

Abstract

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Master of Arts thesis abstract

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A Methodological Journey to an
Entwined Process

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The topic of the thesis implies simultaneously to multiple directions. On one hand, it is methodological work that through a case study aims at discovering the possibilities of entwining different processes. The two processes that are referred to are both of artistic and designerly nature. During the methodological journey, the author aims at discovering how the artistic realm of practicioning could be integrated into the designerly one in a manner that is beneficial and enriching to the latter.

Nonetheless, in addition to conducting a case study, theoretical groundings for entwining the processes are unearthed. The theoretical reasoning consists of locating ideological and epistemological confluence, ultimately resulting in a methodologically consistent framework.

On the other hand, the thesis is an enquiry into a subject matter with a feminist undertone. The author has been discovering the topic also earlier within her artistic practicioning, and now, the theme of everyday womanhood is taken as a starting point for the entwined process. This originally subjective interest is transformed into a collective account of knowledge through applying several participatory methods. The involvement of multiple methods aids in discovering and sensitizing the designer to her initial topic, and makes it converge and crystallize so that the core theme becomes easier to grasp and apply in a design context.

The utilised methods capitalize on inclusive and emancipatory ideologies that can be coupled due to their partly common predecessors, which are also revealed during the study. The case study concludes with critical concepts or scenarios presenting hypothetical designs that also match with these ideologies. The final concepts still include the primary interest in the multitude of experiences of womanhood, but develop the starting point according to the findings and responses achieved and gathered from the participants in the different phases of the study.

The context of research within the thesis is mostly within constructive design research, but it is further enriched with both feminist and artistic methodology, whose compatibility is justified both on a theoretical and practical level. The main goal for the work is to demonstrate the positive gains that utilizing the full creative potential of a designer can yield. It aims at stretching the concept of designerly methodologies, and reclaiming the designer's personal artistic potential. Moreover, the thesis is a subjective journey for establishing an identity of a designer – a designer who situates empowerment, transformation, and in general critical reflection in the core of her practicioning.

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The women participating in the different stages of the study revealed their thoughts, dreams, values and emotional world to me, and I hope from the bottom of my heart that you all are convinced of my deep gratitude on your input. Being able to learn from the personal experiences, and through them gain more understanding of my own womanhood, soon became the main motivation for my immersion to the topic and data.

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Introduction

1.

Background and Personal Motivation

It is rather self-absorbed to commence with the pronoun “I”, but within this thesis, it is somewhat justifiable. Thus, I will start by telling something about myself, because that is probably the easiest way to frame my main motivation within this specific project.

Like a more or less average design student, also I have spent the last 7 odd years discovering the multiple facets of the field. After the first rocky years, I found design research to be of utter interest to me, and experienced it more meaningful than anything I had encountered before within the industrial design program in Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture. One of the most influential turns for my shifting interest was the user inspired design course a few years back. During the collaborative teamwork, we did research on the elderly people’s possibilities for remaining social and active, and applied the renowned method design probes.

The main legacy from the project for me was the increasing preoccupation in understanding what people dream about, and using my designer’s skills to facilitate their expression of it. During the course, I became very

convinced of that by grasping this kind of often tacit and non-verbal information – and now I don’t even care how cheesy this sounds – the world could be changed for the better. Nonetheless, there was also another major gain from the project. Becoming acquainted with the probes methodology but with the emphasis still in its design probes branch, I decided I want some day pore over the original, underlying ideology: the philosophy of the cultural probes.

My fixation with cultural probes becomes understandable when one reflects it against my background with fine arts. Throughout my life, I have put a great amount of time and energy to artistic working, and during the recent years managed to even reach the beginners level within semi-professionals through a few individual exhibitions and selling my art. On the side of my studies in industrial and strategic design, I have been continuously enrolling to classes in painting and printmaking, and spent a year abroad as an exchange student in printmaking. This personal enthusiasm and acknowledging the ultimate pleasure artistic practicing brings about in me strove me for searching for possible areas of industrial design that would allow the incorporation of my skills within the field of fine arts. The Cultural Probes methodology that openly encourages utilising artistic strategies of action in order to better access the dreams and aspirations of people naturally appeared to me as the ultimate answer.

