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# Finding History In The Future

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Finding History in The Future

Aisha Nasser Al-Sowaidi

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## Abstract

Change and development over an extremely fast period of time in Qatar have shifted the atmospheric sense of the country. The distance created by the skyscrapers and their scale to people has a great impact on the behavior and interaction between the people and the city. In my research, I aim to incorporate the old experiences and behaviors with contemporary design in objects used within the house to maintain the feeling of being home through reliving the fading behaviors and traditions as well as bringing closer the modern city into the home through the use of materials. Through experimentation with human behaviors, materials and senses, I create a series of projects that deal with memory, nostalgia, and traces of time.

## Introduction

When does a house turn into a home? We become familiar with surrounding objects in the house through time. When we reach a certain level of familiarity with the surroundings, our feelings towards a space shift from the unfamiliar to the familiar; therefore turning the house into a home. Time is a valuable process. Therefore, I want time to be visible to us. And by this I mean the passing of time and how it changes the appearance of things and us. Everything is getting faster, and it doesn't mean we are getting less busy, but the contrary. Do we have more spare time? No, but we used to have it. So what happened to the concept of time? What happened to time? We call it the era of technology and development. And who doesn't want development? Development is like a train: if you let it, it will move faster and faster. But how fast do we want this train of technology to take us? How fast do we want to move to the future, leaving behind the sense of time and the sense of "before", and how it used to be?

Wasn't it beautiful before? The good old days, they call it. Were they really good, or do we assume they were good because we are beyond that experience. Why do we think old days were good, while in reality they weren't necessarily? Do we want to be younger? Or do we just forget? Do our minds filter out what is bad, and we are left, then, with what is good? Through time, we collect our good experiences because humans tend to forget. So we try to forget the bad experiences and leave only the good experiences, and that's why we say and believe the old days were better days. If you really think about it, today is tomorrow's good old days. But is it perfect now? Do we think this could be a perfect life or a perfect situation? For some of us, it might be. But we don't really have a phrase or saying that says, now are the good days.

"The good old days," we say that when we remember our lives in the past. It is not the old day, but it is the good old days. Why is good related to old? We tend to remember the past as something good. The images of our past are vague. The moment has left, and we need our imagination to remember.



*Me, on my first birthday.*



1980's, Doha.



2000's, Doha.

## Problem Statement

Qatar is undergoing constant change. Living in this experience of transition from old to new at such a fast pace is amazingly overwhelming. Living in my own country, in my own house, and yet feeling homesick was an issue I had to think about and process. I would go out in the streets and not know the way to a place I used to go a few months before. The new towers and skyscrapers are amazing, but what is more amazing and astonishing is the old neighborhoods that are still left. They carry years of memory and call out for a remembering and longing.

Everything is changing so quickly and rapidly that I might try to reach a place I visited months ago, but wouldn't know the place now. It's a shock, to leave home and realize you are not home anymore. Nothing is like what it was before. People's behavior has changed, as well; the buildings have changed. There is no sense of aging, except for the sand and rocks. Whatever we recreate is something new, and we keep on creating something new because we have the money to do so. What I am trying to say is that some things aren't sold, and some things aren't built and bought. These things are more valuable than what we can buy. They are valuable to us, to people, because they are our heritage. And what is culture without heritage? And what are people without culture?



## Traditions

As Qataris, our traditions are changing as the country evolves. Some traditions are changing, and some have totally vanished. This raises the question, who defines our traditions? The surroundings or us? Witold Rybczynski states in his book, *Home, A Short History of an Idea*, "Awareness of tradition is a modern phenomenon that reflects a desire for custom and routine in a world characterized by constant change and innovation."<sup>1</sup> We revere the past so much that we even invent traditions if they don't exist. As a family in a home, there are many traditions that used to make us closer that we don't follow anymore. In order to do that, nostalgia needs to be defined and how memory connects us to the past needs to be understood.

<sup>1</sup> Witold Rybczynski, *Home A short History of an Idea*, (USA: Penguin Group, 1986), 9.



## Nostalgia

Nostalgia comes from the Greek word *nóstos*, meaning homecoming, and *álgos* meaning pain and ache.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is homesickness. It means wanting to go back home. To the old home, to the memories. To the life we used to live, to the family that used to be. That is homesickness. It was first diagnosed as a disease; it is some kind of insanity that was found in Swiss mercenaries who were longing for their native mountain landscapes. But maybe now we don't have to leave home to feel homesick. The world is changing so fast. Everything is renewable. Everything is exchangeable. Perhaps, nostalgia is not a disease anymore because everyone has it in him or her.



*Modern architecture in the 1980's, Doha.*

Nostalgia is the longing for the life that no longer exists, or maybe never existed because our memory shifted our feelings from the past. It has added a filter of goodness to it. What do we miss from the past that makes nostalgia a bittersweet feeling? Is it home and family? Or us being younger? The simplicity of life then? Why is there a strong feeling for a house? Particularly, the home where I grew up, my family house. If I had the chance to go back to the old home of mine, where I grew up, I would choose to go there, but I know it would bring memories of the old time, the old family, and people who have passed away now. I would still choose to go there, even though I know a big part of going back there is sadness. It's a memory that I don't want to remember but I don't want to forget. It hurts to remember and it even hurts to forget. And it is confusing. What do I want of that nostalgic thing in me? And I wonder why I would choose to go back? Why do we like drama? Why would we recommend a movie that would have the most dramatic ending? Why do we find entertainment in sadness, in drama? Why do we seek that? It's the mixture of sadness and happiness. It's a bittersweet place hidden in our minds.

<sup>2</sup> Janelle Wilson, *Nostalgia, Sanctuary of Meaning*, (United State: Rosemont Publishing & Printing Crop, 2005).

