

Design Diary

Siyana Ivanova

25 March.

25/03/21

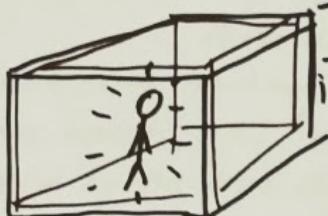
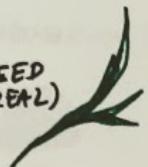
Feldenkrais
experiences

Floating

→ MOST HELPFUL VISUAL
FOR STANDING STILL

OCEAN
VIBES

(IMAGINARY SEAWEED
IS BETTER THAN REAL)



Imagining/positioning
in space

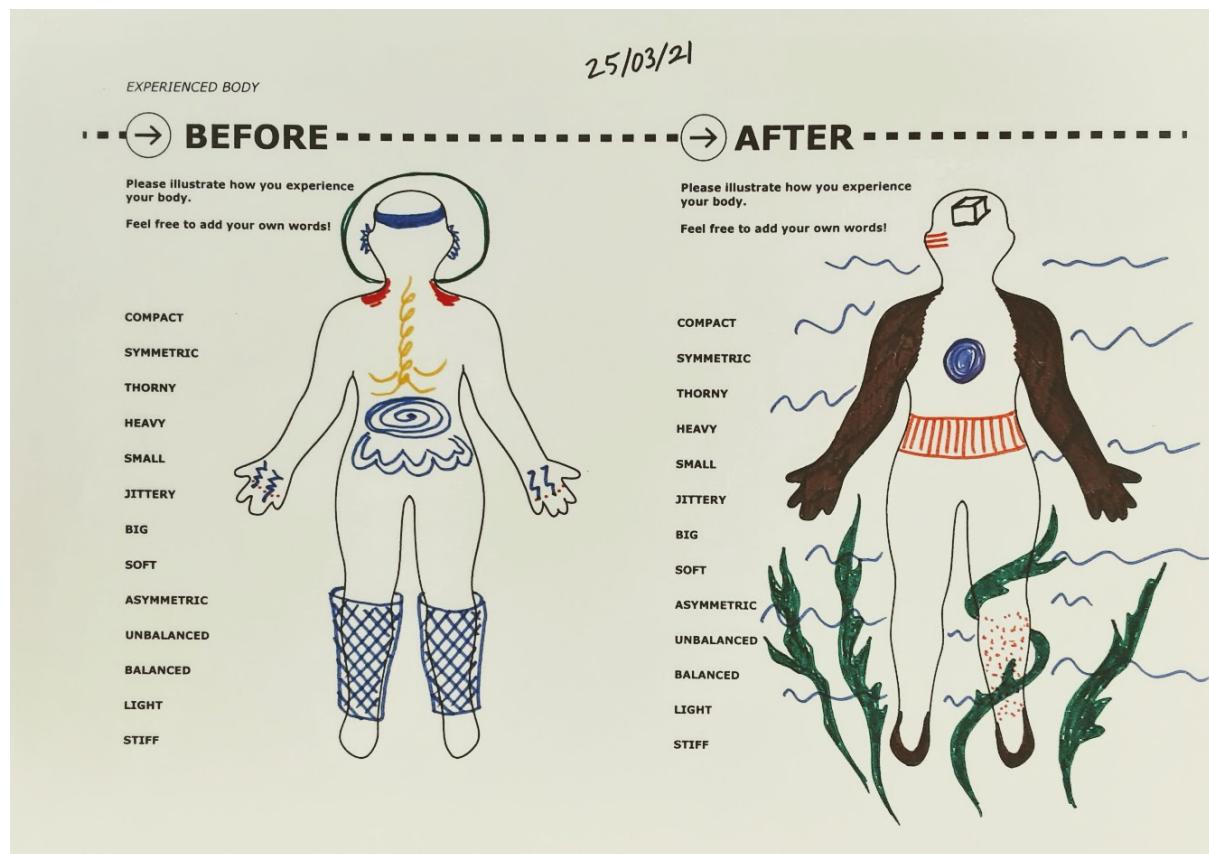
- EASY

- VISUAL TASK = GIANT RANGE
(PREFER SEVERAL
STREETS TO 1 ROOM)

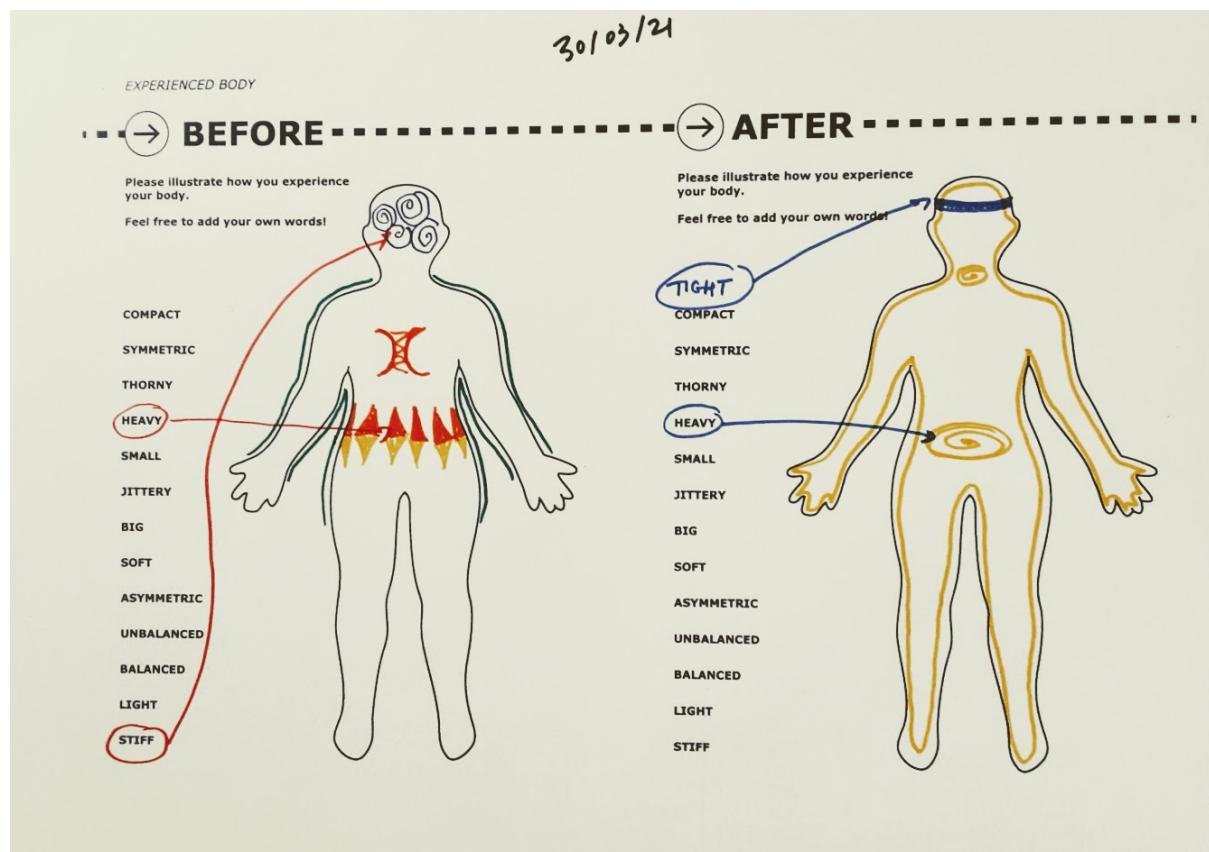
- STANDING STILL IS ANNOYING (MOSTLY HANDS)
- EASY IF YOU IMAGINE THINGS!
- DIFFERENT MINDFULNESS METHODS HAVE LOTS IN COMMON
- I WISH I HAD A SOFTER CARPET



This was my first experience with Feldenkrais, but not with body awareness and meditation as a whole, so none of it felt exactly new. During the parts where we were grounding ourselves in the room I had trouble keeping my mind to just the four walls, floor, and ceiling - I had placed the rest of my apartment and the streets on either side in my mental map/image before I could stop and think about it. I chalk it up to thinking very visually in general. As a whole it was relaxing and I got sleepy.



