

**AGEING**

**SEX**

**WORKING  
ARCHIVE**

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# DESK RESEARCH

Based on our extensive research into "Sex In Later Life", we identified three major themes in the current ageing sex narrative.

## Stigma & Stereotypes

> Aging Ment Health. 2016;20(1):36-45. doi: 10.1080/13607863.2015.1012044. Epub 2015 Feb 23.

**Examining aging sexual stigma attitudes among adults by gender, age, and generational status**

Maggie L. Syme<sup>1</sup>, Traci...

> Aging Ment Health. 2021 Aug;25(8):1507-1514. doi: 10.1080/13607863.2020.1758909. Epub 2020 May 2.

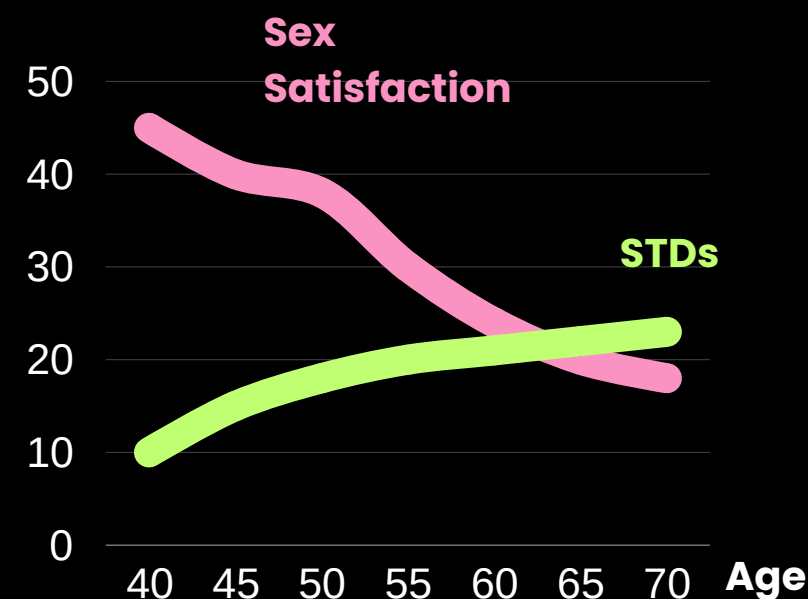
**Aging sexual stereotypes and sexual expression in mid- and later life: examining the stereotype matching effect**

> Healthcare (Basel). 2023 Feb 5;11(4):459. doi: 10.3390/healthcare11040459.

**"I'm Too Old for That": The Role of Ageism and Sexual Dysfunctional Beliefs in Sexual Health in a Sample of Heterosexual and LGB Older Adults: A Pilot Study**

Luca Flesia<sup>1</sup>, Merylin Monaro<sup>2</sup>, Emmanuele A. Jannini<sup>3</sup>, Erika Limoncin<sup>4</sup>

## Worsen Sexual Health



## Lack Inclusivity & Support



Professionals lack knowledge of elderly sexuality and fail to address their sexual health

## OBJECTIVES

# Change the Ageing Sex Narrative

**01**

Stimulate open discussions & healthier perceptions on ageing sex.

**02**

Create a safe & accessible educational space for ageing sex.

# OBSERVATION

## Who

- Older couples

## Where

- Different public spaces

## What & How

- Observe and record how older couples from different age range, ethnicity behave and interact with others. Blur identifiable information.



## Hypothesis

- Physical touch is a form of caring and support.

## Findings

- Results lack depth and objectivity.