However, as I already insinuated, the cultural probes did not remain as an individual method, but grew to describe an entire methodology and attitude within constructive design research. Based on the Presence Project, where the probes made their first appearance, a research program called

critical design began taking shape. Deriving from the modes of action established by these designers involved, an entire framework within constructive design research that today is called “The Showroom” emerged. Consequently, my exploration into the border area between art and industrial design will actually relate to a wider approach within the research community. In the end of the day, the area that I clear with my thesis, will hopefully add some knowledge to this community, especially on how to apply an array of methods wider than before.

Thus, I believe I am now ready to unveil the core motivation for my Master’s thesis project. Due to my dual-identity of an artist-designer, I wish to explore the possibilities of an entwined process, and I aim at doing it on two levels. Firstly, I want to familiarize myself with the appropriate literature and theoretical sources in order to build a solid ground for supposing such a process is viable. Secondly, I will tailor and conduct a case study that is not only reasoned through the literature, but also aims at revealing working practices and pitfalls that I along with other designers can later exploit and continue developing within the profession.

To conclude, the motivation for the thesis is a methodological one. As a graduating design student with a strong artistic inclination, I feel a need to explicate both for myself as well as the surrounding design community a basis for my future practicing. I do strongly believe that despite the subjective starting point and justification, the thorough positioning and documentation of the project will also benefit other practitioners balancing between the fields of art and industrial design.

1.1 Briefly On the Process Structure

I will not aim at conducting a full-blooded artistic research, but only at including those of its elements that aid me in utilizing my artistic work as a background material. Within the practice-based approach¹ this model is sometimes called “Art contributing to research”. During the early phases of the project, the “data” will be exploited in a similar manner to that of designer’s intuition in formulating her knowledge, interest and inherent stance to a certain subject matter. When the project progresses, the artistic practicioning takes a minor role and gives space for designerly manners of proceeding.

Thus, despite the point of departure, the nature of the process is inherently designerly; it absorbs artistic elements in order to develop a novel approach to data gathering and sensitizing methods already familiar especially inside critical practices of design. Moreover, the introduction of the artworks as a process commencer is motivated by a personal wish of mine: having developed skills and passion towards fine arts practicioning, I want to discover how this deeply meaningful area of expertise could be utilized also in my potential future profession as a designer.

So, the project commences with my works on different media usual perceived as artistic – printmaking and painting. Through these methods natural and effective for my immersion to a certain topic, I have defined an umbrella of themes that I want to explore with the means of design. The gender and its subthemes womanhood, femininity and the facile

handling of them encountered in the everyday, are reviewed in my artistic works, which are then used in the preliminary phases of the project as a sensitizing tool for the stakeholders of the project.

In addition to myself, the stakeholders in this case consist of the participating people whose opinions, experiences and skills on critical reflection I utilise in searching for possible design openings. The context of these openings is not specified in the beginning of the project, but it will be determined through the responses collected from the participants. Therefore, the concepts created during the project are grounded on my subjective observations within artistic practicioning, but will in the end of the project relate to the challenges the attendees have confronted within their everyday life.

The first phase of data collection is planned to take the form of a focus group interview. Preceding the interview, the participants will be sensitized to the topic through an exhibition revealing the scope of my project, its core themes and some insights in my artistic work. In this point, the actual designerly process commences. From this on, artistic practicioning takes incrementally a more and more instrumental role in the project, opposed to the role as a main motivator it had in the beginning.

