Still life Portrait:
Contemporary jewelry in the form of still life painting
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Abstract

This paper presents an investigation in how a jewelry artist understands the life and death, permanence and impermanence of human, objects and other creatures, by communicating still life in the form of jewelry. I will bring up a fact that death and impermanence have been forgotten by my peers, and use still life and contemporary jewelry to discuss it.

The paper mainly talk about: my opinion upon life and death in modern society, why and how did I related them with still life paintings, how did I make my jewelry based on still life, and discuss about a dilemma I met: how will jewelry be when they are on and not on people’s body.

Key words: still life, life and death, permanence and impermanence, objects, materiality, jewelry
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Introduction

My norm is that in modern society, lots of people’s ignoring the passing of life. Not only human’s life, but also the life of animals, plants, and life inside the objects. People are talking about others’ life and death on the internet like talking about a show. As they don’t cherish the life of their kind, let alone other species. People take everything for granted and throw away after using them. In lots of cultures objects contain spiritual sustenance, making me believe that besides the function of objects, they also contain other meanings and beauty. I believe objects have life. This thought made me start to put attention on still life paintings. Still life paintings show the care and respect to the objects. Because different artists have their personal artistic focuses, objects are cared and respected in diverse ways in different paintings. For me they have one thing in common, that they all communicate the permanence and impermanence through the objects in the paintings.

I have been attracted by the metaphor of life and death hidden in still life paintings. While appreciating still life paintings, I would imagine how the artists painted at the time and guess what they thought when they were painting. I can feel it that they have seen the beauty in their everyday life, but lamented that the scene can’t last forever. So the painters made every effort to keep it with their brushes and canvas. In addition to history, artistic and beauty, the thought of permanence and impermanence towards life is also indispensable. For the painters, life in objects, fruits, flowers and other things that can be considered as still life had the same value as human’s life. The definitions of permanence and impermanence are vague that everyone has different perceptions about them. For me they are both a period of process and a moment. At some point, everything that is visible and invisible in life changes the form from live to dead. Death is one of the conditions of impermanence that I can recognize. In this paper, I will discuss life and death as the way to express permanence and impermanence, and make links to my contemporary jewelry practice.

My background is a jewelry maker, and I can’t leave behind this form of working while I am investigating the context of still life paintings. Jewelry itself id part of many still life paintings, in which symbols of wealth. In my practice, other still life, such as objects become the protagonist in jewelry. Jewelry is my way of making still life. Jewelry is my way of making still life. The most important feature of jewelry is that it can be worn, and I argue that when it is not worn but placed somewhere, it is still life. In order to show my thoughts and the practice I set up a goal, which is: to communicate the permanence and impermanence conveyed by still life painting through jewelry; in order to show my cherishing of the daily objects and life. I start the project and the paper by a poem written by Robert Frost.
Nothing Gold Can Stay

Nature’s first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf’s a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

Robert Frost 1874-1963
Background

When a rose is cut, it dies. But people put it in the water as if this can extend its life of blooming. I got confused when realizing that I constantly do the same thing. Though getting old is destined, I am still trying to delay it as much as possible by, for example by trying to eat a lot of vitamins. Though knowing what I have can’t last forever, I still try to save everything I owned, youth, love, flowers and beautiful clothes, etc. But why was I being confused about this ‘trying to save’ behavior? Isn’t this a general act written in DNA? I struggled with this for months. It was one day I just suddenly realized like an initiation, that death might be too far away from me, causing me to almost forget the human pursuit of eternity. I was born in a peaceful age, always living in safe countries, and my family is relatively wealthy, so I never lack anything materially or spiritually. More importantly I have never had anyone or anything indispensable leaving me forever. Death seems to have no relation with me, nor with the plenty of similar peers. I have forgotten that life is full of impermanence.

Impermanence is worthy to be remembered, and death should be often thought of. Death completes life, only limited time adding the value to what we own. A Chinese artist Wu Jianan mentioned in one speech that: ‘Humans die, that is why we are human. When we stop dying, maybe we wouldn’t know how should we call ourselves.’

