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# Etude 1

## Discover

### Leather choker

Trends came and went but I have had many chokers throughout the years. I've always loved how they would fit snugly around the neck in a slightly cumbersome way. The last one I bought has a thick metal ring hanging from the center weighing down the choker with a wide black leather strap. It is a meaningful object to me because I love the feel of wearing a choker. It is an accessory which has the capacity to make you feel physically aware of your own body. I tie it tight enough to be able to breathe comfortably but at all times I can feel the pressure around my neck when I move and when I breathe. And, I find this uncomfortable sensation to be both emotionally and sensually comforting and grounding. Symbolically, the choker also reminds me of the traditional environment I grew up in where objects with sexual innuendos like anklets and chokers were highly frowned upon. I attended Catholic primary and secondary all-girls schools and the teachers would occasionally take time after morning prayers to remind us that such objects had meanings we proper people do not want to be associated with. So what? What if? Why not? I resented the lack of empowerment in those words for a decade. Why would one's sexuality be associated with one's moral standing and self worth? Why would one try to convince a child that it did?

Unlike soft materials like textiles, the rigid yet flexible leather strap affords the ability to be wrapped around the neck while lacking the warmth and bouncy feel textiles have. It could hurt if tied too tightly. The leather itself does not conduct electricity but the metal components like the buckles and ring pendant could. The strap is actually made of two separate leather pieces held together with rivets and it is a little too long for me when closed because of the thinness of my neck. It is a choker, it is intended to be tied around the neck but it could be used on any object or objects which would fit within its diameter: wrists, thighs, a chair... The ring pendant affords the availability to be held or to have something hanging from it. Aesthetically, this particular choker is sleek and minimalist but does not really give off feminine vibes and could be seen as a genderless accessory.



## Rice cake

Someone who says that they like eating rice cakes because they taste good must certainly be lying. I find it utterly impressive that something with so little taste can be so consistently delicious. There is joy in chewing and chewing an item which gets all its taste from its surrounding environment. I made tteokbokki (korean rice cakes) with a spicy rosé sauce last week which inspired me to talk about. I ate everything before taking pictures so I ended up making tangyuan (chinese glutinous rice balls) to be able to document it for this paper. They have similar ingredients but different cooking styles for sure, although they sure share the same pleasant squishiness. The tactile quality of a rice cake is usually meant to be appreciated by the teeth rather than the hands. Nonetheless, whether they are touched using hands or teeth, rice cakes are soft, smooth and whimsically bouncy. Their playful texture makes both sweet and savoury dishes more entertaining as they diversify the textures of the dish, which is a sought-out quality for many ingredients of my culture's cuisine. This item is meaningful to me because I find

it universally pleasant, nostalgic and traditional. Since I entered the design program at Concordia, I learned about bioplastics and I found it so strikingly funny that starch-based bioplastic recipes and textures are so similar to traditional starch-based noodles and rice cakes.

Rice cakes being made of rice flour and water, they afford malleability and can be molded into different shapes and flattened into sheets. They can also be easily cut and sculpted since they are very soft. Depending on the type of rice used and the cooking technique used to prepare them, they can be more or less sticky. Cooking a rice cake will set it into its final shape. Different ratios of rice flour to water will turn the final product into cake or noodles. Their softness depends on the amount of water they contain and they can be preserved through dehydration to make them last for years. They then turn into smooth, hard objects very similar to plastics. Soaking a dried rice cake in water and boiling it will turn it soft again. Rice cakes do not conduct electricity. Unless coloured with another ingredient, rice cakes are usually white due to their rice content. Aesthetically, a soft round tangyuan looks very cute and pure. The simple rounded shape and palette reminisces of innocence and joy.



