

# Stories About Bedside Tables

By Karoline Bækkevold Bakke

*Master of Graphic Design and Illustration*

*Tutor: Andreas Berg*

## Modes of Design

### **ABSTRACT**

In my project “Stories About Bedside Tables” I wish to explore how we can tell stories about a character through nothing but the elements they choose to keep on their bedside tables using circa 30cm tall sculptures.

### **INTENTIONS & AIMS**

“Stories About Bedside Tables” is a continuation of both the work I did in the theoretical part of my MA, and the projects in general I have steered towards during my MA. My biggest interest since starting my MA has been storytelling. This has mostly been narrowed down to characters, as seen in the project I did during my exchange semester in Japan where I

narrated different districts in Tokyo through portraits of the people I came across there. Honing this skill is something I believe is useful to all people interested in visual communication of any sort.

When doing my theoretical MA, I worked with wordless stories and silent narratives as a concept. This consisted of a study of TV, movies, comics and other forms of graphic novels that made a point of telling their stories using little to no words. I further distilled the information gained to a series of storytelling tools I could implement into my own work, ultimately using the absence of dialogue to improve on my general storytelling abilities.

Thus, the intentions and aims of my MA project ultimately came down to further challenging myself as a storyteller, and this concept I had familiarized myself with as a silent narrative. Is it possible to tell the story of a character through something as simple as their bedside table?

## **SYNOPSIS**

As a starting point for my project, I conducted a short survey on Facebook asking people to submit an anonymous image of their bedside table situation. This was a crucial part of my research, as it gave me a confident visual reference in terms of what people really do put on their bedside tables. It also confirmed what I had already theorised about; that the bedside table itself is seen as an intimate place that strangers aren't really supposed to see. It feels vulnerable in a sense, and I found that a lot of people felt uneasy when seeing the images I was basing my research on.

After I felt I had a good basis, I started doing tests in ceramics. It was through this I got a confirmation that clay would be a good material to base a lot of the project on. The tests, albeit a bit bigger than the end results, had a good feeling of tactility and fragility that I enjoyed a lot.

As the corona virus pandemic hit, my project had to change a good bit. The biggest changes were in order to make it possible to create the project from home. I have therefore ended up with five bedside tables, detailing female characters in different stages of their lives. The materials are mainly paper-mache, supplemented with some pieces made with hot glue and air-drying clay.

# Self Assessment and Learning Criteria

My project has a clearly stated subject area of investigation in telling stories through objects. I believe I have committed to exploring this subject through my project. Through my choice of materials and format, I have successfully tightened the reins sufficiently in order to restrain and refine the outcome. This particularly in choosing to focus only on the bedside table. This has worked very well in the end result, both as a thematic and a visual connector between the characters.

When looking for artistic references and visual research, I naturally went through a lot of pop-art installations. Most notably is Claes Oldenburg and his sculptures depicting oversized household items. I enjoy how the simple act of resizing an item creates such a strong fictional “look”. However, the pop-art scene is closely tied to a lot of socio-cultural investigations and political statements that I don’t associate my project with. I would rather have it seen as an investigation into a huge part of storytelling that is often overlooked.

In terms of designerly and artistic references, it should rather take inspiration from the tradition of stop-motion filmmaking. In particular; Wes Anderson’s stylistic choices in making the set-pieces in his films have a rugged and almost homemade aesthetic, creating a tactile and often vulnerable and fragile look. I wish that my project should be regarded in this context.

As for most projects being created in these times, a significant part of my schedule had to be altered due to the corona virus pandemic. There was also a part of the time that got lost due to the unforeseen impact working exclusively from home had on my creative process.

However, I was able to adapt and rework my schedule to fit.

I believe that, pandemic-related hiccups aside, my project had a good amount of progress throughout the process. I also created a very specific schedule for the last couple of months, and stuck to it.

I believe I have shown the ability to work through the situation with the corona virus pandemic, and sufficiently adapted the project to still be possible to complete in the circumstances. The project is not finished in the sense that I have ended up with what I hoped in the beginning, but I believe I have been able to successfully finish bedside tables that convey what I wanted from the start.

This project is one that has grown out of the research I started doing in the final months of 2019, and that has kept growing based on the feedback received from my professors and fellow students.

When taking my past projects into account, you can in one way tell how this project have come to be, culminating from a big interest in both the medium and subject matter seen the earliest developed in my BA project from 2018. I believe “Stories About Bedside Tables” is a natural part of this artistic development of mine, and will also act as a great jumping point for further exploration into the subject matter.