

container

Roger Kemp

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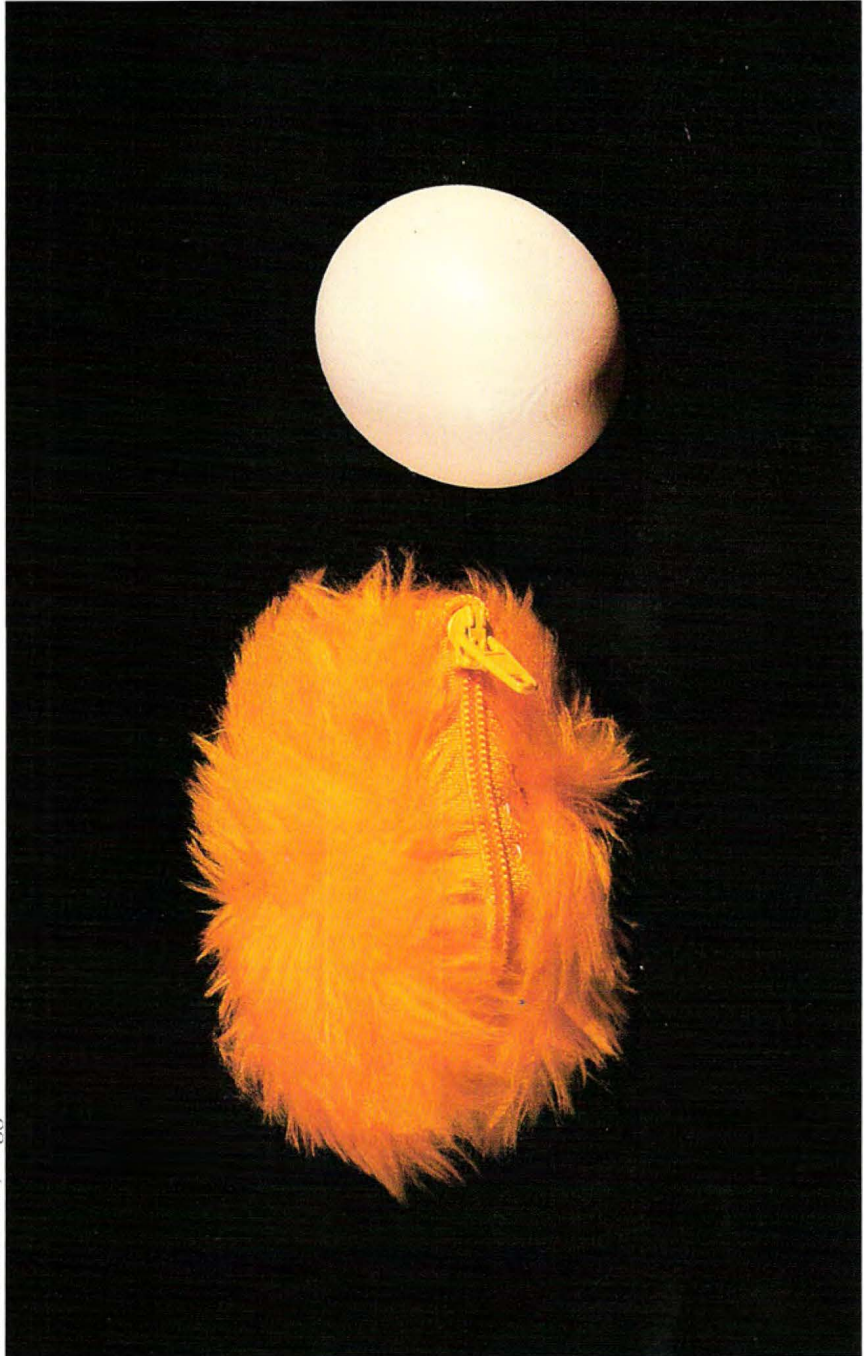
Issues of containment are central to the practice and discourse of interior architecture whether the constraints be physical, financial, cultural, political or social.

