

Wake up!

Wake up!
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Introduction

For over two years now, I've been struggling to understand the purpose of product design within the world we live in today. Doubting my values and morals towards the world, I set on a journey of self-discovery, in hope to find the perfect way to design within the climate crisis. Why am I struggling? What is the purpose of design today? And how can it be achieved? What is my responsibility as a designer, am I allowed to focus only on shapes? What does the world need? How are product designers being taught to navigate this crisis? Are product design students today equipped to design for the future? How might that future look like and where do I fit in?

Both my written and practical bachelor thesis research has been combined, the final product (scene) is based on this research.

Starting point: The climate crisis & product design

“Weather-related disasters already force an average of 21.8 million people to flee their homes every year, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Vulnerable populations are more likely to be displaced by climate change impacts and remain displaced for a longer time.”¹ And that's just one part of the reality of the climate crisis. It is obviously an extremely urgent matter which needs the attention of people from all across the spectrum of professional specialisations. So how are designers approaching this crisis?

Over the past few years there has been a strong emphasis within the product design world on sustainable products and material research, some designers integrated circular systems and others pledged to cut their carbon footprints. Although vital in order to accommodate the requirements of the world today, are sustainable materials and circular systems enough?

Realization

It occurred to me that the majority of those designers who are pledging to make era-appropriate products, are still designing the same exact commercial products. How can a product that fueled the consumer culture, still exist in the masses within the climate crisis?

¹ UNHCR

"I feel powerless, frustrated and disappointed"

"I find design and climate change is a very difficult subject [...]"

"The climate discussions affect me in my personal daily life, but not at school, because often it isn't a part of the assignment"

"Ecology and thinking about the future, should be the base for every design and not just perceived as a trend. It's exhausting when the other students miss this point and use sustainability as an add-on rather than a base for all their work"

Comments made by the survey participating students.

The Survey

The following questions were a part of a survey I conducted on 121 product and industrial design students from Switzerland and Egypt. The aim of the survey was to find similarities between my struggles as a product design student designing in the age of the climate crisis and other students' struggles. This survey was the catalyst for my final product (scene).

Student answers

Question 01

How does it feel like to be a product/industrial designer in 2020?

Result

The majority of the students stated that they find it **'interesting'**. While almost all schools except for FHNW have more than 30% of their students finding it **'confusing'**. And some expressed in the **'Other'** option, that they feel **'overwhelmed'**.

Question 02

Have you thought of quitting or changing departments during your current studies?

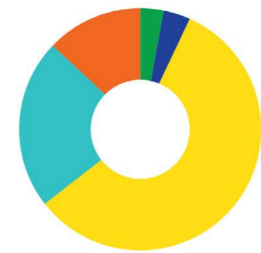
Result

The majority of the students in FHNW and ZHdK stated **'never'**, while the majority in HSLU and Faculty of Applied Arts said **'More than once'**, **'everyday'** or **'I am currently thinking about it'**.



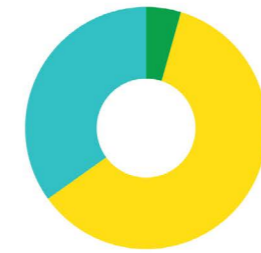
HSLU

Brilliant: %11.11
Horrible: %0
Interesting: %36.11
Confusing: %30.56
Other: %22.22
Words used: 'stressful', 'overwhelming'



FHNW

Brilliant: %3.23
Horrible: %3.23
Interesting: %58.06
Confusing: %22.58
Other: %12.90
Words used: 'complex', 'overwhelming'



ZHdK

Brilliant: %3.84
Horrible: %0
Interesting: %61.54
Confusing: %34.62
Other: %0



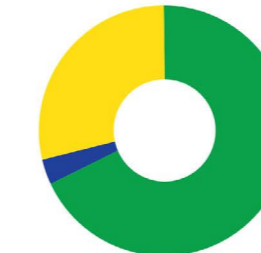
Faculty of Applied Arts

Brilliant: %3.33
Horrible: %3.70
Interesting: %22.22
Confusing: %37.04
Other: %3.70



HSLU

Never: 44.44%
Everyday: 2.78%
More than once: 50%
I am currently thinking about it: 2.78%



FHNW

Never: 67.74%
Everyday: 3.23%
More than once: 29.03%
I am currently thinking about it: 0%



ZHdK

Never: 53.58%
Everyday: 0%
More than once: 46.15%
I am currently thinking about it: 0%



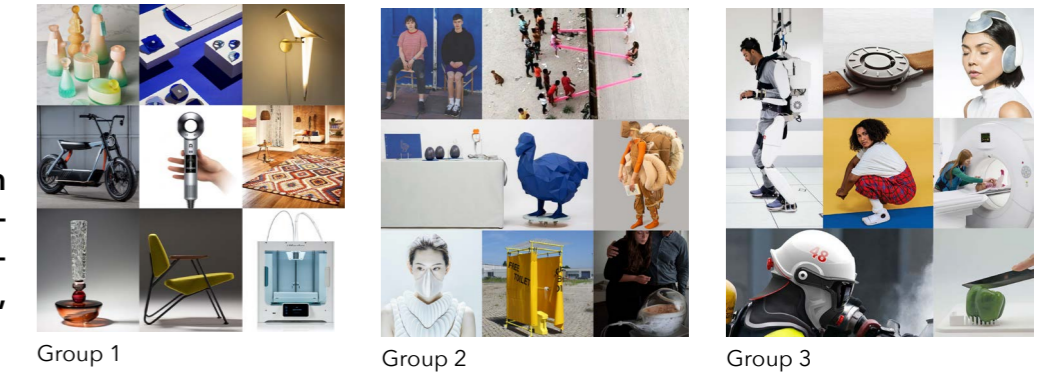
Faculty of Applied Arts

Never: 44.44%
Everyday: 14.81%
More than once: 33.33%
I am currently thinking about it: 7.41%