# NON-VERBAL INTERVIEW

## Who

- General public

## Where

- Battersea  
Power Station

## What & How

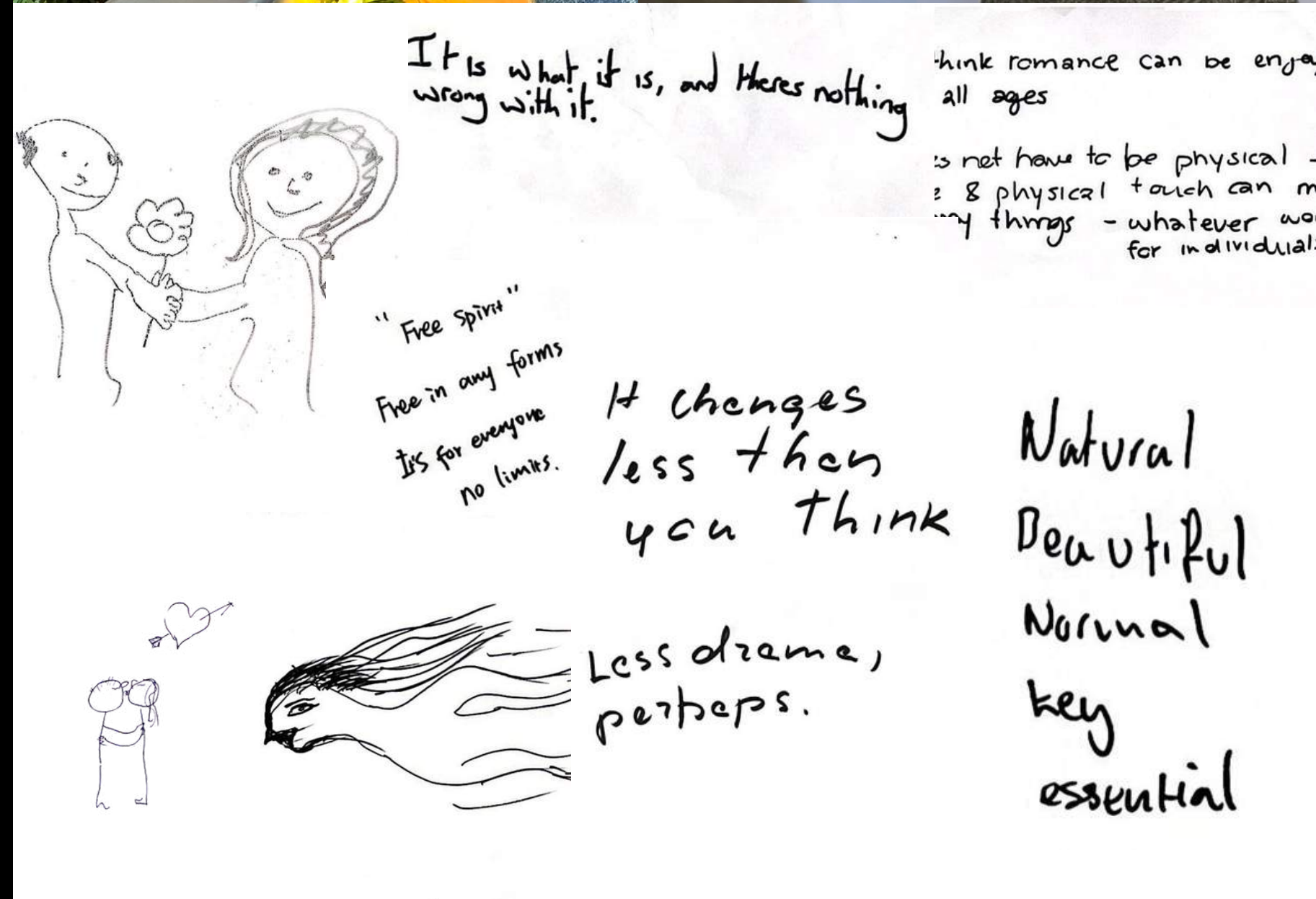
- Invite participants from all ages to anonymously express on "Sex In Later Life" through drawing, writing, performance, etc.

## Hypothesis

- Different perspectives from different age groups.

## Findings

- Public perceptions on ageing sex were overall positive, although implicit and generic in nature.
- Higher engagement under anonymity.



