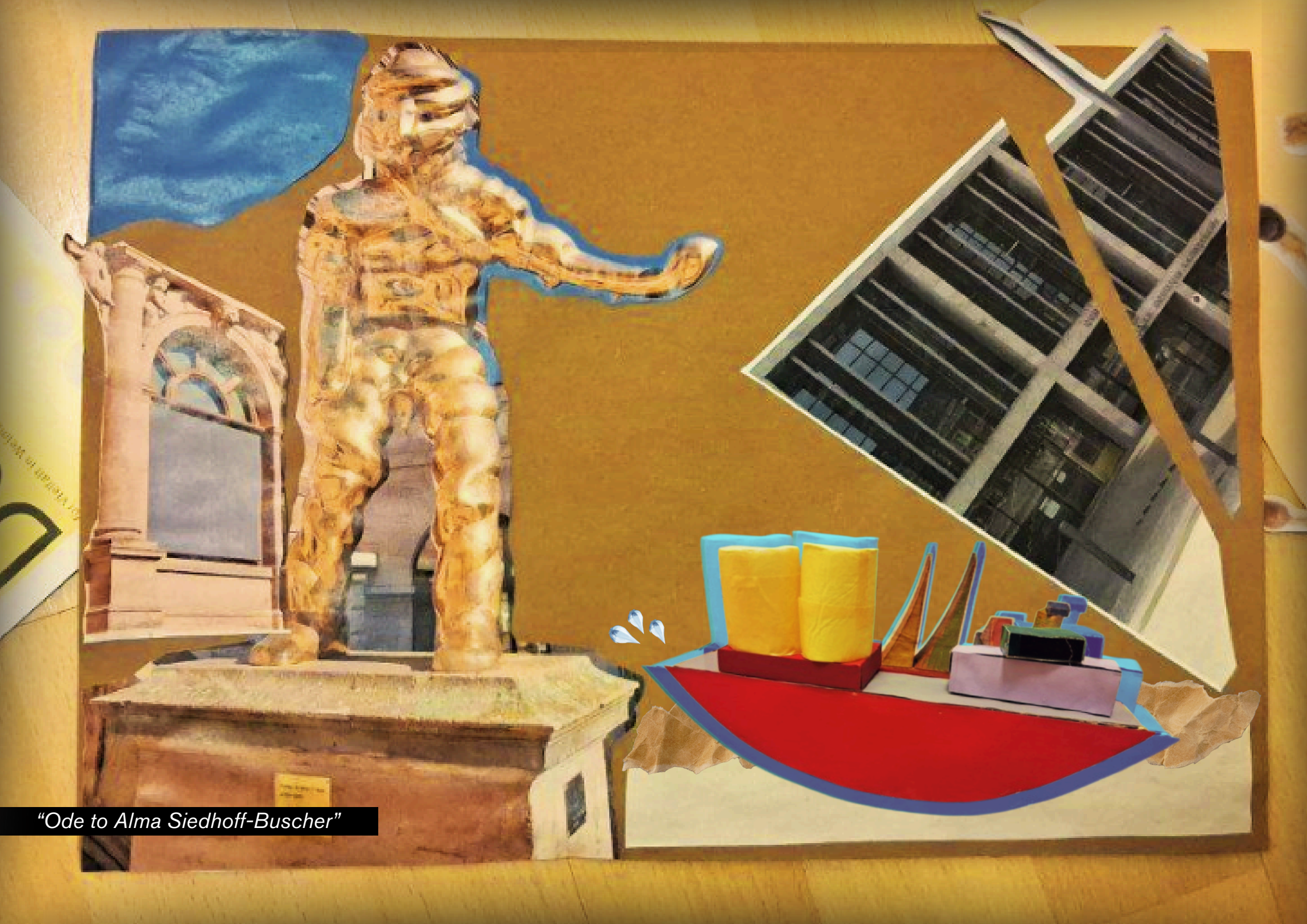


“Ode to Alma Siedhoff-Buscher”

Portfolio Overview

An Ode to Alma Siedhoff-Buscher

Exercise 1 Introduction, Historical Personality - Alma

Exercise 2 Exploring Locations for AR Monuments

Exercise 3 Selected Location for AR Monument

Exercise 4 AR Model - An Ode to Alma Siedhoff-Buscher

Reflections and Takeaways

Future Aspirations

Introduction, Historical Personality



Alma Siedhoff-Buscher (1899 - 1944)

Alma was a visionary German designer and craftswoman at the Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau. She is the historical personality that I chose to dedicate my AR project on, to bring much attention to her contribution to the Bauhaus collective thought.

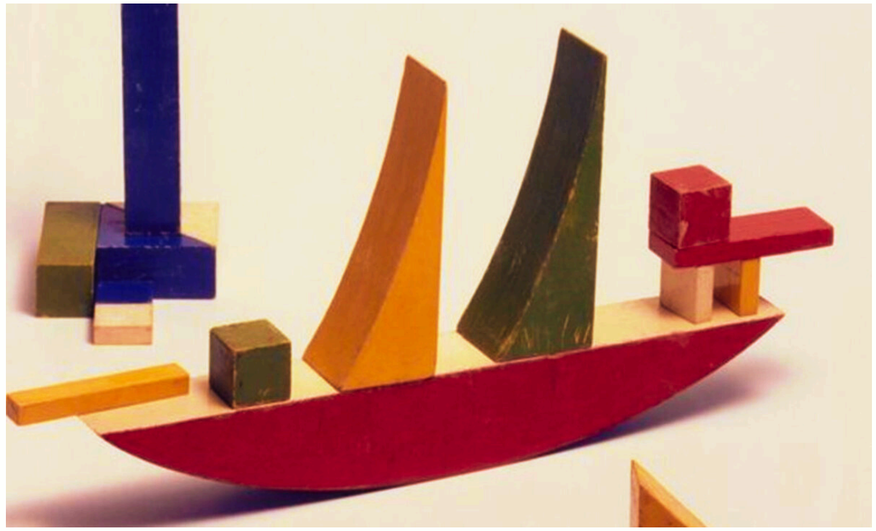
In this work module, we were asked to combine the history of science with media studies and media informatics as well as artistic research and different public spheres. We talked about media and their influence on everyday life and society, about democracy and diversity. To help us understand what kind of monuments we could create in this course, we visited the station of the AR sculpture trail created in the summer semester of 2024 in the framework of the project FREE_IT.

