In need of others
An investigation of touch, memory and the need for human connection and its relation to my practice

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CRAFT! Ädellab
Ma2
Spring: 2020
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Word count: 4657 words
Abstract

This paper presents an investigation of the human need of being needed and how dependent we are of each other. I am dealing with my fears of temporary relationships, temporary meetings and the Individualized society, it is about the fast-paced lives we live and how there is no time for stopping and taking care of each other and our surroundings. I use my craft to reconnect, talk about new or old relationships, and the impact relationships has on the development in one another. I discuss the perspective we have on time and where we have our focus in the moment. Connecting it to the slow movement, making time for the moment that we are in, everything happens in the present.

Keywords:
Memories, imprint, human relations, loneliness, solidarity, interface, connectedness, slow movement, loss
Index

Introduction 1

Background 2

Theory and context
Slow movement 3
Traces, 5
Touch 7
Memories, 8
The image 10
Ikon 10
Private and public 11

Method of casting and material 12
Slow in making 16

Discussion 17

References 18
Image references 19

Reflections 21
Introduction, This paper is about my fear of temporary relationships, temporary meetings and the Individualized society, it is about the fast-paced lives we live and how there is no time for stopping and taking care of each other and our surroundings. I will write about how, through my making I am coping with my fears and also how I connect and reconnect relations through memory and reaching out. I will discuss and make connections to the idea of ‘slow movement’.

I investigate our need of being needed by others, how we depend on each other to create the ability to develop in ourselves. I am interested about the total anonymity that is only possible in a modern society. I am not arguing for the abolishment of our private life and our anonymity, but I am aware of the possibility to be forgotten and no one would notice, when we are so consumed by ourselves.

I see a growing unwillingness to take responsibility for one another, its about Internets role in our lives and about the cellphone.

I use my craft to reconnect, and talk about new or old relationships. This comes from my own perspective and not from a mutual understanding. It is more for me to deal with and accept the constant changes in relationships. I will talk about this through a couple of sections; one is called Traces, where I am writing about interactions between individuals, and the importance of it. In the section Memories, I write about how, through memories we can keep distant relationships alive. I am exploring the interface between me and others.

I have specifically focused on working with the brooch in my making. The brooch relies on the wearer to become activated. It needs to be attached in some way to the wearers clothes ore accessories. In my pieces I have been working with the shape of my brooches, so that the brooch also can be looked upon as a piece in itself, without being attached to the wearer. This allow the viewer to read the pieces even when they are not being worn.
Background

It was a morning, I was on the subway to school, and like everyone else, I was on my phone. I guess that I was looking at my social media account. I was looking up around me just to see how many stations there were left before getting off. A kid and his Dad were in the same cart as me. The kid was asking all those questions that kids do, the ones that are impossible to answer. But the adult didn’t even hear the questions, he was so deep in the phone that the kid could have jumped off the subway without being noticed. It got me thinking a lot about how disconnected we are of each other in the present time in relation to where we physically are at the moment. It is about our focus.

I have a big interest in plants, like many people today. I started thinking about parents, children and my plants. I think I give more attention to my plants then people do to their own children. I think this will affect these children later in life, maybe they will be having a hard time connecting to the people around them. What will the future look like if we live only for the next moment in life, or exist only through our past in pictures that only show a moment, not the experiences in that moment.

we need other people, and we need to be needed. Increasingly, research confirms the dominating importance of love (Gauntlett 2011:123)
Theory and context

Slow movement - key relationship to the human connection

In the *slow movement* a movement against our fast paced lives we live. It is talking about the need to change perspective on how we live. Making time for what we do in the moment that we are in, everything happens in the present. It makes no sense to stress about the next thing you have in life if you still miss it because you are stressing about the thing after that. Therefore missing out on the real meetings with people, and not being able to take time for every person you meet in that moment.

The slow movement is criticizing the consumption in the society we live in today. It talks about the things that give more meaning to our everyday life and don't necessarily cost a lot of money. Things like cooking, talking and maybe walking with each other, are all experiences with real people giving their time and attention to one another. One of the most important things in life is to be seen, and also to take the time to see others.

It is hard to live a life where you are able to create time for more slowness. We need to change the way we think about time. Since the watch was introduced, we have lived our lives according to its time (Honore 2007, kap 1. 00:48-00:52). Eating lunch during lunchtime and having alarms for everything, from going up in the morning and going to bed at night. Not eating when you are hungry and resting when you are tired. We live to fit as much into one hour as possible.

