

Explorations Book

: Expanding Boundaries Through the Senses of Two Objects, 01 Candle

In this Explorations Book Part 2, the inquiry begins with personal objects that hold significance for me, exploring how memory and sensory experience shape the meanings these objects acquire. Building on this foundation, I experiment with various methods of reconstruction, examining how objects can be transformed through material and perceptual processes.

The development of the candle and the wooden table unfolds in parallel yet diverging trajectories; therefore, the book is structured in two separate chapters. The candle progresses through drawing, casting, smell mapping, and model-making, while the wooden table evolves through drawing, CNC printing, material experimentation, and formal development.



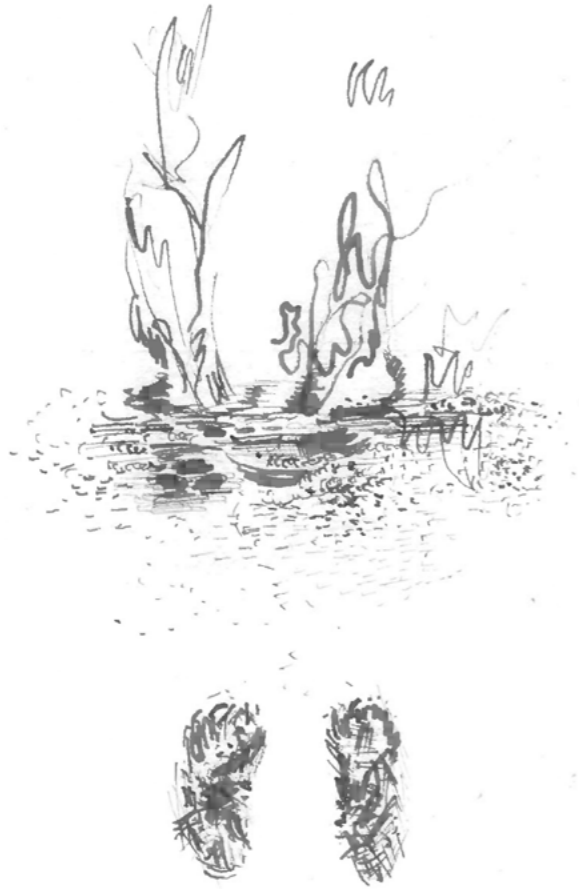
This CANDLE is an item I used in the student accomodation where I first began living in England. When one visits a place with someone, depending on the relationship or circumstances with that person, the place may be remembered not as the space itself, but as the relationship between people or objects (Lee Jeong-ho, 2011). This is also a subtle interaction occurring between emotion and place. Thus, just as smelling this scent evokes a space, the candle will remind me of my life in Britain. Therefore, this object is precious to me.

Lee, J.H. (2011) 'A study on the influence of users' place attachment to public libraries on their perception of place value', Journal of the Korean Society for Library and Information Science, 45(4), pp. 209-234. [In Korean]