# BRAINSTORMING



## Idea #1

## Co-design

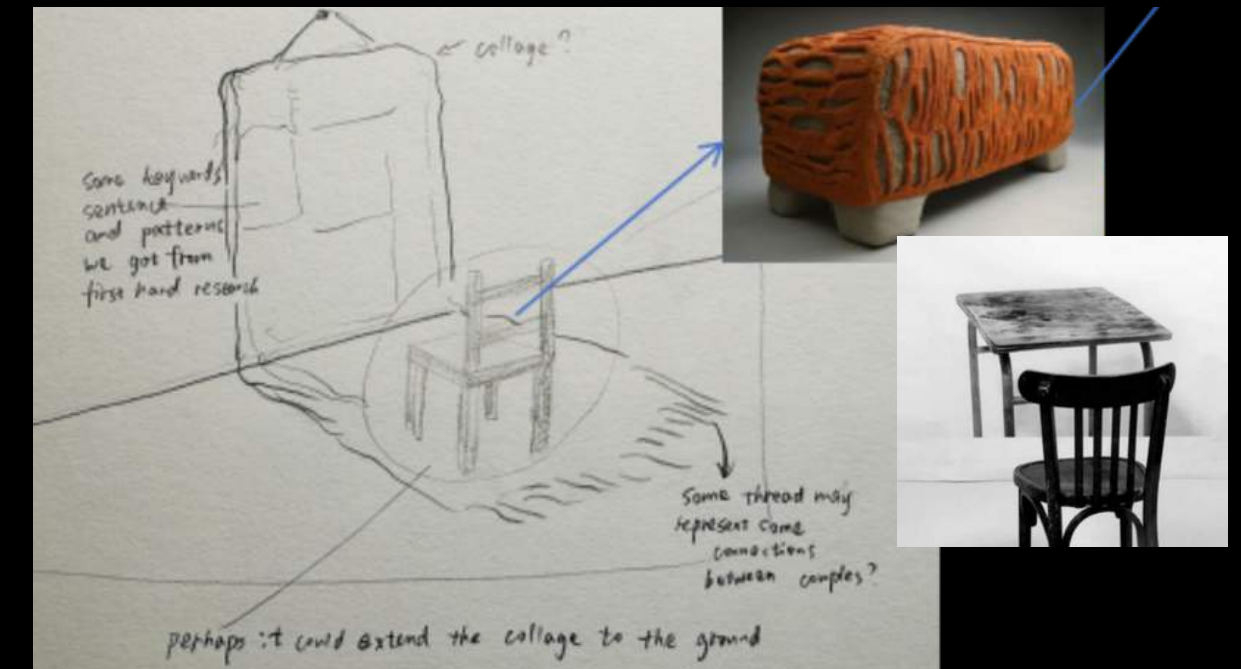
Make two chairs using materials we get from primary research (drawing, craft, key words, photo etc.) and install them in a place where older people can discuss healthy sexual life.



## Idea #2

## Ageing Body

Wave sweater for one (or two and even more) chair that can just wrap around it and warm it up?



Texture of growth lines?

## Idea #3

## Combined

Make an aging chair and have it facing a wall with a collage hanging on it. Content of collage can be data from primary research.

