DELIRIUM —

From the depths of mania
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Konstfack, CRAFT!, Ådellab
Spring 2018

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ABSTRACT

This document explores and expands my perspective on dealing with mental health issues, grieving and sorrow through a material based practice. It portrays private spaces that grows and seeks universal connections. Feelings that is persevered between layers that takes physical form between the skin and the fabric.

Adornments manifests themselves through the body, and when they are passive and sleeping, they dream of belonging.
INTRODUCTION

The paper investigates the phenomenon of mental illness, grief and sorrow through a craft based practise.

To inhabit a body that suffers from mental illness is to view the world through a dusty window. The more you try to see and understand the world around you the more it infolds. layers up, fragments covering fragments.

The I of the selves is not the diseased, the body is the carrier. The body is a layered creation and container. Some layers we are born into, some we choose to address. Some we can never undress ourselves from.

I hope that with this material investigation I am able to encourage questions on how we relate to the sick body, grief and mental illness.

By using the format of adornment to point at certain relationships with the physical and social body. Through wearing, caring, scarring, enrobe and embalmment. As once “things” becomes objects their physical matter is all about their bodily relationships.

This paper will take you into my one year journey to complete this body of work.
QUESTION

I use my practice and experience to investigate the different stages the body passes through when facing mental health issues. As of today it is something we are taught not to speak open about. Why do we look at these topics as isolated phenomenons?

Through my craft and research I hope I will be able to penetrate that surface and project a different way to look at its phenomenon. To shred personal attachment to materiality in order to visualize an example of a collective healing process.

And what does it mean to reuse this materials within the context of today?
Through my practice I make theory. In this textual texture I will bring in other artist work to elaborate on how they deal and make theory through their work as well as a few theorists and philosophers that corresponds to the subject matter will follow in the paper.

"Artists are cannibals, we consume other artists and they become part of us -flesh and bone- only to be spewed out again in our own works."  

Bourgeois As I can relate to her work. Maybe even more her persona.

The more I read and absorb her work the more I feel she is a rather self-devouring cannibal.

She devour her own realm, objects, relationships, experiences, memory and own body. All in -order or disorder- to project it back as representation of what they once meant to her.

In THE ARC OF HYSTERIA we face a headless torso, beheaded of recognition. You can insert [by imagination] your own head to the piece, and imagine the suspension. The bending of the back. The spasm.

The form of THE ARC OF HYSTERIA is driven from opisthotonus which is a physical condition that can occur due a medical intoxication.

Bourgeois way of translating a human condition into sculpture captures me. She takes the recognition of a disease and apply it to material matter. By collecting I entered this project. I look for materials that have had a past bodily attachment. Items that has been worn and loved. But also speaks about the rituals it has been operating within.

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1 Siri Hustvedt, A Woman Looking at Men Looking at Women: Essays on Art, Sex, and the Mind
MAKING I

ABANDONED SILK RUBS NO BODY SPOILED
WE RIP AND TEAR
TO PROTECT AMPUTATED MATTER
STRIPE BY STRIPE BANDAGE BY BANDAGE
PROTECTION EQUALS RESTRICTION.
I hunt and gather antique mourning shawls from the late 1800 to 1900, many of them made of a silk brocade. Silk is like skin, it's fragile in its nature, it consumes itself, if it has been folded. It can dispose itself through time. Some of the shawls are delicate, full of holes and falls apart once I touch them. Some of them appears like they have been frozen in time, not a single scratch or tear.

"Being in sorrow", commonly speaking means that the body is forced to address grieve as a practice. By stepping into or enter it. Where certain objects become transformative tools and passages to send the message outwards to the society. This body is in grief.

In 2017 I together with a colleague visited the death museum in Falköping, which is owned by Fonus Begravningsbyrå. where they have a permanent exhibition of objects connected to death.

The museum is located in the same building as the casket factory, where most of the caskets used within Scandinavia are manufactured. They hold several mourning shawls in their collection, what grabs my interest in them is their narrative of not just being a shawl. There are codes for every object, and for every object there is a ritual. It is not a shawl it is a grieving shawl, its primal function is not to keep the neck warm, it's to send the message of grief outwards to the society.
We are born in textiles and we die in textiles, we enrobe ourselves during day and we unself ourselves during night. The handkerchief we cry in, the pillow we bury our heads in, textiles are materials to trust. That keeps us safe as they are in closest relation to our bodies.

