CHEAP QUALITY & URBAN UNREST
THE PRETTIEST WORDS ARE THE ONES WE DON’T SAY

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Craft! Textiles
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With a background in ceramics and graphic design, I have developed my thoughts about craft as a combination of verbal and nonverbal communication, but in textiles. With the written word as one of my main materials this project looks into class and material hierarchies filtered through autofictive stories from my life. This paper explores themes that impact my decisions in the making process, choosing materials, motifs, texts and words, politics and poetry. It deals with all the information I push into patchworking, shirring, tufting and sculpting textiles, with the goal to paint a picture of an often unwanted section of society. To discuss this I have chosen references dealing with sloppy craft, text based art, graffiti and craft traditions, in a mix with news articles and economy. Through all parts of the project I am on balancing line between chaos and perfection, truth and fiction.
ABSTRACT
I’M TALKING TO MYSELF I HOPE I’M LISTENING.
WORD LIST
CERAMICS, SCULPTURE, GRAPHIC DESIGN, TEXTILES.
THEY CALL IT PUNK.
DIGITAL VS. HISTORY. SOFT, HARD & ELASTIC.
MONEY, CRAFT & THE PRECARIAT
CLASS & MATERIAL MISCONCEPTIONS.
HOW DEEP CAN SHALLOW BE?
THE PRETTIEST WORDS ARE THE ONES WE DON’T SAY
REFERENCE LISTS
APPENDIX
Right foot pushing the gas pedal to the floor. Full speed can't be this slow. The fabric has pulled the speed control to zero again. Full speed, pedal to the floor. Liv Strömkvist and Caroline Ringskog Ferrada Noli are discussing the separation between creator/creation and truth/fiction in my noise cancelling headphones. My right hand holds the elastic thread tight between thumb and index finger. My left hand pulls the fabric straight through the machine with some steering from the fingers I have left on the right hand. The fabric shrinks into hills and valleys. My body is one with the machine. My brain wants to be one with the fabric and the elastic thread. I fail and succeed at the same time. That is the whole point. I'm a perfectionist who loves a mess. I build ceramic sculptures upside down, I distort textiles from the back, I'm searching for ways to lose control. The more I practice losing control the more I fail at it.

My artistic background is a slippery slope of me being unable to commit to any material or technique. I find myself getting bored and I easily get obsessed with learning new techniques and materials. Earlier I've described this in a sense of “ignorance is bliss”, especially regarding traditions and craft history. My ambition is not to be ignorant, but to broaden the view of what contemporary craft can refer and relate to. My research is based on an autoethnographic method, where I discuss class and taste by connecting methods in craft with stories from my own life. The stories I describe as autofiction. Based on a true story, translated into post-disciplinary craft.

This paper will describe my artistic process, how I choose materials and what narratives I am working with. It is about hip hop, polyester, graffiti, politics, chaos and control.

This paper and my studio work has been led by millions of questions, and my mysterious intuition, which has led to new questions and problems. A key question has been how textiles can be used as a distorting layer on images and text, together with wondering what it means to work in between, or try to blur the line between two and three dimensional. In parallel, I have worked with questions about using text as a material to craft, how to strengthen my storytelling through my use of words regarding conveying a narrative or setting. I been wondering how I could use hiphop as a metaphor to conceptually connect poetic stories, images and textile techniques.

All sources have been chosen with biggest care through the lens of my autoethnographic glasses. Many of them are Swedish, and connected to Swedish society, since that is what affects me on a daily basis. Swedish titles are translated to English by me in brackets throughout the text.

This paper is a nonlinear story about my master project, which could be described as inspired by the academic paper format. The chapter you are reading, I'm talking to myself I hope I'm listening, is the introduction, followed by Ceramics, sculpture, graphic design, textiles which describes my artistic background and starting point. They call it punk deals with aesthetics, punk vs. hiphop, graffiti and vandalism. Digital vs. history. Soft, hard & elastic takes a look at all of those things though me making a Shirred sculpture and choosing yarn. Money, craft & The precariat describes craft from a socioeconomic point of view. Class & material misconceptions goes deeper into polyester and cheap materials ability to describe class. How deep can shallow be? is about verbal vs. nonverbal communication, and finally The prettiest words are the ones we don’t say is my conclusion.

Inspired by the research by Magnus Dahlstedt and his book Förortsdrömmar (Suburb Dreams) I find importance in accessibility in connection to my topics. Dahlstedt together with the other authors decided that to make their book free to download instead of making it a commercial product.1 The book aims to broaden the image and gainsay preconceptions of life in Swedish suburbs dominating media, and I think I dare to say I share that aim. By writing a master level paper I also want to try to broaden the view on academic writing, by not using a very formal or academic language. I believe that my ideas would suffer from being translated into elitist language, and I have valued writing in a sincere and personal tone of voice.