# Chair as Metaphor?

## Symbolic meanings:

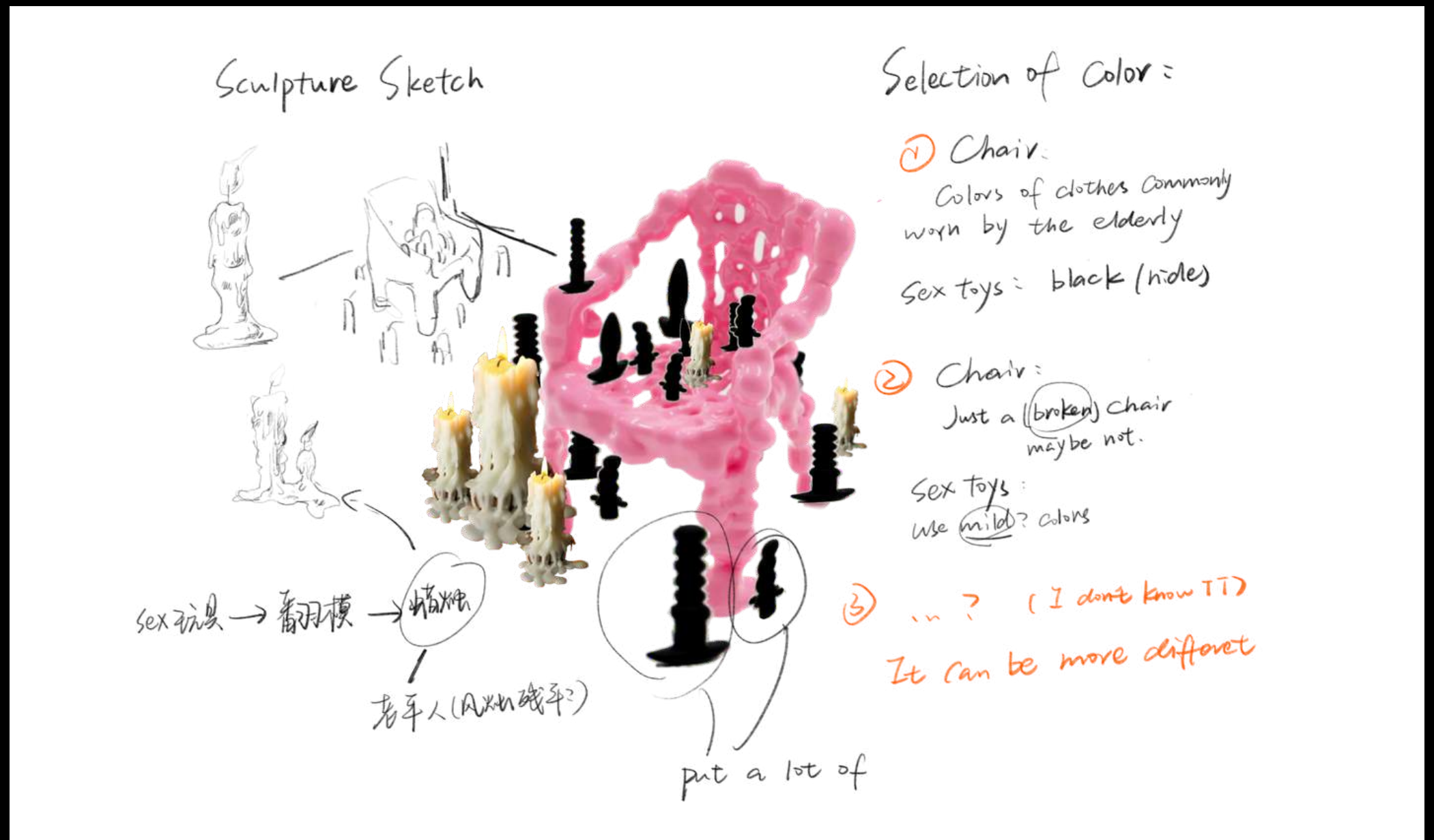
- Loneliness
- Stability
- Chill
- Emptiness
- Support
- Grief

## INITIAL PROPOSAL

# Sex Chair as a Storyteller

Make an installation that burns sex toy candles on an empty chair.

As the candles burn, the chair "hurts" and "dies". The burning and melting of the two components symbolise the unmet, decreasing sexual desire of older people.



## Peer Feedback

- High Risk
- Disconnect from the research
- May replicate ageing sexual stereotypes and stigmas



# CULTURE PROBE

Drawn on lessons learned from Term 1, we kicked off Term 2 with the culture probe to engage the intended audience in open dialogue around ageing sex.

