

Good afternoon, and thank you for being here.

For those who don't know me, my name is Julia Goetz, and I am a multidisciplinary artist originally from San Francisco, where I was raised in a community deeply rooted in creativity and shared expression. From an early age, I was drawn to performance, dancing in a local studio, participating in theater productions, playing music with my family and, perhaps most importantly, being surrounded by artists who believed in gathering, sharing, and making together. Those early experiences shaped not only how I create, but why I create.

I'm currently pursuing a BFA in Intermedia at the Pacific Northwest College of Art, where I've explored a range of practices including painting, collage, ceramics, and woodworking. Across all of these forms, my work continues to return to a central idea: connection, through community, through craft, and through the materials we engage with.

My recent work brings these ideas into a more immersive, lived experience. Through furniture design and real time based gatherings, I created a space where people can come together sharing a meal, a cup of tea, a conversation, while interacting with handcrafted objects. These moments are simple, but intentional. They're a reflection on how daily rituals and communal experiences can themselves become art.

When I first began thinking about my thesis, I kept coming back to a very simple, personal experience: drinking tea with my friends, and wondering how I might design a table specifically for that kind of gathering.

I had been introduced to tea through the traditional Chinese practice of Gongfu—a casual but intentional ceremony centered around quick brewing and moments of rest throughout the day. It involves teaware like a small teapot, small cups, and loose-leaf tea, but more than that, it creates a space for pause, attention, and connection. As I spent more time in that setting, I started to ask myself why I felt so drawn to it.

Over time, through both reflection and making, I realized that what I was really seeking was the experience of daily rituals shared with others—rituals supported by handcrafted, cared-for objects, and grounded in mutual appreciation of each other's presence.

There are two parts of this project, Objectivity importance and Gathering importance.

At its core, my practice is about showing up, for one another, for the act of making, and for the shared experience of being present. I'm interested in how we can cultivate

deeper appreciation for the people around us, and how art can exist not just as something we observe, but as something we live through together.

*My thesis, **Third Space**, explores the intersection of furniture design, sculpture, and performance, creating a third space in the form of a table that fosters intentional human connection. In an increasingly dematerialized world, the act of gathering face to face to converse and share presence has become vital to our collective humanity. Through its handcrafted and tended to materiality, the table functions not only as an object but as a catalyst for intimate gatherings grounded in participation. By embedding the maker's hand in crafting every piece of the hardwood structure, highlighting the physical process of creation, the work emphasizes the value of tactile engagement, lived experience, and communal exchange. **Third Space** positions art as an active, shared event that is an embodied practice of living that unfolds in real time.*

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*This table is not **just** a piece of art.
It is not only an object to view in the art world.
This table is not meant to live in a gallery.*

This table is meant to be used.

*It is meant to exist in a domestic space—
to be touched, carried, cared for, and lived with
by people who do not need to be situated within the art world
to understand its value.*

This table is meant to be used by real people.

And yet, today, it sits here in a gallery.

*This space is not its final home.
This is a first viewing—
a moment to witness the object
before it enters the world it was made for.*

*What I am presenting is not just a table,
but a way of thinking about objects,
about gathering,
and about how we choose to show up for one another.*

*This work is not about viewing.
It is about living.*

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*My background as an artist
has always been rooted in shared experience.*

*As a child,
I was drawn to performance—
dance, theater, music.*

*Any opportunity I had
to exchange energy with others,
I took.*

*That desire to connect
is what continues to drive my work.*

*I've worked across many mediums—
painting, collage, performance, sculpture—*

*but I've found myself returning
again and again
to ceramics and wood.*

These materials carry history.

*They have been used
across cultures and generations
to create objects of function—
objects that support daily life.*

In the book *Fewer, Better Things: The Hidden Wisdom of Objects* by Glenn Adamson, a curator and art historian focused on design, craft, and conceptual art, he lays the groundwork for understanding the real, tactile, and material importance of objects in our everyday lives. He explores the history of craft and how handmade production ultimately shapes the way humans interact with objects. There is a psychological significance tied to handcrafted objects of use, and how they foster a deeper connection to both life and utilitarian design.

In Chapter 11, “Communities of Respect,” Adamson reflects on the power of objectivity, writing:

“Things themselves offer us the power to connect like nothing else because they constitute a sort of truth that can be found nowhere else. When you make an object, there is nowhere to hide. One cannot spin questions of workmanship; the results are plain to see, and that objectivity is valuable indeed in our uncertain world.”

I agree that within the framework of Adamson that there is something to be said about the bluntness that a handcrafted object carries in the world. There is a language of knowledge embedded within it—one that speaks for itself through its radical act of simply existing. A crafted object has moved through a multitude of transformations as its material has been worked and shaped. In a world filled with unanswered questions, objects offer a kind of truth. Especially the ones we use daily—they become trusted. This level of trust creates a collective respect for handcrafted objects of everyday use, as well as a sense of sentimentality surrounding their presence in our individual lives.

