Stalking the Zone of Sentience
A Journey with Glass

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CRAFT! MA2/Glass
2023/02/24
6314 words
Abstract

#glassart #flameworking #glasscasting #emotion #imaginednature
#mysteriousness #uncanny

In this writing, I guide the reader through different aspects of the emotional understanding and experiencing of art. The general purpose of the research is to argue that aesthetic experience is intertwined with various emotional stages. I attempt to decipher the meaning of an imagined or recreated nature (landscape and creatures) by other artists and then focus on my own realizations in creating it. To undertake this challenge, I aspire to understand the unconscious emotional connections of nature to humans, as well as the related notions of the uncanny and the corporeal. The methodology of the research is partly by finding evidence from the discipline of psychology and phenomenology, partly introspective and also process-based (technical) by focusing on the discipline of glass making. The paper’s main conclusions are embedded in my final work, which serve as an illustration as well as qualities of a craft-based research.
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INTRODUCTION

When one starts a journey, they usually begin with approaching the familiar, what they already know, to stay safe and avoid uncertainty for as long as they can. Where I come from, there is even a proverb for the phenomena: “don’t leave your usual road for the unknown”, illustrating issues as a metaphor for a road junction, where one is able to decide whether to make a change or resist it and stay in the usual place. My Hungarian ancestors’ idea, however, has made me think about whether I wanted to follow the safe path after all. Perhaps, if you are an artist, as you dive into your art, it is not even a possibility. It is becoming your own adventure of discovering the way a material works, the way an artwork is the channel for discussions, and the chaotic trajectory of learning about yourself both as an artist and a person.

Since I started to work with glass, I have imagined that being an enthusiastic and restless student/worker is enough, that the meaning of what you create and add to the theoretical scene of craft is secondary to technical achievements you gain in the field. This was due to the fact that the literature and education of glass (because of the difficulty of learning the skills needed to create glassworks), is focused primarily on techniques and applications of the material. I am working with glass since I was 14 years old, and never questioned myself why I find it so fascinating, why I could never leave it. It was recently that I realized, in order to really understand my path in this field and to later on contribute to something bigger than myself, I need to start to analyze and reflect on the experience of glassmaking. Using the possibility to be a reflective practitioner extends the understanding of hidden aspects of personal development and interests. Being reflective is about bridging the gap between action and thought and channeling the dynamics of knowing how into the unity of knowing what and why. I think that the path one chose and the journey they are committed to is telling a lot about a person and their inner world, emotional needs, priorities and assets.

The title, Stalking the Zone of Sentience is a phrase used by Jan Verwoert, describing the emotional realm of life and art as a zone in which connection and sharing occurs. Within this realm, we find many interdisciplinary connections and relations. Stalking the zone, the desire to enter and flourish within it, is what this paper aims to explore. The art of you is therefore a zone, populated by creatures of different kind, memories, needs, friends and foes, strangers and loved ones, a small world which wants to be explored and only you got the map to navigate its terrains.

1 Translated by the author; original in hungarian: „Járt utat a járatlanért el ne hagyj”
3 J. Verwoert, A Prayer to Protest, Piet Zwart Institute, 2010
In these next few chapters, I would like to present the journey of a glass artist work-based self-knowledge and illustrate it with my own. I structure the paper to reflect the dynamics of creating one’s own artist persona. It goes from addressing the state of being emotionally and experientially invested in the process and the material(s) of choice. This indeed is only the departure. It serves as an exploration, which helps to elevate and effectuate the proper working methods which enable the attention to move forward to see what inspires and motivates a person deeply. For me, this is the journey of being a creature of nature myself and also working to recreate it. I imagine the natural world through my own lenses.

THE DEPARTURE

Creative processes, the nature of experience and emotional engagement are intertwining concepts which all hold value in understanding what, how and why art-craft makes sense – how it helps humans to analyze, evaluate and cope with reality. The understanding of our experiences through creation is guiding us towards making sense of ourselves.

Emotion is a key element, because it has many powers on us, intuitively and cognitively. It is the foundation, the first ingredient with which I am able to analyze the processes of making and interpreting. It aids to serve the explanation – even to myself – of what this is all about.

I feel there's a lack of discourse in finding and naming the aspects of glass which elevates it to be considered an artistic material. This is why I give exceptional attention and credit to my chosen material – and protagonist – glass, in this paper, and in my practice in general.

Just like every discipline, crafts have its own methodology and methods. In this field, the methodology of creating is utilizing the different techniques which have been developed to handle certain materials and their behaviors in general. In my opinion, there is a great requirement for problem-solving and logistical skills in crafts, because there are always limitations to your abilities and resources which you have to handle by experimenting, evaluating and planning. This skill is what helps one to be able to handle the difficulties and by creating their own solutions that make their art unique in the field. This is especially true to glass.