The results I gain from the exhibition and from the discussions stimulated by it also ignite my process of searching for new design openings on the field of gender-sensitivity and -consciousness. The exhibition aids me in this task by bringing together a variety of human experiences that

can inform my conceptions and widen them towards dynamic objectivity – objectivity that embraces and reclaims the subjective experiences of all the contributors. The interview also provides me with valuable information of the interest level and capabilities of the participants in taking part to the consecutive part of the study that takes the form of design probes. Consequently, the interview and the first phase of sensitization will guide my planning and compiling of the self-documentation kit.

The self-documentation kit is an adaptation of cultural probes first described and utilized by the protagonists of critical design, Anthony Dunne and his companions. Through applying this method, I am able to fulfil my intention of locating more and more defined concepts for exposing the initially artistic themes through designerly means.

The subjective artistic work still functions as one of the guiding forces in compiling the probes kit, and is also present in some of the tasks in it. Nevertheless, when interpreting the material from the participants’ self-reflective assignments, I break away from artistic working. From this on, the reflective material is translated into design ideas, concepts and strategies, grounded on the values and meanings present both in my works of art and critical design ideology. Finally, a concept or concepts is selected to be exposed to the public with the means familiar to critical design. With applying a strategy of value fictions or other critical orientations, the final outcome can fulfil its purpose: contesting the present state of gendered assumptions and creating dissensus in relation to the un-questioned habits in gendered action in the public.

Simultaneously and parallel to the case study, appropriate literature on

¹ the terms artistic / practice-based / practice-led research are used totally interchangeably within the thesis only to avoid deadening repetition. Thus, I will not comment on any possibly agendas or emphases within this field of research.

design research, methodologies and methods, as well as underlying epistemological assumptions, is reviewed. The course of the process determines and frames the specific material that needs to be taken into consideration. Nonetheless, a profound account on the field of research and practices where my project seeks company from, is indispensable, for only through it, the work can be opened to benefit a larger community of practitioners than only the author.

1.2 The Subject Matter

The project is commenced with a subjective approach that dives into the themes of womanhood and femininity, and pays respect to ways of representing them through artistic media that I have grown very familiar and confident with. Thus, the material with which I will ignite my project is my artistic work made during the years 2010-2011, consisting of a group of paintings and prints that handle the themes mentioned above. The artworks contribute to the personal motivation for discovering the possibilities of the media as a part of the design process. Consequently, the role of the artistic work is actually that of a sensitizer both for the practitioner to explore novel design openings, and for the participants in the generative data-gathering phase of the project.

The rather ambiguous subject matter of my Master's thesis is *exploring the multitude of experiences on everyday womanhood*. This derives from a subjective sensation that I have been handling within my artistic practicioning for quite some time already. According to this sensation, the rich spectrum of experiences related to womanhood is often reduced to a handful of slogans and anecdotes, all

of them representing the prejudice and personal agenda of the speaker. Within my artistic work, I have been trying to question the banalities often connected to the concept "womanhood, and offer an alternative outlook on it – an outlook that celebrates the wide array of different womanhoods and questions the necessity of establishing boundaries for the concept.

Moreover, I have been struggling with the fragility of the personal experience of womanhood, and with the fact that the subjective perception of one's identity can be so easily crushed with the reducing attitude. I have started to call this enemy that has motivated to my artworks as *the hypothesis of reduction*. Putting plainly what I mean with it is that the personal experience of womanhood is always presented in a reduced form that does not pay attention to its infinite shades and variations. When I say "always", I mean especially the everyday condition – people acting in the world, committing to everyday chores almost unconsciously, out of a habit. In these habits, un-contested modes of behaviour, lurks the unthinking and reduction that is now in my sights.

With my work, however, I aim at respecting the multitude of everyday experiences, and thereby fighting the hypothesis of reduction. At this point, it must be quite clear to the reader that my work as a distinctive feminist tone. Feminist attitude will be carried through the whole project, and I aim to take into consideration the criticism that it offers on the everyday practices related to conducting research as well. Thus, in the end of the project, one does not need only to evaluate if the final outcome is an emancipatory one, but also reflect if the means to the end were following the feminist principles clarified during the journey.

