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ABSTRACT

I have made an investigation in how I can encourage curiosity in textiles with a specific interest in its structures. I have found that repetition is one efficient way to make a separate building element disappear into its own mass and instead be viewed as a surface. I researched how different surfaces are created by experiment with materials and techniques and looked into the big role tactility plays when curiosity in textiles are created but as well realized that a haptic experience can be reached not only with skin but through the eyes.

The experiments and elaborations I made took my ideas beyond my starting point and further than I first could imagine. I explored and questioned hierarchies and values of materials by the way I used and combined them. By doing so I realized and discussed the dilemma of being positive to the idea of letting people experience my work through touching and the issue with sustainability, duration and demolishing the patterns while doing so.

Through this paper I aimed to find a definition for what fiber art can be today. I didn’t find one or totally uniform answer but it seems to me that it’s a movement that stretches over diverse material fields and has an underlying power to push boundaries and traditions and break free from classifications.

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SURFACE STRUCTURES
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INTRODUCTION

Earlier in my career I found it easy to define my title and to say that I’m a fashion designer without feeling that that was bold. But today I find it more problematic to use titles such as a maker, an artist or a crafter. For me these are titles that are more vague and by that makes it harder for me to be so determined that I’m one of them.

Instead I would like to see myself as a builder. A builder of structures, tactile surfaces and unexpected material combinations urging to be touched. My motivation as a builder is to shift and challenge hierarchies within materials and push the boundaries for how techniques are used and combined, I want to create a finalized piece through collage or assembly with a main ground in tufting that transcends into structured areas made in different techniques by hand or in a combination of tufting and handworked techniques. By merging all these different techniques I believe I will reach more unexpected and complex structures that I would not have been able to discover if I would limit myself to either of them.

I see my tactile piece growing and distorting from the floor, stretching for the wall and growing into soft sculptures. I want to challenge my textile and fashion background by creating a spatial piece that can be discovered in different layers and perspectives and that through the notion of touch borders between carpet and sculpture as a haute couture piece for the room.

In order to do so I work from the main research question:
- How can I encourage curiosity in textile surfaces?

Through the lens of this question I will look into:
- hierarchies and debates within craft vs. art with a historical focus of the development of fiber art from 1930’s until today.
- tufting as a technique and how the technique can be built into other expressions through a combination of handworked techniques and by constructing the surfaces with unconventional tufting materials and components.
- touch/tactility and how we can perceive haptic structures
- how, through construction, the individual elements disappear to create something new
- possibilites to transform and find new ways of using material considered as waste by industries and companies.

So through this work I’m not only going to build an installation piece out of my experimental structures. I’m aiming to find my definition for what fiber art can be today, the core values behind the movement and what artists I can relate my work and process to.

In order to gain a greater understanding I have interviewed textile artists, looked into works and exhibitions but also gathered deeper understanding about the subject through articles and books. One of the main books for my project is FIBER: sculpture 1960-present (2014) and the chapters by Jenelle Porter. She brings up the feminine history and
starting point within fiber art as well as struggles of hierarchy and belonging. Another important book for me has been Bauhaus weaving theory: from feminine craft to mode of design (2014). It gave me a deeper understanding of tactility through the textile artist Otti Berger and, of how creative processes were translated into industry, as well as perspectives of how feminine craft became a conceptualized field. Sheila Hicks: weaving as a metaphor (2006) brought more connection to my process, inspiring me both by her experimental way of working as well by how she handles and chooses materials for her work.
WHAT IS FIBER ART?

What is this fiber art world? I find it quite hard but intriguing to grasp this mixed media and mixed techniques, where mixed expressions and execution are so diverse. The reason I think is as inspiring as confusing, when trying to dig deeper into the concept of fiber art I find it a bit vague and with no defined boundaries or rules.

In *Fiber: sculpture 1960-present*¹ Jenelle Porter discusses how the movement became part of a feminist revolution, by taking the work from the home and domestic genre into the art scene. Porter attributes Anni Albers and others with her to be a big part in this development, as they started to write about their work and by that conceptualized and theorized the field.

According to Porter, fiber and textile were considered feminine and connected with the amateurish and primitive and therefore had lower status. Porter claims that these associations undermined the material and experimentations that come from this field. She also describes how many fiber artists started to move away from traditional wall hangings and traditions of tapestry. Instead they took over the space, to show on pedestals, on the floor and hanging in the middle of the room. She continues to highlight that the Lausanne Biennale in the end of the 1960s marked a big step for the field towards the art scene and away from the utilitarian and functionalism, by having fiber art as its own category, displaying them in the same way as art, promoting the works to be big in scale and encouraging 3D sculptural works².

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After reading *Fiber: sculpture 1960-present* and the *Bauhaus weaving theory*, I believe that because of the field’s strong ground in using a variety of textile techniques and materials, it was categorised by many as craft. My analysis from reading the books is that the artists didn’t necessarily have a political agenda but it became a feminist movement because women claimed an artistic recognition of their work and demanded space from a world that they were not a part of at that time. Two, for me, great examples of artists demanding their space are shown below.

Since the establishment throughout history has given textiles a lower value being connected to female, utilitarian and domestic work, I therefore believe the artists in the movement had a stronger desire for moving as far away from its origin as possible, by using the historically even higher valued art scene and joined their trends of abstraction and large scales. For me, an obvious mark is using the name fiber art and not fiber craft. Also the fact that they use the word fiber rather than textiles makes me believe it’s a way to distance from the textile connotations.

But as discussed by Elissa Auther⁴ there are various opinions regarding the name. Where some argue that it lowers the status and places it outside of the norm of art by connecting it with the medium. Auther also argues that fiber art as a movement might have been succesful moving into art but it didn’t change the hierarchy between craft and art. And by being so aware of the different classifications they also contributed to keep the divisions and with that also the room for power and status.

Publisher might have a point but I still feel that the field is driven by a will to break free from set classifications and maybe it can’t really go into either craft or art since it is too much of an own thing? Porter sums it up saying:

"...key to understanding why art in fiber still stands apart from contemporary art histories. It requires a delicate balance - an almost impossible balance - that art in other materials does not. Like all avant-garde movements, this high-wire act inherently resists conformity."

