

J: How was your day?

L: My day was okay ... ahm I am just in a stage of finishing everything up because I had to hand over my bachelor project and thesis ehm ... already two weeks ago

J: Yeah

L: I think in one and a half weeks I have my final presentation and the Verteidigung

J: Wooow

L: so I am starting to prepare for it now because I haven't done much in the past two weeks. I was really in the need for relaxation

J: Yeah, I can imagine.

L: So now it's starting to be a bit stressful again, but ehm yeah soon it will be over.

J: Cool

L: How are you?

J: Ehm, ya, I'm doing pretty well, you're my first ... I did like a survey before, but ahm you're my, my first sort of inter... interview or conversation so that's always a bit exciting if everything works the way ehm I thought it would and so on ehm but yeah I'm very happy ehm and ya maybe I'll start of with a bit about myself so that you know what all of this is even about ahm ... yeah I ehm ... I did ... way back when I did like graphic design and then I studied at the UdK ehm aswell, but I studied visual communication

L: Mhm

J: Ehm and yeah specifically there you have like different departments you can sort of go into and I mainly did like eh Interaction Design and New Media

L: When did you graduate?

J: Ehm I graduated 2021? I think

L: Mhm

J: In October or something like that, so it's it's it's been been a bit ahm and

ya I didn't want to do my master's degree there because I was ... ya it was after Covid and I was kind of sick of everything ehm and then I wanted to do something more like theoretical and ya somehow ended up doing Gender Studies ahm end now I'm finalising that and ahm ya my interest is basically sort of I guess the intersection between Design and then aspects of like power relations and specifically in the context of my studies ahm based on gender although of course it's also always intersectional ahm and ya for my master's thesis I thought that like the aspect of ahm I was always interested in like design processes and how design processes like shape the products that sort of come out of it and how these products then again shape our society ahm and also because like everything around us is in a way designed and it yeah it's like this material reality – also immaterial, but I think I am particularly also interested in like the material aspect ahm of it and ya how how that then again can ya shape society in a way ahm and to make it more concrete because it's always like really big and ahm yeah I also have a interest for like these more like maybe philosophical questions but it's kind of useless in a way if you can't like somehow pinpoint it ahm yeah that's why I thought of chairs as like the object I like – or the product – I sort of investigate all of this ahm because it's like an item that's very concrete, a lot of people use them ahm a lot of people have relatively specific ideas of what that item is ahm and I think often it's also just like not questioned a lot and it's also for me an item that like really gives a person a designated space and that can be in different ways but when I don't know when looking for instance at like eh I don't know a cinema or a class room like it's very clear where you have you're space and where you are supposed to be within that space ahm ya so that's maybe like my, my background and my, my, my interest behind it. Ahm and yeah I ehm I wrote you before that like the aspects I think I would be especially interested to yeah hear more from you would be ehm on the one hand like how you approach design processes if that's like something that is always different if it always varies, if you have like a I don't know certain script or like patterns or whatever ahm ya what you're practice sort of looks, look like. Maybe we can start of with that and then go deeper into certain aspects, yeah.

L: Mhm. Ahm it's actually a really interesting question because I was also asking myself a lot lately, I'm starting now to think about like the professional phase and I started my studies relatively late in comparison to other people, ehm very late, I was 27 when I started my bachelor so my aim now ... after graduating is to find like position in ... as industrial or product designer and I was asking myself a lot how similar or different would it be to design processes ahm at university because there we are very, very dependant on many other components as well which I think sometimes can be challenging. I don't, I'm not sure how it is at Medienhaus but in, for us we're very much subjected to ... to ehm feedback and criticism while, while doing our thing. It really depends, it also changes within different professors. You can also see it ahm in both of my chairs that you, I think I approached me ah

because of, ahm you can also see that they are very very ah that there is ... maybe ahm a shift in the functionality between them ... ahm ... and that one of them is way more playful and the other one is more ahm ... in a way practical I would say ... ahm in general I do have my own ... let's say ahm aesthetic that I like to promote within my things – it doesn't mean that all the stuff I design looks similar, but there is a certain touch that I like to give to stuff I personally is like this sort of playfulness or a bit of even child or something that is a bit childish in the way ahm stuff look like ... but I think that with the ... so, I what, what I'm refering the ... ahm the rocking Stuhl that I did ... so I actually designed it while taking a course at Medienhaus because we used to have a professor there from our department that gave courses there, I don't know if you know him, his name is Burkhard Schmitz

J: I think I've heard the first name but I don't think I've ever interacted, yeah

L: Every once in a while we also had ... I took two courses with him and also had eh people from like Visual Communication or New Media taking courses with us ...

J: Yeah

L: Who wanted to experiment with like a certain, more physical designing and with him the courses used to be very, very freestyle, but when we take courses we always have sort of like a definition sort of like a, like a Aufgabenbeschreibung for, for the course and then we need to do something that sort of fits this guideline in a way

J: Mhm.

L: So for ahm and for this [...] so basically the description and the guideline for this project was to do sort of a research about mathematic principles

J: Oh, okay.

L: And even though I registered for this course – cause there is nothing more further than [...] but I think I had at the time ... I, I really didn't want to take ... we have always three options for do what it is called our Hauptprojekt and Hauptprojekt is like, do you know how it works for us? Or ... are you familiar with it?