2.

Premises for the Thesis

The project that I am conducting is an individual one; it is neither part of a wider research initiative, nor does an outside client motivate it. Thus, there are very few background assumptions that I can take for granted. Nonetheless, in order to still dare to commence my work on this topic, I had to establish some sort of confidence on the meaningfulness and relevance of the thesis. In the following few chapters, I will present the main premises that made studying the entwined process something more than just a leap of faith.

The first one of the premises is the ideology behind critical design that I already mentioned utilising artistic strategies, a fact which I consider a good starting point for searching further ways to incorporate artistic practicioning to a designerly process. As the protagonists themselves put it, "More could be learnt from fine art where there is a history of critical strategies for asking questions through objects and stimulating debate in engaging ways" (Dunne & Raby 2001, p. 59). The stances within critical design will gain a more extensive clarification within the chapter Context of Research.

The second premise deals with the entwined process, and its potential benefits and significance to design practice. To present this other premise, I will refer to an article by Janet McDonnell, and scrutinize its implications to design in relation to my own assumptions about the entwined project.

2.1 Entwining the Fields of Art and Design

In addition to my own trust on the yet undiscovered personal benefits that artistic practitioning can have on the design process, there are some established accounts supporting my assumption. One rather distinguished resource is an article by Janet McDonnell, published in *Design Studies* in 2011 under the name of “Impositions of order: A comparison between design and fine art practices”. In her article, McDonnell enquires into which extent the mechanisms of “imposing enabling constraints” well recognized in the design context, could inform a collaborative fine art practice as well. She additionally aims at identifying strategies that fulfil similar roles but are present particularly inside fine art.

Despite a few differing framings between the article and my thesis, the author’s eventual objectives sound very similar to mine, due to which I was initially encouraged to refer to her findings. After revealing her two-fold aim she continues by emphasising that the ambition is to discover something to “return something (back) to further inform our understanding of creative design practice”. My preliminary motivation for commencing a thesis project of this nature could be characterised rather parallel with McDonnell’s: I aim at enriching the design process with a subjective motivation deriving from a fine art practice. Or to put in other words, to locate something inherent to fine art practitioning that could be beneficially integrated to the design process.

The article was initially targeted to a symposium on interpreting design thinking, and spanning its boundaries beyond disciplines and practitioners of design. In the article, McDonnell highlights the importance of in-

creasing the array of creative design practice. According to her, the study “begins to pose questions about areas where design research need to go if we are to improve our understanding of design practices in long-term creative collaborations.” The framing to long-term and collaborative practices are the main points in which my research differs from hers, but despite this, I presume that the following paragraphs justify my decision on relying on McDonnell’s findings, and using them as a the first theoretical validation and premise for my study.

2.2 Imposing Order or Enriching the Process

In general, McDonnell argues for increasing the repertoire of creative design practice. She manages to indicate several features in collaborative fine art practice that could be well compared to designerly ways of imposing order on the process, or “enabling constraints”. The material from which she derives her conclusions consists of interviews with artists Ellard and Johnstone, who have been building a long-term collaborative practice for over 15 years. Moreover, she refers to literature on designerly ways of thinking and practitioning in order to establish a baseline for comparing the ways order is imposed on projects within the two fields.

McDonnell has two sources that she compares, and manages to find an amount of similarities between them. In my work, however, I have an entwined project, a case study that brings the two viewpoints – artistic practitioning and designerly process – together. The two artists that McDonnell interviews tell about how they impose order on their artistic work. Thus, the perspective of my

thesis project is rather opposing to that of McDonnell’s: I am at discovering how fine art practice could enrich the pre-structured design process, and the designer’s mind following that pre-addressed outline for creativity.

