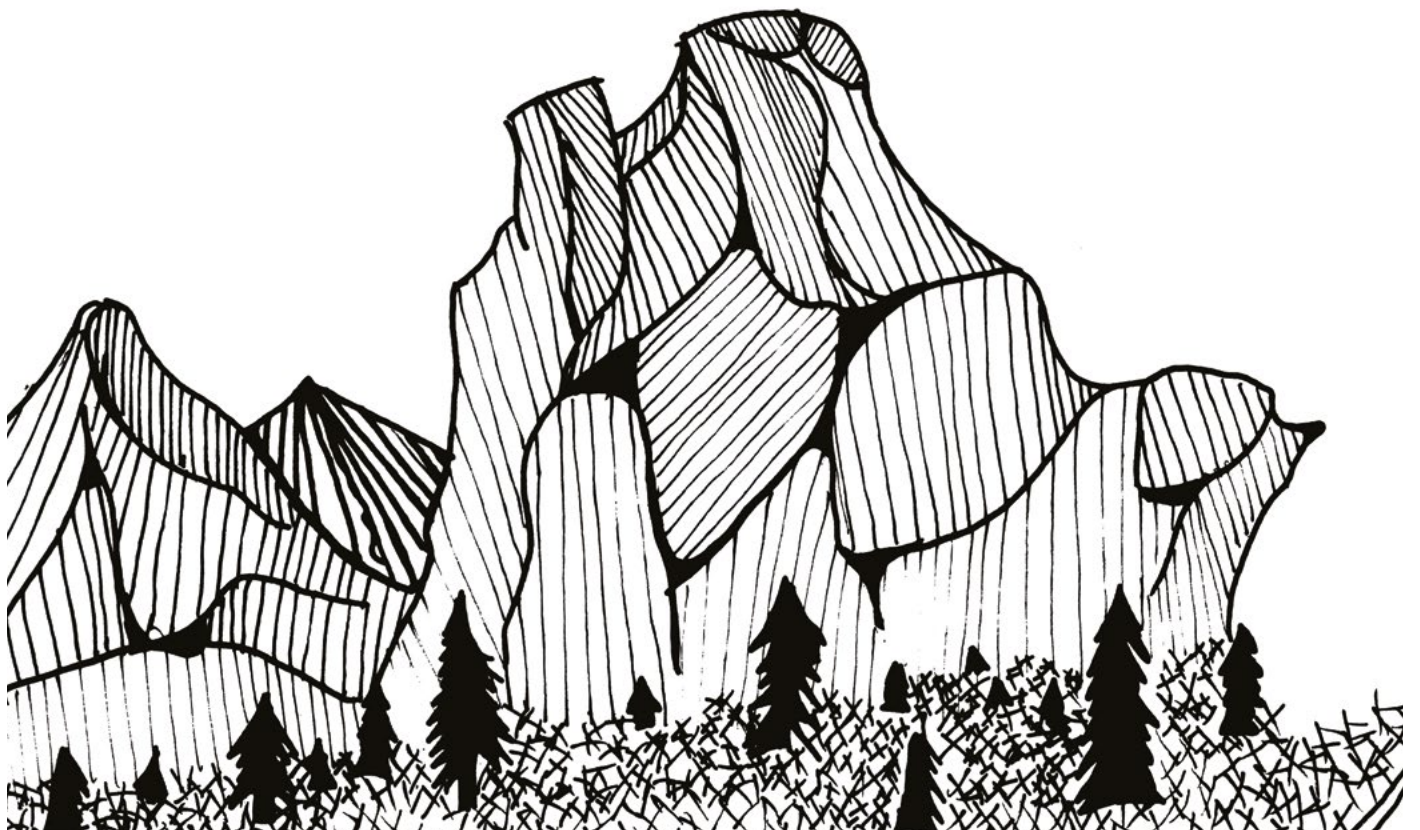


FREE-RANGE DESIGNER
or
WHY DO WE WORK WHERE THEY WANT US TO WORK?!