J: It's probably somewaht different, but then to a certain extent probably similar

L: Yeah, in fact the main projects you do it's master and the main design project and you do them with professors that are not specialized in any way, because for instance we have other courses for like construction or for 3d

printing or for eh design history but they are just like basically designers with which you just develop some product design project ... and this is like sort of the core part of each semester ... and at that time I wasn't getting along that much with the other professor so I chose to take it with him and then the the basically design process for this project was that I was really trying to find something that does fascinate me or that I can find [...] with and then I started to think okay, I can not relate to mathematic principals but I can relate for instance with something more physical like, like movement and motion and then I started to think okay what basically ahm like the entire concept of rocking items or chairs or objects and [...] you can take something that is ahm that is basically ahm ahm how, how, what's the word in English ahm ahm that is still something that doesn't move something that [...] and just by it's shape give it like ahm a quality that it can be that it can create motion this is something I was a bit inspired with and then I started creating all sort of like moving figures, just like some like curved figures ahm some of them were very abstract and didn't look like chairs at all and I was trying to understand how, what is the best way to provoke a motion and basically like what ahm what is the the the best ahm components that need to come under consideration in order to do it good ahm and then I figured out that there is like a certain height that is really well and also the curve ... it needs to be curvy but not too round and it needs to be stretched in a certain way, so I was doing all those kind of experimentations and then I think also the fact that he was very free spirit in his approach gave me the possibility of doing a really crazy design with very crazy colors and going wild with my like ahm space age aesthetic ... so this was a lot of fun ahm and I have now an object that I really like I mean I have it in my home and use it as a chair

J: Yeah, nice

L: Ahm, I must say ... now after using it for a while ahm I can, you know like because we, something that is very absurd is that in the industry usually you have a lot of time to test the stuff you build. You never take your first prototype and then just launch it ... So I did this and [...] it went really well with my vision, but now looking backwards although like the wave in the middle, the blue one, looks very cool ahm it's also not the most comfortable when sitting on it for a longer time, so definitely I would have ... even like made some, some, some edges a bit more curvy or I would take time aah I would have taken the time if I would build it now to ... also adjust it a bit more to the human body ... but ahm if you just free rock it, it rocks really well, ofcourse there is also the paradox in it, because a rocking chair, you always have like the, the, the back ahm ... you don't have that ... so you can not really rock on it as like a rocking couch ... but it is really cool as a stool that you sit on for instance in front of the computer if you want to create some motion with your body, you don't want to be still all day long ... ah for instance for people with ahm ADHD it can be really appropriate, I have myself a lot of problems in this field ... ah sometimes I just need to

move my body a bit, I need to provoke some, some ahm motion around me so this is really good and also just to not get stiff, so ...

J: Yeah I thought, it was also really interesting within like this ahm this aspect of like a chair being like a semi static structure that is very like ... permanent, at least for a certain ... certain period of time ahm and it gives or like it sort of brings your body to a stop in a way ... and eh ya that's also why I thought it was really interesting in that respect because ahm as you said it, it, it sort of gives your body like a bigger range of motion, maybe? Or like the body can take, maybe take up a little more space than if it was just like a stool that wasn't able to like rock? Ahm, yeah I think, I think that's what I thought was really ahm interesting and from what you just said – and I mean I know it from myself as well but maybe ahm yeah I always somehow have the feeling that with like Product Design, because it's like more design that is ... practical or I don't know there is like some sort of outcome ... myself doing like Interaction Design, New Media, it was like ... I would say more artsy and there was like no ... actual usecase for the object or whatever, it was often just like installations ahm and so on and ahm ... yeah and that's why I'm especially like interested, because they're like items that are really then part of your day to day life as you said and ahm in that respect I'm also always interested in like ... this question of like when does a design process like stop and when is it like a final product? Because ahm ... yeah, you could also say ah this, this product or like you're rocking stool is not finished yet maybe? Is it ever finished? I don't know ... ahm is it now in the testing phase, who knows? And then but like sectioning it up is always like this ... yeah it's like this black and white thing sort of this is one stage, this is the other stage and so on and ... I mean in the design industry, like in the industry then itself it's ofcourse a bit different but I think even then ahm you do tests with like different ... ahm things, I once did like an internship at like a, at like Herman Miller, that's like a production ahm yeah furniture production company and then they have like machines that sort of test the chairs, how like robust they are and so on, and then yeah, I always question why is that then the testing phase and then like testing it in real life, like ... yeah ... like these, these boundaries if you know what I mean?

L: Eh, yeah so you mean like if the fact that it can eh hold this amount of weight or whatever really indicates that it is proper for the human body, or?

J: Exactly, yeah.

L: I think in a way that, that design that ... I feel in many, I mean I, I feel, I am still young, I am still studying product design, but I feel in a way it can be in a way like a life long process, like redesigning the things or giving them feedback because I think that we also like ... there is always an interaction between ... interaction happening between the person and the object while being used ... and interactions change also along the time because we

change as well ... and I personally don't believe in this ahm ... in this idea of one product fits to all, I think that we are very different in many, many aspects, bodily, mentally and culturally ... and that we have different needs and ideally it would be good to have diverse options from which we could choose from ahm ... on the other hand it also brings the ecological question, because if our needs are changing, so what happens to the stuff that doesn't fit us anymore, so the aim is always to develop something that could change as many situations as possible or that could eh, eh, eh be used for longer. This is why I wouldn't launch ahm my Hocker the way I did it back then right now, because I generally think it is not good enough ... ahm not comfortable enough and there are many, there is a lot of potential in it, but there are many things that should be changed for someone to really keep for a long time or to fit different life phases ... ahm maybe the height of it could also be a bit more adjusted, something, or, or maybe it can be adjustable, something that could fit also different sizes, because we change, our height changes, our body weight changes ... I mean there are many things that could be done in this aspect ... and I feel that generally this is a very ahm evident tension that exists in the Product Design industry. The fact that, I, I for instance have a lot of passion for designing ahm objects and for designing things for people to use, on the other hand I am very aware ... ahm of the damage that the industry is doing and the responsibility we have in order to ... ahm

J: Do you mean that now specific in like terms of like sustainability? Or more general?