“What trampled over truth was the cloth, the impermeable between the inner and the outer world. Reaction against the dressed human. American movie will inform.”

According to Andrade I see the cloth as surface that conceals inwards and gaze outwards. It consists of a web that catches left-over particles from the body. Textiles embodies memories, of the person who has been wearing them, during that special situation. Its web captures all things surrounding it, smell, dirt, sorrow and happiness.

But it's also the first layer to dispose, once the person has become a body.

I believe that we only become bodies after rigor mortis, when the last movement has left, there is nothing more than a body. A body kept alive is not a living body. The consciousness is what fills our body with life and nuances.

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2 Oswald De Andrade, 1928, Anthropophagic Manifest
METHOD – Inside/outside

Layering is a method I use to construct my work, covering and revealing to emphasize our physical and psychological nature and complexity.

I look at nerves, fibrins, blisters, scabs. Disorders that disturbers and disfigure the harmony of the surfaced layer.

The shredding part in my process is a way to tear apart and multiply the personal attachment from the previous owner of the material. Deconstructing and bending its source and meaning. Through my doing I undo the personal attachments imbedded in the material history and merge them into a new narrative.

I loosen up memories, sharing them make them organic. Memories are never static, they change, inside our head every time we rethink them, some details get added and details gets lost.

To split the parts up allows them to multiply to more pieces. Its previous owner is one layered fragment of a larger phenomenon and organ. As myself, the maker becomes another layer to the material story.

The doing part is repetitive, mending, concealing, wrapping and protecting.
A piece of jewelry can be seen as a decorative element of which the wearer adorn itself with to position social status, path in life or ritualistic actions.

Object accepted and worn by a body, an adornment. An identity marker that takes its action throughout the body.

A triangular commitment throughout body and object projected towards society. The chosen jewelry piece becomes a part and an extension of the wearers body ones its activated through wearing. Much like a new organ must be accepted or rejected by its new body in order to function and work with the other organs to support movement of the organism it adorns.

A rejected organ becomes a broken promise, an untied knot of which both ends may expire. like the rejection of ring becomes a symbol of declined relationship.

The blanket the little child holds on to, the material memory of which the infant has attached to it. The need of a “blanket” does not grow away, I believe that we seek the same mechanism and phenomena in other objects when we grow up, such as status symbols like cars, watches, furniture to name a few. Comfort in a material sense and comfort entangles luxury?
My pieces can be seen as indirect jewelry, even though some of them have the possibility to be worn. Activation in its pure meaning, putting something in movement. Another way I relate my pieces to adornments is how a piece of jewelry simply goes to sleep once its removed from its bodily context. However a sleeping jewel still dreams in its passiveness, and can so still share its bodily narrative simply by referencing its own form and context.

This body of work cannot be separated from its own body, as it is in constant reference to it. So to speak, jewelries are catalysts, they feed of the wearer and the world surrounding them. Yet still while remaining in relation to their relatives. But can be separated into 206 individual pieces that can enter the world through wearing and handling.
SCAB — An ornamental surface

A scab, as repulsive it may seem, it’s also a layer of protection. While under it fibrins and tissue perform their mending magic.

Once recovered it might leave a scar, as a piece of ornamentation of what has been there.

Its function can be related to that of a piece of mourning jewelry. Which the body accept and adorns itself with during the period of need. And falls off as a scab once the healing is achieved.

Fibrin known as the tissue that grows like a web once an injury is in the process of healing. The fibrin tissue collects blood plasma. It grows in a web like formation to secure the wound from dirt and other particles. Its function is to rebound the damaged materials in the wound.
A fully grown human body is held together by 206 bones. That made my goal clear, to produce 206 individual pieces. That once separated they still point at a unity.

And together they can direct point to a present structure, In an almost personified way.

Which follows the material history of the shawls, that has been used to mourn a specific body by a specific body.

But now has the capacity to become a ritual where the personal grief no longer remains isolated or centraled to a certain person. It has the power to become a collective action. A collective consumption. Through splitting and sharing the 206 pieces they can go out in the world with the wearer or beholder. Our whole internal architectural structure, almost monumental in its number.
UNDRESSING

X-raying becomes a method to undress, get under the skin and revealing the origin of pain.

