

# What would it look like to design *in* and *for* friendship?

→ To design a space  
that facilitates and  
supports:  
- the creation and  
maintenance of  
friendship with one  
another and with one's  
self.

↘ To adopt  
(as architect,  
designer, planner)  
the position of  
'friend' with the  
communities, publics  
you design with and  
for.

## Follow up questions:

Designing **in** friendship:

- *What are the core values of friendship? How would one adopt and demonstrate these values, this alignment (to all peoples) as designer, architect, planner?*

Designing **for** friendship:

- *How can physical design facilitate, create the conditions for the making and maintaining of friendship?*  
 - *How can we (as supported by design decisions, or in spite of) use spaces to create and enact friendship with one another and with one's self?*

## Reading List, Part 1.

Designing **in** friendship:

[\*"Too Close to See: Notes on Friendship, A Conversation with Johan Frederik Hartle" \(2013\) by Celine Condorelli\*](#)

Designing **for** friendship:

[\*"Sitting outside: conviviality, self-care and the design of benches in urban public space." \(2018\) by Clare Rishbeth and Ben Rogaly\*](#)

## TOO CLOSE TO SEE: NOTES ON FRIENDSHIP, A CONVERSATION WITH JOHAN FREDERIK HARTLE

Céline Condorelli

The following text addresses the practice of friendship, as a specific entry in relation to the large question of how to live and work together towards change, as a way of acting in the world. **Being a friend entails a commitment, a decision, and encompasses the implied positioning** that any cultural activity requires. In the context of self-organisation, friendship is perhaps at its most evident in relation to a labour process, in *how we work together*.

I have been engaging with what I call *support*, which I consider essential to cultural production, for some time.<sup>(1)</sup> **Friendship is a fundamental aspect of personal support, a condition of doing things together** that deserves substantial attention, and is in many ways the missing chapter to my book *Support Structures*.<sup>(2)</sup> **Friendship, like support, is considered here as an essentially political relationship of allegiance and responsibility.** One of the best definitions of cultural production is perhaps that of 'making things public': **the process of connecting things, establishing relationships, which in many ways means befriending issues, people, contexts.** Friendship in this way is both a set-up for working and a dimension of production. In addition, working together can start from as well as create forms of solidarity and friendship, which are then to be pursued as both condition and intent, motivating actions taken and allowing work undertaken. The line of thought that threads through the following text therefore, **is that of friendship as a form of solidarity: friends in action.**

It seems appropriate to tackle friendship, itself a relationship, in the format of a dialogue, here taking place between philosopher Johan Frederik Hartle and myself. A chance encounter led us to develop an unexpected conversation on the subject over several months, mostly via email, which forms the basis of this text. While philosophy is the field in which friendship appears as a subject, it also holds the word friend (philia) in its very name, so the two are intimately and inextricably linked. The conversation, however, is articulated from our particular respective positions, that of an artist and that of a philosopher, between two practices that produce in different registers, even though they might sometimes share similar concerns. Our practices are usually differentiated between making and thinking, while making is also a form of thinking, and thinking is, undeniably, a way of making. These two positions produce

1. See the long-term project *Support Structure* with Gavin Wade, from 2003 to 2009, [www.supportstructure.org](http://www.supportstructure.org).

2. Céline Condorelli, *Support Structures*, Sternberg Press, 2009.

# Designing *in* friendship:

*“Too Close to See: Notes on Friendship, A Conversation with Johan Frederik Hartle”*  
(2013) by Celine Condorelli

What did we learn?

**TOP TIPS** to planners and designers wanting to adopt a position of ‘friend’ to the communities, the publics they design with and for → the people the space will be used by, the ‘users’

as part of a collaborative design process

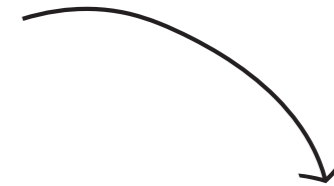
- **Friendship, As A Relational Positioning, May Be A Condition And/Or A Product Of Working Together:** it can be the relational position you adopt from the off and/or it can also be the intended result of working together *note:* think not only of the relations you establish between yourself and others but also the relations you enable between others through the collaborative design process you devise
- **To Work In Friendship Is A Form Of Solidarity: It Is ‘A Political Relationship Of Allegiance And Responsibility’:** it means you work in solidarity, that you align yourself with communities, publics, that you consider yourself responsible
- **To Work In Friendship Is A Form Of (Mutually Consensual) Cooperation**