Source: Susanne Radelhof: Bauhausfrauen. Documentary of the Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk 2019; online, accessed on 13 February 2019.

Recreating Alma's Ship toy during Exercise 3



Throwing dolls in the Bauhaus Museum



Alma’s Original Shipbuilding game



Shipbuilding game from 1923, exhibited in Tokyo in 2016

In continuation of the project FREE_IT in the summer semester of 2024, in this course, participants needed to create monuments for personalities that differ both in form and content from what is shown in the squares in Weimar. The goal is to honor people who are not presented to Weimar's public, but whom we think are worthy of being remembered. I chose Alma Buscher, a successful toy designer, a student from Bauhaus school of thought who unfortunately is often underappreciated for her contributions to design of artefacts for playful action.

Project at a Glance

This AR project celebrates the Bauhaus artist Alma Siedhoff-Buscher and her revolutionary contributions to children's toy design, especially her iconic Shipbuilding Game. Set around an old, unused fountain near the Bauhaus Museum in Weimar, the AR experience reimagines a world of childhood creativity inspired by Alma's toys. In the AR scene, faintly rippling water fills the fountain, and a model of the Shipbuilding Game drifts across it, evoking the limitless imagination her toys encouraged. The blocks can be seen in two transformed states one as a classic ship and another as a towering humanoid figure. The ship slowly rotates in a circle inside the water body as children's playful sounds fill the air, giving life to the ambiance of Weimar in Alma's time. The humanoid figure's blocks are all equippable. This interactive experience not only revives Alma's legacy but also brings forward her philosophy of playful, meaningful engagement—an ethos as relevant today as it was in her Bauhaus days.

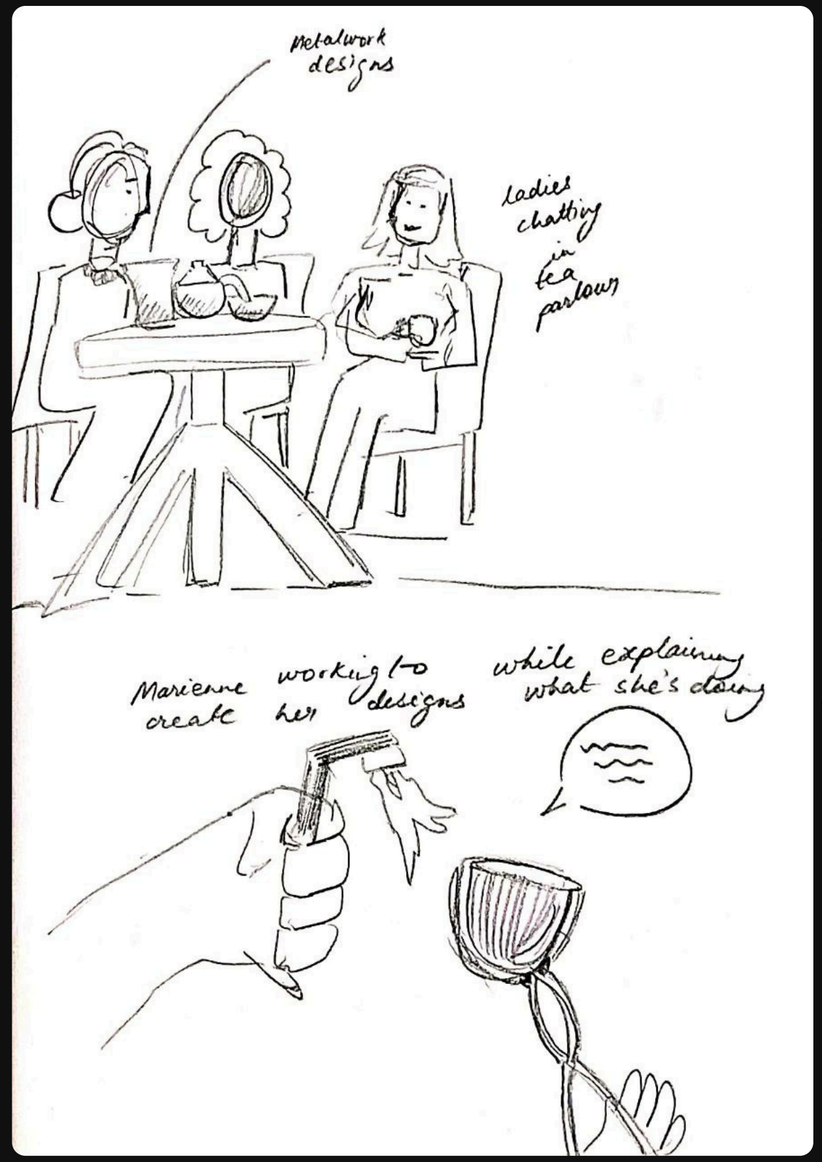
Understanding Alma Siedhoff-Buscher: Legacy and Influence

Alma Siedhoff-Buscher was a remarkable figure within the Bauhaus school, embodying the forward-thinking spirit that redefined design in the early 20th century. She is best known for her innovative approach to children's toys, blending functionality, play, and creative freedom. In an era when the psychological and educational benefits of play were only beginning to be understood, Alma's toys were revolutionary. She applied emerging theories of colour and form to her designs, recognizing that children responded intuitively to bold colors and simple, engaging shapes—a concept informed by her Bauhaus studies.

Her Shipbuilding Game is among her most iconic works, currently displayed in Japan as a testament to her international legacy. Made from brightly colored wooden blocks, the toy allowed children to create their own shapes, from ships to abstract forms, fostering imagination and decision-making skills. Alma's toys were not just simple playthings; they were carefully designed to enhance the sensory and cognitive experiences of young children. Her throw dolls, for example, utilized textured fabrics that engaged the senses, encouraging babies to grip and explore the toys, an early application of prehensile design to aid in child development.