Msheireb, the center of Doha, is being demolished and reconstructed in a modern contemporary architectural style. When I visited the Musheireb Enrichment Center, located on a floating exhibition on the Corniche in Doha, I was touched by the old belongings and historical documentation of the city that was exhibited as I first entered. Walking further into the exhibition space, there was a huge table with a perfectly modeled city. I didn't recognize any part of the model; it is surely a city I have never been to. Soon after, I realized that it was Doha, or it will be. The city I live in is moving far away from how I knew it. This stage of rebuilding a city is not a unique experience lived only by people in Qatar. Many other cities around the world are going through, or have already gone through, this whole process of modernizing the city. The capital of Malta, Valleta, is going through major rebuilding and alterations. In 2009, an exhibition was held in the National Museum of Archeology in Valleta that struck the curiosity of many Maltese to visit. The exhibition was a collection of posters hanging from the ceiling, concept sketches, and a model in the center of the room. The familiar, yet hard to perceive, model was a proposal that will shift Valleta from being a Baroque City to a being a Contemporary one. The people of this old and historical city shared a concern: How will nostalgia be manifested in the architecture? A question I also had in mind when seeing the Musheireb model.



*Msheireb Center.*



*Msheireb Project.*



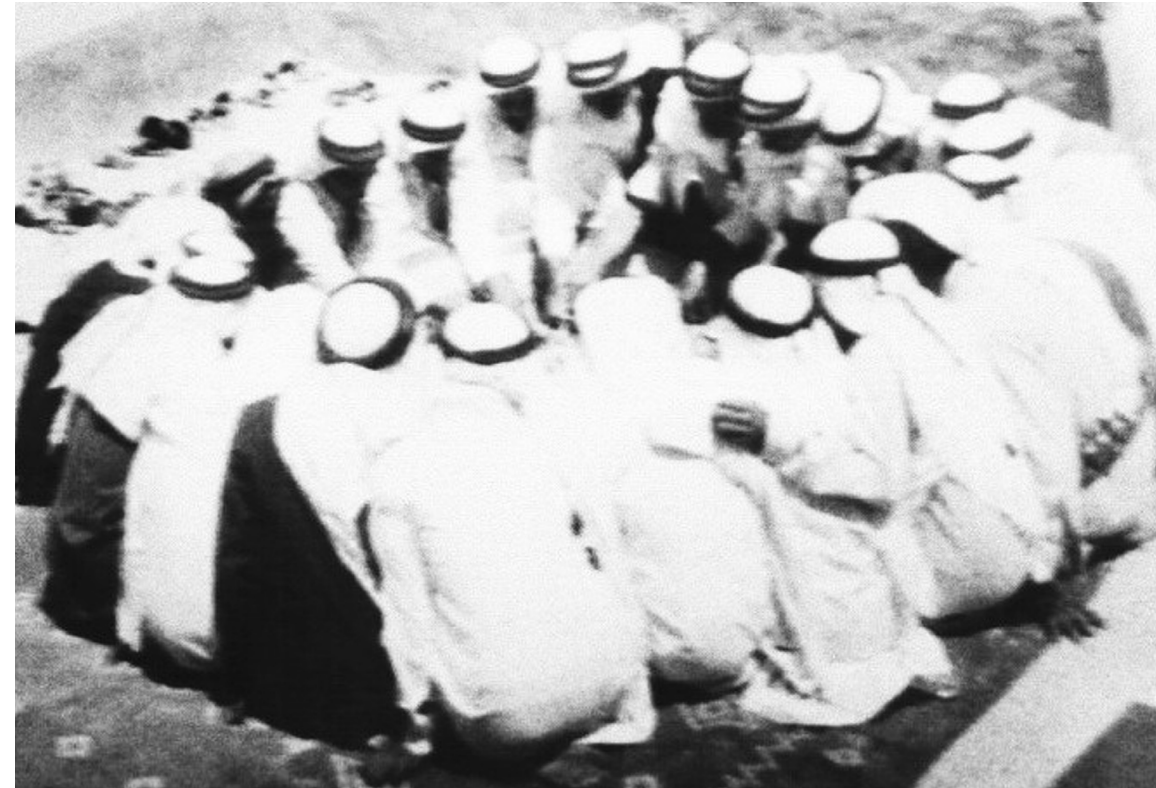
*Smells collected in jars.*

## Memory and the Senses

I researched about memory and how we go back in our mind to a certain moment and a certain experience. When is that experience the strongest? When do we relive it the strongest? I read about memory and the senses, and I realized that the strongest sense that is related to memory is smell because it is connected directly to the nervous system. To relive the moment is a stronger experience than living it the first time, because it is the old experience, revisited.

The smell of memories was an interesting topic to explore. By asking people from Qatar and other countries to name the significant smell they carry in their memory that is related to their childhood, I was able to analyze the behavior and traditions related to various countries. I then started to collect smells of memories by putting substances of odor in jars. Some substances needed water to activate the desired smell, while others needed air to circulate the smell.

The warmth of home comes from love, connections, and closeness. One example is the physical closeness of gathering and sharing while eating. It is known that traditionally, Qatari families gather around the carpet on the floor to eat. This gathering brings the family closer together as they all reach out with their hands to eat from the same plate. This tradition is no longer a common act in a Qatari household. Modernity has changed the face of tradition, as we know it. The act of eating at the table has come to replace the act of eating on the floor. Along with that, cutlery and separate plates are used, making individuals eat from their own plate and limiting the interaction of sharing and unity. Nowadays, people don't even gather much around the table. I would like to push the envelope of the idea of distance further. I want to bring back the feeling of closeness and gathering into today's objects through the activity of eating through creating the sense of before, of nostalgia. I went back in time in my imagination, and I questioned myself: how did it smell when we gathered to eat? There was anticipation before the food arrived and we were sitting on the floor. I remember clearly the texture of carpet on my foot. I remember how the old wool carpet smells. Or perhaps, the memory of how it could have smelled. If we could walk backwards to whenever we want, and if it took us a step to jump back a year, a sniff would jump to that moment exactly. It just takes you there. The sense of smell works directly with memory: when you walk into a room and you smell something, you remember the experience before you actually realize what the smell is.