Masked layers, cover ups and ornamentations becomes irrelevant for the human gaze.
By x-ray we are able to enter spaces within the body that does not reveal itself through its outside layer, without the need of pierce a hole or perform a necropsy or surgery.

Gaining access to the X-ray equipment turned out to be a harder task than I thought.

I found a kind and liberal veterinarian who ended up helping me.

We had to pre-heat the objects before x-raying them.
The veterinarian told me that the harder and colder a material is the harder it is for the x-ray beams to enter and go through the body.
And the beams corresponds to heat, and heat means life.

What unfolds within the pictures from left to right: A breakage, 2 buttons and a needle I forgot to remove during the making process. 3 the white areas are the beading and embroidery, the lines is the veins from the wood core inside the objects.
MAKING II

INSOMNIA NIGHT
OR IS IT DAY?

I DOESN’T MATTER

“I DO, I UNDO, I REDO”

MY TIPS OF FINGERS ARE SWOLLEN RED
I CANNOT DETECT WHERE ON MY HANDS
THEY START, WHERE THEY ARE SEATED

THE NEEDLE AND I HAVE BEEN ONE
WE HAVE TRAVELED INSIDE AND OUTSIDE
OF TISSUE

WE MEND, WE REPAIR, WE TEAR APART
ONLY TO REDO
THERE IS NO I OF ME LEFT WHEN WE DO

THE SUN KEEPS LOOKING BEHIND THE BLINDS,
BUT WE IGNORE THE FACTS OF DAYS
AND KEEP TORMENTING OUR FINGERTIPS
ONCE MORE

3 Bourgeois Louise
Mental illness is often looked upon as a private phenomenon. It should be hidden beneath the surface of the person.

It should not be outspoken. The “mental” needs to be controlled, for the sake of the sane.

Throughout history the mental deceased has been pushed away from society, to become a “we and them”.

The I of the Selves is a guarantee of the collective. We are not our decease. We are a sea of bodies containing various conditions.

Our bodies are sick.

It is important to state that the body carries or beholds the disease. The body itself is not sick. It is its material composition that carries it. Therefore it is important for us to portray a “layered” surface. As the body consists of many nuances and seams. All those layers formalize an individual frame.

“Madness starts in passion, but is by there still an intense movement in the rational unit of soul and body.”

Madness start in the mind, when it has built itself up to burst out it seeks itself to exterior layer of the body. Madness must manifest itself and make an imprint.

Dopamine unites us and saves us. When it turns to adrenalin the maniac makes magic.
I LOOK AT THE TREES
THEY ARE PASSIVE AS GYPSUM
SCULPTURES.

SLEEPING
CROWNS IN DISGUISE OF THE WINTER
DOES NOT GLOW.

MAGPIES DOES NOT MAKE NESTS
OF NOTHINGNESS

I THINK ABOUT MYSELF

BARK

SKIN

ROOTS THAT LEADS TO NOWHERE

AMPUTATED CONNECTIONS

LAYS HIDDEN FROM KNOWING

DOES TREES BLEED IN WINTER?
AMPUTATION — No one can bring “it” back

Amputation matter must continue to grow, seeking new connections and threads.

Our bodies are not of static origin. It’s organic material that is taught to repair and mend itself. A wound need time and care to heal even when parts has gone missing, they find their ways back. An amputated body can feel phantom pains where the part once were.

My crafted objects can be seen as a tool, a “blanket” that supports the healing process on an individual level.

The shredding part in my process is a way to leave the personal attachment from the previous owner of the material. To split it to more pieces. Its previous owner is just one fragment of a larger phenomenon and organ. As myself, the maker becomes another layer to the material story by the intention of making.

The doing part is repetitive, mending, concealing, beading, wrapping and protecting.
They must grow.
Until the “they” becomes a we.