SHIRRING  Sewing rows with elastic thread, often to create elasticity in a non-stretchy fabric, resulting in the fabric gathering in a decorative way.

PATCHWORK  Traditional textile technique where many small pieces of different fabrics are sewn together to create (often geometric, repetitive) patterns.

TUFTING  Technique where a tufting gun shoots yarn through woven fabric, usually to make rugs.

PUNCH NEEDLE  Small tool which could be described as in between tufting and embroidery.

SUBLIMATION PRINT  Digital textile printing technique using a dye that chemically binds to (mainly) polyester fibers.

SLIP CASTING  Ceramic technique traditionally used for mass producing tableware in plaster molds.

TARPAULIN  Strong plastic fabric sheets often used for covering and protecting things, same type of material as the famous Ikea-bags are made of.

POLYESTER SATIN  Glossy fabric, reminiscent of silk, but made from thin synthetic fibers.
When I applied to the BFA program in Ceramic Art at HDK I was convinced that would be a great place to study sculpture. 21 years old and had no idea that there was a difference between fine art and craft. After 1.5 years of studying the heavy burdens of craft tradition, I was allowed to do an exchange semester in graphic design at ELISAVA in Barcelona. Jumping straight into their third year was demanding, but opened my eyes to the freedom I had in crafts. Graphic design came to have a huge impact on my ceramics and my BA project focused on communication theory and a sculptural materialisation of verbal + non verbal communication. The ideas I developed are very much with me through this project, as I am still using combinations of flat images and a material body where I see the flat images as the intended communication and the material body as tone of voice, body language or background noise.

My master project in textiles started with the simple goal to translate my artistic ideas regarding ceramics into a new, yet very familiar material. I had a lot of experience working with textiles, but wanted to take these two years to deepen my knowledge in different techniques and develop my artistic expression. My focus has been patchworking, tufting, punch needling, soft sculpture and shirring. My project developed into focusing on the storytelling, sharpening the choices of motifs and thinking about what they can mean and say about society. I have ended up mainly exploring shirring as a way to distort images and give my work a shaky, sometimes screaming voice. Together with the stories behind the images I want them to scream chaos and perfection, insecurity and boldness, self-confidence and doubt.
They call it punk.

Every now and then someone says my art “looks punk” or that my attitude is punk, and I have just thought: I know what you mean, but you’re wrong. If you want to explain what I am doing through a music genre, call it hip hop. I was probably eight when I was asked to choose between Tupac and Biggie the first time. Both punk and hiphop aesthetics are definitely correct, concerning values like anti-capitalism/coming from the bottom of society, do-it-yourself, selfmade, anti-conformist, anarchist, making something out of nothing and so on. Punk is Vivienne Westwood and hiphop is Dapper Dan? Either way it refers to subcultural aesthetics. Swedish artist Klas Eriksson made a series of football scarves, changing the meaning to All Curators Are Bastards which I really enjoy, that were exhibited at Göteborgs Konsthall 2017. His work revolves around power and control and he questions the distinctions between what is considered high and low culture including references to sport supporter culture. Art critic Jocelyn Davis writes about the exhibition “Vet din mamma var du e?” (Does your mom know where you are?):

“With an interest in how power flows and how crowds function, the artist attempts to unpack sociopolitical dynamics using playful tactics. This show raises the question: Who belongs in a gallery or institution, and how do these entities influence artists given “free rein” of such spaces?”

What Eriksson discusses through his art is very close to my interests, except that we might use different subcultures to back up our stories. It is interesting to find that there are overlapping themes between them, especially the use of the term ACAB. For me it has a clear connection to graffiti and hiphop culture, I have used the abbreviation ACAB/1312 (meaning All Cops Are Bastards) in my work from time to time, and most of the time people only think it says ABC/123. There has been a few people who have seen this that has told me they love it, and that is not the people believing it says ABC/123. This is a method I want to explore in the future, using references that exclude some people from understanding and by that include others. Inviting people who get more out of reading tags on a dirty pub toilet than going to a fine art gallery, and make the rich gallery visitors feel as lost as they do sitting on that toilet.