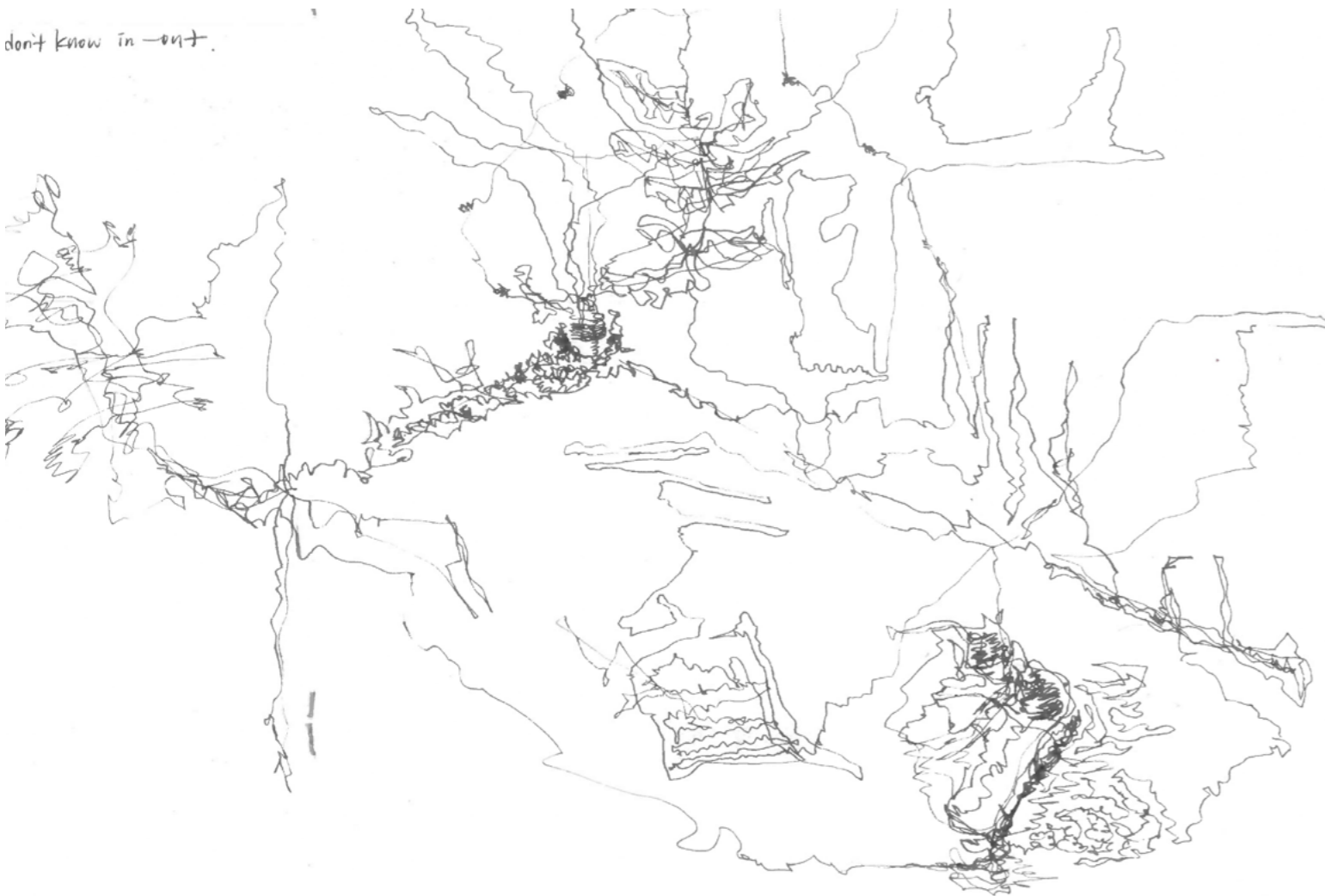
Scent Drawing – Human Body Odor

When I first moved into my dormitory, a strong trace of a previous occupant's body odor persisted in the space. This became one of my earliest and most intense olfactory memories in the UK. As I inhabited the room, the scent gradually diminished, yet it returned vividly whenever I came back from travel. Unlike ordinary smells that become less perceptible after prolonged exposure due to nose blindness, this particular scent resisted such desensitization.

To mitigate such bodily scents or residual smells after meals, I began using scented candles. Choosing a candle required careful consideration, as I understood that its scent would later function as an olfactory marker—an object-memory of this space.