Where does the body begin where does it end where does the next grow.
MAKING IV

THE I OF THE SELVES IS COMING TO THE GARDEN

THE FORBIDDEN HAS LEFT THE FRUIT
–THEY LABEL TASTE EXOTIC

THE I OF THE SELVES IS AN INFINITE DESTRUCTION

RECONSTRUCTED IN THE INVALID MOUTH

MOTHER OF TONGUES HAS BEEN CUT OFF
BUT SILENCE IS A UNIVERSAL HYMN
FOR THOSE WITH EARS

SUNFLOWERS BEYOND SANITY
WITHERS IN THIS DELIRIUM

COSMOPOLITE NEANDERTHALS DRAG THEMSELVES
FORTH AND BACK FROM RUINS TO CATHEDRALS

BUT USEFUL ALIBIES
FLOAT FROM ABOVE

WE MUST CLEAN OUR EYES TO AVOID BLINDNESS
FOR SHADOWS ONLY PAYS ATTENTION TO LIGHT

THAT’S HOW SHAPE IS BORN

I SEEK THE SAVAGE IN THE BEAUTY
I RIP THE SOUL OUT OF THE MATTER
THAT’S WHY FINGERS ARE UNCLEAN

WE MUST BE SOLDIERS PISSING THE MUD
TO SEASONING THIS GREY FIELDS OF IN-BETWEENS

WE MUST CONSUME EACH OTHER
TO AVOID STORIES TO STARVE

AND PRAY THAT BLOSSOMS WILL PROSPER
WITH NUANCES BEYOND BLACKS AND WHITES

WE MUST ADORN THIS FIELDS
AND BEQUEATH TO ALL FUTURE TREES

AND BEG FOR TOMORROW NOT TO REPEAT
THE REGRETS OF YESTERDAY

THIS GRIEF IS NOT YOU OR ME
THIS PAST IS ONLY PARTS OF THIS FUTURE
THAT WILL BE PRESENT TOMORROW
WE INVENTED MASTER-TIME
BUT WE DENY HIS MAJESTY THE SALUTE

WE MUST DANCE UPON GARDEN DIRT
ONLY UNCERTAINTY WILL SPOIL OUR SHOULders

WE ARE COSMOPOLITAN NEANDERTHALS,
DRAGGING OURSELVES FROM RUINS TO CATHEDRALS

TO SEEK TUNNELS OUT OF THIS DELIRIUM
THAT’S ONLY INVENTED BY THE HOLLOWED SIGHT

MORTALITY IS A LIE

DARLING

WHY ARE WE STILL HERE?
January 20 21.40

I have never spoken to one of my sources tongue towards tongue before.

I found five grieving shawls from a 75year-old lady over the internet on an auction site. I ordered all of them. And kindly asked if she would stumble upon more of them she could contact me.

After no more than a few seconds She asked if she could give me a call. At first it felt a little bit weird a Saturday afternoon. The conversation ended up going on for almost an hour. It turned more and more personal.

She came complete naked about her life. Perhaps that was the telephone that allowed that. Not being able to see the face of the other.

I did not want to push her and make myself sound overly interested. I would not have had to so either.

I got to know that earlier that week she got a heart infarct. By the time we spoke her husband had fallen asleep on the sofa.

She was alone in a big house. Full of all the things she had collected during her life. She said she had a hard time getting rid of stuff. She talked about her Grandmas textile collection that she inherited. Crafted objects she could not through away. Her 30-year old daughter who had truble getting a job after ending college.

I started to feel more and more uncomfortable. As she went on more private stuff.

But she kept coming back to her grandma as one of those
shawls had been in her possession. 
She was a nun back in 1809.

She asked me what my intention of my collecting was. 
At first I did not want to go into details. If she would not approve my intentions.

But I gave in as I thought it might be interesting to hear her inputs. I had already payed for the shawls.

So I said that I am an artist making sculptures from them. Which means that I rip them apart and assemblage them again.

She said that she collected them for years because she liked to dress up in Swedish folklore. And worked extra within the church to fill out the pension.

And sometimes she wore them.

She did not seem surprised at all about my intention. She said that it sounded interesting to use such delicate materials. As they are so fragile because of their age.

We went on and I had to ask her more about her collections. I didn’t want to seem to too curious But I asked how she felt about one day leaving her collection. Her answer was that she wanted to sell everything now so there wouldn’t be so much to clean when they were no longer there. The “cleaning” turned out to be more for her daughters sake than for hers.

We went on and talked about the importance of women’s craft within the folkhemmet. The importance that textiles have played for women during the years. And that she saw it as she kept them safe. I imagine almost a personal archive of stuff from various periods.

The whole conversation was weird and very odd in many ways but also an interesting subject brought us ear to ear. Generation to generation.