In my work I try to give space for things to take time, and to work at a pace which allows for every moment to fully sink in before rushing off to the next step. I aim to achieve this through the calmness communicated in my work. It is standing still with a calm grace.

Atsuko Tanaka investigates in the work *Calendar* 1954 how arbitrarily we treat time from the perspective of a hospital bed.

*As the numbers were written down, they 'gave form to time.*

*(Liverpool Biennial: Stages 6)*
Traces, society interacting. Society is a web of ongoing human relationships, it is through these interactions that society's culture develops. Individuals crossing paths and in an interface develop ideas and knowledge that generates new ideas that would not exist without the crossing of paths. If the individual would live without being open to these meetings and interactions, it would be like running away from the development of humanity. The individual needs the society just as the society needs the Individuals within it.

In *Making is connecting* David Gauntlett suggests that:

*Individuals are more satisfied when they are part of a social networks....we are all, collectively, better off as a society when we are active parts of the social fabric* (Gauntlett 2011:116)

I see the individual to be equally as important as the society they exist within. It is like islands on the ocean rising from the seawater, but under the surface being all connected to each other. In some of Atsuko Tanakas work in the exhibition *The Art of Connecting*, You see big paintings with circles and lines connecting them together. They are made horizontally on the floor, the paintings are traces of the artist's movement around a canvas, easily interpreted as the pacing of an individual within a confined space(Akira Kanayama Atsuko Tanaka Association). The lines like nerve fibers sending out connections between individuals.

Image 3. Atsuko Tanaka. Gate of Hell, 1965–69, vinyl paint on


**Touch**, represented in the imprint of the skin on the brooches. It is representing a bodily meeting with a person, a touch that leaves marks in eternity. Every interaction is an invisible recording in time. In Hiroshi Sugimotos photos from the serie *seascapes* he explores memory and time. Using the quality of long exposure photography, he has provided insight into how the medium can both obscure and alter reality. The pictures show the ocean exists in its different states, and is in constant change. Hiroshi Sugimotos says “Photography is a system of saving memories. It's a time machine, in a way, to preserve the memory, to preserve time.”

(artnet: Hiroshi Sugimoto)

Connected through a physical meeting. For me touch is a way of communicating and interacting with others. All of my brooches are representations of physical meetings during my grownup life. It is the loss of connection that I am working with in this project, but there has from the beginning been a longing for reconnecting. In one part of the project I thought that I was going to reach out to the people who are represented in the project, but my fears took over and I decided that I would rather keep my memories intact then be disappointed or rejected.

In the book *Massage och beröring* (Massage and touch 2017) Berit Seiger Cronfalk writes that touch creates closeness, security, trust and can therefore both calm and confirm other people, in a way that no words can (Seiger Cronfalk 2017:15). There is no longer a touch, it is just a bodily memory of it. In the short movie *Fly in the Ointment* made by Peter Collins, he describes his longing and loss of touch while being a prisoner in a Canadian prison:

> Somehow, I felt [my wife’s] fingers on my leg. Shocked and excited, I opened my eyes only to realize it was a fly walking on me. I was greedy for human touch so I closed my eyes and pretended it was her fingers. I tried to stay perfectly still because I didn’t want to frighten the fly off and be left alone (youtube: Fly in the Ointment).
Memories, just by the memories of his wife’s fingers he was able imagine that the touch of the fly was a human touch.

I create relations in my head all the time, I play out scenarios until I almost believe in them. I base my created relations on a memory, but I can’t be sure if the memory is constructed or not, I rethink and think again so there is no original memory left, only a representation of it. I also only have my own perspective on this memory.

*As my thoughts turn to you again, I do not suffer. I do not miss you. You are more present in my memory then you were in the life we shared. If you were still here, you would perhaps have become a stranger to me. Vanished, you are as alive as ever.*

*(Aleksander Johan Andreassen, 2015)*

Do other think of me as much as I think of them?

Arne Jarrick writes in his book *Behovet att behövas* (*The need to be needed*) that through the ability of dealing with relations in absence of reality in the mind, the human is able to keep these relationships alive. (Jarrick 2005:186) It is not a mutual relationship kept alive, so is it really a relationship? It is real only for the person dealing in the absent with the memory.

In the Movie *Mannen utan minne* (*The man without memory*) A man travels to a new city in search of a new job and he decides to take a nap in a park. During his nap he gets robbed and beaten. He wakes up at a hospital, not remembering anything about who he is at the moment. Creating his own Identity again without all the knowledge from old relations. Imagine if the body remembers something from its meetings and interactions that the mind no longer has for him. Can all of our memories truly disappear? bodily or in the mind?