*Remember: it is not only people you can be-friend --->>>*

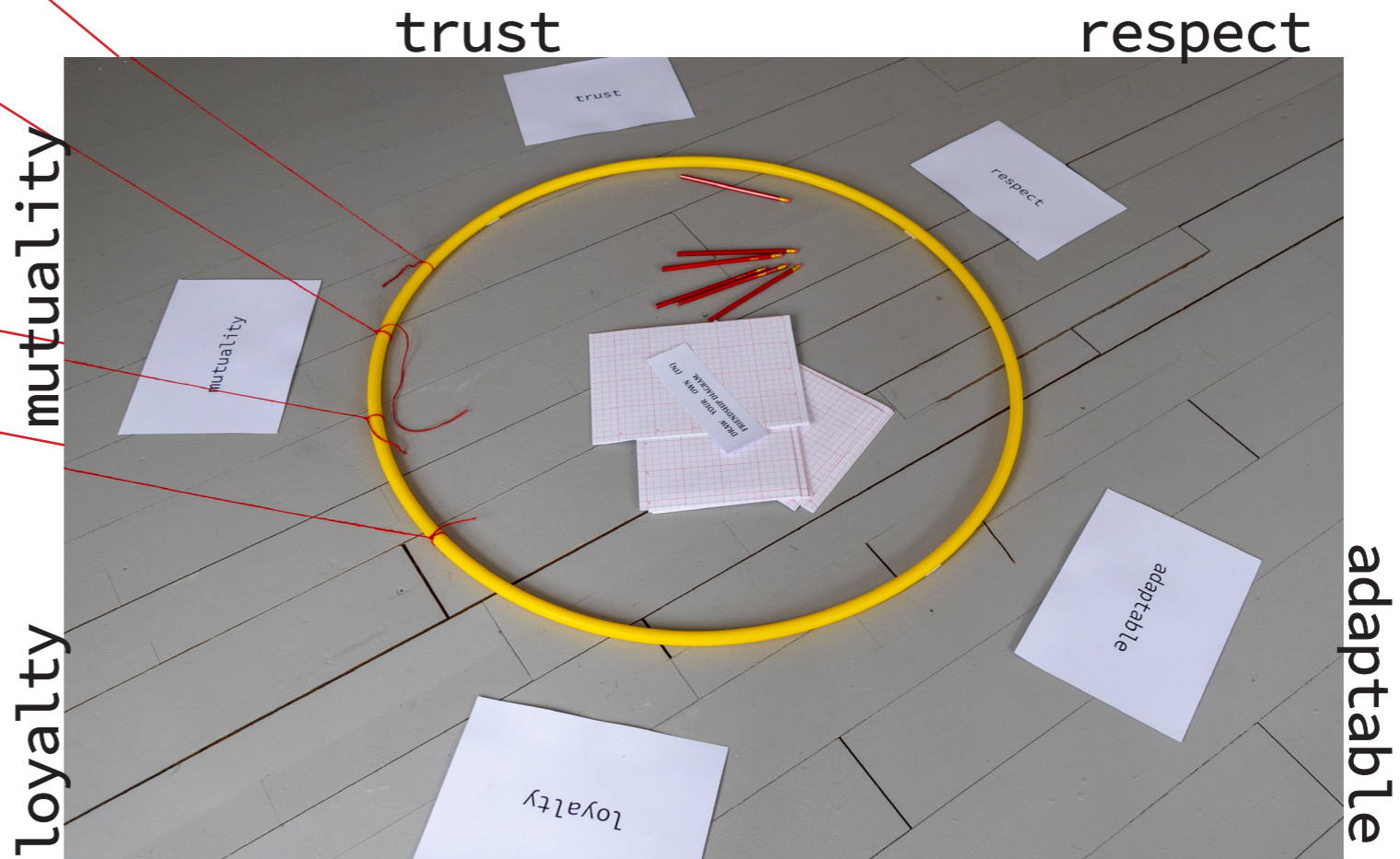
- **Be-Friend Issues And Contexts:** those that are pertinent to the people you design with and for, taking on these issues as your own, be it: anti-racism, homelessness, disability justice, the environment

// reflections:

recall your friendships. what are they? what do they look like? how do you consider your relationship to your friend? could you draw it?  
how do you come together as friends? how do you enact, how do you live your friendship?  
what ‘issues’, what ‘contexts’ are you friends with? where do you bring them? to your work?  
your personal life? how?

