernist houses. I made variations in the designs:

Models 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4 were formed of rectangular elements but I started playing with heights and placing the boxes.

In model 2.5 I tilted the resulting in a cluster of space, trying to break the hierarchy between the elements. In 2.6 and 2.8, some of the elements became triangular angled.

The idea of models 2.9 and 2.10 was to create a long and shorter sequence of spaces. And finally, model 2.11 was an attempt at creating more intricate indents into the elements.
Out of the nine built models, I identified three particularly interesting pieces to further look at: **models 2.5, 2.6 and 2.8**.

These were selected compared to others for their strong character and most importantly, the interesting intricacy and qualities within their interiors.

**Model 2.5**: composed of elements that had been twisted and formed a cluster.

**Model 2.6**: formed of simples large intersecting shapes creating different levels in the interior.

**Model 2.8**: with one sharp angle and hanging spaces.
Having explored the parameter of form with a new set of models, I approached the question of material. When designing this question usually appears later in my process. Here I first set up the ground and started studying and developing compositions, going between digital and physical.

Until this point paper had been a great material to sketch spaces and get models into physical shapes. However, as seen on the pictures I used for the scale-stories, the level of transparency in the paper made the flaps visible, adding a layer of visual details (fig. 12a). The transparency gave an appealing aesthetic and warm feel to the spaces. The flaps appearing through the material could potentially have been interesting as revealers of the construction but in this case they were also stealing the focus.

I made a second version of the model that I painted black with acrylic to give opacity to the material. This resulted in a different weight and thickness to the structure and the homogeneous surface changed the atmosphere. (fig. 12b). I was unsatisfied about its level of precision and sturdiness the need for a new material became clear.
The aim with both series of models had been to frame the air, shape it into intricate spaces. Spaces to crawl under; comforting nooks and for me a seamless and neutral material was needed. A non-material. We are used to seeing these kind of finishes through rendering when we design with 3D softwares (fig. 13), build walls with no thickness and achieve perfect finishes. However, in the physical world this smoothness is not achievable.

As a result of my experience using a digital software and building in paper I identified qualities I was looking for and found important in a material: lightness, smoothness, seamlessness, slimness and a certain degree of translucency. The most essential was for the interior to carry these qualities.

I looked for a material that communicated my idea of non-materiality and aim to make the physicality and scale disappear. Working with walls and tangible shapes and being able to sculpt the space meant there was the need for something solid. I considered casting the space in plaster, creating voids around the material, but this would have meant loosing the exterior shape which I had been attached to and the technical aspect of making it would have taken too much focus, away from my real interest of studying the spaces. I also thought about 3D printing the shape, but once again, the technical difficulties to reach a clean interior dismissed this method.

I initially considered building in wood and started tests that were not conclusive.

At an early stage of the project I also tested spot welding metal as a method to join parts. The welding created beautiful and precious-looking details but very distracting to the piece. These details also implied scale and demonstrated to me that the visibility of the joints brought important layers in the way one reads the space.

After several discussions on the best technique to use to achieve what I envisioned, I decided to test the use of laser cut mdf and acrylic in 2 or 3 mm thickness. Laser cutting the pieces came close to way I had been working in paper: creating a template (fig. 14) to obtain precise pieces to be assembled.
Once the technique and material had been resolved, it was time to decide what models would become part of my installation later. The three models initially selected remained and a new series of three models was created. I kept two of them: 3.1 and 3.2.

Model 3.1 was a complexified version of one of the early models that was used in the scale stories experiment and 3.2 a completely new addition.

For technical reasons related to laser cutting, I increased the thickness of the wall to use 3 mm thick material and reworked some of the details, where the elements join, and making the gluing operation easier. I decided to keep similar dimensions I had used to make the paper models. I liked how the size enabled the viewer to hold the spaces in their hands and interact with them. First wondering what they were, then peeking in and starting to discover the interior. This closeness created an intimate feeling, like one was holding a secret and could appropriate the piece for a more intimate and individual experience.

Every model had different characteristics and qualities. For example, one was more like a cluster; another one was interesting for the difference of volumes, angles, views, heights.

Assembling all the plexiglass elements was a task that required precision and patience. And some of the elements that contained angles had to be filed.

The end result was a collection of five miniature spaces, they all held different characteristics from the outside but also belonged together as a whole. The interior views (see page 28) were clean and intricate. One could also use the word clinical to describe the whiteness and lack of variation in textures. As stated before, this was intended for this stage of the development, but could be something to look into in the future.

Inside the shiny surfaces reflected each other and the penetrating light. And the translucency of the material also allowed subtle play with the lighting or sunlight.