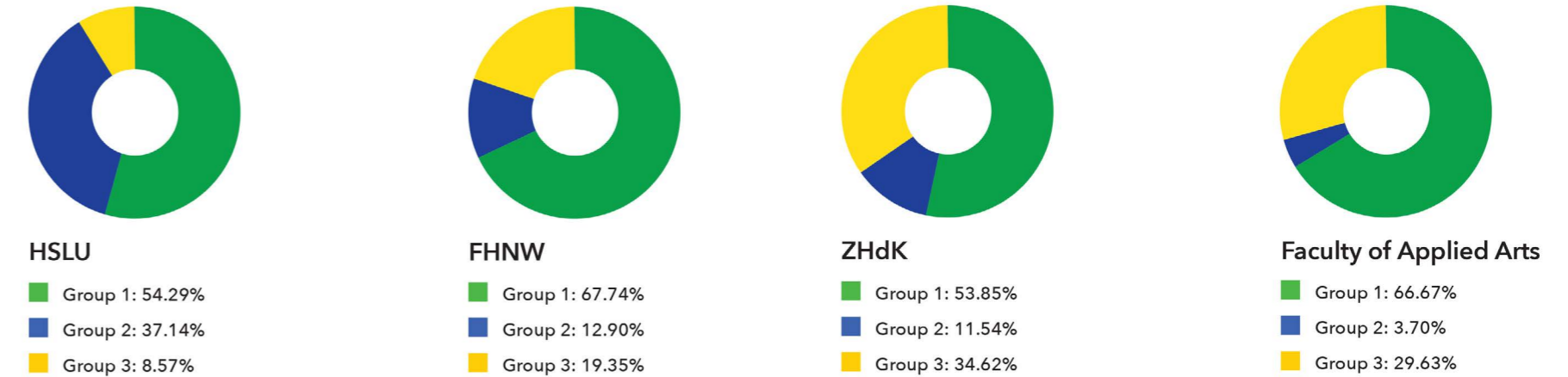
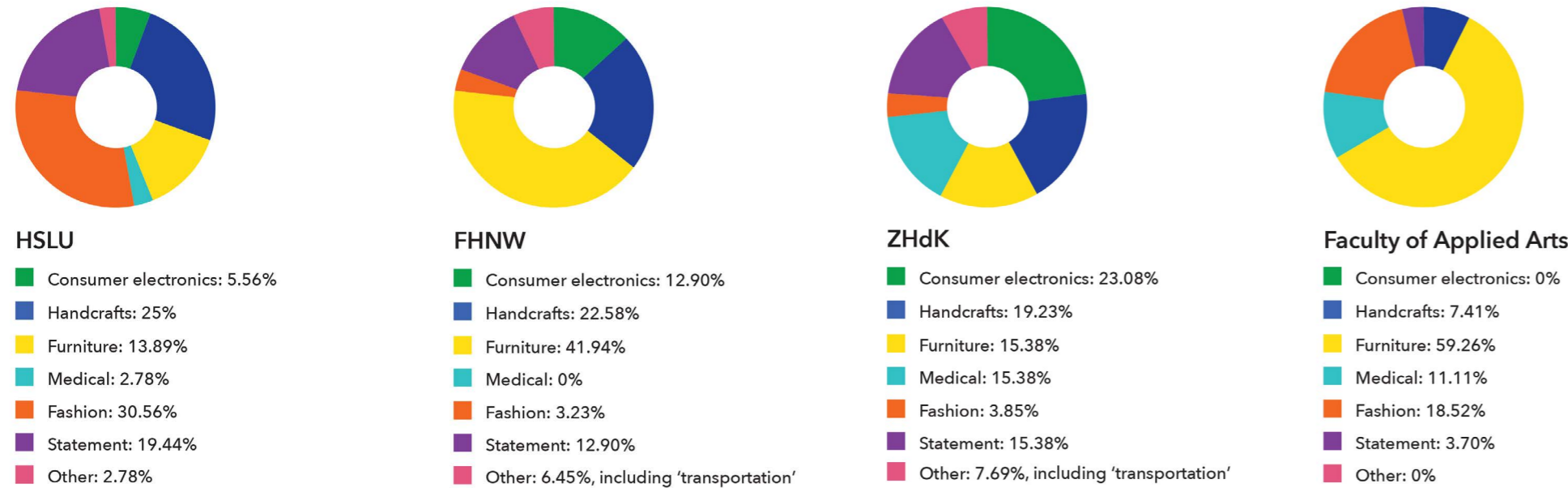
Question 03
What kind of products do you like to design and make?

Result
 The majority were drawn to 'furniture design' followed by 'handcrafts' and 'statement products'. While the minority stated to be interested in 'medical design' and 'home electronics'.

Question 04
Choose a product within the following 3 groups in which you can imagine yourself designing, then choose the group it's placed within. (You don't have to know the projects, their purpose or their context, choose based on your imagination of what they might be or do, choose the most relatable product for you as a designer)



Result
 The majority chose 'group 1' (commercial products), while depending on the school followed by 'group 2' (statement products) or 'group 3' (aid products).

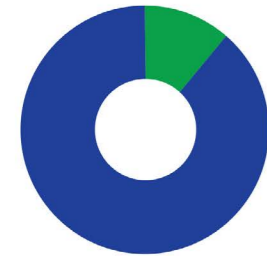


Question 05

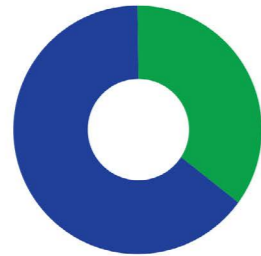
Have you learned to design for the future? (The future: Starting tomorrow until the next 50 years or more) For example: topics related to space travel, Artificial Intelligence, speculative scenarios to navigate the future, effects of climate related catastrophes on lifestyles...etc.

Result

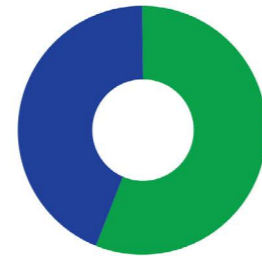
67.74% of the universities in Switzerland stated 'no' in comparison to 81.48% in Egypt, while again the majority of the ZHdK students stating 'yes', while HSLU including the highest percentage of students, 88.89% which stated 'no'.



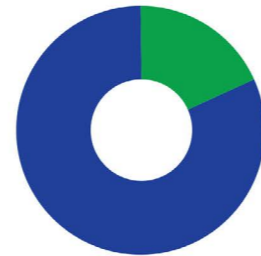
HSLU
Yes: 11.11%
No: 88.89%



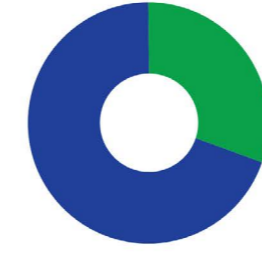
FHNW
Yes: 35.48%
No: 64.52%



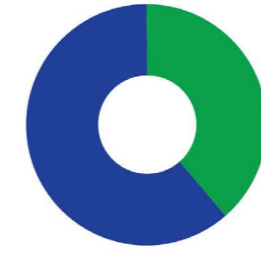
ZHdK
Yes: 56%
No: 44%



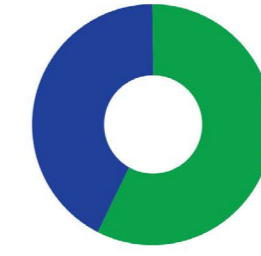
Faculty of Applied Arts
Yes: 18.52%
No: 81.48%



HSLU
Yes: 30.56%
No: 69.44%
I don't care: 0%



FHNW
Yes: 38.71%
No: 61.29%
I don't care: 0%



ZHdK
Yes: 57.69%
No: 42.31%
I don't care: 0%



Faculty of Applied Arts
Yes: 25.93%
No: 18.52%
Somewhat: 55.56%

Question 06

Do you feel that your department in your University, is equipping you to design in the age of climate change?

Result

When asked if they felt equipped by their universities to design in the age of climate change, 58.51% of the universities in Switzerland stated 'no'. While ZHdK being the only university where the majority of the students answered 'yes'.

Please note that due to an error, the students in the Faculty of Applied Arts were given the choices of 'Yes', 'No' and 'Somewhat' unlike the other students in the rest of the universities which were given 'I don't care' instead of somewhat. Therefore, it is not possible to include the Faculty of Applied Arts' results, when comparing the universities.

The final product

After the survey I realized that my struggles are very legitimate, I am not the only student that struggles to design today. There is something obviously lacking, not only within the design educational system, but also within the product design field as a whole. Students preferring to design aesthetical products in the age of the climate crisis is probably influenced by the continuous portrayal of those products all over design magazines, by design professionals and within curriculums in design educational institutions.