People in the past were closer to death. German philosopher Walter Benjamin compared the differences in the relationship between people and death in the past with it now. He said that: ‘There used to be no house, hardly a room, in which someone had not once died. Today people live in rooms that have never been touched by death, dry dwellers of eternity, and when their end approaches they are stowed away in sanatoria or hospitals by their heirs.’ Not only the past of life, nothing stayed permanent and even the daily supplies could be lacking in some families. Because death and impermanence are parts of daily life, they are not only the objects of awe, but also the difficulties people have been wanting to overcome. Different ways of keeping things were invented. For the objects and things that were unlikely to preserve in a physically, they were recorded, still life was one of the methods.

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1 Wu Jianan, ‘How was death invented.’ Lecture with Dongjian Art on CAFA ART INFO, October 23, 2019

Permanence, Impermanence and Still Life Painting

Human's pursuit of permanence is not only manifested in trying to extend their own life, but also in trying to lengthen the service time of objects. Lots of objects are produced. If well kept, they can last longer than their producer. They were made in the past, are used at present and will still be used in the future. If a thing is not marked with an expiration date, it seems like it can last forever. Objects are between life and death. It's a bit hard to tell whether an object is alive or not. Before its function runs out or is thrown away, I personally think of it as it's alive, only without any visible vital signs. There is a saying in Asian culture that if an object existed for a long time, it comes alive. A lot of arts, such as paintings and sculptures are objects themselves, at the same time they can carry the life in other objects. Still life painting is one of them, especially the vanitas still life painting. It shows the transience of life, the futility of pleasure, and the certainty of death. Flourished in the Netherlands in the early 17th century, Vanitas paintings still have a great impact on the modern art with regard to the impermanence of life. Quote from Themes of Contemporary Art: The term vanitas refers to art intended to remind us that life and its pleasures are fleeting. Curator John B. Ravenal noted, “The theme of vanitas concerns one of life’s fundamental tensions, between the enjoyment of earthly pleasures and accomplishments and the awareness of their inevitable loss.”

The preservation of the moment made the object in the still life painting transcend the time, and the canvas became its container. Take the painting Still Life with a Skull a Book and the Roses (1628-1632) by Jan Davidsz. De Heem as an example. The roses weren’t completely open, the buds are round and full, as they are still alive. However, the old toothless skull and the yellow book beside them reminds us that these are roses from 400 years ago, they might already dry out before the painting was finished. Still life paintings never lack of death. It is the core. Still life is known as the nature morte, literally ‘dead nature’. The book Nature Morte claims that: ‘ still life painting’s poignant reminders of the transience of life and the ever-present threat of death.’ If seeing the still life individually, everything has its unique temperament. They gradually became different symbols in painting. The book also mentioned that: ‘Arranging these symbols on canvas became artists’ obscure way of presenting their thoughts. In related to death, if not a skull, then a watch, hourglass or burning candle could be inserted into the scene to remind the viewers of their own eventual death.’ Because of these semiotics, that every object on the canvas looked like they were there because of some accurate calculation, I was struggling with the meaning of objects nowadays. What kind of objects contain permanence and impermanence in modern society? Do they need to be extremely accurate? To understand these questions, I started to investigate through still life paintings that are closer to nowadays.

Among the numerous twentieth-century still life paintings, there are two painters that touch me most. Giorgio Morandi is one of them. Morandi’s paintings have a peaceful power that makes me calm down. Though using the most common objects such as vases and bottles and without

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3 Jean Robertson, Craig McDaniel, Themes of Contemporary Art Visual Art After 1980 p.342
4 Michael Petry, Nature Morte Contemporary artists reinvigorate the Still-Life tradition p.6
5 Michael Petry, Nature Morte Contemporary artists reinvigorate the Still-Life tradition p.6
emphasizing why using them, that doesn’t weaken the permanence in his paintings. There’s a sense of warmth in his painting from inside to outside transformed by his dignified color, elaborate arrangement and the delicate light and shadow. Just like pulse under the skin, the simple scenes have a strong vitality.