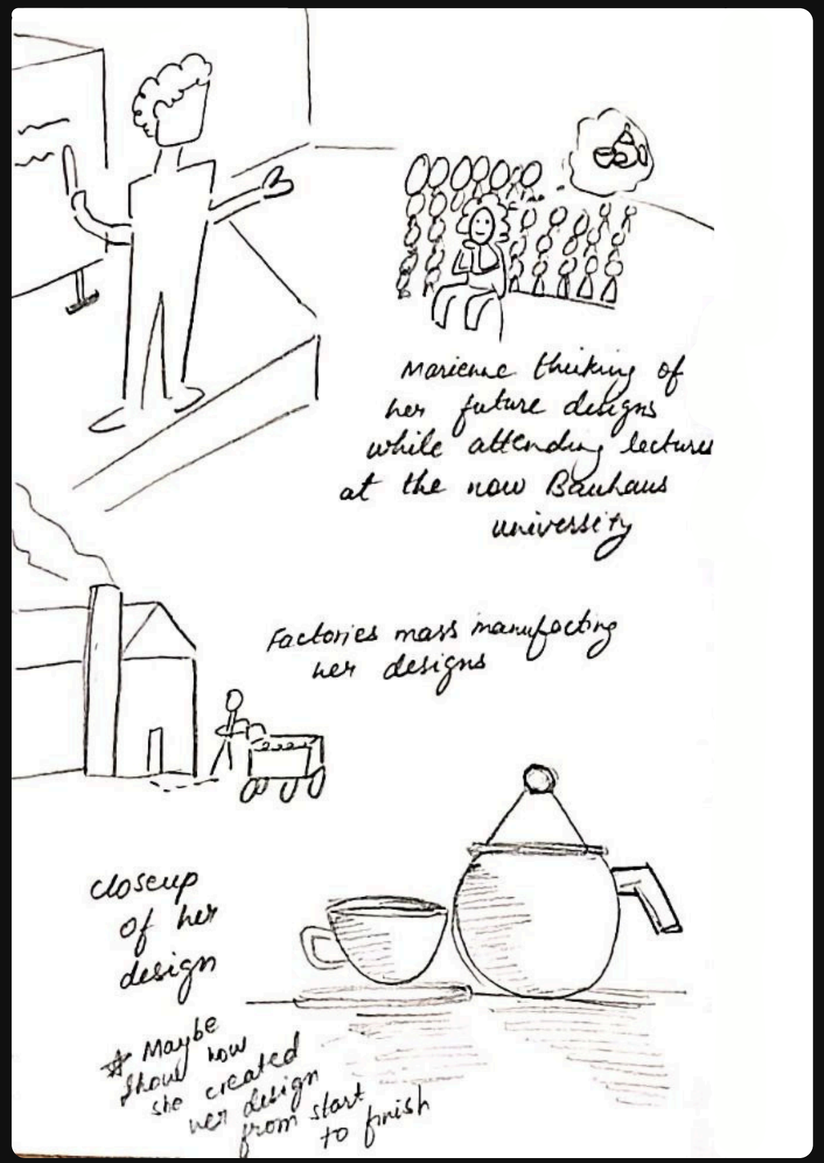
Alma's role at Bauhaus also holds historical importance. At a time when the role of women in design was limited, she asserted her creative agency within Bauhaus's male-dominated circles. Her work blurred the lines between "high" and "low" design, challenging perceptions about the value of toys and furniture for children. Alma's focus on the everyday needs of families—creating designs accessible, educational, and beautiful—demonstrated her commitment to democratizing good design, aligning with Bauhaus's broader mission of integrating art into daily life. In this way, Alma Siedhoff-Buscher's work remains an inspiring part of Bauhaus's legacy, celebrating the blend of creativity, practicality, and accessibility.

