

Contemporary Lifestyle Products
With a Touch of Craft
Product Design Project II

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Approval sheet

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1.0 Introduction

In today's world where everyone wears the same kind of clothes, talks over the same kind of cell phones, travel in same kind of cars, work in the same environments, buy things that are not very distinct from the other. How does one stand apart from the crowd without blending into the surrounding? People have their own tastes and appreciations for life. They like to show their feelings and expressions. They like to show they are distinct from one another.

To get a clearer picture of what is lifestyle and what are lifestyle products and how they become one, the daily lives of people across the world were studied. This study helped in identifying behavioral patterns that are followed. And how products graduate from one level to another level. The study of daily life in various regions of India helped to identify

the underlying commonness despite the regional variations.

Lifestyle products are not just good looking products, they have a purpose of satisfying not just the functional need that it is meant to but also to project its owners attitude and some times social status.

To understand the production system we visited a few industries, which manufactures and exports these products. These visits helped us define the technological back up necessary to come up with well crafted objects and the philosophies that keeps these industries alive despite heavy competition and flooding of cheap replicas.

In this project I have tried to understand the influence and importance of culture on even mundane and not so functional objects like accessories and the role they can play in projecting someone's image and to start a dialogue with the onlooker.

The products available now are imported technology intensive products that are mass manufactured, or locally made imitations of them, traditional craft products or traditional products from an alien culture. The mass manufactured objects leads to loss of identity through imitative attitudes and extinction of local material culture. The traditionally crafted artifacts and accessory whose designs have not changed over years are misfits to the contemporary living spaces. The traditional products that people buy from abroad leads to cultural incompatibility.

The intend of the project is to come up with a range of products which are different from the mundane plastic products available, an object of desire which invoke in the person who is handling it a reminiscence of a rich craft tradition or background. These products though might seem to be so irrelevant acts as a reason to start a conversation with a person who may or may not have a background about the craft, tradition or ethnic context. They should differentiate the person and at the same time should not overpower the personal taste. They act as wake up call for sensitivity, a visual vibration.

The intent of the project is not to study one craft or traditional product and come up with solutions for the revival or revitalization of it.

2.0 An Overview of the Context

What is lifestyle? What is the difference between living an ordinary life and lifestyle? An overview of daily life in different traditional contexts reveals the relevance of various customs and the products related to them. How one product transforms itself into a lifestyle product from an ordinary product of daily use. How the culture and thinking of the people affect the evolution, growth and sustenance of such products. With this in mind an enquiry was carried out probing contexts, both native and foreign.



2.1 Daily Life and Lifestyle products in different Cultures

Studying various cultures one could easily discern the attributes that a product should have to make it a lifestyle product. One of the most elaborate examples is that of 'Tea Ceremonies that were held in China and Japan. These took place within a set of rules. Harmony, serenity, and socializing were the objectives of this simple but elegantly beautiful ceremony. The setting was based on a system The space was configured using the module of a 'Tatami' mat. There were also variations according to the season. The host and guest had their place within these settings.

From the point of view of lifestyle objects the simple things used for this ceremony are truly lifestyle objects. A simple cup passed on from one person to the other in the ceremony becomes a symbol of respect. The values associated with the object become more important than the value of the object itself.

Be it socio-economic status, respect or any other factor, all cultures show a variety of such products that have great significance and associations. What one can directly learn is that simple objects having an emotive or associative quality can become important and indispensable.



2.2 Daily Life in the Indian Context

In the Traditional Indian context we see that in all the regions a large parts of the acts that people got involved in had strong roots in their beliefs and values. Social customs, community and religion were major contributors to the lifestyle of people. Way of life and living was elaborately outlined and people respected these rules. From the individual to the family to the community, the roles were outlined. Duties depending on the gender of the person were outlined. Traditional Hindu society laid down these set of rules and even today some of these are followed. The patriarchal society outlined duties that the male of the house had to follow. Be it early morning rituals or the daily pooja, these became integral parts of their routine and are practiced even today.

For instance in the Hindu families there used to be a lamp that had to be kept lit permanently. The lamp became the focus of attention of the household binding people together. Once in a day the family got down together for a prayer.

In the northern regions the practice of smoking a 'hookah' was prevalent. This object placed in a courtyard became the connecting thread of the community. Some actions also had symbolic meanings. In the northeastern region an object

called the horai, which is used to make offerings to guests, assumes importance on festive occasions.

inferences

- *Rites, rituals, beliefs and customs assume prime importance.*
- *Most of the actions are based on some belief.*
- *Objects related to the carrying out of these actions become an integral part of daily life and thus become important.*

3.0 A Study of the context and Owners of Lifestyle Products

Qualitative responses were collected from a category of people. This category was pre-defined. A person belonging to the upper middle class, well established, and having a reasonably high-income were the parameters set. A reasonably good place to live in, but a non-hedonistic nature was also the criteria. An over indulgent person was definitely not the target. An advocate of the good life, a person of socializing nature who would invite people home and who would be friendly and amicable were some of the attributes desired. Also a person belonging to a small family or individual was desired. This was only so keeping in mind the time one could allocate to ones own pursuits.

Some questions were defined to probe into the thinking of these people. These were such that would elucidate the various aspects of a making of a lifestyle product.

To the user

How do u celebrate life? What are the pleasures of life, celebrations, parties, weekends, routines..... What are the other sources of entertainment? What are the habits, behaviors, desires needs, feelings, emotions, aspirations that you have.

What do you possess and why do you possess it? How does one derive pleasure out of these products, which are not highly functional but semi-functional also. Did someone pick up the products and appreciate it?

What is the décor of the house in which they stay? The architecture, interiors and why? Are the objects related to beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, what are they? And any other wish? Socio – psychological and cultural effect on the objects that you buy.

What is the product they like most in their house – why, what how and where do they like about it.

About craft touch

Have you seen any traditional product that you think are good lifestyle products?

Do you ever like a special touch to your product – something unique – craft, tradition, culture? Do you consider it important? What is your suggestion about it and on which part of the product?

To the marketing person / dealer

Which product and how much is its circulation? What is the typical user response?

Image that you are trying to project- intended image by dealer and perceived image by the user.

Does region, culture, tradition, trend etc plays a role in users liking?

Are there people who have money and people who have money and taste?



3.1 User surveys and responses

Kavita Kapoor
Versova

Profile:

Housewife - 32yrs.

Nuclear family.

2 kids.

Husband works in software firm.

Helps husband in designing brochures.

Planning to relocate to Australia.

Habits:

Travels abroad often.

Visits Local Exhibitions.

Shops in various local lifestyle stores.

Inference:

Buys Different and unique and rare objects.

Displays and presents her collection to visitors.

Objects that can be packed and stacked up are preferred.

Has the house in mind while shopping.

Does not believe in religious associations of objects.



Rochelle Chhabra

Versova

Profile:

30yrs, Nuclear family with 2 kids.

Works in the QA dept of a Pharmaceutical company .

Husband works in Pharmaceutical company.

Catholic but husband is a Hindu.

Habits:

Travels abroad often.

Rearranges her house once a month.

Visits Local Exhibitions.

Shops in various local lifestyle stores.

Inference:

Buys souvenirs from places she visits.

Retain objects which have emotional value.

Buys objects that catches her fancy, 90% of the time.

Gifts are given according to peoples' taste.

Artifacts brought from places like Contemporary arts and crafts tend to look old after a while.

Likes to buy products made from wood glass etc. that are easy to maintain.

Objects which have a regional (ethnic) touch is preferred.



Kapil Saxena
Bandra

Profile:

Retired, works as a consultant.

60 yrs.

Wife and 2 children.

Dispersed family.

Habits:

Socializes, invites people over.

Travels abroad.

Inference:

Likes simple and elegantly designed products.

Wants products that have a contemporary identity.

Likes ethnic and crafted products.

Buying products depends on mood and money.

Always have the space constraint in mind.

Values workmanship, craft and finish of a product.

Checks if it is comfortable holding the product.

Traditional craft are preferred only if it is not too loud.



Kunal Edwankar
Worli

Profile:

30 yrs. Architect and Interior Designer.

Nuclear family

Designs homes and offices on a turnkey basis.

Habits:

Shops for clients.

Wants theme based products or products that fit into a context.

Shops in various local lifestyle stores.

Imports luminaries and accessories for interiors.

Inference:

Likes to portray the image of a young trendy designer.

Looking for things that others haven't seen.

Always committed to high-end quality work and products.

Believes that as cost goes up, options go down.

Wants to deliver long lasting products to his clients (A warranty of 10 years)

Wants one-off pieces

Hunts for things that match the client's home/ office interiors, but that does not overpower the persons taste.

Likes to buy things that have cultural interpretations.



3.2 Conclusions from user surveys

Most of the people like to buy when they are traveling.

Intimate identification and appreciation of object helps them associate better to the context of purchase.

Cost considerations are secondary, rarity and uniqueness of a product makes it more valuable.

People have a desire to present the object and appreciate viewpoints.

Simple and elegant forms are preferred in products.

Products should have a contemporary look.

Religious connotations of a product become irrelevant in the modern context.

Some people prefer objects with an ethnic touch to it.

Craft touch is preferred but should not overpower.

inferences

- *Owners are extremely articulate about their wants and needs.*
- *Owners build an emotional relationship with the product.*
- *Associations of time and place assume significance than the value of the product itself.*

4.0 Market Survey

Although a number of products are brought on trips to different places, a Metropolitan city like Mumbai has sources where one could find these objects. A place like Mumbai also has numerous well to do people who would indulge in buying these products. From large 'Lifestyle stores' to places tucked away in some part, these stores almost hold treasures of exquisitely designed Lifestyle products.

What are the products that these places stock and how much circulation and sales are registered? What are typical user responses to these products? What is the image that the store is trying to project? With these questions in mind, a few of these stores were visited. Each store almost defined a category in it's own.



‘Pallazio’ at ‘Crossroads’ displays a range of products from the extremely expensive to the other objects that are brought by upper middle class. Imported products relating to wine consumption, exquisite pen sets, crystal and timepieces made of glass are displayed here. Most of these are batch-produced or are one of a kind.

However, during the course of the interview it seemed as if the products like the crystal and glass had maximum sales as these fall into an affordable category. The other class of objects appeared to be a tease, a stimulant for the senses, and of a lifestyle, which only a few could afford, but which all could aspire to achieve. The store also displays exclusive items like jewelry, watches etc.

‘Bungalow Eight’ is a ‘Lifestyle store’ that houses products that have been designed in India by trained designers. Again the image that the store tries to project is of a place where one could acquire exquisite objects. Some of the products made using various materials like stone, wood, and different metal alloys define the category of products that are being addressed in this project. Here a buyer can directly connect to what the designer was thinking. People could also look for objects considering the décor of their house or objects that would go with a certain theme. Some of these products





also have a craft touch although they would be following batch-manufacturing techniques. Some objects were one of its kind mostly manufactured by hand.

‘Contemporary arts and Crafts’ is an older store having a couple of outlets in Mumbai. As the name suggests this store also displays products that have an ethnic craft touch to them.

The ‘Lifestyle store’ showcases products manufactured by Indian as well as international manufacturers. The product range varies from daily use to exclusive items. Some of the Indian designs include products made by ‘Magppie’. These are made of stainless steel meant for residential use and are setting the trend for quality, mass-manufactured, designed lifestyle products.

The shop also includes products which has a traditional flavour to it like products made from traditional weaving facilities. The are products and gift items made out of a variety of metals and alloys with various finishes and surface coatings.

The existence of these stores substantiates the idea of taking up such a project. With new stores coming up, a strong market is building up which allows people access to quality, designed products. People have access to a range of products



both from the international as well as the local market. Stores like bungalow eight commission designers to create these lifestyle objects for them. With these kind of systems in place one could exploit the possibility of making this kind of a project a commercial reality.

inferences

- *A well-defined market exists for the lifestyle products category that can be tapped.*
- *New stores opening up are displaying quality objects that define and set the benchmark for quality lifestyle products.*

5.0 What is a Lifestyle Products

What kind of products, how and why it gets into the lifestyle product category? What are the associations' people have with such products? What are the qualities of these products that make them stand apart? Who owns these objects? With these questions in mind we have categorized the various aspects of lifestyle products. What emerges is not a single definition, but various shades within which such products exist.

Possessor. Owner. Persona.

Owners of the objects are people with taste, people who want to exhibit and make a statement of the way they live. They admire and adore this cocoon they have created and have a



sense of pride possessing it. Some are quite articulate in defining their wants or for finding objects that fit in the context that they have created for it. Some buy the objects and later make sacrosanct spaces to display these objects. Owners create a collage that reflect their personalities, ethnic, contemporary, modern, eclectic...

Scale and conventions

The scale of objects being addressed here varies from objects that fit in your palm, like some jewelry, to larger objects like a flower vase. Objects that you can hold, clasp, grasp, touch and feel and interact with. People have a conventional image of lifestyle and objects associated with it that are considered as lifestyle products.

Lifestyle products are reflections of the beliefs, profession, religion, customs of a place, habit formation etc. These products emerge specifically in relation to rights and rituals, social obligations, ethical standards, tradition, social and educational background, family values and habits of each individual.

5.1 Cultural influences

Culture plays an important role in the birth and evolution of a product. Ordinary products sometimes reach the state of a lifestyle product in course of time. Tea ceremony in Japan has



more of cultural connotations which is not so in other countries. The event of having tea and its transformation into a ceremony has given birth to many specific products associated with the ceremony. The products used during the event celebrate the host's social status and concern.

Ceremonial / Symbolic / Ritualistic

An immediate derivative of the culturally influenced products is the ceremonial, symbolic and ritualistic products. These products vary from its ethnical and religious backgrounds. The welcoming ceremony of a bride to the grooms' house has many products, which are usually lifestyle products, and is a signifier of the social status though their utilitarian value and scale of use is very limited.

Habits Related (indulgent)

Every place and culture induces habits that are set in their people's everyday life. These products may be used in friends or social circles. Wine from France, hookah, paan and supari from India and cigars from Cuba all fall in this category. They have a whole range of accessories and exclusive products dedicated for these habits. Humidors, cigar gauges, decanters, wine tasters and corkscrews are exclusive products designed for these habits.

Possession

Some products become lifestyle products be-



cause of someone's possession. People follow such trends and similar products or products of the same make rise to the level of lifestyle products.

Direct Personal Relation

Associations with products are made when they are actually put to use. The owner builds a relation with these products. Jewelry and bangle boxes are such products.

Icons

Some products stand as icons over time and help the owner make direct and recognizable statements to others about his lifestyle. They also exhibit the person's knowledge of the products from different societies and cultures that stand as icons.

What makes these objects icons are associations with durability, trustworthiness, aesthetics, form and excellent functional qualities. All of these combine to form a very strong image. These objects are also portrayed as objects that can buy you a 'lifestyle' and place you in the select few of a class who have a desire of owning beautiful objects and lifestyles.

Profession

Some products and gadgets are used to project the persons or company's image to others. These products could fall in to the lifestyle product



category due to the cost exclusivity or the technological edge associated with it, which makes it impossible for all to own it. The use of PDA's expensive mobile phones, Mac machines etc are examples of these.