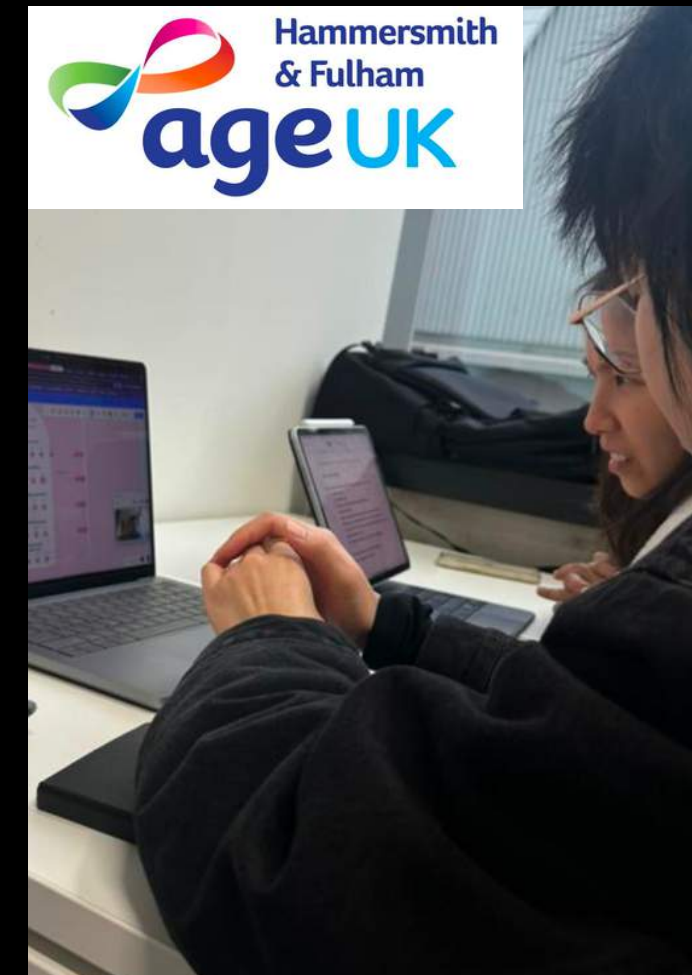
Also, we contacted a nearby elderly activity centre called **Age UK Hammersmith & Fulham** as we wanted to have stable participants and gain insights from professionals working with older adults.

## What's needed for the open dialogue and higher engagement?

- Anonymity
- Incentives
- Quick and fun to do

## What do want to know from the culture probe?

- Young and older adults' views on ageing sex
- What is needed for building a healthier perception?



Having zoom meeting with Age UK H&F to co-design our culture probes



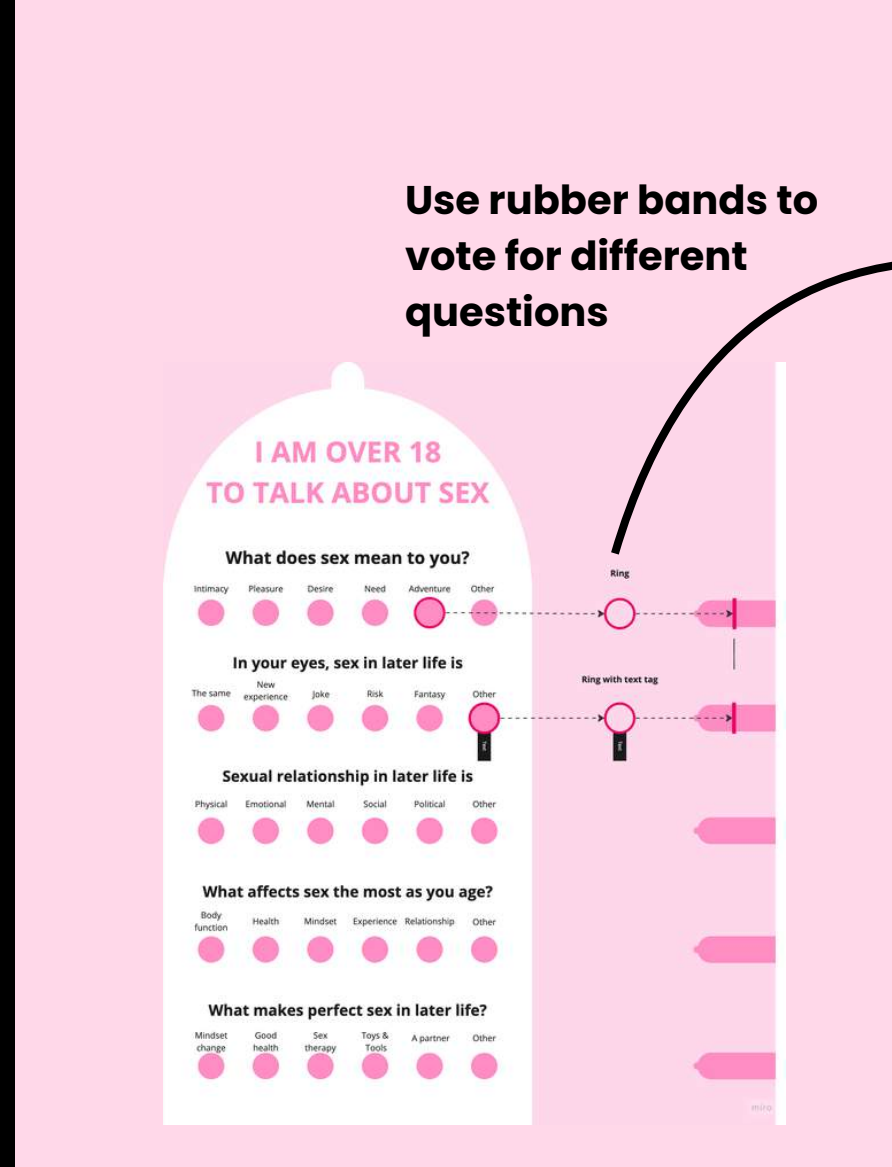
Culture probes installation & Filed Observation at Age UK H&F

