

ETUDE ONE - CART 360

MARTIN HANSES

1. Dirt Road

The dirt road leading to our old family home has a pleasant dark brown, auburn tint to it, and while it's rough and bumpy, there's a strangely smooth surface to most of it. Although it's almost completely shaded by the surrounding forest and the sun rarely covers more than patches of it, any light that does find its way to it is reflected back with an oddly glossy sheen. It almost looks like clay or ceramic, but the surface is cold and damp to the touch.

The main road that leads through Sideby, our home village, is asphalted, worn and sun-bleached, and turning eastwards onto the dirt road is very much a state of change and a signal of arrival for me. The wait is over and the journey is at an end - you're home. It's uneven and littered with tiny rocks that over time have sunk into the soft, clay-like soil. Walking over it even requires an effort, however minuscule, to maintain balance. If you drive a car over it, you're met with a low, content rumble as the rubber tires find their grip on the surface - sensually similar to white noise or the gentle flapping of sails in the wind.

It can be difficult to separate the smell from the surrounding pine forest, but there is an unmistakable scent of clay. An unbroken lane of grass runs through the middle, but it's the murky, musky smell of the wet dirt that first comes to mind, especially after rain. Coupled with the experience of traveling it, it has a calming effect on just about anyone I've seen walk or drive it. There is a real sense of escaping the world, passing through the forest, and then arriving at the coast. Stepping on the road feels like a gateway from structure to nature, and each step produces a dull thud. By car, the experience is even more noticeable - the rounded, rumbling sound of traveling the road comes to a sudden halt, and when the engine stops there is such complete and utter silence. There's nothing here, and no one else in sight.



2. Wet Dough

Bread is obviously a central and global human invention, and with very few exceptions, most cultures have their own type of traditional loaf or version of the food. Eating bread is something many do each and every day, but baking bread is becoming far more uncommon and is almost thought of as a niche thing or a hobby, rather than literally putting food on the table. I think that overseeing and enabling the transformation of wheat and water into something that so completely deviates from the starting components is something that not only gives a certain appreciation of the final product, but also is an incredibly tactile experience.

Any baker will tell you that wet doughs are difficult. Most (well-made) doughs have a wonderfully elastic property to them, but using that elasticity in your favour takes knowledge and patience. Pull a dough too quickly, and it will snap. Overwork it, and you'll only be harming the integrity and structure of the final loaf. It's an exercise in patience and knowing what to do; when and in what quantity. First-time bakers often end up having it stick between their fingers, a result of not being fast enough or not approaching the dough with the right technique. Thus, handling dough is incredibly performative.

I mentioned the elasticity, and with that comes that feeling of a whole that you reshape and mould into what you need. The edges feel light and stretchy, but lifting the whole thing often requires more effort than expected. Soft doughs run and push down between your fingers if you try to lift it from underneath. Tossing, folding, and shaping it often needs to be done quickly and with minimal grip strength - almost as if you're working with a large blob of non-newtonian fluid. Folding and turning the dough produces wet thuds against the counter, and not seldom will it be surrounded by a cloud of dusty flour, as if the dough is evaporating and creating its own dry steam.

The best type of dough, or at the very least most sensorial and tactile, is an overnight cold-risen wet dough. There's a yeasty, fresh scent, and the surface feels damp but doesn't stick. Flipping it out onto a surface reveals that only the top is a smooth dome - inside is an intricate web of bubbles of air that collapse and pop, sinking into each other as the whole thing is turned over. The work that goes into maintaining the bubbles inside this balloon-like thing is difficult and incredibly fascinating. A wayward cut or stretch might ruin the entire thing, but do it properly and you've managed to fold air inside a material that has no reason to be anything but light and airy.



3. Dice

Humanity has always had something of a need to quantify and classify things, a practice which in turn gave birth to the concept of numbers. With numbers, then, comes geometry and mathematics, without which we would have remained in the dark ages. Numbers, much like language, is a completely human creation with no real basis in nature. There is no counting for plants and animals in the natural world, for instance, but there are amounts which we interpret and assign symbols for, much like our languages and words.