Cross Cultural products

Products transcend cultural barriers and appeal to people across the world. These influences have been strengthened considerably in the present context with the advent of the Internet and cable TV and thus access to various cultures and lifestyle. Wind chimes which have a strong cultural connotation have reached the common mans homes crossing the cultural barriers and religious associations it once carried with it

5.2 Time and Place

Products have relevance with respect to time, more importantly, time and place. Some objects reveal directly the period or age of their origin. They tell tales of the culture they belong to and the lifestyles of the people they belong to.

Antiques and indirect lifestyle products

Objects especially from pre-industrialized times reveal the level of craft, understanding of detailing, materials, technology and the finesse with which the craftsman executed the work.



These objects behave differently when placed in different contemporary contexts. In the first instance, they are objects of appreciation that the user feels towards them. The owner usually displays these objects as treasures. The owner would have his own stories and memories about the object, where he would have obtained it from and such.

These objects though being lifestyle objects in one sense of the word may not have any utilitarian value today. These can be termed as antiques. In the second instance some of these objects find secondary use in the houses of their owners. In some cases they would be used differently from their original intended use. An antique glass may be used for keeping pens and an old Kerala chest used as a table in the sitting room fall under this category.

Timelessness

Some products have an intrinsic timeless appeal. The qualities that determine this vary. One of the qualities is associated with the function of the product. Some functions are essentially existent over any time period. A flower vase and a chair are utilities that fall in any time frame or within a large time frame. Thus these become functionally timeless, and the value of the object increases over time.

Materials also have a timeless quality. Wood, stone and glass have a timeless appeal and they



Think Different

work well over any period without stagnating. Products are also timeless by design. They can appeal to people over different eras. Traditional artifacts made from Padauk in Andaman have this quality. Noticeably, the more simple and elegant they are, the more their appeal over time.

Temporary Lifestyle products

Fashion wear and accessories are primary examples of temporary lifestyle products. Most of these are fads or trends that cannot survive the next arrival on the market. The possessor is usually a well-to-do person who invests in different objects that are necessarily the latest, newest things available to prove his uniqueness. A lot of these are also custom designed for the possessor.

5.3 Materials and lifestyle products

The use of exclusive and expensive materials like gold, platinum, sterling silver, pewter etc make a product exclusive. Some materials like wood have a timeless appeal and hence figure in all forms of lifestyle products. The value of an ordinary material like stone, steel or glass can be enhanced by 'good design'.

Technology lead products

New technology helps in developing new



lifestyle products. A Mackintosh computer is a statement of the user's preference for not only a better performing machine, but it also has value as a lifestyle product. These machines are a visual statement and are examples of a high order of carefully designed products. A Bang-Olufsen music system reeks with hi-tech but on the face it is subtle, elegant, sophisticated and is an object only for the truly indulgent.

Craft

A touch of Craft in the contemporary context or craft dating back to antiquity has great value as lifestyle objects. Craft is a personal signature of the designer-creator and one can directly communicate with his thoughts through the object while he was creating it.

Cost Exclusivity

Most of the lifestyle products are by and large in an upper cost category. Most of them attract only serious buyers who would value and treasure these objects or who would gift them to people they think deserve them and who would cherish these objects. What makes these objects expensive is the attention to detailing, materials, and the exclusivity of the object.

Contrary to the rule however, even trinkets collected from some wayside place can become statements when placed in a different context. Inexpensive objects thus become invaluable objects imparting joy. Small glass lanterns brought off the street are iconic of a time and



yet don't cost anything. At the same time some objects can be made to look expensive with clever use of materials and craft.

5.4 Associations

The owner builds an emotional relationship with the objects associating them with memories, time and place. He also learns from his possessions. The more he sees them, the more he learns to appreciate.

Tactile

Owners develop tactile associations with the products. Touching and feeling the surfaces, the form, and coming in to direct contact with the objects awakens the owner's emotions and connects them to their memories. The experience is shared between the owner and the object. The person thus develops an indirect affection with the object.

Visual Stimulants

Placed in context, these objects punctuate the surroundings. Here we have assumed a contemporary context. Tastefully done up spaces or environments that have their own impact on the user are the canvas for these objects. Placed in unique positions, proudly displayed, these objects are what the person indulges in. They

function as reminders of a level of elegance to the possessor.



inferences

- *A display of status and passionate indulgence.*
- *Experience of using an object and possessing it.*
- *Personal and intimate relation with the object.*
- *Association of objects to specific time, place and memories.*
- *Desire to present, to share and appreciate.*
- *Some users are well informed about the materials, finishes and demand quality in terms of design.*
- *With the advent of different new media, users have been exposed to various cultures and this has expanded their needs.*
- *As far as Indian Culture is concerned contemporary forms of various traditional objects have not been explored by designers.*

6.0 Industrial Setup

As part of the industry survey I visited and studied a number of industries varying in scale and sophistication. Most of the Stainless Steel industries involved in the manufacture and export of home and office accessories have a tool room of their own where they manufacture the dyes for their production. The shifts vary from one to three and the number of employees from ten to one hundred and fifty. The machinery includes facilities for punching, forming, spinning, curling, welding, annealing, pickling, and pad printing.

The growth of technology has been at an alarmingly fast rate that the traditional industries or craft industries stays rather undisturbed and unaffected by any of these machinery and institutes of mass manufacture. The craftsmen still continue to use their traditional tools and



work environments to come up with objects whose designs have not or very negligibly changed over the years.

The industries have the manufacturing sophistication which can produce similar objects with very high precision in extremely short time. The craftsmen on the other hand have the ability to visualize the beauty of an object even when it is not there. The current system of how the mass production industry and the craft industry works are in two watertight compartments with negligibly low interactions amongst them. For a product to be mass manufactured with the same sensitivity and quality of a craftwork, the amalgamation or the right mix of both the industries strengths are required.

The materials and the processes and techniques best suited for working with them were parallely studied.



Stainless steel

"Stainless" is a term coined early in the development of these steels for cutlery applications. It was adopted as a generic name for these steels and now covers a wide range of steel types and grades for corrosion or oxidation resistant applications.



Stainless steel is essentially a low carbon steel which contains chromium at 10% or more by weight. It is this addition of chromium that gives the steel its unique stainless, corrosion resisting properties. The chromium content of the steel allows the formation of a rough, adherent, invisible, corrosion-resisting chromium oxide film on the steel surface. If damaged mechanically or chemically, this film is self-healing, providing that oxygen, even in very small amounts, is present. The corrosion resistance and other useful properties of the steel are enhanced by increased chromium content and the addition of other metals such as nickel, molybdenum, titanium, copper and non-metal additions like carbon and nitrogen.

There are over 150 different stainless steel grades divided into five classes. The grades 304 and 410 are general-purpose steels used in cutlery, 420 has increased carbon content to improve mechanical properties and is used in the manufacture of scissors, dental and surgical equipments, 430 is used in architectural and interior applications, cooking utensils and food processing equipments.

Brass

Nominally composed of 70% copper, 30% zinc, this alloy is of such a composition that strength



and hardness continue to increase in relation to the more pure copper, but ductility falls off as the metal becomes saturated with zinc. Common fabrication processes are blanking, drawing, etching, forming and bending, heading and upsetting, piercing, punching, roll threading and knurling, sheering, spinning and stamping. This alloy is readily soldered and brazed. Bars, rods and wires may be resistance flash butt welded. Sheet metal may be resistance spot welded. It offers excellent to good corrosion resistance in most environments, but it is not suitable for use with certain acids and compounds. Cartridge brass 260, Yellow brass 274 are two commercially available variants of brass.

Copper

Copper has been in use for over 10,000 years now and has over the years changed its role to meet the contemporary need of human beings. Applications for copper are emerging even in seemingly diverse areas as superconductivity, fuel cells, marine protection, and nuclear waste disposal canisters - to name but a few. Copper will continue to fascinate and find exciting applications.

Copper is a malleable and ductile metal which means that it can easily be bent or hammered or drawn. Copper has a melting point of 1083 C.





To remove the stresses and tension which hardens the metal it is annealed by heating the metal to a dull cherry red colour and quenching in water. A thin flaky skin of oxide forms on the surface of the heated metal which can be easily removed by pickling. Copper can be pickled in a hot solution of 10 parts water on 1 part sulphuric acid or in a cold solution of 5 parts water on 1 part sulphuric acid.

The common fabrication processes possible in copper are blanking, coining, drawing, etching, forming and bending, heading and upsetting, hot forging and pressing, piercing and punching, roll threading and knurling, shearing, spinning, squeezing and swaging and stamping. Soldering (with silver solder or pink copper solder) and brazing are excellent fabrication processes when it comes to copper.

Finishing techniques include waxing, antiquing, painting, coating, lacquering, enameling, variegating (heating copper over a burner to produce a spectrum of colors), and oxidizing to bring out the desirable copper patina effect.

Wood

Wood is a versatile material that man has been exposed to since time immemorial. It had been used to make probably all things man could ever





think of. The common kinds of wood that are used in the craft industry for the making of artefacts and carved objects are Mahogany, Teak and Rosewood. The industry uses mostly hand held tools for the manufacture of these objects or they use machines like wood turning lathes to turn wood.

inferences

- *The industrial set up in India is capable of coming up with quality products.*
- *There exists a group of highly talented and sensitive group of people whose services can be exploited to come up with quality products.*
- *Amalgamation of art, craft and the production industries needs to be explored.*

7.0 Product brief

lifesytle product general considerations

- Exploration of Lifestyle products within a context.
- Objects of day-to-day use not strictly utilitarian but objects to derive pleasure.
- Products imparting joy, and a memorable, tasteful experience.
- Object of intimate identification and appreciation.
- Objects that have an ethnic or craft touch to it, which defines the uniqueness.
- Products that invoke visual curiosity and provide tactile sensations to the user.

material and process considerations

- Use of materials that is familiar and closer to man.
- Use materials in a way to give the product a contemporary look.
- Processes used for the manufacture could be enough to suffice batch production.

business and economic considerations

- The cost of the products should fall within the buying power of the user category under consideration.
- The products could be sold through outlets like various lifestyle stores.
- The business set up should be able to coordinate between different manufacturing systems to come up with the production requirements.

8.0 Concept Generation

Culture is the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, and all products of human work and thought. It is the expression of a particular period, class, community, or population with respect to a particular category, such as a field, subject, or mode of expression. Keeping this in mind I chose three different categories of expression to come up with the initial design ideas. The metaphors or images were only to an inspirational level and is not directly reflected in the product.

The categories are: Sculptures and motifs which have conveyed meanings to our religion and heritage over the years, Damascus steel manufacturing of ancient India and a folk dance called Theyyam.

8.1 Sculpture and motifs

India has a rich tradition of sculpture. These are usually more of a narrative quality than giving importance to realism. The meaning associated with the motifs and sculptures are used as a means of story telling especially in most religious contexts.

The language followed in sculpture vary from different region to region and according to the traditions for which it has evolved and also depends on the availability and awareness of the craftsmen who are exposed to these fields.



8.2 Damascus Steel

India has been reputed for its iron and steel since ancient times. Metalsmiths in India as early as 300BC developed a new technique known as Wootz steel that produced a high-carbon steel of unusually high purity. Wootz is a corruption of the word for steel ukku in many south Indian languages. The Arabs who took ingots of wootz steel to Damascus following which a thriving industry developed there for making weapons and armour of this steel, the renown of which has given the steel its name.

The term Damascus steel can refer to two different types of artefacts one of which is the true Damascus steel and the other is pattern-welded steel. In true Damascus steel which is a high carbon (1.5-2.0%) alloy, glass was added to the mixture of iron and charcoal, the glass would bond with impurities in the iron stock and then float out while the mixture cooled. The carbon precipitate out primarily in the center of the blade, thereby producing a softer center with very strong edges – the swordsmith's ultimate goal, leaves the blade covered with a beautiful swirling patterning. Pattern welding is a mechanical process that lays up strips of material which are then pounded together, or folded. If the blade is then etched in acid the layering below the surface is revealed.



8.3 Theyyam

Folk forms do not necessarily constitute a separate sphere from the respective communities life. The expression in folk art may not always be aesthetically pleasing or poetical to many, it seems raw and blunt at times, words simple and primitive. But these expressions touch a part of the soul in a way that is more direct and natural.

Theyyam is a ritualistic dance with its rare and grotesque make-up and costume, lively footwork and gymnastic fervors. Theyyam could be a corrupted form of the word *deivam* or God. Themes revolve around the triumph of the goddess over the demon Daruka and other evil characters. There are about 400 different types of Theyyams, each with a different myth. Theyyam is generally performed in front of the village shrines or in houses. The songs of Theyyam (thottam pattukal) are mainly to praise the deities and contain myth or legend of deities. They describe the origin of the deities their beauty and grandeur, their journey, power and bravado.

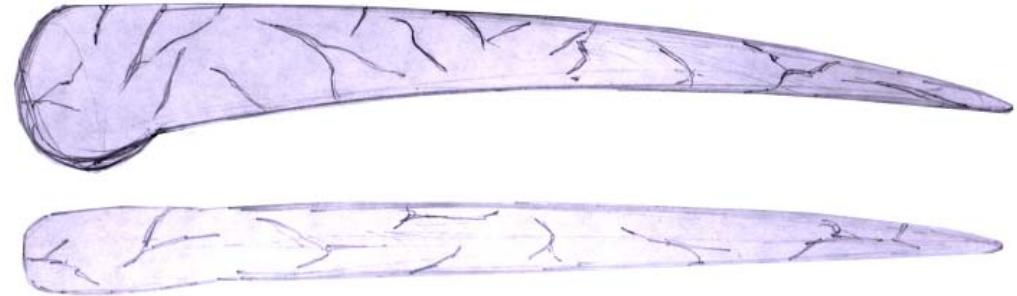
The first part of the performance, vellattam or tottam is performed without proper make-up. After a short interval, the dancer performs with proper make-up and costume. The dancer gradually metamorphoses into the particular deity of the shrine. He then dons the headdress and dances.



8.4 Preliminary concepts

To start with a set of paper knives were designed.

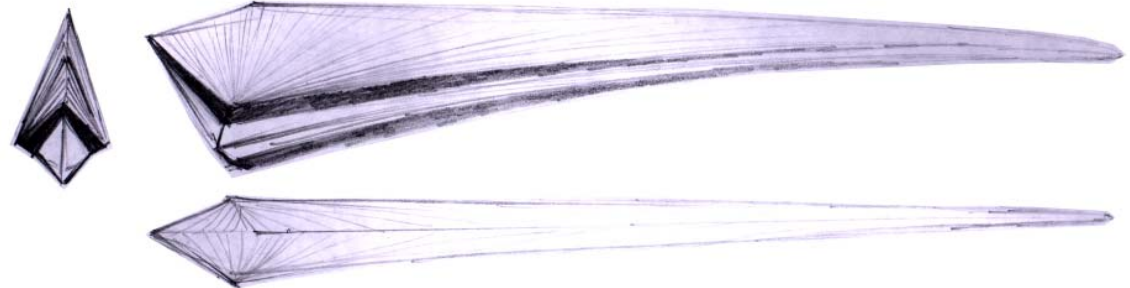
The first one was designed to be made in stone with metal inlays on it. The idea was to invoke in the user a sense of curiosity generated by fragility of the knife.



A sharp pointed edge is formed from a bulbous form. The bulging out of the form gives the sense of softness to the form. The idea of a pseudo handle for such a product is explored in this form.