When I was sixteen I found myself being friends with a big gang of graffiti writers. They spent their evenings drinking beer and drawing and planning where to go painting when the city went to sleep. The vandalism was probably the only thing keeping me from painting then, but those years influenced me a lot and led me into applying to Wiks Folkhögskola to study art. I have later found similarities in my artistic process and the graffiti process. The goal is always to evolve, it is not about permanence. As soon as your piece is on the wall you run, hopefully you can get a photo of it tomorrows sunlight. You have to detach your emotions from the work, cause it may be gone in the morning. If your painting is shit, someone might make a better one on top of it an hour later. The only way for the work to survive is in photos or in people’s minds, the conversations about it, and that depends on the impact the work makes on its viewer. It is this driving force to create and be seen without any profit, rather at risk of personal bankruptcy, that makes graffiti so appealing to me. You can find obvious visual inspiration in a lot of my works, I use letters and play around with their shapes, creating different levels of legibility. I’ve made repeat patterns that look like public bathrooms, referring to vandalism or the works by Nug, while others rather bring your mind to fabric patterns by Carl-Johan de Geer.

Showing graffiti in galleries has been discussed, because graffiti can’t be graffiti without vandalism, and I agree that the vandalism is a strong part of the expression. The former Konstfack student Nug made a film of himself covering a SL subway train with spray paint, which made the current minister of culture tell Swedish media that “This is not art” (own translation). I followed the discussions about this being a crime (even though the train was nowhere to be found), or art, with huge interest in how Nug is able portray vandalism without vandalizing anything.
Jacob Kimwall describes the history of graffiti and how it moved from the streets in the 70s and into galleries and museum in the 80s, and presents the skeptical viewpoint of Jack Stewart, who means that graffiti artists showing graffiti painted on canvas in galleries, are really making paintings with graffiti as motif. I can agree that seeing little paintings of graffiti at a gallery isn’t a powerful experience compared to walking around Röda Sten Konsthall in Gothenburg.

So when I became a crafter instead of a graffiti writer I made the decision not to vandalize, even if I so highly enjoy the concept of vandalisation. It is such an emotional force to destroy something. And that is the kind of frustrated energy I want my work to have. To portray this I have used printed images of burning cars from the news on a series of sculptures. When I lived in Västra Frölunda the half melted cars on parking lots served as a constant reminder of the issues Sweden has with segregation in its city suburbs. There were so many stories that could be told through those parking lots. The Swedish prime minister came to Gothenburg to speak about the governments’ enforcement of harsher penalties for vandalism. When the solution should be on the opposite side of the chain of events.

There is research on Swedish car fires, one report from 2012 is called Segregation and Urban Unrest in Sweden and is analysing the association between car burnings and urban unrest, concluding that residential segregation is a factor for car burnings, it is a reaction to social exclusion, not ethnicity. Stefan Löfven decided to talk about penalties, and here I am, crafting about it.

The storytelling that goes into my craft has many layers. Through this project I have been working on the creative writing that ends up in a material process. I have been reading a lot of novels, and both listening to and reading hip hop lyrics. When I read the lyrics of Swedish rapper Z.E. I realize there’s a whole lot of nonsense, things that just sound good melodically. I also want my words to have a melody, I’m looking for shapes and structures that rhyme and little details that repeat like a beat.

Rappers often tell fictive stories based on reality, there are a lot of stories that could have happened, or may have happened close by. I have been very interested in this kind of realistic fiction, the stories I have been listening to my whole life, the stories that are almost true. It is not unusual that rappers have to explain their song lyrics in court. The balance in-between truth and fiction that I value so high is apparently powerful enough to be used as a weapon by law enforcement.

Having worked with the thought of autofiction as a method for my writing, I have also wondered if anything is either true or fictive. Just a tiny rearrangement of sentences can create a whole new truth, or lie if you will. Most of the things I write are reactions to things that has happened, mixed with purely emotional gabble. I pick and choose lines and words from the weird documents I end up with, I combine and rearrange, add and delete, until I’m facing something that has to take material form.

In one of our weekly feedback sessions I showed my first experiments on shirring, a technique where you sew with elastic thread which makes the fabric gather and create flowy folds. I had spent some time theoretically thinking how I could use the technique to distort images and finally I had some results. I told my colleagues they could touch my work and play around with them, since my reason for receiving feedback was to find new ways to elaborate the shirring. Many of the ideas that came up was based on the elastic threads that made it possible to have an audience interacting with (pulling!) the fabric to find new images or hidden messages. The following days I was thinking about how to prevent this from happening. I have to be in control. Nothing should be hidden, my lines of words are fragmental enough. I believe I am already asking a lot of the viewer to look beyond the words I put in front of them. It became clear that I used shirring as a method to manipulate motifs, the elastic threads had lost their functional elastic purpose as soon as the fabric wrinkled into something new.