FREE-RANGE DESIGNER

(Masterthesis | MFA in Design)

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LET ME PUT IT IN A NUTSHELL (SUMMARY)

Out of all the information I gathered and with close attention I create a concept furniture that offers the opportunity to work on the places that are supportive for our creative tasks. On one hand it allows us to be more free to be able to go with our flow. But on the other hand we have to restrict ourselves. It is necessary to focus on the task to see the goal and to prepare to achieve this goal by finding inspiration and focus on the way.

The portable research lab will have capacity for the most needed things. What is needed today and what can be left home? Over the time this process of choosing will create a ritual we will perform on every working-day. Prepare the goals for the day, set the mind and ourselves on the way. This is an important part of this piece of furniture. It tries to get us away from a routine, where we only take our laptop, pen and paper because anything else we will find in the *action setting* where we will go to. It will trigger our spirit of discovery again.

#

(KEYWORDS)

#tool #furniture #mindset #nomadic #desk #ethnographic research

FOR WHAT?!

(ISSUE)

Free-Range-Designer is more a thought provoking impulse than a one-way solution with a moralizing undertone. It deals with the surroundings we are kind of placed in during our time of working and learning. I call it atelier, university, school or office. Roger Barker, a social scientist first developed the theoretical frame work of behaviour settings in the 1940s, and later geographer and regional economist Peter Weichhart described it as action settings. These terms indicate consistent and organized people-environment interaction, that creates individual behaviour patterns. An action setting is a physical structure that is consciously created for a specific cultural purpose. To mention the previous examples: office, atelier, university etc.. These settings are defined by clear actions. We expect a certain atmosphere, that is created by the infrastructure of the space. An office for example has to have an appropriate interior, that allows the people who are working in this place to settle their given tasks. An office also includes a setting of rules you have to follow and you later follow automatically in a routined way. They are not nailed on the wall but your cultural background, observation and education let you act in the expected way.

„The expectation elicited by the purpose, rules, and restrictions of an action setting induce in people a collective behaviour based on anticipatory obedience of self-censorship in the sense that individuals evaluate their own performance, actions and artefacts through the eyes of their audience, supervisors, or critics.“¹

To work in such a surrounding can be both, pushing or distracting. But it is important that we can decide if there is a need for such a setting or not. *Can* is not meant as a *being allowed*. It needs to be understood as a *can* that deals with our ability and freedom to decide which is the best choice in this special status of process.

The first brick in the wall was the project: „Is process killing creativity“. This was the question I have dealt with. I called it a soul strip because this question handled my biggest concern regarding to my profession. I see the necessity in calming down and finding our places to hide but not for the sake of hiding more for finding vacancy, clearness. We minimize our needed requirements into portable electronic devices. Our knowledge is archived in PCs our personal relationships and short-term memory is in our phones, headphones create certain surroundings and the rest is delivered by our responsible actionsettings. These devices allow us to be part and present nearly wherever we want. But instead of including it and using it as a tool it makes us more and more restless. Everything we need is nearby, it seems like that there is no necessity to change our set routine. But as Thackara mentioned already, some of us feel flooded by the never ending stream of information. Wanted and unwanted ones. We have to deal with crowded atelier situations where many people come together to share their experiences, opinions and thoughts but also express themselves. In these setting we have to find and create our niche, a setting that allows us to focus and concentrate, too.

„ We feel flooded because we are getting information unfiltered, unsorted, and unframed. We lack ways to select what is important. [...]. In biblical times, a shepherd boy sitting under a tree would „see“ more of that tree than we would today, sitting under the same tree, because he was not distracted by other inputs. “²

The relevance of creative institutions is indisputable. They are places of learning, developing and sharing. All of them are important to create diversity and thoughtfulness. My aim is not to replace the existing education- or workingsystem by another. Even more will I show up an alternative way by using a created tool.

Our ways become more and more optimized . Bigger distances in less time is worth to strive. I on the other hand think that the way itself is an important part of the process that goes while we are searching for creative solutions. As an example: People who travel a lot often talk about that phenomena that it feels like leaving soul and thoughts behind, whilst their body goes with them. Physically here but mentally there. I say that it is important that mind, body and soul go their way together. Cause on their common path the trinity develops ideas and solutions.