The craft of glassmaking revolves around the knowledge and behavior of different manifestations and types of glass. While practicing different glass techniques, I have associated some experiential and emotional components in

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4 I use the term art-craft to refer to the process of blurring the lines between considering something solely as craft as opposed to being art. Crafts have emerged from the domestic scenery into the academic arena (by industrialization, globalization etc.) as well as finding its way to the fine art's market and galleries.
my process relating to meditativeness, impulse, organization, improvisation and bodily exertion. In my opinion, these provide good orientation points to recognize one’s willingness and longing to work in certain, given circumstances. These are beneficial, not only for revealing more about the optimal way of work and environment for the individual, but leaning a lot about the personality traits emerging through your interaction with the processing of a material.

The techniques I mainly use are flameworking⁵ and kiln casting⁶.

Flameworking is fast paced. The material quickly heats up to about 800-1200°C where it melts and deforms enabling the maker to shape and transform it easily. The maker sits closely to the flame, their hand is just a few centimeters away from where the magic happens. As glass does not conduct heat, it is possible to hold onto it closely while it is heated. I work with borosilicate glass, which is a very generous material for the impatient worker. It is a type of “hard-glass”, meaning that it has high tolerance regarding quick changes in temperature. The material pulls out, drips and bends while being twisted and turned in the flame, then hardens and becomes stiff as it is taken out. It is a playful and dynamic way of working, where you get immediate feedback for your actions from the material as it forms and develops right in front of you.

The other technique I use is kiln casting. It is a slow mental and physical process with a lot of planning and organization involved. I often create the original from clay, because it is a smooth and easy-to-handle material. The process of working with it is gentle, slow and meditating. When it is done, I make the mold from plaster and place the glass in it. The difficulty of this technique is that the maker does not see or interact with the process but has to think it through in advance by predicting the outcome. This involves the precise knowledge of the upcoming scenarios, calculations about the things that could go wrong and ways to prevent problems. It teaches the maker to be respectful of the material and to know its limitations. The goal is to build the best possible solution for the expected result. The maker becomes the architecture of the process.

Last year, I became particularly interested in methods related to kiln casting. I was curious about the variety of visual expressions that I could create using the hollow core molding technique⁷. This allows the maker to

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⁵ Flameworking, also called as lampworking, is a technique requiring a small flame (torch) which is often placed on a table. The used materials are tubes and rods of glass in various sizes which are then melted and shaped in the flame. The technique is mainly used in the manufacturing of laboratory equipment, as it is very precise and detailed work.

⁶ Kiln casting is a technique where refractory molds (plaster mixtures) are used to make glass take certain shapes, using heat in a closed kiln over a period of time.

⁷ The hollow core molding technique is made by making a positive plaster mold, the core, which is being attached inside a negative plaster mold. The melted glass is filling out the in-between of the two shapes.
create a surface inside the shape, which feels like a frozen, embedded entity in comparison with a one-sided cast. Magma and Glacier are both examples of this (see image 01), but with different colors and inside shapes. The goal was to explore their connection to be able to see how much their personality and their narrative manifests. For this, I used the same shape and after I polished them the same way.

After creating the common ground for the objects, the next step was to go the other way and elaborate on their differences. For this, I wanted to add the same elements around them made with different techniques: forged metal for Magma, representing the fire and strength, and shimmering glass leaves made with flameworking and silvering, used for Glacier. Then, after I made it, something didn’t quite work, it felt too forced. The flameworked particles needed more air, more freedom because of their shiny, strong visual appeal. In the meantime, I experimented with the silvering technique by making more complex shapes. It was beyond my expectations. It looked like magic to me. The bending palm leaf on Glacier is complex but supportive of the inside core of

01. “Magma and Glacier”, Mira Davida, 2022, cast glass, metal, flameworked glass
the cast glass. It is guiding the attention but not distracting. I needed to follow what I saw and felt. I realized that plans are good to have by your side, but intuition should never leave your side, even if it contradicts your preliminary visions. This is an example of how I work. From a distance, it could look impulsive or even indecisive, but it is actually a collaboration with a material, and I need to hear out its opinion too.

By the continuous work with the material and receiving feedback, I came to realize some important aspects of my work: that it is mysterious and strange and that it is closer to nature than I ever thought. My work has also shifted when I went to the Corning Museum of Glass after my first year, in the summer, to learn more about flameworking. There, I explored ways of creating natural shapes and to make glass look like the original plant, animal or organism. I learned not only ways to handle the tools, but the ways of thinking about natural shapes, their recreation – the frog’s frogness or the iris’s irisness – the unspeakable quality of an entity that makes it what it is. It was a great challenge for me and a push towards building a new skill set for the future. This gave me the confidence to dive deeper into this type of work, because I could feel my visions come alive by my own hands.