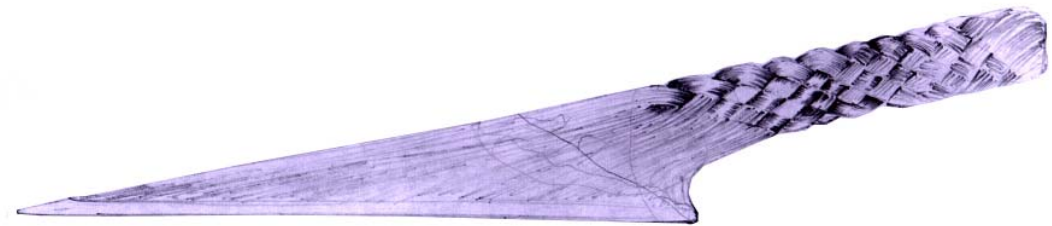
Sharpness of the paperknife's form is enhanced by the serrations on the surface which run from one point to divergent directions.



The free flowing plastic form is broken by the slots on the surface. The slightly misaligned slots gives the feeling that it is carved out.



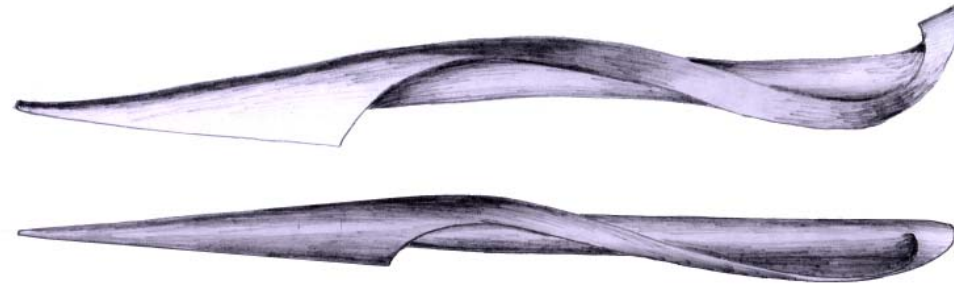
This paperknife was designed taking inspiration from the weaving patterns available. the weave of metal slowly loosens from the weave and joins to form the blade of the knife.



The flowing form changes in all directions and finally forms a comparatively sharp edge at the end. Here also the comparison towards sword gives the feeling that it is a sharp product.



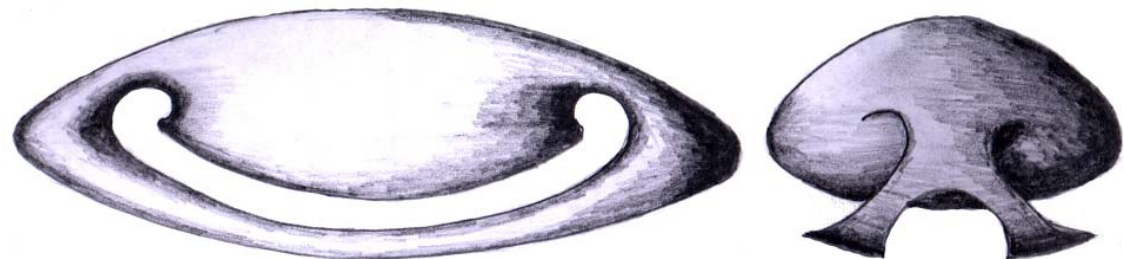
The association to a seen image of a sword generates in the user a feeling of handling a dangerous weapon. The continuity of the form is to generate a sense of warmth.



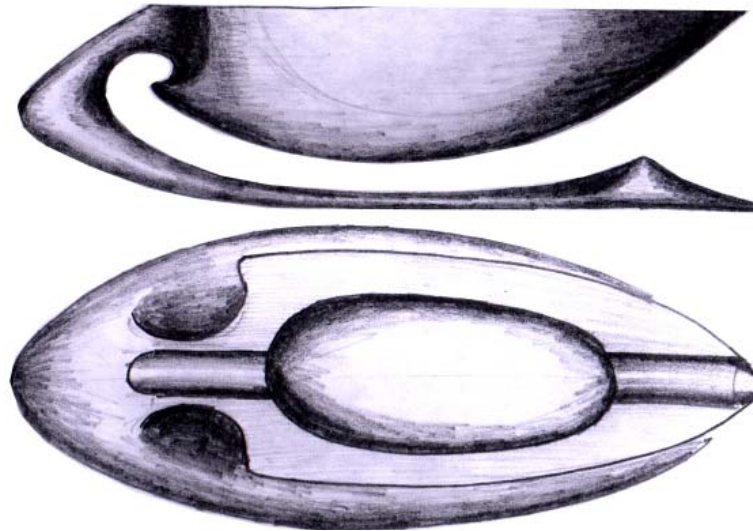
The perplexity of having a sharp and dangerously pointed corner inside and a smooth and blunt outside for cutting paper or opening an envelope is explored in this design.



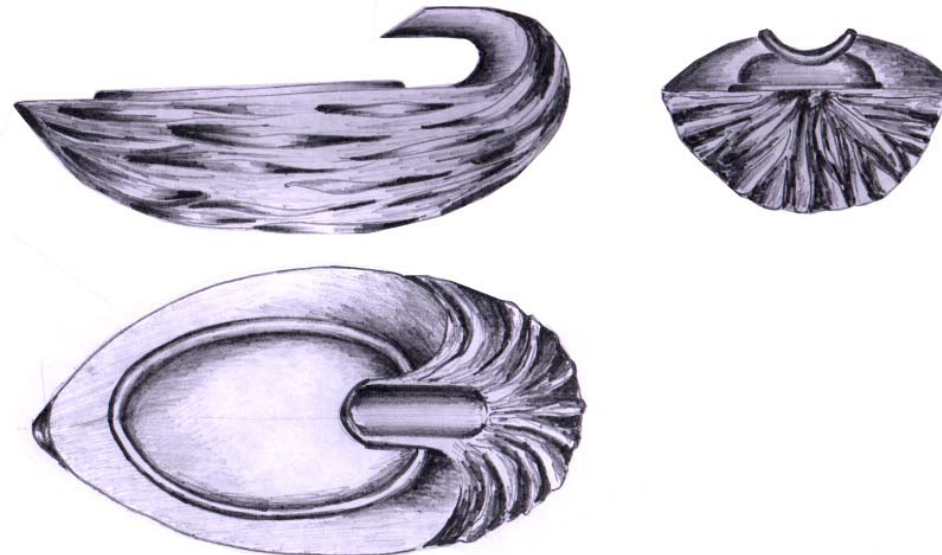
The image of a paper weight as a stationary and stagnant object is tried to be broken in this. Though there was no direct imagery associated with the product subconsciously it related to some of the traditional products available.



An ashtray was designed after the design of the paperweight. It was to have more of a traditional product look, the curves of the product was accentuated to have that look.



Another ashtray designed to enhance the tactile qualities of the product. Here combination of two materials to complement each others qualities were tried out.



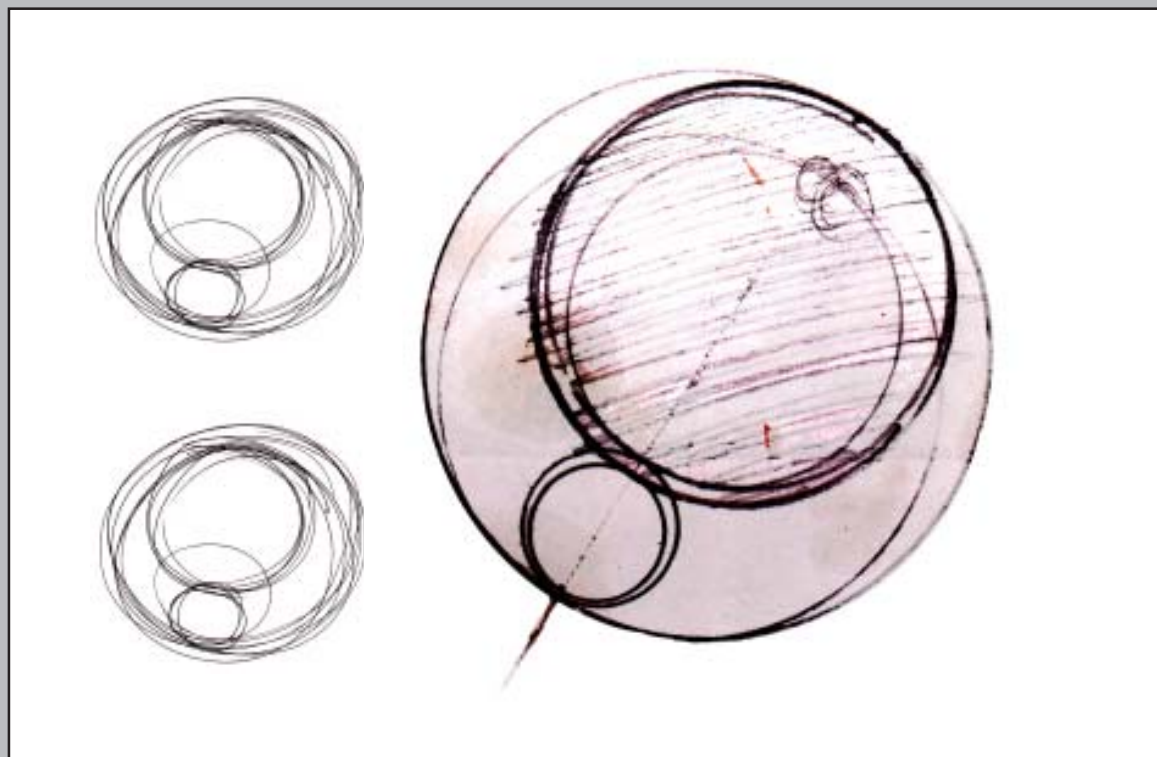
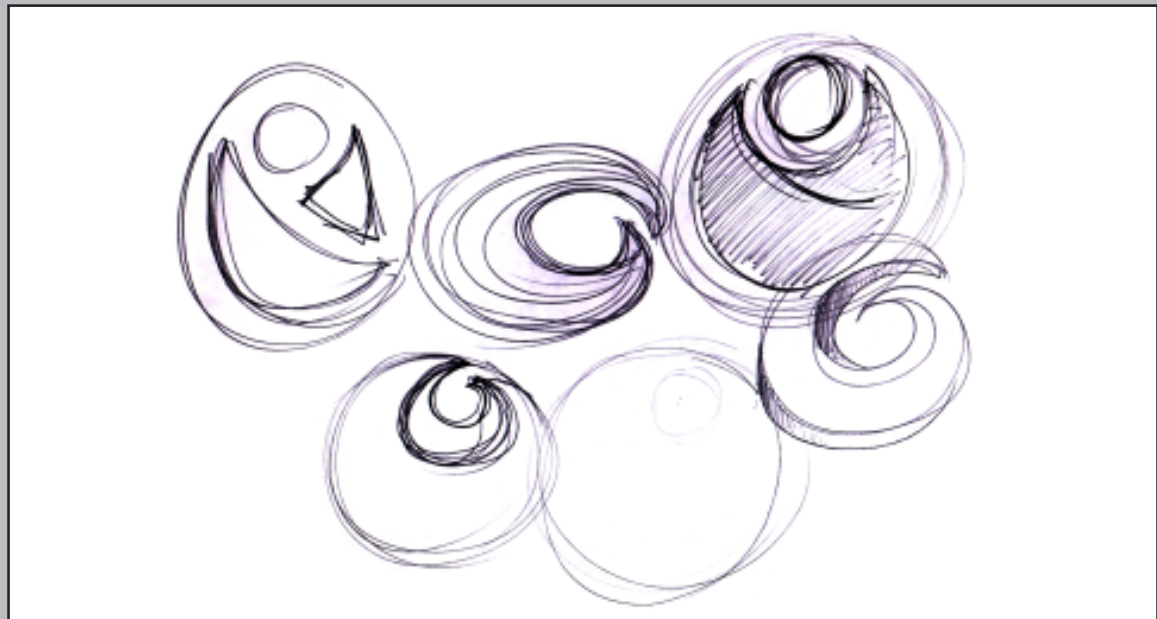
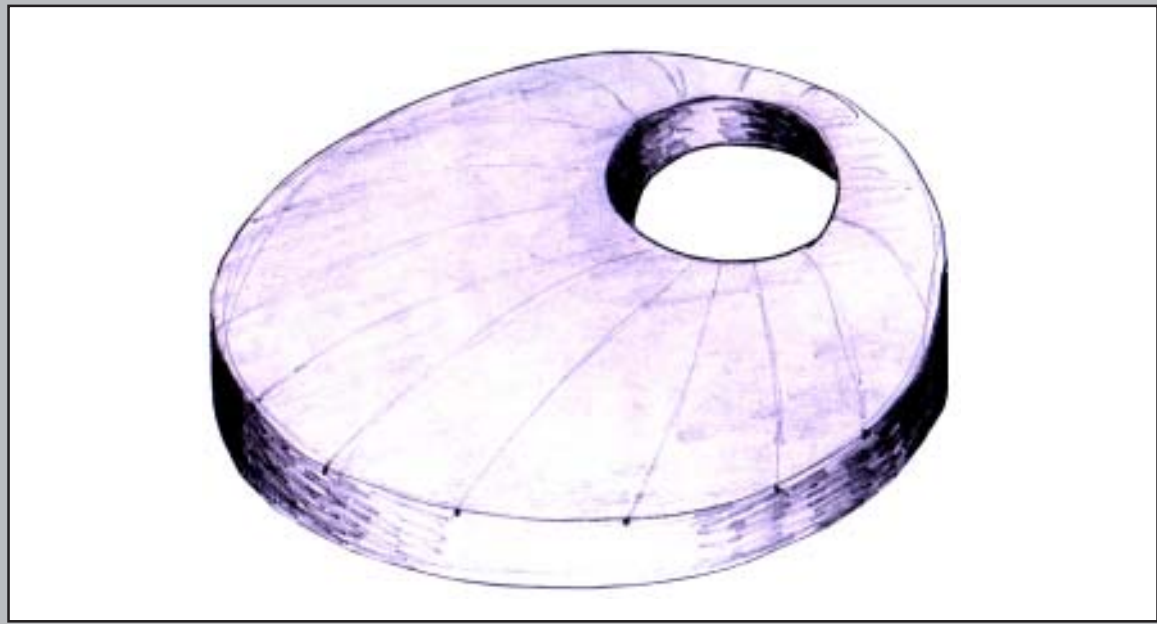
Concept 1

The inspiration is taken from traditional jewelry patterns. Unleash the subconscious and shed the inhibitions, to make marks that parallel those of a known civilization.

A sense of excitement and surprise is made in the way the circles meet. The edges of the circles dangerously close that you feel its almost not there. Different combinations of how circles could meet were made.