A couple of weeks later I had just finished sewing my biggest shirred thing. One by four meters of fabric printed with newspaper images of car fires in Sweden. I had spent hours on shrinking it into less than half of its original size. Condensing is a better word than shrinking actually, I was boiling things down to a blurred concentration. I was going to drench it in glue. No one is going to be able to change my reduced distorted story of the fires. I could easily drape the fabric into a bulky flame. The glue made the fabric heavy and created new vertical folds. Maybe a metaphor for putting clay in the kiln, a decision to let go. A decision to take control.

In the essay "A perverted taste" Claire Jones analyses depictions of cloth (and puberty) in Italian mid-nineteenth-century marble sculptures. The perfectly sculpted textile folds, laces, seams and buttons made people want to touch the sculptures to make sure it was actually marble. I have been captivated by marble dresses on more occasions than I can count. At Glyptoteket in Copenhagen and Pergamon in Berlin I have spent hours looking at the rock hard fabric folds. There is something about freezing the forever flexible fabric that makes so much sense. The simplicity of fooling the eye. People often touch my ceramic sculptures to see if they are soft, they ask what material it is. I see that as a form of success in removing the ceramic history from my pieces. I am not flirting with porcelain figurines, I am flirting with Photoshop and Microsoft WordArt in my material practice. In a world where anything can be created in a 3D software, I want to make objects that couldn't or just wouldn't be digitally produced. I treat the workshop as a virtual reality simulation of Photoshop. The elastic thread has become a sort of sculptural paintbrush and I can't really decide what it creates.

Alexandre Bavard has made a series of sculptures of petrified contemporary clothes, sitting on concrete fundaments with traces of graffiti tags. He works in a wide range of materials but for me it strongly refers to textiles and graffiti, it is serious and playful, and with a very today textile representation. Early 21st century fake marble sculptures found in a future dystopia, fabric drenched in plastic and concrete. Bavard works with common objects from the anthropocene and uses neo-archeology as a tool to look back at our society from a thought future. I often think about my work through the lens of it being found in the future and looked at as a representation of today. For me that is an important part of developing the field of craft, a combination of looking back and moving forward.

23 years has passed since Zandra Ahl published Fult & Snyggt (Ugly & Cute), a tiny pink book loudly critiquing what is considered "good taste", and unfortunately not much has changed. The minimalist, pure, white craft has lost some ground to the sloppy craft movement, but many traditional values linger around. As I plan my work before
going into the tufting studio, trying to estimate how much yarn I need for the color scheme I want in a sketch, I am doubtful about mixing natural fibers with acrylics. I have collected three Ikea bags of yarn from sales and thrift shops, as usual I have chosen them for their color and look - not their material properties. Why am I like this?! my brain screams to me. But when moving into a new technique I always want to follow the rules first, to get a grip of how it is supposed to be done, to be able to think how I can move away from that. As usual, I look at history and tradition, might even take a swim in it, but only with the mission to move away from it.


I grew up in a kind of messy part of the city. A lot of our neighbours were unemployed or dependent on social handouts. Since I was a kid I have been around people struggling with their economy, so for me that has always been normal. The people I grew up with today both earn their living from selling drugs and fancy university degrees. It is this part of the world I want my work to take you to. One of the sculptures from my bachelor project is a good example of when I feel I have succeeded with that (although I had not yet formulated that narrative). The title “HYD?” or “How you doing?” and the response is as you can see “cool, but broke and tired”. It has a very thought through sloppy craft look, where the only perfect thing is the outlines of the letters. Sandra Alfoldy describes my intention very well:

“Sloppy craft suggests a purposeful approach to failure. Employing a purposeful approach indicates expertise or professionalism, or the ability to differentiate between good and bad technical skills, which reinforces the idea that the craft artist chooses to work in this way”.

I am not afraid of the sloppy, it just has to be meaningful, and often - used as a contrast. My sculpture for example, would be illegible and completely lose its purpose if it was sloppy all the way. In textiles I’m still exploring the sloppy, and what kinds of sloppy textiles I like. I have to fight against my self all the time, since gaining technical skills automatically makes me less sloppy.

Alison Britton writes about art and craft and skills and expression. That something skillful without expression would always be less interesting than a poorly executed strong expression. She questions that skill and expression are in opposition, and I can only agree with her. I have often felt I have found freedom in lacking skills and knowledge, especially regarding craft tradition. When my ideas run freely without any set material limitations, the ideas are better and I can choose the material that fits. This is one of my problems with being in a material specific craft education, that my ideas easily get stuck in one material. But I chose to do my masters in textile to deepen my skills in executing my ideas regarding textiles. Although I’m still a bit more confident in my ceramic practice, and I know I can always go back to clay when I need to.