What I want to trigger with „Free-Range-Designer“ is the planned and organized departure to work, a conscious way to the goal that takes time on one hand but gives time to organize your mind and thoughts on the other, without distraction or boredom. It is not a conscious process it happens unconsciously while we experience our surrounding. At last a comfortable linger at a place that the thoughts can become stronger. The place we choose, conscious or unconscious, has influence on our effectivity. Some things need to be experienced, studied or occupied before we are able to understand. Others just need neutral space for an unrestricted development and uninfluenced process.

Through our history field studies have always been an important method no matter in which field. From economies to science over to Gestaltung. While some set out to open up new markets, others are attracted in foreign cultures and landscapes or existing but unknown situations out of light, form and colour.

As I have mentioned before is our earth full of information, resided in digital and analog archives. Many of them are open to the public. It is not the way I work, but I am sure that it is possible nowadays to finish a creative process without making one step out of the house. Most information we need is available on our portable devices. Images, text with different sources from different per-

spectives to the same topic, emotions spit out by our „followers“, „friends“, „likers“ and „contacts“ we stay in contact with via social media.

I created a portable device too, cause we need to step out of our microcosms again. We lock ourselves in a self-made action-setting full of entrenched behaviour patterns. We need to step out because only by strolling through unknown terrain, where fascination and focus have more relevance than time, thoughts that would not had a chance to connect in routine, connect. We need time for ourselves to prepare, reflect and collect.

My opinion is that we can solve this by going out again, out in the field. Judith Robinson already mentioned that:

„Only by really looking at the world, and by constantly perceiving it afresh, can we hope to break down our stereotyped sets of responses and open up the opportunity to discover different structures in the reality that surrounds us. ... We must learn to see ... with our eyes and not with our brains, to perceive the world as it appears to us before memory with all its habitual associations and interpretations and the intellect with all its categories and conditioned reflexes have time to step in.“³

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

(METHODS)

SURVEY ⁴

I would like to step back from that main-character-position to involve all the other creative minds. To get a better overview I decided to start a survey in which I please the participants to answer questions about necessities, habits, places and needs concerning working-situations. The survey was send out solely to students in the field of design, art, music and performance. The answer were the base for my development. After evaluating the results I had a better overview and better impressions from peoples working behaviour. That was a necessary step to create the single elements my working-station contains. *(see img. 21-23, page 20)*

OBSERVATION

Observation and filed research was another important tool. During the five years of education I went through, I met a lot of people from the design and art field. I was always and still am I very interested in people opinions, points of view and experiences. One aspect that became more and more clear is that the lack of focusing and stagnation in processes is a wide spread problem. All the information I gathered during the time as a designer makes it clear that there is *a need for new working strategies in spatial separation and mind-set. (see img. 21, page 20)*

SELF-TEST

During the six months I started kind of a self test. I have put myself into different working-situations. I have worked in public, cafes, bars or parks as well as in forests or at the sea side. I have also switched locations. For one month I went to a different country with the decision to build my artefact abroad. These experiences opened my eyes in so far that it is not only the change of places but even more the inner acceptance to develop a behaviour or ritual concerning work that suits you. I am still in a phase of experimenting and experiencing.

BRAINSTORMING & SKETCHING

While the survey was online I started with sketching. It was neither detailed nor focused. My intention was to find a language my artefact could speak. Understandable but raising curiosity. Different but not strange. I was very aware about the fact that I am trying to change the behaviour and routines of people. To get a better feeling for form and aesthetic I started to research. What are traditional materials? Which functions are basic? Sizes and measurements of different working situations. How did the desk change during the time? Even if I did not have enough results from the survey to go deeper the image of my working-station became more and more clear. After I had enough results to know what are common needs I became more precise. Based on the answers I made sketches for different add-ons. The survey showed that there is a big need for hot drinks like coffee or tea and for storage as well. What also became clear is that people prefer spots in nature and the more solitary the better. This fact let me step away from the first image I had in mind and rethink the given demands.

3D-MODELLING

I started to make proportion-models and prototypes. I decided to build the working-station out of wood. It is a material I understand and the characteristics of wood were necessary to create the image of a desk and not of a camping solution out of aluminium and fabric. I started with proportion models. To figure out the size was a challenge. I had to take care that it is small enough to be carried but that there is also enough space when it is unfolded.

HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?!