# DESIGN JOURNEY

To make the most of our different skills and expertise, we held a skill sharing session to collectively make the **Condom Board** that helps open up discussion about ageing sex. It was designed in a **bold and playful** style as we wanted to use **humor** to increase participation.

The flippable **Body Board**, meant to foster acceptance to changing sexual identity in the ageing process, was adapted for **color coding** due to our concerns of re-stigmatising and de-contextualised analysis.

To view our Making Process, please visit: <https://youtu.be/IyVLxDt02Fg>



## INITIAL DESIGN



## FINAL DESIGN



# WORKSHOP TESTING

While making the culture probes, we also prepared a variety of co-creation activities to engage both **young** (peers from the college) and **older adults** (from Age UK Hammersmith & Fulham) in **creative expression** on aging sex.



## *Unfolding Sex*

A collaborative drawing session for young and older adults to visualise aging sex from different perspectives

**Where** RCA + Age Uk H&F  
**Who** Young + Older adults



## *Sex Bingo*

Open discussions using bingo game which older people are familiar with and comfortable to play.

**Where** Age Uk H&F  
**Who** Young + Older adults



## *Shape of Sex*

A clay making activity for reimagining and communicating ageing sexuality with young minds.

**Where** Age Uk H&F  
**Who** Young + Older adults

# RESULTS & REFLECTION

However, due to the **sensitivity** of the workshop topic and the **short-term relationship** we had with Age UK, our testing workshop received low attendance, where older people were unwilling to participate.

# Why we "failed"?



Student work from "Unfolding Sex"



Bingo card design for "Sex Bingo"