Another artist is Avigdor Arikha. Arikha abandoned abstract painting because what he was pursuing, was the clearness in viewing. If everything abstract can be read as the real world, why not just drawing the everyday life. His drawing turned to realism, he started to draw the corners that were easy to be ignored. What he cared about was to capture the moments of reality. The tiniest things also contained the profound truth. For me that is the impermanence of life. This might be what I was looking for in my practice. Despite all the great meanings that forced on objects, objects themselves have their own beauty and truth that worthy to be appreciated. So now I tried to find the details in the daily objects that speak for themselves. They are powerful persuasive themselves.
Recording and photographing with materiality

How to truly convey the information and details expressed by objects? I think casting and milling are two of the best methods in my experiments. Traditionally, still life is presented in paintings, illustrations or photographs. I believe that casting and milling have some similarities.

Instead of being flat, the casted object possesses the touchable details that a traditional painting does not have. Casting is the recording of objects. The objects need to stay 6 hours in the silicon, the final result shows not only a moment but a period. Its lifetime changed with the change of the material, and lost its original function, but turned into something that might persist longer. A different texture might make the object hard to recognize at first glance, and the consumption during production can sometimes make it incomplete. But I argue that these differences transform the object into a still life, and the still life is all the object wants to say. The casted still life is very honest with the object, because it is hard to exaggerate when casting.

Casting is very common in artworks. A British artist Rachel Whiteread (see image 4), has widely used casting as her working method. There's a big contrast on the volume of her casting targets, from small everyday objects such as hot-water bag to large inside of a whole building. In the interview with the Tate Gallery, she said: 'I wanted to preserve every day. I want to give authority to some of the most forgotten things. Stop them in time and cast in something solid.' Her perception and expression of space are very touching. Whiteread filled a lot of open spaces in the most common rooms and buildings people live in. Those spaces are easy to ignore even though we are living in it. Only after her filling, can people feel the shock brought by the blank spaces, and show respect to the space that is normally considered to have nothing. Every detail of the object is kept intact, and even all the flaws. The flaws turn in to an aesthetic in Whitered's work after her casting. Defects are also aesthetics, which inspired me a lot. Objects aren’t perfect, just like people, no one is perfect. The marks on the objects are considered to be defective and flaws which might cause people want to throw them away. But for me they are the imprint of the life of objects. So I also paid great attention to keeping all the traces on the original items when I was casting them. Since I am making jewelry, so they may not be very large in size as Whiteread’s casting, but they can also tell a complete story about the life of objects.

Casting is the recording of objects, and milling is the photographing. Milling is a processing method that is commonly used in metalworking. The process can be concluded as: soften the metal sheets by heating them, catch the object between two sheets then let them go through the milling machine together, the objects in the middle will leave its imprint on both of the sheets. Compared with casting, it takes a much shorter time, that’s why I’m comparing it with photographing, they are all capturing a specific moment.

I use silver as the milling material. Compared with other metal, its softness makes it easier to process. Silver also has a traditional heritage in classic jewelry and it's highly decorative. Because of these qualities, the first piece I milled was a box of an used facial toner. Boxes as packages are meant to be throw away, what we really need is the thing inside them. But most packages were designed meticulously, I feel sad to see them lying in the trash as their own life is meaningless. Therefore I want to make them into still life. By folding the box and milling it on the silver sheet, its shape is gone forever. The box turns into an abstract pattern and its life becomes permanence on the silver. As a valuable metal, for the majority silver is always worthy. Its commercial value makes its eternity. The impermanence of a wasted box turns into a permanent piece of silver at the moment of milling.

Besides metal, I have casted a lot with concrete. Concrete is a very modern material that fills up everywhere in the cities now. Despite the buildings that are under construction, the exposed concrete is rare to be seen. Concrete buildings are mostly covered with several thick layers of paintings on the outside, and inside the room the concrete is hidden under the

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6 Rachel Whiteread, ‘Celebrating over 25 years of Rachel Whieread’s internationally acclaimed sculpture’, interviewed by TATE, September 12, 2017
decoration. Although concrete is the basis of a home, because of its pale looking, people sometimes forget that it’s a material with a gentle character that keeps us warm and safe, and it’s solemn at the same time. In recent years some artists and designers have found that besides constructing material, concrete has a quality in crafting into highly detailed objects, including jewelry.