A big inspiration in the contemporary textile field is Erin M. Riley, she weaves big impressive tapestries depicting dramatic car crashes, faceless selfie-nudes, still life images of sex toys and drug addiction. A wild mix of motifs one could think, but she ties it together visually through weaving and all the photos have a of connection to her own life. I am guessing a lot of people think these images are provoking and disturbing, but I
find them being so important. The time spent on weaving serves a purpose in her work, and I do not say that often. Some of the sloppiness I am looking for in my work comes from working in a fast pace. I make mistakes and repeat the good ones.

When I first got my hands on Frida Hållander's PhD "Vems hand är det som gör" in the summer 2019 I had really high expectations. The under title says "A sister text about craft, class, feminism and the will to fight" (own translation) and what I imagined I would spend the summer reading turned out to be something completely different. She describes her driving force as a naive desire to initiate a change in society where working class women would not be undermined and their labour/making would not be deprived its legitimacy.\textsuperscript{15}

My first thought is "Do we even need a societal change for the working class today?" Of course, things can and should always get better, but I often find myself envying the stability of my fellow working class women, and by that I mean the ones with permanent contracts. They can not really be compared to the 19th century working class movement. Guy Standing proposes a his theory about a new dangerous class: The Precariat. A word put together by the words precarious and proletariat.\textsuperscript{16} A precarious class that developed from the need for a flexible labour market, an idea that found its way into politics in the 1980s and led to companies moving their production to countries with cheaper labour.\textsuperscript{17} Today this has refined into a growing group of gig workers. The last three employments I have had has been like that, I wake up in the morning and I have a job if/where someone needs me. New day, new job - hopefully. The companies that need me can replace me at any minute without explanation. Profit, profit, profit. If it wasn't for this I might have been a happy working class girl with a permanent employment slip casting ceramics at Uppsala Ekeby. I have no interest in opposing myself against the work and research by Frida Hållander, sharing her values of intersectional feminism I will rather propose my research being a "sister text" to hers.

In a way I also have the naive desire to initiate change in society, but I also believe craft can be a very inaccessible channel to use. I make objects I could never afford to buy and I (most often) exhibit in spaces where I had never set my foot before my craft education. My intention is to change this, hoping that someone who would never enter a craft gallery might feel more comfortable in one of my exhibitions. A good solution would simply be to exhibit in other places. At the end of an artist residency I did at Zentrum für Keramik in Berlin 2019 I had a big sculpture I couldn’t afford to ship back home. So I walked the city to find a good place to leave it. Just a few blocks from the studio was an old abandoned Schwimhalle, a building falling to pieces, covered in graffiti and shattered glass. I needed help to carry the three piece LOL sculpture there, we tried different spots for it and along came two teenage boys and asked if they could bring it home. I was so happy, I had put something in their secret teenage living room - and they wanted to take care of it. It was the perfect spot for it. In this way I often think about where I want to place things, but most of the time they end up on white walls. The thought of their placing, for example my new favorite abandoned building that I can’t get into, brings a contrasting energy to the empty spaces they will actually inhabit.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. p 16.
The sound of silence would be nice for a change. Its roots will grow deeper into the mattress. I take a cigarette from your hand and follow you to the sunny balcony. Like I was looking at a photograph. A car drives away. Yes, I can buy new bags for the vacuum cleaner. Something has happened. The sound of the helicopter immediately shuts down whatever my brain is up to. The sound of silence would be nice for a change.
When I started using polyester to be able to use the sublimation printer, it was not a conscious choice, the technique demanded it. I felt a bit bad about it, this cheap, shiny, plastic that I would never want to wear. It does not bring your mind to quality, not even if it is the recycled kind.

So why would I want to use this cheap cheat, pretending-to-be-silk fabric? Because it speaks about the dream of being silk, when it is actually polyester, and the misconception of being silk, while actually being polyester. It contains both the success and failure to be silk, depending on who you ask. It opens up questions about quality and privilege I want to discuss. When I was 10 the coolest thing you could do was to have a pyjama party with your friends all wearing silk pyjamas. So even though my mom tried to tell me that this “silk” pyjamas I wanted would be sweaty and make my hair static, I got a red one with pink hearts. It was perfect and beautiful but of course I did not like wearing it because it was 100% polyester plastic.