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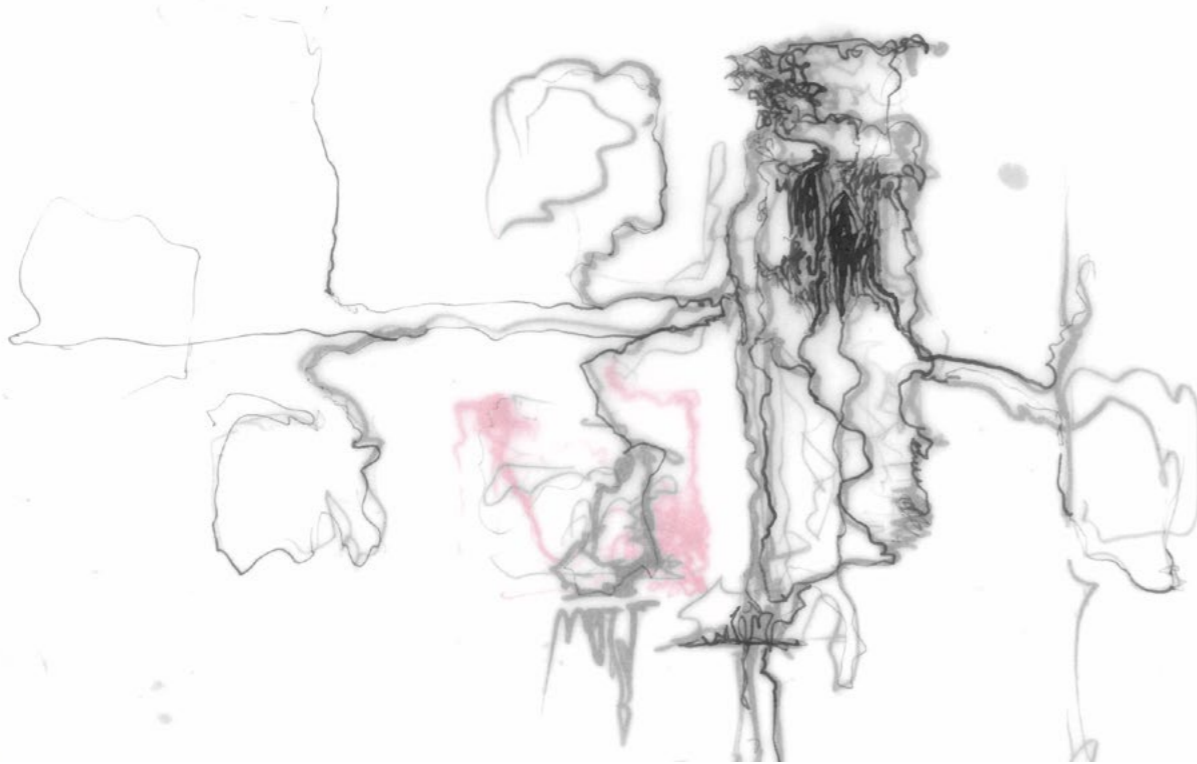


Drawing depicting how scent disperses when a scented candle is lit

It demonstrates the expansiveness of scent. When a candle is lit, it gradually masks food odours or human scents until they fade away. This scent permeates every corner, and even after the candle is extinguished, its fragrance is suddenly detected in various places. The candle alters scents; the hues and atmosphere it creates when lit refresh the mood, imparting different emotions even within the same room. As Simmel observed, scent evokes emotions and instinctive responses, thereby situating the individual within spatial and social worlds. Similarly, the scent of a candle often positions me within a space of memory.

Drawing the Diffusion of Candle Scent

The diffusion of candle scent, though invisible, extends beyond the room through gaps, ventilation, and door frames, reaching the corridor, other dormitory rooms, and the shared kitchen. Notably, the kitchen retains strong food odors even in the absence of people, revealing how olfactory traces articulate temporal and spatial boundaries.





Where Does the Boundary of an Object End? – From Candle to Wooden Table

The boundary of an object is not fixed; it is defined through human memory and experience. Objects themselves become agents that expand the notion of boundary. A boundary is a continuously reconfigured interface. As these objects acquire meaning and undergo reconstruction, they generate boundary-spaces where material, memory, and relational experience intersect. Through this process, the boundary shifts from a mere spatial divider to a dynamic field mediating between the self and its extensions.

The candle and the wooden table are both rooted in my personal history, and the continuity between them shifts depending on how memory connects or separates them. This relationship of two objects is expressed through a “scent expansion map,” which reveals how folding directions generate layered, overlapping spatial configurations. Ink drawings depict the irregular spread of scent, while the use of black and white visualises the intangibility of smell and memory.



First Casting Experiment Using the Candle Object

The used candle left behind a glass container and a fragment of wax. Although the missing wax was no longer visible, it remained present in memory. I represented this remembered absence through an incomplete form of yellow jelly wax, carving the glass and leftover wax to convey a sense of memory held within the object. The outcome was limited, yet the process introduced new considerations about interior/exterior relations and material behavior, which later informed the final table.