*Men gathering around a meal.*



I went on to investigate the sense of smell and memory in order to design an object that will serve our modern needs but yet, take us back in time. Combining the fading tradition of eating on the carpet and the modern act of eating on the table with the strongest sense related to memory, I created The Nostalgic Table, a table that represent the “carpet” in its pattern and the sense of smell. The individual would sense the warmth of the gathering from the past around the carpet in these busy modern days. I designed a high table to portray the little time we have to spend eating that we don’t gather anymore. This high table does not need an individual at which to sit, but he or she would eat while standing. The surface of the table has the pattern of a carpet and has cutout patterns overlaid on top of a piece of wool, that when wet, enables the smell to evaporate through the cutout and makes the table smell like carpet, thus taking the person to an experience from the past. *(Projects - page 59)*

The sense of smell triggers the memory like no other sense does and makes us re-enter a space that we forgot existed. The eyes suddenly see back to the past an image from the forgotten memory. It is a strong, overwhelming feeling that smells bring to us. As children, we collect memories throughout our daily life. Our brain records smells of places and objects and unconsciously relates them to behaviors and perhaps insignificant events and situations. I remember as a child, I used to hide in a room at the end of a corridor in my old house. I don't remember if there was a bed in that room, but I remember a brown velvet chair with a triangular textile pattern. I remember when I jumped on it dust came out. The smell of dust takes me back to my hiding place.

Smell is the most powerful memory of any space. I barely remember the face of my grandmother, but I remember the smell of the little bundle of Habba Soda (*nigella sativa*) seeds wrapped in a black cloth that she always carried with her. She always pulled it from her pocket and made me smell it; I remember how soft her hands were. I remember the sound of the seeds in my hands. I remember the feeling of comfort and love the smell brought to me. I remember the living room she always sat in, and the room of her daughter, my aunt, who passed away long before she did. Nothing was moved in her room: it smelled abandoned.

Why do old abandoned houses have the same hollow smell? Juhani Pallasmaa questions, "is it because the particular smell stimulated by emptiness [is] observed by the eye?"<sup>3</sup>

The memory of the experience of sitting with my grandmother next to me on my right and the smell of the bundle of seeds inspired me to redesign this experience through a single seating chair. The Grandma Chair, is a cushioned chair I designed using the fabric of Milfaa (a black fabric used to cover the head) that my grandmother used to wrap the bundles of seeds with. The chair has buttons of fabric covered Haba Soda seeds to reinforce the experience with the sense of smell. The chair is designed to be higher from the right side to invite the individual to lean on it, thus, bringing the feeling of intimacy and closeness. (*Projects - page 63*)

<sup>3</sup> Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of The Skin*, (England: Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2005), 55.



*Interior of an old Qatari house.*



Old streets of Doha.



Local souq.

## The No-man's Land

Many objects within my home have a comforting memory, but I also have the same feeling of comfort in an old Toyota Samurai. This old car was a kind of no-man's land; it was another universe of space-time in the shape of speed. It could be home, yet it could be further and further away from home.<sup>4</sup> The intimacy of the car is similar to the intimacy of home but without the constraints of the domestic relationships and habits. The car is a moving realm detached from many social constraints. But as a child, I simply liked the movement of the car. I liked the places my father took me. The journey is a waiting, exciting time in the moving car. Lots of memories arise, as I smell a piece of raw tobacco leaf in the market. That was the smell of the car, because we used to stop in the market to get some tobacco for the Gidu, which is a pot used to smoke tobacco. I want to capture the scent of the tobacco in the car. I want this memory to be a tangible object that reminds me of this experience. I experimented with alcohol and oil to capture the smell, but both have actually added an odor to the tobacco that made it smell differently. However, the shape that the scent would be cast into has to reflect the memory of the car. The significant behavior along with that journey was the cassette I was allowed to change. That was the tangible object related to the car and the memory. Therefore, I created a mold using an old cassette I have and plaster and cast the tobacco-scented wax into it. This wax cassette was to revive the memory I have of the journey with my father. (Projects - page 66)

<sup>4</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, (UK: Verso, 1996), 70.





## Day Dreaming and Childhood Memories

Home is where you daydream. It's your first universe. And I'd been living in my house all my life until I had to leave because they had to demolish that area. It is the only home I knew. I remember as a child I would sit in the living room and the door would be open to the garden and the sun was shining so brightly that if someone walked in I wouldn't see him. I only saw an outline of a person and I saw the sun shining behind him. And that image haunts me. It brings warmth to my heart. I remember sitting on the floor looking towards the garden and seeing the world so bright outside that it feels like the sun has landed in the garden. That was how warm the living room was to me. It was in the center of the house; anyone who would come in would walk through this living room. Anyone who wanted to go to the kitchen would pass through this room. It had a stairway leading to the second floor. It was the focal point of my universe, then.

I remember being so proud of my house. Why is our childhood house so special? They say it's where we daydream. Bachelard wrote that thought and experience are not the only things that create human values. But he marks the depth of humanity value to belong to daydreaming: "The places in which we have experienced daydreaming reconstitute themselves in a new daydream, and it is because our memories of former dwelling-places are relived as daydreams that these dwelling-places of the past remain in us for all time."<sup>5</sup> This refers to the home as a remarkable place for integration of the thoughts and memories. Home is protection; it is love, it is the feeling of being safe. I remember every detail in my childhood home that I loved so much. I made games out of a lot of things. I would slide down the stairs. I remember we had wallpaper that had texture; I remember the touch of the texture and how I used to imagine that the wall was the ocean with waves. I remember how it felt to sit on the floor. And I remember, just a lot of things. However, I was about to leave this home soon, but what about the memories?