30 March.





The second Feldenkrais experience was similar to the first in that I got rather sleepy, but overall felt a little more boring since I already knew what to expect. The drawing was

made afterwards as a rumination on both experiences and how the bodily sensations affected my state of mind.

31 March.

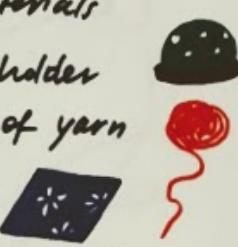
31/03/21

A-Labs



I had a phone with a vibration app and those materials

- 1) a pin holder
- 2) a ball of yarn
- 3) a cloth



It was interesting to see how each of them disperses the vibration from the phone. We also tried touching the phone with different body parts (fingers, hands, legs). We involved different senses as instructed by the A-lab sheets.

At this rather early stage it is hard for me to relate today's exercise to designing an elevator. I guess it remains to be seen how it will come into play.

CONCLUSIONS

- / There are many ways to engage
- / Thoughtful design makes a difference
- well at the medium and connects materials or qualities with materials



Felt inspired to think about materials and how they can be experienced and interpreted.

DH2629 | Aesthetic Laboration
 Host: Jiating
 Blindfolded
 Camera:
 Material: bank card, glass bottle, key (plastic), vibration

31/03/21

glass bottle: extremely strong vibration, water not moving
 bank card: stronger vibration, familiar feeling (phone + card often together)
 Key: much stronger vibration

no licking :)

- difficult to describe
- feels like touching a bee
- only on finger, not the rest of the hand

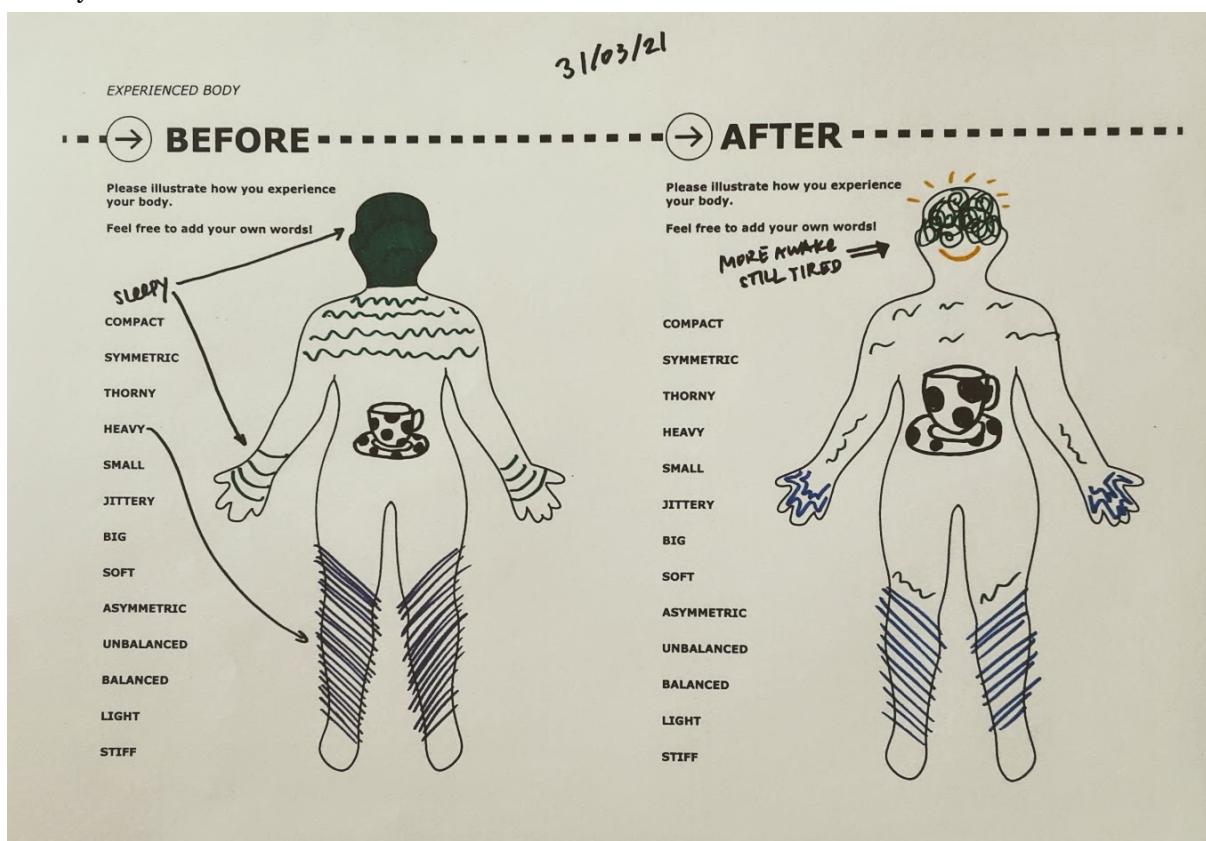
- bottom finger gets stronger vibration
 - top one gets higher frequency but more gentle

- no smell

- entire face is vibrating when phone touches ear
 - 1-2cm distance: no feeling but can still hear it
 - other ear (right) hears the sound more

- it's a phone
 - no movement can be seen
 - now used to see vibration
 - slight movement when putting materials on top of the phone