(PROCESS)

CONSTRUCTION

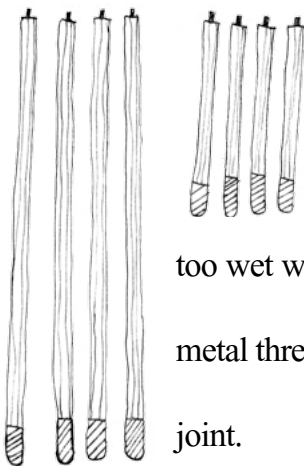
The construction was a tricky thing. On one hand I wanted something that is lightweight, easy to carry, waterproof and super comfortable. During that time I was researching a lot in camping equipment for foldable solutions out of lightweight-material. But at the same time I was worried about creating a lifestyle-furniture. Nomadic life becomes more and more a topic, still for insiders but the youth is more and more going out. For travelling, experiencing, living, live styling but at the same time I was also looking for something that does not feel strange or like a holiday equipment. This was the point when my research turned into another direction. I focused more on the traditional image of a desk, the desk during history mainly how the field desk was used and designed and later I got my inspiration out of the nomadic movement. Since decades there are *several books*⁵ that pinpoint on nomadic furniture. Nomadic furniture describes objects that are pitched and disassembled simply, and in a just a few minutes. Out of these inspirations I decided to use wood instead of high-tech-lightweight-material to keep the traditional image of a desk, cause the fact that I am trying to change a long established behaviour needs an already known constant to become more accepted in the comfort zone. What I learned from nomadic furniture are different techniques how to make things portable, lightweight and foldable. The idea to create a back-pack (the typical modern nomad utensil) out of wood (traditional material for desks) was born.

ELEMENTS

The **table-top** (700x400x45) is made up of different elements. It has a smooth surface for working and a soft inner out of foam and fabric. A piano hinge allows to lift up the desktop to fill the space between with delicate utensil or materials. A laptop fits in there as well as high-quality sheets. The backside of the tabletop has the same materiality than the inside. For a better carrying comfort.



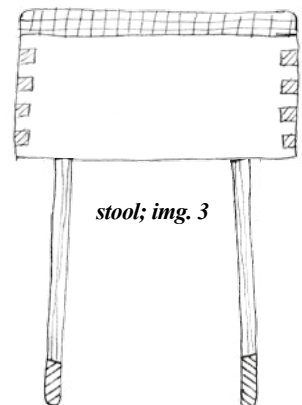
table-top; img. 1



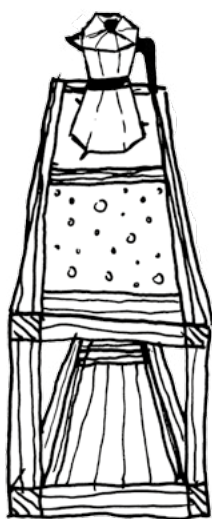
legs; img. 2

The **legs**, four for each, stool and table-top are made out of larch wood in combination with steel socks. These socks prevent that the wood becomes too wet when it is used on forest floor, the beach or in the rain. On top each leg has a metal thread. Stool and table-top have threaded sleeves for a stable and easy-to-handle joint.

The **stool** is a comfortable seat and offers more space for storage. It is a simple box with a holstered lit that is covered with woven wool. The size is 150x400x150.



stool; img. 3

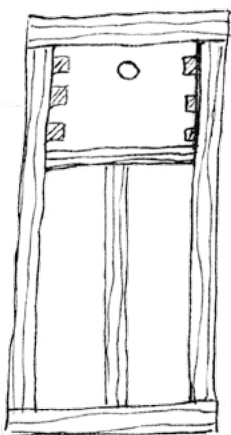


fire-side; img. 4

As it already says is the **fire-side** is meant for cooking. A steel-plate with an inset cooker allows to cook coffee, tea or even food. The anterior part is coated with cork, there you can put down hot pots and cans or park your cup on an anti-slip surface. Underneath this part you also find a tiny storage space that fits for a container, bowl or camping-pot. The rear part is already occupied by the gas cartridge.

41 participants out of 81 need coffee, tea or food to work in the most effective way (see img. 21, page 20).