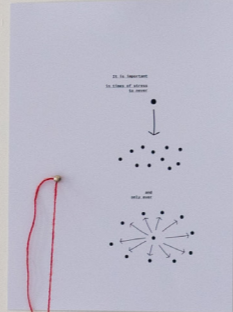
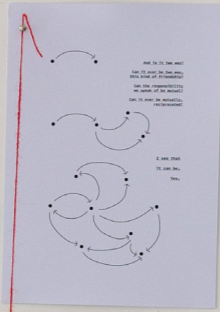
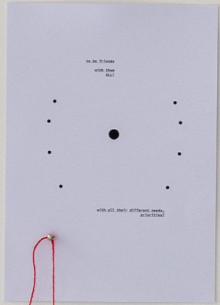
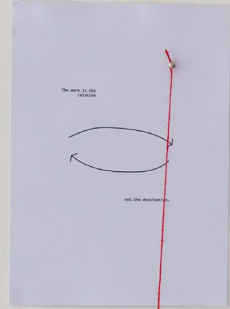


TELL ME WHAT IT IS.

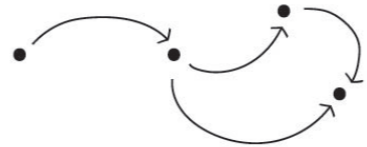




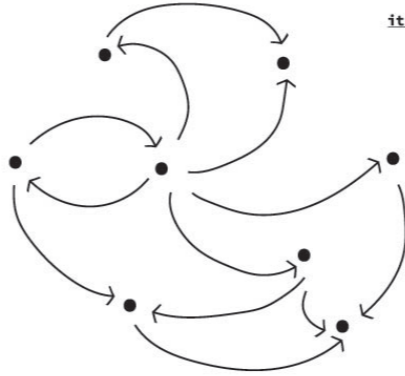
**DRAW YOUR OWN (IN)FRIENDSHIP  
DIAGRAM.**



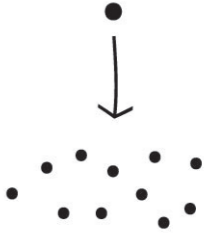
And is it two way?  
Can it ever be two way,  
this kind of friendship?  
Can the responsibility  
we speak of be mutual?  
Can it ever be mutually  
reciprocated?



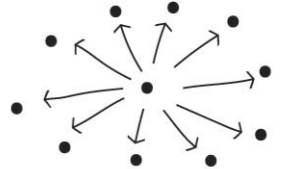
I see that  
it can be,  
Yes.



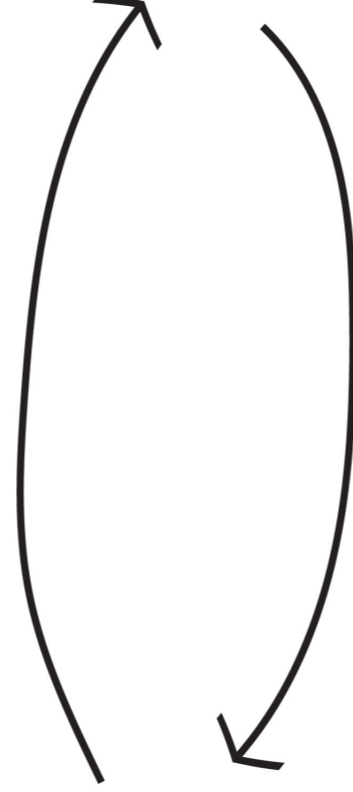
It is important  
in times of stress  
to never



and  
only ever



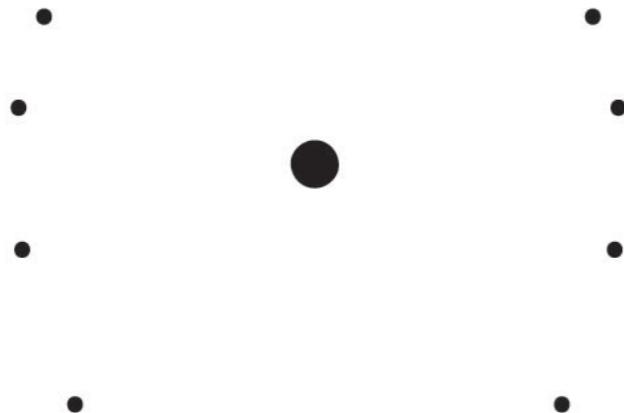
The work is the  
relation



not the destination.

to be friends

with them  
ALL?



with all their different needs,  
priorities?