L: I think I am talking now about the sustainable aspect, about the fact that, yeah production, I mean the ... I don't know if ... I mean Product Design is such a wide area right ... I mean you can ... it eh ... it's a general term that includes furniture design and and and ehm I don't know also like eh electronic waste and cars and whatever, so it's a very big range of production, but basically everything we produce ahm leaves a mark on our planet and also won't disappear, so I think we have a lot of responsibility to produce things that people can use for longer and also to be aware of how we produce them. Yet I haven't stood in front of the chance to to produce my own things yet, I hope it will come in the future, but it will be for instance very important for me if I stay here in Europe to produce in the continent I live in ... and produce it in the most fair terms I can and if it means that ehm ... it wouldn't be a mass production, okay it's good ... I mean I do believe that this is the direction the world should go to ... ofcourse we are very far away from it. I guess you can see those tendencies much more with smaller studios and designers but also financially it is something that is more ... that more makes sense ... ahm but still this is not where the big damage is made ... but ... yeah I guess we all want to feel that there is sort of like a bigger meaning in what we do or to be aware of the ... so yeah this tension is definitely there

J: And are those like ehm aspects, or like how does that sort of affect the, you're design process then? Is it like, yeah maybe you can walk me through, like a process if, if you can even say that there is like a ahm one fits all process, or maybe specifically for the, for the stool ... and how that maybe differs, yeah? Maybe ...

L: Describe what were the stages I went through until I came to the final design?

J: Sort of, yeah, because I mean ofcourse you said that ahm often ... within like an educational setting, ofcourse there are like limitations based on like ehm curricula and so on but I mean also in the industry there are limitations, be that time, ressources, you name it, ahm ... or like clients you do something for ahm and yeah sort of ahm how you work with those limitations and then also with like the ... limitations I guess in terms of like, things like sustainability, etc. how you sort of incorporate them within your practice if that makes sense?

L: Yeah, ahm, again I must say, I am also ... I am very aware of this stuff and I am always trying to take it under consideration in my designs, but to be honest I do have classmates that are way more focused on this, that have also done projects about developing like sustainable materials or like different production ways in order to make ... I have never made, I have never digged that deep into these ahm ... into this field although it would have been good ... ahm but in general I feel that also there are two parallel universes and university many times ... we are sort of imitating production methods ... ahm with the tools that we have in our disposals or that we have in our [...] So we can not always create thing the way that would have been done in the real life by imitating those processes, but it still means that you can think about those stuff ahead, so for instance ... ahm ... the ... the step chair I did ... ahm actually it consisted out of one, two, three, four, five, six parts that I CNCed each one of them seperately. Do you know what is CNC?

J: Yeah

L: So I CNCed it out of a wood plate and I was really trying to puzzle them in a way that is as tight as possible and to see how I can also build parts that can be sort of puzzled to fit, I don't remember now, but to fit a certain area, which is not that big and to sort of ehm ... and to sort of eh try to, to, to spare as much waste as possible, so to use like the best wood plate that I had in my disposal, also to think about production processes ... ahm this is something that is being done a lot in order to save material from going to waste ... ahm and then I think that there is a lot ... ahm ... I mean in general working with wood it is something that is being done a lot and wood is

ofcourse ... better than metal I think ehm in the way of the pollution that it creates for instance ... when ahm ... while producing it, but on the other hand wood is also a resource which is very, very precious and it is being very over consumed ... ah so there is always the pros and cons when you decide to produce something physical there is a question of am I going to do it out of plastic – I know it sounds like a tabu, but we have a lot of plastic on our planet and it needs to be used ... ahm so ... am I going to do it out of recycled plastic? Am I going to do it out of bioplastic, which is biodegradable, this is also a very grey area, because for instance we 3D-print a lot with bioplastic ... ahm in general like the standard PLA ah filament that is used for 3D-printing is based on corn starch

J: Yeah, that's what I heard

L: Yeah so it's very cool but on the other hand when you dig deeper into the data it's still very, very hard to recycle it. and most of the people that are, will use it won't be able to recycle it properly, so it does mean that in comparison to normal plastic it will leave a smaller footprint in the world because eventually it will be able to decompose better, partially, but it is still not ... it is still not the magic solution and the fact that each person, including me, has a 3Dprinter at home – not every person because also it is not that easy to design 3D objects, but now we already have a market where you can buy the 3D designs for three euros and then print it at home ... ahm ... yeah there are a lot of questions emerging ahm and then also even I think that people don't realize how much waste is also going for like shipping methods. I am working in a museum shop for instance ... aaah at Futurium museum, I don't know if you know ... ahm and we're getting like daily a lot of deliveries of new supply that we need to ... to ahm ... that we need to take out of the boxes and price them and put them onto the shelves etc. ... It's been sent with so much freaking waste and this is a sustainable shop for a sustainable museum so most of it will be paper but still we are throwing away tons of cardboard and paper per day just for being shipped to us, so also to think of the fact that ahm that if you're products are going to be shipped internationally – how are they going to be ahm how are they going to be packed, what is the packaging made out of? Are you going to make your product in a way that it will be possible to ahm disassemble it to small parts and then you can, you can send it flat packed? Then you can send it this way or, or is it not the case ... eh with my chairs for instance it's not what I did ... I eh really like eh screwed them and then glued them together, so ... but theoretically it could be the case ahm as a prototype ... ahm I think for us also many times you really don't have a lot of time to design the things you want ... I mean in the industry it takes you one year to have the first prototype after which you have at least five more that people are testing, it takes two, three years to have something that is being ... that goes out to the market ... we have three months to design something out of which one month is just like freaking out because you don't know what to do