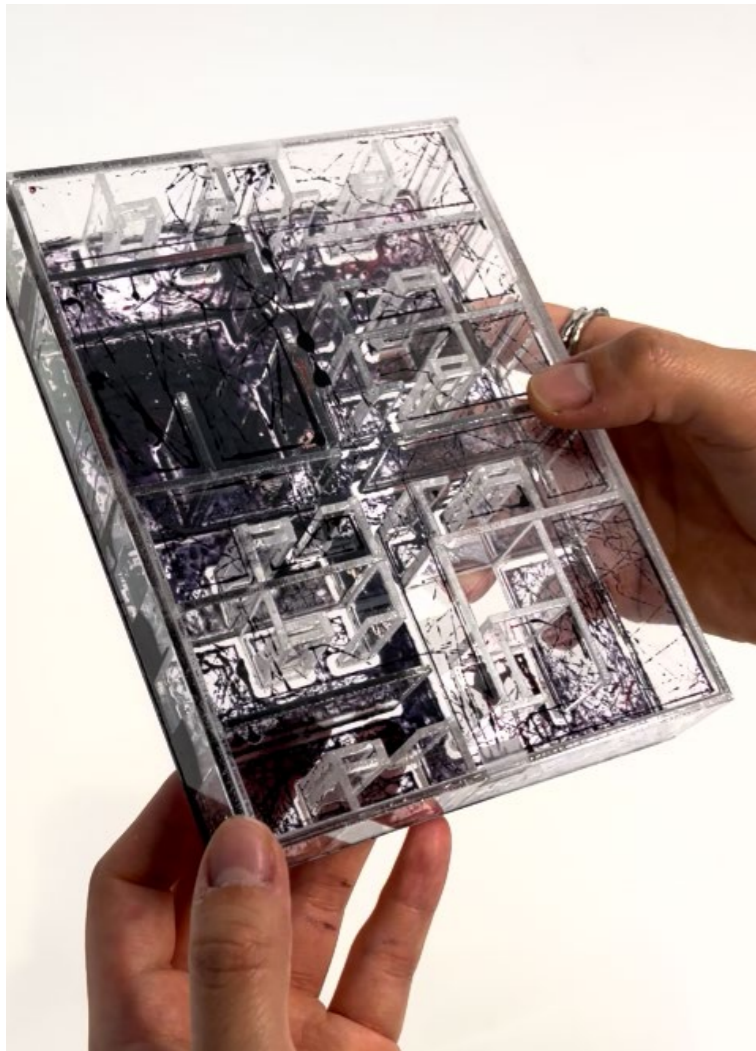
Rachel Whiteread casts the ‘negative space’ of everyday spaces in plaster, materialising invisible emotions, memories and traces. By recreating negative space in everyday spaces and objects, she conveys the uncanny effect of transitional spaces. She materialises the “remnants of memory” that the space itself holds, showing that space is not just a physical place. Her work significantly influenced this phase.



Scent Diffusion Map

The initial drawings were expanded through a shift in medium, adopting illustration and diagrammatic approaches. The images used depict foods frequently cooked or strongly scented within each dormitory room, along with partial representations of the human body. Through distortion and repetition, these images generate an extended visual field that maps the pathways through which scent diffuses across the corridor and into each room. At the time, flatmates cooked in the shared kitchen and food smells travelled from the communal space through the corridor and into private rooms, continuously changing with time and variations in intensity. This work documents and visualises this fluctuating movement of scent.

According to Low (2007, cited in Premdas, 2012), human reactions to scents—body odour, food smells, floral aromas, synthetic fragrances—serve as cultural signals that negotiate intimacy, privacy, and distance. In this sense, smell functions as a complex marker of social boundaries, revealing how individuals navigate proximity within everyday interactions. This project focuses specifically on body scent and food scent within this framework. It also reflects the distance maintained according to the food and body odours they emit.