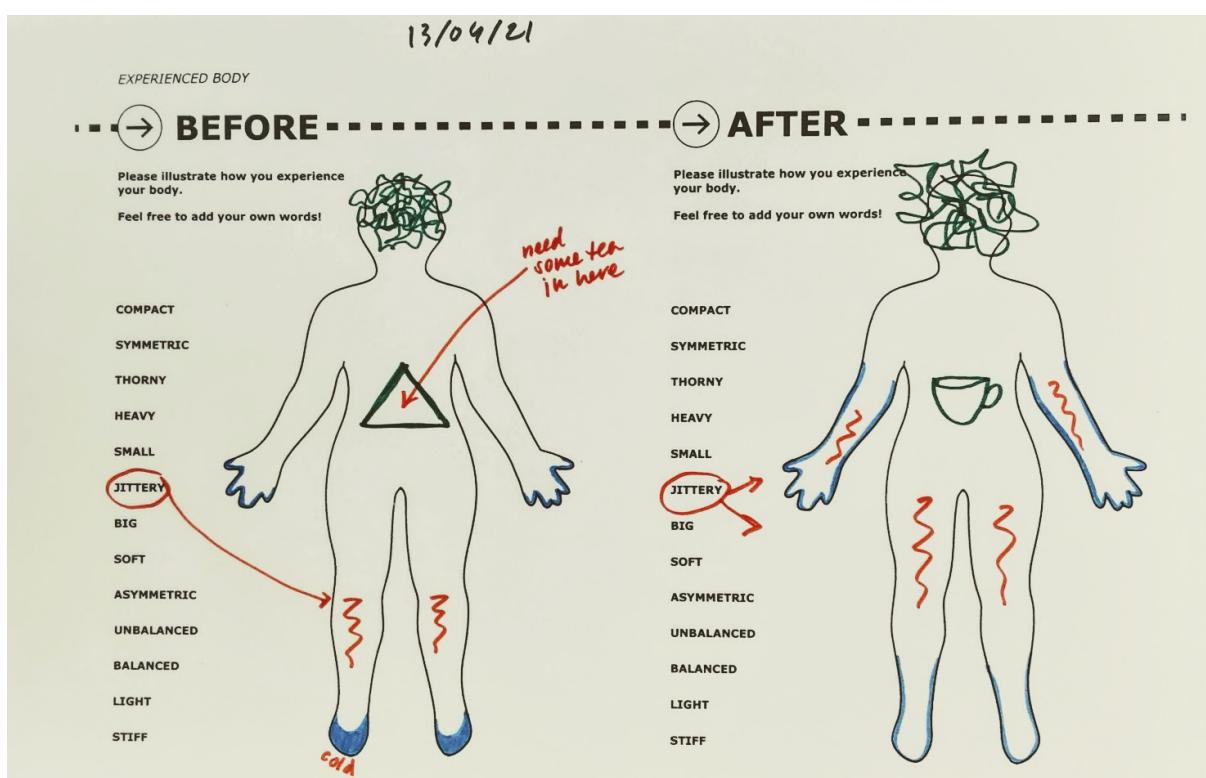
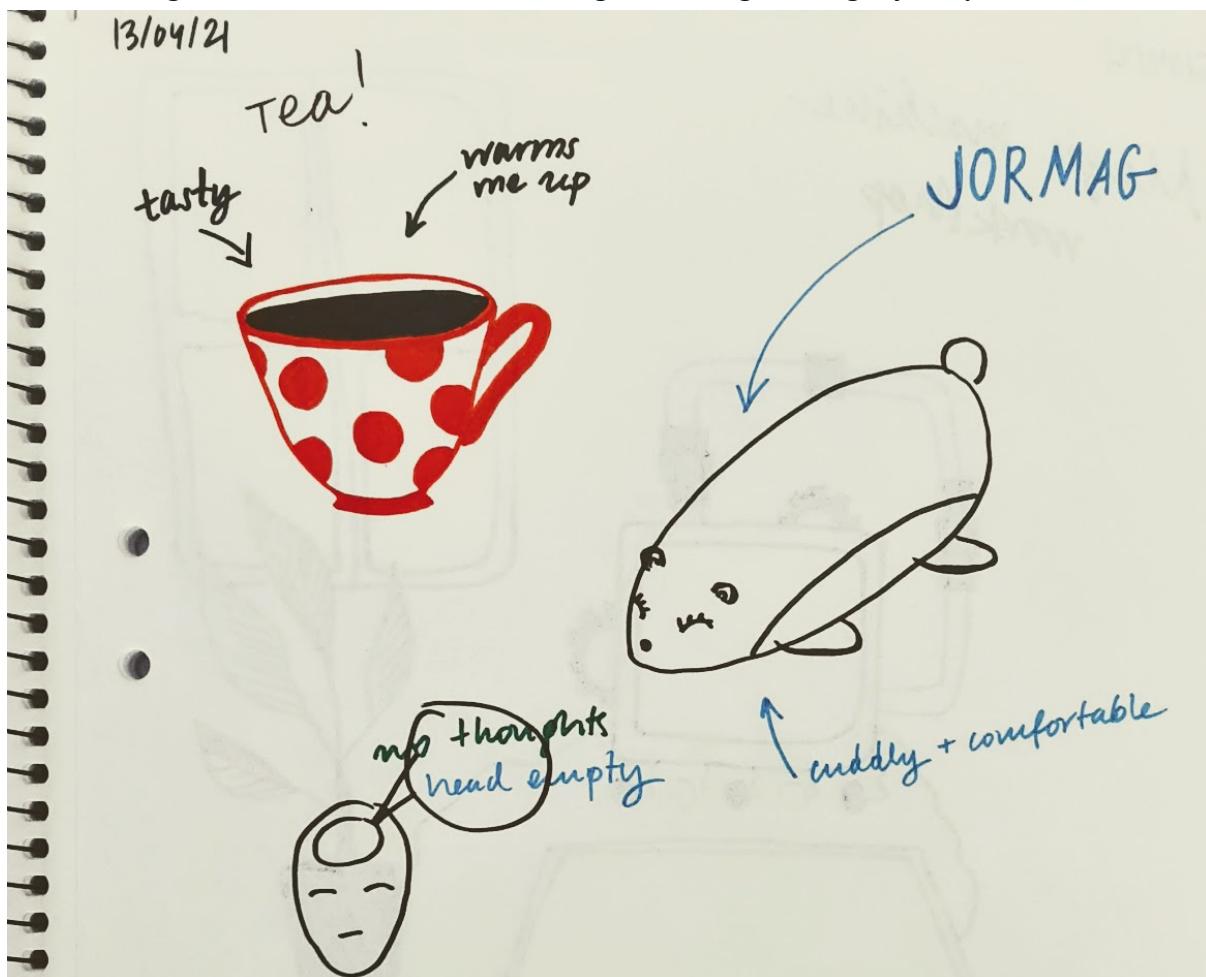
I feel like the lab was also a good opportunity to bond with my project group, as we had to rely on each other.



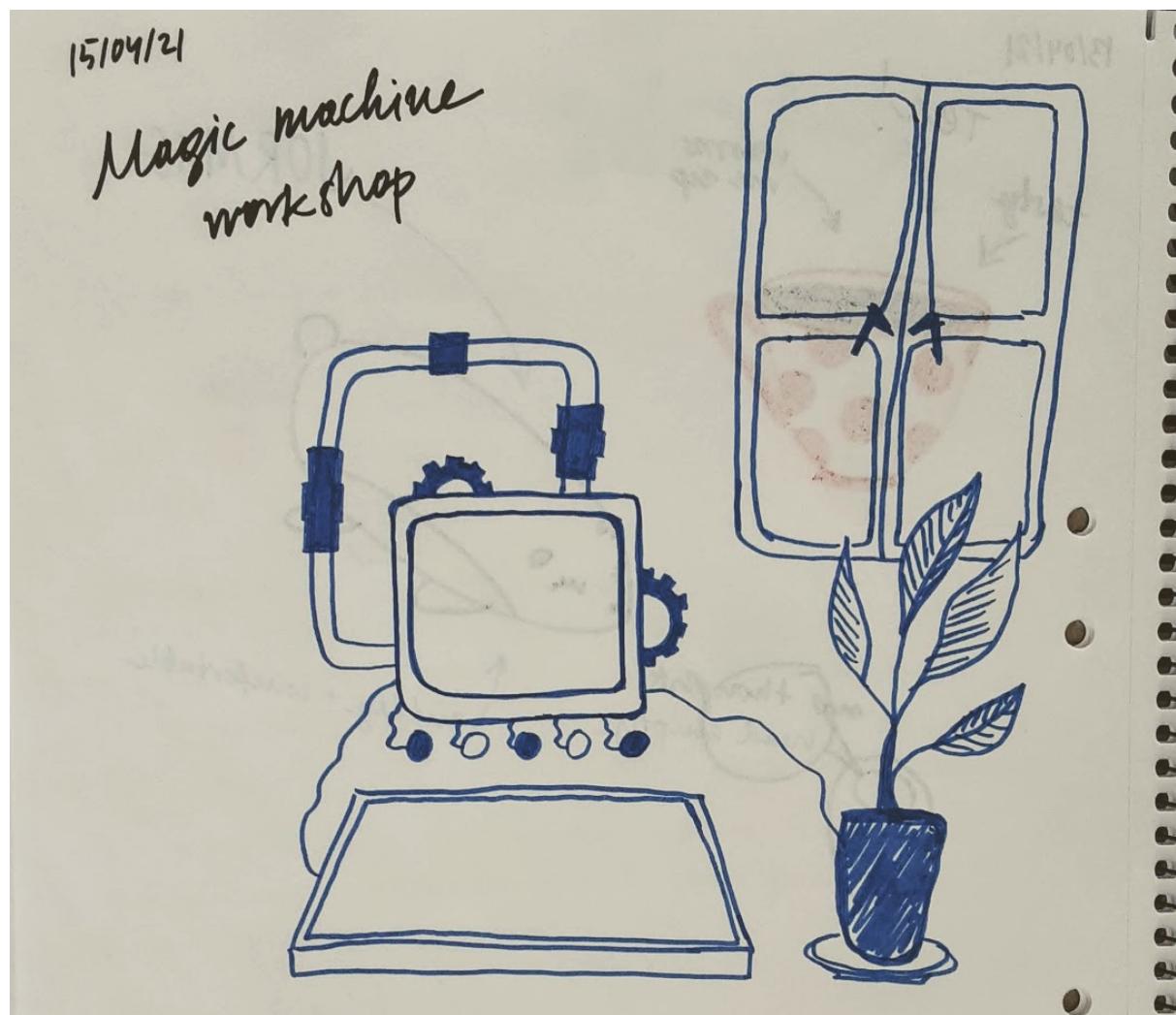
1 April. A-labs could also be applied to entire objects or even a concept (such as time).



13 April. The exercise was pleasant: made me feel cosy, at home. A good feeling to store in the feelings vault. I do have trouble sitting still though, and got jittery.