I also believe that it is important to take care of thirst and hunger. It has a big influence on your concentration. Another part I like is the ritual of cooking a coffee or tea. It rings in a break, a moment to calm down and refresh.



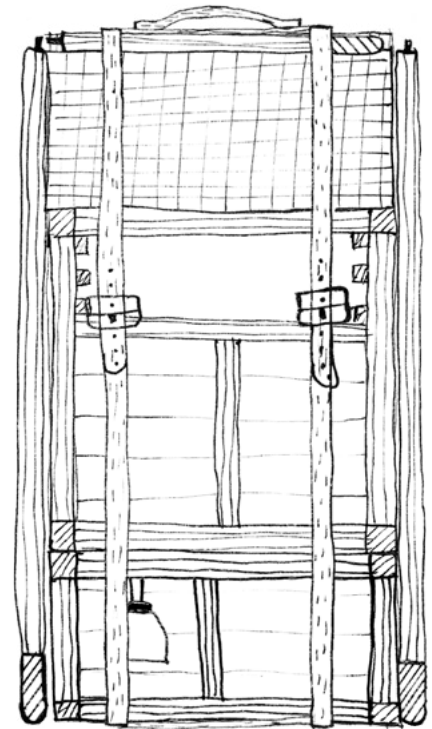
shelf; img. 5

The **shelf** (200x400x200) is an add-on to the table-top and can be attached on the right or left side of it. It offers two storage solutions. The lower part is meant for books, papers or scripts. It has the size of an A3 paper. Above this is a drawer. This would be the better solution for loose material like pens and brushes, needles ...

This add-on was built as a reaction to the survey results. A surprisingly big amount of people is still working with analogue processes in research and development.

(see img. 22, page 20)

The last tool that let everything become one is a *carrying harness* out of leather with buckles to adjust shoulder height and to strap the elements together. It will be used as a backpack where everything has its place. The decision to carry it on the back is also a something that became clear with the survey. *A lot of people love to go into nature, hidden places without paths but also in the middle of the city (see img. 23, page 19).* The first idea of a working-station that is packed to a bicycle trailer would have been too limited in its mobility and manoeuvrability. A backpack instead



carrying harness; img. 6

leaves you more free to choose where to go and how to go there. The aspect that you have to carry your work yourself lets you think about twice what you want to take with you. To more unclear you are about your daily working goal the more you might need to cover all eventualities. This makes the act or ritual of preparation and clear goals weightier.

BUT ... (DISCUSSION)

The free-range backpack is a starting-point for me. I do not see it as a finished or final product. It is something to get one thinking and take part in this process as a tool. To figure out in how far this working concept is a serious proposal it need way more investigation in the fields of usability, functionality and development.

My whole investigation started with the following questions: How to get back the freedom of finding inspiration? Our daily life is clearly structured so our behaviours are. Is it possible to find new inspiration by rethinking and celebrating our working environment? Does it have to be the office, the café or balcony? Is our chosen working place depending on our comfort zone, needs or laziness? The answers to these questions just scratch the surface. The reason is that I decided early to invest the main time in the development of a tool that would make the understanding of the topic easier. Now that I have this tool I can start to research more in the direction of acceptance, get in contact with potential users and find ways how to infiltrate people. The act of „going out“ is not a new movement. Already in the end of the 19th century artists started to go out into nature. The Barbizon School that is mentioned as the forerunner of Impressionism started this movement also as a reaction of new invented tools. It was the time in which pigments started to be chemically produced more brilliant and easy to handle than before, brushes and flat-ferrules were invented but even more important was the invention of colours in tubes out of tin or lead. By the plentiful availability the change and revolution of art began. Pleinair painting was born. Instead of focusing on lines the Impressionists started to see the world in colour:

„when you go out to paint, try to forget what objects you have before you, a tree, a house, and a field or whatever. Merely think here is a little square of blue, here an oblong of pink, here a streak of yellow, and paint it just as it looks to you, the exact colour and shape, until it gives your own naive impression of the scene before you.“⁶

(MONET quoted by BUMFORD)