#### Sitting outside

community' (2016, 3) is refined, sharpened here to a micro scale and the presence of people choosing to sit in relative proximity. Wilson (2016) argues that encounter fundamentally has the potential to surprise, disrupt and *make a difference* to people. By attending to the voices of bench-sitters, we have articulated this difference through narratives of care, humour, companionship, irritation, peacefulness and belonging. A bench here functions not as a still point, but a mundane nexus of un-panicked multiculturalism (Noble 2009).

A paper about benches cannot be purely about sitting still. The communal context defies this, always requiring a return not only to the interaction between individual bodies and 'everyone else', but also to the multiple temporalities and subjectivities of urban publics. Even as corporate developers seek high rent-payers to increase their profits in the longer term, for now, during the early years of redevelopment, Woolwich centre continues to be used by all, including people who are likely to be pushed out later by the pincer movement of gentrification, spiralling housing costs and benefit cuts (Peck *et al.* 2013; Watt and Minton 2016). **As such, our findings have implications for policy and public space practice (Bynon and Rishbeth 2016). Public space design that facilitates a mix of activities, comfortable for longer-stay users and accommodating a flow for those 'just pausing', can provide a broadly inclusive place within an urban locality. Choice of where to sit is important in supporting a personal agency, easing the mostly unspoken practicalities and challenges of proximity to unknown others. We suggest that lived negotiations of care and conviviality are not only shaped by these 'material affordances of the built environment' (Degen and Rose 2012, 3278) but importantly enable 'counter-memories that challenge normative narratives' (Wilson and Darling 2016, 6). Temporal imprints of these become part of the materiality of the square, noted by contrasting the 2015 film stills with the publicity images taken immediately after the redesigned square's completion in 2011: worn grass, the mark of a beer can and the scuff of a skateboard. The act of designing, the top-down architecture of care, is partial. The square is never seen in the purity of the proposed masterplan but re-encountered, re-evaluated, re-purposed on each day and on each visit, a co-production of place: designed, managed and inhabited.**

#### Acknowledgements

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#### Notes

- For example, the population of Woolwich's Riverside ward grew by 50 per cent between 2001 and 2011 (Bates 2017, 58).
- All participants' names are pseudonyms.
- 'Not a dicky-bird' is colloquial English and in this context means having no possessions.

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## Designing *for* friendship:

'at ease with difference'      friendship with yourself!

"Sitting outside: *conviviality*, *self-care* and the design of benches in urban public space."  
(2018) by Clare Rishbeth and Ben Rogaly

What did we learn?

**TOP TIPS** to planners and designer when creating a public space that **a)** supports the building of relations of friendship with others (*conviviality*) and **b)** with oneself (*self-care*)

- **Attractors That Bring People Together:** be it a big screen TV (passive) or ping pong table (active)
- **Broad Range Of Seating:** to allow people dictate their own social configurations and levels of proximity
- **Clear Site-lines:** with a view to other people or to a natural spectacle such as water (alone together)
- **Ease Of Movement Flow Through The Space:** to attract the 'going through' or 'just pausing' users
- **Think About How Bodies Will *Feel* Using This Space:** think textures, sounds, security, visibility

*Remember! It's equally about people adapt and take on the space after you leave --->>>*

**TOP TIPS** for users wanting to engage in **a)** the building of relations of friendship with others (*conviviality*) and **b)** with oneself (*self-care*)

- **Sit Around, Look And Listen:** to be 'alone together' (self-care) or to get to know your community (listening and observing as step one!)
- **Bring A Book, Magazine, Something To Do:** for self-care, for extending your home outward, for company
- **Bring Your Own Furniture:** be it comfy chairs or pillows to make your own safe haven in the public realm, or facilitate longer social exchanges through increased comfort
- **Bring A Dog With You:** people say hello to dogs by proxy dog owners. Don't have a dog? Borrow one!