It’s clear to me that this movement is part of a revolution and about raising one’s voice, claiming space and breaking the traditional boundaries. My work belongs in this field since I’m mainly working with textiles that often includes a lot of handwork. My main investigation is perhaps not around feminism or any broader societal topic but my work carries this power to take place and question predominant traditions and hierarchies with a focus in my materials and techniques. Even if my work somehow of course relates and also is build on a ground started by this feminist movements.

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CONNECTION OF INTERESTS

There are so many fiber artists of interest, I will later mention some pioneers and discuss why they are of interest to me but first some of a more recent generation that I feel in different ways connect to my work. All of them have a high level of detailed structures, repetition, manual work and a boundlessness of materials values.

Vanessa Barragao, (1992) Portugal, has a strong handicraft approach and is totally grounded into textiles. She uses the same base material to a higher extent than me but I find her interlacing way of mixing techniques interesting. The assemble outcome stays balanced even if many different structures are going on in the same piece. But I also think a balance is easier to meet if you have a motif in mind like Barragao, compared to mine often more abstract composition. She also often “frames” her structures in a more known shape like a circle or rectangle which I think helps to focus on the structures and all the tactile information happening in the piece.

Image 10 and 11 (detail): Vanessa Barragao, BOTANICAL TAPESTRY, 2019

In the work of Francesca Pasquali (1980), Italy, I found associations with my practice but in the opposite way from Barragao. She doesn’t mix the techniques or materials so much in each piece but she does work with repetition and the way of using a material in a way that it’s not usually done. According to Pasquali she is trying to use material from everyday life and not usual in the artistic field and makes the object stay recognizable while giving it a change for a second life. I found the thought of using ready-made objects inspiring, especially Pasqualis thoughts about the objects possibilities to surprise the viewer since they can relate to this object but usually not see them in the artistic works. But for this project I will rather work with materials with more of a textile quality and have a higher level of manipulation of the materials.

5 Francesca Pasquali, email conversation, January 5, 2021)
Looking outside of the fiber art world I also feel connected and inspired by the work of Faig Ahmed (1982), Azerbaijan. His work breaks other traditions and rules than mine but the way he works with manipulation, distortion, combining/mixing, break apart and put together elements feel like the same processes. I think this process is very visible for example in his works *Flood of yellow light* where a stereotype oriental carpet pattern is "destroyed" by yellow paint or in *Gravity and anti-gravity* where he in a literal way breaks the whole apart to its building elements.
Haegue Yang (1971), South Korea/Germany, however, definitely mixes material and media in a non-hierarchical or assembled way, such as in Bondage Bonsai, 2012, where I think she have mixed media and object without seeing any traditional value to the materials they consist of or giving any of the material a higher value than any other within the piece.

So many elements of how I want to work are there but still I don’t feel so much connected to her expression as to Barragao and Pasquali.

I think that comes down to my interest for structures. She has not really reworked the materials or worked with repetition, so the objects still stands on their own instead of building a structure or surface.

It is very inspiring to look at all of above artist together with my own work as I find we all have connections of interests and in different ways all of us are builders. We work with assembling element and construct them into something new and unexpected for the viewer. Each of these artists encourages curiosity in the viewing of their work, which is what I am also trying to do.

Image 16: Haegue Yang, Bondage Bonsai, 2012
THE PROCESS OF BUILDING UP CURIOSITY

I see my research as practice based and it develops a lot through my experiments that takes me beyond my starting point and further than I first could imagine. The way T’ai Smith⁶ in Bauhaus weaving theory : from feminine craft to mode of design talks about compositions and expressions in the weave making makes me relate to my way of thinking. Smith identifies how the expression comes from within, made simultaneously with the weave, and that a unique process appears when the material IS the form and color and not, compared to painting, something applied on top. Smith continues to elaborate on how the depth and surface also creates simultaneously in the weave by the choice of texture, shininess, weight and spun of the yarn etc.

I feel my process and my building of structure is the same in the sense that it is growing from one point out to the finalized whole in a concurrent way and that the choice of the materials’ properties is of high importance for the expression. But in order to work bigger in scale than I’m used to and to create different layers in the piece I have felt a need to sketch and make some decisions of form and placements in order to start. The intuitive work with the structures have stayed the same and have also made me develop from my original sketch along with the building of different structure areas.

Preferably I want my work made so it’s not so clear for the viewer how and what it contains and to build up an imaginary landscape to discover with an urge to touch. Almost like you are a curious mini sized person stepping into a new world with all these fibers and combinations becoming in focus.

Image 17 - 18: Sofia Bahliner, own picture of time consuming detailing creating imaginary landscapes (2020)

I also think the viewer can get more curious about the artwork when they get to know it mainly consists of waste materials. By waste I mean, in a sense that industry or companies feel they can not use it in their own business. I have tried to contact and collect as much waste yarn and other material for my piece as possible since I believe it is as valuable as any new material and also a way to be able to use so much material as I do in this project.

If I would work only with waste materials it could in one way come out as a stronger statement but I also see that the limitation with that maybe end in a result not as good or interesting as it could be. But by highlighting the waste, the not choosen material, with new material of my own choice, I believe that the end-result might be even more intriguing. For example I have added a lurex yarn to get in a shiny effect in some parts. I see it as a way of up-cycling rather than 100% recycling which I believe is harder to accomplish but fills a higher value for me if succeeded.
In the podcast Material Matters, I think Craft critic, Corinne Julius nails it when she refers to material scientist Mark Miodownik saying that makers maybe do not invent but by exploring and experimenting they tell us what we can do with the materials.

I think that explains how I see that curiosity is being built up for me while working with textile. It would of course be amazing to have the resources with all the high tech machines that exist within the textile industry and I would not be honest if I didn’t admit that I would really enjoy being in charge of some of these and have the possibility to develop and invent completely new materials and functions. But, what Julius describes above and comforts me with is that as a builder of structures I can also invent new surfaces, expressions and functions by exploring and experimenting. So the result can be something unexpected and new even if the building block in the construction is not.