During the autumn 2019 my main obsession was printing drawings on polyester and making patchworks with them. While moving around the parts of the process to get different results in distorting and destroying the images I printed, I realized how much I loved working with polyester. It behaves nothing like natural fibers, I can iron it to the point where it almost melts and it stays flat forever, kind of. It is completely hopeless to control. When I made a patchwork from some old linen and cotton I got so bored. I could cut and sew perfectly straight and the fabric had no opinions at all.

The ethical problems with polyester are infinite. Europeans wash 30 000 tonnes of polyester fibers from their washing machines every year according to Greenpeace, the production relies on fossil fuels and the material is not biodegradable. It’s fast, it’s cheap, that’s it. I could go on explaining how small amounts of waste I have and that I never wash my polyester in the washing machine, but that is not the point. I use polyester as a tool to describe problems in society, that this is what I can afford and I have to make the best out of it. It unfortunately serves a point for me to discuss being poor through the cheapest material I can find. I couldn’t tell you stories about car fires in the suburbs in pleated silk, it just wouldn’t be true.

In the spring 2020 my textile class was invited to do a project with the city of Stockholm called Levande Stockholm (Alive Stockholm). We are asked to create a fabric print that will be made into festive flags hanging in different parts of the city. The fabric would also be made into a sculpture for a park in Midsommarkransen. Since I enjoy hand drawing pattern reports I decided to draw one pattern a day until I decided which one to use. This was a great (financial) opportunity to try out ordering printed fabric. For a long time I have been wanting to print tarpaulin. It would suit perfect for this outdoor textile sculpture thing, cheap and strong. It has no luxurious connotations that I can come up with. I was thinking about the waste disposal company Big Bag. You buy a Big Bag in the size you prefer, it’s bright orange and has the Big Bag logo on it in black, you fill it with trash and call Big Bag and they come get it for you. The tarp its made of is so high quality you can put 1300kg of trash in it. So where am I going with this? I’m don’t want you to think about tarp as a high quality tent you put up when on a fancy hiking trip. Think about the advertisement on the fence to the construction site where they are building expensive condos to replace the mouldy rental apartments. Think about the Ikea bags you kept all your clothes in when you moved out of there.

So, I had to hand in a sketch for the flags that were going to decorate Ténsta and Nybrogatan. I had drawn a repeat pattern based on the zip codes to Sweden’s “no go zones”, we don’t have no go zones in Sweden, but some state that we do. Correcting myself: I used the zip codes from the Swedish polices list of “särskilt utsatta områden”, the places
they can’t keep up with solving and preventing crimes. Someone who spends their day in Tensta might find their zip code in the pattern, while the residents of Nybrogatan probably think it is just nonsense. Swedish politician Ebba Busch (KD) likes to use the expression “no go zones” when talking about integration. She uses it to paint a picture of Swedish suburbs becoming more and more like ghettos and what her party wants is ultimately a massive cut down on immigration. So the made up concept of Sweden’s no go zones is exaggerated and used to make people scared. The use of the term creates these zones in people’s minds. In my opinion that is the opposite of integration politics. So, my sculpture was a relaxed ice cream-balloon looking take on integration politics. A soft decorative invitation to these zip codes.


The mouth is interesting because it's one of those places where the dry outside moves toward the slippery inside.

MEN DON'T PROTECT YOU ANYMORE.
Jenny Holzer is definitely one of my favorite artists, although I have very recently discovered that. I have seen her work at Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin and have just thought "Of course I love this, how predictable of me". Holzer manages to open up a universe of thoughts with her short and powerful pieces of text. It is so good I could just give up writing. "ABUSE OF POWER COMES AS NO SURPRISE" from the one-liner series Truisms, is for me just an absolute awful and important truth. Holzer uses language as her artistic medium, simply because it communicates in a way that painting can’t. The more I see and read, the more I agree. Text is a perfect material to craft, but I don’t want to put it up against the painting. I want the images to be read together with text and materials.

Looking back on things I have made I can sort of make a recipe for what I want my text based works to include. I start with a piece of text that opens up for reflection, often what I write is a response to something, which taken out of its context can find many other meanings. I choose images and patterns that should somehow connect to or contrast against what I thought the text was about. When I give a body to the text I look at shape and texture as how it is being said. Wildly gesturing with hands or whispering with tear-swollen vocal cords. Looking at my own work this way, words and images as verbal communication, and shape and structure as all kinds of nonverbal communications, has become a set of rules to analyze their layers of meaning. Suddenly every detail communicates something. The Photoshop filter that turned the typography into little dots becomes a hoarse voice, together with the crispy wrinkled fabric I can almost hear it. Slightest change in the rows of elastic thread gives a different tone. A large piece of entirely black polyester satin became such a dramatic silence. The printed images of burnt and burning cars turned into abstract paintings of flames and ashes, both easy and difficult for me to explain. They will be given additional verbal communication, titles.

