Map of findings
One week, one chair

A map of the “One week, One chair” process. Every chair / week will be logged with all the necessary details and comments as to quantify and communicate the findings that have been made. Most importantly the actual physical stats but also my personal journey through these ten chairs. Every week I will logg the construction of the chair, the dimensions, the angles and comment on the shape language. The white outlined boxes will be what this week has taught me and what I will take with me further into the process. The black circles represent my thoughts on the week or project in general. I added this because I want to remember what I thought at the end of every week. This also makes this a time capsule of sorts, which helps me bring myself back to the feeling of making each chair. The coloured lines that run thought the map shows, similarities in a quality or something that was learned through one chair and represented in the other.

10 WEEKS CONCLUSION

These past ten weeks have been really interesting. I had some idea of how it was going to work and what I hoped to learn, but the reality was quite different. The specifics of what I have learned, like the dimensions, angles and shapes, construction, material choices and ideas are all listed in the map, here in this conclusion I will be writing about what I learned through this type of practice.

The first thing I noticed was how much I can manage to do, during the span I had set for myself (seven days per chair). If you allow yourself to focus on a subject like I have, the amount of work you can do was surprising. As the weeks went by, my ability to create something in that time frame also rose. The first weeks I struggled to draw, ideate, mock up, and make a pretty simple chair. It took me the whole first week to make it. But once I had gotten trough the first 5, the speed of which I was producing was quite a lot faster. I believe that the reason for that is the familiarity with the subject, like the shapes and sizes, the construction method mostly used to create chairs and other simple skills that will come just by doing. Another reason could also be that I became more comfortable with the level of finish that was needed for my project. The idea was never to create a perfect chair every week with wood, sanded down to 600 grid paper that feels smoother than silk, but rather communicate the idea of the chair and make something that is possible to test and discuss. Realising that made me relax a bit more and allowed me to create more freely.
Secondly, what I found maybe the most important, was the fluid relationship between dimensions and angles in a chair. Starting this project I had researched some standard forms and well known chairs to have a grasp on the traditional angles and heights that have created successful chairs in the past. I sometimes used those as a starting point for my own chairs, for instance; the world famous “The Chair” or “The Round Chair” as Hans Wegner called it himself, has a seat height of 450 mm with about a 2-3 degree slope towards the back with a slight curvature. While the back is located 240 mm above the seat. I tried to use these measurements once but adjusted them more towards my intended use. And just by lowering the seat and tilting the angle of the seat slightly more forward the chair i made (or mock up) felt horrible. I then tried to correct it by adjusting the back compared to the angle of the seat but again, it felt awkward. Thats when I understood that the angles, heights and dimensions all work together. There isn’t a single rule that creates a perfect chair, Its how the different attributes of the chair combine and flow with each other that creates a quality feeling of comfort, and the feeling of a good chair. To learn that there isn’t a single way for a chair to be “good” and that any angle or height — within reason— could be suitable for a good chair if you can find the dimension, heights and angles that would suit it. This insight has been crucial for this project

The third thing I learned — which is kind of obvious, but I have to include it — was the importance of mock ups. Either full scale or small scale. It’s no shock that testing and seeing is important, but even more so for an object that communicates so closely with the body. There are few objects thats sole purpose is to ease the strain of the body, and support it. People can instantaneously feel if a chair is good or not, and even how to improve it. The backs too high, the seat is too shallow, its too hard etc. By mocking up, mostly in full scale I got people to test the chairs and got honest feedback quickly. This resulted in some quick learning and understanding of the usage of the chair.

Logging was a highly important part of these weeks, After every week I wrote down every detail about the chair I had made and found out what I had learned and what pieces of information was important to bring with me going forward. I put these thoughts into the diary and this map. I would often come back and visit this map while I was drawing new chairs to double check angles, heights and other interesting aspects of chairs I had made before. It became a form / function library for me to use where I had full knowledge of how to use the information that was written. I really think I will bring with me this technique in the future and something I can use in other areas of my design practice in general.
The last thing I learned, which is quite important is to find a context for the object you are making. Different contexts or situations creates different needs, and the object you design needs to reflect that. Through these weeks I have worked with different qualities as the context, but for future projects I believe it would be beneficial to include a context as well. This could force the dimensions and mechanisms in a way that a quality can not, and will require more testing. In line with the use of a context, I believe working with a more specific user group would also prove beneficial.

It’s been incredibly fun to make these ten chairs. I do believe I have gotten further on my journey of creating a “good” chair by doing this exercise and getting a grasp of the intangible qualities it entails.

General thoughts | Things learned | Construction | Angles | Measurements | Shape | Comment