Every Sketch I Mad



At first I had chosen a different personality

I drew what I thought Marianne Brandt's designs would have been interacted with



More doodles inspired with Marianne Brandt's designs

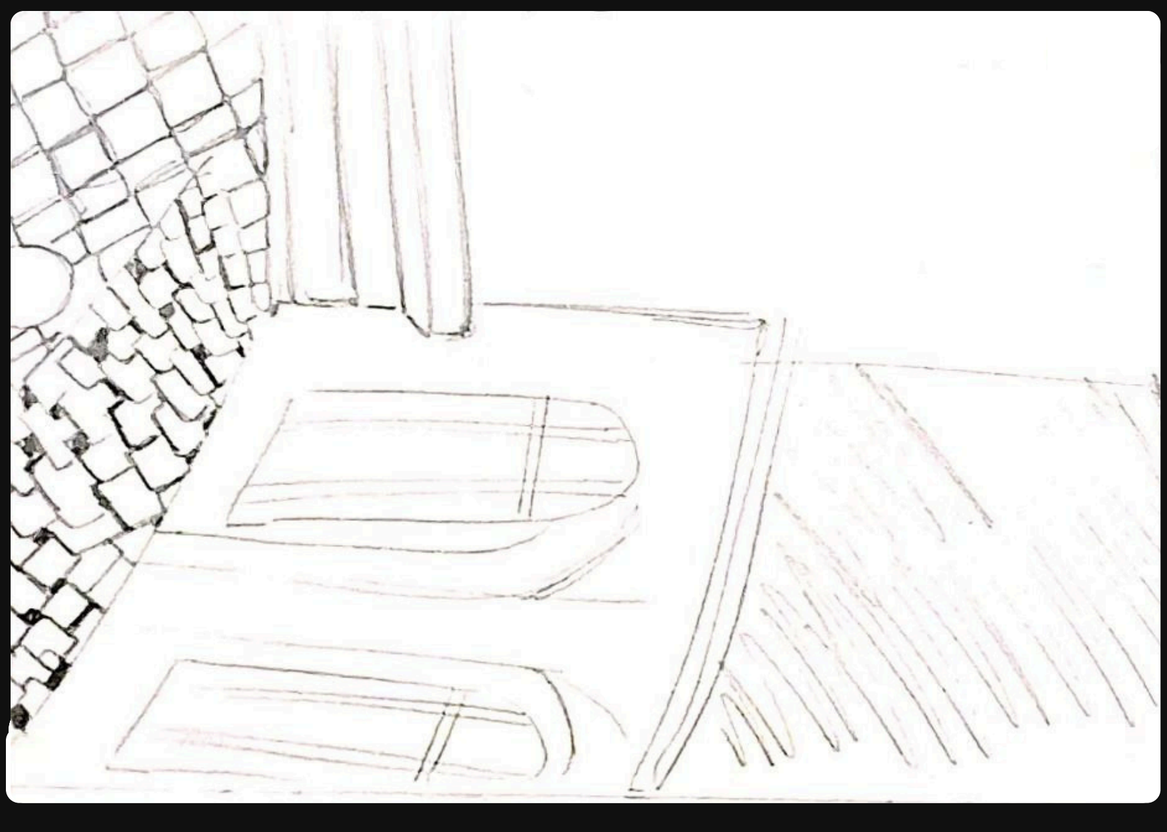
During First Exerci

Every Sketch I Mad



that I selected for my AR monument structure. This is the Weimar Neues Museum

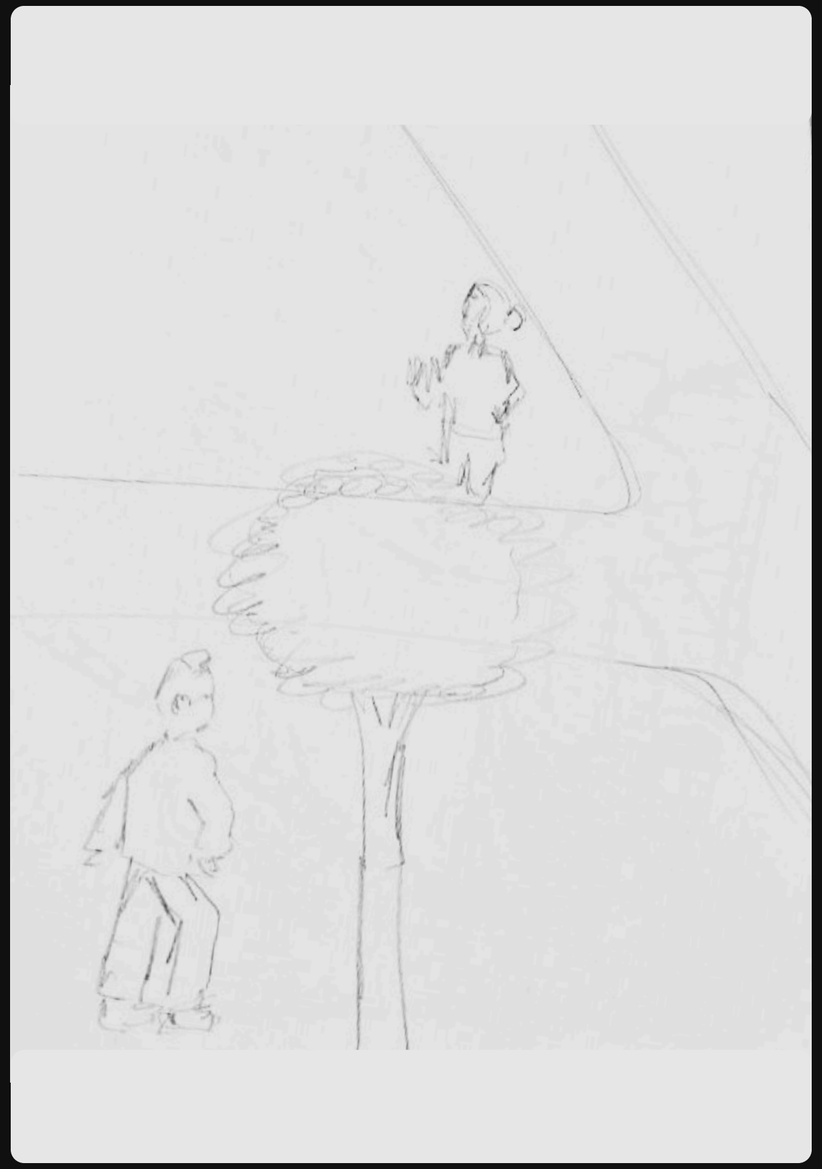
The second location is what ended up as the location



This pavement was beside the Neues Museum

During First Exercis

Every Sketch I Mad



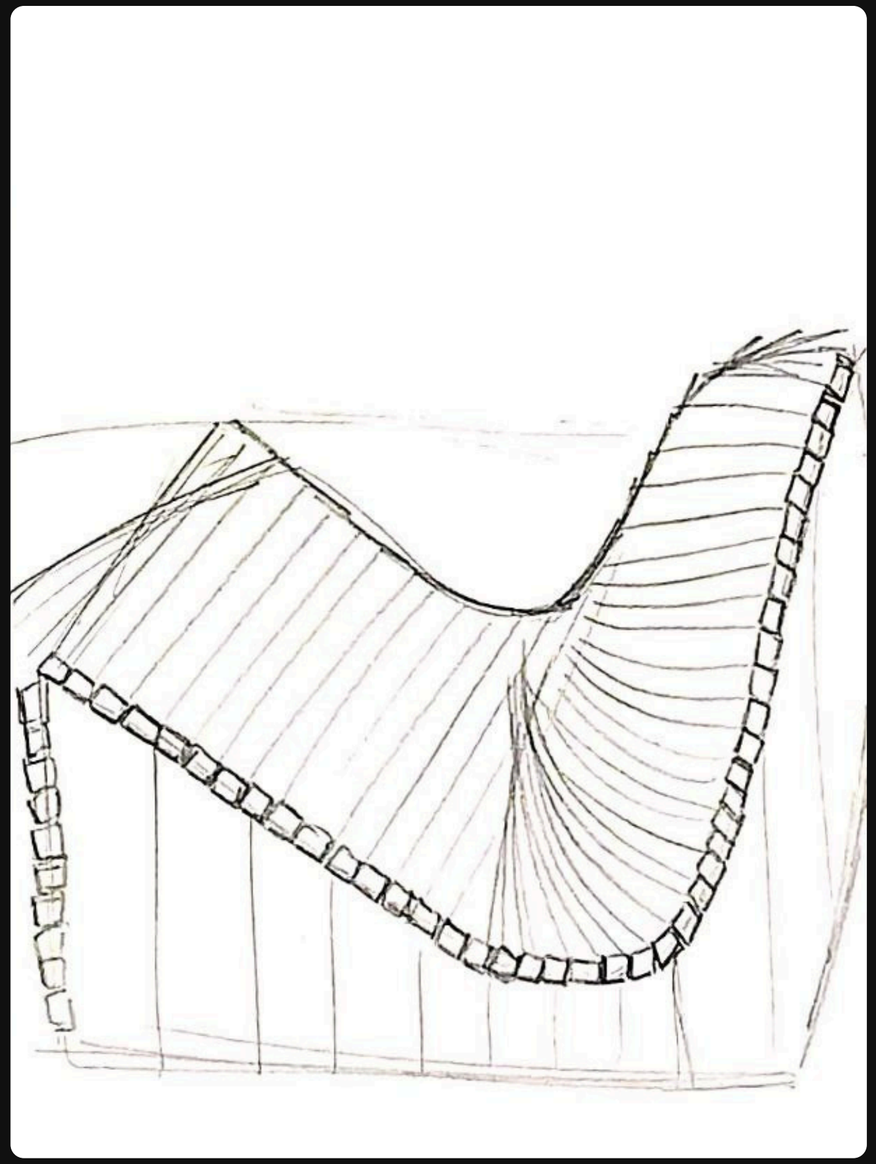
I tried sketching the people who were walking around