That is where my original ways of working merged with a fresh perspective on natural shapes. This meant using casting and flameworking to go hand in hand in creating a sort of imagined nature.

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8 2022 Summer program, intermediate flameworking class called Figuratively Speaking taught by Milon Townsend
NATURAL RECREATIONS and IMAGINED NATURE

At the very beginning of my glass-journey, whenever we had to gather some inspiration for a project, my art school teacher showed us a heavy book full of the works of Karl Blossfeldt⁹. His intention was to show how he recreated shapes by photography (all black and white) with only subtle changes in quality but immerse ones in expression. Blossfeldt intended these to be documentations for botanical use, yet just by the way these were photographed, he elevated the material into an artistic realm. It is filtered through his own perspective by the shades and settings he gave the plants. By that, we learn a lot about his approach to the subjects.

02. “Cirsium canum, Phlomis umbrosa, and Salvia”, Karl Blossfeldt, 1928, photogravure

Natural motifs and visuals are a great subject for artistic work, because it has many scientific aspects one can reach towards. Ernst Haeckel’s illustrations are also one of them¹⁰. His colorful drawings are made of many different types of creatures and entities, mostly on a microscopic level. They are based on science and made for scientific use, although became outdated by the modern visualizations, rendering them inaccurate in many ways today. For me, these illustrations remain the living proof of how science becomes unintentionally

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artistic by the scientist’s intention to represent. From today’s perspective, this body of work is becoming more an imagined nature than a representation.

The manner in which nature is the source and subject matter for artistic use can differ in thousands of ways. We could even suspect that in the core of everything, one will never be able to completely disengage with its influence.

03. “Kunstformen der Natur”, plate 49, Ernst Haeckel, 1904, painting
Katrin Linkersdorff’s *Fairies* photography series is scientific in its process. Her aim is to depict the internal architecture of living organisms, flowers in this instance. She extracts the plant’s pigments then carefully reintroduces it to them in a liquid solution. The levitating, faded plant tissue interacts with the color (its original) and dances together, revealing the hidden alchemy that resides in all living matter. Her way of working is based on the deep inspection and experimentation with natural phenomena, like pigment or the skeletal complexity of plants. She is altering nature, or she could also be simply showing its different faces to the viewer. It becomes painterly, exotic and otherworldly.

04. “*Fairies VI*, Katrin Linkersdorff, 2022, photography

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11 K. Linkersdorff, ‘*Fairies*’, European Photography: the international art magazine for contemporary photography and new media, 2022
Flameworking (or lampworking) allows intricate details in works mainly because it has an equipment better suited for small scale works but also because the tools are designed for precision. It has historically been used to recreate or represent natural topics. For example, it was used for making ocular prosthesis (glass eye) for which it was necessary to make it as lifelike as possible. The other use for this was to make models for botanical and zoological representations. One famous example of this is the works of the Blaschka family. Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka, father and son, were glass makers from Dresden, Germany, originally from Bohemia (part of the Czech Republic where glass material is still being produced today). At the turn of the 19th century, they created thousands of glass models of plants and animals with incredible resemblance to their originals. These were used for teaching purposes in many major universities and museums across the western world (In Stockholm: Naturhistoriska Riksmuseet).

05. “Anthea cereus”, Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka, ~1905, flameworked glass, National Museum Scotland
The most known collection is the “Glass Flowers” (The Ware Collection) from Harvard University which consists of 4300 models of 780 plant species, custom ordered by the botanical department of the university with which the family had a contract\textsuperscript{12}. These works are still on display and remaining irreplaceable treasures of the history of glass craftsmanship. Their artistic quality resides in their perfect execution and the material proficiency the craftsmen had. It is inspirational for anyone who aspires to be a flameworker by illustrating the range of possibilities in making an object look alive.

The approach to recreating and/or inventing nature varies in technique, discipline and intention for use. However, there is a small point where they all intersect, which is the artist's/maker's persona of which the same experiences filter through. Their presentation is a reflection on the perspective of their creator, creating the world of the work, which then corresponds to the viewer's own experiences. Nature, in this sense, is a common ground for the overall positively sublime, spiritually influencing impact which by any means is universal to human beings. Therefore an imagined and manipulated natural landscape could confuse and spark recognition from the individual's behalf at the same time.

The perception of glassworks is one that is built on the familiarity with natural phenomena. It has a mythical association with the natural elements of earth, water, fire and air. It also has a profound and sensual connection to light and transparency, so much that in the Roman era, it was considered a privileged medium and the agent of vision\textsuperscript{13}.