<sup>5</sup> Bachelard Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 6.

## The Last Night

The last night I spent at home, I went outside in the middle of the night. Walking in the garden. Stepping on the grass. Touching the palm tree. Silently, walking around the house. There was life in every corner. There was life. There were memories of every day layering over each other. There is a memory of my early childhood that I don't remember but I've watched on home videos. There are memories of my childhood, when I was older and I remember. There are memories of my teenage years. There are memories of high school. There are memories of college. There are memories of seasons. There are memories of people. There are memories of moments in every season, every age, with different people. How could that place not be alive? It held a lot of memories. How could that not make a place alive?

I went walking around the house towards a white gate leading to the farm behind the house. The farm that's not a farm anymore. It's abandoned. But as a child, I would run towards this white gate. It was a little iron door painted in white in the middle of the wall. I would slide the door bar, and I remember how I tweaked the bar to unlock the door. Once it was open, I would have a peek before entering because there was a cow that I enjoyed being afraid of in the farm. So I would first have a peek to locate where the cow was. Sometimes the cow was very far away so that I could just enter the farm. Other times I would peek and find the cow just in front of me and I would close the door and joyfully be afraid! So, I walked at night towards this door, and I touched it. Yes, I've seen it before. But I wanted to see it for one last time. And I wanted to confirm my sight, with a touch. So I touched the door. I touched the bar. Yes, it still needed to be tweaked to be open. I left it and walked back home. I walked inside the home, knowing this was goodbye. To the garden, to the palm, to the white door.





*Oil platform in Qatar's seas.*

## Liminal Space

Being in a liminal space, it is crucial to understand that change cannot be contained in one bubble, but the consequences of change ripple to its surroundings. However, realizing that the memory of the past exists in my imagination and the traces have been lost, I want to design objects that would connect the past to the present and towards the future. Therefore, I believe we need to study the past to successfully design for the future. Maybe analyzing the city of Doha through color, material and the change it is going through is a good point to start with. This makes me wonder, what the color of our cities is? I think each place has a natural color before it became a city. Then, when humans inhabit it, the colors of the place change gradually. It is crucial to understand how the change occurred during the city's evolution.



### Colors and Materials of the City

The colors of Qatar before the oil revolution were the colors of the stones and sand, which were light beige, white, and gold. But when it rains, the colors of the environment change. The sand turns to brown, the stones become a darker shade. And a few days later, the land starts to turn green. Grass grows; the trees turn green. The people become happy, likewise the land. People anticipate the entrance of winter; they anticipate the appearance of Suhail, a star that appears when the weather gets colder. And if it rains in this early time of fall, truffles will grow later in the fall. This activity of searching for truffles in the ground is a joyful activity. However, with the oil revolution, construction boomed in Qatar. The materials for building have changed. It is not the traditional material taken



from the environment anymore, which is stones and mud. It is now bricks and concrete. Grey started to color the city. There was modernity and pride along with it. The streets are no longer comprised of the natural roads people created by usage. Concrete was poured over them to create a smoother surface. The skyline started to rise. Grey became a dominant color in the city. Bridges are the sign of modernity and development, and they are blooming in different parts of the city. As I went into one of the new walled bridges in Doha, I was surrounded by concrete. The road, the high wall of the bridge was all grey. And for a moment, it felt as if I would never escape this bridge. I felt trapped in the concrete. With all the high-speed construction and development happening in the city, there is less chance to find truffles in the winter because the construction is moving to fill more land.

Green is a color that comes and goes. And when it comes in the winter as the grass grows, people move towards it, either for the pleasure of the sight, or for feeding their sheep and camels. Now, the color green doesn't have to leave in the summer. Water is accessible all times of the year and in many parts of the city, natural grass is replaced with plastic grass. The skyscrapers by the Corniche are made of steel and aluminum with fewer amounts of bricks and concrete. The exteriors are mostly reflective glass in the color of blue, green, and gold.

Nature has a better way of coping with the environment. I observed from my trip to Helsinki that the rocks are black, while in Doha they are white. White is less absorbing to heat, while black is more absorbent. Therefore, white rocks are suitable for hot countries, while black is suitable for cold countries. Then why did we turn our city grey?

There is a traditional system of color that has a psychological meaning. Colors have their own language. Red is angry, blue is calm, and yellow is optimistic. Jean Baudrillard defines colors as metaphors for fixed cultural meanings.<sup>6</sup> Color could also be attached to materials, like wood, leather, and grass. Wood is a porous material, which makes it evolve through collecting the passing of time from within. The aging of wood holds meaning. It is the succession of generations embedded in its fibers. This warmth of wood awakens nostalgic feelings. As we touch an old piece of wood we are connected through the touch to a time that no longer exists. I believe that objects absorb our touch, smells, feelings, and generally our lives. This is what makes old objects valuable, because they become to us beyond what they really are. Wood lives and breathes as we do, both having our own way as well as having our own memory and history. Now, many substitutes have replaced organic and natural materials. Plastic and polyester have replaced wool and silk, for instance, or, in many cases, have been integrated while concrete and polystyrene have come to replace stone, wood, and metal. The old traditional materials have been replaced, but do these alternative substances still hold the warmth of objects and places of former times? We can categorize these materials as traditional and modern, meaning, traditional material relates to a past period of time, thus, characterizes this material as heritage and history. While modern materials don't carry these kinds of characteristics, it doesn't mean that they are less authentic. "How could concrete be somehow less authentic than stone?" Baudrillard questions in writing about the atmospheric values of materials.<sup>7</sup> Whether or not we reject or accept traditional or modern materials, we need to understand how the change of the substances has changed the meaning of the materials we use.