and then you have ... if you are lucky you have one and a half months to actually design something

J: Yeah

L: Ahm many times it's also not possible to unfortunately ahm to take all of it under consideration ... ahm but yeah this is definitely something that if I would ah now design furnitures I would take under consideration. IKEA, is a really good ... it's not the best, the best example when it comes to sustainable design but it's a really good example for how you can ship very big objects in the like most ahm like space saving packages ... ahm ... but ofcourse ahm yeah it's also not always that easy to construct for everyone so, if it's a chair it's not a big deal, but if it's now a PAX closet it is possible but it's not something that my seventy years old mother would do

J: yeah, yeah. but so like within you're ahm studies ah like the sustainability aspect was like the main ... was, was like a very big topic? Because I mean there are like also other aspects ofcourse that come into ahm play, like ahm I don't know who can afford it? For who is the like object designed? And so on ... and yeah I think ... yeah my ... I'm sort of interested what like the ... what maybe is the focus on and maybe it's also just a focus right now or yeah, but yeah

L: It changes between one professor to the other and then it also depends on what is the project we are bringing forward, but I think that many times ... I don't know if you have the same feeling but it happens to less ... sort of like when you are designing things at university or to much staying in the university sphere and many times you don't even manage to realize how to practice it to the actual industrial level of ... if this is something that will be done to this scale aaahm there are some professors that which approach it a bit more but I think that in general this is also a very big question, because ahm producing things out of sustainable materials and a sustainable production way will alway be way too expensive than producing things in a non sustainable way ... ahm and ofcourse it also effects the question of who can afford it. I designed now a series of seven shelves for my bachelor project and I ... the professor, one of my supervisors really tried to insist with me that I should do it out of plastic because it will be more affordable and theoretically also easier to produce but I really didn't want to do it. Ahm and I decided to make them out of aluminium, it's not the ... but it's ... it still gives them another quality. It made them way to expensive, I spent ... almost 2000 euros for this bachelor project ... ehm I can say that it's a netto production cost but I mean it would have been super, super, super expensive to buy. ofcourse this is also not the netto price because when you're producing single pieces it is always way too expensive.

J: And that's also not like, it's just the material costs, it's not like you're costs

working on it, designing it, prototyping it and so on. is also not in it.

L: No, but it wasn't just the material costs because I used eh I outsourced it and I used eh a professional company to help me produce that like in fact not a company, a factory, ... so this is why I had to pay for the lasercutting and for the bending, because I did a lot of bendings and that were, that had a lot of big radiuses which is not possible to do in our university and I wanted to have more organic shapes ... ahm and eh it was a tough decision to do but the reality is that if I would have decided to produce lets say infront of one from each shelve which means seven different shelves that they needed to produce, seven different designs ahm if I would have decided to produce twenty or onehundred or thousand of each one it means that the netto price per shelve would have been way way lower

J: Yeah, ofcourse.

L: But ofcourse you need to have the money to invest in order to make it possible ... ahm ... it is always a burgeoin between those two ahm and I think that for me that it was really really important for me to do something ahm ... those shelves I mean they have few principles and first of all they don't look like normal shelves, some of them is like a spice shelve, one of them is like a strainer shelves and it really has the shape of a strainer, some of them are normal shelves where you can place your things and they connect to the kitchen tile area with like hooks that are based on suction cups and the entire idea is that you can add them and remove them and really interact with them in a way that is sort of between a permanent thing like a shelf and sort of a vessel that you can use and [...] and then I also powder coated them so you have a really nice ahm a really nice finishing ah which is also resistant. And my idea was to have something that people can really carry for a long, long time. Like the inspiration was like those emaille plates from our grandmas that have the flowers on the that have the flowers on them and that can survive forever although at some point they are chipped off, but something that you can really carry with you, that you can also take with you easily when you are moving from one apartment to the other and I think that it also ... there is sort of like an emotional attachment value that is being developed to stuff that has certain aesthetic that I personally feel like plastic can rarely have. depends on the context, but we don't perceive stuff that are made out of plastic in a certain way ... it, it makes us treat them in the same ahm or give them the same honor

J: Yeah, do you maybe think that that's like connected to ahm like ah an emotion that is maybe like put onto a material also from like society because for instance in my survey I asked ahm ... I also asked like what people like, like what kind of chairs they like to sit on, what they disliked, what a bad chair design was and so on and ahm one of like the main thing was, or like a lot of people said like cheap plastic is something they like dislike and I

thought it was almost like this ... hmmm... yeah it's almost like instilled in us because that's just like a saying almost in a way and then through that then there is like a certain emotion attached to it and then ofcourse also like a certain way of interacting with that object ... ahm and then on the other hand like having ehm one of these emaille things that ... yeah we maybe connect some family or whatever with it then there is like a completely different interaction also with it? Maybe?