*Diary notes*

*I am thinking a lot about how I am in my relationships, I know that I have a need for keeping in touch, I need to be pretty close to that person physically. It’s a big fear for me, I know that I am moving soon again and I don’t want to lose my relations I have here, but at the same time I really want to reconnect with old relations when I move. If I see my relations as a box it’s a box that I can take with me. And if I only can nurse the relations I am close to I need to travel a lot.*
I have a big interest in charms, specifically the Locket, a medallion where you can put photos. I can remember the curiosity it awoke in me, not knowing what was pictured on the inside. It felt like the most personal secret kept in plain sight, and still it was so far away. It was not possible to get to know what others were hiding there. I never had one of my own, but I started creating boxes, with secret compartments hidden in plain sight. If you knew where to look you could find them. They were often connected to a specific person, and often also just containing memories from that specific person. Things that I would not ever want to forget. I have a chocolate bar that is soon 20 years old, and I will never be able to open it, that would in a way destroy the memory it contains. It moves around with me forever like the other things I collected, I bring it wherever I move. I keep a lot of this things in boxes that are hidden in box that then are placed in another box.

In a way I try to freeze or preserve something that changes all the time, and it's not just up to me to make it alive.
The Image to preserve reality. The picture have become something more important than the real experience that you take the picture of. Does the picture help us to create a structure in our lives? Do they create a lifeline for us to remember what we have done and when. The pictures are a way of preserving a moment in time. In a way are we taking pictures today as if the experience only exist if it is captured in an image.

What does then the image do for us? For me it takes me to places I have been, or feelings I have felt. It gives me the ability to relive the experience I had. It is as if the picture has the ability to open up a world beyond the actual image. A secret key to the memory it holds in my mind. The quality of the picture does not matter. I see through the picture into the memory it contains. The polaroid picture will fade while my work will be forever in a material the nature can not take care of. While the fading picture dissolves it will be filled with new memories, through the new wearer.

I use the measurement of a polaroid mini picture in my work. The frames it creates helps me to portray the feeling of a captured moment in time and contain it. Again using the box as a frame to contain and freeze the moment in time.

Icon a spiritual image. The word Icon comes from the Greek word eikon and translated means image (Abel 2006:27). The Icon is a spiritual image with a lot of layers of meaning. It is not the motive that is important, it is what it is representing.

The Greek-Syrian monk Johannes of Damaskus describes the image as “an image is a resemblance to something, a model, or a representation that in itself shows the image. An image is not always consistent with the original. for the image is one thing and it depicted another”(Abel 2006:51). The representation can never be the original, even when there is no original, it comes from original interactions or happenings.
Private and public. The brooch is for me a type of jewelry that communicates from a private level out to the public. It has been worn as a statement or to show political belonging and also belonging to specific groups, and still is.
The brooch life began as functional, utilitarian items that were used to secure pieces of clothing, like a loincloth. The first recorded brooches were made of thorns and flint, while pins crafted from metal date back to the Bronze Age (Beth Bernstein, 2016). I find it interesting that the brooch was used to connect together cloaks and other items of clothing. The connecting in brooches comes back in my project but in reconnecting and connecting to others.

There is a large range of brooches, one of them is the Cameo, perhaps the most traditional form of brooch, cameos feature carved relief image of a figure, often depicting a relative or significant other (Phil Youngberg, 2017). In a way I see a resemblance to the cameo brooch and my pieces. For me the imprint or relief is representing a relation to a significant other.

You might wonder who the specific other I am talking about is? I will never give you the names of these people. They have a big place in my heart, even if they will never get to know this. Maybe I am afraid of telling them how much they have meant to me, and maybe I am afraid of knowing that I didn't have the same impact on their life.

In an older project Lost messages, 2016 that is still not finished I casted paper messages into bronze, they were going to be send out to people that I wanted to tell things that I never got the courageous to say. It was both things that had made me mad, sad, angry, happy, glad, loved. A couple of the castings where made, and in a way I felt that it was no longer necessary for me to send them to the people they belonged to. They were after worked with just representations of things I didn't dare telling people, and all the things I will never dare telling people in the future, they are the unspoken words hanging around someones neck.