So, my project is concerned with informing the design process through thematic motivation initially recognized through fine art practice. Ellard and Johnstone, on their side, utilise thematic, aesthetic, and material constraints to structure their work - that is, they are in a way to limiting the project, not enriching or widening it. Despite this difference in approach, what is similar though is that Ellard and Johnstone use the constraints “to set place the potential for creative freedom within imposed boundaries”. Also I am on a similar quest for laying new ground for potential creative freedom. Nevertheless, due to my personal experiences and background as a designer, I want to approach the challenge of integrating the two fields primarily by releasing the process.

2.3 McDonnell’s Implications for Design

From the literature on design thinking and research, McDonnell oozes out a characteristic pattern for the practitioning of the expert designers. According to her, their professionalism is very closely linked to the capability to structure problems, and generate design outcomes “via movement between consideration of the whole (breadth) and the parts/details (depth) of an emerging design”. Having established the value of this kind of process within the design context, she investigates how the actions could inform understanding within fine art practice. This done, she pores over to the manoeuvres of the artists, and dis-

tils implications for how to encourage creativity within designers as well. The three implications that she concludes the article with, describe substantial gains from the cross-fertilization of the practices, and have greatly encouraged me to study the entwined process.

1) Design thinking is under-researched, especially in the creative end of the design spectrum. The aspects that would require and deserve further investigation consist of enabling constraints, formative influences and pre-occupations that may characterize the work of both individual and collaborative design practice.

This is something that I aim at studying: how can my pre-occupation with the theme of womanhood inform my designerly thinking and actions? How can the formative influences from printmaking and painting help me to sensitise to the topic in a manner that benefits the design process? What kind of enabling constraints do all of these, the thematic, material and aesthetic constraints that I have developed within fine art practice, impose on the design process? And, perhaps most importantly, how do these constraints guide the design process?

2) There is a need for more studies that look beyond the beginning and end of particular projects. This would help in understanding how value systems, pre-occupations, and prior histories of those taking part influence the work at hand.

I have already for long acknowledged my formal and thematic concerns in artistic practitioning, but was never able to utilise them in a design setting. I know I possess a good amount craftsmanship within

printmaking, but till now, it has been un-applicable within design projects. Nonetheless, I strongly believe that this creative reserve and skills should be exploited also in other realms outside the artistic one. Fortunately now, McDonnell's conclusions support my belief.

3) "- there might be a greater research focus on *the essential need* of the creative practitioner to be motivated, surprised, excited and challenged throughout their association - in any creative activity." (cursive added)

My aim is not to argue that any kind of human activity should be considered as an act of designing, and thus unquestionably merged in the array of designers' tools. Nonetheless, I wish that the variety of activities where designers can derive their motivation, surprise, excitement and challenges from, could be opened up. I believe that being methodologically unprejudiced and confident on the capability of the prepared minds to discover new routes bears in a high probability for success also within the design practice.

3. *Objectives*

1) To conduct an entwined process that combines elements from artistic practi- tioning and a structure of a design process.

The case study is carried out in order to prove the usefulness of intro- ducing artistic elements to a design project. Moreover, it is executed in order to reveal ways how, in a concrete manner, art could enrich the design process and sensitize the artist-design- er to her topic.

In addition to and alongside with these, a personal approach to the process will be crafted; the still fundamentally designerly process will be customized so that the artist- designer can utilise the model later, and in a manner that supports her own practitioner's identity. Thus, the design method is handled mostly as an agenda (Keinonen, 2009): through contesting and challenging the process and supplementing it with new ele- ments, I aim at deciding what I should do as a designer, and insinuate what in general could be done with the tools available to designers.

2) To explicate a theoretical reasoning for the entwined process to exist, and a foundation for its success.

Positioning the project within de- sign research and critical practices in design is crucial in order to assure of the applicability of the process in other setting outside this thesis project.

3) To conclude the entwined process with (a) critical design concept(s).