Glass can be manipulated in a variety of techniques, being the confidante of innovative thinking and experimental journeys. Yet, among these many variations, there are similarities and strong associations in the perception. Glass in its raw, natural form, is already capable of enhancing and distorting vision, to see through yet not see clearly and express a connection the narrator has to the story. It is a dense material, with an inner cosmic, framing even the impurities to be somewhat sublime. It comes alive only with light, but not in a way non-transparent materials could do, to flash and draw on the surface, but with a strong emphasis on inside and outside structure, with depth, reflection and refraction. The association with nature is in its core personality, it feels natural even though it has always been man-made. It can put up a form of the tamed ice or the frozen moment of fluidity. Glass holds the potential to be felt familiar, known, and by the distorting effects and textural changes, still mysterious.

\textsuperscript{12} ‘Glass Flowers: The Ware Collection of Blaschka Glass Models of Plants’
06. “Flameworked objects”, Mira Davida, 2022, glass
UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCE

The realization that my artworks are so close to nature has strengthened my curiosity in how experience feeds into art (from all directions). The untouchable and unspeakable wants to find its way to exist in the material reality through the actions of my hands.

Experience is a complex phenomena because it involves everybody (everyone can experience things) but one cannot build a universal theory of how it actually happens and what the outcomes are because of the too many variables unique to each individual. We do have some similarities though (physiological responses, collective consciousness, etc.), on which one can theorize the overall meaning of experience and the probable response to impulses.

As an artist, the investigation of experience starts with their process of creation. As Walker put it, "process is an open-ended situation directed by ongoing dialogue" referring to the definition Donald Schön has given the idea, precisely that process is "a reflective conversation with the materials of a situation."14 The experience of creation therefore is a constant reflection guided by the dynamics of statement and response; question and answer; it is creating the thesis and synthesis of the subject.

The art-craft process is essentially deriving from the pursuit of one’s own sense of self. As far as the dialogue goes, besides interpreting external situations, it allows us to observe internally our actions, motivations, and responses. As Niedderer put it, “characteristics of craft are based on an intrinsic understanding nurtured by experiential and emotional knowledge, and craft’s affinity with human values”15, pointing to the closeness of these activities to our human nature and its instinctiveness in the behavior of creating crafts. Kouhia characterized the phenomenon in a different way, saying that craft “opens opportunities for self-discovery and nurtures emotional sensibility towards the self”16.

The work of an artist is nevertheless connected to their own personal experiences, which is then fed into creating the world of the artwork. However, the viewer is essentially in touch with the artwork only, in which they reflect their own experiences. This is the creation’s other side, which shows well how a process remains still open-ended even when the artists work was done17.

Aesthetic experience is an achievement of the understanding, as we learn to appreciate it by the effort of perception. A piece of art in itself is, a bare exposure is not yet an aesthetic experience. It is humans that create it, who can open up its possibilities of becoming.

**EMOTION and CONNECTION**

Emotion in art is indispensable. It is what it grows from and what it gives, its beginning and end. After we perceive, we engage and experience. In this process, emotion is the dense, humid air in the room, transparent and interchangeable.

The nature of emotion itself is an obscure phenomenon, surrounded by many theories and schools of thought, each applying their own views on the matter. The debate of the nature of emotion is among theorists who believe that emotion is a phenomenon that is strongly ingrained culturally and socio-politically (social constructivists) and the theorists who rather focus on the internal dimensions of emotions and the psychological causes (cognitivists)\(^{18}\). On the philosophical level, which is more or less informed by the psychological implications of emotions, the debate revolves around a *sensationalist* and a *cognitivist model*. The main issue is whether the core of the emotion is an internal feeling or set of sensations (sensationalist) or can be described as a particular kind of thought, judgment, or evaluation (cognitivist)\(^{19}\).

Generally, emotion is a difficult subject to build theories and facts around, as there are no adequate research models (for example culturally and psychologically neutral language and expressions). However, this difficulty of creating facts is more focused on the exact descriptive categorization of emotions and not the general presence of them, which rests upon the consensual idea that the essence of emotion is a “*bodily response and an inner effect of some sort*” that “*include essentially cognitive elements, that is, thoughts with specific contents, which contents are in many cases socially shaped*”\(^{20}\). Therefore it seems to be consensual that, in the majority of the cases, emotion is a bodily response with a distinctive psychological, phenomenological, and expressive profile with a constitutive role that culture ingrains in the individual who is experiencing it.

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\(^{18}\) M. Hjort, S. Laver, Emotion and the Arts, 1997, page 3-19


Do we always connect emotionally to artworks? Does experiencing art inevitably mean we will gain emotional understanding? What is the nature of aesthetic emotions?

