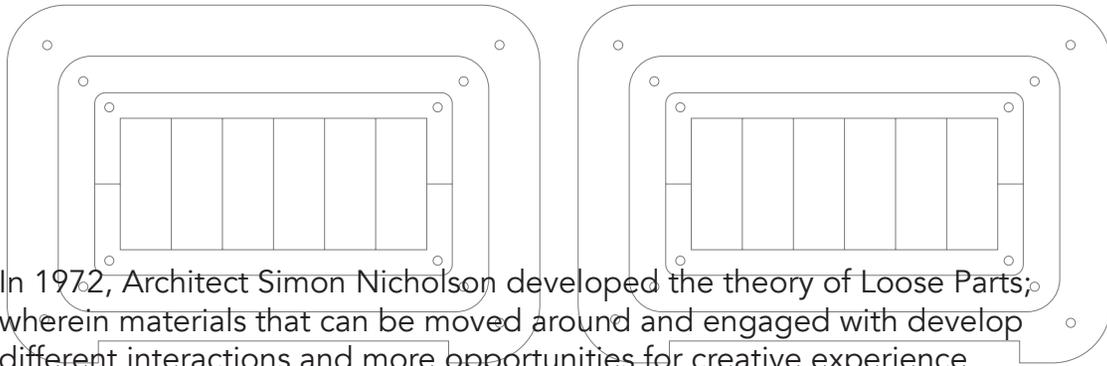
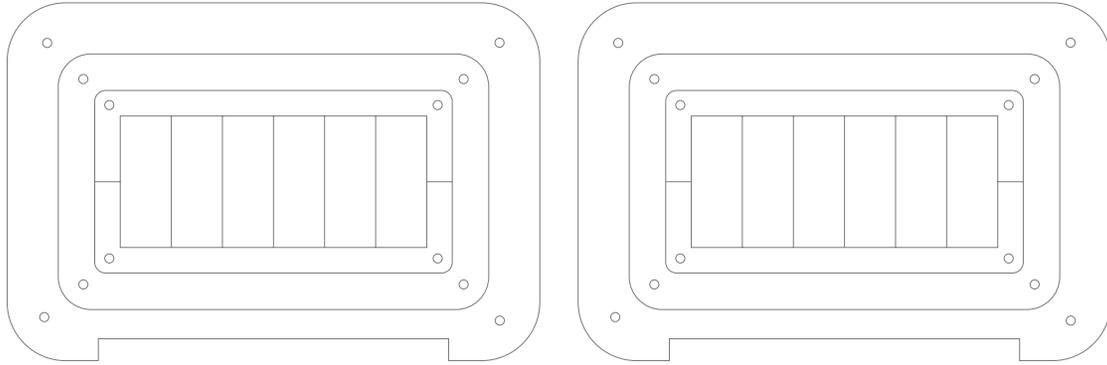
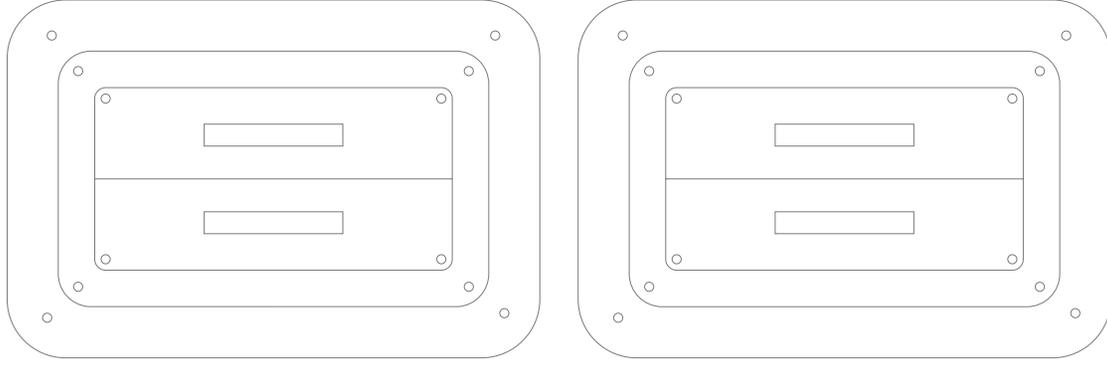