In my work right now the specific person in mind will never know that this project is about them, because it is not. It is about me and me feelings towards them. The project is talking about privacy and in a way, it would stop being private if I would tell you or the person involved that they are a part of my project.
Method of casting and material. I use casting as a method in my making. I have developed my own method of casting, where I cast in every step of the making of the primary form. In this project I am casting the last step in epoxy resin. It is a transparent plastic. The transformation in the material from liquid to solid has always fascinated me. It is not a object until the transformation is completed to solid form. Casting plastic has been used before to capture things in a state in time, memories from a vacation or a flower someone got at a specific moment. I am capturing something that in a way only existed in very short moment. A snapshot in time not even existing, a snapshot out from my memory. I use imprint of my skin, but in a way it is not. It is a imprint on a imprint on a imprint and so on, it is eight steps from the "original" imprint of my skin, now only the memory left of the original. I use my own imprint because it is my memories the meetings is based on. How can this then be a representation of another person? I see it as a painter painting a portrait from a memory of a specific person. Is that not a portrayal of that person? It is a abstraction, and you can't see the person it represents but that dosen't mean it is not.

It is important to me to be in the whole process of making. I want to be able to control as much of the process as possible even if there always will be a part of the material transformation that I am not able to control. One of the reasons why it feels so important for me to be present in the whole making process is to be able to see something develop and grow into shape. Something that didn't exist before is now materialised. It is like making your thoughts real and visible for the audience. To make is to make things matter or to show that you matter. I position my jewelry pieces in a construction that takes them to another stage. The autonomous stage of everyday jewelry enters the gallery stage, where the context of my jewelry is also communicating through the display.

As Ellen Dissanayake has written:

There is an inherent pleasure in making. We might call this *joie de faire* (like *joie de vivre*) to indicate that there is something important, even urgent, to be said about the sheer enjoyment of making something exist that didn't exist before, of using one's own agency, dexterity, feelings and judgment to mold, from, touch, hold and craft physical materials, apart from anticipating that fact of its eventual beauty, uniqueness or usefulness (Gauntlett, 2011:24).

The origin of my casting method comes from the French technique Cire perdue, or "lost wax" which is a technique used since bronze age (Nationalencyklopedin, casting). The technique allows the final casting to be very detailed. In the original technique it is only possible to make the casting once, but for me it is possible to cast multiple times, because I am using alternative materials with this technique. This enables me to try out the same form in different coloring and surface treatment, before taking the final decisions. When the final decisions are made I only cast one more casting in the form.

The color I choose to work with is an opaque white. I only add a very small amount of color to the plastic, so it still have a transparent look, but with a diffusing expression.

Through the front of the brooch you can see traces of imprint shown through the surface. The Imprint is is gilded from the inside of the brooch.

On the back of the piece the brooch mechanism is attached, the back also reveals its hollow shape. The back of the piece is for the wearer to choose to show or not.

The brooch has the expression of being heavy and solid, it can be hard for someone that doesn't have the knowledge of these materials to see that it is made of plastic.

The display of the brooches allows you to see that something exists on the back of the brooch that it is not possible to see without taking it out from the display.

Here is an example of a test display I
made. The box is in transparent acrylic plastic that I have sandblasted so it is not all see through, it is sandblasted on the inside of the box. So you can't see any reflections from the brooch back. On the frontside of the display you can see the brooch standing on a transparent stand. From a distant it almost looks like it is floating in the air.

On the back you can see through the plastic but not al clear.

The legs of this display is made of steel and then colored black. I have also gilded some areas of the back of the display leg. It is very important in this test of display to be able to move around these structures.

The structures are built at eye level, so that you should be able to come close to look at the piece, but not be able to see behind it.

Image 11. Emma Hansen. work in process, Stuff it 2019
The display I have made for the final presentation is made of the same material and same color. I have developed it into one installation connecting all of the pieces in the ceiling. The installation is 4,03 m high. There are pillars coming down from the ceiling to the floor, and on every pillar sits a frosted plastic box. In the first test the box was frosted from the inside so there were no reflections from the back of the brooch. In the ones for the final work is the opposite, frosted on the outside and glossy on the inside. This change will give the audience the possibility to see the reflection of the brooch back. Not see the actual back but the representation of it.
Slow in making

My way of working is maybe what other would call slow and inefficient. The work develops at a slow pace, and I take time to look and think about what happens with the pieces and the steps of the process. I collect and archive every step of the making, which allows me to go back and retrace what has happened during the process. This allows me to easily see if maybe I have missed something along the way that is important to take back into the making. I adjust small things as measurements and go into a deep level of detail in my work. I have a great deal of patience while working. This way of working is an act of meditation. It is a process which gives me and the materials time to make purposeful and meaningful decisions, by listening to my feelings. I still encounter many doubts and obstacles without knowing exactly why. However, I trust in my work that although I might not know it in the decision making, it always has a reason. Even if it doesn’t always feel like that.
Discussion

I started out with my fears of losing relations and trying to reconnect, but through this work I have accepted that, through the loss of relationships, I allow new relations and being open to letting go and developing in that.