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The table holds many things.

*It holds memories,
family,
friends,
food,
homework,
grief,
opinions,
disagreements,
and love.*

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While the history of the gathering at the table stems from the social structure and power dynamics, such as long tables symbolized wealth and the ability to host many people, and how dining rooms themselves were a space created to formally host gatherings to symbolize wealth and status, the necessity of gathering to further experience human connection is

While investigating the history of the table and the furniture typology relating to gathering and shared experience, I came across an idea, In design theory and

phenomenology Erving Goffman, a social psychologist and sociologist, who worked mainly in areas regarding the social construction of self, refers to objects and spaces as a “frame” how we interpret situations

This area of inquiry when applied to the table follows these human patterns almost to a t. There is a framework around sitting at a table signals, focus, intention and a shared participation. Whereas a conversation at a table feels different from:standing randomly or walking side by side with someone, There is a bounded situation at the table where the interaction pulls in focus from all participants, to be at the table is to be present.

*Throughout my life,
The table has been a place of sanctuary.*

A third space.

*It is where meals are shared,
where birthdays are celebrated,
where holidays unfold,
where conversations stretch long past what was expected.*

Experiences happen at the table.

*And there is always space for more than one.
The table is built to gather.*

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*But in the world we live in today,
our understanding of gathering is shifting.*

*We are moving toward a kind of dematerialization—
where connection no longer requires physical presence.*

*We ask:
How can we stay connected
without being in the same space?*

*And in many ways,
technology has answered that question.*

*We can see each other,
hear each other,
communicate instantly.*

But something is missing.

In this 2020 article, *Presence in Digital Spaces*, academic researchers known for their work in sociology and phenomenology, Lindemann and Schünemann (Shoe-ne-mon) argue that traditional sociology places special importance on face-to-face interaction because it involves shared physical space, embodiment, and rich sensory experience. However, they complicate this idea by showing that digital communication can also create forms of “presence”, though in different ways. Even though digital communication can simulate presence, their research shows that people still struggle to fully recognize “strong ties” without physical meetings.

*The exchange is visible—
but it is not fully shared.*

*There is an energy that exists
when we are face to face,
feet to feet,
looking one another in the eyes—*

that cannot be replicated.

*As third spaces become smaller,
and less accessible,
this kind of gathering becomes more rare—
and more necessary.*

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*My growth as an artist
has come through gathering....*

*Not just gathering materials—
but gathering people,
experiences,
and relationships.*

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As I've been researching beyond material-based studio practices, I've become really interested in social art and the idea of community gathering as a form of art in itself. Artists like Tom Marioni, with works like *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends Is the Highest Form of Art* (1970–present), have really shifted the way I think about gathering. In that piece, something as simple as drinking beer with friends becomes a form of high conceptual art—creating space to think critically and creatively about our social interactions, and how they inform life. Marioni started this piece in the 70's by hosting gatherings in his studio in Oakland California. What started as a couple of friends coming together to drink beer in an art or gallery space, became a weekly occurrence, having a person invite someone new each time to the gathering. A ritual began to unfold. This work became much more than just a social art experiment, but a necessary call to action to bring people together, no matter the outcome. This work was to simply enjoy, and to give the self permission to enjoy with one another. I related to this line of thinking in the way of showing up to be present with one another is enough. That the connection between groups of people is inherently the space where we feel that love is shared. Showing up for one another is what matters.

It makes me think about how life itself can become art, but often only when it is framed that way. When a gathering is self-proclaimed as a work of art, it becomes subject to a different set of expectations and standards. Yet the act of naming something as art—of declaring it as such—is itself a radical gesture, both within and outside the art world.

This raises questions about the legitimacy of art. If something is self-proclaimed, does that make it any less real? Or does it reveal that art has always depended on perception and agreement?

There is something powerful in this shared consciousness. If two or more people agree to experience something as art, then, in that moment, it exists as art. The framework shifts. An everyday object or occurrence takes on new meaning because you allow yourself to engage with it more deeply, without relying solely on preexisting structures or definitions.

In that sense, there is a kind of self-proclamation of importance—an intentional act of assigning value, rather than inheriting it.

Marioni's work highlights how the rituals of simple joys—like sharing a drink with friends—can have a much more profound effect on our psyches than we usually acknowledge. These intentional gatherings create space for conversation, for vulnerability, and for ideas to emerge. There's something about that environment—especially when people relax a little in a casual setting—that allows for a more open, honest, and engaged exchange. Those moments of connection can actually become the backbone of inspiration and how experience is research.