They stepped back from the old rules, the pictorial function of representation, that a painting has to be made by the purpose of showing religious scenery or contemporary personalities. The main aspects in Impressionism was the observation of landscape settings and the realization of changing light-situations. The painters developed a very fast sketching technique to capture this one special setting. Many artist as for example Monet painted the same scenery several times at different times of the day to show the the main influence of light in the perception of colour. Forerunner John Constable who was one of the first painters who neglects the line to the credit of colour effect. He described the aim of this movement as a new one:

„I am anxious that the world should be inclined to look to painters for information about painting. I hope to show that ours is a regularly taught profession; that it is scientific as well as poetic; that imagination alone never did, and never can, produce works that are to stand by a comparison with realities.“⁷ (CONSTABLE, J., quoted by notes by LESLIE)

This is a quote I would like to link to the designers profession as well. We as designers are also scientists, translators, poets. We have to be aware of our surroundings, we need to see the things before someone else can see them. We are able to filter, rethink, define and translate the happenings around us for the creation of a new understanding. We must relearn to trust our senses and listen to the vibes that are drowned out by the noise of overwhelming abundance.

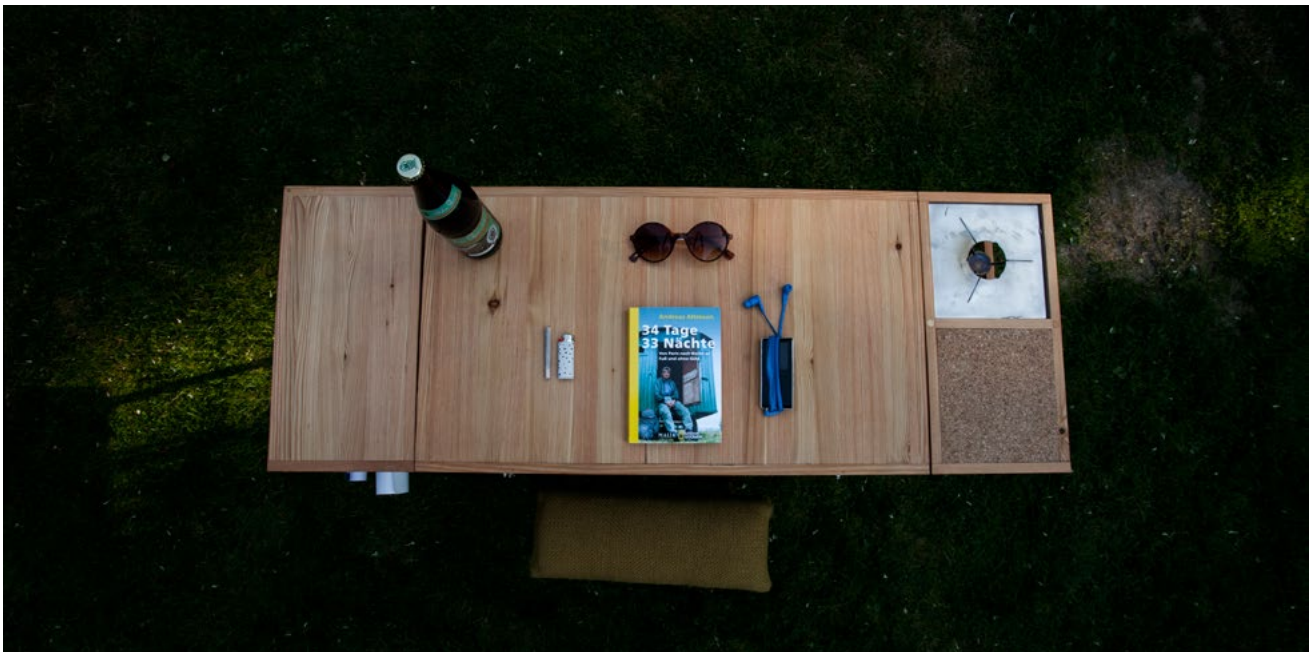


TA DAAA !!! (RESULTS)