// reflections

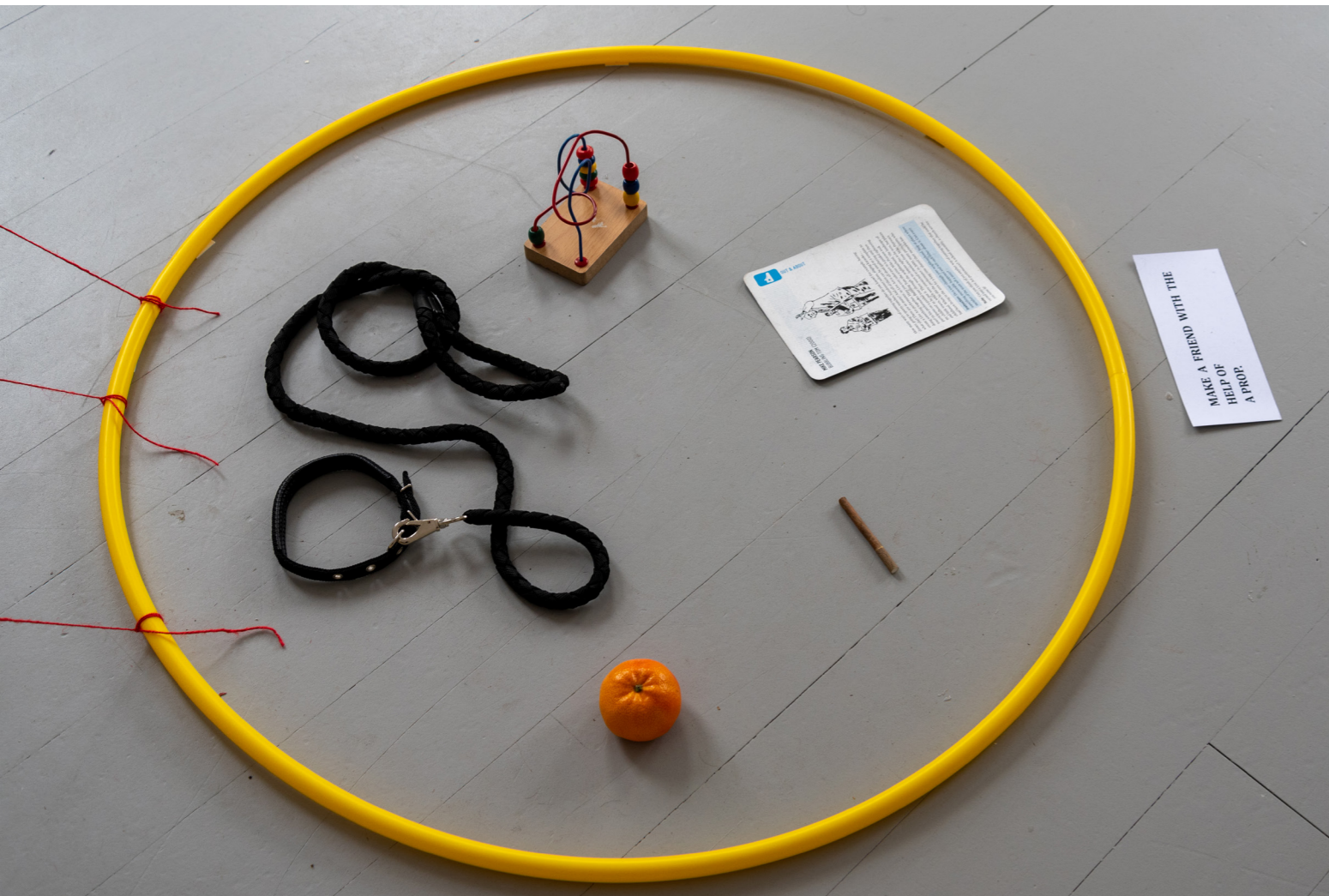
recall a public space in which where you enjoyed moments of friendship: with others (new and old), with yourself.

what was the space like? what did it include? what did it not include? what did the space feel like? how did you feel in the space? how did your body feel? how did your voice feel?

what did you bring to the space? what did you not bring to the space?







## MAKE A FRIENDS WITH THE HELP OF A PROP.

Own a dog.

Own a baby.

Ask for a cigarette.

Offer a slice of orange.

Play a game.