Image 20: Sofia Bahlner, own picture, handworked structure (2021)

THE LAYERS OF PROCESS

In a recommendation letter Ulrik Martin Larsen, senior lecturer, Swedish school of Textiles described my work as: "...tour de force in unexpected material combinations and showed an innovative and interactive approach..." a phrase I’m happy to keep, even if that means my working method is really time-consuming. It includes a lot of errors on the way but it is a process that leads me to conclusions and findings I would not have been able to discover in another way.

I got a deeper insight to the world and work of textile and fiber artist Sheila Hicks and felt a connection to my way of working by reading the book *Weaving as a metaphor* where Joan Simon writes about her use of mixed media and what kind of materials she uses depending on where she lives. But I mostly connect to her by the similarities I see in our way of working as Simons highlights "...but a question of process: a finding, an accident, a shape or material that she has come upon in her experimentation that she will than subject to a new set of manipulations."

This time-consuming project often fascinates me and there is something interesting in the contrast between rather cheap materials and the large amount of work hours needed to put them together. By doing so I also see a questioning of the hierarchies and values of materials versus handwork. Everything needs to go so fast today, especially in the commercial industry where I worked before my master project. So therefore I think this kind of project fascinates me, and hopefully others, when you can look into another world and to be enchanted by the thought of how much time that has been spent on creating these structures.

For the last year of this master programme I have chosen to keep to my concept of combine, distort, manipulate, dissolve and join materials in another way than its origin and then assemble these experiments with my tufted pieces. It makes me feel like a builder when combining my experiments with the tufting I have developed, during practical work in the studio. By doing so I can reach a broader span of structures and surfaces that would not be possible if I would limit myself to only work with tufting technique. I find it that the combination of tufting, handmade structures and the combination of structures made out of both tufting and handmade techniques is that makes my project special and a big part of what my experimentation in this project is about.

8 Ulrik Martin Larsen. Senior lecture at Swedish School of Textiles, recommendation letter, 6th Feb 2020
I want to challenge myself and hopefully also to some extent the field in what structures can be made and what materials can be combined by using tools and machines that feels possible to have on your own.

Initially my process is often about combining different pictures and work on translating what I think is the essence of them into tactile materiality in form of structures and surfaces.

I see a linkage in this way of working with how Nina Stritzler-Levine describes Sheila Hicks ability to transfer her surroundings into inspiration by using architecture and patterns on facades as mentioned in Sheila Hicks: Weaving as a metaphor. One of the more clever examples I believe is the Grand Portal, (1972), where she has translated the lightning through the portal brilliant into the weave as well.

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It’s been inspiring for me to read about other artists who I believe have been pioneers within their field like Sheila Hicks and Otti Berger, both working innovatively with mixed materials and techniques. Both seem also, just like me, to value and have a high interest in the tactility in their piece which intrigues me to know more about their practices.

In the book, *Bauhaus weaving theory: from feminine craft to mode of design* Smith introduced me to the practice of Otti Berger, female textile artist educated and teaching in the Bauhaus school and the first to take out a patent on her textile designs. Smith describes a couple of works with, at that time unusual material combinations, for example artificial horsehair with rayon and cotton. Smith emphasizes Bergers fascination with tactility and the fact its being present also in her writing, for example she express that the primary experience and quality in a fabric is in its tactility. And that the hand is for tactility what eyes are for the vision. Smith also points out Bergers way of discussing the double meaning of the word grasping, like physically grasp and touch something and on the other hand to understand it.\(^{12}\)

I think it’s a good way to also describe how I feel about wanting people to understand my structures by awakening an interest in touching them. Smith also highlights the fact while referring to George Berkeley that eyes only see two-dimensional and that it is our touch-memory that makes us “see” in three dimensions and that the sense of touch gives us tools to separate materials that for the eye looks the same.\(^{13}\)

Even if Juhanni Pallasmaa is referring to architecture when writing about tactility and touch I found it highly intriguing to follow his thoughts in the book *The eye of the skin: architecture and the senses*\(^{14}\) and I think that links to my thoughts of being a builder rather than a crafter. In short he describes how all other senses are born out of the touch since the skin is our biggest organ and that the eyes, ears and nose are specializations of the same. He continues to show the visions importance in the western world, always considered superior to the other senses by being the main communication and information way through paintings, pictures and by technology of today.

However he argues for the value of touch to take a greater place since, in his opinion, it’s not as judging and demanding as the vision. It’s a sense that welcomes the creative, imaginative and empathic and makes one’s start to have associations and thoughts around what one experience.

Just as Pallasmaa writes about the vision being considered superior to the other senses I think there is a parallel follow the idea of fine art being perceived as superior to other art forms such as textile art.

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And therefore it’s considered more excepted to use, touch and consume textile art in another way than for example paintings that in this way of seeing it have a higher value. Traditionally the different fields make people behave differently and have other expectations of what is allowed or how to consume the pieces. I think there is a preconception around the textile art field that encourage you to touch and physically experience the art and therefore should be allowed to use or physically grasp it.

Maybe it is grounded in this traditional idea of textile being soft, protective and feminine. One aspect I believe is that textile in different ways surrounds us in our everyday life and that we have a habit to touch and use the things made in this material. Another thing I have thought about is if it might also be connected to what T’ai Smith writes about, that I bring up in the chapter “the process of building up curiosity”, that the textile is growing simultaneously from within and not have something applied on top like a painting and by means of is a more haptic piece that we might feel talk to us in a more tactile way?

My own dilemma in this equation is that in general or as principal I like the idea of letting viewers touch and experience the haptics in my work with their hands and skin. At some point I think this allowance would lead to a new surprise for some viewers, that the surface is not feeling like expected.
But on the other hand it could be debatable in the perspective of sustainability and durability. Color and the material could easily be destroyed in a long term but also in a short term if you would allow visitors to walk on it or touch it some of the structures and pattern would be demolished. Not forever but until you have fixed, fluffed and combed it again the piece would look different and in my opinion it would not help the piece to be more interesting, rather the opposite.

An interesting aspect of not letting people touch the piece clicked for me during one of my tutorials with Anders Ljungberg. That by not letting viewers touch it it might also change the feeling and body of the person. That you might go closer, bend, crouch or in other way change your body language to get as close to the feeling of touch as possible. And also the knowledge of not being able to touch might increase the mystique of the piece and one’s desire to do so even more. I hope my stool embedded in the piece will encourage viewers to experience more sides and angles of my piece. And by leaving no instructions I hope the viewer that do touch it will do it with a gentle approach. My biggest aim and goal if I have to choose is rather to wake the interest and will to touch than invite the audience to interact with the piece.