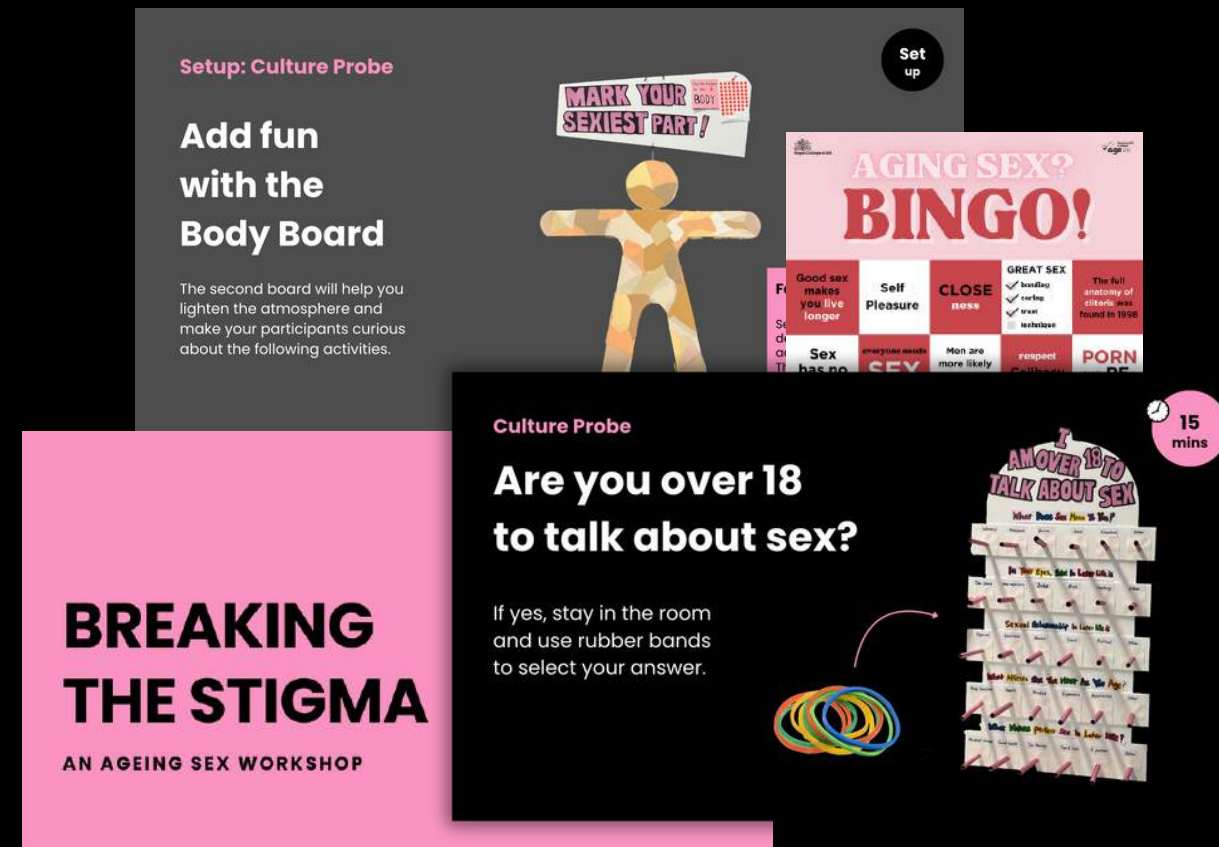
Student work from "Shape of Sex"

- Lack of trust and knowledge between us and older people

- High commitment for participants aged over 75

- The entrenched ageing sexual stigma

# FINAL RESPONSE



## Workshop Slides + Toolkit

for professionals specialised in elderly care and empowerment to run a workshop about **Ageing Sex**.



## “Secret Saver” + “De-Secret”

An artistic film that reflect on the **ageing sexual stigma** we failed to break in our research journey.

## FINAL RESPONSE

# Secret Saver?

A **secure** and **symbolic** space for storing creative, anonymous reflection on ageing sex.



Inspired by the shape of sex toy from the sex-empowerment brand OSUGA.



Like water, sex is a basic human need.

Ageing sex is a sensitive subject needing thoughtful, strategic approach.

We as young researchers should be respectful and more considerate when exploring ageing sexual stigma.

# De-Secret?

Inspired by the exhibition "Never Too Old To Cut The Banana When Erected" by Lola Keyezua

# APPENDIX

Luca Flesia, Merylin Monaro, Emmanuele A. Jannini, Erika Limoncin, "I'm Too Old for That": The Role of Ageism and Sexual Dysfunctional Beliefs in Sexual Health in a Sample of Heterosexual and LGB Older Adults: A Pilot Study'. *Healthcare*. 11:4 (2023). p.459.

Maggie L. Syme and Tracy J. Cohn, 'Aging sexual stereotypes and sexual expression in mid- and later life: examining the stereotype matching effect'. *Aging & Mental Health*. 25:8 (2021). 1507-1514.

Maggie L. Syme and Tracy J. Cohn, 'Examining aging sexual stigma attitudes among adults by gender, age, and generational status'. *Aging & Mental Health*. 20:1 (2016). 36-45

'Never Too Old To Cut The Banana When Erected' (exhibition). Galerie Bart, Amsterdam: 23 April - 5 June 2021.

OUR JOURNEY TO

**De-secret**

CONTINUES