L: Ehm, yeah I am really trying to think if it's also like the fact that we are aware of plastic first of all being cheap, second of all being sort of harmful

J: Mhm

L: Ehm and I think that it's really interesting because you know like plastic especially in the context of chair doesn't necessarily have to be cheap. Some of the most expensive designer chairs, like the Panton are made out of plastic, they are made in like Spritzguss, like the injection molding methods

J: Yeah

L: super pricey and for me as a product designer I would be super happy to have a Panton chair in my house, you know, and I would keep it forever and perceive it as very cherished but it's also funny to me because I, I really like, personally, the space age aesthetic, you know, so at my home ... ahm ... at my living room for instance I have some space age objects that I bought second hand and I really like them ... and for me they really fit perfectly in my universe and I'm always trying to understand if when people see them, people that visit me and doesn't come from a design background if they look kitschy and horrible to them. I don't care, but it's just really interesting to think about the value that you have of things once you are part of a certain scene

J: Yeah

L: Actually like the design bubble is of course not representative to the entire world so it's really, it's really interesting to think about it in this context but yeah, definitely I think that ... and also like when people started using plastic like materials, I don't know if, do you know the Memphis Group?

J: Hm, I am not sure

L: It would be really cool for you to look for them because also

J: Memphis Group?

L: Yes

J: Okay

L: It's a group of designers ahm in Milan I think during the 80ies, yeah during the 80ies and they were really, really, they were super influential to the entire aesthetic of the 80ies and they had the most crazy objects with the, they used to do furniture with the most crazy aesthetic and their sort of motto was like more is more, so very contradictory to the Bauhaus movement that was very minimalistic and tried to make ahm, ahm designs from the least as possible. So here it's like, no, we are taking ornaments to the next level and they at the time used a lot of ahm ... how is it called? ehm ... the material, ah I have today a lot of blackout of vocabulary ... ahm, so for instance in a lot of DDR apartments they used to have this floor that is made out of this like, not plastic, lino?

J: Linoleum?

L: Yeah. Do you know the word in english?

J: I'm not sure. But I know what you mean, yeah.

L: So they took for instance this material and made super prestigious, but very very crazy furniture out of it

J: Mhm

L: Many times it was perceived as like, like elite design, so I think, and this is especially the, the period in which plastic with crazy prints eh emerged and started being very, very ahm very, very desired and then it also leaked into the fashion industry and all of those very, very crazy patterns hostiled from Memphis basically ... so ... I assume if you would talk to people from this period ... if you could jump into the 80ies and speak to them about how they perceived plastic objects it might be a different perspective ... ahm

J: Yeah

L: Plastic has a lot of advantages in other fields that are not specifically product design, especially when it comes to being very sterile ... very ... clean like the medicine, medical ... yeah, it's a

J: Interesting. And ahm because you said that the shelves you did for your like bachelor thesis that they had like ehm maybe like more unusual shapes or whatever than shelves would usually look like. Is that like a ... ehm ... yeah is that maybe also like a way of trying to trigger like a different interaction with an item? Or yeah what is you're hm yeah you're thought or

your intention behind ehm yeah finding different shapes, finding different colors, maybe sort of yeah ... intervening in that way ...

L: I think that for me something that I am generally super intersted in is taking like very standard designs and making like a very small change in the way they look and then it changes a bit the way you interact with them

J: Mhm

L: Ahm, so with the shelves, it was like my first goal to sort of create like a secondary working space on the wall on the kitchen tile area so that you can have more like space on your counter top while cooking but also sort of emphasize the fact that the kitchen is a space that is made for cooking, because I feel that is something that was really lost now a days with the amount of people ordering their food from Volt and with all of those also ... airfryer machines that I personally hate that you're supposed to take all of, everything you have in your refrigerator and it just this robot that brings your meal back

J: Mhm, mhm, mhm

L: And I wanted to do something that sort of like celebrates cooking and the fact that this what is happening in the space so to also combine a workshop aesthetic a bit in the way it looks like which is something that was very evident in the 30ies and 40ies and if you know like the Frankfurter kitchen [...] and was very lost in the last years also there are also positive aspects with but especially since the living rooms started to be merged with the kitchens, so you have the open space kitchen designs and then we started really trying to hide the kitchen as much as possible and make it blend with the, with the, like with the rest of the house to make it very representable ... so I wanted to design something that said like this is what happens here and ... you know like this is something that, that has flexible features ahm ... but still ahm so this was part of the design and I think that also for me it was necessary to think okay shelve is used ... is important because you can layer groceries on but maybe to have a dedicated shelve that has hole where you can put your spatula and and that has space for all of your spices, which again it's not revolutionary to have a spice shelf but eh to have one ... that has the shape of a strainer and has holes underneeth so you can for instance wash your veggies and fruits and then to instead of leaving them in the sink you can keep it free and hang them on the hooks to hang on the wall while they are drying on the tiles ... so to think about those functionalities and ... ehm ... so I think in a way it's a very practical thinking but it always comes from a bit more of a ... of trying to understand something about society or trying to understand something about what, what we need for ahm yeah, and in this sense it was also a decision also on the sustainable level maybe ... ahm making them out of plastic and make them

ah like the idea was to make them suitable for injection molding ... ah ... do you know what it is?