When going into Sheila Hicks work I think the article “Fibre is my alphabet” sums up my feelings around her practice and why I feel connected to it: “The hand connected to the eyes and the brain. Hands, eyes, brain: it’s the magic triangulation. It comes from passion, heart and intellect inseparably cemented to your times and to your emotional experiences.”

After reading Touching for knowing: Cognitive psychology of haptic manual perception I don’t find it so strange that Hicks refer to the hands for touching. According to Arlette Streri the touching sense develops really early in the palm of the hands on a body of a fetus, already after 10-11 weeks. These parts together with mouth and sole of the feet are still for adults the areas with the highest number of receptors, so it’s strongly connected to our ability to perceive touch perception.

Tactility starts the curiosity and wakes the child in me and my urge to experiment and play. And it makes me connect to the article “Fibre is my alphabet” where Hicks describes how all things around registers by her, either she likes it or not. On Higge’s question if that is not exhausting she answers: “Children do it all the time. It’s only as people grow up that they start shutting down.” I think for me that connects to what Smith brings up in Bauhaus weaving theory: from feminine craft to mode of design when she refer to Johannes Itten saying: play becomes celebration - celebration becomes labor - labor becomes play. Both mottoes I would like to keep for my future career.

18 Tái Smith. Bauhaus weaving theory: from feminine craft to mode of design. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 27
While researching on tufting as a technique I have also looked a lot into carpets and especially shag piles. While reading the book by Uuve Snidare\textsuperscript{19}, Ryamattan I also got the idea of using white as the main color, connecting to the original shag pile that was trying to imitate sheep fur according to Snidare. The white color is also necessary in order to create my invisible layer, made out of glow in the dark yarn, which means it will be hidden among the white colored yarns in daylight and reveal its surprise in the darkness. In order to create a contrast and a dynamic I will also use areas and parts in blue.

I have divided my thoughts around my installation artwork into three layers and I have put up a framework using micro to macro perspectives of cartography as guideline for my investigation and decisions. All layers have different type of maps in mind.

For building up "the structure layer" I have used the micro perspective and looked into maps illustrations and visualisations of landscapes, terrains and different vegetations.

\textsuperscript{19} Uuve Snidare. Ryamattan. (Stockholm: Prisma, 2007).
For the "color layer", that is to say where the different colorblocks are placed, I have looked into maps of areas, regions and field. Those create for me inspiration for forms or domains of different colors, where I later have translated that into white and blue areas for this installation. I think the piece needs another color than only white to create tension, contrast and interest. I think its important for the color not being the main color that it is possible to work in hues and scales of tones. But I have the colors separated in blocks as I believe that the structures get the most attention if the colors have a monochrome feeling and placement.
For "the invisible layer", or the surprise layer as I prefer, I have looked into maps showing terrain and mountains but not the geographical once. The mountains on these maps are created from the amount of lights that the humans are using at this places. This layer is created so it's invisible in daylight but by the use of glow in the dark yarn it will create an unexpected irregular pattern when viewed in darkness.
Another challenge in my practice is the creation of large pieces when it is only possible to see and work on one part at the time. When I have been thinking of the feeling of growing and surge in my work I have automatically been drawn to the wall. But since the tufting is strongly connected to the carpet the research has made me look deeper into carpets and from there I got interested to see if it's possible to create that surging feeling coming from the floor, moving its way up on the walls and part growing up from the floor into soft sculpture-like pieces. When moving up from the floor instead of down from the wall the growth becomes in one way stronger and more powerful since it goes against the gravity completely. Another strength by letting the piece move from the floor up on the wall is that it creates a movement that takes away the borders between them.
I see this piece being installed alone in a room, a room bigger than the piece itself so that you can approach it from different angles and come up close as well as get the space to see it on a bit of a distance. I also want to encourage people to see my work from different perspectives and will therefore build in a stool into the work so that you are invited to be a body if the work and at the same time get the opportunity to discover it in another perspective and angle. Hopefully this can open up the thought and encourage curiosity of how the viewer can encounter the work with its mind and body and change its body language to explore more of the piece.

![Image 43: Sofia Bahlner, own pictures, sculpture piece - stool, 2021](image)

Strong lightning is needed to highlight the different structures and surfaces but also the different hues, shininess and textures living within the piece. The strong lightning will also be necessary to "load" the glow in the dark yarn. I want it to be possible to make the room dark so that the hidden irregular pattern from the macro cartography will magically be discovered.

Making and execution of the of soft sculptures feels really intriguing and important to incorporate into my work even though that is new to me. I think the way of seeing my work being built and constructed during the process gives me courage to step out of my comfort zone. I feel I have the possibilities to see it grow step by step and alternate and change if I think it's needed during the process.
I believe my working method with this sculpture parts came natural to me partly because I'm new to the execution and partly because of my background in fashion and clothes. I have draped and built forms out of paper and from that taking out pattern pieces for the sculptures. From there I have treated this pieces as the rest of my structure and tufted pieces and intuitively built them.
Since a lot of different impressions are going on, on all these layers at the same time I found it necessary to have a guideline moving forward, while deciding the outer forms. So I used a rectangular, as the basic ground shape of a carpet.

But I wanted the end-result to be distorted from it and have more flow and organic lines. I have on purpose saved some of the straight lines of the rectangular form in order to work as a contrast and dynamic to accentuate the other organic lines in the piece.
Image 46: Sofia Bahlner, own pic. Collage of organic lines, structures and shapes in progress, 2021
CONCLUSION

I set out to look into how I could encourage curiosity in textile surfaces and started with looking into hierarchies and discussion within the fiber art field and found some associate artists who I believe do so. But where I found I got closest to the answer have been in my studies around tactility and also in my studiowork where I have been experimenting with materials and techniques and discovered structures far from where I started which have given me an even deeper curiosity for what textiles can be.