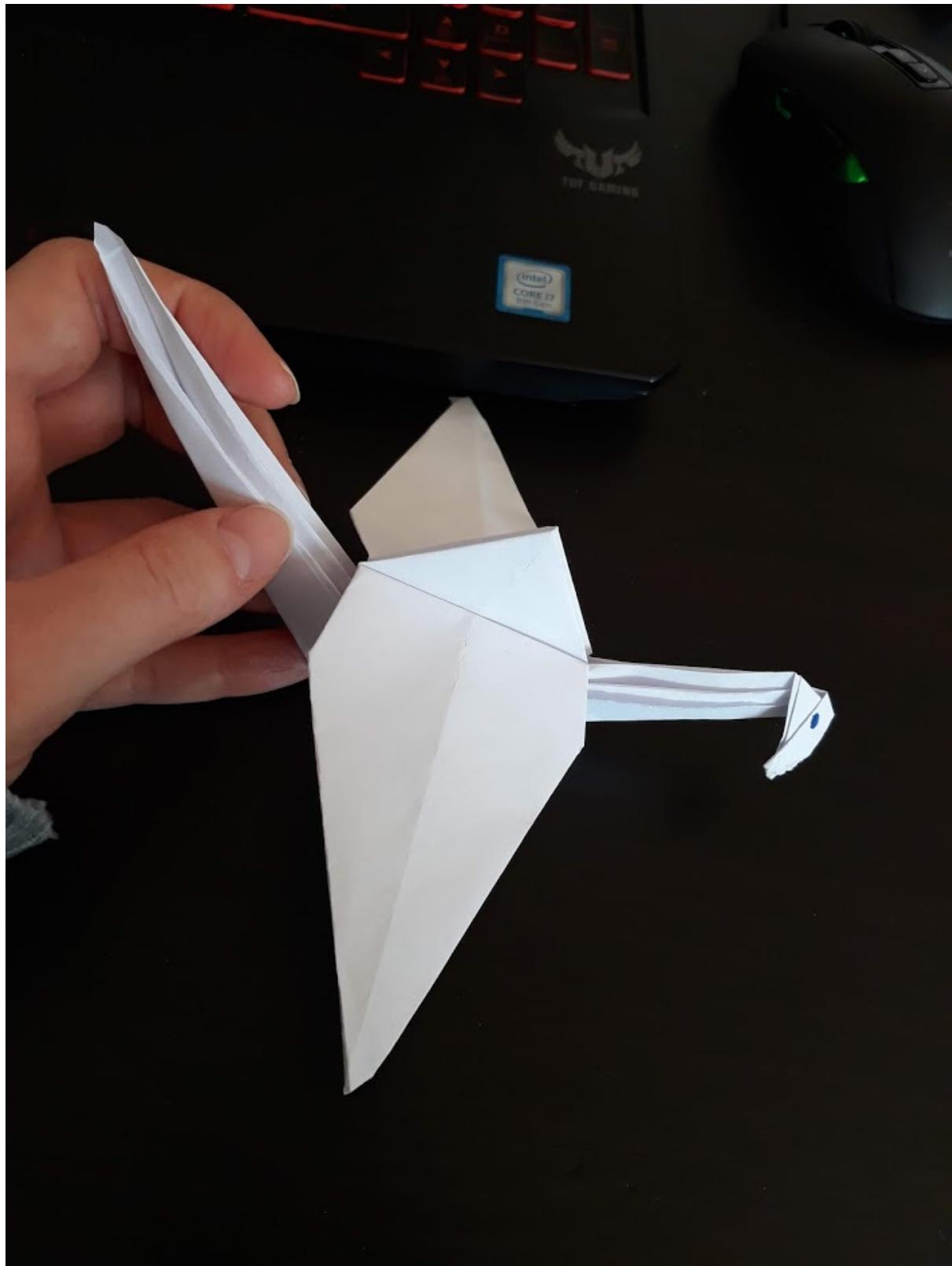


15 April.



This was an interesting one, because it was simultaneously about imagination and kind of ground mine to a halt. Immediately after hearing the task, I began drawing the above sketch (didn't have that many materials available at the time besides paper), which is of a machine that would let me daydream by freeing up the time for me to do so: magically writing all my essays, quietly putting the content of papers and tutorials in my head, coding, painting, giving people the impression that I am present at a meeting, and maybe even releasing hot cups of strong black tea from somewhere. But soon enough I realised I had kind of misunderstood the task, which seemed to be more about the process of daydreaming rather than the circumstances which would be optimal for it to occur. This is where I got stuck, because, funny enough, I cannot imagine a machine to help me with imagining things: it's a very central part of how I grew up, as I'm sure it was for many many people who were raised among a multitude of reading material and with little opportunity to socialize. It's a rather strange thought that somebody could ever want a machine to help with daydreaming, magic or no magic. So, I arrived at a compromise. In the photo is George. George is my magical daydreaming machine: he is not a model or prototype. He is fully functional and no additional assistance is required

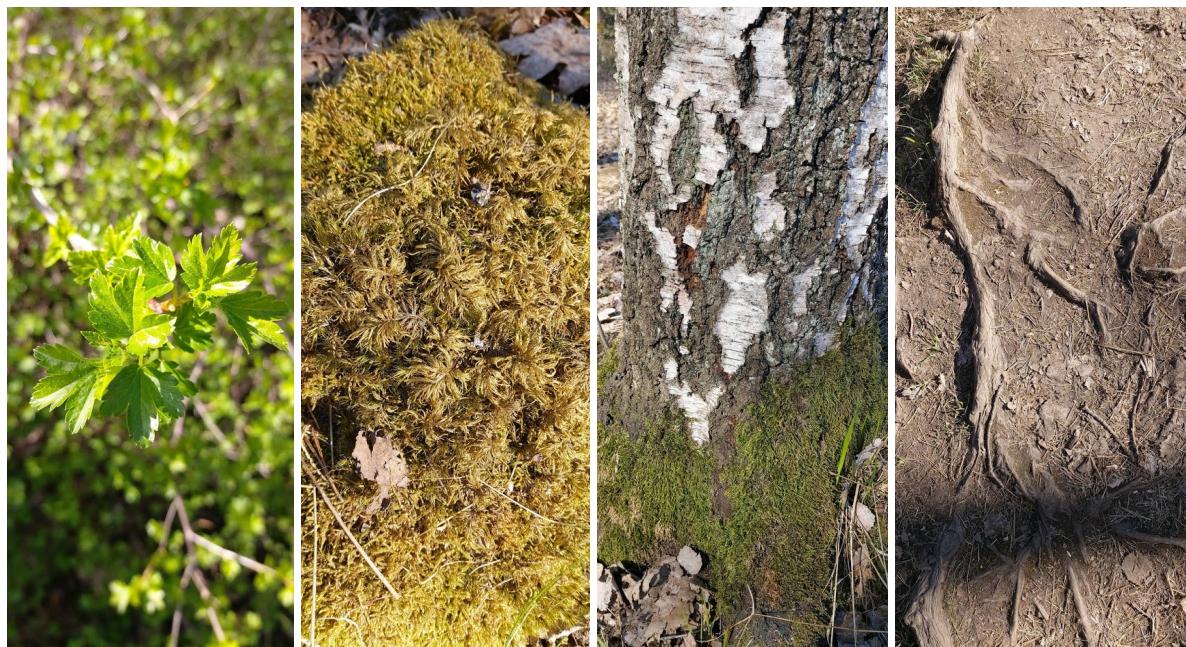
- he works out of the box, metaphorically speaking, since he did not come in a box. I've drawn an eye on him even though you don't usually draw on origami, but I felt like he needed one. I guess I can conclude that a machine that helps with daydreams does one of two things in my mind: frees you from capitalism's grasp on your time, or nothing.



Besides the workshop, we also had a group meeting to work on a Miro board for the first project checkpoint. I feel like while we didn't entirely commit solely to the methods from the course so far, we did take them into consideration when selecting the images on the board, which stand in for feelings and sensations we want to evoke, materials and objects we like, and random ideas that came from simply brainstorming.