Konečni discusses emotional connection towards art through the *Aesthetic Trinity Theory*, which consists of three components: *Aesthetic Awe, Being-Moved,* and *Thrills*. He writes that emotions regarding aesthetic phenomena are distinguishable from “regular emotions”, as they are not fundamental, but derive from the mixture of basic emotions like joy and fear. He claims that the person who experiences these emotions can relatively easily and intentionally ‘switch them off’. Aesthetic awe, in his perspective, is induced in spectators by the *sublime qualities* of artworks, specifically art installations. He dismissed the strong effects of disgust and arousal to be rather bodily responses towards a certain stimulus and set up a sort of hierarchy of emotional attachment, being the sublime as the most important of all. The sublime stimulus is something that possesses “physical grandeur, rarity, and novelty” and also distinct in a sense that “a complex relationship exists with beauty”.

The sublime, in this sense, is something aesthetically pleasing, but unique to the viewer in some way. It is a term that is in the intersection of value, aesthetic, and rarity, all influenced by the viewer’s cultural belonging. But that all is still not enough. The sublime component of an artwork is also based on setting, the environment and the experiential connection, as we saw earlier in the text. A good example for this is the Rothko Chapel. Mark Rothko’s color field paintings are divisive in aesthetic value for many people of the public, for the reasons that they are “too simple”. Yet, the architectural connection and the positioning of the artworks in the Chapel are somewhat other worldly. The journey there, the connection of the works and the overall religious undertone of these highly emotional artworks, is touching, even for the skeptics.

**EMPATHY**

The most important element of emotional engagement is empathy. It is the ability to feel the emotional states of others. It could easily be the root of morality, as the participation in someone else’s pain allows one to feel the need to help and be truly there. It is the root of connecting to others as well, one of the strongest adhesives of social development of humans by creating a functional community or a society. It is also the ability to imagine how the other person might feel. This is especially important in a creative practice,

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23 Speaking of Psychology. 2022. *What psychology has to say about art, with Ellen Winner, PhD.*
24 M. Rusu, *Empathy and Communication through Art*, 2017
because if you are in the pursuit of making a connection to others, you have to imagine yourself being in their position in the world and empathize with them.²⁵

“There it is. It’s mine now, though it shouldn’t have been. It’s yours now, too, though it needn’t be. There it is. Just there.

It is what stands between us. And what makes us relate. Here and now, it’s words on the page.”²⁶

Verwoert’s quotes have inspired me to write this section on empathy. In his work, he discusses empathy as the labor of a witness. It is not always an easy thing to do and live with, yet an important and crucial aspect of being together as groups within a society. What being a witness implies? Being present, being available, feeling through. Witnessing is a shared moment of reality. Essentially, creating art to share is against isolation.²⁷

Negative art, in this sense, is especially intriguing. Artworks which show sad or horrific content is often valued higher or considered greater by the audience.²⁸ Wouldn’t we want to run away from these situations or emotions instead of savoring them? The answer is not at all. Art is fictional, it is not happening to us, yet it is possible to make a meaning out of these experiences, to feel into it, to learn from it. Being moved is pleasurable, it is a chosen suffering, one that gives us a mixture of emotions. It is a safe space to encounter grief, sorrow and horror accompanied by the beauty of art.²⁹

The works of Swiss artist, H.R. Giger (1940-2014), is a great example for the emotional impact one can experience via another person’s artistic activity. Personally, its atmospheric, bizarre and disturbing visuals have been silently influencing my visions by always lurking in the back of my mind. His best-known work is the Xenomorph, the monster in Ridley Scott’s Alien film which then became a pop-cultural phenomenon with its substantial legacy. His dark and surrealistic works are inspired by a mythological, nightmarish dystopia, with its grotesque biomechanical creatures and eroticism. He lived and worked through the turmoil of the post-war 20th century, the cold war, the sexual revolution and the rapidly changing technological advancements which have already foreshadowed an ecological crisis. The societal fears and the questions of existentialism and humanity are all represented in his legacy.³⁰ I drew many conclusions when I encountered his works, and I found the creation of this universe of works exceptional. Even though the disturbing attributes felt very

²⁵ B. Metcalf, Embodied Sympathy, 2002
²⁶ J. Verwoert, A Prayer to Protest, 2010, page 271
²⁷ Verwoert, 2010
²⁸ Speaking of Psychology. 2022. What psychology has to say about art, with Ellen Winner, PhD.
²⁹ Speaking of Psychology. 2022. What psychology has to say about art, with Ellen Winner, PhD.
³⁰ ‘HR Giger, Hans Bellmer’ exhibition in Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin, 22.01.2022-20.03.2022, Curated by Laura López Paniagua
distant to my practice, the corporeality of his monster creature was inspiring. I started to dive deeper into what it represents or how I could recreate such a feeling of body and narrative in my practice.