FlexNest

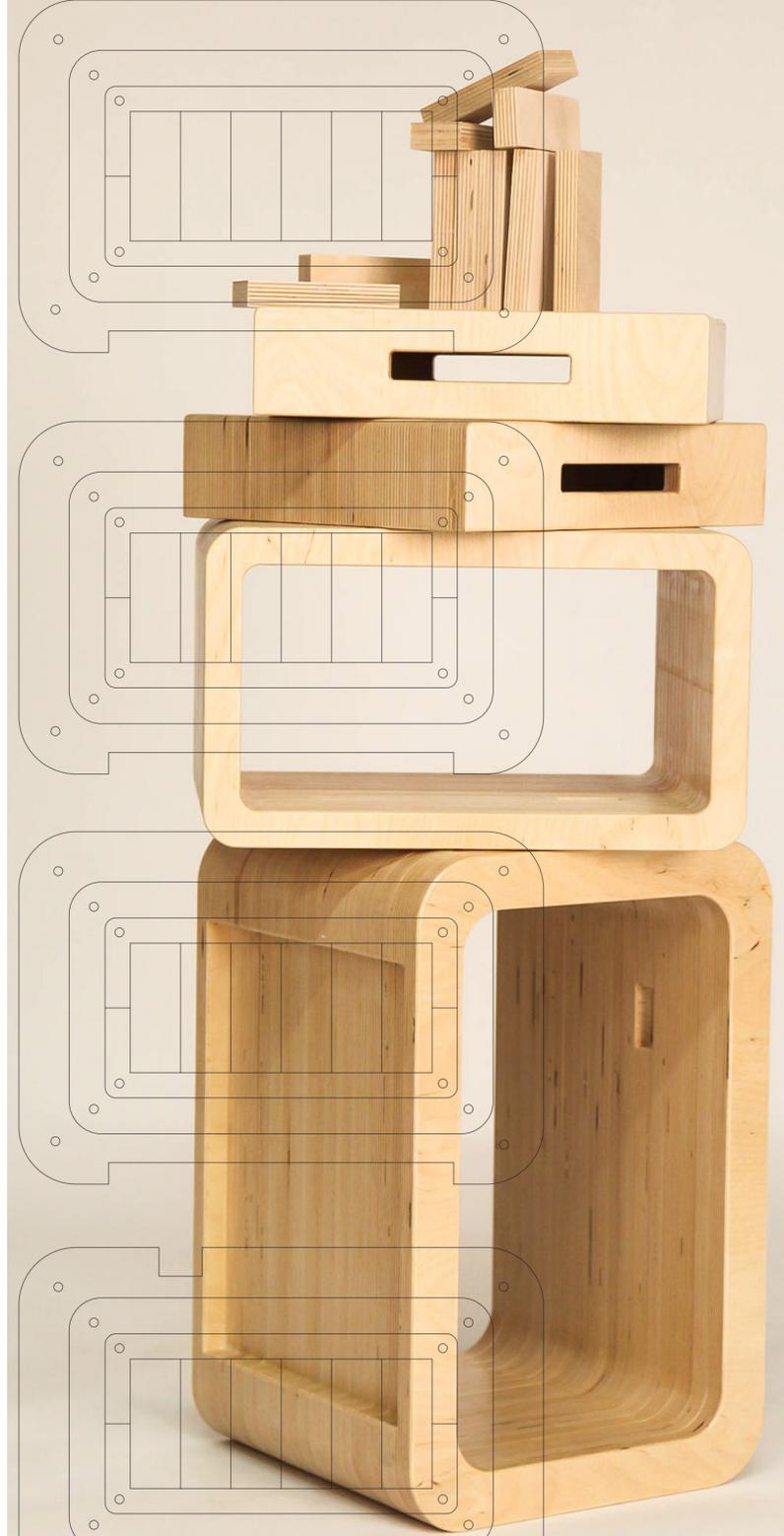
A place to sit. A set of loose parts to explore.





In 1972, Architect Simon Nicholson developed the theory of Loose Parts, wherein materials that can be moved around and engaged with develop different interactions and more opportunities for creative experience in playspaces for children. Furthermore, the interactions should be spontaneous for the child and materials offer no specific set of directions .

The play landscape operates as a set of loose parts that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, taken apart and put back together in multiple ways. The trays transport other loose parts from place to place, allowing for an enhanced imaginative experience. For example, the tray could be taken outside to collect and transport stones and sticks to the interior environment to be combined with other interior objects.





By nesting together, the play landscape requires little storage area, while carefully considering sustainability and maximization of material use. The entire piece is made from one sheet of plywood.



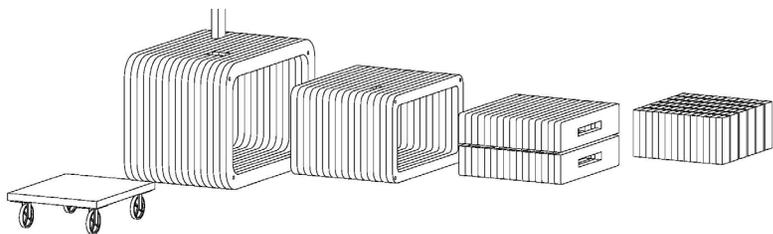
The clean design compliments the environment and supports inquiry-based activities.

Large and Small Seat: Two nesting seats create four heights for story time, group activity, one-on-one work, dramatic play, etc.

Trays: Two trays create the storage for the building planks and can be used in multiple ways, such as step stools, building platforms, carriers, etc.

Building Planks: 48 building planks are included, offering a set of loose parts that enhances engineering, construction and imagination.

Detachable Caster Base: Used to transport the FlexNest around the classroom.





Children engage their imaginations as they explore the FlexNest.

Dramatic Play: With endless possibilities, the FlexNest transforms into a boat, stairs, tunnel and even a cooking oven.