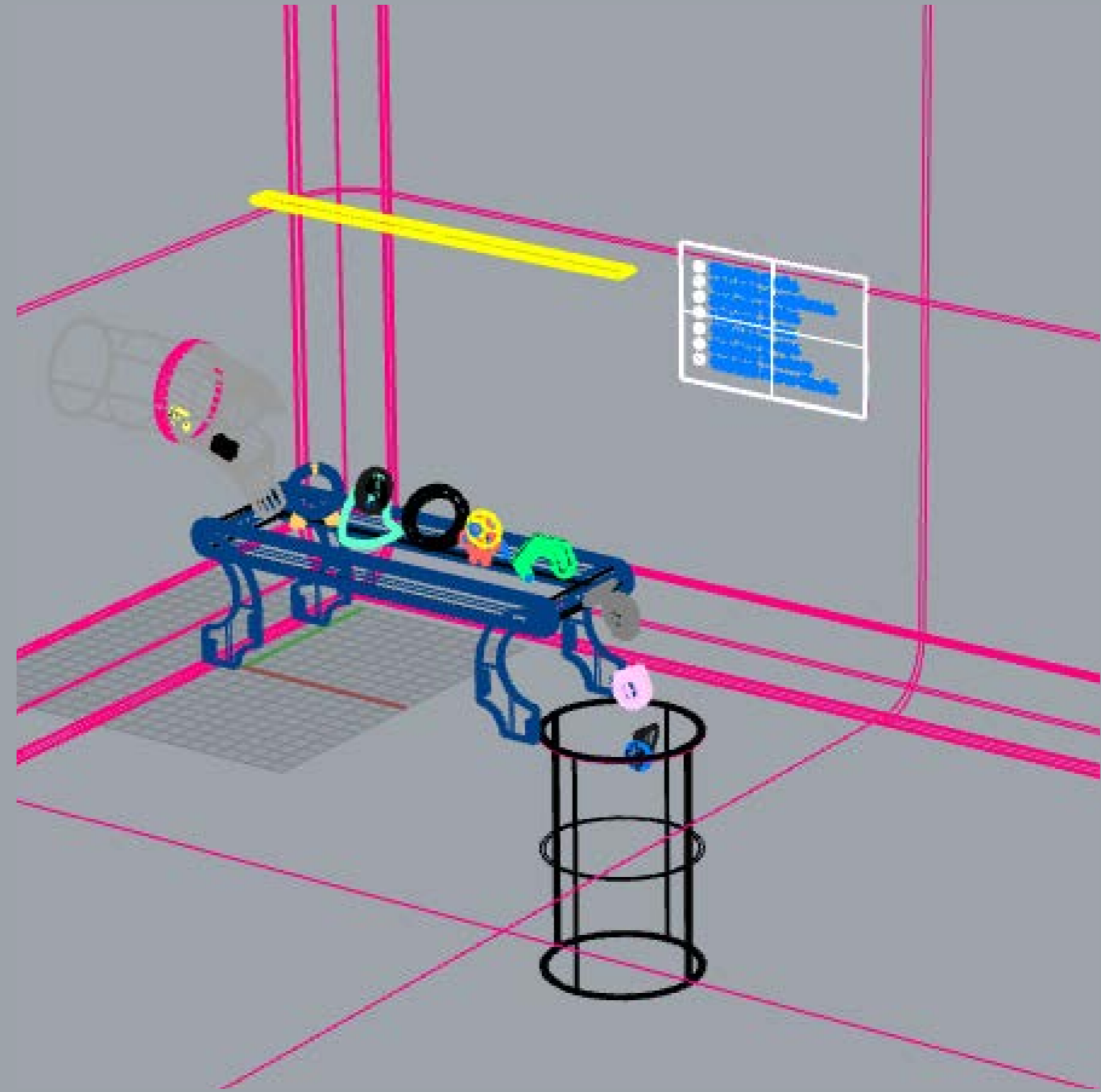
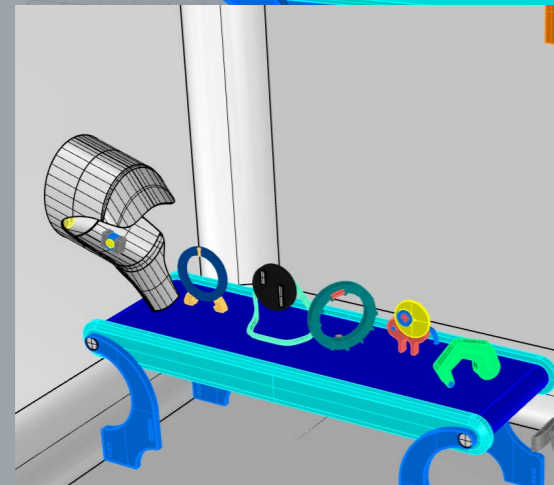
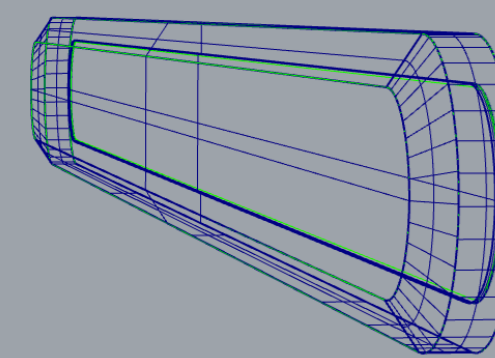
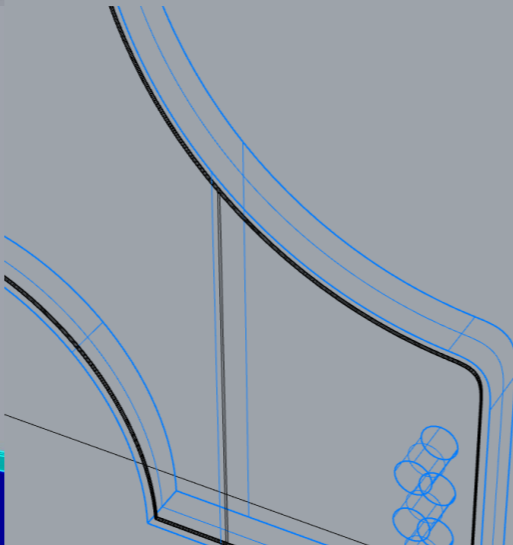
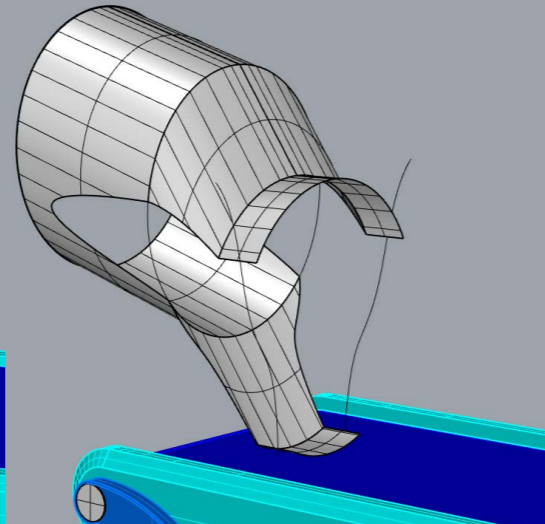
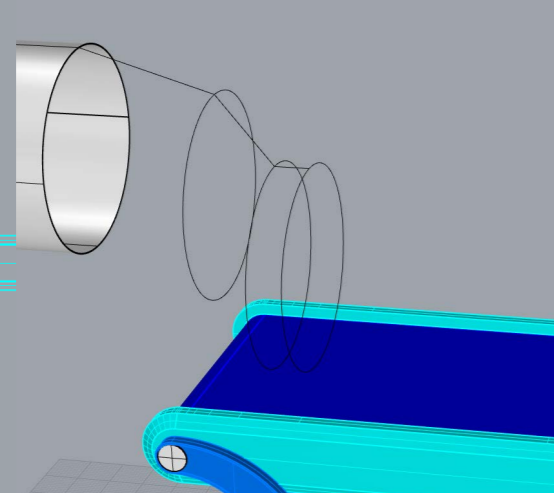
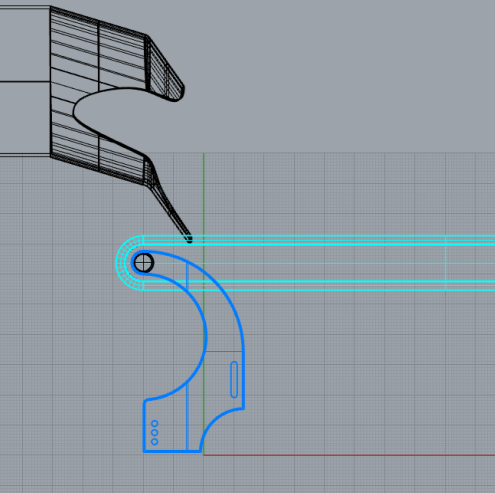
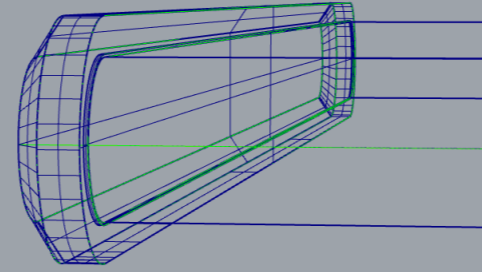
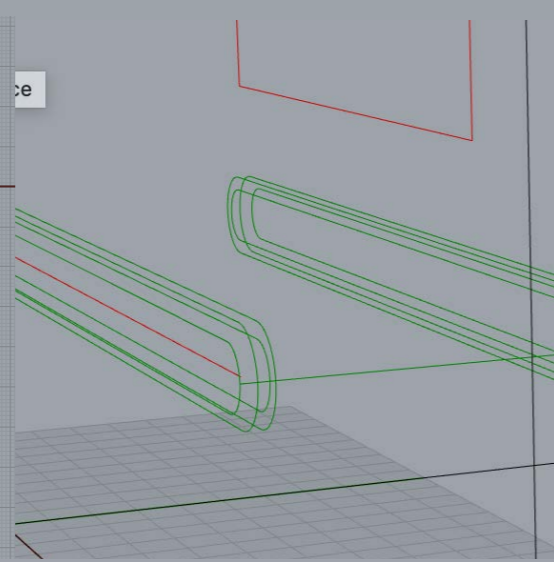
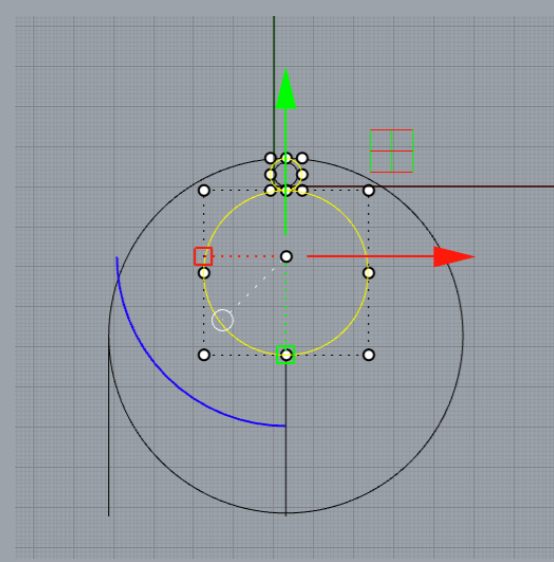
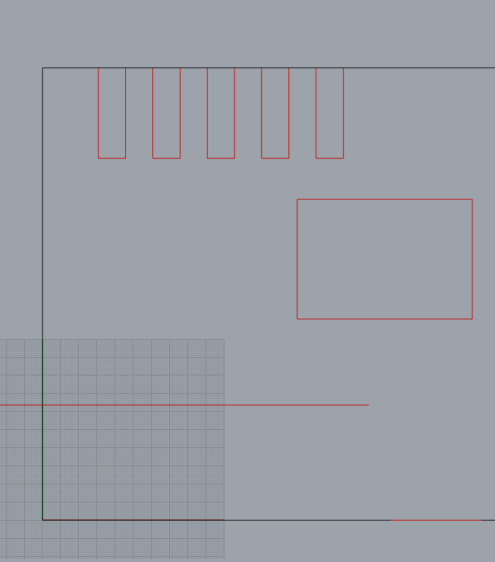
Wake up!