J: It's where you have like a like a ahm, what's it called ... a cast and then you sort of pour it into, or?

L: You inject it and you have to, you need to have ahm like a walls where it can come in, it's a very, very complicated and expensive method because creating those molds is very expensive but once you have them you can produce basically each of for ten euros, so it's way, way cheaper but again I'm not thinking of it as this is how kitchens should look like this is what everyone needs this is a suggestion that might fit certain people I don't look at it like something that should be mass produced but I think it would be good to be able to offer it to many people and then the question would also be how to design it maybe in a way or how to produce it in a way that would make it more affordable price wise because I for instance couldn't afford my shelve now, but ehm ...

J: But It's also like a modular system or? That you could sort of eh pick and choose and see what works for your needs

L: Exactly, you don't need to have them all. Even if you do have them all you don't need to have them all hanging all the time or at all you can just leave the hooks on the wall or not ... ahm and just puzzle them whenever you need them ... there are also very, because they are made out of aluminium they are very thin and light ... ah the reason I chose aluminium for instance and not eh steel is because aluminium is three times lighter and it is important to keep the weight capacity for the groceries and the tools themselves ahm and not for the shelves. Because suction cups have their limitations and right now each shelve can carry around four kilos which is good, but if each shelve would have weight one and a half kilos it would have been way too much and I now it's like 500 grams so it's really light.

J: Yeah, so basically you have like ... so many restraints in a way, like your own but then also materials ofcourse, costs, you name it and now the way I sort of ahm ... heard was that you sort of have to in a way also pick and choose like your battles in a way? Because it's pretty much almost impossible to ... cater to everything? Meaning like topics, bodies, materials, eh etc. and ehm that's something I also learned through the survey I did that there is often like for instance also one chair that is ehm dedicated to one specific task and that it's often not the case that there is one chair that does everything and so this idea of also what you said in the beginning of ... ahm ... yeah one fits me all product that it's kind of hard to do ehm ... but then also again in ... tied to like the whole sustainability aspect ahm ofcourse it gets sort of complicated

L: I eh think that it's also hard for us to perceive that sometimes our progressive ideas of diversity in the context of product design can be contradictive to other goals we have, as people that are ...

J: But are like aspects of gender for instance ahm ... is, was that ever something ahm you had in like your curricula? Or not so much?

L: Ehm ... not really, no. I must say that I think that my faculty is by far the least political one ... at UdK ... ahm

J: Interesting

L: To some extent I might say for me ahm ... it was even a relief because I had a very, very hard year politically ... but eh I, I, in many courses I did have the possibility of approaching like the gender aspect ... ahm ... it also depends a bit on, on the professor with which you do the course. The head of our department is a very, very, very complicated figure I would say. Her name is Ineke Hans and she's ah a quite succesful product designer – does especially furniture – ahms, she's pushing a lot for instance the sustainability aspect although you feel that in many of the courses it's still being conveyed in a very superficial level in a way ... but ahm she's sort of like a female designer that ahm I think right now she's around her sixties, she's around sixty years old and she had, she gained a lot of recognition and success in Europe, she is Dutch originally, around eh the last ... I would say she started in the 90ies and I guess in the last twenty years she managed to really pave her way ... but she really adjusted to a lot of ... of eh ... menly discriminating behaviours and she is promoting those subjects unfortunately and even when you are taking her courses she can even be ahm ... she can even be a bit ... ahm ... ahm oppressive. Like if you want to deal with certain subjects, she would be like nah, like, like she wouldn't really let you dig into certain directions ... so and since she is also the head of the department she's not really promoting courses in those areas ... not really ... so I think this is ahm yeah but I did have my chance to deal with ... ahm I guess it was mainly in two projects I did. One was that ... I designed an object eh it was in like a course that is between design and art and I designed an object that has no specific aim and it's aesthetic it's, I think you saw it right?

J: Yeah, yeah

L: I took inspiration for it form sex toys and children toys and self defense tools and then I speculated what will happen if you put this object with this package in, in the in the context of stores in all of those fields and how would people perceive and interact with them ... I think this is also interesting to think of, like ... if you, if you find [...] exactly the same object in a certain children toy store or in a sex store for adults and how would

people, I guess like the gender aspect is ofcourse related to it but also not very directly refered ... and the second one was very early, it was in my third year and I designed ahm ... I am jewish, I come from a jewish family ahm and I'm also Israeli and I designed ahm ... a wine carafe ahm with four wine cups and the carafe sort of has the wine cups sitting on it and I designed it for the Shabat ritual, which is a ritual that is being, do you know it?

J: Yeah, a little, not super detailed, but yeah.

L: So basically on Shabat, ususally it's like on Friday we're doing sort of ... to be honest I grew up sort of secular, so we haven't practiced it a lot but I have a wine cup that you're blessing ahm the people in the room with and you're blessing the Shabat, sort of inviting it to come in ahm and usually it is like the male figure of the house that is doing it while holding the cup and then everyone is passing it for the other participants and everyone takes one sip from the same cup, which I've always found very unhygiene ... and sort of this eh wine carafe that is very heavy and you have those rounded cups that sit on it and in order to start pouring the wine you need to take all cups down, first of all place them on the table and only then you can do it and then the idea is that each one has their own cup and that there is now hierarchy, there is no gender hierarchy or whatever within the ritual and each one can either do it together as a communal ritual or, or, or bless over their own wine ... ahm so this was also something ahm but I must say that it always came from my direction. I never took any course at our university and I don't think it was even offered that dealt with such aspects ... which I must say it's ... it's very ... it's very absurd, because we are dealing with all kinds of social phenomena and this is something that ... is very rooted in the way we are and it's not only that it's a very hyped and discussed political subject also that it's, it's super relevent because it's there with every interaction we have. Yeah I think it would have defenitely been positive ahm if htis would change. To be honest knowing my department ... I would be very positively surprised if this would come.