**TOWARDS MYSTERIOUSNESS**

Mysteriousness derives from incompleteness of knowledge, darkness in which one walks, unidentified human faces which haunt in a dream, natural phenomena which lack explanation. Incompleteness, but not ignorance, in which case one would be detached from the willingness and curiosity to gain insight to the mystery. One has to feel that there is a possibility to piece together this puzzle and find out what lies beneath the surface. An artwork is inadvertently referring beyond itself and its existence by creating a channel to the hidden qualities of its meaning and the unconscious symbolics within. For me, the journey towards mysteriousness has started with a lingering sensation of curiosity.

The importance of mysteriousness in my practice emerges from the investigation of my visual language and working process. I have a tendency to create artworks on the border of recognition, which imply the depth but not explain. I aspire to recreate natural shapes and formulate them into abstract, dream-like visuals using only my memory of the sensation of plants and animals from nature. For this, I coined two terms which are the closest clues to unfold my own understanding of these works: uncanny and corporeal.

In this sense, the uncanny is the mysteriousness of the world around us and ourselves in it. Corporeality is the mystery of the world within ourselves and our understanding of it. In the following, I will further explain these terms and their meaning in my practice.

**THE UNCANNY**

The uncanny is an experience, a sensation of unease. A way one feels when encountering something strangely familiar, yet the thing is not quite what it is supposed to be. It is a confusion, a lack of orientation evoking the vague feeling of anxiety. The origin of this sensation is caution, a mistrust in unknown things and a certain difficulty or reluctance of assimilating the new experience with the rest. In his essay about the psychology of this phenomenon, Jentsch claims that the effect of the uncanny is most easily shown when one confuses

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31 Nevanperä, Tiina, ‘In the flesh of sensibility. Unravelling incompleteness with art’, 2017
the boundaries between animate and lifeless. This can be summoned by undertaking the challenge of reinterpreting lifeless things as part of the organic world in a fantastic or poetic way. Jentsch claims that the situation or sensation of uncanny is based in the imbalance of the intellectual mastery of one’s own environment, which is the human-centered, self-evident knowledge of the world which provides shelter for the struggle of existence. Therefore, this lack of orientation or intellectual anxiety is deriving from a sort of deception and feeling of lacking ownership of one’s own senses.

In an artistic interpretation, the uncanny is a strong tool of manifesting mysteriousness. It represents the outside in comparison to the inner reality. It is the symptom signal of something latent, that is hidden from our senses, something mysterious that may be bringing us towards another world. The representation of nature is also part of this, as it is based in the distinction between animate and lifeless. The confusion in identification is causing the realization of an interaction being off, and so, sending us on the journey of finding clues.

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The creatures I am making are my milestones in the progress of venturing the idea of the uncanny. The crawling legs and wonky shape, the spikes, all resemble to arthropod creatures (Image 07). The recreation is incomplete, as the intention was to imply rather than to represent. Even though they were made from fantasy, they still needed to be life-like enough to evoke the bodily sensation and the association with the crawling millipede. The flameworking technique is a suitable way of creating the detailed and organic work needed to represent them. The silvering\(^4\) is completing the circle, as the objects cease to possess the distinct features of glass, making it difficult to clearly outline their materiality. As they become metal-like, smooth, transcendent shapes, it also contradicts the *creepiness* with its appeal.

The investigation of the uncanny does not stop here. It gradually became an important question for me to find where exactly lies the key to the uncanny experience using glass and how this sensation is being created.

\(^4\) Silvering is a process with which mirrors are made. It is possible to silver the insides of hollow objects as well as flat glass by using a solution of silver nitrate.
CORPOREALITY

*Corporeal* is a suggestive and intangible notion when relating it to artworks. What does it imply? Does it look like a body or does it feel like one? It is materiality and sensibility, with the implication of possessing qualities of a body, like texture or shape. It is also the human material reality in which we perceive the outside world. It is the limit and framework in which we exist and work.

The roles in explanation can be reversed in the dynamic of the artist and the artwork, it explains the intentions back and forth. While analyzing paintings through the lens of psychoanalytic theories, Wollheim focused on the unconscious fantasies of an artist being transferred into artworks. His idea was that paintings (and art in general) is a particularly suitable media for expressing desires that cannot be expressed in words. Abstract art, for example, is capable of metaphorically expressing things without actually depicting it. The texture of a painted surface can evoke the metaphor of a body, suggesting flesh and shapes that are generally the associations we make on bodies. The corporeality of abstraction works because it is inherent to our shared way of being born and held by a body (the parent figure), being the first and most ingrained memories we have and also having our own bodily existence.