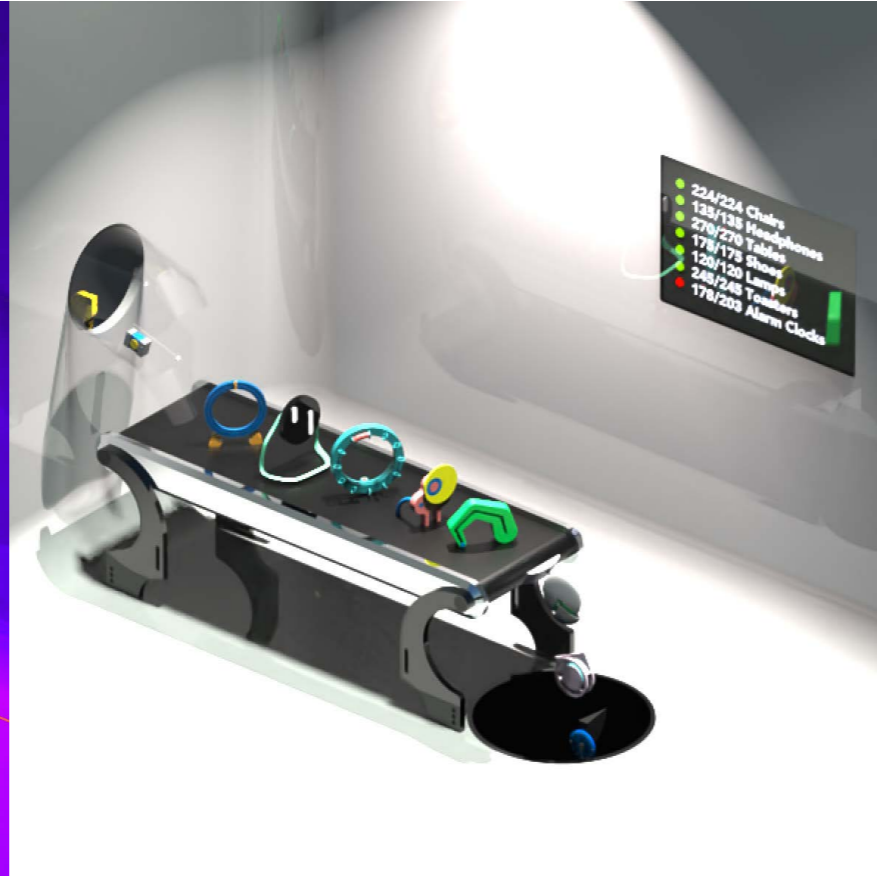
Reshaping perfectly functional and aesthetical products, has become the definition of product design. The climate crisis requires the next generation of designers to be equipped to design for the challenges to come. Wake up! questions the validity of today's approaches of product designers and the product design educational system within the climate crisis. Consisting of 10 alarm clocks with no stop or snooze buttons, this scene represents the moment of realizing that:

In order to create era-appropriate designs, we must dispose of the outdated mindset of reshaping pre-existing products for consumerist satisfaction and redefine the purpose of the profession.



The process





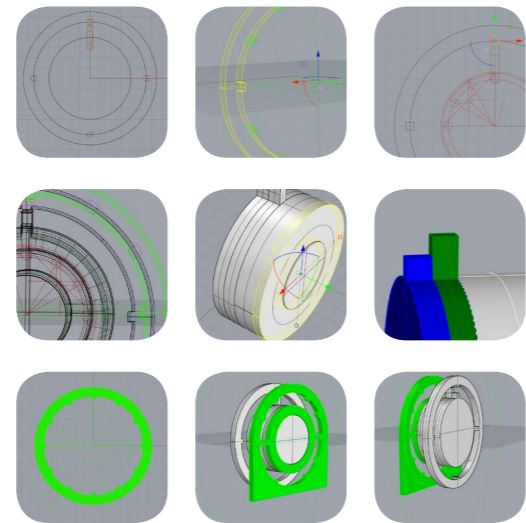
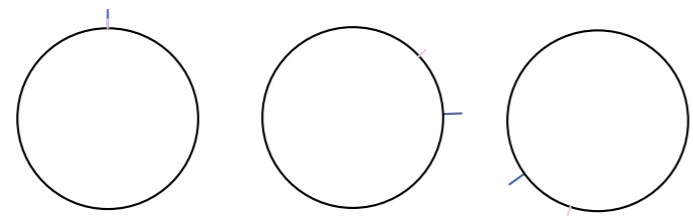
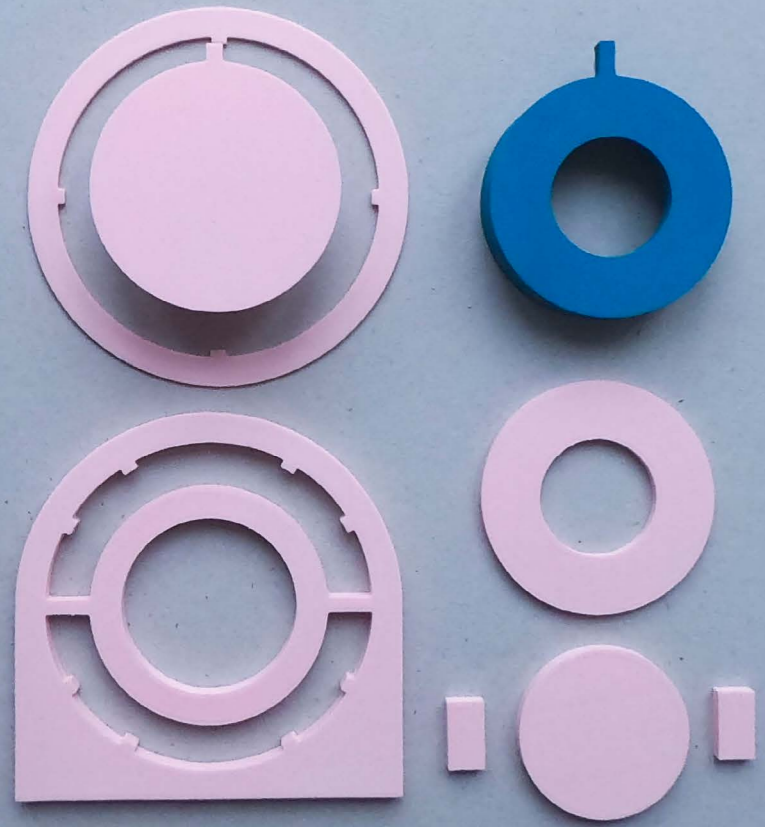


Alarms in detail

All the shapes of the 10 alarm clocks stem from the circle. Each alarm clock is inspired by a person or animal who played a positive role in my education so far. The following alarms are all 3D printed using PLA Plastic, all colors are detachable and so helps for re-using the materials after the project is over.

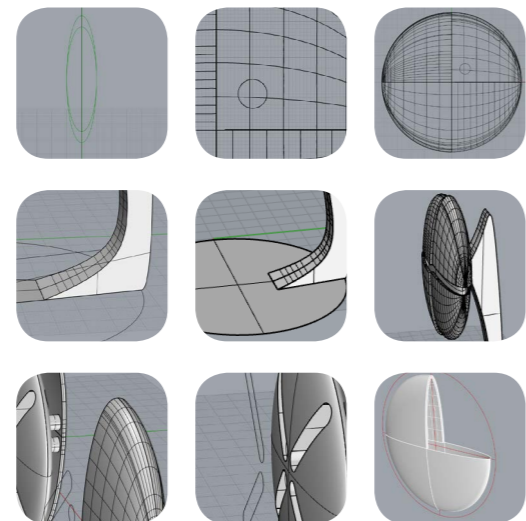
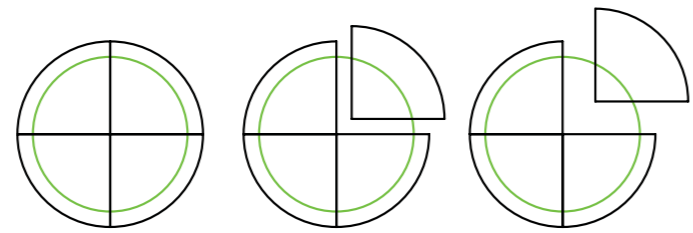
Alarm 179

This alarm clock consists of multifaceted layers, portraying each important layer of an alarm clock in a place of its own.



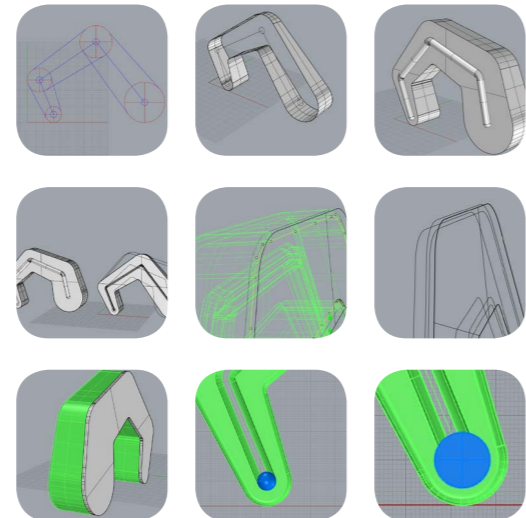
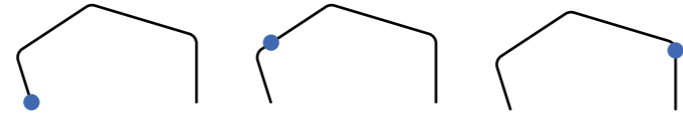
Alarm 180

This alarm clock shows what quarter of the day it is, without giving the exact time.