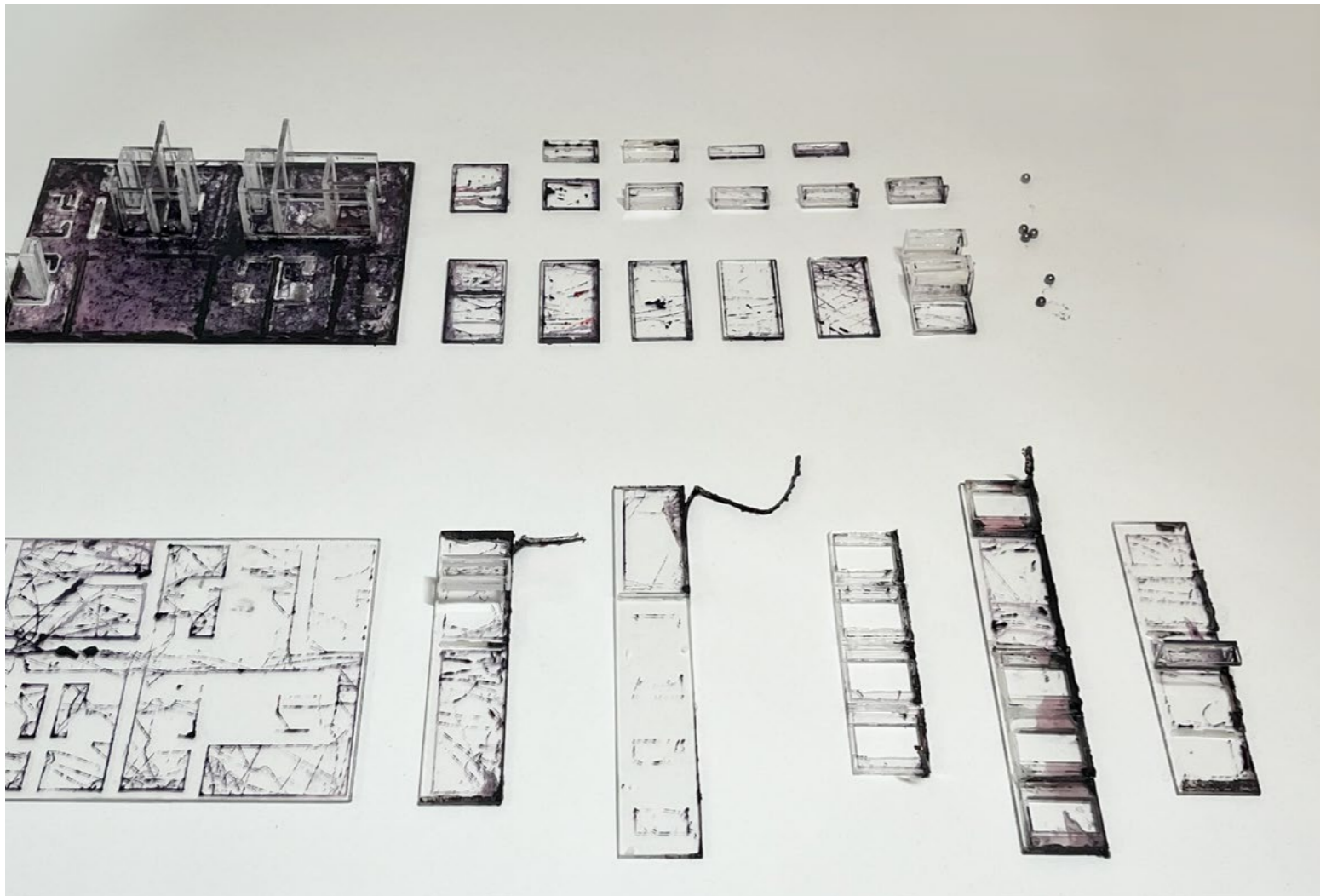


Scent Diffusion Model

The transformation of the initial drawings continued through a three-dimensional model created with acrylic boards and ink. Developed for the Working in Progress exhibition, the model was designed to facilitate interaction with visitors. The Scent Diffusion Map was placed beneath, with a scaled dormitory model above it. Inside the model, metal balls could be rolled along designated paths, allowing participants to physically trace the imagined routes of scent diffusion.

This model translates the previous illustrations into a material, spatial form. The dormitory space was designed with one side facing the corridor and the other opening toward the exterior, allowing for effective ventilation. The walls between rooms were constructed to prevent the passage of scent. Although the kitchen and bedroom were separated, the smell persisted because meals were often consumed inside the room. Scent does not move solely across horizontal planes; it spreads along walls, ceilings, and corners.

This phenomenon was represented through a metal sphere symbolizing fragrance. While the metal sphere was blocked by the walls and unable to move further, the ink gradually spread through the small gaps between the walls and doors. This symbolically visualized the diffusion of scent and the spatial limitations that define its movement. Ink was chosen because it leaves visible deposits on acrylic surfaces, thereby emphasising the accumulation of traces. During the exhibition, the model gradually darkened as more ink accumulated.



Archive and Deconstruction of the Scent Diffusion Model

After the exhibition, the model gradually deteriorated due to the repeated accumulation and movement of ink. Similarly, some residents of the dormitory remained while others left, each carrying their own memories and experiences to new places, where new trajectories will inevitably emerge.

The fragments of the broken model were first archived. Small pieces were combined with resin to test how the ink diffused within the resin's transparent structure. I then considered reconstructing the entire model using these fragments. However, determining a reconstruction method proved challenging, as resin becomes difficult to dismantle once cured, and its spreading behaviour varies depending on how it is poured.

This led to a new material inquiry: which material could maintain the transparency and traceability of resin while allowing for reconstruction and transformation?