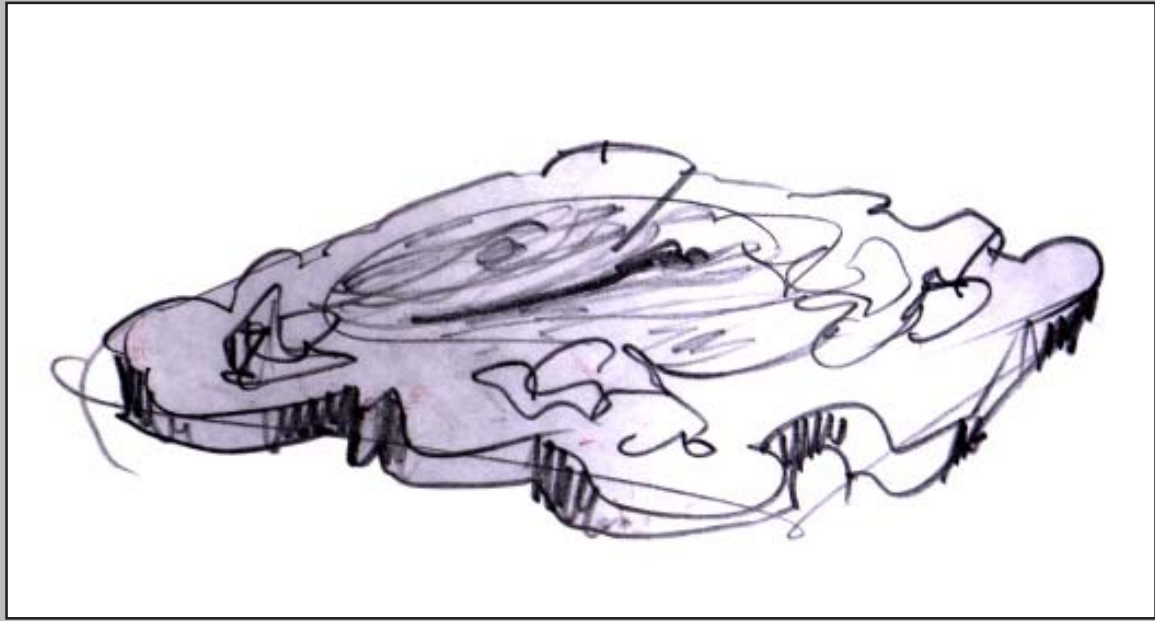
The copper plate is punched out to form a circular disc. A circular depression of bigger diameter and one of smaller diameter are machined out. To it are fixed two stainless steel circular discs of different diameters and brazed. This fixes the stainless steel discs on to the copper disc. The copper plate is drilled for the smaller hole. The product is finally pickled and buffed.

The copper plate is drilled for the smaller hole. The product is finally pickled and buffed.

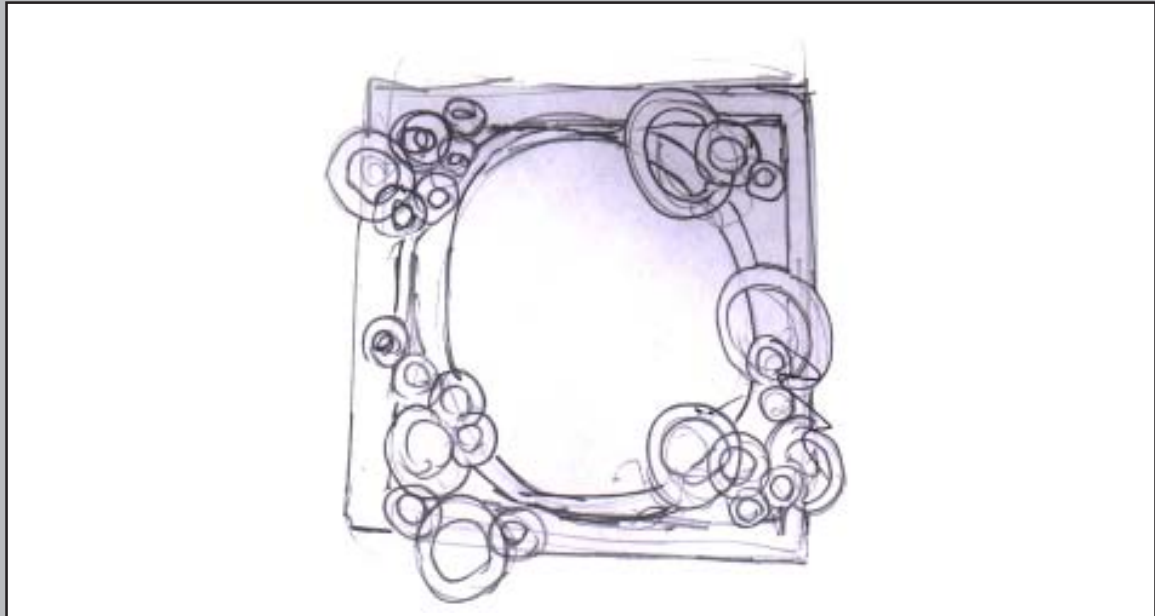


Concept 2

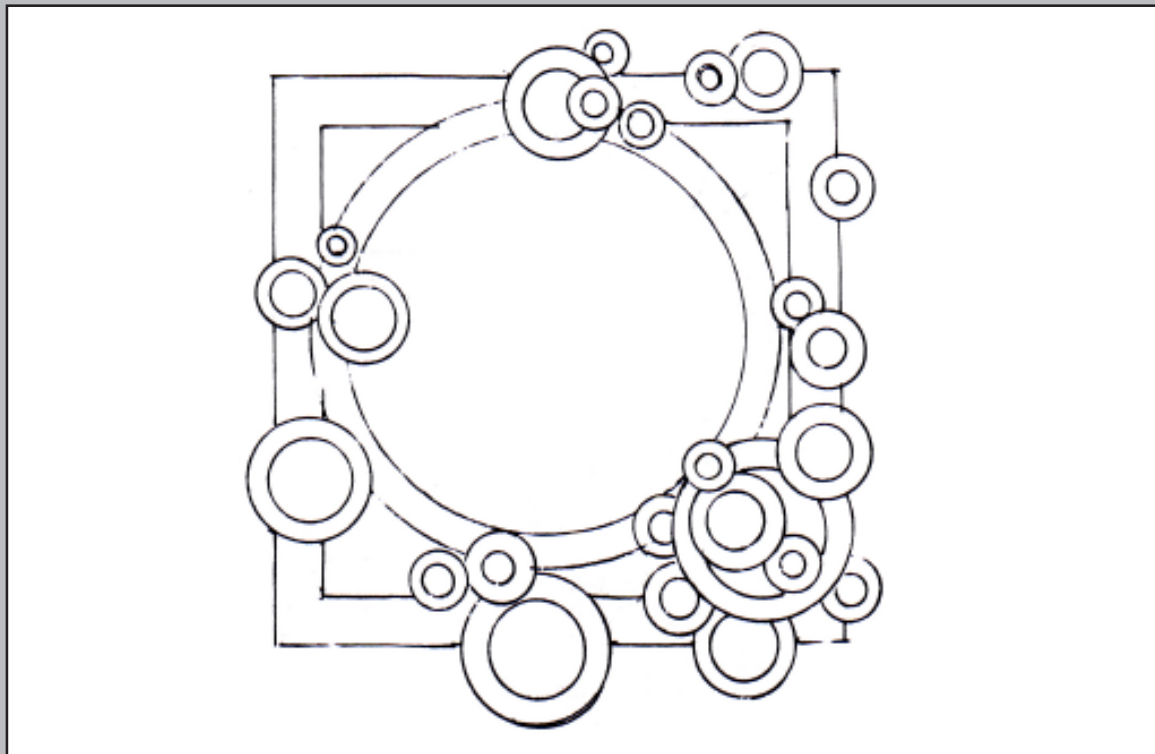
The rays of sunlight seeps in through a window. The arrival of a new dawn signifies the arrival of opportunities and good luck.



The initial idea was converted into an image with more open spaces. The circles gradually became just holes and that too lost its boundaries with the strict straight edges.

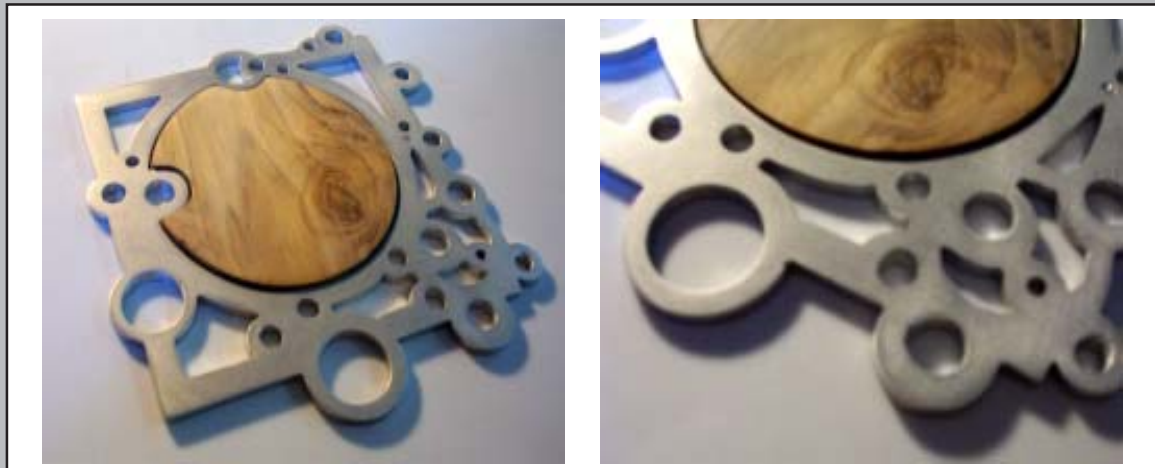


Different materials are tried out instead of just teak wood. The change was made to enhance the qualities of both the materials used.



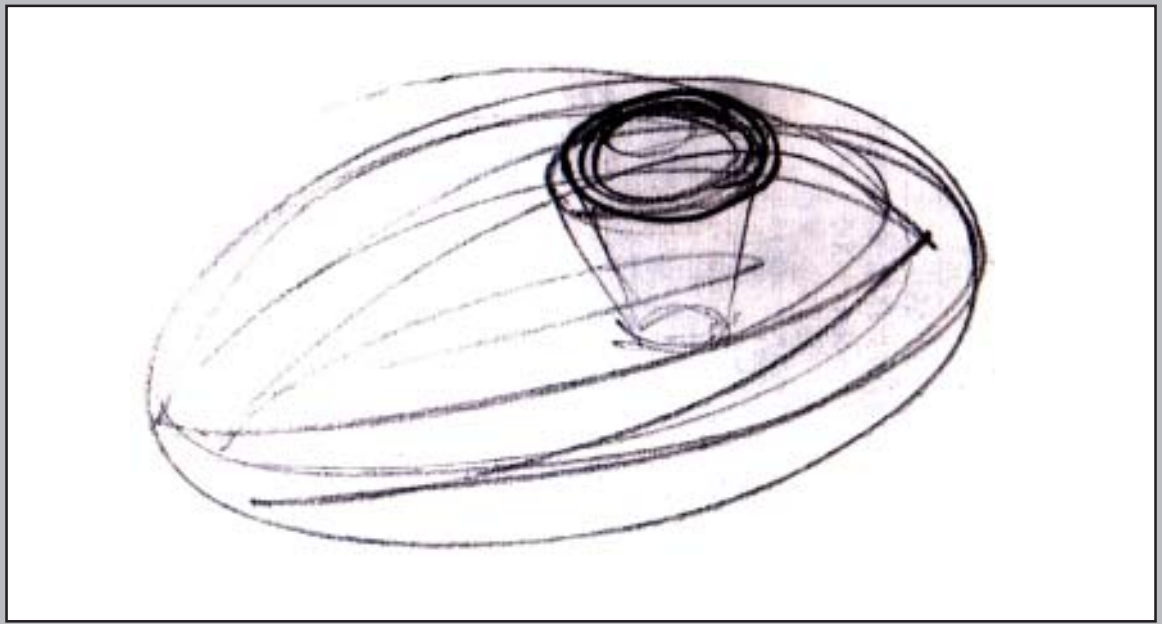
The stainless steel plate is blanked out. Wooden pieces that match the inner surface is machined out.

The inner meeting walls of both wood and steel is run with a grooving tool that leaves a gap in the center of the plates. Resin based adhesive is filled in-between the gap and set to dry up for the exact setting time of the adhesive.

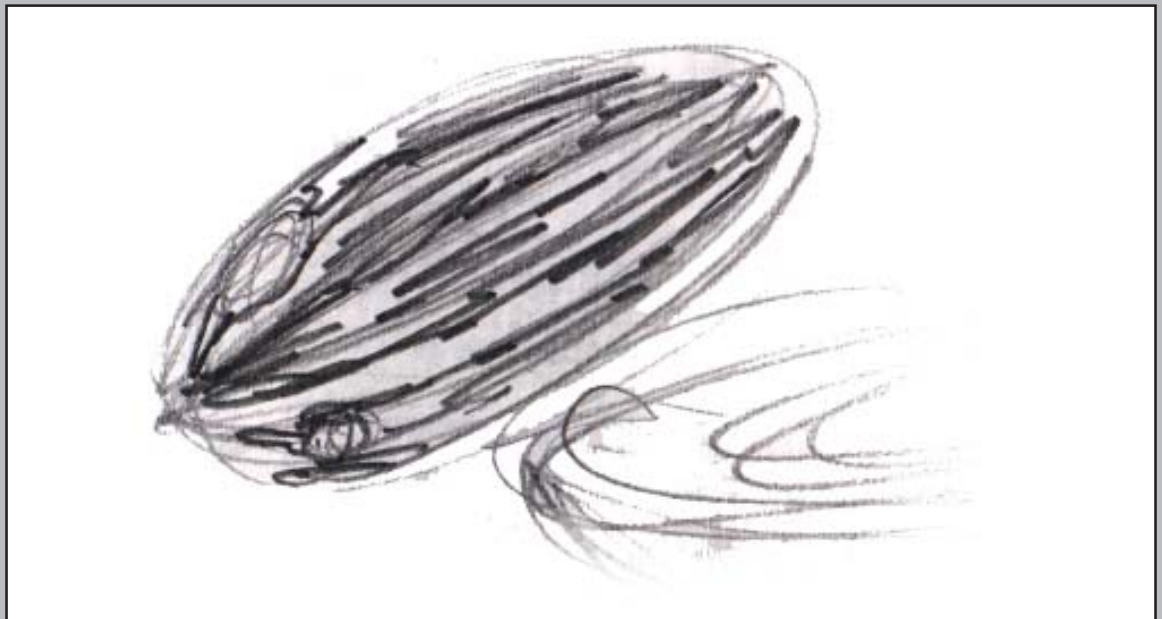


Concept 3

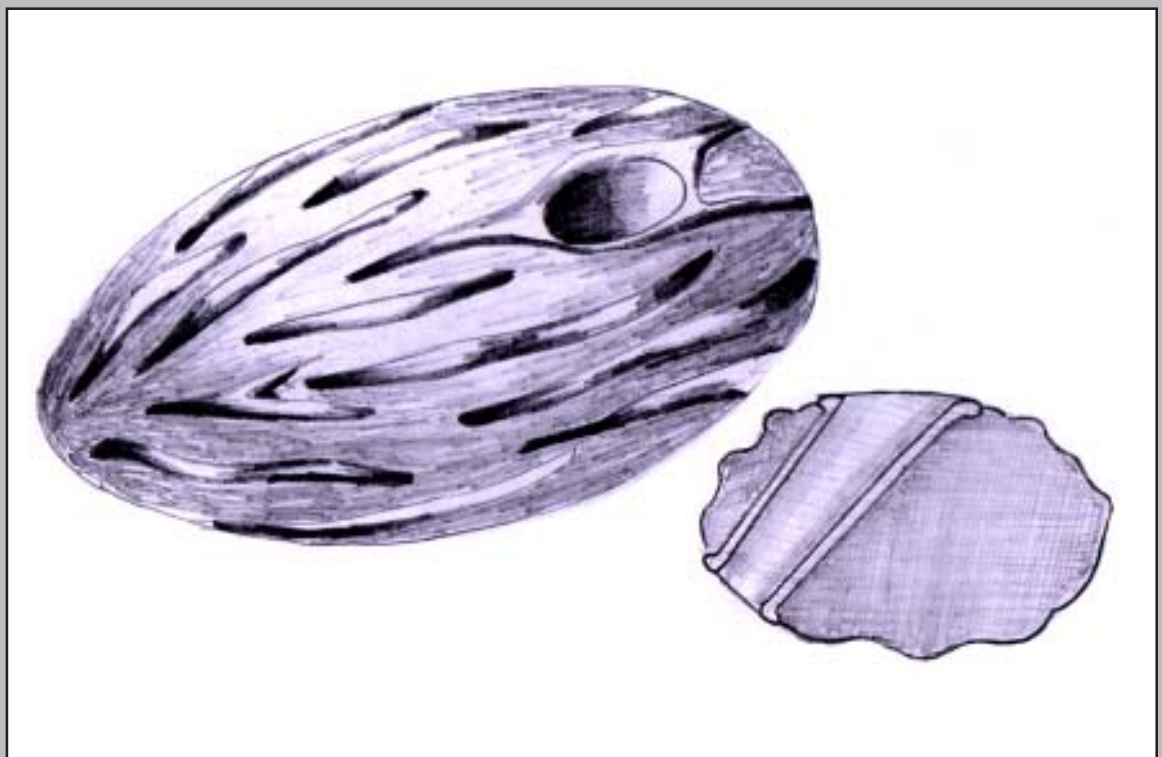
Trying to invoke in a person both visual and tactile sensation by the use of a warm material like wood with a cold material like steel. The person should be able to play around with it even if it is not used as a penholder.