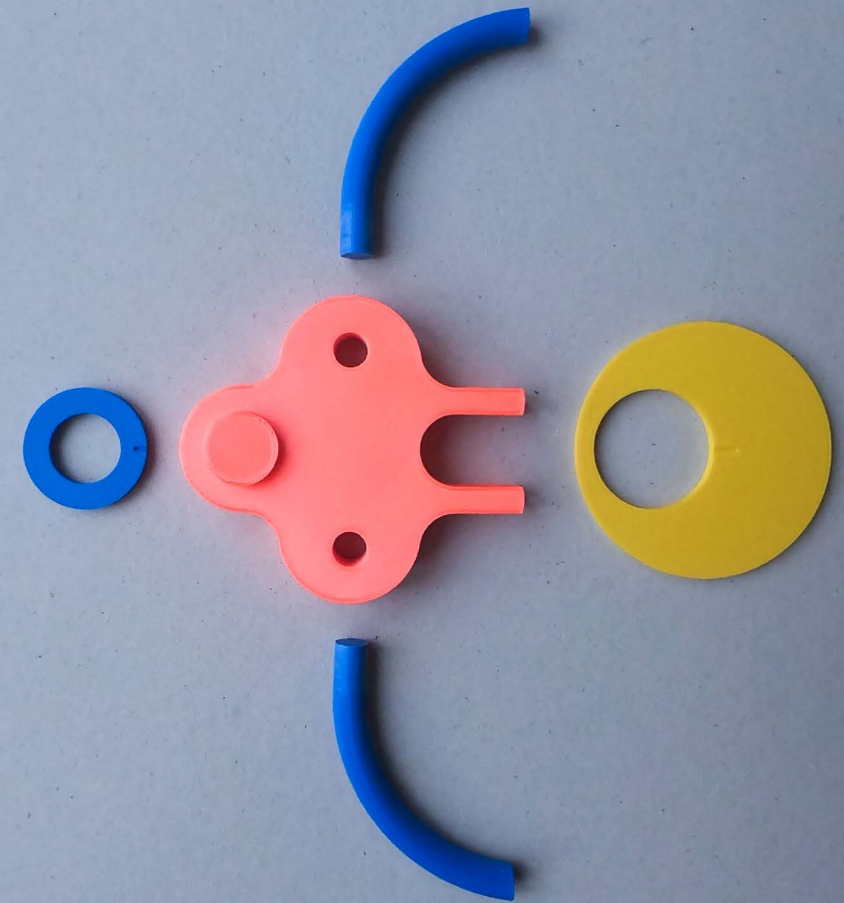
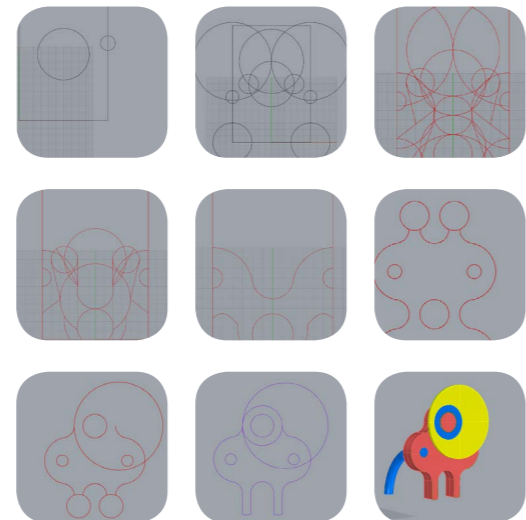
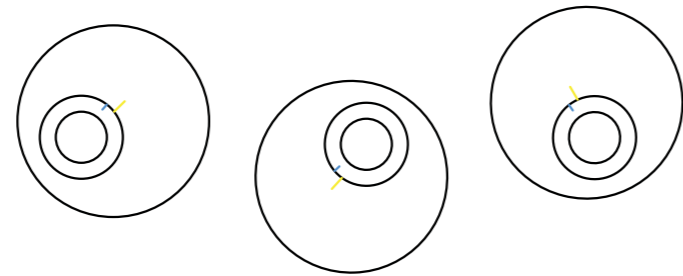
Alarm 181

This alarm clock shows 8 hours in a linear way (each line being 2 hours), prioritizing the amount of sleep, rather than time itself.



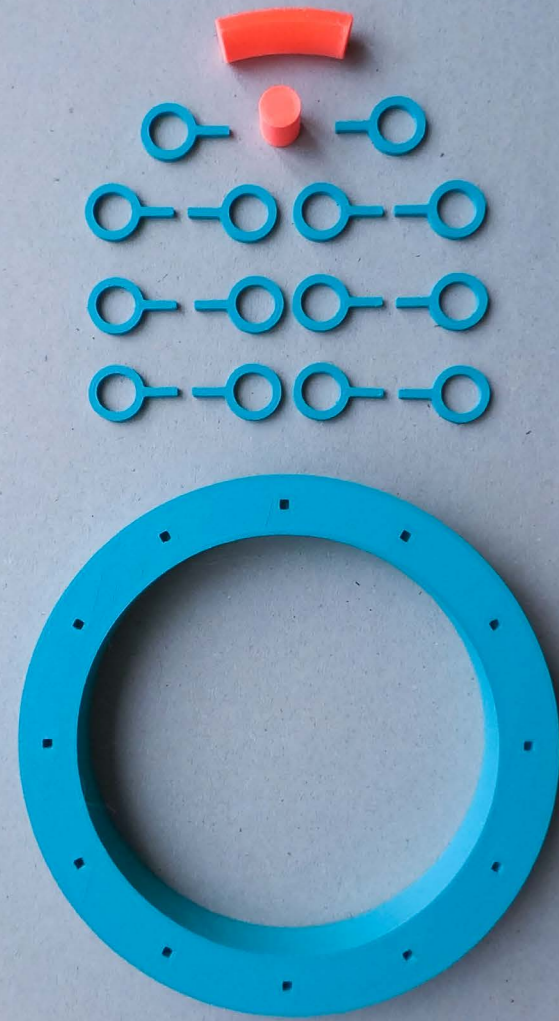
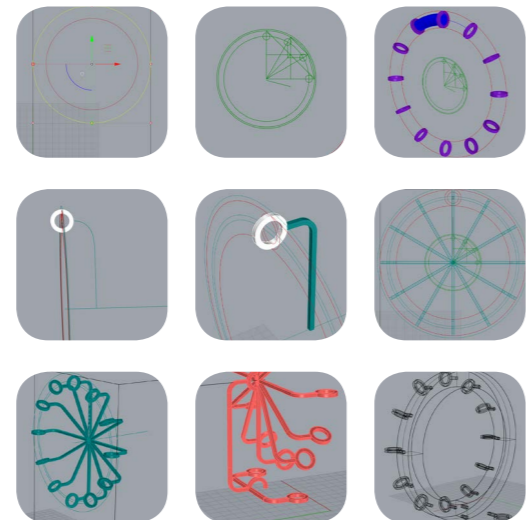
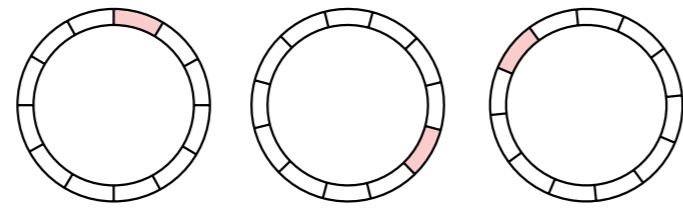
Alarm 182