Colombian-born artist Doris Salcedo, who was commented by Gill Perry, a professor of history of art at the Open University, as: ‘… anthropomorphic references are often deliberately written into her intended narratives.’ She has a series of installation arts Untitled (see image 7). In which she combined different furniture by filling in concrete. For example, she took away a door of a wardrobe and let half of the bed disappear in the cement that filled the wardrobe. There’s a tension in this shrieking and chaos space which looks like they are forced together. The bed that is usually fulled is empty but the wardrobe that should have some empty space turns into a heavy monument. If looking closely, the crumpled shirt and dresses seem to emerge from the concrete. ‘…In Salcedo’s work, uncanny effects are often deployed to reinforce metaphorical possibilities.’ said Perry. The reason she said so was concerned with the unusual filling of concrete. The concrete shows various traits of characters in different artistic languages. Here it brings a stifle. I started to ask myself what kind of feeling do I expect it to carry? Then I found I can’t answer that before the actual casting experiment.

The first thing I casted was pill packages. Instead of the one that is new or completely used up, I choose the ones that still have few remains, but looks like they’re soon going to be used up. It is obvious from the shape that with the running out of the pills, the life of is package is coming to a count down. Concrete stopped this count down. What surprised me was, the concrete restored all the details including the ones that I haven’t expected, such as the zigzag broken edges and the batch number. The concrete pills were carefully held when I showed them to others. The way people appreciate it also changes because of its tiny size. It was not until the pills package turned into concrete did I realized how much atheistic were hidden in them. Coming back to the feeling question, I think I have got an answer that the concrete in my jewelry is sensitive and fragile because of the size, but still solemn is an inherent quality that can’t be removed.

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image 4
Ghost
Rachel Whiteread 1990

image 5
Untitled
Doris Salcedo 1997
The objects

What kind of object can be still life? We are surrounded by various objects, they are filling our space. But it is still hard to find the ones that are representative and suitable for making jewelry. I have also experienced a series of changes in choosing the objects. I started with the classic still life paintings, in which each object in the painting has a corresponding symbol. So I racked my brains to tag the objects around me and imposed them with what I thought were human characteristics. But those are not real, those characteristics can't present the life of objects, and they also make me think narrowly that I found nothing is really suitable. So I turned to study the modern still life paintings such as Morandi and Arikha that I have mentioned before. They were more concentrated on the objects instead of forced the objects to be something else. I also changed my working method. I made the still life that I found appealing to me first and then thought about the message it conveys.

Pills

Pills are the first set of still life I made. They are used for extending human life but can't make them immortal. The reason they were first created was the human's demand for a permanent life, such as in the Qin dynasty the emperor put his entire life in finding and making a pill that can make him immortal, but accidentally invented some other things like deadly toxicant. The pills packages will be thrown away after eaten or no longer needed, for me that's when they die. But besides their original function, pills and their packages were designed. They have different shapes, textures and arrangements. They have their aesthetic to appreciate than throw away.

Toner Box

The reason I choose the toner box is similar to pills. Toner and other skincare products were meant to let human skin stay nice. Its package is also something that considered as trash once what's inside is no longer needed, as if it's the mission of the boxes. People put time and effort in designing and making packages, it's a pity for me to just throw them away. I want to make them stay longer by milling it on a silver sheet. After milling for almost twenty times, the shape of the box was completely gone. But it looks extremely like a human's skin. It turns out to be what it was trying to keep.

Rose

Rose is the most common flower to be seen in still life. It is widely recognized that rose symbolized love, which seems unreasonable to me because they fade so soon in reality. Even though they were painted in the still life, they still looked delicate but fragile. Can the rose be something else? Can the rose just be rose? I cast my rose into concrete, which has a strong contrast with rose. The concrete rose is still delicate but also strong. It's not as beautiful as the fake flowers but more honest.