The flow patterns of metal over wood has to be defined to get the right kind of sensation and make it more subtle.



The bulk of the material was removed and made little smaller to fit ones hand.



The basic form is turned in lathe and each individual piece which matches the profile of the wood is force fitted on to the surface manually. The piece is finally finished and lacquered by masking the metal area.

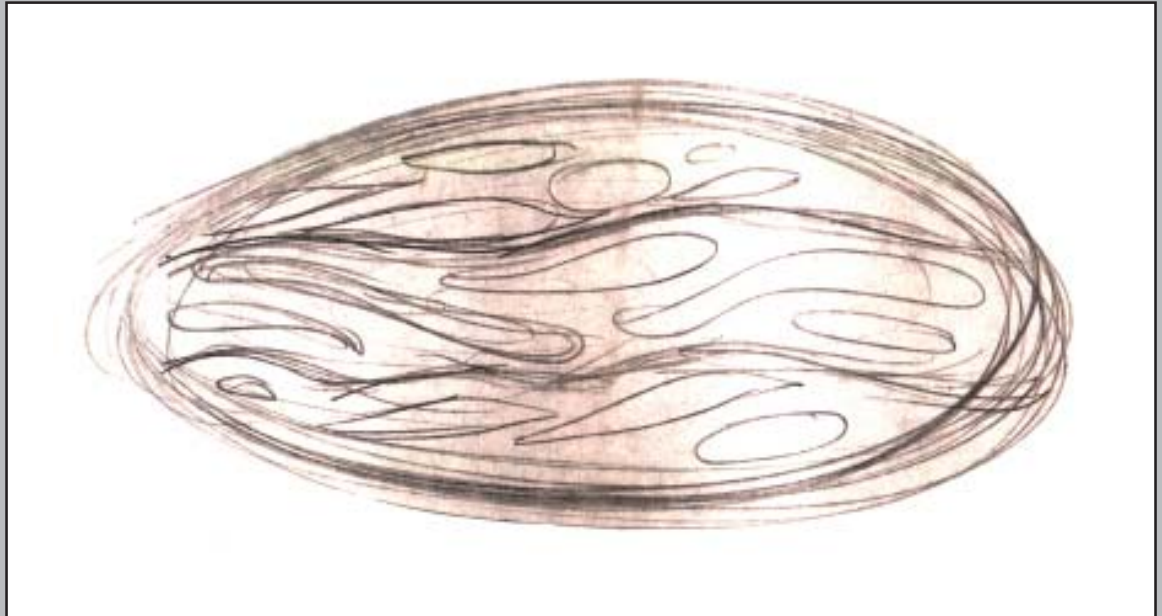


Concept 4

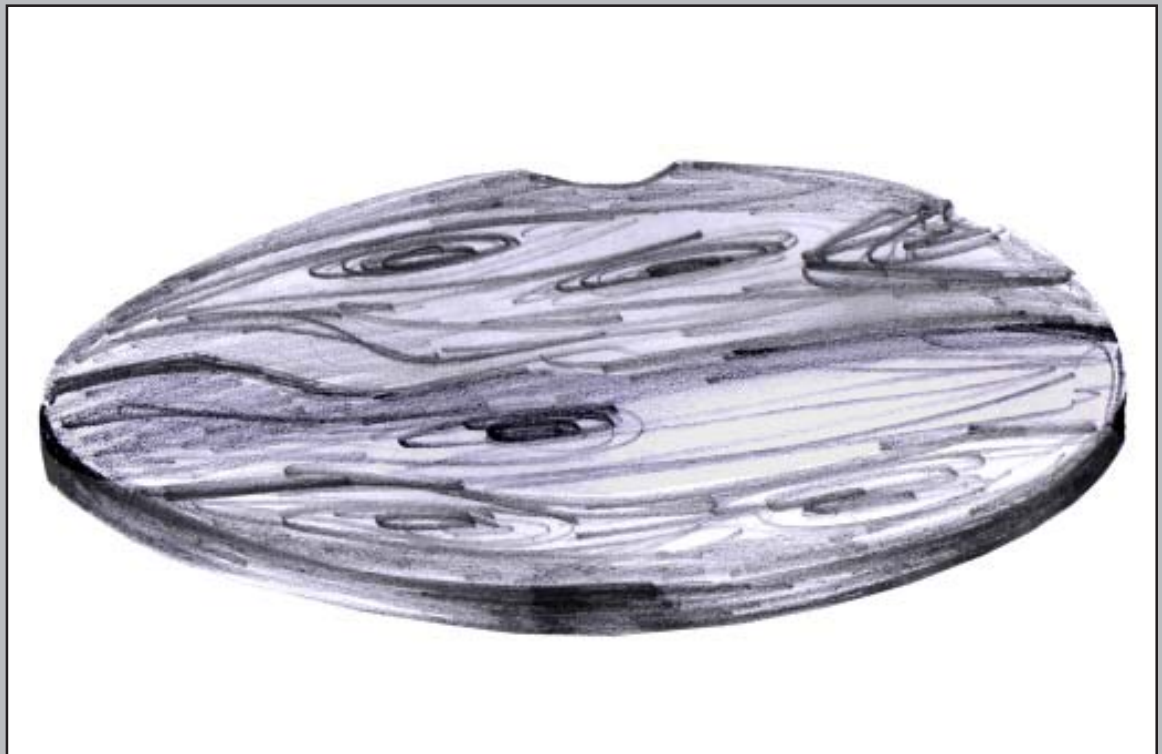
The understanding of wood, its grains, its growth structure and its texture. Richer lines reeling into exciting new dimensions as the artist tells a new story and share an event. In the end it is not just the soul of the tree that reaches out to the viewer but the heart of the maker as well.



The idea of each hand produced one at a time can be avoided.



The basic form is standardized. It is batch produced and machined to get the basic material removal done. There needs to be a sensitive person who can see the grains of the wood and finish it to bring out the maximum from the wood texture. The final products look each as a distinct piece as the woods natural grains are enhanced.

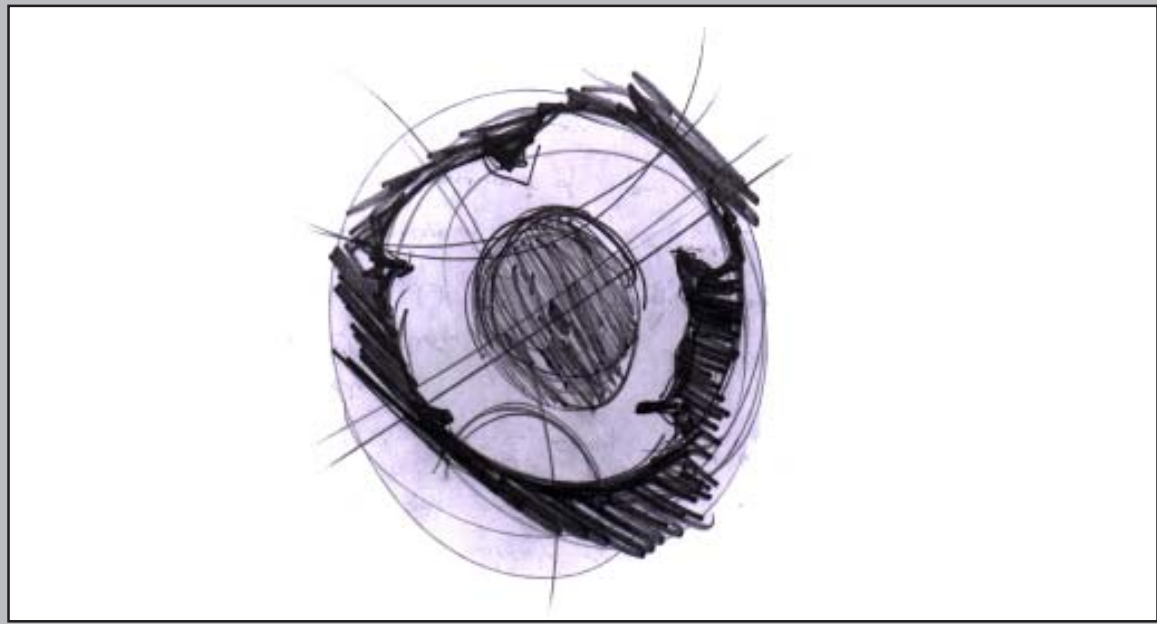


The brass line that runs over the edge is produced by bending. It is then soldered to the wood and finished. A protective lacquer coat is given to enhance and protect the wood.



Concept 5

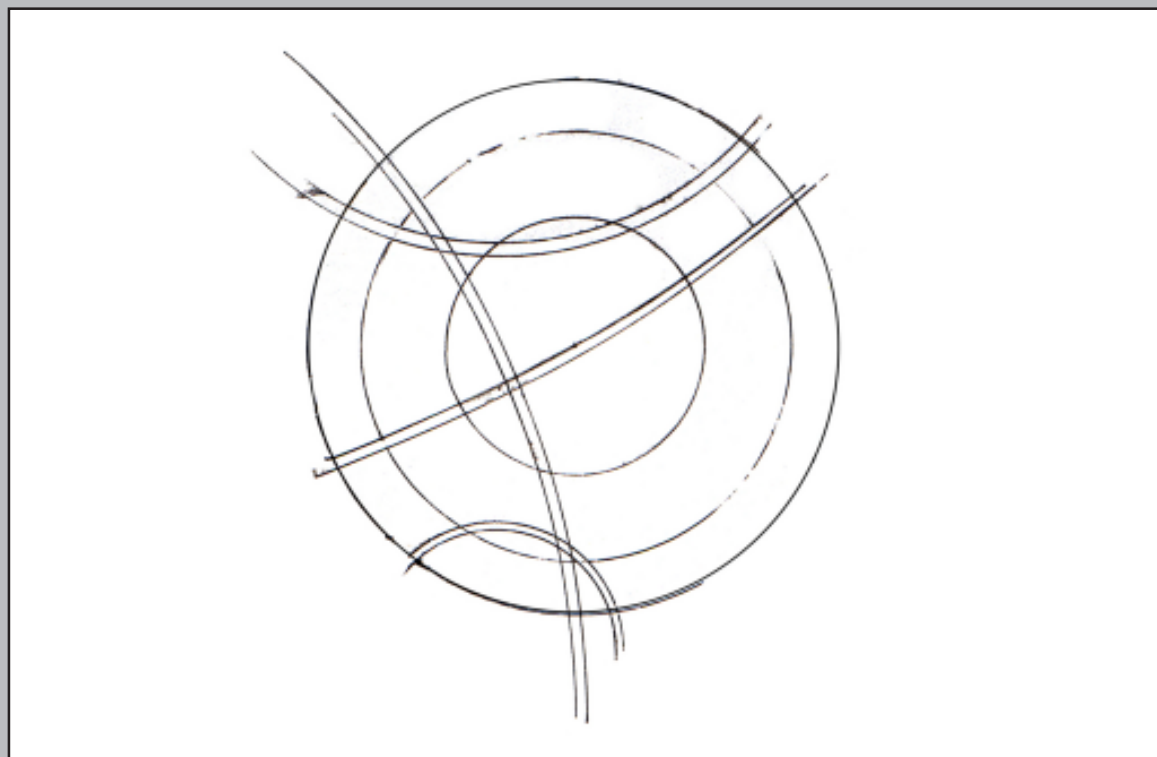
Only a part of the whole is visible and others go unnoticed.



The two circles in the coaster dominate over the other. Though the others form part of more similar and bigger circle their existence as a whole is lost because of the domination of the others.

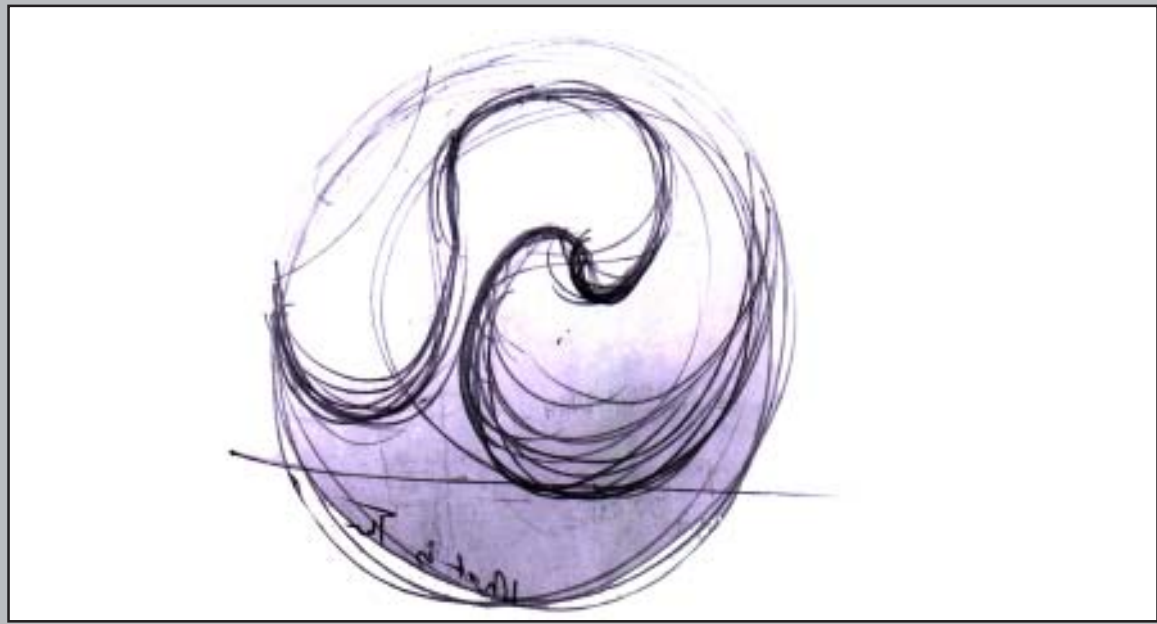


The basic discs are turned and made in wood. The slots are made in wood and the metal is force fitted on to the wood manually. The use of slight amount of adhesive also helps for the bigger circle in the center.