Though this project I have worked a lot on my writing, I have tried to write longer texts than earlier, and more towards telling a story or painting a picture. If every sentence is a snapshot, together they become some kind of multilayered moment, a collage of memories. My way of writing has always been like opening a water tap, things just pour out. I remember writing my first short stories when I was 9 or 10 years old, how surprised I was that my brain could tell me a story I had never heard. And I am still confused that after finishing every sentence I know what happens next, without knowing anything when I start.

THE PRETTIEST WORDS ARE THE ONES WE DON’T SAY

Time has come to an end, and it comes as no surprise that the thousands of words I’ve written about words are not enough. My project has found its title: The prettiest words are the ones we don’t say.

A bit ironic, since the written word is an important part of my practice, but I really want to highlight the communicative qualities in the materials. Typography has a voice and the fabric is the money in someone’s wallet. The car fire flame sculpture is also a tulip growing on my old street in Västra Frölunda. I have made square wavy love letters to situations that almost happened, speaking in a trembling voice. Everything happens at once, the songs on the radio and the helicopter in the sky, the mad frustration about our unequal society and the happiness about my new curtains from the thrift shop.

My bachelor project in ceramic art, where I first developed the concept of looking at material as nonverbal communication in relation to words (and images) as verbal communication has been leading my experiments through different textile techniques. The idea has developed to a point where it seems I’ll never let go of me. I look at every step in the making process as communication, every choice and every mistake. My focus has been to manipulate and distort motifs to rearrange, enhance or destroy its original meanings. Sometimes I just can’t live with anyone knowing what the text said before I cut it to pieces, other times I regret everything I’ve done. What I’m left with is still the same story, just told in another way, neither uglier or prettier. I have been searching for ways to lose control, something that seems to be impossible.

Looking at my library of patchworks, soft sculptures and shirred distortions I wouldn’t describe them as pretty things to put in your home, which craft historically have been. But at the same time, I really think that is what they should be. There are a lot of cute, feminine, romantic details in their overall hard and loud, graphic appearance. I have been valuing cheap materials high, for example asking if it’s at all possible to justify working with polyester. After having fallen hopelessly in love with the plastic fake silk I have realized that that is where its beauty lies, in the cheap attempt to fake being expensive and perfect. In my book, polyester has won the fight against silk. Looking towards the future of craft I really think we have to leave the living room with dusty old perfect luxurious decorations, and that is why I am presenting a series of true fictive statements about the world I live in.

I have made some loose references to hiphop, regarding autofictional storytelling, and there are more possible parallels to draw between voluminous textile structures and musical melodies, with visual rhymes and political poetry. I have actively worked with visual influences from graffiti and graphic design, and have unintentionally found connections to abstract painting and marble sculptures.

Having thought through the various ways I have been influenced by graffiti, I have come to realize that its accessibility must serve a key role. My daily walking routines are often decided by where I can look at art, and most days I’m not walking to a gallery. The feeling that craft is inaccessible has been bothering me through all of this, what is the point of making things that neither me, my friends or our parents can afford to buy? My brain and hands keep trying to make sense of the world through textiles and clay. I have to believe in craft as an important language to use, and hope that it is possible to understand or simply feel something beyond words. I find new problems everywhere, all the time, and crafting keeps on being the answer.
REFERENCES

BOOKS


DIGITAL


IMAGES

1. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, Shirring detail. 2021 (Own image)
2. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, Sublimation print. 2021 (Own image)
3. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, No I’m not scared, punch needle, wool/silk/acrylic yarn. 2019 (Own image)
4. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, Patchwork detail. 2021 (Own image)
5. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, Patchwork, 2019 (Own image)
6. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, Klotter, repeat pattern, 2019. (Own image)
10. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, ACAB1312, PVC-tarpaulin, digital print, sculpture, 2020 (Own image)
11. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, Chaos is ok too, Soft sculpture, 2020 (Own image)
12. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, Sculpture, polyester, pva-glue, 2020 (Own image)
13. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, Pergamon & Glyptoteket, digital collage, 2021 (Own image)
15. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, Sculpture, polyester, 2021 (Own image)
18. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, HYD?, stoneware, 2018 (Own image)
19. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, polyester, 2021 (Own image)
20. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, Relax, sculpture, PVC-tarpaulin, digital print, 2020 (Own image)
21. Jenny Holzer, Living, Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin (Own image)
22. Jenny Holzer, Survival, Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin (Own image)
23. Sara Kallioinen Lundgren, polyester, 2021 (Own image)
June 1st 2021