Frame

I bought the frame in the second-hand market, along with a photo in it. The one who framed the photo must wish that the photo can be kept forever, but apparently, it wasn't. If I didn't buy it, it might end up in a dustbin. I can't verify how many times this frame has been rotated, and I don't know where it will go in the future. Maybe one day the jewelry I am making now, the objects that I am trying to keep will appear in similar markets.
pills

rose

toner box

frame
Investigation on placement of jewelry

When the jewelry is taken off from the body, it needs to be stored. Being on the body is the most significant feature of jewelry, but there are times that they are not worn and still need to be appreciated in a different background than on the body. Comparing with jewelry itself, the background is often neglected. If the exhibition of jewelry is completely decided by the curator, the characteristic of jewelry might be sacrificed in the big white cube. The exhibition 21 Grams curated by Ruudt Peters in 2018 Hangzhou is one of the bad examples for me. All the podiums were arranged neatly in a fancy room, which looked crowded because of the floor color, but each jewelry was so lonely in the box and had no interaction with neither the space nor other jewelry. This is what I trying to avoid. Most of the time the background of jewelry is a box, or a podium. Can it be something else, that is not only a setoff, but also something that can tell story by using every jewelry placed on it?

I am making jewelry as if it was painting still life. As the composing of objects is essential to the still life paintings, the placement of jewelry is also very important to me because different compositions tell different stories. I wish my jewelry can be like the objects on the still life paintings, to have their specific spot. When they are not taken or worn they can be appreciated as a whole set including their platform as a painting background. Once the jewelry is bought, I have no control over them. In order to leave the wearers with a strong visual identity of the placement, there should be some marks or imprints left to show on the background that this place has an absence of a piece of jewelry.

Traditionally jewelry’s definition is dependent on its placement on the body. If it is on the neck then it’s a necklace, if it is on the wrist then it’s a bracelet. This becomes conceptual when it comes to contemporary jewelry. Not only where to place on the body, but also the placement when it’s not on the body.
For example, Liesbeth Bussche is a very interesting artist. She is making jewelry that is not for worn. The jewelry she has made come from common city facilities such as street lights, roadblocks and security fence. Using the shape they already have, Bussche added the common jewelry parts on them, and made them look like giant jewelry that still has their original function. There is very little verbal content on her website, only to claim that her works are called Urban Jewelry. I think this is because her intention is clear enough in the works, her practice is the word that even those can’t write can understand her. Bussche is not making jewelry for people, instead, she is making for the cities that the people are living in. Her works seem to be separated but still closely related to people. For me she’s not only making jewelry or illustration art, but they are also still life on the street. It’s not hard to relate her huge jewelry with their environments. The reason her jewelry always has a stable impression for the viewers is because that they are too big to move, and they were made for the environment. How can I find my communication of jewelry with the human body and its background?

The background to put the jewelry in is usually called the jewelry box. Most jewelry boxes have clear functional constructions to point out what kind of jewelry should be put here. For example, the ring grooves are for the rings. But those kinds of grooves are not specific enough, because any ring can fit it. What I am looking for is a clearer corresponding relationship. I want to use the imprint left by jewelry, to let the jewelry itself decide what should be left when they are worn.

Danish jewelry artist Kim Buck has some sets of jewelry that can’t be separated from their boxes (see image 7), they have the equal value in his jewelry work, sometimes the boxes become the main part. He made a set of brooches called the Jewelry Box for the exhibition Smykkeskrin. held at the Art Museum of Funen in 2003. The golden brooches’ motifs were the negative impressions of some classical jewelry including pearl earrings, a necklace with a heart pendant, a solitaire ring, and a necklace with a crucifix. In the book Kim Buck It’s the Thought That Counts (2007), the writer Jorunn Veiteberg commented that: ‘An impression tells us about something that once was but now is gone, a trace or a memory that was preserved here in a new form.’ 9Because of this impression, even if this set of work was not made into a brooch, I still see the quality of jewelry in it. I keep thinking about what is left behind when the jewelry is not there, can there be a mark to show the absence of the jewelry?