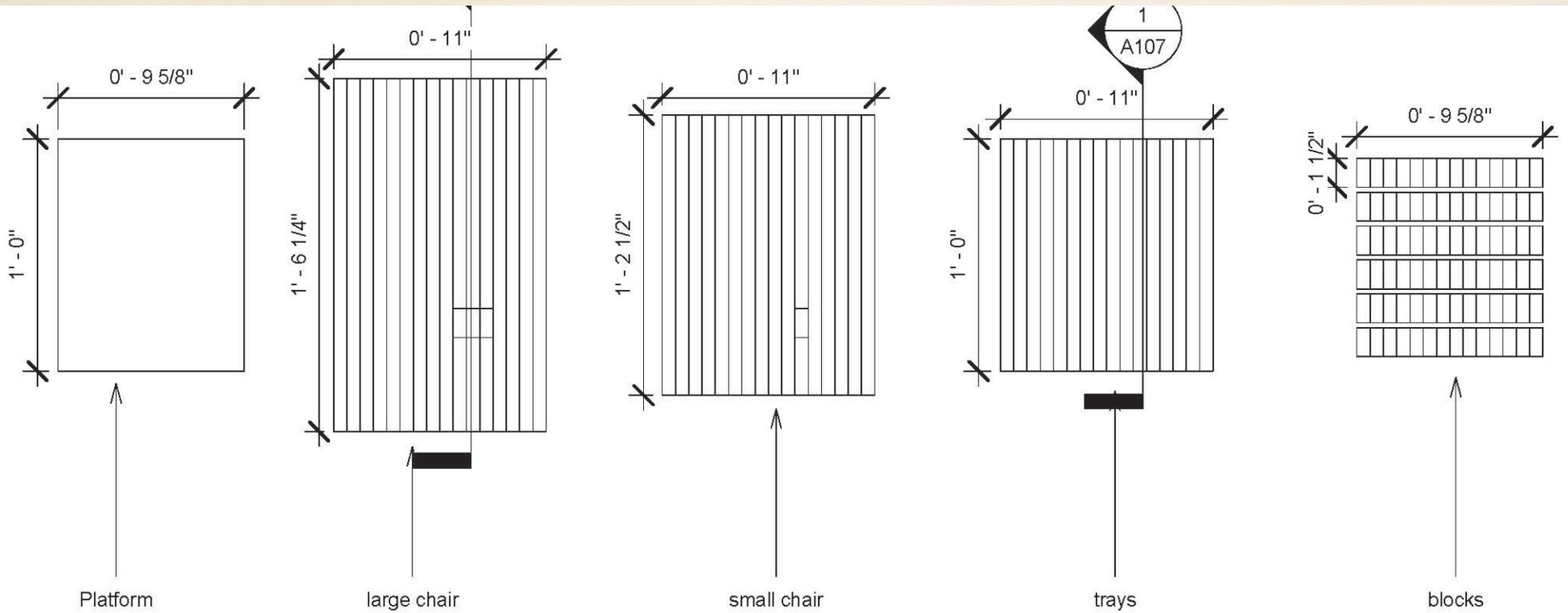
Constructing: The FlexNest provides a building platform and a set of blocks for children to construct and explore.

Music: The FlexNest becomes a percussion instrument during music time.

Reading: The FlexNest creates an elevated perch to read from during group time.

Relation: The FlexNest is a great way to build learning interactions between student, teacher, and parents, such as adding and subtracting with blocks, or through exploring symmetry, gravity or other physical concepts.

Problem Solving: All of the pieces create a large interactive puzzle. The FlexNest promotes critical thinking that encourages fun collaboration.





Inquiry-Based

Multi-Perspective Practice

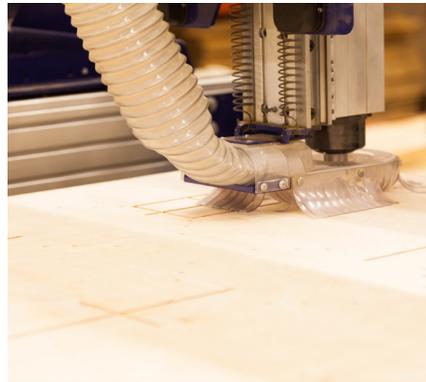
Industry Partnership

Reggio-Inspired

Participatory Research

Experiential Learning

Furniture Design



Process

The Flexnest was created in a unique faculty-directed research investigation, in collaboration with an on-campus laboratory school and industry partner. This process also includes interior design students in multi-perspective design process, undergraduate participatory research, innovation, patented intellectual property and entrepreneurial endeavors through market immersion of prototypes.



The question in focus for this study is “in what way would processes of learning and teaching be modified and enriched if school culture welcomed the poetic languages and an aesthetic dimension as important elements for building knowledge?” Utilizing the Reggio Approach as a catalyst for theoretical frameworks, the design team also explored nine spatial metaphors outlined by the Domus Academy in *Children, Relations and Spaces* as counterparts in an inquiry-based early childhood learning environment.

All too often, interacting with furniture is perceived as an ordinary occurrence. The challenge was to consider how this experience could enlighten and enhance the learning process. Though engaging in multi-perspective practice, design iteration and national product testing, theoretical underpinnings of initial prototypes were vetted, reconsidered and revised.