The top surfaces of each element were lightly sanded to create a deeper mat effect and invite inside.
COMMUNICATION

The exhibition at Konstfack gave me the opportunity to look at ways to communicate the project to a wider public. I conceived the space as an installation where people could be surrounded by the spaces and can choose to explore their interior easily.

The space consisted in the five miniature spaces hanging in front of a dark grey backdrop. A space was conceived, consisting of a partition wall with a corner to emphasize the feeling of stepping into a space.

I decided to hang the models rather than placing them on pedestals. I wanted to make them float, channel an idea of lightness and give them preciousness, solving the technicality of the hanging in a similar way. Having previously worked in the field of jewellery, the idea with hanging was also to stay away from the objectification of the pieces created by placing it on a pedestal.

I brought back storytelling in audio form and recorded myself reading texts I had written in relation to the spaces. Those stories took the viewer into my world, and hopefully inspires him or her to imagine their own scenarios.

I intentionally decided to keep the space simple and bare, and offer a way of seeing and experience rather than information about the process. I relied on the label text and the steps as an invitation to come in, climb up and look closer and into. Most models were placed at eye level and the stories channeled through the headphones and hinted the visitors to look inside and imagine their own stories.

Many of the visitors inevitably saw the pieces as beautiful objects but others dared to come closer. I was pleased to witness the public engaging with the work and to have conversations with some of them.

9 transcript of the audio stories in Appendix 9
10 text label can be found in Appendix 10
I consider the models as made up sites, space that the mind adapts to, where the mind can wander and evade for a few moments. The viewer makes up functions and scale.

Besides the size, it’s not a totally new way of seeing space or conceiving space. In the 70-80s, the Japanese architect Kazuo Shinohara designed individual houses. He created what he called naked spaces - sculpted the spaces so the human had to adapt to them. He focused on the interior volumes and the composition. More recently, the Swiss architect Gion Caminada designed a girls dormitory built around nooks.

In both examples, the space acquires meaning when life enters it. These references or the understanding of this architectural design process became clearer to me as I was understanding my own process more.

For me interior is not about function. It is about volumes, about the air contained within walls.

The outcome of this work is a collection of miniature spaces that have become some sort of devices to interact with. For one to go wherever imagination takes them. Overall the work aims at creating a discussion, about a place for non functionalist approaches to interior architecture. How we relate to it and why creating spaces couldn’t not simply be like sculpting space, trusting ourselves to find ways to adapt to them, to get a feel of safety, and to stimulate our imagination.
From the start I was exploring what my background as a jewellery designer, could bring to the field of interior architecture and spatial design, and what working on very small scale could bring to the new side of me: the interior architect.

I realised that in the way I approach interiors, in my process, scale does not matter. It becomes important later on, when one wants to have a bodily experience.

Through this thesis I worked on developing a method, creating spaces, using stories and imagination as tools.

I came to understand and affirm my approach to space, grasping the small details, the elements, one by one as I aimed to channel the preciousness of nooks within interiors.

The journey of this project was also an invaluable way to reflect on my process and methods and to strengthen them for future undertakings. The use of digital modeling, building sketch models, using photography and story telling, and discussing with others to inform my design; all these tools help me throughout the exploration.

I would like to keep working within the frame of this project, to maybe work on body scale, add colour and material and observe the changes in the space. This exploration has given me a solid base and knowledge about nooks and I am now more clearly understanding what is so fascinating with them.

Besides writing, I would like to develop the use of photography and I am very interested to produce films both to explore space as well as a way to communicate.

Nooks make us work and relate to interiors more. Their presence within a space demands for the body and mind to come up with ways to use them or become familiar to them. Space is sculpted and eventually becomes functional in a non-traditional way. Requiring the user of the space to adapt and be more active, conceiving space in an artistic way rather than following rational and functionalist standards. I aim to continue using my background in jewellery as a strength and way to challenge the conventional approach to architecture. This research has revealed a door to new exciting conversations and potential ways to develop the work further which I look forward to explore and discuss in the future.
| APPENDIX 1 | examples of architectonic jewellery |
| APPENDIX 2 | examples of details and nooks |
| APPENDIX 3 | the work of jeweller Peter Skubic |
| APPENDIX 4 | images of the houses designed by Kazuo Shinohara |
| APPENDIX 5 | origins of the project |
| APPENDIX 6 | the work of artist and photographer Uta Barth |
| APPENDIX 7 | transcript of one of the scale-stories |
| APPENDIX 8 | material test: wood |
| APPENDIX 9 | transcript of the audio stories from the exhibition |
| APPENDIX 10 | exhibition label text |
Appendix 1

Examples of architectonic jewellery. These pieces show how jewellery can also be seen as spaces, miniature spaces. The construction and composition shares similar proportions with architecture.
Appendix 2

Illustration of what is described with the term detail in the context of this work.
Intricacies within the architecture.
Appendix 3

Peter Skubic.
Jewellery, wall and floor pieces. The jewellery piece - a brooch - can also be considered as a miniature space that one carry with or on them. Skubic demonstrates that space is scale-less by blowing his jewellery up into large wall and floor pieces. The size of the pieces change, but the proportions between the elements and the details remain almost exactly the same.
Appendix 4

Photographs of Kazuo Shinohara’s interiors between the 1970-80s.