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*My primary method of research
is through first-hand relationships.*

Through conversation.

*Through observing how people move,
how they speak,
how they exist in space—
and how we exist together.*

This kind of research is alive.

It is responsive.

*And no matter how intimate a relationship is,
gathering creates a kind of family structure—
where behaviors and exchanges
shape the outcome.*

*There is vulnerability in that.
There is intimacy in occupying the same space.*

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*The table I've created
is not fixed.*

It is movable.

*It can exist in multiple environments—
on the floor,
on a bed,
outdoors,
or placed on top of another surface.*

I designed it this way intentionally.

*I created something
that could transform any space
into a site of gathering.*

A portable third space.

*This object is not precious. It is an everyday object that, over time, will inevitably carry
the marks of human use and imperfection.*

While the table is not intentionally meant to be damaged or altered, these changes are unavoidable through its connection to people. This mirrors our inability to control the experiences in our lives—no matter our intentions, the outcome will always be different from what we expect.

This inquiry interests me because it means the work will evolve over time. The object, in its existence, will become one with its environment and, in turn, change its own nature.

*It is meant to travel,
to be handled,
to be used.*

Holds the record of experiences

To live a life beyond this room.

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So why is this table here?

*If it does not belong in a gallery—
why present it this way?*

This space serves as a threshold.

A moment of introduction.

*A place to witness the object
before it enters the world
it was built for.*

*Because ultimately,
this table does not belong here.*

It belongs in a living room.

*It belongs in a bedroom
filled with memory.*

*It belongs in a kitchen
where a family gathers after work.*

*It belongs in the hands of friends
lifting it into a car,
bringing it to a park
for a meal at sunset.*

Artist and space maker Andrea Zittel reaches deeply into the ideas of how design and living can function in harmony when approached through the lens of life as art.

Her framework around her practice and where it exists in the art world speaks to me on many levels. If someone were to look at her work from a biased standpoint, what she ultimately is doing is design, but her thought process is beyond just simple terms. She is an artist because she says so. Her self-proclaimed nature of being an artist, doesn't necessarily fit into the artworld.

I have been inspired by her functional, sculptural living units, which are designed on a small scale with everything you need to live in mind. There is a sense of scarcity that allows the materiality to speak for itself, in that whatever is present in the work is ultimately understood as an important object of use. Her approach to building and making—seeking to understand the reality of a material world, with a deep appreciation for the things we interact with—gives me hope for a functional, sustainable, and heart-forward world of material. A world in which material can be experimented with, not abused, taken for granted, or wasted.

In a 2009 interview with Zittel, she touches on her decisions around gesture, and relationship to making. How situating herself and her work in a community and environment outside of the art world can reveal a more experiential understanding of why creative gesture is so important to design in our everyday objects of use.

“I think that on a fundamental level my work will always be treated as art simply because it is in that system (i.e., sold in a gallery, validated through its acquisition into museum collections). The tag “conceptual” has been overused and abused for the last twenty years to the extent that almost all art that isn’t formal is seen as conceptual. I like to think of the word experiential as a good stand-in for the word conceptual when it comes to my own work. Yet the shortcoming with the word experiential is that it doesn’t adequately explain my mission, which has more to do with exploring and understanding the set of norms, values and psychologies that surround use of objects, rather than simply making objects of use.”

“I was curious to find out what would happen if I actually went a step further and just did it in a normal community where all the participants weren’t artists.”

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*My practice is intuitive,
but it is also rooted in discipline.*

*Working with these materials
requires time,
attention,
and care.*

*There is repetition and lots of planning
And there is failure.*

And there is a relationship.

The material and I are in conversation.

*Sometimes I push too far—
and it resists.*

*Sometimes it leads—
and I follow.*

*Through this process,
the object becomes an extension of myself.*

*The more I commit to the material,
the more it holds me within it.*

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For me, making is deeply about process and dedication—about learning through materials and staying open to growth. I think I will always feel like a student as long as I continue to make. At the same time, I'm interested in how art can become an experience that allows us to see the world differently, together.

My work has shifted through this exploration. I've become less interested in experimentation for its own sake, and more focused on creating work that exists within a broader community—one that extends beyond the art world. By making objects intended for use and ritual, I hope to encourage people to gather, to slow down, and to reconsider the culture of constant productivity in favor of presence and connection.

I understand that not everyone will immediately recognize or value an object made for sentimental use by hand. But for me, continuing to create these kinds of objects—ones rooted in care, intention, and emotional connection—feels like a labor of love. And I believe that the people who resonate with that will find their way to it, and maybe even be inspired to create in their own way.