Some seemed to be travelling far, others nearby

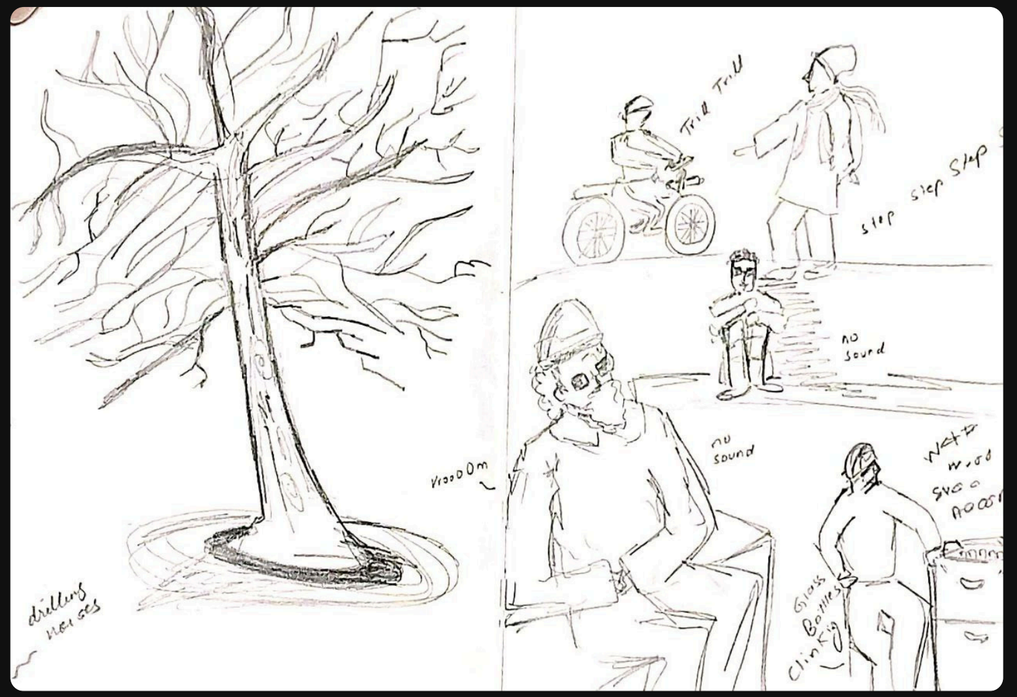
During First Exerci

Every Sketch I Mad



The third location was the older Weimar Museum

During First Exerci



I drew an old tree, interesting people who sitting still and also what kind of sounds they made

Every Sketch I Mad

During First Exerci

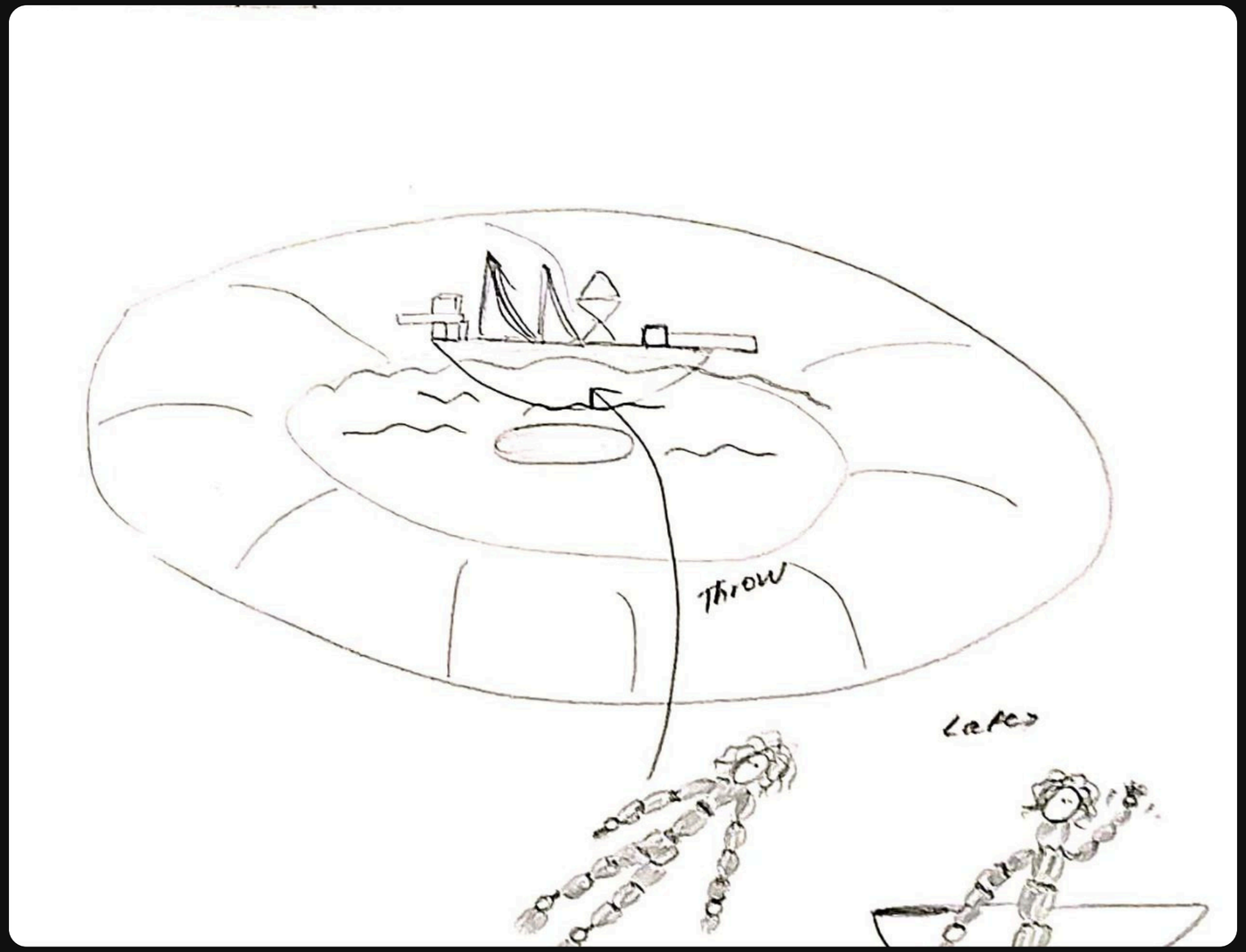
The fourth location was the next to the Goetheplatz bus stop, the busiest place we visited that day