Ask a question  
(the time, directions, advice)

*I swing my arms in a circular motion, from the shoulder socket and I stare at the surface of water.*

*In haste I snort up a guzzle of lavender essential oil from the bottle in my pocket.*

*I watch.*

*I watch the way the trees move in the wind.*

*I rock forward and back, from the tip of my toes to the heels of my feet, swaying my arms in sync. I breathe.*

*I eat nice things slowly and breathe deeply.*

*I observe.*

*I sit on the floor and let the ground hold me and I remember we are part of something bigger.*

*I collect.*

*I listen to brown noise on my headphones and my head takes on and becomes the gravelly, comforting sound.*



# FOR FRIENDSHIP WITH ONESELF.

*I take the time to notice and acknowledge all the different shades of green in my vicinity. I sound out the word GREEN (in my head or out loud) to solidify the link.*

*I smile and say hello at people, looking them in the eye, maybe nodding or waving if it feels right.*

*I find a tree to hold, putting both hands, palm down, on its trunk and my head in between - ideally placing my cheek onto the trunk, on the bark. I feel 'negative' energy leave me in the form of squiggly white lines and I exhale.*

*I methodically sort through my things.*

*I draw.*

*I wrap myself in something warm and/or comforting from home.*

*I drink a cold beer and enjoy the escapism it brings.*

*I record.*



an attractor: to bring us together (in conversation, in action, as bodies, in silence)



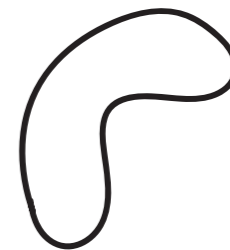
a sense of agency in the way we use the space



a sense of warm enclosure by nature



and also: a sense of openness for safety (seeing and being seen)



fluid objects where the usage is not inscribed in their form (sit, climb, lay, interact, ?)

## NOW WHAT ABOUT THE DESIGN(ER)?



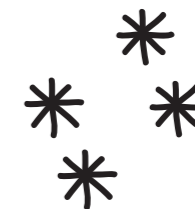
a level of comfort for our fleshy bodies (not too many hard lines)



trust in the maintenance and governance of the space



think multi-sensory: nice smells, sounds, tastes, textures +



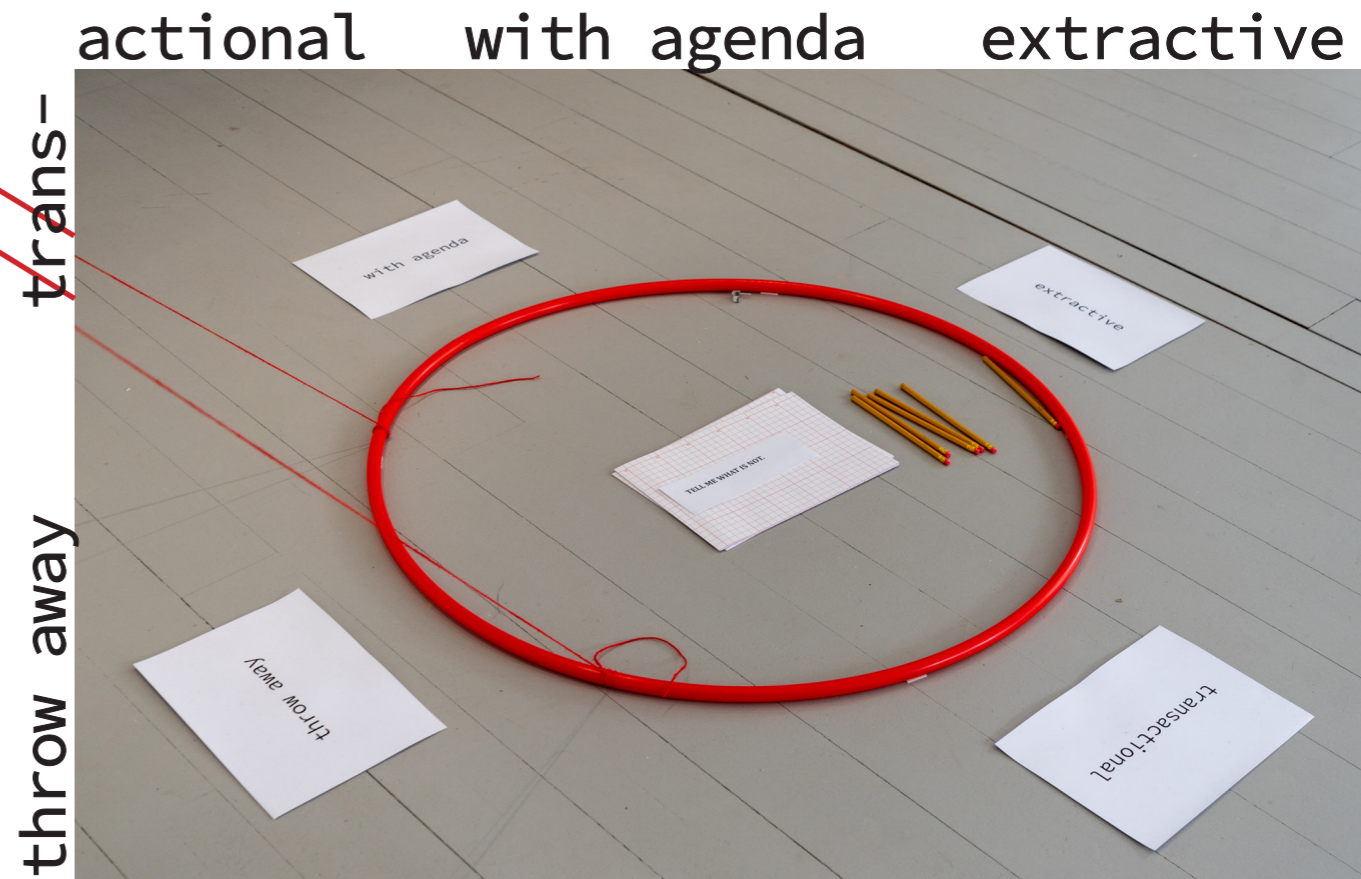
lighting for night time (for safety and mood)