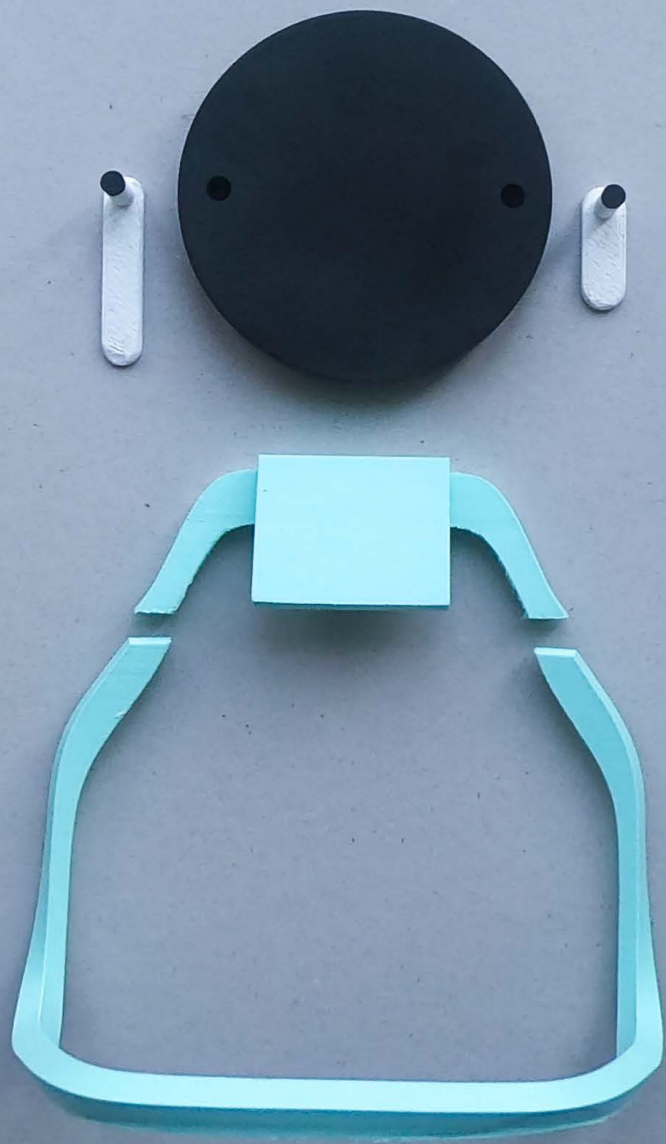
This alarm clock shows time within a playful context of constant reinvention and unpredictable unique change with every movement.



Alarm 183

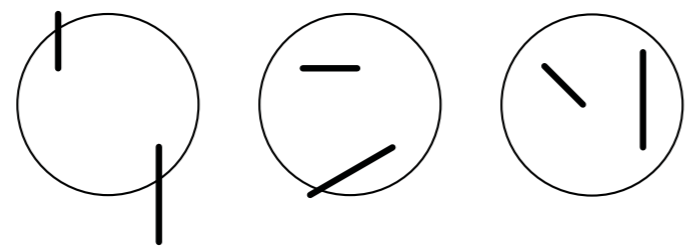
This alarm clock shows time in a five-minute pace with disregard to the hours.





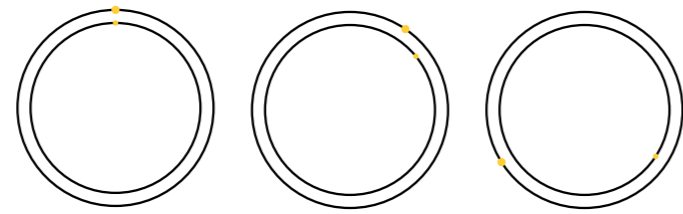
Alarm 184

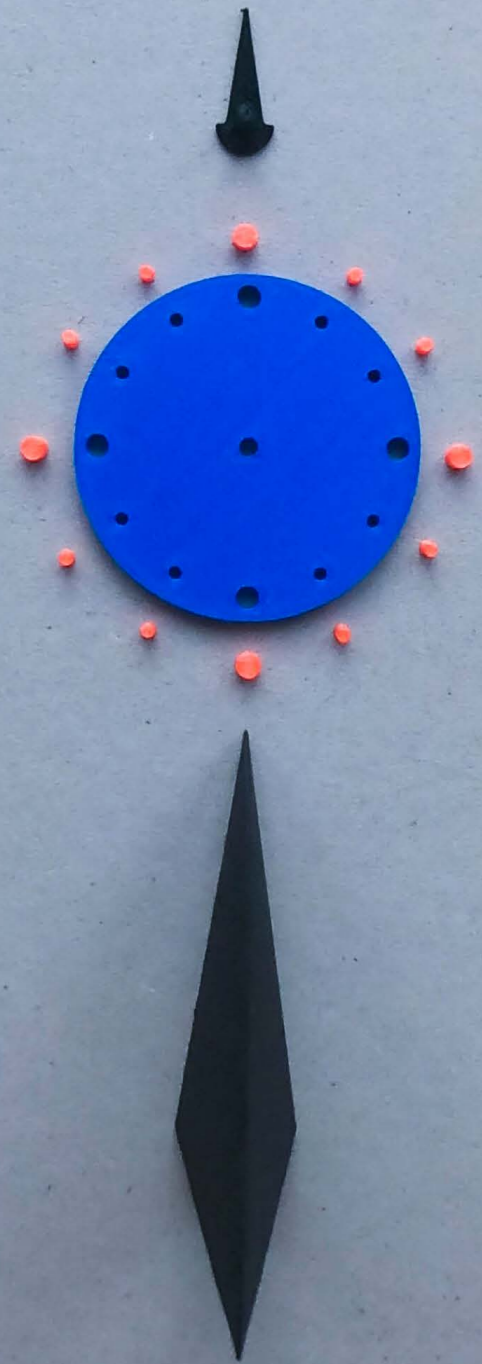
This alarm clock shows time in an abstract way, which forces the owner to put an effort in figuring out the time.