SITUATIONS



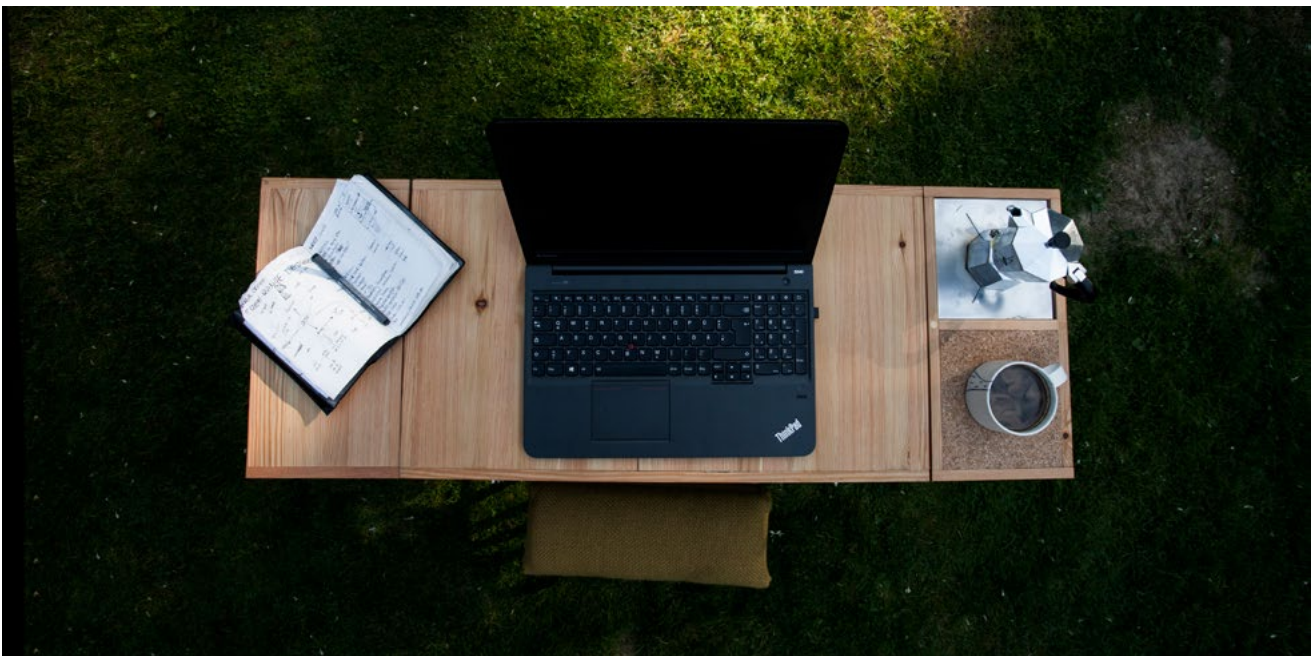
lunch; img. 7



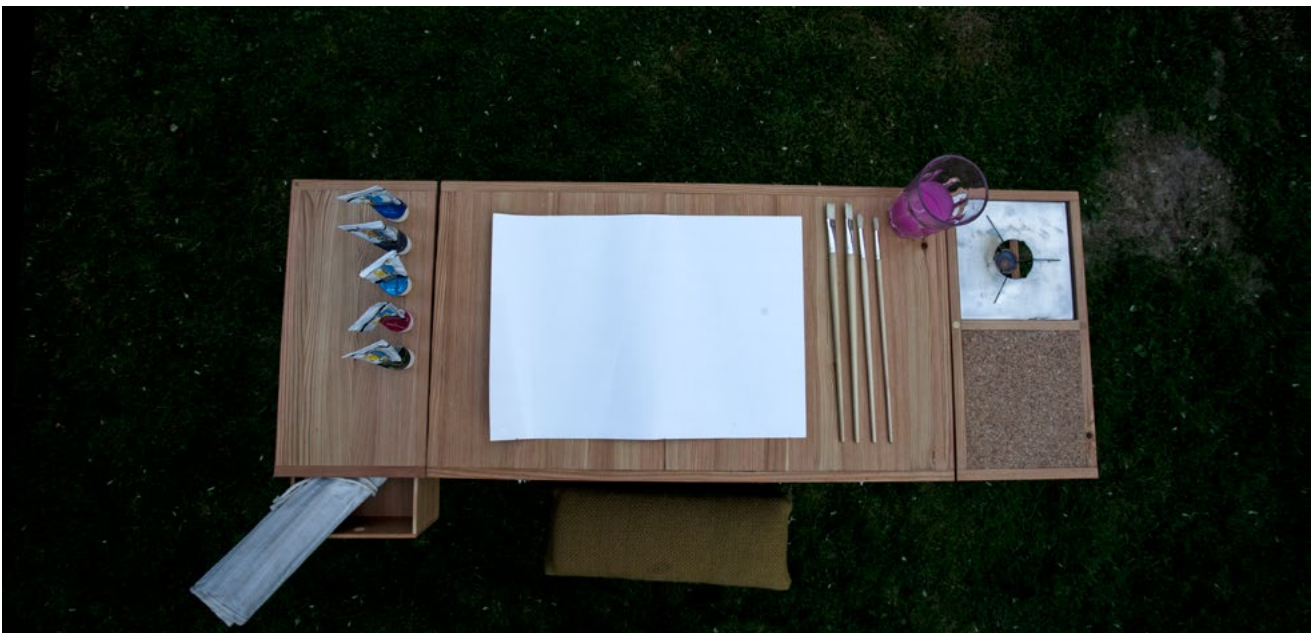
inspiration; img. 8



sketching; img. 9



research; img. 10



painting; img. 11

OVERVIEW



front; img. 12



back; img. 13



shelf detail; img. 14



bar detail; img. 15



cooker detail; img. 16

FLAIR



backpack front; img. 17



backpake side; img. 18



setting up; img. 19



work situation; img. 20

WHERE DID YOU DIG THAT UP?! (REFERENCES)

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SURVEY RESULTS

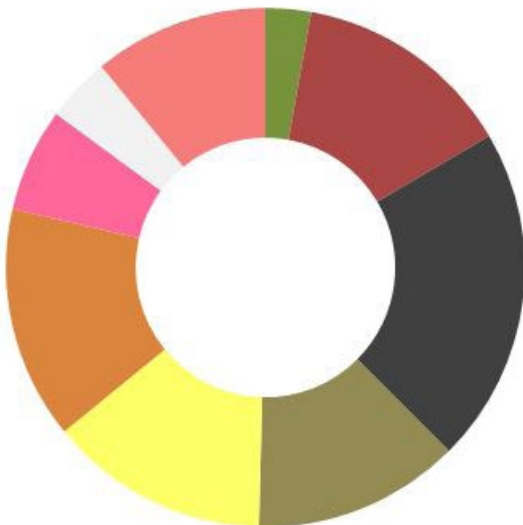
img. 21



„Just imagine you own a „working-station“, that allows you to work wherever you want without restrictions. Would you work on your chosen place?“

- Yeah, I would love to work there
- I would definitely give it a try