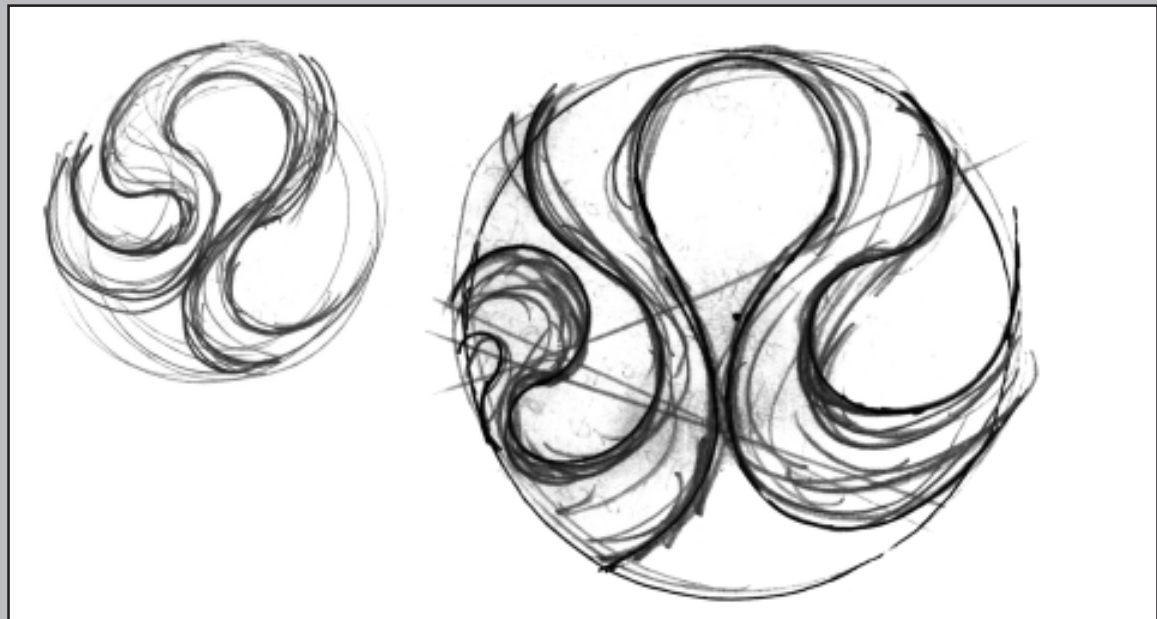


Concept 6

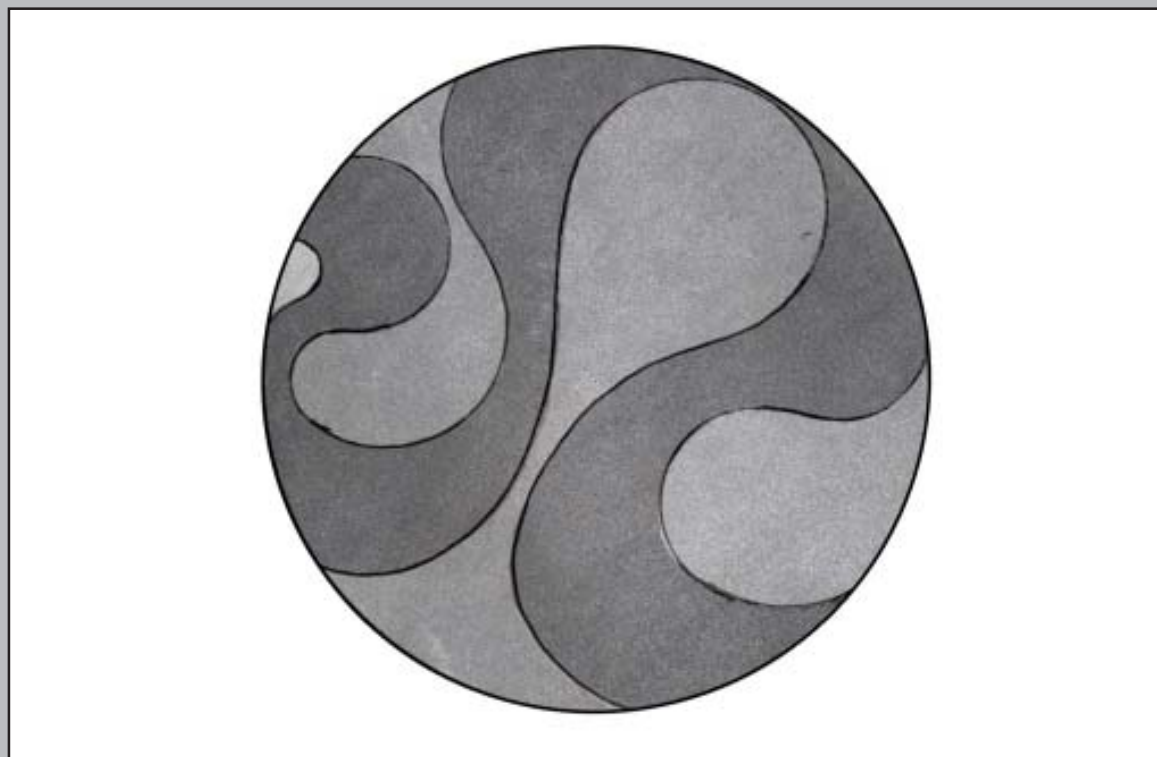
As smooth as a rivers flow, some times visible and some times not. In the morning sun the water in the rivers seems to rise above the ground.



A number of flow patterns were tried out that best invoke this feeling, a feeling of familiarity and curiosity.



The slight level difference in the two metals is to generate the tactile sensation of the curves flow.

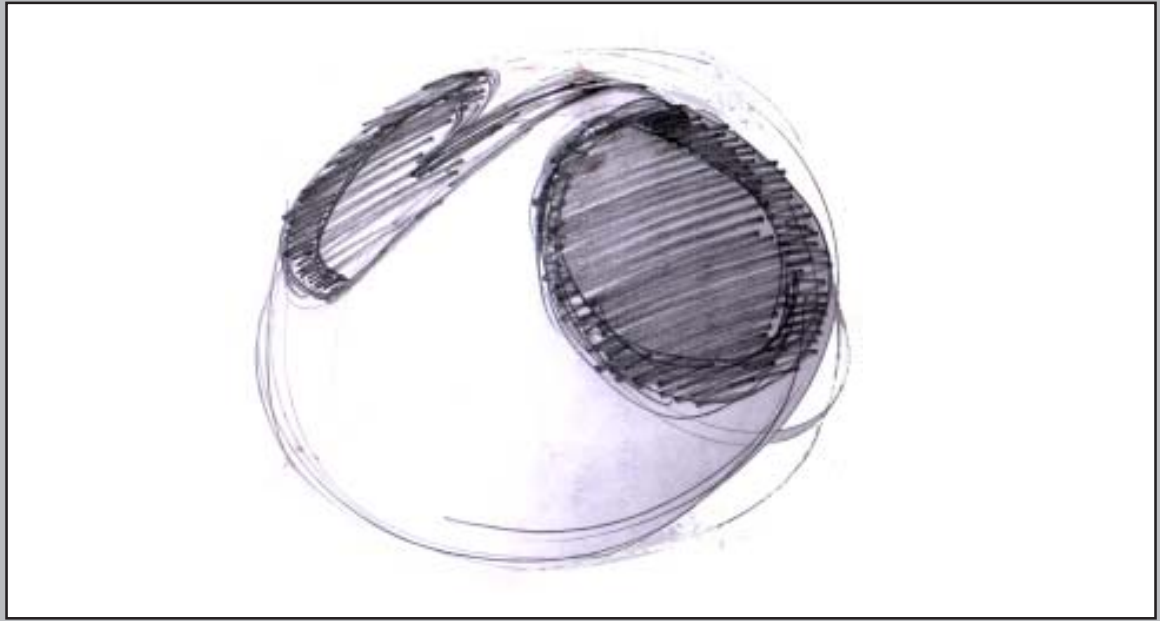


The copper base is milled out and on it is placed the stainless steel blanked piece. Both the pieces are force fitted and braced. Picking and buffing are done to finish the product finally.

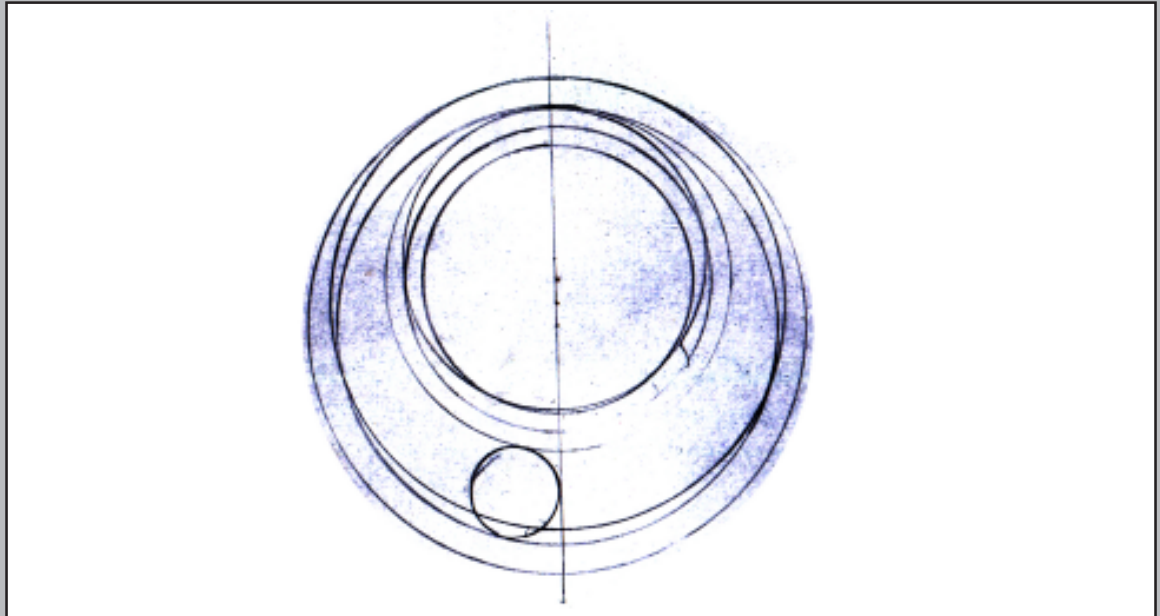


Concept 7

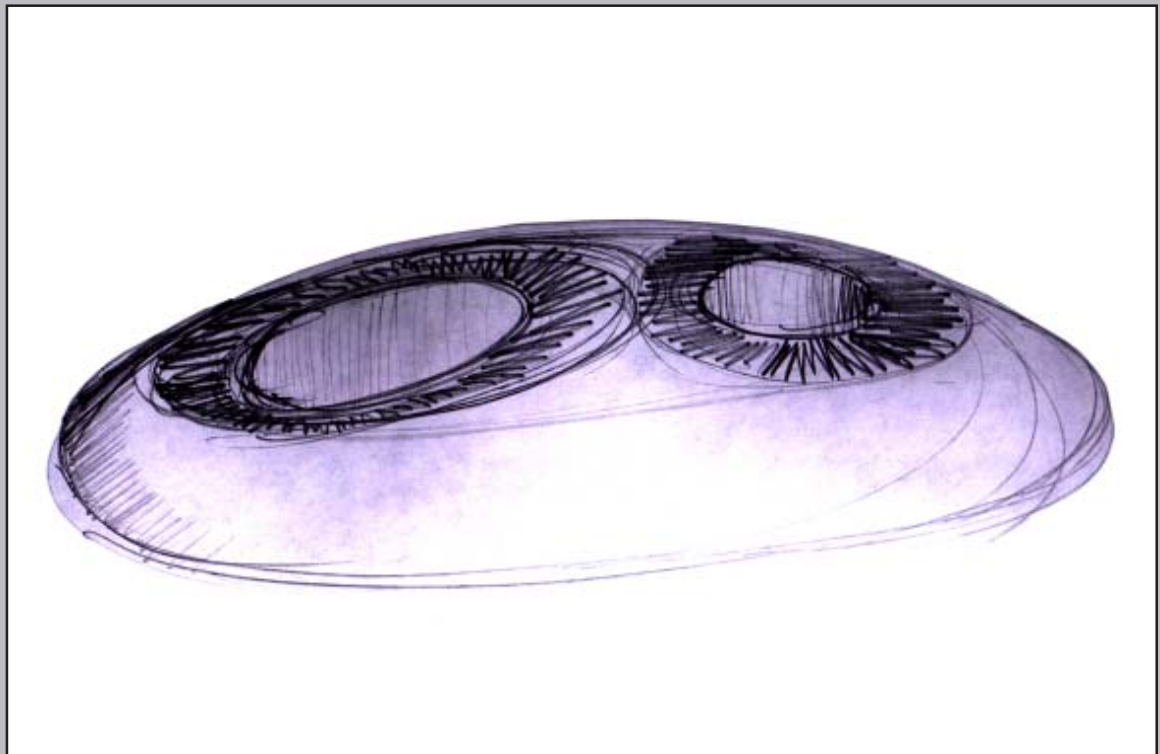
Taking inspiration from the way the costumes made with natural objects like palm leaves make interesting patterns in circles. Trying to use circles as the basic element and to come up with interesting forms.



Design just enough to respect woods liveliness and finally the wood shouts out its glory, the seductive calls of polished wood grains.



The borders in the initial idea were taken out and the dominance of the base materials grains was enhanced.