J: Yeah, I mean I think I had similar experiences to be honest ehm ... also just like references like that were made and ofcourse Bauhaus was always the go to although the're like so many different projects you would have been able to reference and different like aesthetics and you name it. I mean its always also like a very ... ehm ... and I mean that's also something that I sort of saw in, in, in like the answers from my survey that ehm there is ofcourse like this ehm ... yeah this like aesthetic and this visual language basically that is so instilled based on like the stuff ehm that was instilled in us through like institutions of all sort and ehm ... yeah the institution both of us studied at ahm at least also in our, our department was very specific on like ... ehm ... topics and ehm ... and ya just procedures and aesthetics and so on ... ehm

L: But do you know if it, if it remained the same because I have a few friends that study at Medienhaus nowadays

J: Mhm. I think it also really depends on the person as you said in the beginning, like the person teaching a course and stuff like that ... ahm ... ya, I don't know there are some, some characters that, that were like ... ehm yeah eh ... on like the very high spectrum of Bauhaus and super sexist and ... ofcourse then also like hierarchies that are in there and things ... ahm ahm ...

L: Yeah, yeah it very ... mhm ... Even for us it is sort of similar. It is very absurd that like, like the most ... sort of oppressive person is actually like the, the, the, the female head of the department but in general all the others like, all the other professors that had a fixed position and that were there for thirty years ... very old german guys ... like they all retired in the last two years and the department was just left with no professors which ehm Ineke is very happy with because she can bring guest professors all the time without having someone there for a fixed position and then do whatever she wants. She is the only one making decisions ... But also a lot of instability because people are coming and going every semester almost or every two semesters. We need to have five supervisors for our bachelor projects

J: Five? What?

L: Two for like the mündliche Prüfung, which is part of the, of the process and we need to have three more for the project itself ... and it wasn't easy because I had to take some people I had never studied with, because most of the ones I studied with are gone, which is yeah ... UdK is ... yeah

J: Maybe, yeah I don't want to steal too much time from you but ehm maybe one thing you also touched on with like the ehm object you designed that was, that didn't have like a necessary usecase ah where you also said that it was ehm like this thing between design and art ahm ... and yeah I wanted to ask you like ehm in which way your practices differ or like intertwine and also maybe this question of ahm ... eh ... yeah, I don't know when like a product or whatever is more like a design piece or more like a art piece and if you can even like ... eh distinguish that because ahm a lot of ehm reactions I also got was ehm that certain chairs in this case for instance were more created not for like the sitting aspect but as like a sculpture I would say ahm and ... yeah I thought it was interesting because ahm they often questioned like sitting behaviours or ahm different norms and stuff ahm but then in the end they were not made for sitting and ehm or like for the usecase that that object is sort of intended for and yeah I think I'm sort of wondering ehm ... which or if it's maybe easier to question certain things ... eh with an object that is not intended to be used but more as like a sculpture or something like that, that, that more has like the intention of

questioning in itself? If you can relate to that?

L: Ahm ... it's interesting because you know even when like eh I think that also in the visual language of how stuff are made there are things that indicate to us that they operate in a way we know or that we recognize them ... because if, if you would have given your iPhone to someone from the sixties they would never know what to do with it. They would never resemble it with the phones they had back then ... but you can take someone's ehm Android and you would know immediately how to use it because you know the visual language and even if it's something less high tech, even if you just take a box and there will be just bottoms on it or holes you will immediately think if you can put something inside or if you should press it. There are things that our brain already knows how to translate in ways we know and I think that when we see something that we don't know, or something that we know how it operates but when this time we can not use it the same way, it does make us question and wonder. I think that also the question is, you asked if ... if it is something eh when does it stop being art and when does it start to be something that is design? And I think that ... something that is design, designed can also be a sculptural thing ... but when it comes to Product Design ... if you just ... look at it from this perspective and make this shift you will always have the criterias of functionality

J: Yeah

L: Many times it will be measured or criticized by how eh functional it is although ofcourse Product Design can be also made or used in order to ... to, to ... to convey a certain message and it can still be practical ahm and for instance with the wine carafe that I did for the Shabat ritual it is very practical but it also, it says okay ... let's try to do it in a different way this time ... ahm ... and changing tradition is already something very controvercial ahm I think that ... ahm deciding that you take tools that are used in gynecology field and are making them more ahm friendly to the bodies that are, that they are serving ah really considering the human experience of them which was not made while they were created is something super political but also very practical ... so you can decide which ... which route you're sort of taking with it ... I think that for me ... I enjoy both but I do have the very practical aspect in me. I enjoy art and I enjoy going to museums and also for myself I enjoy doing prints and collages ... ahm ... but I also feel ... for me that there is a potential for interaction or for a shift in behaviour when I'm designing something. This is something that I'm super passionate about ... But yeah its, its, its a bit hard to say when, when does it starts and when does it eh stop like the boundaries between eh art and design as you defined before ... I also did for instance my internship in this super nice studio in Berlin that is called studio, studio Berg. You can check it out. And ehm the studio owner she actually used to also study at my department ten years ago ... and she is creating super nice