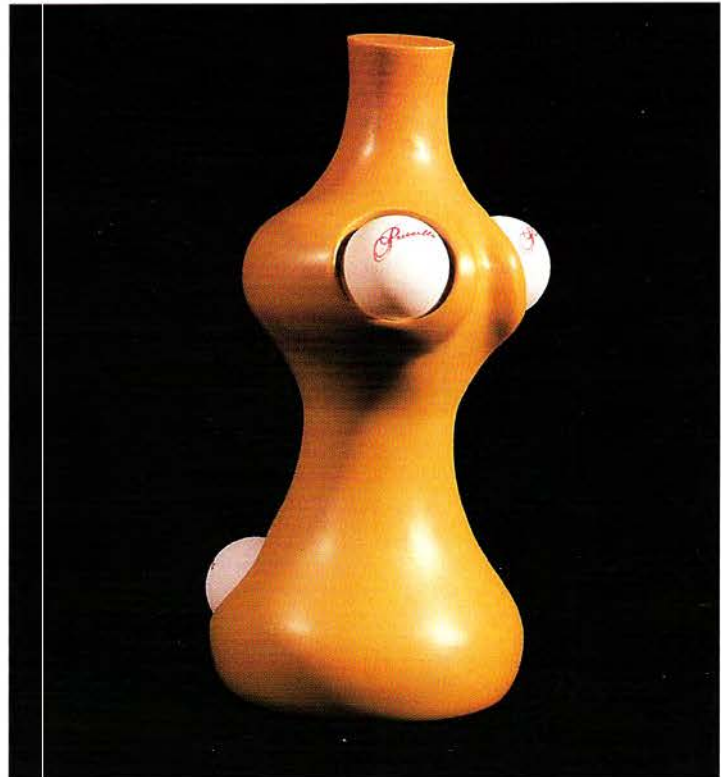
The container as architecture suggests applications of shelter, defined property, security, privacy and ownership although often these boundaries become somewhat blurred. This suggests a further breakdown of space accepting issues of transferral, thresholds, easements; where the issues of public and private are raised.

Design of packaging is based around similar concerns of containment. The relationship between object and receptacle or vessel having its origins with the hand and parts of the body used to hold or conceal personal belongings.

In the development of receptacles 'the need to contain soon gave rise to

Chitati Rachshit, 'Egg'





Anji Noorbergen, 'Ping Pong Ball'

I. Renate Eco-range,
Ottagono, Issue No. 123, p 94

different categories; it became necessary to keep, to transport and to distribute, slowly turning the container into pocket, bag, net, cage, box suitcase and wheeled means of transport.¹

Then of course the construction of marketing and selling devices for commercial endeavor.

The picture frame plays a similar role in providing a construct of limitation, in capturing, enclosing and defining territory to allow specific critique or observation.

Interior architecture specifically deals with the way people occupy, experience and inhabit space. Together with the inhabitants are the collections of objects and the relationships between them. The location and accommodation of these objects often provide a basis for the manipulation of space; in fact the space is often formed by the location of such entities.

The spatial dialogue and traces over time are integral to the brief of a designer working within or through these walls. The memories of, and association with objects form space. A space which is not designed but conceptually built over time. A space which is identified and recognized upon

entry. The removal of these objects dissolves space. The empty house requires reconstructions in the mind to provide meaning and association to the space.

The cultural and social implications which are offered through rituals of use of objects also form space. A space which can be read by people with similar habits and backgrounds.

With an impact from a burgeoning design sensibility in the community where domestic designer objects reign supreme and life-style is bought and sold, the container project attempts to recontextualize the everyday domestic object by providing a new micro environment for it to be held, enclosed, accommodated.

The placement, ritual of use, access to, viewing of, and human participation with each object was central to the initial research, forming a critique for the design of a containing space.

The exploration of materials used in the production of this work allowed for new opportunities in the appraisal of both the object and its position within the domestic environment.

This work sought the exploration and analysis of interior space through the design and manufacture of 50 containers each with a specific object to contain.