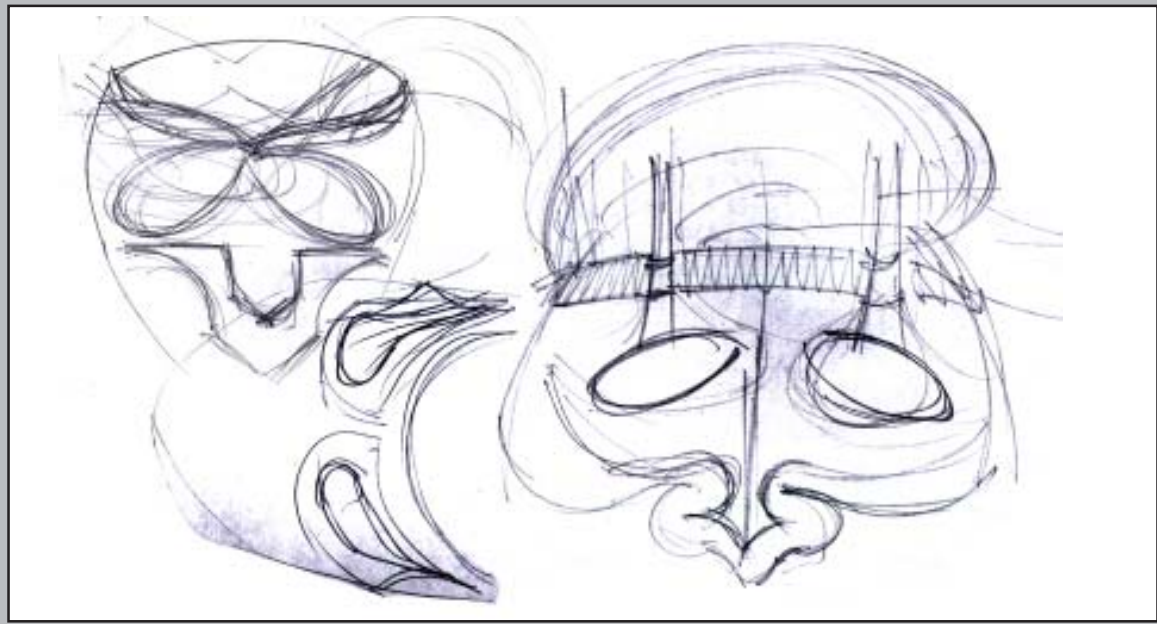


The basic form is turned in a wood turning lathe and then the bigger circles in it are milled out. Care has to be taken about finishing the edges. The final product is finished and lacquered.

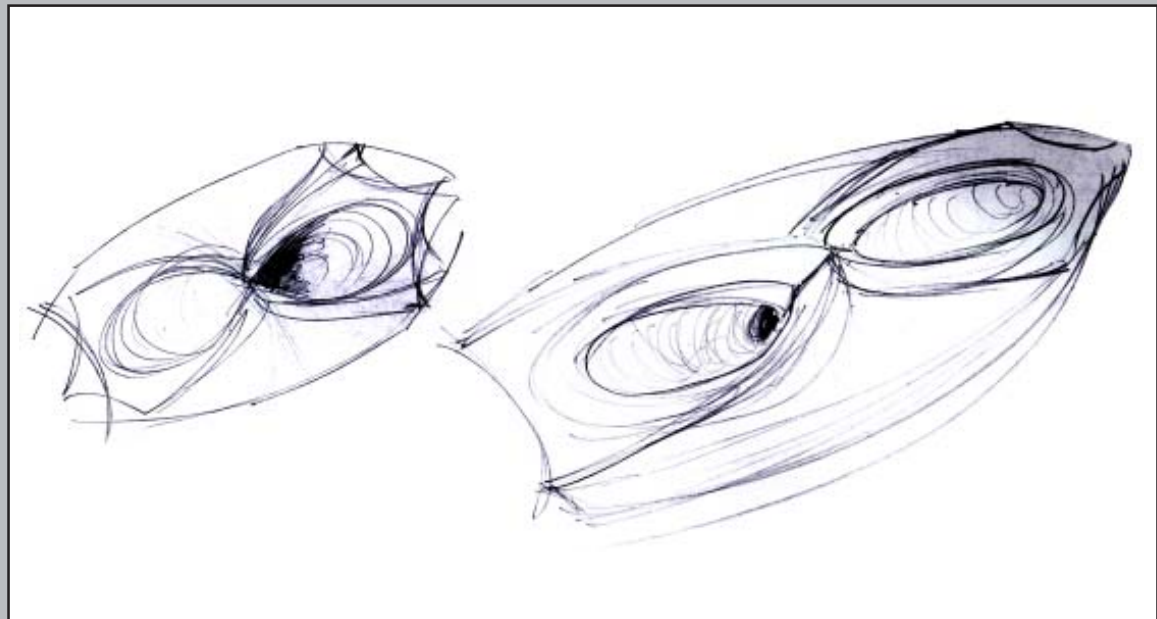


Concept 8

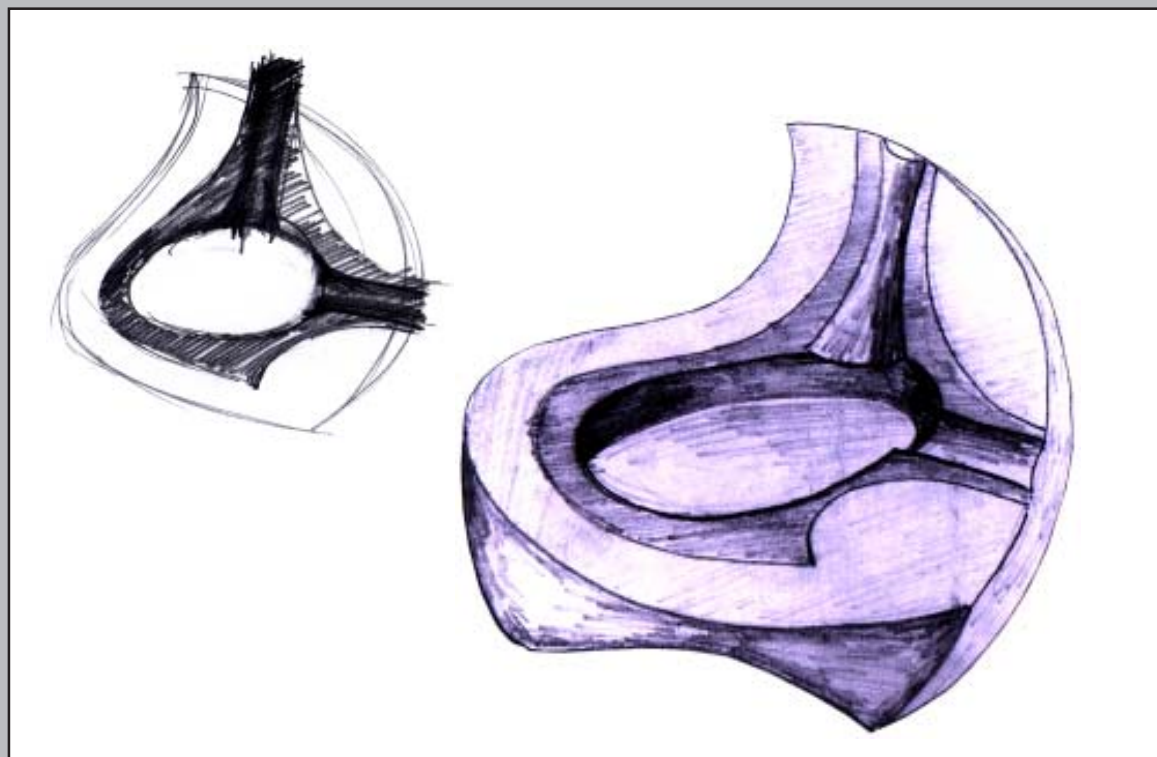
Take inspirations from the masks and facial makeup.



To use two contrasting wood in terms of its colour and working on three dimensions to get a coherent form for the base also.



The golden metal in the depression forms a curious part, it emerges but suddenly vanishes without coming out.

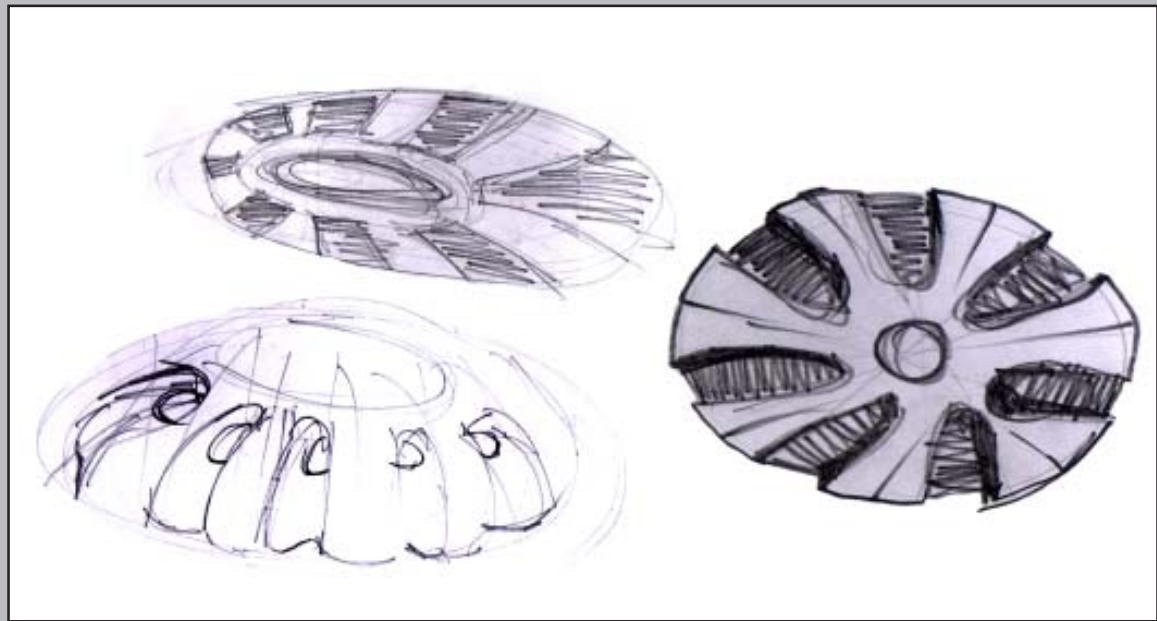


The joinery of wood-to-wood and wood to metal needs extremely high precision which is not possible. Therefore a groove is given at the meeting point for errors and filled with resin-based adhesive which forms an aesthetic element in the product. The product is finally hand finished and lacquered.

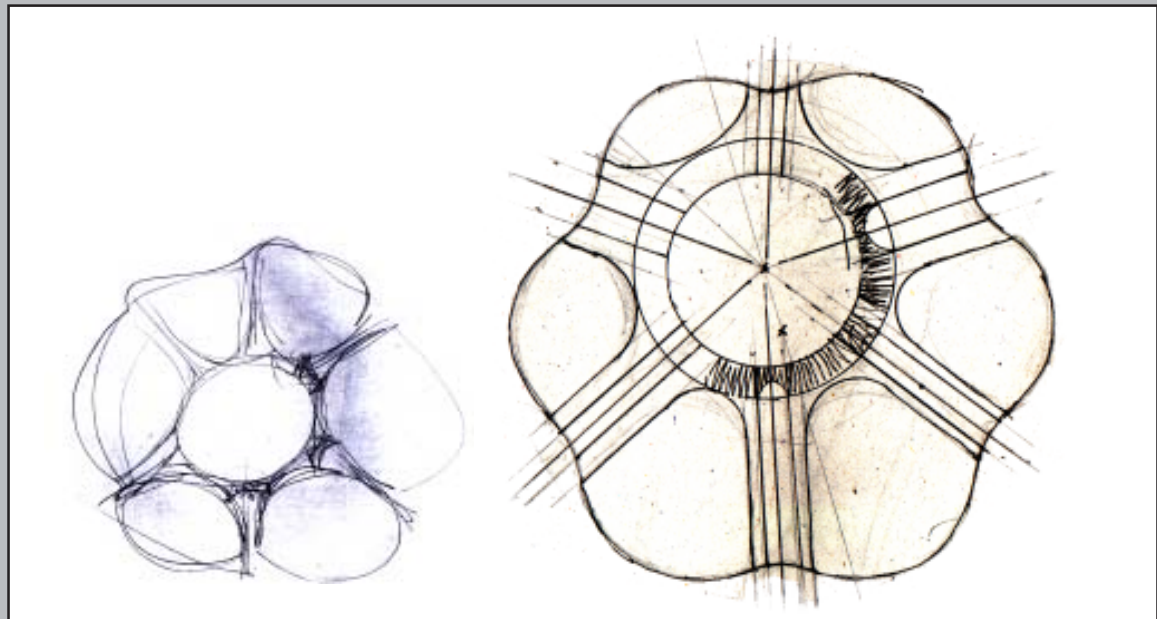


Concept 9

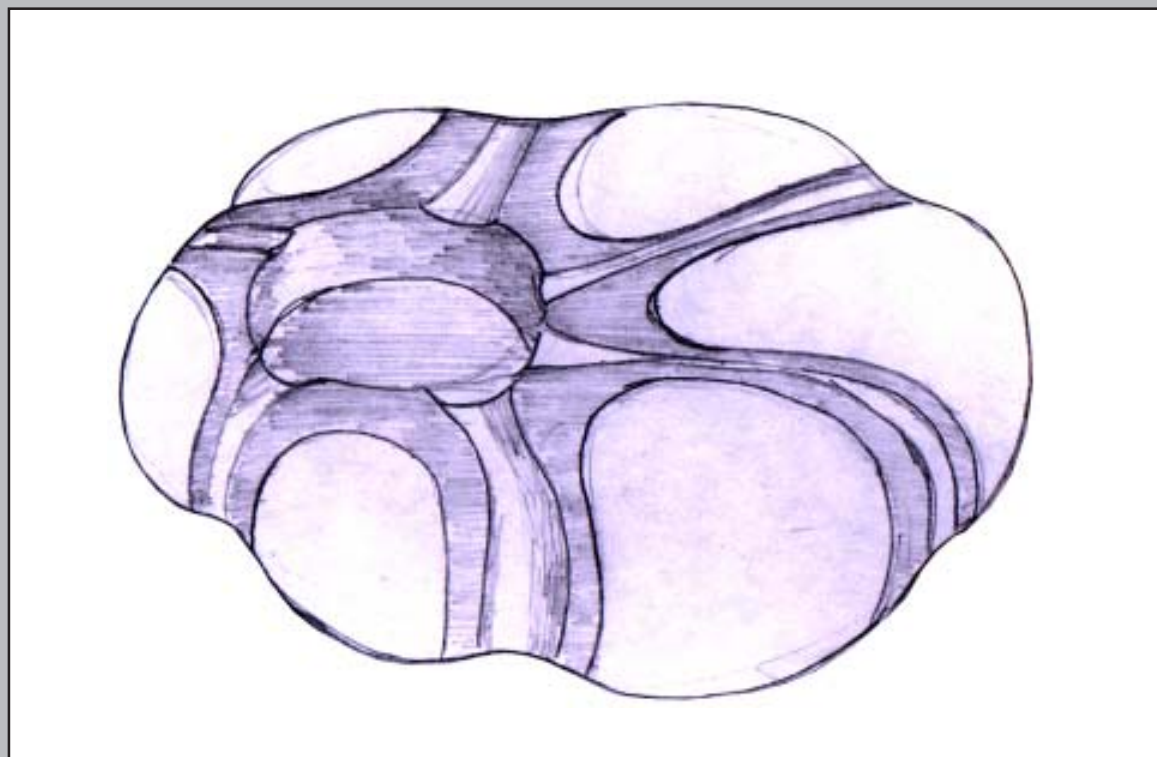
Driving inspiration from the idea that there is always something unseen or at the back of a thing.