19 April. After receiving feedback, we've decided to schedule some exercises to be done either separately or together, in order to expand the design space and incorporate the methods from the course more - starting with a slow walk on Tuesday.

20 April. Slow walk day! I had high expectations and that is probably why I am disappointed. I take walks (sometimes really long ones up to 30km) very regularly, and use them as a problem-solving tool, as a way to clear my brain, as unhindered and unjudged imagination/inspiration time, and to tire myself out completely in order to fix my sleep schedule. So I assumed it would be easy to adapt them for yet another purpose; however, my brain is so used to doing all these other things when I go on a walk that it kind of refused to stop doing all of them at once. Plus, I was sort of unconsciously hurrying because of all the other things I have to get done today. It didn't help at all that it was noisy, too warm, and I met quite a few people, but it helped even less that my main somatic experience was that of being hungry and really wanting a snack. I guess I got one thing related to the project from all this: we could slow the elevator down, like say four times the speed, and place a vending machine in it so that people may have a little break from whatever it is they're doing and get a nice snack. I did see some nice forest textures as well, and saw/heard a lot of birds. These are some interesting textures I found on the walk and wanted to document since the textures and smells of the forest are among my favourite things to enjoy when out on a regular walk.



20/04/21

EXPERIENCED BODY

--- → BEFORE --- → AFTER ---

Please illustrate how you experience your body.

Feel free to add your own words!

COMPACT

SYMMETRIC

THORNY

HEAVY

SMALL

JITTERY

BIG

SOFT

ASYMMETRIC

UNBALANCED

BALANCED

LIGHT

STIFF



→ AFTER

Please illustrate how you experience your body.

Feel free to add your own words!

COMPACT

SYMMETRIC

THORNY

HEAVY

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JITTERY

BIG

SOFT

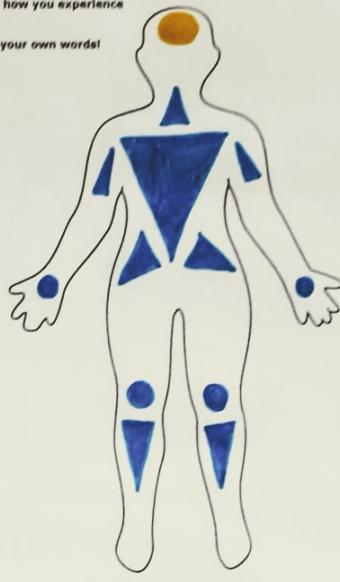
ASYMMETRIC

UNBALANCED

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LIGHT

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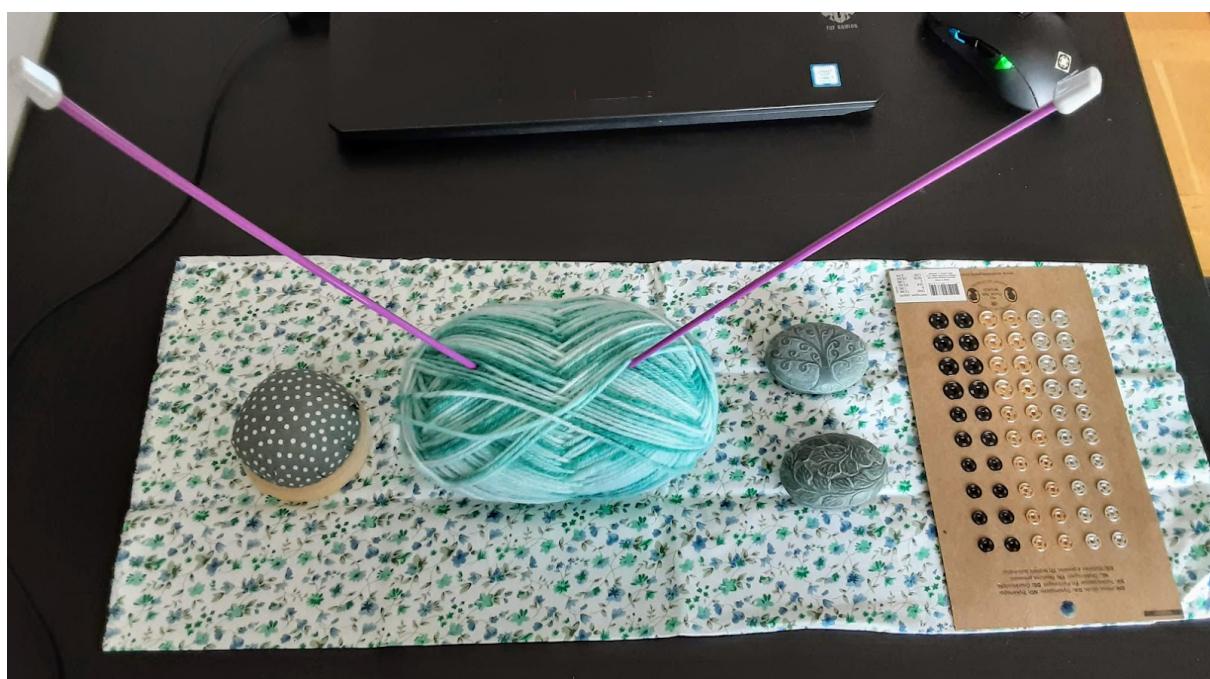


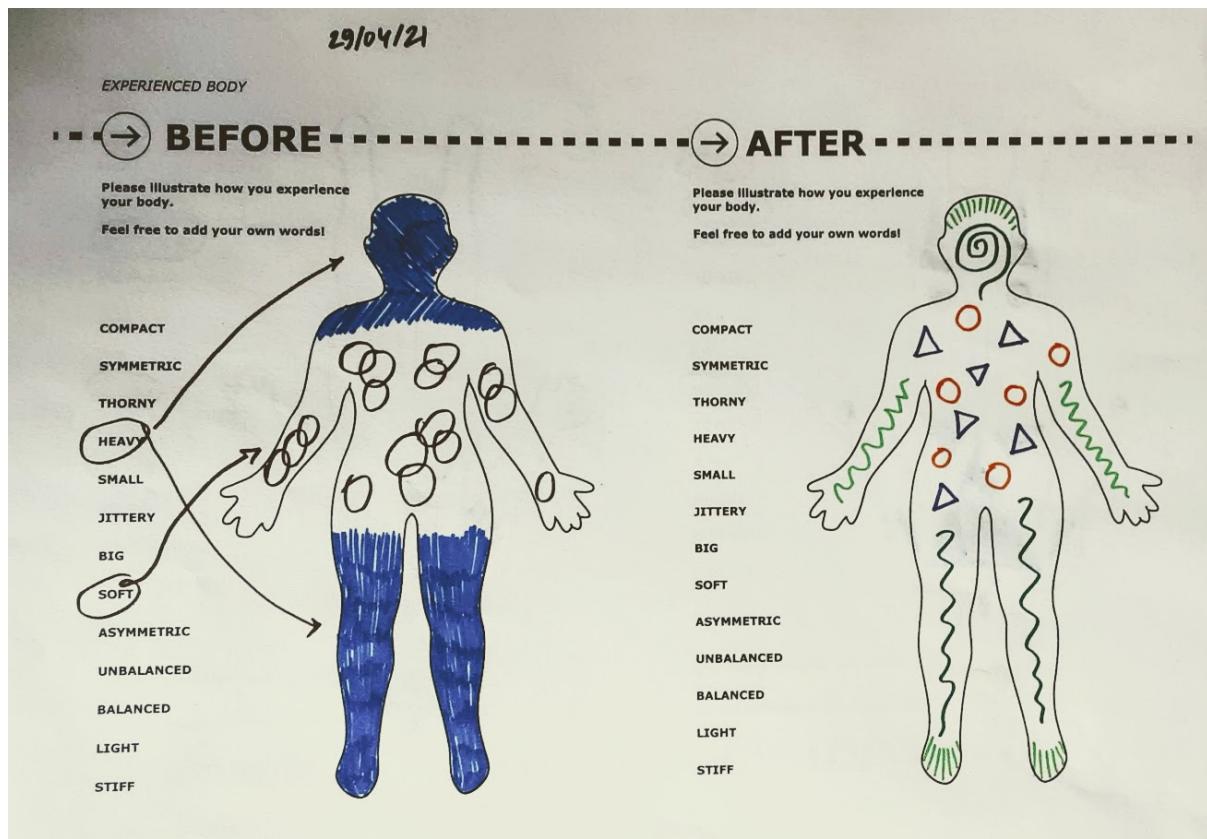
24 April. Had an interesting dream featuring an elevator, dinosaur bones, an abandoned train track, and a lot of nonsensical action sequences. Drew a picture.