Since the conclusion-like words on page 27 was written a lot has happened. The exhibition we built for the examination - was the first time I saw some of my pieces in their intended form, hanging from the ceiling. Two of them are over three meters tall and I was surprised with how small they made me feel. The ceramicist in me was pleased. Choosing which pieces would play parts in the story of the exhibition was not easy, but came down to looking at them in different constellations and how they brought out strengths in each other, most of all looking for contrasting colors and shapes. The shirred text dense works needed the simple and illegible stretched out texts as pillars in the background. Something silent to trust. When the eight parts of the story was placed, one on the wall, one on the floor, and six from the ceiling, it felt like I had created my own little corner of a world the large sea. A solo show, some have said.

Quickly the examination week arrived, and I had the luxury to have Zandra Ahl as my guest critic. She said she felt invited to add her own parts to the story, which was really important for me to hear. My intention is not that my exact story comes through, but there is a story to find if you have something to add. I explained how I had worked with texts as patchworks, picking different lines from different stories, creating a new fragmental story. Since I know too much about every line of text, it is difficult for me to know what it might mean to someone else. Comparing to my ceramic sculptures, which are often just one word, people have often told me what they thought about when they saw it. “I have to remind myself to say no to things every day” a family member said to my sculpture that simply said NO. I have come to a point where I feel I have underestimated the power saying less. My Eternal Flame of car fires has caught something in its simplicity. Later during the spring exhibition it became clear that some did not have the attention span to read my long and wobbly texts on site, which I understand when it comes to digesting an exhibition of that scale in a 1,5 hour time slot. Some got back to me and said they had read it later from their phone and they wished to see it again after. One of the longer texts became quite difficult to read depending on where the sunlight hit the folded fabric.

The biggest issue that stays with me from the examination is Zandra Ahls negative reaction to how I described using polyester, that there is a problem with talking about cheap materials as low class and by that consolidate class and material hierarchies. She poked a hole in the foundation of how I have described my love/hate relationship to polyester. But after having this though in my head for a couple of weeks, what is important to me is not the fact that polyester is a “low class material” that needs to be related to certain topics, it is the parts about faking and wanting to be something else - prettier, richer, shinier. In the exhibition people have asked “Is it silk?” and I know they want me to say yes, so when I answer that everything is polyester they seem a bit disappointed even though they had not even touched it. A part of me feels successful when I see that disappointment, or at least I hope they are left with something to think about. Would it have been in silk? I made a small piece of shirred silk an evening not long ago, to try to prove myself wrong. Just to see if I had done it all wrong. The folds were the thinnest and most voluminous ever, it looked like something that belonged at wedding. It simply wasn’t my language to speak, even if that would turn some kind of made up material hierarchies upside down.

The earlier discussions about the function of elasticity that led me to drench some of my pieces in glue, came to have surprisingly small importance in the exhibition space. Many missed the fact that some pieces were hard and some were soft, because no-one dared to touch them (at least when I was around). So the worry that someone would stretch something can simply be left behind. Moving forward, the use of glue will not be based on giving up elasticity, but durability and aesthetic, fabric-shiny vs. lacquer-shiny, lightweight fluff vs. heavy
wet folds. It also surprised me that a few did not at all understand that the folded structures had something to do with elastics, one or two jaws dropped when I stretched out the letters to show the connection between the shirred and the flat fabrics with illegibly long letters. It made it really obvious that I have been working from inside a very closed Konstfack. The tiny detail that something is, or was, elastic definitely changes something for me. Finally, I would like to comment on the book recommendation I got from Zandra Ahl at the examination, Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age by Kenneth Goldsmith. I went straight to the library to pick it up and have not had a minute to sit down and read since. It deals with new ways to write, using techniques taught in other disciplines than literature, which I guess was connected to me describing my writing as patchworking. I really look forward to reading it and getting new ideas on how to develop my writing.

I could not have done this without you:
Bella Rune
Andrea Peach
Birgitta Burling
The sound of silence would make me change. To what will I be driven deeper into the matrix? I take a cigarette from your hand and follow you to the sunny balcony. We are looking at a photograph of our friends away. Yes, I can make new sense for the vacuum cleaners. Something has happened. The sound of the silence is immediately unite. Whatever my truth is, it's beyond sound of silence. Would you be there?