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Appendix 5

Initial Development of the three-part iteration project:

At the very start of this exploration my aim was to grasp space in a new way. After reading researched trying to make up my definition of atmosphere and ambiance. I concluded that the spaces we experience go beyond the built. From these initial observations, my interest in spatial narratives inspired by Georges Perec’s spatial stories and the poetic angle taken by Gaston Bachelard, I decided to approach different spaces in the city through writing. I spent hours sitting at the chosen sites, writing what I heard, smelled, all the details I got hold of. I filled pages of my notebooks with the stories, every element present within the space would bring to my mind. I wrote about people, wrote from the perspective of the space, thought like a child, etc. I also added more from memory after returning to the studio. Having collected a lot of written material, I decided to transfer all the texts into the computer as an easy way to examine the writing. I printed them and added handwritten notes to the texts, creating new layers to the stories. The texts became visually interesting and the growing volume needed to be sorted out into categories to understand the different spatial aspects that had been captured.

The fragments of texts both computer and hand written were once again translated digitally and organised into rectangular fractions. I wanted to recreate the profusion of information, the intricacy and network of stories present. One cannot process just one information at a time but gets overwhelmed with a number of impressions that form one’s perception and feel of the space. The resulting collage with overlapping fragments of text organised in different directions according to a made up system showed the layers of information and the complexity to describe and explain the atmosphere of a specific place at one precise moment.

The spatial properties of the collage were used in a very literal way in the second stage of this exploration. The outline of the fragments was drawn and the drawing used as a plan to develop a three-dimensional structure.
Appendix 7

Example of a story written as one of the scale scenarios:
This is a description as if the piece was very small (scale 10:1).
The scale evolves as the writing progresses. The story is unedited as it was only meant to be a tool.

“I hold it between my thumb and index. It is really small, tiny. I’m not sure what it is. It has sharp corners. It is not a cube, it looks like two (three?) cubes have merged together. It looks like a little figuring of some kind of modernist house. Very simple and minimal. Or it looks like building blocks.

It’s hollow and has openings. You can guess what the inside looks like by looking at the outside. I bring it up to my eye to look inside properly and try to see if there is any surprise inside. Maybe a gemstone or something like that. I bring it and peek in. The four openings allow the light to penetrate and define the corners, the angles and the several parts. I am blocking one of the larger openings with my eye. Somehow it looks to me as the entrance. Like a larger entry point. That’s where the eye enters, and it brings everything with it.

As my eye goes around trying to capture all the intricacy of this tiny volume, it also tries to relate it to the outside shape it previously saw. It feels different to be looking in though. The space is more inviting, less round and bubbly since everything is reversed. But it offers steps and recesses; points of exit or points of entrance. It depends how one sees it. The lines are straight and the view is quite simple. But it has some sort of quirkiness. Some kind of first step, leading to a first landing. The step seems high. Higher than the second one. The second one leads to another landing which is encased and seems shallower. It is a smaller space within this small space. It seems like something should fit in there, like a piece of puzzle is missing and reveals something, a secret. I could scratch this surface with my nail and feel the various levels. From the recess downwards.

Above the recess there’s another space. Bigger. More voluminous. Spacious. Its opening is larger too. It’s difficult to see all of it because the ‘window’ I am peeping from is placed so that I can’t see the very top. I help my eye with my fingers and tilt the form forward a little so I can get a larger view of the whole. I am still missing parts on the left hand side but I see bits of the ceiling. I like to see the light coming from the other side and the tiny framed view it is giving me. It’s bringing air within the volume, like it can breathe.

There’s also this large opening on the left hand side. Larger than the hole I am peeping from and the view from there is sideways. It doesn’t give the same escalating view but more of a look from above. Its purpose from here is quite clear. It brings the light, it makes shadows and helps define the depth. It is big, yet not disturbing.

That side opening is not very inviting to enter. The geometry from there keeps one on the outside. It reveals enough.

I feel the outside shape or shell so clearly pressed toward my fingers. Peeping inside. I forgot the angular qualities of this object. I was inside, understanding.