27 April. I've been watching a livestream showing the annual moose migration across a river in Northern Sweden. It occurred to me that it can be a similar experience to slow walking, since once you kind of get into just sitting and observing the animals, the trees, the water without really thinking about anything, it is easy to slip into a similarly meditative state. The sound is especially conducive to this. It's a part of nature that usually remains unseen for most people, and so it's easier to forget yourself just watching what's happening on the stream. On a less relevant note, I was unaware that so many people were down to watch hours of content with no voiceover whatsoever and get invested in the lives of moose, cranes, reindeer etc. But now that I think of it, it's not that surprising. I bet if people had more time on their hands and were less chronically tired, they'd pay a lot more attention to what's happening around and about.

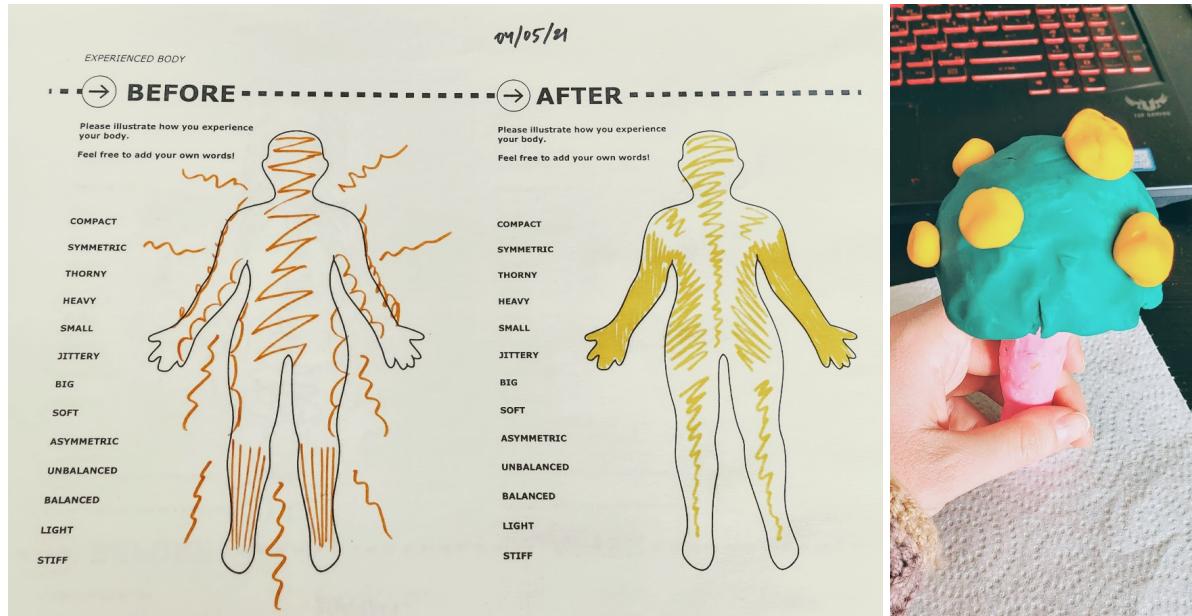
29 April. Meeting with project group. We made magic machines for transportation and traveling. The "button" on the right is the on/off button. The machine has two modes: slow travel and fast travel, chosen via the two buttons represented by the carved rocks. Slow travel allows you to look at what's on the way and enjoy the nice views. Fast travel is essentially teleportation, because I really wish I was able to travel very far instantaneously sometimes. Next we have the "steering wheel" which I guess would mostly be usable in Slow Mode - it allows you to steer away from your pre-decided course if you see something interesting, or it lets you get a better view of your surroundings. There is also a panel of varying "buttons" on the right: they do all sorts of things from playing music to opening a magical window (allowing you to maybe pick up something from the outside in Slow Mode) to dispensing snacks whenever you require them. I would really, really like to have this machine in real life, since it simultaneously allows you to visit somewhere you couldn't afford to go for either time or money reasons and also lets you see a lot of the world at whatever pace you like.



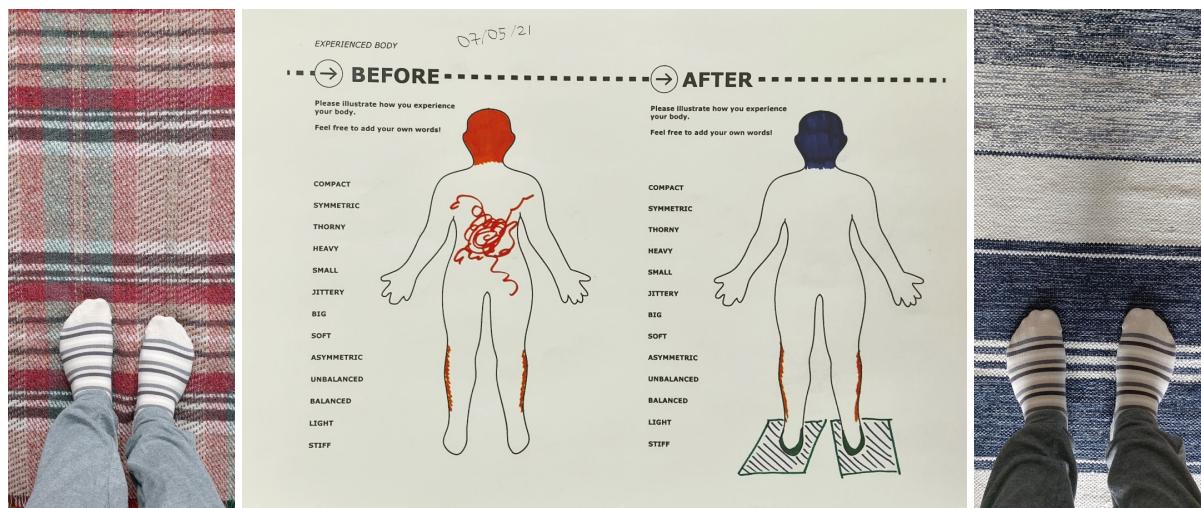


4 May. Focusing exercise. I was the Focuser in our group, and while in the beginning it felt kind of awkward following the instructions on the sheet and reading out the steps, I managed to get into it relatively quickly and even felt myself slipping into this calm, quiet instruction voice, which I think was good. Our topic was gravity/weight and we chose it as a group before we started. In the short discussion we had before sitting down to write, one person said they thought of chains and heaviness, while another on the contrary imagined weightlessness and thought of a space walk where an astronaut is connected to the space vessel with only a cable. The final impression was of changing one's shape and being pulled by a magnet, which I thought was very cool. I'm happy that everyone's experience came out so different because it makes me think I succeeded in not pushing people in a direction but rather allowing them to explore their own body and their own mind-space. As a whole I'd call it a success, considering it was my first time leading such an exercise. (Pictures of a climbing forest road vs. a flat field related to my own associations for gravity and weight, having to do with body limitations.)





7 May. We had a short meeting to discuss what we'd like the first draft of the pictorial to include. I'm going to buy some materials in order to make a small-scale prototype/model of what we want the final result to look like. We also made a plan for several further exercises to help us zero in on the design we want to end up with, and got started with the first one on the list: Feldenkrais. We each separately watched the recording of the standing up exercise since Feldenkrais doesn't involve much talking or group activity. We chose that one because of the relation to feeling through the feet and being aware of the textures beneath them. I must admit that Feldenkrais in particular is not something that works very well for me, but I tried to lean into it as much as I could. I paid special attention to the parts involving the exploration of feeling in the legs and the bit about the floor coming up to meet my body, as well as trying to imagine the floor and its various textures and temperatures in as much detail as possible with my eyes closed. I have two separate rugs on a wooden floor, so I was able to concentrate on where the rugs are and where the empty spaces are, i.e. the boundaries between the three different textures.