My work explores and questions hierarchies and values of materials by the use and combination of them when I build my structures. By using various techniques I have assembled and unified tufting with structures made in other handworked ways and by building with the elements discovered unexpectedly and new structures and surfaces. I see my work developing through constant experimentation and by striving to find a way to construct materials in other formations. The process of making helps me to rethink and discover new solutions and brings out a playful mind that opens up my curiosity. I feel the final installation have both a movement and growing feeling to it which I was aiming for but I have realized that the most important growth has been in its process. The project needed me to be able to work freely and let the piece grow through my hands in the direction the experiments and newly found structures takes me.

I have found that repetition is one efficient way to make a separate building element disappear into its own mass with the handworked structures and instead be viewed as a surface. Contradictory I have realized that even if you do an irregular pattern, never to repeat itself, or even just one form in tufting it becomes a surface in my eyes without a repetition. But I think tufting could also be viewed as a massive repetition of each thread of yarn. Since the building in various techniques are so different I have come to the conclusion that it was crucial for me to also have areas where I have created structures made in a combination of tufting and other techniques made by hand to elaborate this interaction.

I´m convinced, even more after this project, that the haptic and tactile experience is of great importance to increase the curiosity in textile and is a magic power that is very eminent for it. What has become clear to me during this work is that it´s not only the hands and skin that are receptive for the tactile experience, it can also be discovered within a viewer through the eyes, through how the body language changes if we can not use our hands and also through the mind with the self experienced knowledge that guides the observer into the tactile impression. But I do think that a human will get the widest and most nuanced impression of the surroundings if it´s possible to utilize all the senses. So I will leave it up to the viewer to decide how they want to experience the work and will try to give the ideal conditions, to make it possible to see it from different perspectives, distance and to invite the viewer to be a bodily part of it by building in a stool to sit on. Maybe some viewers cannot resist from also touching it which is fine as long as it is made in a gentle manner. I hope the ritual of taking off its shoes might help to get into this more careful state of mind and a feeling of being closer to the piece.
I also feel I have framed my own dilemma regarding being positive to the idea of letting people experience my work through touching and the issue with sustainability, duration and demolishing the patterns while doing so.

As a builder, this is important to me, and my aim to create something a bit unexpected and preferably so it’s not so easy for the viewer to understand how it’s made or what it consists of. For this project I feel I took this even one step further by working with glow in the dark yarn and create an, in daylight, invisible layer among the structures that reveal an unexpected experience and irregular pattern when viewed in darkness.

The biggest challenge for me apart from time frame have been to work in such a big scale and also with sculptural elements. It has not been possible to see the whole work at the same time and it needed to be built in sections. But I feel I have learned a lot from that and I’m happy I managed to create a piece this big. The scale might be a contributing factor to encourage the curiosity in textile and awake an interest in looking at it for a longer period and from different perspectives in order to discover new things. I hope the viewer get a chance to feel almost like a miniature person stepping into a world full of structures to explore.

The fact that the main part of the material I have used comes from companies and industries that consider the material as waste might intrigue some people and by that encourage a higher interest in the textile. I find a big incitement in doing so both since it is a material-heavy artpiece but also to challenge myself into make something interesting, unexpected and tactile out of materials I have not chosen myself and at the same time give waste a second life. It has been a contributing factor for me to push myself even further in the experiment and process with material since it’s been an extra layer to also estimate and rework patterns and areas from the amount of the same yarn available and how to merge or blend transits. My aim has been to try to work with my limitations instead of against, make them into a factor for creating and instead embrace the fact of this limitions.

By working with this paper I have gained a deeper understanding in the history of fiber art and related parts of the textile field and I have taken those parts that I think will be fruitful for me into consideration and as inspiration for my desicions. I don’t think I have found the definition as one or totally uniform around fiber art but it seems to me like a field based in textiles but not solely. One can still work with multiple of materials and techniques to overwhelm viewers with creativity, curiosity and an urge to touch.

Where once there were clearer definitions between craft and art, now these boundaries have merged and borrowed from each other. An underlying power in the fiber art field is present to me, to always push boundaries and traditions of many kinds and break free from classifications. Just because of this I don’t feel that either the field, nor me, wants to categorise fiber art into either craft or art, but rather stand uncommitted as Fiber art, with relationship to them both.
I think there are different ways to go and to develop my project both towards art, craft and design and I would like to embrace them all. Here and now I have presented my piece as a big haute couture piece for rooms and the installation is displaying a lot of my interest and my curiosity for materials. But I can also see my work as a big patchwork of inspiration, a giant swatch sample or a materialized research book, where parts of the installation can be cut out into its own piece or a small part of the installation can be isolated and like a bacterial culture it can be the seed that starts to grow in an own direction into another project.

Whatever direction I will take I will always carry a big curiosity for structures and fascination in what way I can build and rebuild them.
Books:

Journal article:

Podcast / Interview:
IMAGE REFERENCE LIST

Front page image: Sofia Bahlner, own pic, detail pic of structure, 2021

Image 2: Sofia Bahlner, process picture tufting, 2020

Image 3- 6: Sofia Bahlner, own picture, process picture structures, 2020-2021


Image 17: Sofia Bahlner, own picture of time consuming detailing creating imaginary landscapes (2020)
Image 18: Sofia Bahlner, own picture of time consuming detailing creating imaginary landscapes (2020)

Image 19: Sofia Bahlner, collage picture of parts of the waste collected for this project (2020)

Image 20: Sofia Bahlner, own picture, handworked structure (2021)

Image 21: Sofia Bahlner, own pictures, structure made of tufting in combination with other techniques, 2020


Image 24: Sofia Bahlner, own picture, process - tactile surface, 2020


Image 39: Sofia Bahlner, own picture, process picture, of irregular glow in the dark pattern, 2020

Image 40: Sofia Bahlner, own picture, test of glow in the dark yarn, 2020

Image 41: Sofia Bahlner, own picture, scraps and cut offs, 2020

Image 42: Sofia Bahlner, own pictures, sculpture piece, 2021

Image 43: Sofia Bahlner, own pictures, sculpture piece - stool, 2021

Image 44: Sofia Bahlner, own pictures, sculpture pattern piece, 2021
Image 45: Sofia Bahlner, own picture, first live sketch, tape on floor, 2020

Image 46: Sofia Bahlner, own pic, Collage of organic lines, structures and shapes in progress, 2021

Image 47: Sofia Bahlner, own pic, installation in sound proof room, 2021

Image 48: Sofia Bahlner, own pic, installation in night vision with glow in the dark yarn visible, 2021

Image 49: Sofia Bahlner, own pic, detail, 2021

Image 50: Sofia Bahlner, own pic, detail, 2021

Image 51: Sofia Bahlner, own pic, detail, 2021

Image 52: Sofia Bahlner, own pic, detail, 2021

Image 53: Sofia Bahlner, own pic, detail, 2021

Image 54: Sofia Bahlner, own pic, detail, 2021
Interview with Francesca Pasquali

Q: Is there any difference for you in using “ready made” objects as materials (like straws, toiletbrushes, balloons) compare to materials more open for its purpose like foam, fabric etc?