Since I am working with still life, which has a tradition with the oil painting, I decide to place my jewelry on the canvas. The canvas is the jewelry box. I mark the place by sketching the shadow of the jewelry. It’s like a phantom, but also a surprise for people to see that objects have little but beautiful imprint even they are ephemeral.

Jewelry box
Kim Buck

the rose and its shadow
Discussion

What is the relationship between my chosen objects? What’s the meaning of them when they are composed into one still life? They are not my main questions, but they are the most frequently asked question during the process. These the same questions for a lot of fine artists as well, such as what do these things mean in your painting. It bothered me a lot in the beginning. But then I started to think, do I have to answer that? What really confused me here, is people’s dedication to making clear of all the content in art and craft.

Of course I have my reason for choosing the objects that can be in my still life. Each one of them has its own story. But I’m not sure if it’s necessary to explain the combination meaning particularly clear in this paper. I think one of the charms of contemporary art is that it has some distance from the audience’s life, just like Nikolay Chernyshevsky\textsuperscript{10} said that: ‘Art is inspired by life, but beyond it’. If art is clear in words, then there’s no need to look at the works. This may be better in the field of fine art. For so many years, people have probably assumed that there’s no need to understand completely. But I feel different in contemporary art. I claim myself as a jewelry artist, not only because I’m using still life painting that originated from fine art as my theme, but also I think jewelry and craft can achieve the same philosophical thought as fine art.

There are a lot of people holding a different opinion. In countless cases in which crafts challenged to join fine art and ended in failure, I can feel some critics’ stubborn views on crafts: Since you are a craftsman just make something that is useful in daily life. But more people are working hard to broaden the path of arts for crafts. Such as Jorunn Veitberg, a Norwegian curator is trying to help contemporary craft enter the white cube. ‘One of the ideas associated with craft is that it belongs more to the sphere of everyday life than the art sphere. With the white cube, there followed a further underlining of the distinction between art and everyday life.’ said Veitberg in her book Craft in Transition, ‘It represents a haven for art and it is often referred to as the temple of art.’\textsuperscript{11} If art is tolerant, I argue that it should also be able to include craft, and although I am making jewelry, I should also be able to apply fine art thinking into my practice. I wish I can be brave as the fine art artists, and saying that I composed like this because I know they should.

When I first started, I was tangled in what objects should I choose. They better be common in everyday life, but also have a unique aesthetic, and can show some feedback on our current life. This brought a lot of limitations. Meanwhile the further I get into this project the more I realized that, if I put all my attention in the symbolic meaning of the object, I get into a dead end. It seems like I was finding excuses for them, which they don’t need. As I mentioned before, objects are powerful persuasive themselves. Therefore I believe that I don’t need to explain too much, and tell everything so clearly in the paper. Neither do I need a whole story in my practical works.

Lots of concrete broke during the casting and silver broke after milling, some organic shape only have half remain. This fragment somehow meets with my thought about what in an object can be permanence and what can’t. Sometimes even with the help, not all the object wants to still stay alive.

\textsuperscript{10} Nikolay Chernyshevsky(1828-1889) Russian revolutionary democrat, materialist philosopher, editor, critic, and socialist

\textsuperscript{11} Jorunn Veiteberg, ‘Craft in Transition’, translated by Douglas Ferguson, pressed by Bergen National Academy of the Arts 2005, p64
Conclusion

When this project first started, I just expected it to be a set of contemporary jewelry using fine art as an entry point to express my concern about everyday life where life is not cherished. When I went deeper, I discovered a lot of problems that I need to solve, not only in the technique I used, but also how to develop the concept, and how to learn from the failures. I don't think all the problems are solved, and actually, no problem has been solved. It's hard for art and craft to really solve problems, but they are good ways to expose the problems.