9 May. I bought some things to try out in the materials A-lab we've planned and then use for prototyping. I tried to get a diverse set of textures with distinct qualities, such as crumpled paper, ribbed cardboard, soft fabric, etc.



12 May. As with Feldenkrais, we were not in the same place for the A-lab or have the same items available, so we did it individually and then shared the results. We also adjusted the lab to be about feeling with one's feet with different footwear and in different environments. I did my materials A-lab in two parts: outdoor and indoor.

Outdoor “materials”:

Shoe type/ Material					
Sneakers 	Can definitely feel the sharper and bigger stones in the gravel; makes a noise when stepping.	Smoother than the gravel. Feels normal to walk on, steps are a bit quieter and kind of easier.	Regular asphalt; feels about the same as tiles but my steps are even more quiet.	The path is as easy to walk on as the asphalt, but feels a little softer, as if it's giving a little way.	Definitely the softest; feeling way less pressure on my feet; very relaxing to step on.

Light shoes 	Even sharper stones; uncomfortable to walk on; the sound is quieter with the lighter shoes on.	Better than gravel, can now feel the gaps between the tiles; very hard surface, can feel the tile's texture.	Hard and unyielding surface, feet get tired and it's definitely very easy to feel through the thin soles.	Less unforgiving than asphalt, easier to walk on with thin shoes; can feel small rocks on the path.	Soft and easy to walk on, feet get a lot less tired than on the harder surface; can feel the soil underneath.
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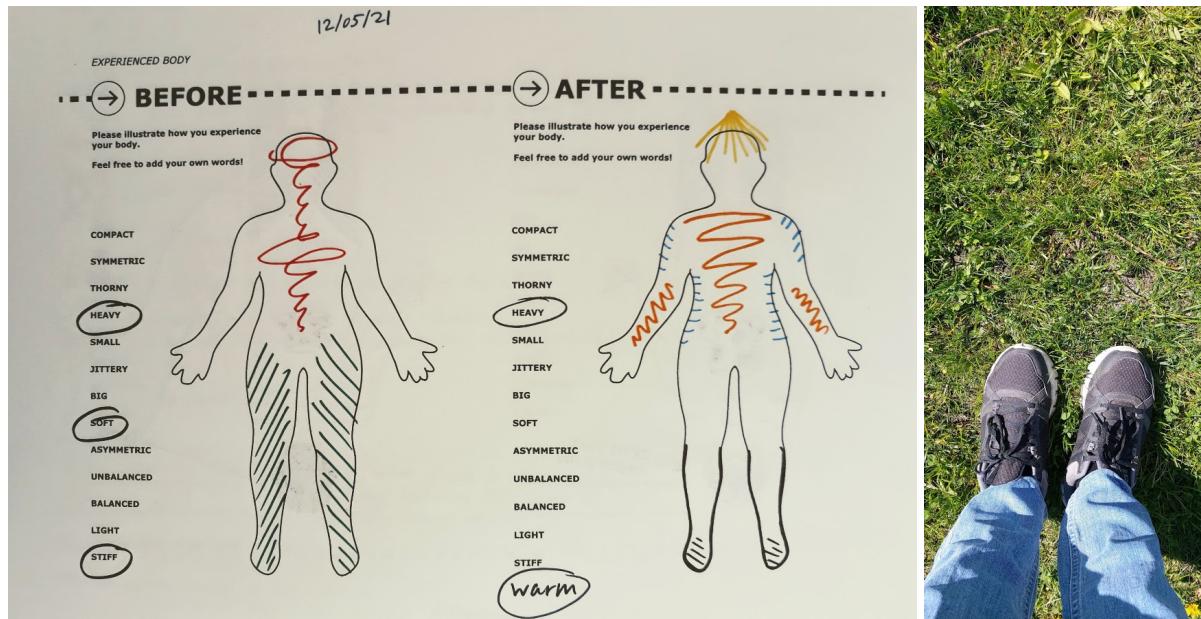
Indoor materials - Floor types:

Footwear type/ Material				
Bare feet	Very cold, hard surface; recoil reaction at first, then pleasant; can feel the ridges between tiles.	Warm from the sun; walking barefoot is enjoyable; texture is variable since the wood is worn.	The rug is knotty and has a very coarse texture; it's nice to step on barefoot; uniform everywhere.	Extremely soft; the fibers are very long and thick, making the carpet feel plushy; feet are sinking into it.
Regular socks 	Less cold, can still feel the hardness of the tiles and the texture of the ridges; rather enjoyable, sleek.	Normal - this is how I usually walk around the house; hard, reliable surface; solid against my feet.	Similar to being barefoot, but the knots on the rug feel less pronounced.	Not as much of a feeling of sinking, since the fibers cannot go in between my toes anymore.
Thick wool socks 	Very slippery; cannot feel the temperature of the surface anymore, but the ridges are still palpable.	Able to slide around on the floor in my socks; less of a feeling of hardness, cannot feel any texture.	Almost no difference between rug and wooden floor; can mostly feel the texture of the socks.	As with the other socks, not as plushy as when barefoot; it's nice stepping on a soft carpet with soft socks.

Indoor materials - Other:

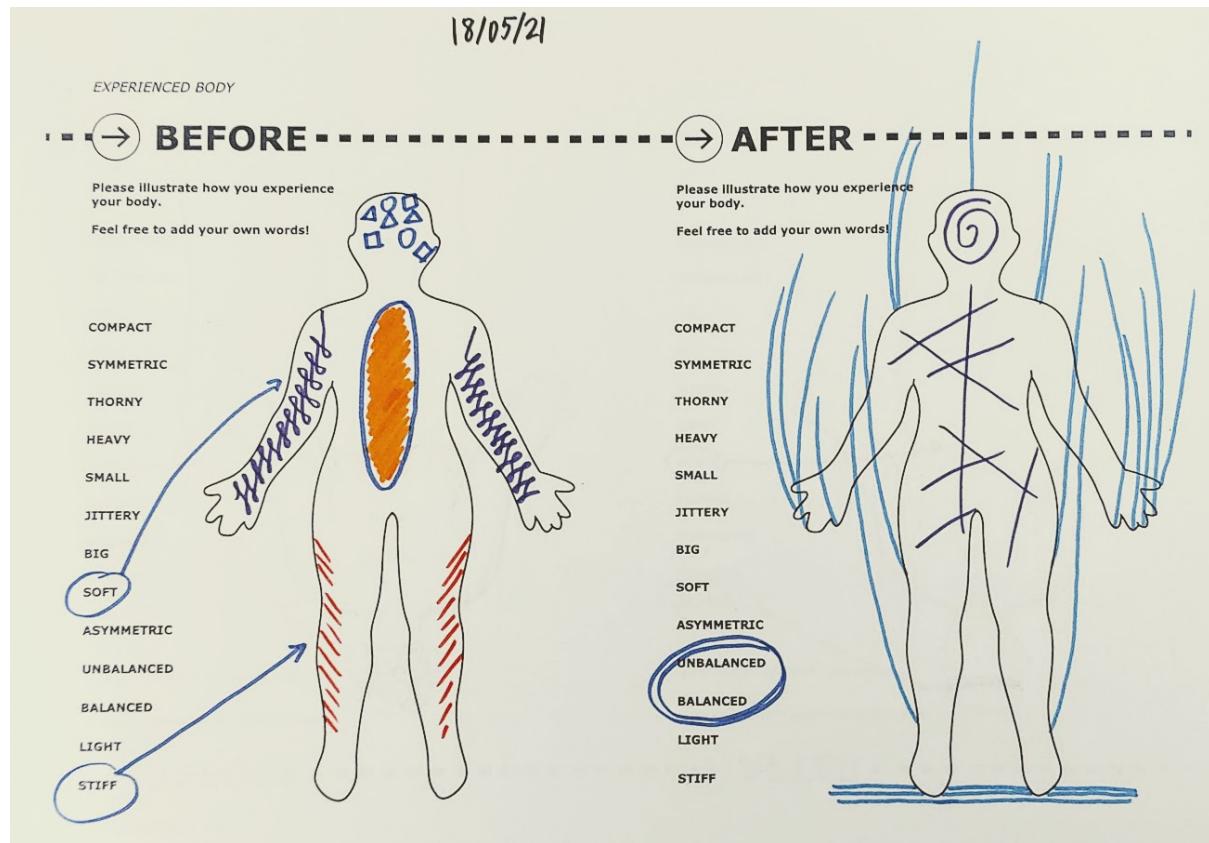
Footwear type/ Material					
Bare feet	The cardboard is easy to squish and covered in horizontal ridges.	Can feel each individual bubble and apply pressure selectively to pop them.	The foam is very textured and feels coarse when dragging a foot across it.	The paper is crinkly and makes a crunchy sound. Feels very smooth.	The tacks are colder than the towel; the texture is variable: soft towel and hard metallic tacks.