The concepting phase closes the process and provides the reader with an evaluation tool whether the entwining was successful or not – if it was possible to utilise the artistic themes and starting point in a manner that pushes the design process towards a designerly end result. Through the concept, I wish to test my skills within the critical practices of design, and demonstrate how the initially artistic, thematic motivation could be con- verted to enrich the design process.

Sanders states (2001) that basi- cally what designers are doing is that they are designing for experiencing. They are creating scaffolds that enable people's experiencing and expressions of creativity (Sanders 2001 & 2006). This is also my aim with the concep- ting phase of the project: I strive for creating a scaffold for people to ex- press their womanhood in a way that respects the multitude of its nature.

The material for concepting that I work with consists of values and socio-cultural meanings concerning issues of gendered presuppositions and representations of womanhood and femininity, both in the public and private domains. Critical handling and re-crafting of the material is aimed at producing alternative scaffolds for experiencing, and new strategies of action, taking the form of (a) critical design proposal(s).

II

Research Approach

1.

The Research Questions

1.1 Commencement - Art Sensitizing the User of Design

In the very beginning of the thesis project, I was most interested and occupied by the possible ways in which a target user in a design project could be sensitized with the help of art. The initial motivation for the question came from my own experience: with having integrated fine art studies to my major in industrial and strategic design, I had felt that I gained indispensable inspiration, motivation, and clarity of thought for the designerly projects. In the beginning of the autumn 2011, I thought that discovering the effects art could have on a design process, even beyond the practitioner herself, would develop into an interesting and personally significant topic for a master's thesis.

My project was accelerated to full speed by having an exhibition displaying my artistic works. Nonetheless, this style of practicioning would not be in the focus of the research, but it is for the most part done prior to the project. The exhibition provided the project a starting point that simultaneously concretised both the topic of study as well the focus of research.

The former was initially framed as the diversity of womanhood – a theme that I had been handling in my artistic practicioning for quite a few years already. With the name of the exhibition “*Womanhood is _ _ _ _ _*”, (see figure 01) I aimed at drawing viewers to challenge their perceptions of womanhood and femininity, as I had been doing in the pieces that were on display in the exhibition.

The focus of research developed through making art, through analysing my subjective and still rather subconscious standpoints as well as by planning the exhibition. Due to this gradual process spanning over approximately two months, my research questions evolved into something partly contradictory to their preliminary wordings. In the beginning, I was thinking of concentrating on *the sensitizing effects art could have on the participants in the data collection phases of a design process*. When I accompanied this emerging interest towards effecting participants to my own experiences of being enriched by artistic practicioning, the research question obtained a wording:

How could the artistic objects mediate meanings for the viewers, and thereby direct designer's choices in a certain design process?

The presumption underlying the question was that the art objects would be utilised in the early phases of the project for sensitizing the users to the topic the designer is interested in, and through the thoughts and the data provoked by it, the users would provide the designer new perspectives and inspiration to support her designing. When poring over the question at hand, the inner meaning seemed to begin expanding even further. The

wording could actually be divided into three research questions, all of them considerably extensive:

How can the artistic objects mediate meanings and thus direct designer's choices in a certain design process?
What kind of effects can art have on the participants when sensitizing them in the data collection phases of a design process?
What does the role of an artist-designer actually mean in this kind of process?

1.2. Development – Art Sensitizing the Designer

Very soon it became apparent that the three questions encompass an amount of research impossible to conduct in the scope of a master's thesis project. Fortunately, when plainly continuing my practicioning, and introducing reading of the development of critical design to the reflection, I realised that there are actually two different points of view that I have been mixing in my reflections about sensitization:

- * firstly, there is the making of the so called art-object. According to my own experiences, the process of making sensitizes the designer to the topic through the act of making art.
- * secondly, there is the art-object that is viewed, perceived and experienced by the outsiders. This object succeeds or fails in mediating the meanings the author, that is the artist-designer, wanted to express through it.