I wanted to draw the environment isolating it from the business that it was immersed in. The pavement, nearby pop-up store, tall trees and benches are what caught my attention.

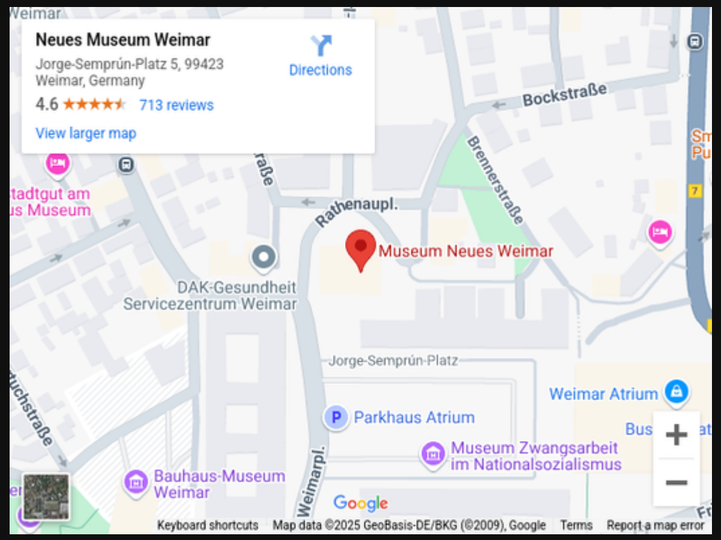
Why Museum Neues Weimar?

The location of this AR project is a quiet, out-of-use fountain situated outside the Bauhaus Museum in Weimar. Once a lively structure, it now stands dormant, an ideal space for a modern revival that echoes Weimar's vibrant past. During Alma Siedhoff-Buscher's time at the Bauhaus, such public places were hubs of interaction, where students, artists, and families came together. Although there are few direct records of her seeking inspiration here, it's not hard to imagine that she might have observed the playfulness of children at places like this and envisioned toys that could bring out the same joy, exploration, and creativity.

Weimar is deeply connected to the Bauhaus movement, where artists like Alma challenged conventions and embraced democratic ideals in design. Unlike the grand monuments of more famous historical figures, this location symbolizes the inclusive, accessible nature of Alma's contributions. I admire the idea of resurrecting an old place with the same ideals in a different form using the help of modern media technology like AR. Her toys were crafted with the intent of providing simple, meaningful play for all children, reflecting a commitment to democratizing creativity, not unlike the goals of the AR experience you're creating. This fountain, currently devoid of activity, becomes an ideal site for honoring Alma's legacy. Here, a new generation can be introduced to her playful, modernist vision—a vision deeply intertwined with Weimar's history of fostering groundbreaking art and design. By projecting Alma's world onto this unassuming location, the AR project transforms it into a lively canvas, where the fountain's stillness makes way for a virtual world alive with colour, motion, and the echoes of playful laughter.



A initial sketch detailing what my AR Monument project idea would look like, later I discluded the throwing dolls into the monument as that would not have been possible with Styly (the AR tool we were using)







Map address of the museum, location for the AR Monument, out-of-use fountain situated outside the Bauhaus Museum in Weimar (left-to-right anticlockwise direction)

I created collages and crafted a miniature replication of my AR project idea

Comprehensive Exploration and Visualization

Simple tools like paper collages were discussed in our next workshop during this work module in order to realise our own augmented reality ideas. Using collages we had to express what we envisioned our AR monument to feel like, we were going to use this tool to find the colors and effects that made more sense to us.