objects, she also has some sitting objects that are made out of glass and have a candy shape and pattern ... ahm and her objects are first of all super expensive because their production costs are super expensive, they are produced here in Europe. And second of all ehm they are really on the boundary between design and ... and art and sometimes even their functionality is questioned but they are still like ah sort of like a center piece, you know, and that you have them at your home not fitting to everyone's style but it is like ... a statement object ... and just like when you have a huge candy chair in your living room already probably says something about your personality ... but ahm ... yeah I mean eventually I think that objects and design are a bit like clothing. It is also a way to express our personality ... and something that is being very ... sort of vague that through this like entire IKEA eh and, and like ... Scandinavian movement that sort of standardized sort of everything to be very like ... schematic and, and, and same like ... this is something that I at least like to break a bit with how stuff looks or how I'm using them.

J: Yeah, yeah and do you think that ahm sort of changing the process the way you, you approach the design process or some sort that, that like changes the the outcome? So for instance, I don't know if ehm, I don't know I had one, one example for instance where a person was reading a specific book and it was about like community and so on and that book for instance ehm ja influenced the design process a lot and that was sort of ... coincidence in a way – I mean not completely, because the person chose to read it – but ahm ... yeah ... ehm ...

L: I am not sure I understand the question entirely.

J: Yeah, maybe like ... if you think that ahm ... or maybe let's frame it differently. That ahm, I, or I often have the feeling that, and I know it from myself, that there are sort of like scripts that I ... where I am like ah okay I need to ... now for instance in Graphic Design or whatever I need to design ehm a book or a poster of whatever and then I have like ah okay I need to first do this, then I need to do this, then I need to do this and so on it is almost like a script that I ... ehm sort of yeah work with and do like check, check, check and then in the end I have the feeling that ehm because I followed the script in a way it often leads to similar ehm outcomes ... and if, yeah if you've maybe had the experiences of like ... yeah working in design processes and maybe changing these processes and how they then ahm effected the outcome

L: I am not sure I think that design processes to be honest are always quite similar. Like starting with an idea of something that bothers me or something that intrigues me or something that I want to explore or something that I think doesn't work well. Then I was starting to think about what I can make to change it and then usually it starts from many, many, many sketches and

the sketches turn into 3D sketching with like ehm autocut programmes and then usually I am doing some cardboard models and then it really goes into the prototyping. I think what is mostly changing maybe I can relate to what you said about the book that he read ... you know like life circumstances and situations and the most random situations we can find ourselves in can be influential for things we do ... so for instance now for this project what really gave me the drive to do it was that we moved to a new apartment and we had a new kitchen that I really liked because our kitchen in our old apartment was super shitty and now we had like a proper, not like a fancy kitchen, but a proper one, with a proper stove that works and like fitted cabinets and everything and I enjoyed it so much and on the other hand it is very narrow, there is not a lot of space so I needed to calculate every movement, like sort of like where do I position things and this is sort of like ... I think it was eh something that gave me like the, the ... made me feel like I wanted to dig into this direction. Ahm but I think that I ... different projects in different life phases and different stuff influenced them. I did a master project that was maybe much more like Communication Design in a way because I went for a walk, it was spring, I saw the craziest flower I saw in my life and for me it really yeah maybe its also gender related, its, it really reminded me of like eh a uterus shape and also a bit of a clitoris shape. Its called decentile, if you want to look for it afterwards and then I started, I decided to make a growing kit for this flower with brochures and a lot of information about it that compare it to, to the female repro... eh ... basically ... reproduction, like, like to our yeah to our ... reproduction organs whatever ... ahm so ... you know and ... it was just something that started out of going in the park and seeing a flower ... so I don't know eventually we ... design things for real life eh situations and many times the designs come, the design comes from experiencing those situations. I think this might be more ... yeah ...

J: Yeah, no, its a good point and it sort of closes also the circle to that the objects then again sort of influence us and then it influences again the design process and so on. Its like this never ending ehm circle maybe in a way.
[...]

L: I think it's also really interesting to think about this intersection. The only thing that I thought of that we didn't spoke about is also the, the, the subject of bodies that is also very relevant to Product Design and to chair design. For me like being a curvy woman I encountered many chairs in my life that weren't comfortable or that didn't fit my size and ehm yeah I'm always trying to do the chairs a bit wide to fit also bigger ahm bottoms but eh ... yeah defenitely its eh really interesting and yeah I think its a, its really cool that you are doing it because many times ehm ... people are not aware, we're just taking stuff around us for granted and we don't think of who made them and how they were made and why and how does it influence for the good

and for the bad and its good to wonder about that stuff.

J: Yeah its also like eh I'm always interested in like the responsibility aspect of like designing and I find it also especially ehm interesting in the context of that the design industry itself is not necessarily or like in a lot of spaces at least not a industry that is regulated and I mean that is another topic for itself but still ehm there is not like ehm ... like some sort of ... ah I don't know rules or yeah also again very big topic and controversial but ahm like eh yeah there is not like a codex or something that it has to be for ehm that it has to fulfill certain criterias ahm and also a lot of people can do it without, with like very different backgrounds, which is ofcourse nice, but I think it also ... ahm ... yeah people have ... different experiences and take those experiences and then that sort of then again shapes everything. So ya, I think that is also an aspect I'm very interested myself also for my own practice but in general ahm yeah, that is why I'm doing it.