This studio was designed for first year, first semester Interior architecture students. The programme has been prepared and delivered by four design staff members, each with a specific area of interest and expertise.

Staff:

- academic programme director / author (interior architecture training);
- academic (fine artist and communications training);
- practising architect (engineering and architectural practice); and
- practising designer (specific interest and research in domestic objects).

As multi-disciplinary design/art/multi media practices become more prevalent within the design field, the selection of specific staff for this project seems an appropriate way of investigating the issues of containing space.

Representing an introduction into spatial investigation this studio set out to educate students on a number of levels. The studio asked student to begin to explore and analyse interior space through the design and manufacture of a container (vessel).

The programme was designed to educate the student as to the relationship of an object to the space in which it is or could be occupied. To form a critique of existing domestic objects and their environments. An attempt also to redefine and change peoples perception of day to day objects by developing challenging

spaces and vessels for the object to reside.

The studio asked students to form a knowledge of materials, construction, manufacture, co-ordination and communication for the realization of a built entity. Decisions as to appropriate manufacturing processes for individual materials and manipulations were made through continued weekly tutorial discussion. Communication to manufacturers through drawing and discussion developed awareness as to the appropriate information required.

The programme was delivered over a six week period by way of two three hour weekly classes; formed by discussion, critique, readings, lectures, slide presentation and esquisse.

Four main tasks were issued as assignments:

Assignment One: research a given architect/designer/artist

Each student was asked to research a given designer, architect or artist. By individually prescribing the identity of research for each student I hope to challenge, encourage, develop interests and make connections specific to each student.

The decision making does not always produce the expected outcomes, however in most cases it seems to raise awareness of individual identity and critique. As this is one of the first research exercises, particularly in relation to contemporary artists, students need to quickly familiarize themselves with current journals and library referencing systems to obtain appropriate information. This is critical for contemporary discourse and discussion.

The students are not asked to use their researched artist as a basis for developing a design methodology or approach, however they are encouraged to reflect on their working methods and ideas to promote questioning and perception.

Some students rely on their research to guide them through the brief. We found that this was a good support for those students who had difficulty in positioning themselves in relation to an object which for them seemed too familiar.

Assignment Two: visual diary / sketchbook

The programme asks students to maintain a visual record of their investigations and thoughts whilst preparing the design. As this is one of their first design exercises, the students tend to ignore the journal in favour of the stroke of pure genius falling on their drawing board. The journal gives the teaching staff a good understanding of the students thinking and helps in enabling the staff to give considered advice on direction and additional tasks or reading.

Assignment Three: scaled drawings

Students in the early stages of their design education often get confused as to the uses of so called "technical drawings". As drafted drawings are not only used as a communication medium for the documentation of design work for construction, this assignment asked students to prepare a set of scaled measured drawings.

The conventions of drafted scaled drawings are used in the representation and presentation of a project. These drawings give a precise and clear depiction of the spatial relationships in design. The students were asked to produce a set of drafted ink drawings which documented the spatial and volumetric conditions of their container.

Assignment Four: the container

Brief: To design and make a container which holds the given object.

The objects were selected by staff and drawn out of a barrel. All objects were found in domestic environments. We decided to use performance criteria since many students coming from a secondary school base tend not to ask enough of the project brief or question issues of perception.

The container had to address the following requirements:

- must protect the object from damage
- must have a high quality of finish
- must celebrate the objects qualities
- must be no more than a litre in volume
- must have a title/name
- will be exhibited in a public arena
- this is not a model this is the real thing

Lectures were given on 'retail packaging', 'the domestic container', 'the container in art', and 'the container as architecture' citing specific works for discussion.

Students experienced some difficulties in building or having their container built within the time frame, however this constraint often lead to the investigation of alternative materials and processes. The more sophisticated responses to the brief developed new relationships of objects, materiality and space. Clear evidence of a design process and developed design thinking through the research, sketchbook, decision making and the container was seen as the basis for assessment of this work.

Roger Kemp is the co-ordinator of first year Interior Design at RMIT