<sup>6</sup> Bachelard Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 31.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, (UK: Verso, 1996), 55.



Cities worldwide have a color palette that is recognized through their architecture. The bias and commercial imposition is hard to ignore when looking at a city. *Urban Earth* is a project developed by The Geography Collective, which aimed to show various cities in an "honest" way. The project was to produce videos from around the world, exploring cities by walking from one end to another and taking a photograph every eight steps. This allowed the documenting of the city in a more truthful and genuine way. I noticed different color palettes through these videos of cities. Each color palette characterized the city through its assemblage of construction materials, adding identity to each place.



*City of the touch.*

### The Old and the Contemporary City

Natural materials like stones and wood allow our vision to penetrate their surface and involve us with a deeper sense of warmth and legacy. These materials age and reflect the passage of time and human use, making them rich in content. The collection of time is reflected through the patina and wear of the surface, adding an enriching experience of time to the materials.<sup>8</sup> These enrichments of surfaces are lacking in currently construction. They aim to achieve an ageless perfection that technology has paved the way to reach. The dimension of time does not appear. However, we as humans have a need to feel rooted and included in the continuity of time.

<sup>8</sup> Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of The Skin*, (England: Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2005), 31.



*City of the sight.*

To distinguish the difference between the contemporary city and the old city, we can say that the contemporary city is the city of the sight, while the old city is the city of the touch. In other words, the contemporary city is a city of distance and exteriority, while the old city is a city of nearness and interiority. The further we walk from the skyline in the city of Doha, the better picture we can get and the more amused the eye becomes; it is no longer the walking through the old neighborhoods and looking into the open doors of the houses to see the lives lived by people. What could be made to achieve this nearness in the contemporary city?

## History in Objects

History is something that is gained with time. Time, however, can make things more valuable in some cases and less valuable in others. But what determines this? Is history something we can plan? And buy, perhaps? Can we add history to a place? Or product? Sometimes we collect things through life that we relate to because we share with them a special memory. This thing may have lived with us and, therefore, become part of us. Often, we see ourselves through an object or a place. Do we give these things a part of us? Why do they suddenly become alive? Sometimes it feels like these objects or places communicate with us through silence. An old wooden chest that has been inherited from one generation by another holds meaning more than its monetary value. This box may have gone through a change of color, texture, and smell. These characteristics may have been picked up from its users. This makes me question, what makes us alive? Breathing? Or the marks we leave as we go through life? It is said that when we are born, we are like a clear page. Isn't this how products, objects, and places are when we first have or visit them? Just an empty new page? Don't we want to fill our journey of life with achievements and experiences no matter how tired and "used" we are going to be? Do we want our belongings to share this with us?



*Old wooden chest.*

## Temporality

The layering of time is something that is constantly wiped off the flesh of this city. The peeling, ruins, or fragments of a surface evoke nostalgic feelings for the passage of time. Heidegger describes the past, present, and future in human temporality as “now in my present, I stand out into my past and into my future.”<sup>9</sup> The philosopher also implies that humans and spaces are unified “When we speak of man and space, it sounds as though man stood on one side, space on the other. Yet space is not something that faces man. It is neither an eternal object nor an inner experience. It is not that there are men, and over and above them space...”<sup>10</sup> The experience of entering a space is an exchange of us entering the space and the space entering us. As we invite people to our home, we invite them to ourselves.

This notion of having the past, present, and future reflected through self, memory, and imagination in a concept I want to explore. As the past and layering of time is being replaced by the new, it still exists in our memory. This memory I want to project, literally, with a projector. When experimenting with projectors and light and layers of images and video, I saw something worth contemplation. When the projector was aimed on a transparent glass, the image showed on some parts more than the other. It amazingly captured the image on the traces of the cloth that was used to clean the glass. I started to wipe

<sup>9</sup> James Phillips, *Time and Memory in Freud and Heidegger*. <sup>10</sup> Juhani Pallasmaa, *Space, Place and Atmosphere*, (Helsinki: 2010).



the traces, and the image started to disappear. Then I started adding my own handprints on the glass, and the image started to appear again on the traces. This means that the imagination of the past appears through traces of usage and time. I went along this idea and built a portable stand that holds a portable projector and has a glass screen. This device is to be taken to different places of Doha to perform a past, present, and future scenario. Through having an old image projected on the glass, the future city as the background, and me creating the traces in the present, I combine the three elements of temporality, therefore, realizing the layers of time through traces of touch, use, and continuity of time on surfaces. (*Projects - page 71*)





*Sheraton Doha, 1993.*

## Building Future Memories

As a child, we reconstructed our house while we were still living in it. This process took a long four years to be accomplished. Through these four years, concrete, plaster, wood, and tools surrounded me. They were my toys to play with. The construction workers had a hard time figuring out where the tools were until they found me in a corner of the garden almost finished building my own little house. The house I built was made from stacked concrete bricks attached with cement and a little wooden door. They took away the tools and locked them in a big metal box, never again to be used by me.

With all the construction taking part in our daily life, I chose concrete as the dominant material to work with. How will we remember this period of development in Qatar? Will these construction sites filling the city build memories in our children's minds? How will they remember their childhood? Will they remember the construction? The materials? The colors? These materials are dominant because Qatar is being built, and I want the practice of building to be practiced and understood by our children. The Sheraton hotel is one of the oldest hotels in Qatar and is considered a landmark. In one approach, I remade the Sheraton in a simplified shape with concrete by casting. This Sheraton is a component of simple triangular shapes designed to be placed over each other to resemble the Sheraton. *(Projects - page 79)*

My idea is to involve children in the building of Qatar through letting them experience rebuilding landmarks with their original material, concrete. Through another approach with concrete, or how I called them, Concretotoys, I created a soft teddy bear made out of an industrial sack. This teddy could be positioned in any desired way and be sprayed with water. Then the teddy would harden to an unchangeable shape. This process realizes the characteristics of concrete.