The combination of concept and the work is tighter than I expected. During the producing process, my working with fragment had an impact on my way of thinking and writing, meanwhile, the writing also helps me understand my work. Sometimes I feel like I am having a conversation with my work. When I am working with them, I need to hear their requirements.

Back to my key question, that how a jewelry artist understands the life and death, permanence and impermanence of human, objects and other creatures, by communicating still life in the form of jewelry. I have always been a pessimistic person. This pessimism makes me hold everything like a miser. But sometimes things are like sand in the hands, the tighter it is held, the quicker I lose it. I can't say that I have made all the chosen objects into permanence, but the form of their life changes and will live a little longer as jewelry. As human's purse for the permanence of life is in vain, so is my project. But I what I kept is my respect of object in a sad world.

When people seeing a piece of jewelry, their eyes usually stay a little longer than seeing the things that are going to be thrown away. This little time difference is how my work shows the critic to the norm. People might notice that the jewelry is made by used objects and have a quick thinking of all life can be beautiful during this short time. The carefully hold and kept of jewelry by both me and others is another side that shows the critic. My jewelry is valuable and fragile, so is life, and all life should be kept as precious jewelry.
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I am very picky about me, and my work. In my opinion, a successful work of mine is something that can last for two weeks without me getting bored and disgusted with it. So far I haven't rejected my work, I think it’s a good thing. Maybe this is a successful work, though I see it's insufficient. For example, the metalworking. On one hand good metal work requires years of practice, on the other hand I feel that time is an excuse for my impatience. I still have no answer to the placement of my jewelry. I constantly think that painting on the canvas is not the best place but the simplest one. So I often comfort myself that this is how art should be, it has experiments but no answers. The graduation work is one of the experiments. Although I am soon taking the Master's degree, this is just the beginning. I have only taken the first step in the field of contemporary craft.

The exhibition is also part of the experiment. If it wasn’t such short in time I think I can have more fun in the setting up. My jewelry still tends to be traditional in terms of functionality and size, so this also makes it less eye-catching in the first glance of the room than other works in the exhibition. Now I understand why many curators do not like contemporary jewelry, after all, it is difficult to display in the traditional white cube. But from another point of view, this is not the problem of the contemporary jewelry itself, but the problem of the curators. They should have the courage to challenge rather than slander if they fail to do well.

When I was writing the discussion of my thesis, I lamented the unfair treatment to craft in the art world. But now it’s 2020, the virus has brought all types of art back to the same starting line. Digital media may be excluded, but the effects of public broadcasting and online communication are also different. I think the transformation of traditional art, especially craft, to digital art started long ago. But no one is ready for this. The quarantine is a push that forces us to come up with a solution. Good pictures become the most important thing. When I make a piece of work, I believe that as long as the work is full of expressiveness, there is no need to use too many words to explain. The pictures are the same, they become a flat exhibition. I finished my Bachelor in China, and I have seen the importance of good pictures in order to apply for the Master here. But I don't like taking pictures. Taking pictures makes me irritable, no matter it's taken by me or by others. I choose craft because I like to make things with my hands, and I am not very good at using electronic devices. Craft is my comfort zone, but now I have to jump out of this.

I collaborated with a photographer Linda Andersson on May 10th, and this collaboration was a very pleasant experience. She is a nice person, easy to talk with and very responsible. But I am still a bit timid, because of my lack of confidence in my work. It's not that I don't think I did well this time, but that I am thinking about how it can develop. I really care what non-professionals think of my work. I worry that they will ask: How do you make money from this? If I can, I hope to use the craft I have studied for so long to maintain my life. So I had to think about why and what kind of people would buy and wear it. If I want to develop the material of concrete, it will be more interesting if it looks more like fine art. I have seen jewelry brands that focus on concrete, and not many have survived. During the process I find something might go further with jewelry, which is I attached the jewelry piece and the functional parts without welding them. This might be developed into the jewelry that is contemporary and wearable. But neither of these are important at the moment, people only dress up when they have extra money. The current economic downturn is a barrier for artists, designers, and all those who graduate from art schools.