- There is everything I need to work
- No way!

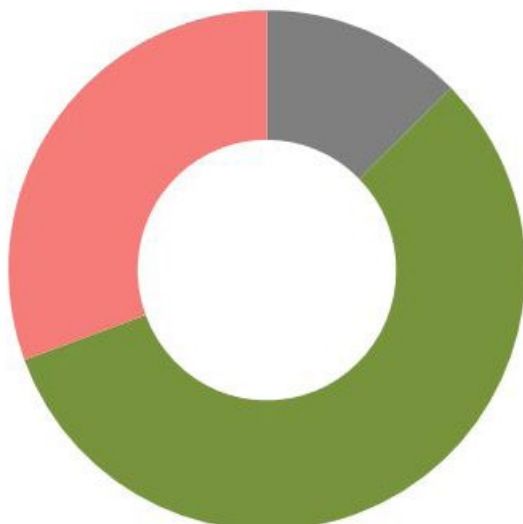
img. 22



„I please you to fill in 5 main things you definitely need to work porperly. For example your watercolors, headphones or a hot cup of coffe. „

- food
- tea/ coffee
- analog sketch
- electronics
- music
- analog work
- sweets & sins
- internet
- special circumstances

img. 23



„I please you to fill in the coordinates of that place where you go when you need to think or rethink, where you feel relaxation or clarity in mind. Maybe it is a forest, a park bench or Granny’s kitchen table.“

„Please describe what kind of location it is. For instance a park-bench or the window seat in your favourite cafe.“

- urban
- nature
- private

FREE-RANGE DESIGNER
OR
WHY DO WE WORK WHERE THEY WANT US TO WORK?!