## Reflection

Reflecting on the approaches I followed with experimentations and literature review, I see that it is important to keep the essence of the past, present, and future in my next step. Without the past, there is no present, and therefore we cannot move on to the future. I have divided my previous experimentations to cover these three temporalities. I am not stating preferences for any time of being, but I would like to merge and bring closer the past, present, and the future.

Through my written research and experimentations, I found a link between the city we live in and how it is changing, and the effect it has on people and their changes in behavior. The nearness of the old city architecture allowed people to touch and interact with the exterior, leaving traces of life and experience. On the other hand, the modern city architecture is seen from a distance that allows less interaction between the people and the architecture. My design direction aims to:

- Bring back the nearness of the past into today's daily life through reinventing ways to embed forgotten and fading behaviors and traditions in the modern and future home.
- Eliminate the detachment of the modern city through bringing the exterior materials and its characteristics into the interior of the home; therefore, creating a bond with the city and the people.

## Delimitations

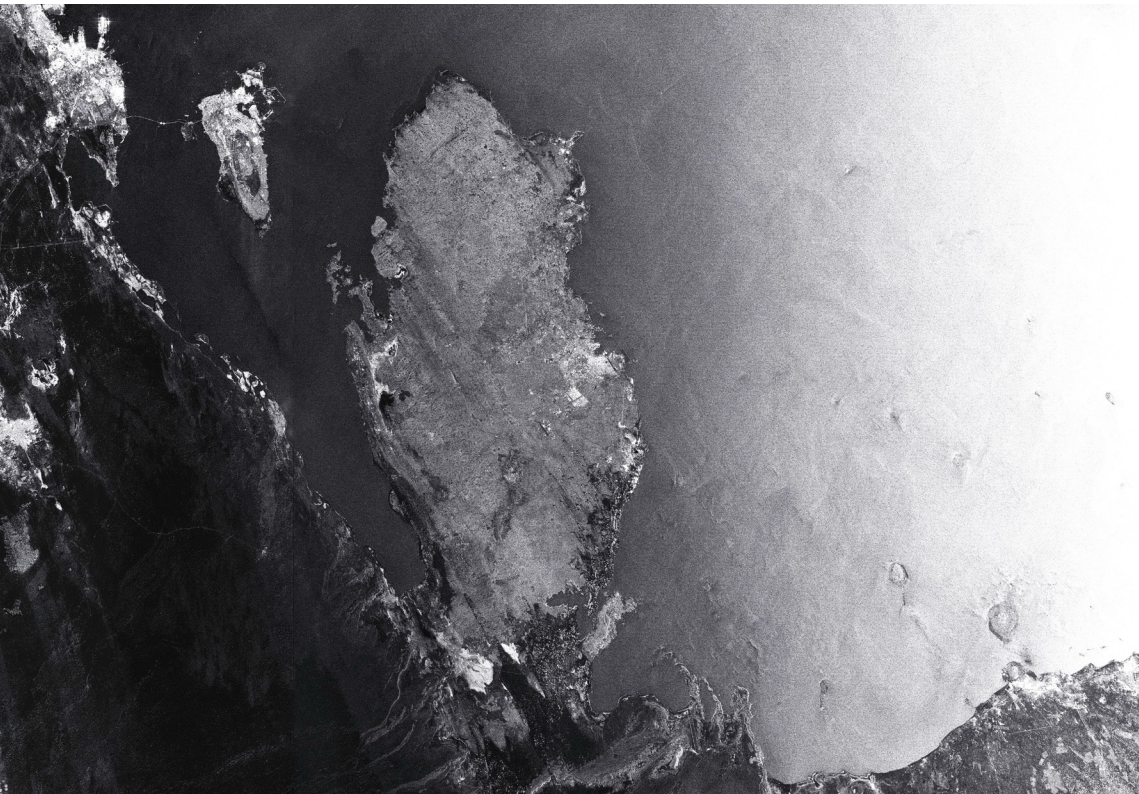
I am not stating a preference for any period of time. My projects are an attempt to connect the past, present and future through design. It is not meant to solve the problem of change; rather, it's adapting to it. This research is not to include the psychological impact of change on people, nor to cover sociology. It is my own observation of the change in the country from the period of 1986 to the present.

## Conclusions

Throughout history, people have developed ways of communicating to stay connected with each other across the distance. Through the use of technology, these ways have become more efficient. People can stay connected far away from home, thus, having the option of leaving home sounds easy. Through phone calls, we connect in the present; through photography, we connect to the past; and through computer-generated imagery, we connect to the future. However, there is another level of connection that fails to be fulfilled through these ways of communication. There is a deep bond with personal experiences. Experiences with people, experiences with places, and experiences with objects of the household tie the place called home together. In a constantly changing and developing country like Qatar, these experiences have a short life; therefore, bonds that are created are shifting constantly.

Throughout my design projects, experiments, and processes, I realized that the feeling of being home within people is similar and diverse at the same time. We meet in the understanding of comfort, warmth, and the intimacy of the home; yet, we all have different memories and experiences tied to the place. While I design or experiment with my own personal experience, I see Qataris react to the objects and connect to them in a certain way, and I also see non-Qataris react to them in another way. This makes me realize how very similar yet very different we are, no matter where we are in the world.





*Satellite photo of Qatar.*

## **Future Directions**

At this point, my concepts have been defined and shaped to cover the past, present, and future. I see this project expanding in each direction, focusing on specific elements such as the past and nostalgia and the future and isolation. I have established a base of knowledge in philosophy about being, time, and the surrounding world, and planning to expand this knowledge through further research.