Regular socks 	Can still feel the ridges on the cardboard; they squash down when pressure is applied.	It's still possible to feel and pop the bubbles, which is a very satisfying sensation.	The foam only feels soft with socks on, the texture is too delicate to be felt.	Still makes a fun sound, but it's not possible to feel the smooth texture anymore.	Cannot feel the temperature of the tacks, but feel the difference in texture and pressure with the towel.
Thick wool socks 	Even through the thick socks the feeling is similar if not the same; compressing the ridges is fun.	Cannot feel the individual bubbles and so it's harder to pop them; the texture feels soft.	Cannot feel a difference between the foam and just stepping on the carpet.	The same as with the regular socks.	It's still possible to feel that the tacks are there, but it's a much duller feeling than the other two cases.

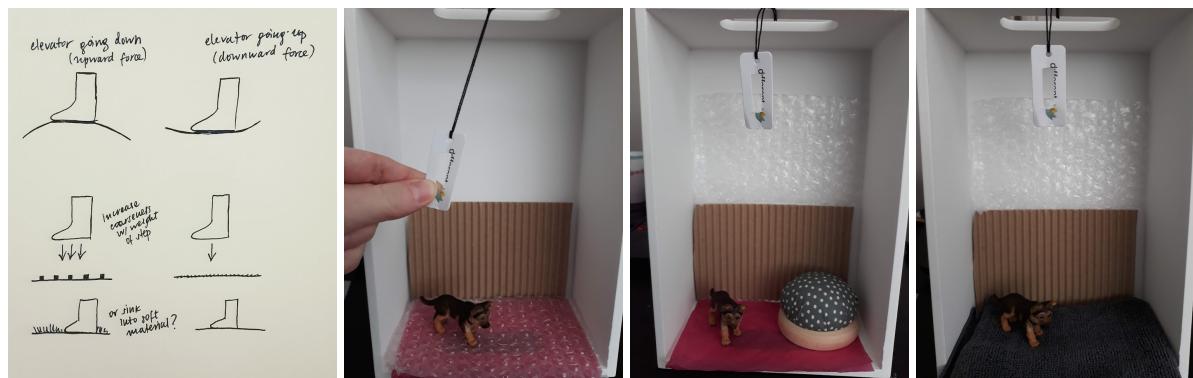


18 May. We had a Focusing session around the theme of balance. When thinking about that topic, the first thing that always comes to my mind is how fragile balance is: whenever I become aware of balancing, or try to figure out exactly how my body balances physically, it feels like I lose the thread I am hanging by and tip over immediately. Balance only ever works for me if it is entirely, or almost entirely, unconscious. This is why the metaphor I came up with during the session was that of hanging by thin invisible strings like a doll, and realising that the strings are there causes them to disappear along with the silent support they provided. Even doing the body scan at the beginning of the exercise with balance in mind made me feel unsure in my footing. I've tried to kind of reflect these thoughts and feelings in the body map I did after the exercise was completed.

18/05/21



19 May. I've started using my materials to create very simple models of what the elevator might look and feel like. I began with a sketch summarising the way I see our current design idea, then put together some of the materials and a dog figurine (did not have a person) to "ride" the model.

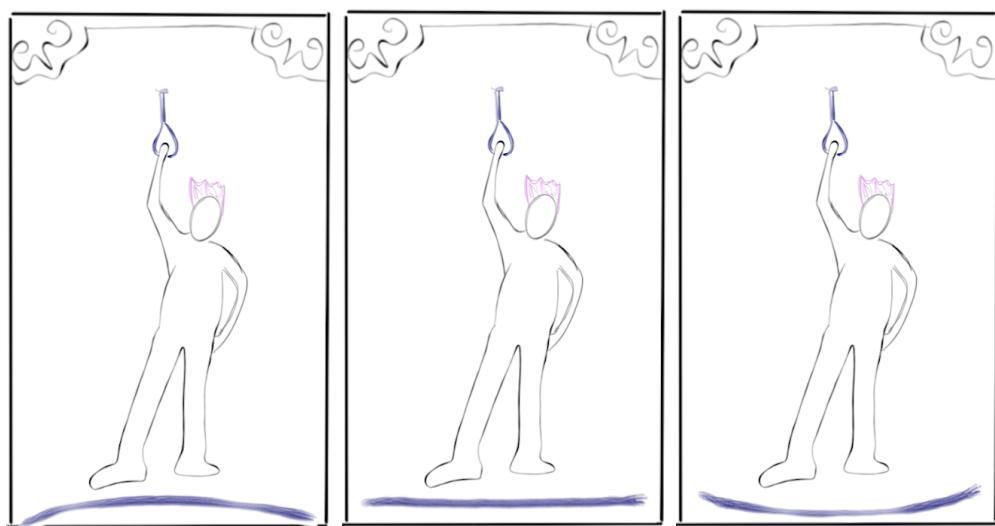


The process helped me think about the differences in sensing each material and in particular the ways to transition between these. In the ideal case we would have some sort of shapeshifting material to create the floor out of, so that it can react to the pressure of the user's feet.

21 May. We had a meeting to discuss each of our prototypes and sketches in order to crystallize our final idea. We agreed on the floor reacting to both the force of the

elevator's movement and the amount of pressure applied to it. The intended interaction thus becomes a combination of the floor bending or giving way as the elevator moves up/down and changing how soft or coarse it is depending on the weight applied to it by the users' feet. We will have to limit this interaction somehow for wheelchair users and strollers, since it is doubtful if it will be entirely accessible to use the elevator when the floor is changing and/or moving in some way - maybe it is a good idea to have a maximum weight after which the elevator just works normally for getting up and down building floors.

26 May. I've started working on the video with the help/advice of teammates. I don't think we'll manage the final thing by the deadline, but we can get a decent draft done. I'm making a short example animation showing the bending interaction using some simple sketches (stills below).



1 June. The final version of the video is done, now including much better animations made by three of us. I think it has been much improved and gets the point across better. Other than that, I've been going over the pictorial and adding a few missing things. We've also started working on the final presentation, which I believe should cover anything that is not conveyed by the video so that they work together well without too much of an unnecessary overlap.

3 June. Had a meeting and worked on putting together the final version of the presentation. Hopefully we're well prepared for tomorrow, my only worry is sharing video over Zoom, since that goes badly almost every time.

4 June. At the very end of the course, I think I summed up our experiences kind of well in the conclusion to our pictorial, which I am pasting here as well:

“Completing this design has been a three-month-long journey of learning to apply Soma Design methods in order to achieve a complete and coherent end product. As shown in the previous sections, each aspect of the final elevator design is grounded in one of these methods and exercises and subsequently in our own somatic experiences and our understandings and interpretations of them. The process of collecting the bits and pieces of the finished product from exercises such as magic machines, aesthetic sensitization labs, slow walks, Feldenkrais and Focusing was fascinating and also at times confusing and challenging, especially given the fact that due to the continuing pandemic, we were not in the same room for any of them. Nevertheless, we are confident that the design is backed up by the summation of our experiences, which we integrated into a coherent whole. We believe that a good next step could be considering more different/ edge cases such as multiple people riding the elevator simultaneously, pets who might get spooked by the interaction, and so on. There is always something to be honed and further thought about.”

When it comes to the presentation, I think we did a good job of communicating our design and the process behind it. I'm very glad that most people seemed to enjoy it. There are obviously things to improve on in the design, but given the timeframe and our level of experience, I'm pretty happy with the result.