A: Firstly, it is not toiletbrushes, it is brum dusters. Each material has it’s characteristic, singular aspects, malleability and substance. Usually I try not to change matters, but “hearing” its propensity I work to give them a second chance to born again in a different shape, but always recognizable.

Q: If you get a commission for a site-specific place how much of what material to use do you decide based of the place itself?

A: I’ve always been inspired by the place. It’s one of the first aspect I deal with. I really think that every work has its own place. The sculpture or the installation must dialogue with the place that host it, so as to look like he was born there, in a perfect formal balance.

Q: How do you find materials that is waste from industries? Are there many industries near to you producing this kind of things that you can ask to come and have a look at or do companies know about you and send it to you and hope you can use it?

A: I usually contact directly the company asking them for materials. Luckily the region where I live is full of factories working with daily objects and plastic materials. It’s not always easy find recycle materials, because many industries now have their own regeneration cycle of waste. When I’m looking for a new material to use, I always ask to go and see the factory waste. This is an interesting opportunity to learn about the various processing stages from which materials to be used may arise. Lea Vergine said: “even trash can become art‼”

Q: Do you have any preferences when choosing your materials?

A: I prefer to use materials that are not of the artistic field to stimulate wonder and amazement in the viewer. Daily and common objects, not just plastic. I’m interested in the reuse to give them a second life and a new chance to rehabilitate, reborn.

Q: What I can see in your work it feels to me like you most often use only one type of object or material for each piece you are making? How do you feel about combining different materials with each other or why is it often one at the time? What does it give to your experience or process to mostly work with one at a time?
A: Yes, I like harmony and simplicity. Combining different materials or objects could create formal confusion. I prefer to use same objects, combined by different colors, dimensions and heights. This is my way to play and create with matter. I usually work with large dimension of works, so the accumulation of materials for each work is already abundant. Therefore I prefer to work choosing a single element repeated endlessly.

Q: I find it very exciting and also generous of you that you want people to explore and involve in your work by touching and feeling the materials and surfaces. I really like that, too! But how do you think around the durability of the pieces? Are you not afraid it will break or change expression or do you see that as a part of the piece?

A: This is another very important aspect of my work. Involve, dip viewers inside the work asking them to participate and change it. It’s amazing and charming not been able to predict how the work can change with the interaction of people. I always try to “fight against” the usual distance that exists between the observer and the artwork. To feel emotions and understand better the work and the artist thoughts, you need to get in touch with her or his art, and the best way is to stimulate all the senses.

Q: Would you say it is hard to get these kind of commissions? I mean to start with, Im sure its not hard for you anymore =). I would love to get similar commissions so it would be of great value if you have any tips? =)

A: Believe me, art is a very complicate field, full of uncertainties, doubts. It’s a constant challenge! But at the same time is undoubtedly one of the most stimulating aspects of this work. My advice is to always believe in what you do, but also have the humility to confront yourself and retracing your steps when it is necessary. They will always be more motivated and aware starts than the previous ones.
Parts of mail conversations with companies supporting with waste material

C-knit

Från: Christine Melin Wigh <cgnit@cknitgarn.se>
Skickat: den 16 oktober 2020 19:41
Till: Sofia Bahlner <Sofia.Bahlner@student.konstfack.se>
Ämne: Re: Examensprojekt

Hej!
Hoppas du får ihop tillräckligt med material.
Trevlig helg!
Mvh Tine/C-knit garn

Swicofil

Från: Adriana Fickin <adriana.fickin@swicofil.com>
Skickat: den 20 oktober 2020 11:25
Till: Sofia Bahlner <Sofia.Bahlner@student.konstfack.se>
Kopia: 'Bedo Ricklin' <ricklin@swicofil.com>; 'Regi Bonnel' <bonnel@swicofil.com>; 'Tizianel Bucher Sandra' <tizianel@swicofil.com>
Ämne: AW: Degree work

Dear Sofia,

Thank you very much for your mail.

In regard of glow yarn, we can only offer raw white yarn with a yellowish-green glow effect. There is neither a blue yarn available nor a raw white yarn with blue glow effect.
There are two options: either a first grade yarn in dtex 167, dtex 220, dtex 330 and dtex 650. Those yarns need however to be purchased and cost – basing on bobbinwise purchases – USD 114.00 / bobbin of 2kgs EXW.
The other option, which we could provide you free of charge (meaning the yarn is free but without the shipment, this would still need to be paid by your side) is a second grade quality glow yarn. The yarn itself is perfectly fine but the winding is rather irregular and loose. It is available only in dtex 167.
Please see attached picture. On the left, this is the second grade bobbin in dtex 167, on the right handside a first grade dtex 330.

In case your university would have a FedEx / TNT / DHL courier connection, we would of course be able to ship the bobbin then with this courier connection. Else, shipping with our courier would cost CHF 110.00. For international shipments, we recommend courier shipments as we then can trace the shipment with a tracking number. Shipment via normal post on the other hand (no tracking available) would cost CHF 47.00.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,
Adriana
What a pleasure dear Sofia to start the day with an Email like yours 😊
We wish you successful inspirations and good results.
Take care and stay healthy
Regula

Dear Sofia,

Many thanks for the transfer.
Now the parcel is about to travel with the waybill attached 😊.