In my future career plan working with Qatar Museums Authority, I would like to incorporate my design experience in the MFA program in designing objects that reflect Qatar. I would also like to revive lost traditions through redesigning objects and re-planning experiences to meet today's lifestyles.



Projects





## Nostalgic Table

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Analyzing old behaviors and traditions that have been changed or have faded through time. Creating a sense of nostalgia through the targeted sense of smell to trigger old memories.

**Smell:** Carpet.

**Where:** Embedded layer of wool underneath the tabletop.

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### Materials

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- Walnut wood
- Wool fabric

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### Dimension

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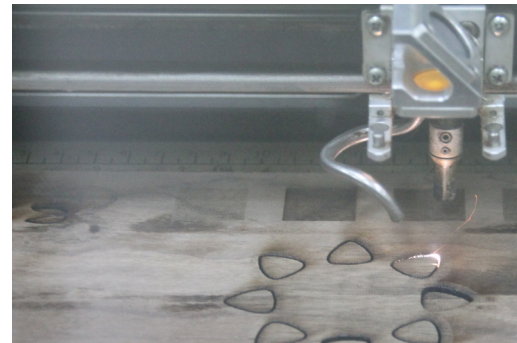
37 x 54 x 120 cm

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Laser cutting and etching the carpet pattern on the tabletop made out of walnut wood.

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A peice of wet wool fabric placed in a plastic bag to create to smell of old carpet, or the smell of old houses.



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The piece of wool that has been soaking in a plastic bag is attached to the tabletop along with the carpet fringe.







## Grandma Chair

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Redesigning a memory of a childhood experience through the sense of smell and the tactile feeling of a situation in the past.

**Smell:** *Habba Soda* (Nigella Sativa)

**Where:** Embedded in the buttons of the chair.

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### Materials

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- Wood
- Sponge
- Raw cotton
- Fabric
- Plastic
- *Habba Soda* seeds

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### Dimension

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41 x 55 x 105 cm

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Building the wooden structure of the chair.



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Adding layers of padding to the wooden structure to create the comfortable form on the chair.



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Embedding *Habba Soda* seeds to the 3D printed button.



# Cassette

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Revisiting a childhood memory through the use of a metaphor and smell associated with the experience.

**Smell:** Tobacco.

**Where:** Mixed with the wax.

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## Materials

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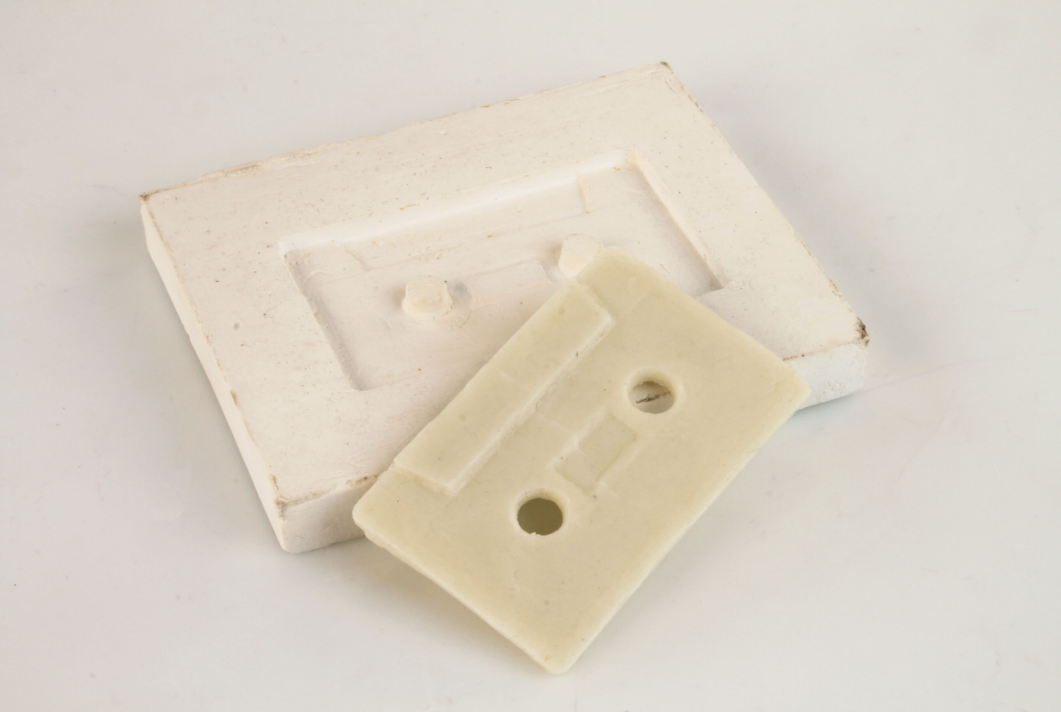
- Plaster
- Wax
- Almod oil
- Tobacco