TELL ME WHAT IT IS NOT.



I  
am  
waiting.

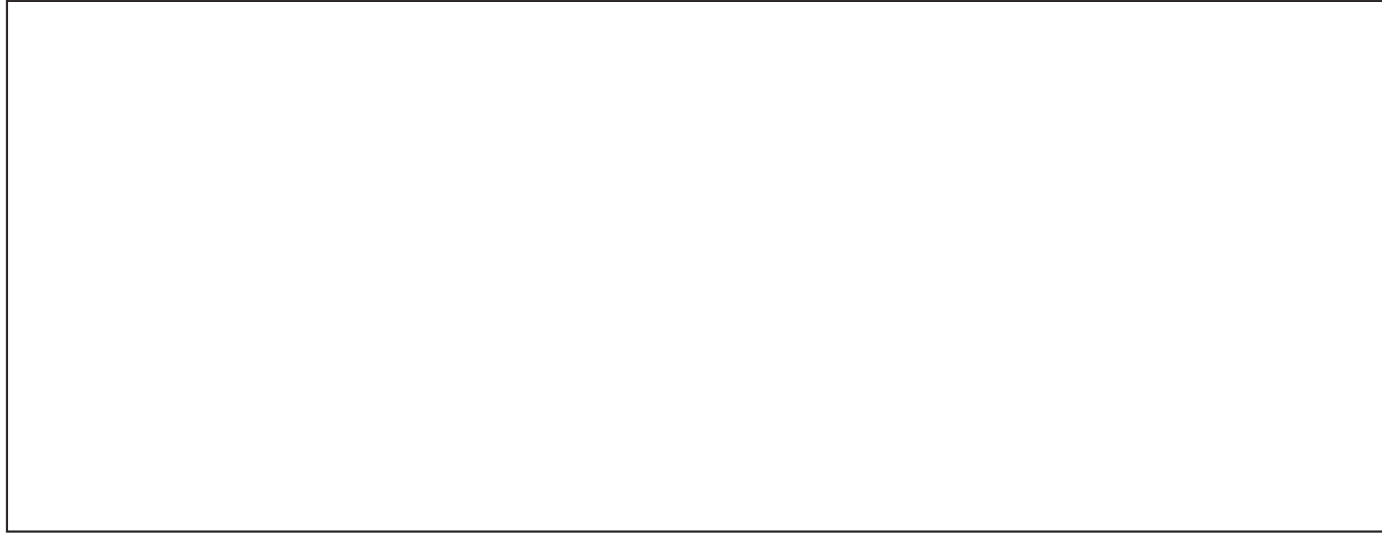




*TELL ME WHAT IT IS.*



*what would your diagram look like? try.*



NOW WHAT ABOUT YOU???

*how do you make friends? what props do you use?*



*how do you enact your own self care in the public realm?*



*TELL ME WHAT IT IS NOT.*



**visual research project**  
**'designing in and for friendship'**  
**katy hawkins.**