I went on talking about material memories and how we attach and associate different people with certain materials. She started to talk in a very nostalgic scene about her grandma again. And said that she had one more shawl in her collection that
she would give me as a gift for buying her collection.

Things came somewhat clear to me, the importance of giving old materials new life to let them speak again.

It was certainly a very interesting and unexpected conversation to have a Saturday afternoon.
A separation means by definition “to convert a unit”.

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This is one way to explain how the activation phase of this body of work can take place.

As one actively has to take a part, choose from the mass of the unit, and absorb it into its own material structure. But what it’s happening then? Is the engaging person’s body become a piece in according to the external part, or vice versa?

What happens with the past histories of the materiality? Are the becoming filters, loose fragments mended with the intention and act with new unit?

I see bodies as units, we have the potential to spread, walk in our skin sacks, expand and shrink, we have the possibility to create new units.

Units are always in relation to their connections, even if the origin appears foreign or even unknown. The skin on our bodies, our genetic construction always references to our past unit by those connections.

By taking something we must reduce something, but at the same time we are gaining something. Those systems I want to call material transactions.

I believe that its performed every time I have ripped apart a shawl in this project.

As the ripping part is a reduction from the whole but at the same time it multiplies into new units that can spread.

The “loss” of parts rebounds with a body, but are then always referencing its original form simply by coexist with the new body?

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari explains such phenomena’s with their concept of a rhizome.

A rhizome never stops, as it grown from the middle of itself, it expands only by force of its own materiality, and has no clear start or end.
My materialization process shares ideas and principles with a rhizome, however, my 206 connections cannot expand in infinity. But they can be passed down, inherited like an heirloom, from body to body across generations and across times. They are always in relation to the other pieces. As the internal skeleton of a human body has 206 connections. Toes And fingers being the ends that does not directly connect to another part. It is with the foot that we can connect to the soil and by the soil and land we can connect to everything. It is with our fingers we can connect to the things in front of us. We can reach out a hand to shake another and then for a while we are in connection with another unit. We pick up a cup of tea, and holds it and let it go through our mouth to take a sip. It fills the functions my hand cannot handle. The hot tea will burn my hands and will go lost. But the cup saves it, allow my body to do things it could not do otherwise.

This body of work feasts upon participation, the participant becomes its own context. Wherever a piece is taken it absorbs its surroundings, it absorbs the wearer and I wish the wearer will absorb it back as an equal part of one unit.
Craft appears to me in an evidential matter. It speaks about history and materiality, relations with body, the maker and the society.

Craft is evidence of civilization and progress of evolution. From the things that appears common within our everyday life, there is always a material and making story behind them. Therefore I am attracted to ready-mades or used materials as they come with a clear or unclear message of their past meaning and use. Sometimes that is very distant and one has to approach it almost like a detective.

A detective that seeks and follow threads to make connections and conclusions. In order to unfold a story. That is where my interest on the subject matter is. It is a cluster of messages, clear and unclear and they all resonates with existence.
SOURCES

1. Siri Hustvedt, A Woman Looking at Men Looking at Women: Essays on Art, Sex, and the Mind
2. Oswald De Andrade, Anthropophagic Manifest, 1928
3. Moderna Klassiker Michel Foucault Vansinnets historia under den klassiska epoken Arkiv förlag, 1973

IMAGES

Fig. 1: ARCH OF HYSTERIA
Structures of existence: THE CELLS, P138

Fig. 2: Antique Mourning shawls ca 1800-1900 century, 2017
Artist image

Fig. 3: Fibrins and blood vessels under microscope

Fig. 4: Mourning pieces ca 15 x 4 cm, 2018
Artist image

Fig. 5: Ichthyosis Hystrix, Tilesius, Wilhelm Gottlieb, von Tilenau, ca 1800
https://www.huidziekten.nl/zakboek/dermatosen/itxt/IchthyosisHystrix.htm

Fig. 6: Mourning part ca 10 x 40cm, 2017

Fig. 7: Les Fleurs Du Mal, Carlo Farneti, ca 1935
http://50watts.com/Les-Fleurs-du-Skull

Fig. 8: Mourning Pieces ca 200 x 60 cm, 2017
Artist image

Fig. 9: X-Ray portrait, 2017
Artist image

Fig. 10: “Amputated” Tree, 2018
Artist image

Fig. 11: Last fragment, 2018
Artist image