Now I’m looking at it from the outside again, and I see it differently. Its shape, so transparent and straightforward in appearance contains much more than just what the exterior lines are suggesting. Even more complexity. Peeking in didn’t reveal a gemstone but the preciousness of knowing what is inside. I’m holding it still, feeling the marks that will be left on the surface of my skin when I put it down. And the connection I have made with this object, is like a little secret I am to keep. The preciousness of knowing, of having been inside. I place it back on the shelf, as a giant collecting tiny objects, extremely small versions of reality. And I know I’ll be able to carry it again, or pick it up and look whenever I want.”
Material test: wood

One of the initial material tests after using paper for the first development part of the project was wood. Working with laser cut wood, or in this case 3mm MDF, would have given me the possibility of a smooth and seamless interior. The use of filler on all the joints as well as opaque paint would create perfect surfaces. However, giving the size and complex shape of the model, it would have made it impossible to achieve such a finish in one part. Therefore, I decided to cut the space into two sections.

I chose to move on to another material before finishing it as I found this material to be too opaque and opening the space into two sections meant the final result once assembled would not have been seamless.
Intro
What you hear is what you’re looking at.
Or maybe it’s not.
But does it matter really?
Don’t you just love finding that one corner that you feel no one else knows about?
You discover it, and start imagining what it could be for:
Can you fit your whole body?
Do you hide?
Is it unreachable?
Too tight?
Why is it there?
It takes you somewhere where you let stories unfold.

3.2
Let me tell you about a girl.
She used to get really excited exploring new spaces. Her favourite thing was to discover quirky nooks and find ways to use them. Here she could escape, play hide and seek. Fitting her body into a small recess in the wall.

Maybe she was an introvert.
Maybe you’ve experiences this too: when a room feels a little overwhelming. You just want to find somewhere to escape, evade.
Curl up somewhere that’s more your size, where you can be alone and think in calm.

This girl, she loves small things, small objects, small spaces. Small spaces for small objects.

The smaller the better:

Because when she feels like she can grasp it all she feels more comfortable. More in peace. She can see all of it, frame all of it.

She adjusts to the space around her. It’s like a game. Here she can fit her hand. There she can sit. Over there, further up, she found the perfect niche to display her trinkets.

And when she feels like it, she can climb down, take a few steps into the larger room. And start dancing, filling the air with her movements.
The best is to be in the centre. But to get there, there are many things to experience. It depends what side you want to come from. Are you drawn to the big openings? Or do you like tighter spaces where you can just squeeze your whole body in and feel the walls hugging you? You can be there for a while, there’s no rush to move on too fast.

Perhaps you’re the kind of person who only dares to look in but doesn’t want to risk coming in and getting lost. That’s fine too. You can get closer, even closer… It should be a nice view, or at least I hope so.

Usually people take the big entrance, don’t know why. It probably just feels safer and easier… But then, once they’re inside, that’s when they like to explore. They get intrigued, to understand how the walls are connected. How it has been thought through, or if it has been thought through. They want to see it all, to know what’s hiding around this corner, and that one. To find the little details that make it exciting. The happy accidents. And the stories behind them.

Where can you hide? Or just be quiet for a few moments? Then you’ll notice something up in the corner. A strange angle. You will wonder why it’s there. And you’ll move closer, to have a better look at it.

High spaces have always made me feel so small. This seems like the right way in. Run around this vast hall. Imagine you could reach up and check the view from up there…

To go up the next level there is a ladder, or maybe a staircase. Or maybe, it’s not actually that high and it’s possible to step over. Ah! Over here it’s more comfortable. Are the walls straight? Hard to tell… Maybe it’s just an impression. It looks like it’s possible to get into this tight space. It isn’t easy, but it’s doable. It’s open so one can breath and see outside.

Everything feels different all of a sudden. Tighter. Much, much tighter. But it’s not so bad. Feeling the floor, the walls and the ceiling around the body, like a cocoon.

Up, Up, Higher! There’s an attic, a special place. It’s hard to reach but once you’re there you don’t want to come back.

You’ve been looking in, looking out. Your eyes go in, though and out again. You see what’s on the other side, what’s inside. Or you guess…
shaping the air into spaces for the mind

Every corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination; that is to say, it is the germ of a room, or of a house.

(Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space)

Regardless of its size and scale, for me space remains space. The project explores the potential of small and intricate spaces to trigger stories and memories. These spaces become places for the mind to evade. As smallness resonates with preciousness, the dimensions of my spaces invite you to come closer, enter with the eye and the mind and let different scenarios unfold.

Listen to the stories and let them guide you inside…
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SITE VISITS

SCARPA, Carlo, Olivetti Showroom Interior (1958) Venice, Olivetti Showroom

SCAPRA, Carlo, Renovation of the ground floor of the Fondazione Querini Stampalia (1950) Venice, Fondazione Querini Stampalia


Appendix 3  Peter Skubic [online image]. All available from: <http://www.startlife.at/skubic/> [Accessed 29 May 2017]

Appendix 4  Shinohara


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