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## Dimension

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10 x 6 cm



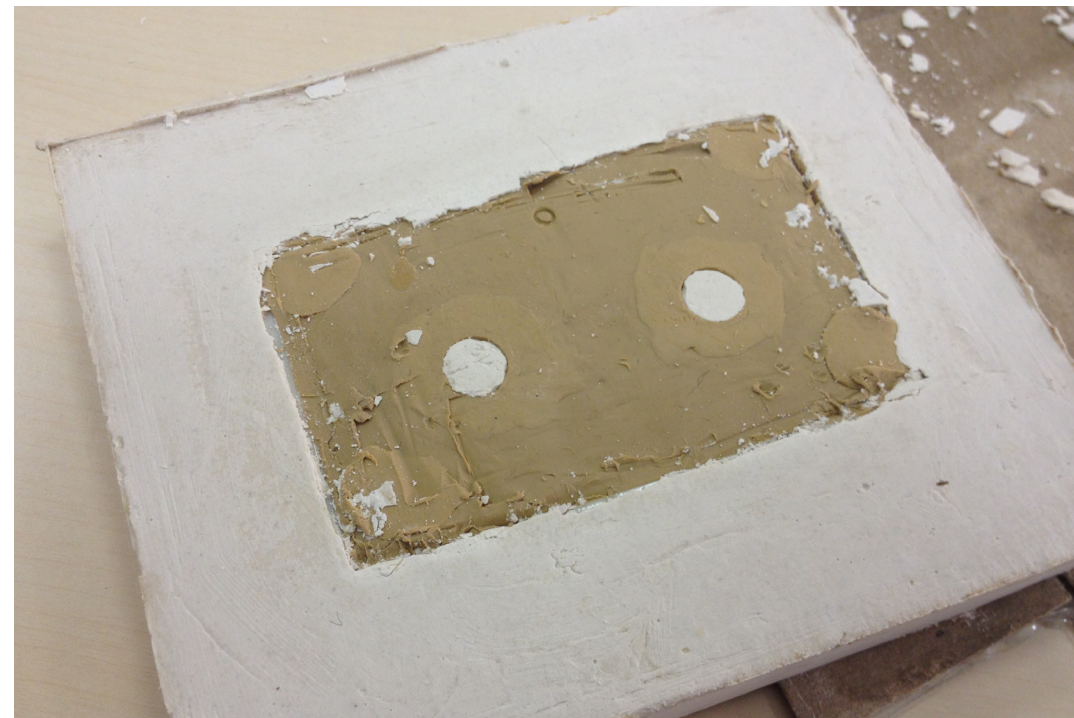


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Creating the plaster mold of the cassette for casting.

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Casting the hot mixture of wax and tobacco scented oil.





## Temporality TV

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Experimentation with time and layers of history through the traces people and their environment leave behind.

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### Materials

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- MDF wood
- Glass

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### Dimension

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128 x 53 cm



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Experimentation with the projector and traces on a glass.





## Concretoys 01

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Investigating childhood memories through materials surrounding us in our daily lives.

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### Materials

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- Concrete
- Plastic toy

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### Dimension

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25 x 13 cm

# Concretoys 02

Introducing building materials into toys for children to involve them with the current state of development in the country. This teddy bear is stuffed with a powder mixture of cement and sand and involves the children by allowing them to shape the toy and then spray it with water to get it to harden into the desired form.

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### Materials

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- Concrete
- Fabric

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### Dimension

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18 x 20 cm





# Concretoys 03

Construction sites are a common scene in Doha. This little recreation of the Sheraton Hotel of Doha is a way for children to practice the act of building through assembling the parts of the concrete structure.

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### Materials

- Concrete

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### Dimension

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Different mixtures of cement, sand, and water to test the qualities of concrete.





## Concrete Jalsa

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The Majlis is a common space for gathering in the Qatari house. In modern days, life is getting busier due to longer working hours. This Concrete Jalsa is a recreation of the seating cushions in the old Qatari Majlis

**Smell:** Bkhour.

**Where:** A built in drawer that infuses the smell through a lip in the concrete.

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### Materials

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- Concrete
- Fabric

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### Dimension

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52 x 33 x 20.5 cm



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Pattern inspired from the old Qatari cushion imprinted on concrete.



## Hiya Biya

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The tradition ritual of Hiya Biya has faded. This act of planting seeds in a metal can in anticipation for the Eid where children gather and go to the seashore to sing a traditional song and throw the planted cans in the water is gone. This is a recreation of the metal can to revive the faded tradition.

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### Materials

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- Plaster
- Plastic
- Soil
- Seeds

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### Dimension

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Small: 7 x 7 cm





## Rocks Soap

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The Qatari lands are filled with rocks. These rocks have certain qualities and colors that are special to this country. The soaps are molded from these local rocks.

**Smell:** Amber.

**Where:** In the mixture of the soap.

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### Materials

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- Soap
- Amber
- Mica pigment

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### Dimension

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Varies.

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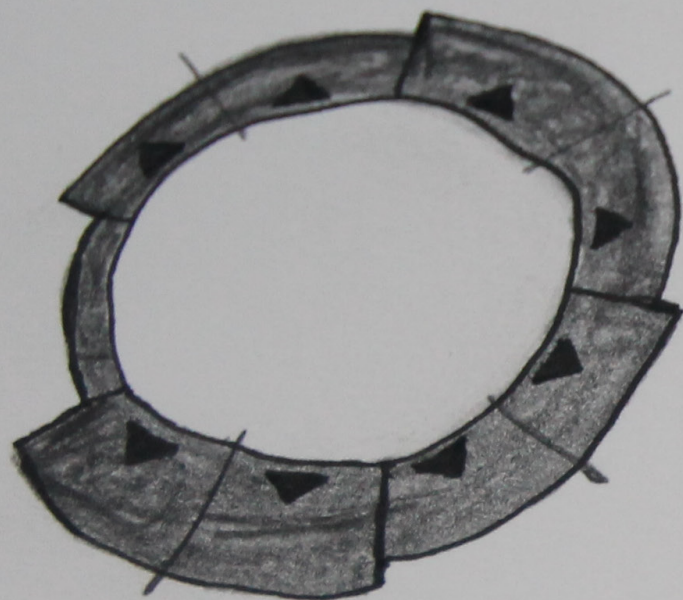
Rubber molds of local Qatari rocks ready to be casted with soap.



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The scented soaps are attached to suction cups that allow them to be placed on the shower glass.





1.1
1.2
2.1
2.2

years  
Semesters

Building / P



- Interactive
- adjustable

Time: concrete

years



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