We wish you good success with your work and maybe you can keep us informed about the results.
Kindest regards
Regula
Hejsan

Så bra att du kan få användning av de garner vi skickade :) 
Vi ser verkligen fram emot att se dina alster framöver <3 

Ha det så bra,

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Mvh

//Maria och Ulla-Britt
Garnbutiken i Kilafors AB

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Schmitz Textiles

Från: Wiemer, Laura <laura.wiener@schmitz-textiles.com>
Skickat: den 28 oktober 2020 09:31
Till: Sofia Bahlner <Sofia.Bahlner@student.konstfack.se>
Kopia: Sabrina Brinkschröder <sabrina.brinkschroeder@schmitz-textiles.com>; Lilian Krause <lilian.krause@schmitz-textiles.com>
Ämne: Textile materials for your degree work

Hi Sofia,

Thanks for your interest in our companies products.

We can provide to you about one meter from a glow in the dark material. Its a woven fabric with a luminescent coating.
Furthermore we have some blue and white wovens and can send you some metres of that after I clarified internally what kind of wovens we do not need anymore.
The package should not be too big, so how many meters of blue and/or white wovens can you use?

To clarify these and some other points, we can also phone the next days if you like.

Thanks in advance for your feedback.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen | Best regards

Laura Wiemer
Produktmanagement
Ludvig Svensson

Från: Peter Manfredsson <Peter.Manfredsson@ludvigsvensson.com>
Skickat: den 5 november 2020 15:56
Till: Sofia Bahlner <Sofia.Bahlner@student.konstfack.se>
Ämne: GArner

Höj Sofia,

Garnerna borde skickas till dig imorgen.

Med vänlig hälsning / Best regards
Peter Manfredsson

Peter Manfredsson
Group Supply Chain Manager

Peter Manfredsson <Peter.Manfredsson@ludvigsvensson.com>
> Ons 2021-01-20 18:47
Till: Sofia Bahlner

Det går jättebra... roligt att det går framåt. Ser framemot det färdiga arbetet

Mvh Peter

Carpet Vista

Carin Terins <carin.terins@rugvista.se>
Ons 2021-01-20 23:08
Till: Sofia Bahlner

Hej Sofia,

Kan du få användning av konversation så är du välkommen att använda den. Så härligt att du kommit igång och jag hoppas tuftmaskinen funkar igen:

Dina alster är härligt organiska som får fantastin att flöda när man tittar på dem och jag förstår att det är mycket som växer fram under processens vindlande gång. Jag vill vildigt gärna följa dig i processen om du vill dela något under resans gång annars ser jag fram emot att se det färdiga resultatet i vår.

Njut av din konstnärliga frihet och processen framåt, du är grym.

Vi hörs,

Carin
Hej Sofia,

Ett paket med garn är skickat och ska komma till dig imorgon. Spårningsnummer: ETA fredag

Hoppas att du får stor nytta av materialet och jag ser fram emot att få se vad det blir för spännande konstverk den här gången.

Ser också fram emot att få se lite mer från det du gjorde senast. Hur har det gått? Har du något material annu som du kan dela med dig av.

Stort lycka till och trevlig fredag.

Med vänlig hälsning
Carin Terins

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**Stoff och stil**

Kristina Lindau <kli@stoffochstil.se>

Tor 2020-10-15 10:11
Till: Sofia Bahliner

![DesignKonkurrence_SE.pdf](830 KB)

Hej!

Tack för ditt mail.

Så nätta ting du har skapat och så fina idéer. Vi sponsrar överlag aldrig någon men jag kan kanske ordna lite varuprover och dylikt om det kan vara "vad som helst". Om du vill kan jag skicka lite smått och gott om det är så du tänker dig det så får du se vad du kan använda. Ok? Vg meddela din adress i så fall.


Hör av dig om du har några funderingar.

Hälsningar
Kristina Lindau
Countrymanaget
Från: Natalia Sandberg <natalia.sandberg@hrdcarpets.se>
Skickat: den 16 november 2020 10:18
Till: Sofia Bahliner <Sofia.Bahliner@student.konstfack.se>
Ämne: SV: Uppföljning waste material

Tack, nu är jag på plats igen 😊


Fraktten landar på 150kr i så fall och du swishar till HRDCarpets.
Om du tycker detta låter ok så packar jag ihop och ser till att det kommer iväg i veckan.

Med vänlig hälsning/ Best regards

Natalia Sandberg
Designer

HRDCARPETS

Från: Natalia Sandberg <natalia.sandberg@hrdcarpets.se>
Skickat: den 22 oktober 2020 15:38
Till: Sofia Bahliner <Sofia.Bahliner@student.konstfack.se>
Ämne: SV: Uppföljning waste material

Hej Sofia,

Ursäkta sent svar. Jag ska undersöka om vi kan ha material som skulle kunna användas enligt din beskrivning. materialet ska vi säkert kunna sponsra dig med isåfall, är det däremot ok om du står för fraktten själv? Isåfall skulle jag kunna undersöka vidare vad vi skulle kunna ha i vitt.

Med vänlig hälsning/ Best regards

Natalia Sandberg
Designer

Från: Natalia Sandberg <natalia.sandberg@hrdcarpets.se>
Skickat: den 13 oktober 2020 10:13
Till: Sofia Bahliner <Sofia.Bahliner@student.konstfack.se>
Ämne: SV: Uppföljning waste material

Hej!

Vad roligt att vi får ta del av ditt arbete. Hoppas materialet varit till hjälp, det ser verkligen jättepånnande ut.
Lycka till med ansökningar och exjobb, hoppas vi får se mer av detta framöver!

Med vänlig hälsning/ Best regards

Natalia Sandberg
Designer
Hej Sofia,

Alltid roligt att hjälpa till när det går;) De skulle vara spännande att se bilder från ditt projekt när det är klart!!

Garnerna som du har fått kommer ifrån Wagenfelder Spinneri i Tyskland som producerar kardgarner och semi-worsted garnar. Om du även fått finare kammgarnar så är det från deras syster företag Vinap AS i Tjeckien.

https://www.wagenfelder.com
https://www.vinap.cz

Lycka till!