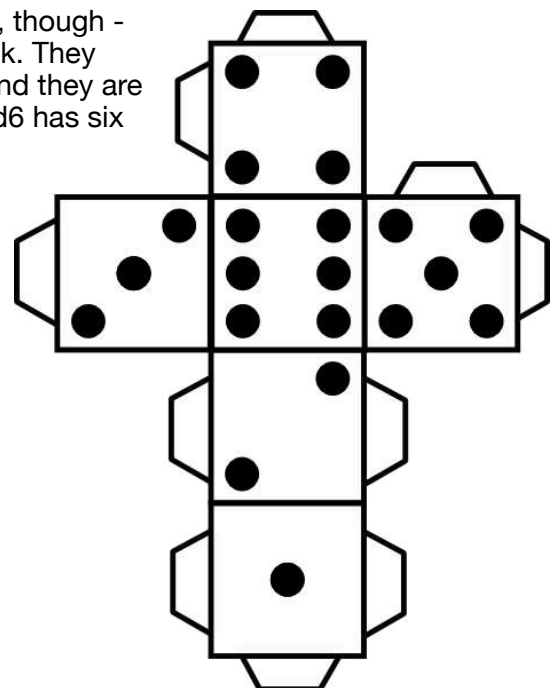
From that desire to classify, count and number things, then, comes a certain satisfaction when the symbols “align”. We set volume between even numbers, we buy eggs in packs of six and never seven, and we work out in repetitions of tens. There's safety in numbers then, it would seem, in a very literal way. That same safety applies to geometry - the human brain almost instinctively considers symmetry attractive, for example. Numbers and geometry is good - and in the case of dice, we consider it fair.



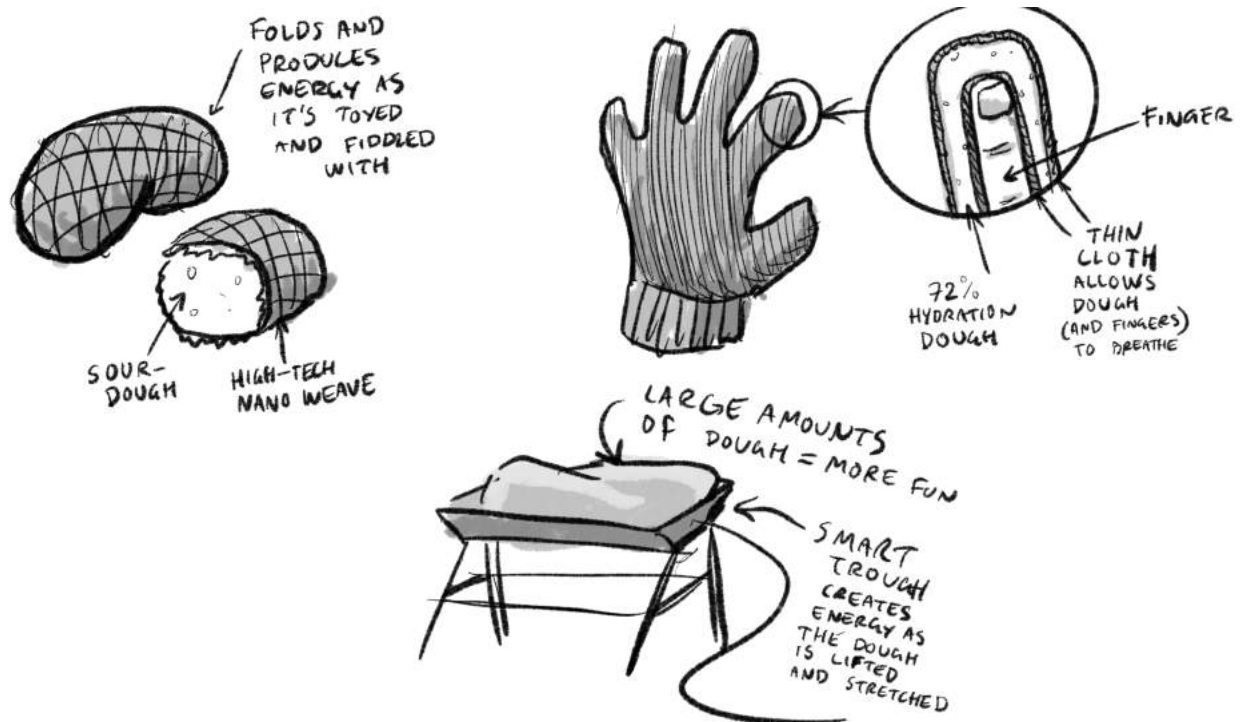
Rolling a die is never completely random. “When I let go of the die,” we seem to think, “the outcome is completely random and out of my control.” Physically and with regards to physics, of course, it's not. The force, angle of throw, and surface, for example, can all be assigned numbers and can thus be controlled - it's theoretically possible to repeatedly roll a die with exactly the same results, if those numbers can be maintained and turned into constants. But when we roll dice, the results are always fair. We can't control the results. They are as if ruled by fate - completely random.

That's why rolling dice is fun. It's affective and exciting. You don't really know what will happen, or how you will roll. Rolling high feels good, and rolling low makes you want to try again.