## Spice jar

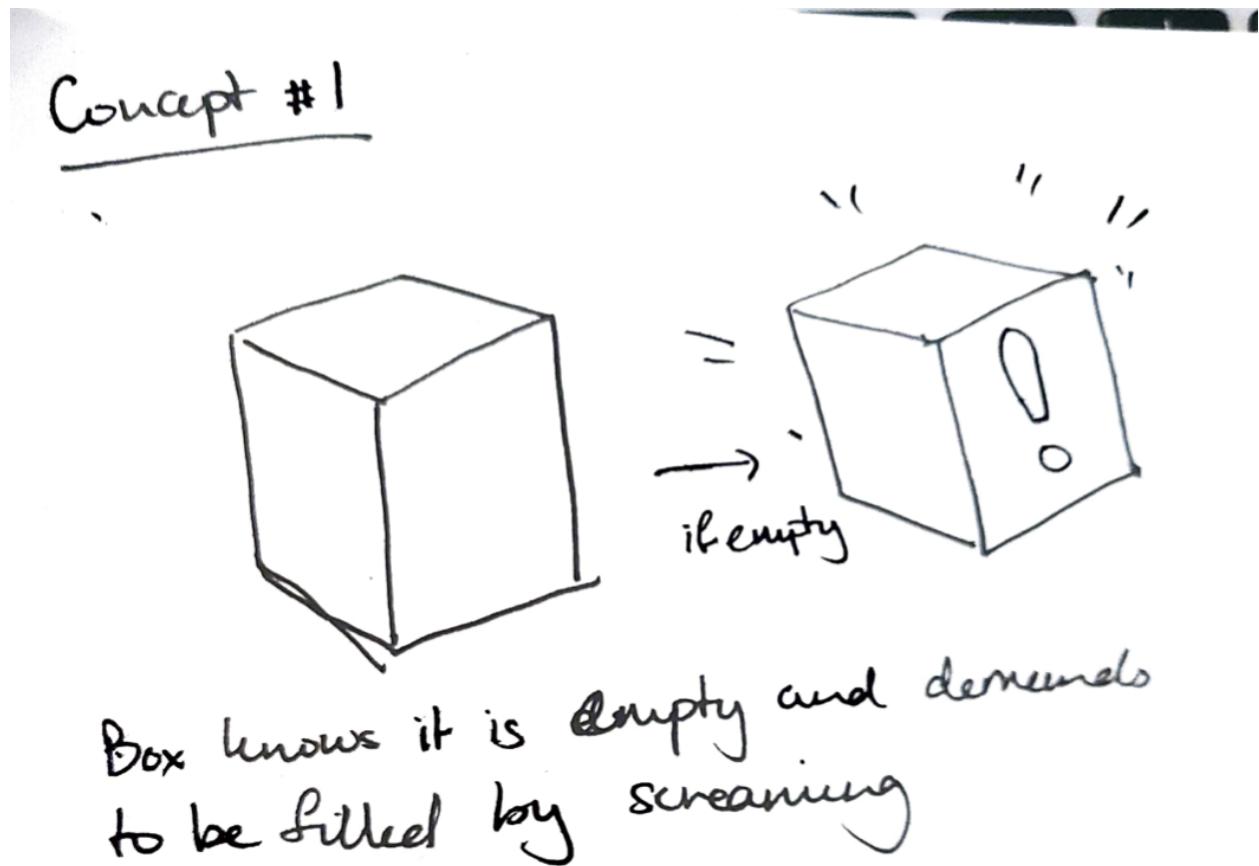
I grew up in my grandparents' small retail shop. I love any solid containers you can use to store things inside: boxes, jars, tins, bottles... It needs to be durable and small in size and be used to classify and categorize things. So the materiality of the container is very important. It is actually one of the things I like from working in a pharmacy. There are small containers of things everywhere. They help keep life neat and tidy. There are two components of my interest in jars. Firstly, there is so much joy in opening a sealed container and secondly, there is another kind of joy of labeling a container and arranging it with other similar containers on a shelf. Putting something in a container gives it a sense of preciousness because you actively want to safeguard it. To place an item in a container is a protective act. You could also put something in a durable container like a tin box or a wood one and hide it away for the future. I recently bought this spice jar because I wanted to organize my pantry as I use a wide variety of spices because the typical Mauritius food culture is multicultural. Most of the spices I buy come in plastic bags which take a lot of space and are difficult to organize.

I chose glass and metal as materials because I wanted the jar to be durable and to not retain smells like plastic containers often do as I was going to store spices inside. The glass body of the spice jar affords a hard surface which is wide enough to allow a label to be placed. In this particular situation, I used masking tape to write the label because I wanted to be able to change them easily. So the glass jar can also store objects but it does not have to be a permanent situation as the content can be removed and swapped from the jar. The glass is brittle and would easily shatter if dropped but the metal cap wouldn't. However, metal can be dented on impact if it was hit with an object hard enough. The seal between the metal cap and the glass body is contextual and depend on how they are fitted together. Also, the glass will not conduct electricity but the metal cap could. The jars came in a set of a dozen similar ones whose similarity allows them to be grouped together.



# Design

The object I chose is the spice jar and I developed several concepts of interactive containers which would be fun to play with.



Regulating system:

It constantly measures the weight of its content and alerts the user when it's weight is zero. The goal is to never be empty.

## Concept #2

Shy box



will turn transparent  
again if left alone touch



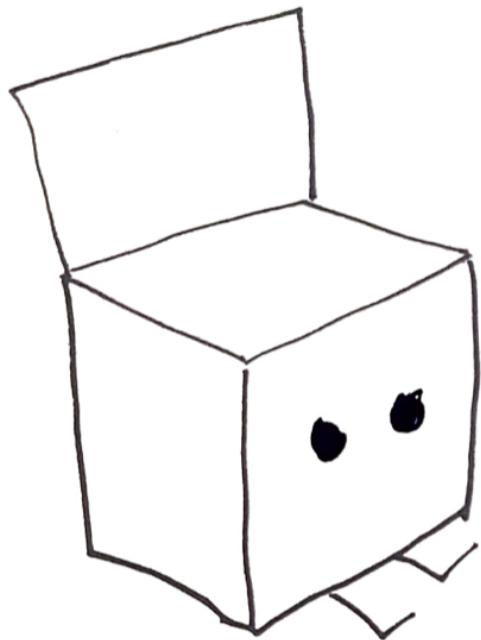
Can see inside but hides it if  
touched \$

Conversing system:

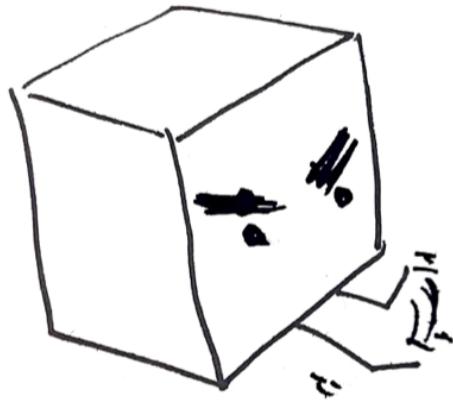
Detects both touch and presence of a user in its surroundings. The reaction to touch is linear and is input together with environmental sensing to a second reaction which is to allow content to be visible again.

## Concept #3

Whimsical box



Like feeding  
a pet



Tells you what it  
wants you to put  
inside it and  
when

↑  
May be detects  
its weight to  
know

Not happy if  
not given  
the good  
thing or  
~~but~~ not happy  
randomly

Managing and entertaining system:

There is a first self-regulating system similar to concept 1 which detects the weight of the content inside the container. The container keeps the user engaged by either refusing or accepting what has been put inside and will demand content to be changed if unhappy. Decision to accept or refuse content is automatic. This keeps the user entertained as it provokes interaction similar to a living organism like a pet.