Vänliga hälsningar,
Ebba Nordlund

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Från: Maria Stawåsen <maria.stawasen@vregion.se>
Skickat: den 14 december 2020 11:39
Till: Sofia Bahnner <Sofia.Bahnner@stucent.konstfack.se>
Ämne: VB: Examensprojekt

Hej Sofia!

Nu har vi pocket ihop garnet till dig. Återstår bara att ladan kommer till dig! Har du någon i Borås eller Göteborg som ska upp till Stockholm som jag kan skicka med ladan?

Vänliga hälsningar
Maria Stawåsen

maria.stawasen@vregion.se

0700- 62 51 53

Fristads Folkhögskola

Hej!

Det funkade utan ditt mobilnummer. Har bifogat kvittot.

Du kan swisha mig på [redaktionellt material]

Det är Fristads folkhögskola som sponsrat dig med gamarna.

Vänliga Hälsningar
Maria Stawåsen
Reference letter: Sofia Bahlner

To whom it may concern

I had the great pleasure of supervising Sofia Bahlner during her BA Degree Studies at The Swedish School of Textiles from 2010 - 2012.

Throughout her studies Sofia demonstrated outstanding skills in all aspects related to the fashion design process. Characterised by a richness of ideas, determination, patience and dedication to her craft, Sofia has the ability to develop complex ideas through her practise - always with a great eye for form, material, detail and overall composition. Characterised by curiosity Sofia’s BA degree work was a tour de force in unexpected material combinations and showed an innovative and interactive approach to body and dress.

With a strong research based approach her resulting processes and outcomes testify to a rare understanding of the field and without out any hesitation I give her the highest recommendation.

I am at your disposal for any further questions

Kind Regards

Ulrik Martin Larsen
(Letter without signature)
SELF REFLECTION

- Aww, I just want to touch it!
- It’s like a world where you discover new things and details all the time.
- How many hours have you worked on this???

These were the three most frequent comments/questions I got during the time "Experimania" were exhibited and that make me really happy and satisfied since its some of the main points I really wanted a viewer to feel or experience. So I feel it is a great receipt to carry with me for my further projects.

During my meeting with the audience, I realized that to a much higher extent than I have thought about it the viewer wanted to find a picture or motif in the installation. Many refer to it as a landscape, an ocean world, Antarctic, a place on the moon, etc. My focus during the whole process has been in the structure and the different layers so even if I have spent loads of time looking at it it stays at more of an abstract form to me. Therefore, I find it fascinating to hear that many people viewing it for the first time want to find a motif, but at the same time I see that as a result of that their imagination have started to flow by experiencing the installation.

During the examination course I exhibited the installation in a big sound proof room and it was possible to walk around and see the installation from many different angles, distances and views. Something I had in mind while working on it. So for the spring exhibition placement I was initially a bit more sceptical. But now after both of the exhibitions I can see a benefit from the fact that the two different exhibition sites gave me the chance to experience the installation in two very different ways. From the sound proof room the silence where part of the installation and the textiles fluffy surface enhanced the experience of the silence and created almost an isolated vacuum feeling.

In the spring exhibition, the piece instead did take over the room, since it was much smaller and almost filled up the entire room. The room was also white which hasn’t created the same contrast to the piece visually, but I thought it was needed to make the room still appear as big as possible. I do think the piece acts like a silencer in itself, but the same vacuum feeling was not present in this room and it made me also start to think about making an additional sound piece to go with the installation instead. Maybe an idea for the future would be to make a music piece in a collaboration with someone working with sound to create a piece matching the structures and forms as well as the surprise of turning off the lights.

In the smaller exhibition site I do think that the installation viewed in darkness got even more spectacular since the glow in the dark pattern than really surrounded the audience and was automatically much closer to the viewer’s eyes. One of the comments I will really take with me from the guest critic in the examination, Anton Alvarez, was regarding the glow in the dark effect. He put it so nicely when he said that he had experienced a transposition to another place in his mind, the same way he can experience while listen to music.
I wasn´t sure until I saw all the pieces in the same room that the glow in the dark effect would work. So by turning off the light at the first time made me very happy and relieved to discover that my surprise layer were glowing in front of me. What was unfortunately much harder to accomplish than I had expected was the timer function on the lightning in the rooms in combination with the wifi at school. I eventually had to consider me defeated by the technique.

So the surprise idea that the light just turns off at anytime had to be transformed into a more analog version where you as a viewer had to turn off the lights with a button. Of course the surprise was in one way still there since they could not see the glow in the dark threads in daylight and didn´t know what will happen, but it would have been even more of a surprise if the light were just turned off by a timer. The whole idea of the surprise layer has grown on me during the exhibition process and it have become even more important to me. Since my focus and hard work have been put into creating structures and different surfaces I found the contrast to the view in darkness grew on me during the end of the process. All of a sudden, in darkness, all the structures just disappeared and the world I created was not longer visible, only possible to experience with tactile senses. But at the same time another kind of world reveals for your eyes and it was notable how all viewers in darkness got silent or started to whisper instead.

My big issue I had during my final installation was the fact that I needed to have a curtain in the doorway to make the room dark enough, but I realized even with signs that many visitors did not dare to enter the room. I had to work on a compromise and open up the curtain and hope the viewers will read the signs to make the room dark as well.

Since it is a rather big artwork and I dared to use a technique I was not so familiar with in this project I can now see structures I maybe would like to change. But as a total project and installation I am really pleased and feel proud that I manage to get all my ideas together and dared to use a new technique which made me develop new skills.

A thought that might automatically be different after education, but still worth to think about is the expectations you think you have from the surroundings. For example, in my presentation I felt obligated to sum up what I had researched even if I might not feel that was so important while showing the ready piece. When I got to question around this on the examination, it made me realize even more the importance of actually presenting what is most important or interesting for me here and now and not the things that I think for different reasons should be explained or discussed.

My reflection since finishing the piece has made me realize that I have found a concept to continue working from that is based on the idea of transforming waste. And yes, I’m also not yet tired of experimenting with materials and still fascinated by what structures I can create.
Image 47: Sofia Bahlner, own pic, installation in sound proof room, 2021 (size 3m*3m*1.7 m)

Image 48: Sofia Bahlner, own pic, installation in night vision with glow in the dark yarn visible, 2021