Alarm 185

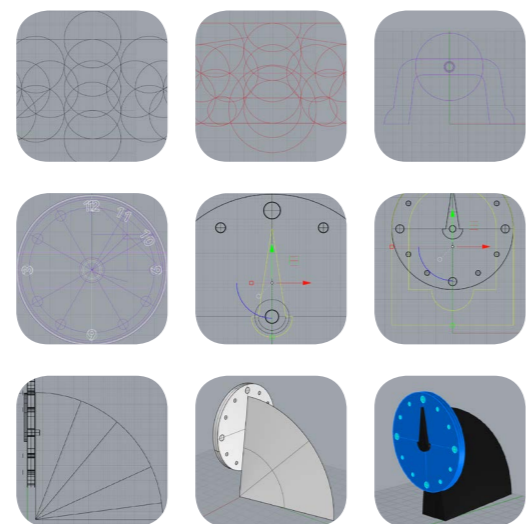
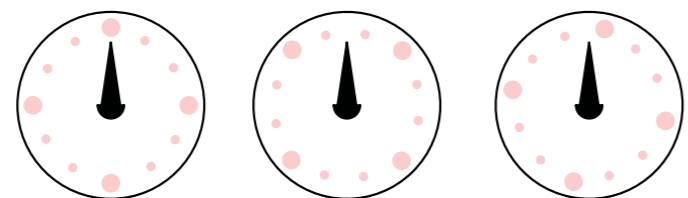
This alarm clock shows time in a circular context, while portraying time as crown jewels.





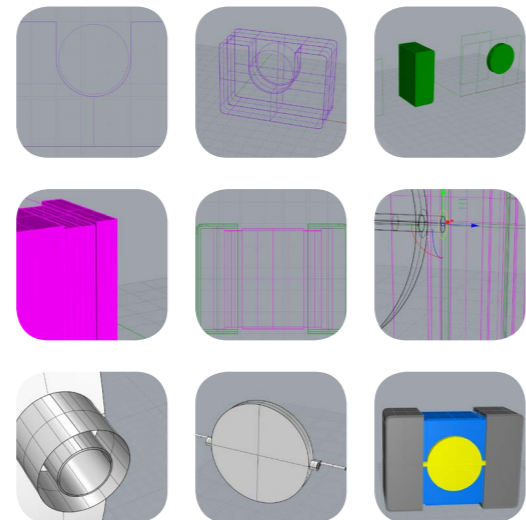
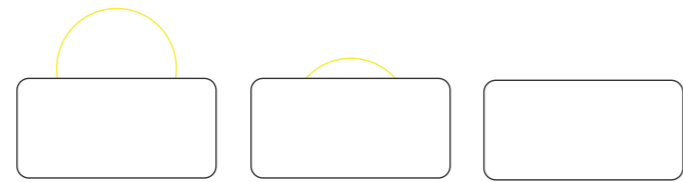
Alarm 186

This alarm clock shows time by rotating its plate anti-clockwise, while the arm stands still.



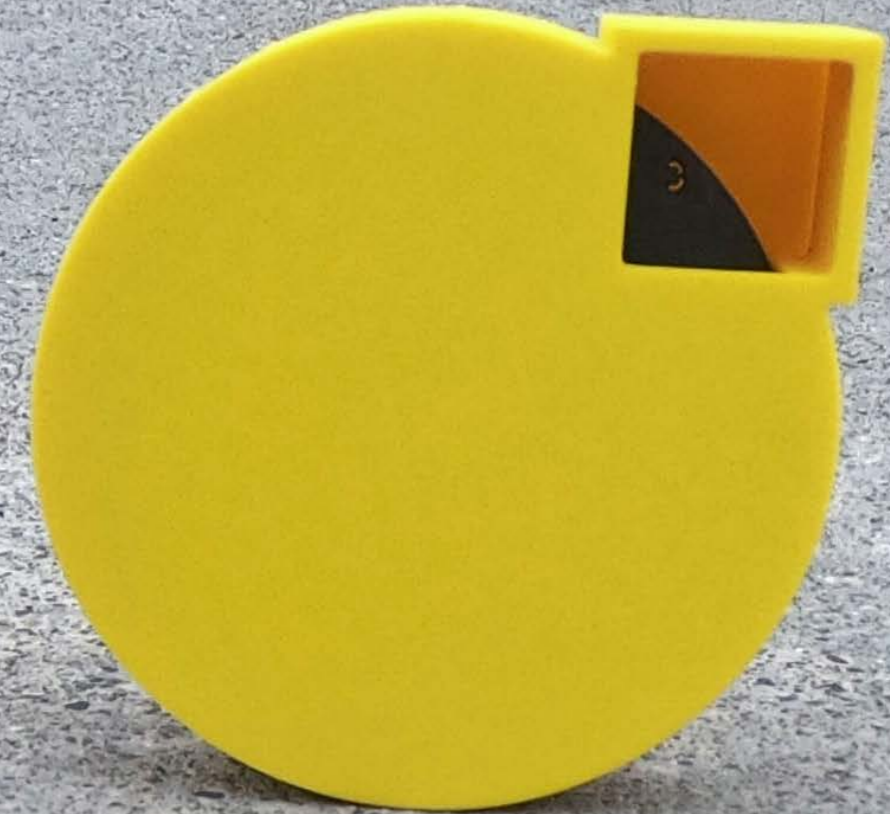
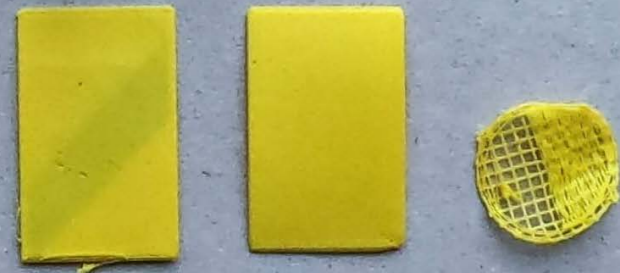
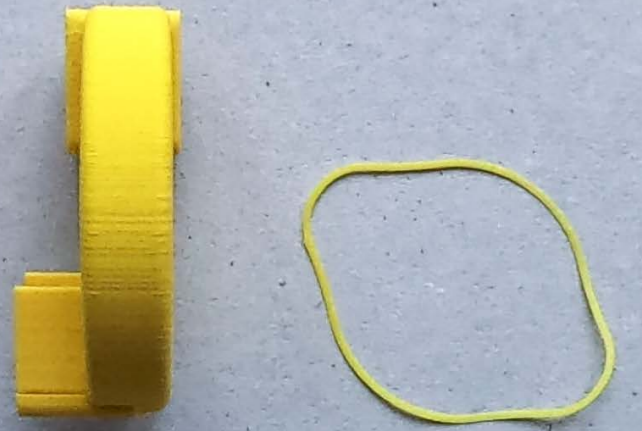
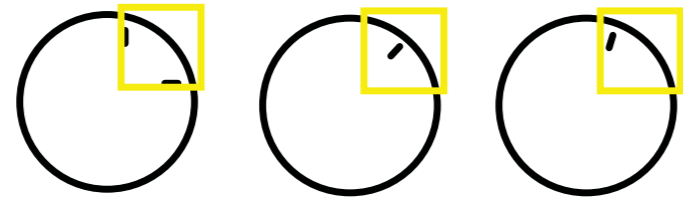
Alarm 187

This alarm clock shows time by imitating the movements of the sun (sunrise and sunset).



Alarm 188

This alarm clock shows only the timeframe which the user finds themselves within.





By-products and failed prints were collected and will be remade into new filament alongside the alarm prototypes.

List of figures

UNHCR: Unknown, Why UNHCR is taking action on climate change displacement, UNHCR | Innovation Service, 2017, <https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/why-unhcr-is-taking-action-on-climate-change-displacement/> (retrieved on 10.06.2020)

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