It is today 16/3 2020. The final year of my Masters Degree was coupled with some enormous transitions in my life. Everything turned upside down. All around me it felt as though the whole world was experiencing changes as well. I was sure that 2020 would be a great year when everything fell into place. But now I sit here today, (16/3 2020) unsure about what is happening around me, a virus is spreading through the world and it feels like the distance between people has grown wider than ever before. We are not allowed to touch each other or and stand too close. Today the recommendation for everyone that could work from home should do that, soon we don't meet at al.

As I say in the introduction to this paper about that I see a growing unwillingness to take responsibility for one another. In the last few days this has become more and more clear when you see people shopping for groceries. Not at all thinking about others, just every man for themselves. Of course people also have stepped up and offered help to those that need.

I was hoping for a change in our prospective about time and how we through time is stressing for the next thing in life. Little did i know that in a couple of weeks the whole perspective on time would change as it did. But with it also the interaction between us all.
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Image 10. Emma Hansen. Work in process, Stuff it, 2019

Image 11. Emma Hansen. Work in process, Stuff it, 2019

Image 12. Emma Hansen. Sketch for final display. 2020
Reflections

The Exhibition

In the exam exhibition Master of CRAFT! my work was placed so that you could see it almost directly when you enter Vita havet where the exhibition was built. I really liked the placement that I was given, but I had a couple of problem. When I Placed that sealing installation it was the very first time I had it up, so there was a couple of things that I didn't think of before putting it up.

The angle you saw the installation from at when you enter the exhibition was what I thought maybe the most boring angle. The installation lost its depth and you couldn't see all the legs from the pillars. A second thing was that I had placed the roof installation directly over a cross in the floor where the floor was more uneven then on other spots. This made it very hard for me to position the work so that the installation where able to stand straight. Some of the legs needed to be floating in the air and I needed to put some extra material under them. Another thing that would have helped me when I installed the work was if I also had a sketch on the floor so it would be easier to see if it was straight. If I was to install the whole installation again as it from the beginning was planned during Craft week 2020 I would also change some details such as the color on the tape that holds the plastic boxes into place. Now when no one saw the exhibition in real life it wasn't so noticeable with the details that wasn't perfect. For me the whole experience of build the exhibition became a good tryout, especially when I never have been working with a larger Installation before.

I have an idea of making the installation in wood also so that it is easier to control it and lift it. Easier to install in different kind of rooms. I really liked working with the installation of the work and really give that time and meaning, I will keep on working and develop this.

The Movie

The movie that was made for the opponent and later with sound to the web exhibition at konstfacks webpage, was not at all what I had expected. I think my expectations on the movie made it hard for me to look at it if I haven't seen the work installed. The movie didn't at all capture the feeling of the work, the colors on the shoots was not at all as they look like in real life. The move was too fast for the feeling I wanted to communicate. I wanted it to be a calm move where you were allowed to come close to the work in the shoots. If I would see the movie before taking the exhibition down, I would have made a new movie. It was not possible for me to install the work again and make it because of the size, room and I also needed a technician that had access to a sky lift.

I have got some responses from people that haven't seen the work in real life
but seen the movie. The responses have been positive, but they come from friends and family that maybe is a bit partial. I think the best thing would be if we as students also where send the material that was given to the opponent. So that we as students would know what the opponent have seen and what we think they have missed out on. I think that would have benefit during the examination.

The Examination

For me the format on zoom for the examination worked better than I expected, all the technology was working as it should and I felt that I had the support that was needed if something would go wrong. The strange thing for me was the pauses even if i felt that they were needed. I was in a room with a real audience so I could talk and vent with someone in the pauses, otherwise if would feel too weird. After the examination was done, it felt a bit empty not having my class and teachers around when you leave the room before the next person is going up. This is for me where I gather my energy from my surrounding and cheering each other on. This has for me been the hardest thing this whole semester, to find the energy when there isn't so much to take it from. I have already taken one degree on Konstfack, so I know what I miss this year and I can't say that I am not sad about missing this. And all the meetings with people when they see your work for the first time at the spring exhibition. I remember this as my most impotent part during my bachelor's degree.