At its core, I want to inspire people in the same way I've been inspired—through friendships, through shared moments. Because community and friendship make experiences richer, more meaningful.

I've also come to realize that being an artist often involves a lot of time spent alone. That solitude can be necessary for growth and self-discovery. But at the end of the day, there's something essential about coming back to one another—about sharing conversation, in person. It feels like a kind of completion, a return to something human.

As important as it is to show up for each other, my passion for craft and for designing objects for use feels like an extension of that care.

The objects I make become physical indicators of my investment in these shared experiences. By building something to gather around, I'm adding another layer of intention—one that exists through material, but translates into something emotional.

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While I was in the process of developing the final design of the table, my material knowledge improved consistently. As I spent more time getting to know and understand the language of working with wood, I developed a deep love for—and trust in—the time I spent making, working, and existing in the shop.

I showed up every day with new questions for my teachers and for the material itself. As I continued, I began to realize that many of my questions could only be answered through the act of making. At times, I viewed my intuitive practice as failure, but in reality, those “failures” were simply the material responding—answering my questions, reacting, and teaching through my movements as a maker.

My first attempt and prototype was a handcrafted wooden table that was seated low to the floor and had one sunken tray instead of four. I used pine lumber, which is a softwood that is relatively inexpensive and a good material to work with when becoming familiar with woodworking. I was always interested in working with hardwood, but as I found out during the process, I had a lot to learn before diving in headfirst.

The main thing I learned about working with wood is that it is always alive. The material will warp and move throughout its life, even when it is in a finished state. When storing wood, there are many factors that come into play to keep it in optimal condition. Maintaining airflow on all sides—edges and surfaces—is very important to keep the material flat. This is where working with the material becomes tricky, and where the relationship becomes necessary. Wood demands a certain amount of care and consideration, or it will give you problems.

The pine lumber that I started out with is very universally recognized for furniture and is a relatively inexpensive wood product. Some people say pine has a reputation for being cheap and associate it with IKEA and other mass-produced items. However, this material, in its own right, is incredibly important for accessibility in woodworking. I had to remind myself that there is nothing wrong with pine.

Yet my interest and determination to work with hardwood persisted. I wanted to work with something that required more care and planning—something with more at stake when handling it. Cost was a large factor in this, as most hardwood is expensive and often seen as a luxury material.

When considering the species of wood, I thought carefully about what the material meant to me and the attributes I wanted it to represent in my work. I knew I had a budget, and I wanted something very sturdy that would last for years if properly cared for, with character in its grain. I felt like a kid in a candy shop in the lumber store—each aisle filled with hundreds of trees, cut into recognizable boards, all individually beautiful and alive. Seeing each species next to one another revealed their personalities and unique presence.

I ultimately chose a hardwood that offered these qualities: warm, smooth, smoky, with a soft grain. The wood I used for my final table was European beech, a dense hardwood commonly used for cabinetry, furniture, and flooring. It offers durability and hardness while still being moderately easy to work with. For my first piece of furniture, I allowed myself to be ambitious enough to work with hardwood without going too far into a material I was not yet fully familiar with, respecting its scarcity and importance.

This realization has deeply impacted my relationship with materials. I've come to understand that simply spending time with a material or object can offer more insight than any book, article, or lecture on the subject. This idea has reaffirmed my ambitions as a maker. There is a kind of knowledge embedded in experience—especially when approaching a material without prior assumptions about what you should or shouldn't do.

This process strengthens critical thinking and problem-solving—fundamentally human experiences that, in many ways, are slowly being overshadowed by technology and an overwhelming influx of information.

I would like to thank my mentor Sara Huston for always challenging me to critically think about the work I make and how it exists in the world. You've helped me grow more than you know. I would also like to thank James Kennon, for being by my side in the woodshop and letting me experiment while keeping me in check in my craft. A big thank you to my dear friend Nick for making the signs for this exhibition. And finally I thank my family for being supportive and always showing up for me as a person. They continue to give me the room to mess up and learn from my mistakes, which has led me on the path I am today. I am forever grateful.

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I've become really interested in the idea of objects that hold life—objects that we return to again and again. These objects carry experiences, memories, and traces of the moments we choose to show up for. And in that way, they become more than functional—they become part of the rhythm of living.

*My motivation for making this work
is simple.*

*I want to continue to create spaces and objects
for intentional gathering. Places to rest, and collection for the point of togetherness and
that Showing up is simply enough.*

*Because community—
friendship—
Connection—*

Learning from one another

*these are the things
that allows us to continue.*

They are what keep me afloat.

This table is a kind of self-portrait.

*It reflects how I show up
in the world and how I want others to show up*

An invitation for others to show up in the same way.

It is an offering.

*An invitation
to sit,
to share,
to be present.*

To gather.

Thank you.

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