9. “Chains/Bonding”, Mira Davida, 2023, oil on canvas, 80x100 cm

Corporeal became a term close to my heart. It was one that suited best to the visuals that I created, which implied that the abstraction and seemingly unidentifiable shapes have a strong connection to my experiences of being in a body that breathes and behaves in its own way. I often contemplated the alienation of the modern way of urban living, especially in quarantine\textsuperscript{36}, of my mind from my physical being, which was being trapped. I started with painting many canvases, trying to follow my impulses of completion, rhythm and atmosphere. I was trying to get away from the place and reflect on these experiences of feeling detached and disconnected.

“\textit{Carnivora}” was the first work that I created based on my vision about corporeality. This points further than paintings, as the materiality of glass is giving depth to the interpretations. The cast glass pieces are attached to a mirror, making it barely visible, but still essential for the reflections that amplify its presence. This creates a shimmering, semi-transparent texture with shapes of bodies in a formation of movement. It is a frozen moment as claws try to rip open a gate for themselves into our world. Who knows who this passageway belongs to? Where does it lead to? Who knows what holds the \textit{Zone of Sentience}?

\textsuperscript{36} 2020 March-May in Hungary, during the COVID19 pandemic
CONCLUSION

As the closing of this paper, I conclude that art is individual but cooperative, introverted but social, instinctive but reflective, impulsive but mindful, and so on, and one as a practitioner can only guess the core of all this turmoil that is creative work. It remains a mystery because it is incomplete, it is timeless but changes with time as they gain different meaning in each environment and to each person.

In the spring exhibition, I use the material glass, and its spectrum of expressiveness, emotional qualities and experiential differences, to be able to create uncanny and mysterious objects. With listening to intuition and indulging into the material implications of flow, I aim to follow my instincts reflectively and consciously.

It is, was and will be a journey with glass for me, in the sense of learning the world through a material and creating a framework for safe and mindful sentience.
APPENDIX

The task for the examination was to set up an exhibition of the final projects, then make a presentation about the intended background. That was followed by a discussion with the opponent who has already familiarized him/herself with the background research and thoughts (in the exam paper). The examination ended by questions from the audience.

So, let’s see, what happened during this time.

1. The installing and preparation:

The installation period for the examination was chaotic. I accidentally stabbed myself on my wrist with a pointy metal pipe (part of my installation) a day before starting, which was a pretty strong “wake up call” to slow down and take my time. After all, we had all week to install and I will need all my limbs.

I was placed in the big exhibition space called “Vita Havet” alongside 14 of my classmates. I put my works up on the wall between two textile students, on one side, partially hidden by a textile weave installation, on the other, colliding with the colors of another. Very tricky situation, indeed. I liked it, after all, textile has a very different feel than glass, so my works shined like jewelry between them. The three wallpieces I’ve made were colourful, fragile and very heavy. I’ve worked on their custom metal frame for a long time, trying to make something durable enough for heavy glass. I tested it for the first time on the spot, praying that it stays there till the next day.

It did.

The other part of my installation was the podiums and the creatures on them. I made three podiums with different heights from metal, with a shining, polished surface, then placed my nerve-wrackingly fragile creatures on them.

I only started making these creatures a couple of months ago, and I had to thoroughly learn every step of the process to be able to make them. It took me a lot of time to even create these few ones. Now, in May, after many tries, I am able to make them without any problems, so I’m guessing this had to go through its own “learning-curve”. I’m pretty convinced that all the failures have made me overly cautious about them, which actually helps the process.

2. The presentation day:

I cannot recall a time when I prepared so well for my presentation as I did now. I was always a strong believer that I can just “freestyle” my presentations, which have gone always slightly wrong considering that I am not an experienced performer. It is fine, lesson learned. This time I took it seriously and have prepared all week, since I was on the last day, and I had the chance.
I have felt really proud of myself for doing that and my presentation have been successful.

After the exams, we’ve all been joking about how we don’t even remember what we talked with the opponent, it was so sudden and stressful, it just flew by so fast. But I do remember actually, mostly because after my careful preparation for this moment, “this moment” became surprisingly blunt. Simon Klenell, my opponent, who is a glassblower, has an understanding of glass, so therefore he had been appointed to me. A fellow glassmaker seems a good match, yet, I think his understanding and technique is hugely different than mine. I would’ve enjoyed more a casual conversation with a philosopher with a pesky style of arguments.