Initially my motivation for accessing the entwined process through a critical design point of view was because the protagonists of the field had already framed reasoning for incorporating artistic means and attitude to a design process. As Dunne and Raby (2001, p. 59) note, designers could learn from fine art practices that have throughout their history developed critical strategies, primarily with the aim of asking questions and encouraging debate in engaging ways.

Before the exhibition in October 2011, I had again cropped and reformulated my focus, and was becoming certain that my main focus would be in finding out *"What kind of an effect an art object can have in a design process, and how this re-directs and defines the role of an artist-designer?"* Through committing to the preparations for the exhibition, I had understood that I would need to shift the focus from the latter role of the art-object – that is the mediator of meanings to the outsiders – to the former one, that is the role of an conceptualising tool for the designer herself.

One of the reasons for this emphasis lies in the requirement of cropping my sources. Focusing on the outsiders' experiences I would need to dive deep into the theories of experiencing art, which would be a realm totally one of its own, and not serving the intention to start entwining the artistic practitioning to a designerly process from the early phases of the project. Another argument was the now increasing interest towards the effect art could have on sensitizing the practitioner, and aiding her immersion to her topic. I decided to begin framing my project so, that in the end I would be more informed of the ways the designer could take advantage of her artistic facility and thinking in a creative process that would result in a



Figure 01: The Poster for the Exhibition.

designerly solution.

I was glad to mark that even before the exhibition, I had actually managed to make my first finding through my own practitioning. I had distinguished two possible but presumably very different roles for art to take inside the design process:

- * the role concerning the maker
- * the role concerning the perceiver

Again, I was very fortunate: the exhibition and the first data collection from it did direct the process in a natural manner towards the emphasis on sensitizing the designer. When I really felt confident that the focus would inevitably lie on the first role, I dared to produce new formulations of my research question, which would now begin really guiding my process of enquiry:

How can the making of art-objects guide the artist-designer in her process, even though striving for a design-like outcome?

Or in other words,
How does the self-reflection, concretised in the art-objects, feed the design process, and direct towards a designerly end result?

The almost last development phase of the research questions took place after the analysis and synthesis of the focus group interview. One of the great findings from the session was the deepening understanding of what I was really and precisely dealing with in my project. As presented also in the chapter The Core Findings – The Research Question Solidified, I discovered that the aim of the thesis work was to find out

How can the artistic self-reflection, concretised in the art-objects, guide the data collection phase of the design process, and aid the development towards a designerly end result?

Within the last stages of the process, the initial artistic elements were fully transformed into themes that were again re-worked through different inclusive research methods. The subjective hunches had become collective experiences, and through this development, I had realised the

ever-decreasing importance of the concrete art-objects. Rather, the process of subjective meaning-creation present in practicioning should be highlighted. Additionally, I had realised that even though the artistic elements were more evident in the data collection phase of the project, their effect reached to the concept development as well. Therefore, after seeing how the whole process turned out, I can be able to say that the ultimate core of this project can be described as follows:

How can artistic practicioning sensitize the designer to the topic of her design project?

How can this sensitization be integrated in a process that still has a designerly end result?

2.

Context of Research and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Thinking Through Design

The research question established, I will now shed light on the context where it is to be discovered. In this chapter, the theoretical issues that define the ground for my project will be exposed. Through the theoretical framework, I will also aim at creating a basis for understanding the selected methods and how they relate to each other and communicate. Nonetheless, the pragmatic means are presented in more detail only in the next chapter 3.0 Selected Methodology.

What is characteristic to my thesis project is that despite it aims at merging different elements from various fields of practice and research, the one thing that remains the same is the thinking – it always happens through design. Basically what this means is that throughout the whole process, I consider myself first and foremost as a designer, who reflects and makes decisions in order to craft the best kind of design process possible. That is also why I will begin by presenting what the notion *design process* means for me, and only after that, continue by pointing out assumptions, requirements, and tasks that define it more precisely in relation to the topic of the thesis.