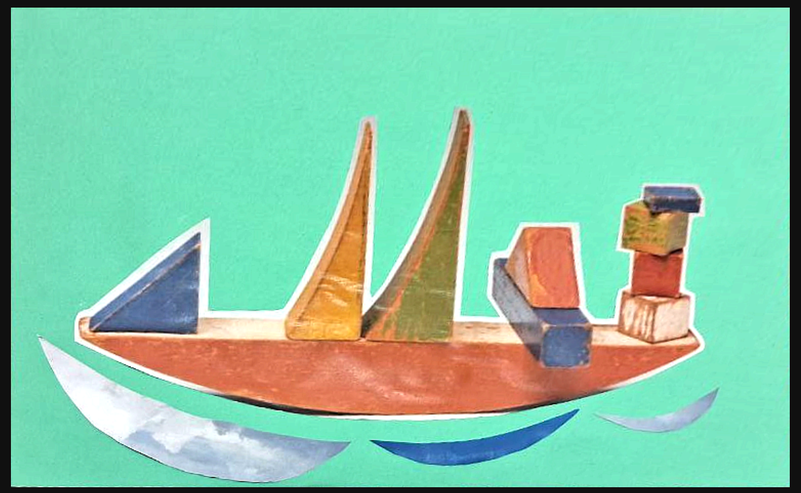


Collages That Tell a Story



"NATURAL TONES" (SANDY BEIGE BACKGROUND)

This collage features a neutral, earthy tone for the background, which is simple and grounding, much like the functional aspect that Alma Siedhoff-Buscher applied to her design. Muted-toned geometrical shapes evoke a minimalist Bauhaus feel as an investigation of harmony in structure. At the time of constructing this collage, I mainly reflected on how Alma's designs could move beyond simple toys into versatile, timeless artifacts.



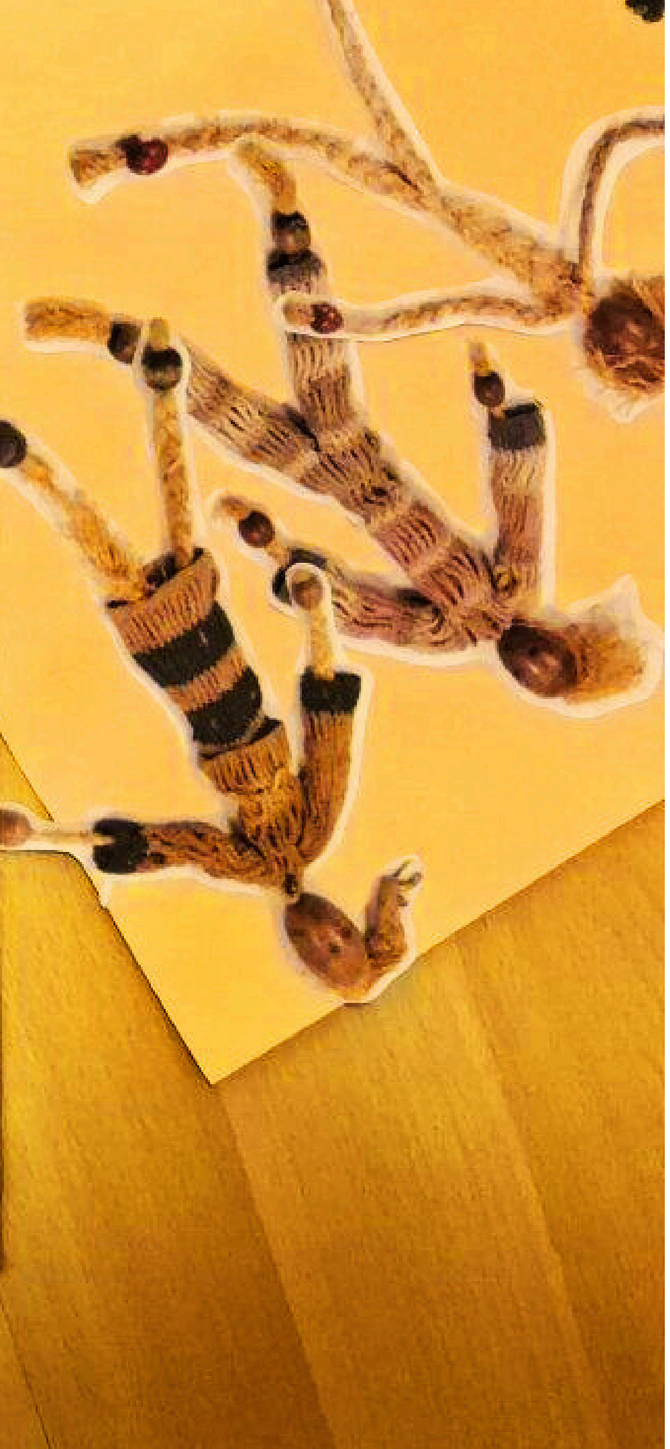
"BRIGHT AND BOLD" (AZURE BLUE BACKGROUND)

The bright blue background is bold, innovative, and imaginative, reflecting the freedom of creation that Alma encouraged with her toys. The bright geometric and organic forms that dominate this composition symbolize the explosion of ideas, the fluid possibilities of play. While working on this collage, I envisioned the boundless potential of her designs to spark joy and creativity in children. This collage probably gave way to interactivity within my AR project, like the playful motion of the ship across the water and the dynamic transformations of the blocks.



"IN MOTION" (GOLDENROD YELLOW BACKGROUND)

The yellow background fills with energy, optimism, and warmth-things central to the philosophy of Alma in catalyzing young minds. This collage brings structured and chaotic forms together, suggesting order and freeform exploration, side by side. I imagined how kids would interact with her throw dolls and that somewhat inspired the motion aspect in my AR project.

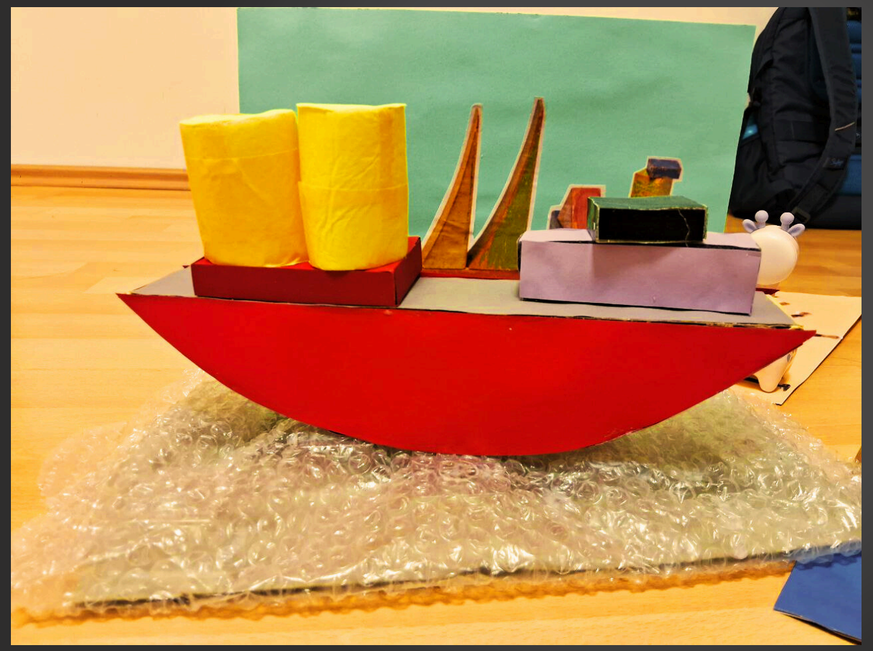


Augmented Reality Meets Alma: My Vision and Approach

How I conceptualized “An Ode to Alma Siedhoff-Buscher”