Different faces of the product join to form a single thing. The smooth form is missed out unless it is held in hands because of the use of two distinctly coloured wood and finally each piece becomes a document of its own making and speaks through its own visual and tactile language.



The depression is made much more smoother to go with the overall form. The continuation of the curves to the bottom side of the product is also done in order not to leave out anywhere unnoticed.

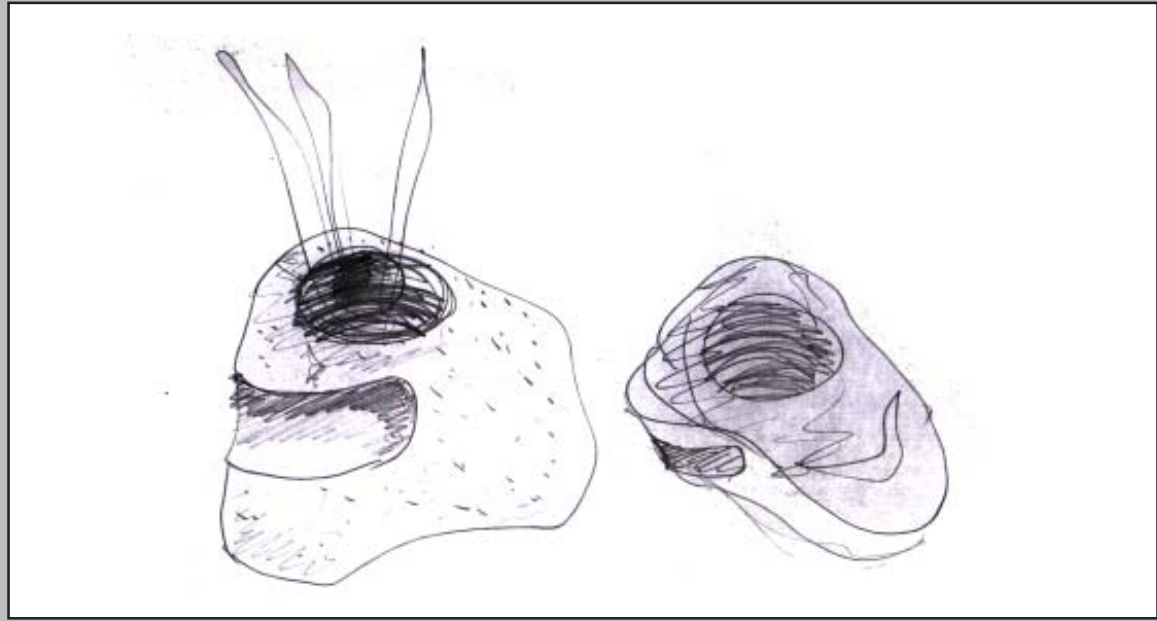


The basic form and the angle through which they fit are standardized. A gap of one mm is given at the joining edge of the two woods. The adhesive fills this gap and becomes a curious element. The final finishing of the form after joinery changes the shape of individual pieces and makes them look different from each other.



Concept 10

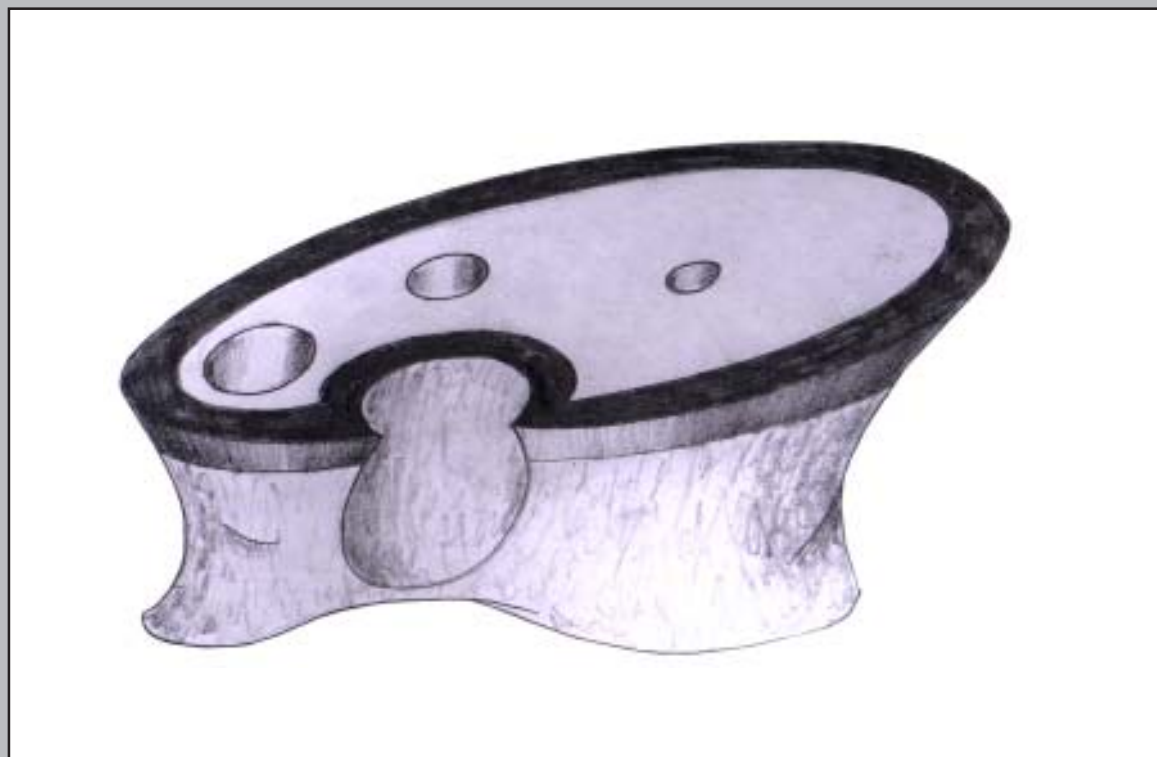
A rigid form emerging from a more fluid and undefined form.



The experimentation with newer material poses a constraint the bulk starts dominating over the voids.



The translation of a sketch to a three dimensional form reveals more about the feel of the product. This is one of the unsuccessful attempts made.

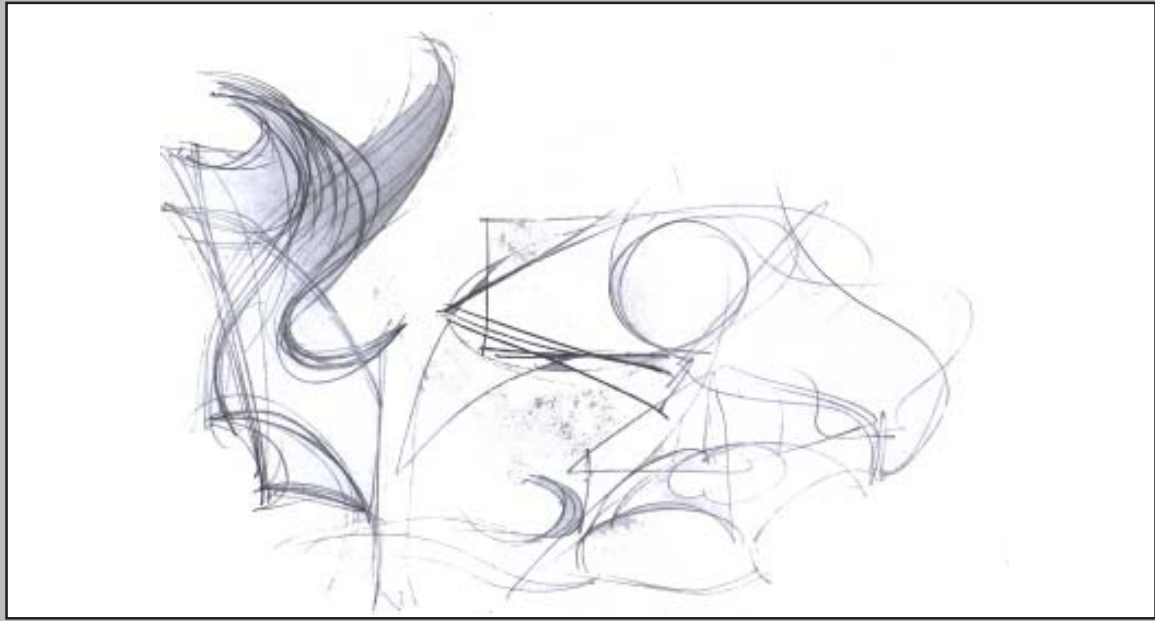


The domination of mass over void has to be negligible; otherwise the product starts overpowering the functional needs.

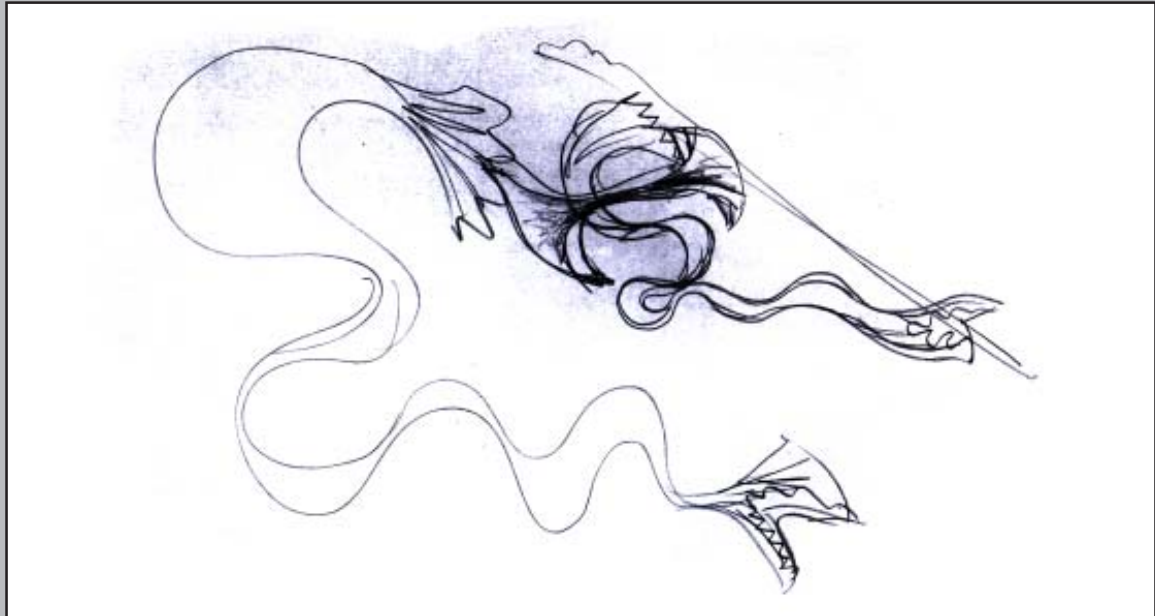


Concept 11

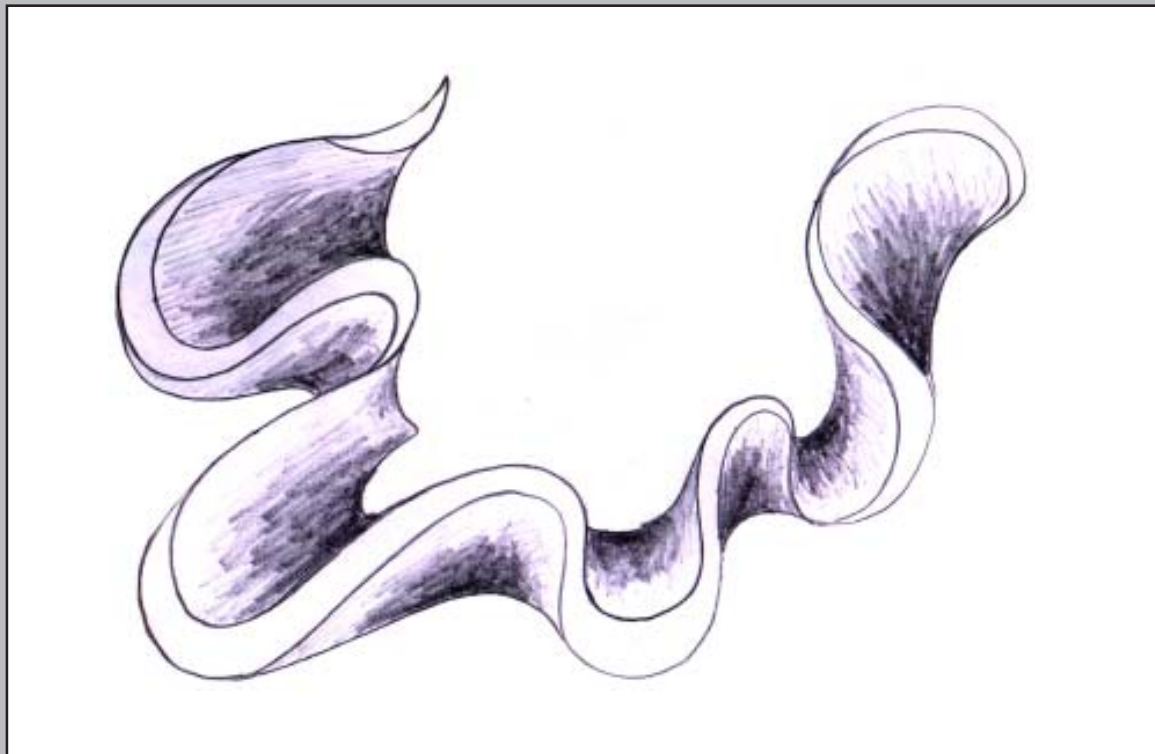
The rasa that animates the dance form has a flow but the vocabulary is rather crude or primitive.



The flow of the idea is depicted by the form of the penholder. It is enhanced by the golden brass line that flows throughout the edge. The exploration of surface patterns generates crudeness to the form.



Careful experimentation was made to balance the proportions of voids and mass. The idea of a ground is dismissed and the user is free to use it the way he wants.



The form is carved out of a single piece of wood. Surface finishes are carefully given to match the contour of the wood and its grains. The brass lining is finally fixed and the whole product is finished.



9.0 Postscript

Having done the design it is now time to define and discuss the production facilities, the infrastructure, the economic and business considerations that were envisaged throughout the project.

A firm that is already into the lifestyle product manufacture and distribution business is expected to carryout and coordinate the whole chain of events that is required in the production of such products and also use his existing distribution network to reach the outlets and finally the buyer.

The manufacture of lifestyle products being discussed in this project need to coordinate the large-scale production units for the production of majority of the parts, small-scale vendors for the production of components and for operations like bending of brass rods etc, craftsmen or a person with reasonably high sensitivity towards materials like wood who can do the finishing of standard components to give that touch of uniqueness to the product.

A metal working industry which has the manpower and machinery to produce products of high precision. The quality of mass produced part help in reflecting in the final product the overall quality of workmanship. In the case of a production unit facing problems due to lack of manufacturing facility in one field the system is expected to vendor parts from outside so as to meet the production needs that be required to come up with such a product.

People who have the sensitivity to understand and respect the growth of a tree, its grains and its exclusivity, is expected to handle wood where ever necessary. These may not necessarily be the traditional craftsmen who has immense talents when it comes to carving and sculpting wood.

The batch produced parts are joined or fitted together at a common place where it could be finished, packed and send send to various outlets.

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