*I realized over these two years that I am not a craftsperson, nor a designer, nor a glassworker or manufacturer. I think I’m just an artist who is obsessed with glass and the skills of making it. – a random thought*

Anyways, we talked with the opponent about many things. We talked about the way of exhibiting, how it was so different than the way I’ve photographed my pieces, and how the photographs created a world that was not representing itself in the exhibition. I had to defend myself and that impossible exhibition space, but deep down I screamed “I know, right??”. I have never gotten a clear compliment about my photos before, which I am proud of because I’m taking them all by myself. So, it seems that they worked well and I should continue this, and that made me quite satisfied, because I didn’t think they are worth more than to put up my website and social media.

We’ve talked a bit about art too, which in itself, is a very difficult thing to discuss. I did write about it in my paper a lot, so I guess that was on me. I like to write about these abstract ideas, because the whole paper – the whole two years! – were essentially the slow untangling of my own individual journey through art, glass, and my personality within. I’ve never before have been given the chance to think about my own “calling”, but without that, I simply could not continue in this school. It is crazy that after the two years, it all lead to me making weird creatures from laboratory pipes, I would’ve never guessed!

We were also talking about the relationship of the wall pieces to the creatures, which was not clear for many. It’s hard to explain them together, because I argued that they are the “portals” where the creatures emerged from, but their formats are too different and it just didn’t convince them. There was a missing link. After the discussion I’ve talked to my teacher who had an epiphany, that they are actually the “images” of the world of the creatures. I think I’ll work with this more, because this has a lot of potential in pointing out “the observer” to the “one that is being observed”, which is essentially a link to experience and reality in a way, with which I worked throughout the exam paper. Or if this explanation still doesn’t work, maybe I’ll separate them.
From the audience, I got suggestions on why not make a little “world” of them, like a nature documentary, to see what are their habits, how they move and eat, etc. That would be absolutely hilarious!

I also got the confirmation on how my photos could also be an exhibition, because it shows well my perspective on the creatures, maybe even better than them in person.

I got the feedback, that maybe what I’m talking about is some sort of evolution of these creatures. They might now even be aliens or futuristic, but they could be archaic.

*The spring exhibition:*

The spring exhibition...well, well, mixed feelings. I’ve got the end-of-project blues. I cannot fully comprehend the meaning of this time, and my emotions are fluctuating a lot. I’ve made lots of changes to my installation, gave it a proper background (a cave mural), some environment, made some more creatures and positioned the wallpieces in a different way. I think at this point, this was all I could do. And still, I feel like this is not enough.

I’ve spent my first year navigating myself in the dense fog of cluelessness. I’ve experimented with the material, failed a lot, changed directions in my research more time than I’d dare to admit. For myself, the fact that I could still present a body of work with this stage of technical skill, is unbelievable. Yet, from the outside world, I get no appreciation or much of an applause for that. And I understand, because people do not see the journey you’ve come, they only see the result.

Being an artist is definitely hard, but now I realize that it is also the factor of motivation. The external validation. I’d say it is somewhat a “stretch-test” to not get any and still be persistent in knowing that what you do is worth doing, to nurture that inner stubbornness into being your one true cheerleader that picks you up every time. I genuinely think that at this profession, only those can survive who have that. Otherwise, if you’re entitled to your top position, you’re not only going to be disappointed, but will leave. Nobody is entitled to success; you just work and likeminded people will follow.

Likeminded people. I’ve met with a couple of them during the exhibition. I realize now that what I do is not for the wider public. It is something subcultural, and the context is narrower than I thought, at least, in this setting.

For a final conclusion, I’ve came to the realization that in fact I have achieved my goal, no matter how bittersweet I sound. I have experimented and found a prospective path of technique and context where I can belong. I’ve set up my research on emotional properties of glass and chose the sublime and uncanny relation to focus on. It has worked for this purpose, and I could really feel that happening during the time people visited, looking at their behavior. I’ve
gained access to my mind in ways that I only imagined during research and work. And last but not least, I started to love and appreciate writing as a practice. To be frank, that may have been the most surprising amongst all, because that was not something I’ve felt in me, but something everyone else felt around me. I hope that in the future, I am going to be daring enough to pursue and perfect the skills that I may take for granted or not appreciate in myself enough. I’m only beginning to imagine what will the future hold.

Some appreciation:

I’d like to thank some teachers who helped me in these two years. Yes, here, in this paragraph, so if they read it sometime, they’ll know. Anders Ljungberg for motivating me to strive for the highest, Andrea Peach for the eternal support and understanding, Marten Medbo for being a kind and gentle tutor, Asa Jungnelius for being a visionary and pointing out things that could blossom themselves into what I do now, Filippa Arrias for being a creative partner and a reliable critic, Sara Lundkvist and Nina Westman at the glass workshop and the school’s technicians for all the help. I didn’t do this all alone.
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