This AR project is designed to celebrate Alma Siedhoff-Buscher’s contributions to toy design by reimagining the world her toys invited children to explore. When viewers approach the old fountain outside the Bauhaus Museum, they will activate an augmented reality experience where calm, swaying water fills the basin, offering a surreal sense of movement within the forgotten space. Floating atop this virtual water is a replica of Alma’s Shipbuilding Game, crafted to mirror the bright, geometric blocks that defined her design. The blocks arranged in a ship form drift in a subtle, slow circular playful motion, capturing the spirit of open-ended creativity she so valued.

Building Miniature AR Project



A Miniature version of my AR project idea created with art and craft materials in third workshop

The shiptoy made from building blocks are manufactured to this day which is quite a feat in itself, the longevity and vitality of the idea being still alive is also something that I wanted to capture in my project. The beautiful irony is that the shiptoy can not really float on top of water, it is an imaginary depiction of the vastness of possibilities that can exist in life and how long ideas can impact minds even after the originator of the idea is long gone. I can safely assume that children who play with her toy today would be making many different things apart from the ship and transformer shapes.

Throw Doll :)



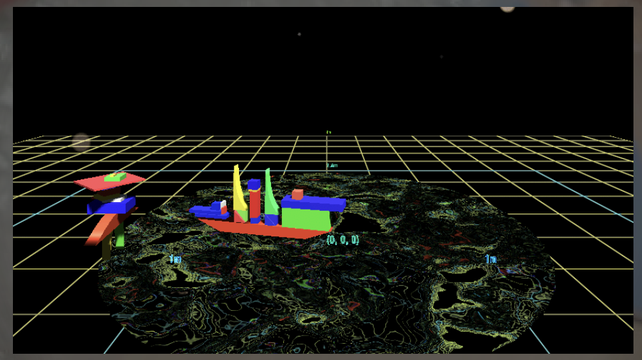
(You will be redirected to Styly App)

Link to AR Model: https://gallery.styly.cc/scene/704cad97-5567-41f5-9ebf-60b3c38689e9

The ship's movement is in contrast to the transformer form of the blocks that stands still on the fontain's one end as if quietly watching or protecting the ship, accompanied by the ambient sounds of children playing and playful whistling note, builds an immersive atmosphere that evokes both nostalgia and wonder. The deeper meaning behind this monument is that we not only have to encourage innocence and wonder of life in children but that we must also protect it. Out of the many treasures in the world, perhaps children are the greatest gift to mankind. Instilling and encouraging creativity in children is also what Alma helped in with her designs.

My AR model is grounded in my studies at Bauhaus University, incorporating elements of HCI and AR to create a democratic space for exploring design history. Rather than creating a literal monument, this experience channels the joy, play, and creativity Alma championed, revitalizing a forgotten corner of Weimar with the legacy of one of its lesser-known pioneers.

AR Model made using Blender and Styly



Reflections and Takeaways

The course offered an amazing mix of history, media studies, and technology, providing a solid context for AR design. I was particularly impressed by the creation of interactive projects that merged artistic research with digital innovation. Understanding the legacy of Bauhaus really enhanced my appreciation for accessible design. The hands-on workshops, especially those focused on collage making and AR modeling, were instrumental in refining my creative and technical skills.

Future Aspirations

In future courses, I would be excited to explore advanced AR techniques, such as creating interactive multi-user environments and dynamic soundscapes that boost immersion. Including community-based projects, like collaborating on AR monuments with a variety of local voices, could promote inclusivity and democratize the design process. Expanding the module to incorporate storytelling in AR would add richness, allowing users to connect with the narratives behind the monuments. Lastly, I would suggest workshops focused on the ethics of using AR in public spaces, ensuring that designs are accessible, non-intrusive, culturally sensitive, and effectively contribute to democratic engagement and creativity.



Appendix

Anja Baumhoff: Behavioral Teachings of the Cold? Implications of modern forms of discourse at the Bauhaus Dessau using the example of the history of Alma Buscher. In: Christoph Wagner (ed.): Esoterik am Bauhaus: Eine Revision der Moderne? International Scientific Symposium. Schnell und Steiner, Regensburg 2009 (Regensburger Schriften zur Kunstgeschichte; 1), ISBN 978-3-7954-2093-2, pp. 191–206.

Ulrike Müller: Alma Buscher. 1899–1944. In: dies.: Die klugen Frauen von Weimar. Regents, salon ladies, writers and artists. Elisabeth Sandmann Verlag, Munich 2007, ISBN 978-3-938045-19-0, pp. 150–157.

Amanda Boyaki: Alma Buscher Siedhoff: An Examination of Children's Design and Gender at the Bauhaus during the Weimar Period (Dissertation May 2010).

Susanne Radelhof: Bauhausfrauen. Documentary of the Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk 2019; online, accessed on 13 February 2019.

Michael Siebenbrodt: Die Bauhäuslerin Alma Siedhoff-Buscher – ein Designleben für Kinder. In: Melanie Kurz / Thilo Schwer (eds.): Design für Spiel, Spaß, Spannung. Design of artefacts for playful action. avdedition, Stuttgart 2023 (Gesellschaft für Designgeschichte, Schriften; 6), ISBN 978-3-89986-396-3, pp. 27–36.