It's not just the presumed randomness that's the appeal, though - there's also the tactile and audial feedback. Dice rattle and clack. They decrease in speed and possible results flash by in an instant. And they are predictably unpredictable, a result of their perfect geometry. A d6 has six sides. A d20 has 20 sides. They roll in a certain way - their trajectory is mostly straight, but can suddenly turn and twist, suddenly stop or go on, off the table. They are fair, because by all reason and logic, numbers don't lie, and the perceived perfect geometry of dice is completely and totally a result of numbers. It's harnessing our perception and interpretation of the world in a small, inconspicuous object.



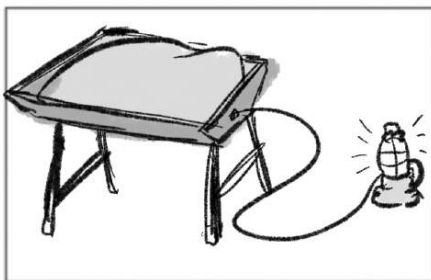
Prototype drawings for technology that would harness the physical properties of dough, including a glove that allows you to feel and interact with the world with the same kind of care you would preferably treat dough with.



Storyboard for use of the "Doughn't Worry", a new source of relaxation and power. (Larger version on the next page.)

Title **"DOUGHN'T WORRY"**

Name **MARTIN HANSES**



1. A large electrically conductive dough is placed in a smart-trough. Working the dough produces electricity.



2. The user is frustrated and goes to find their preferred device for relaxation.



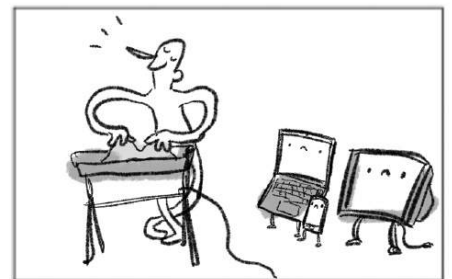
3. In order to use their devices, the user has to produce electricity. At first, they are unable to efficiently work the dough and as such, fail. Subsequently, they begin to take out their frustrations on the dough.



4. Eventually, they figure it out, and the "Doughn't Worry" begins to produce a power. As this happens, the user starts perfecting their technique.



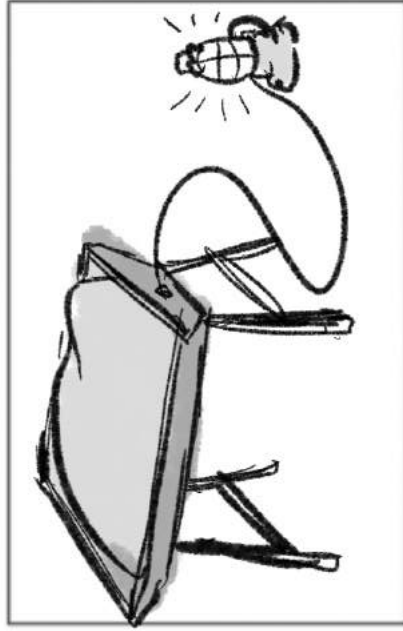
5. At this point, the user starts to appreciate their newfound ability, and start enjoying the process as well as relaxing.



6. The result is piece of mind, free electricity, and the user relying less on electronic stimuli and instead enjoying the smaller things in a new and healthier life.

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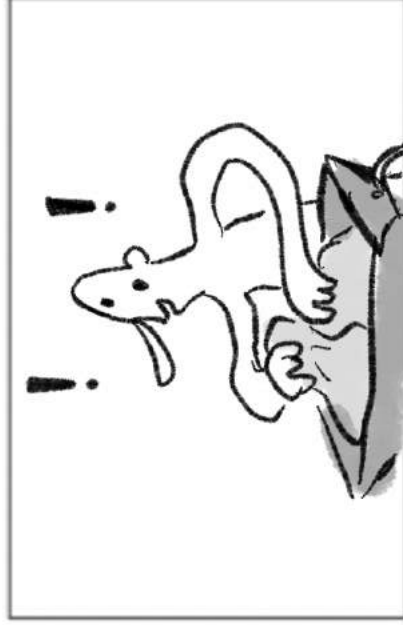
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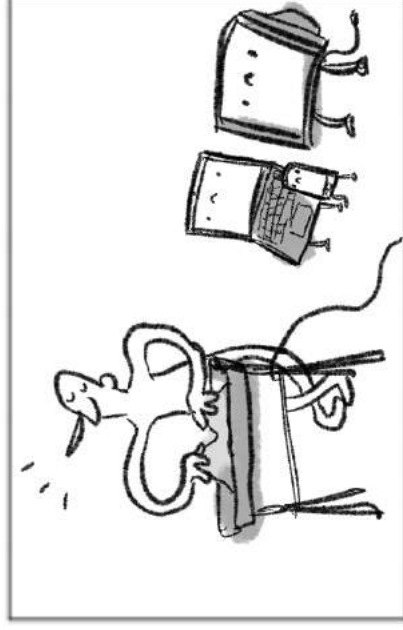
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