Within the description of the design process, the reader will encounter a twist in time: I will present the course of the project, as it would be already finished. This is not done because all of the succeeding phases would have been known from the very start of the project. Quite the contrary – in the beginning I only had a faint idea of the most intriguing topic and a lap full of paintings. The reason why

the process graph is already completed with details of methods and made decisions is simply in order to make the course of the project and the written thesis more understandable. In other words, I wish that the first sector of this chapter will also function as a key to the thesis; it should answer the questions of what happened and when. Nonetheless, the reasoning for the different occurrences and resolutions will be presented later, within their appropriate contexts.

2.1.1 THE DESIGN PROCESS

I began my studies in 2005 in the University of Art and Design Helsinki, nowadays the Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture, in its industrial design study program. During my studies, my professional's tendencies and the entire designer's identity have changed and developed rather radically - more or less on a yearly basis. The playful product design student grew to a serious, ecologically aware service designer, and the criticism towards consumption and easy assimilation of values embedded in marketable products led to an inclination to study people and gather understanding of their behaviour and needs. The aim of gaining deeper and deeper understanding of the true interests of people revealed me the meaningfulness of design research. The researcher's attitude coupled with my on-going interest and hobbyism towards arts, the artistic orientations of the critical design practice was bound to be next in line.

The last fields of interest have made me experience a kind of confidence towards the design practice that I have not encountered before. This was one of the main motivations for me to do a master's work of this kind: from

the very start, I wished to conduct a project that would establish a personal formulation of a design process that I could apply with certainty and trust in my future practicioning.

Despite the fluctuating professional's identity, what has remained rather untouched throughout these years, has been the general form of the design process. In the following few paragraphs, I will draw an outline of the process that I am most familiar with, and that I have been thought to follow in all the different fields of design. The systematic form I have always experienced as well functioning - even to the extent that I have been applying it to my artistic projects as well. Nevertheless, what I have been lacking is a more personal formulation of the model, and thus, within the work at hand, I will now aim at integrating and highlighting areas that are of special importance for me within the process.

"The creative process combines the designer's experience, their self-imposed constraints, their knowledge and information, as well as the chains of thought created by the process", notes Mattelmäki (2006, p. 20). With defining the appropriate places and roles of even artistic elements as a part of my experience and self-imposed constraints, I aim at finding out how the process could absorb these untapped skills of a practitioner in an enriching manner. One of my hypotheses is that the practitioner should be able to take advantage of her full creative reserve, without having to exclude her aptitude to any extent.

Diverging And Converging Processes

The first explicit account of the design process I encountered was that described by Ilkka Kettunen in his book *Muodon Palapeli* (2000), a rather popular textbook directed to students of design, applied arts, product development and economy. Despite his somewhat simplifying approach to design, the framework of the design process presented in the book is aligned with and applicable to the more refined formulations of for instance Keinonen's product concept design (2006), or Moritz's service design tasks (Moritz 2005, p. 123). Thus, I will utilise Kettunen's model to illustrate my understanding of the design process, but enrich it with the double diamond scheme, compiled by Design Council as an in-house research project ² (see figure 02).

The diverging and converging diagram is a simple graphical model to describe the design process as 11 global companies apply it ³. During its different stages "discover", "define", "develop", and "deliver", the creativity and criticism fluctuate, aiming at reaching a design solution where sufficient amount of alternatives have been created and evaluated. In the next subchapters, I will point out focus areas of my work through the model in order to highlight the project's intrinsically designerly nature. Notwithstanding the lack of product orientation, the combined model was applicable to develop great understanding of an entwined process consisting of both artistic and designerly inputs.

² Retrieved and modified from Design Council: <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/about-design/How-designers-work/The-design-process/>

³ <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/Documents/Documents/Publications/Desk%20Research%20Report.pdf>, accessed 28.8.2012

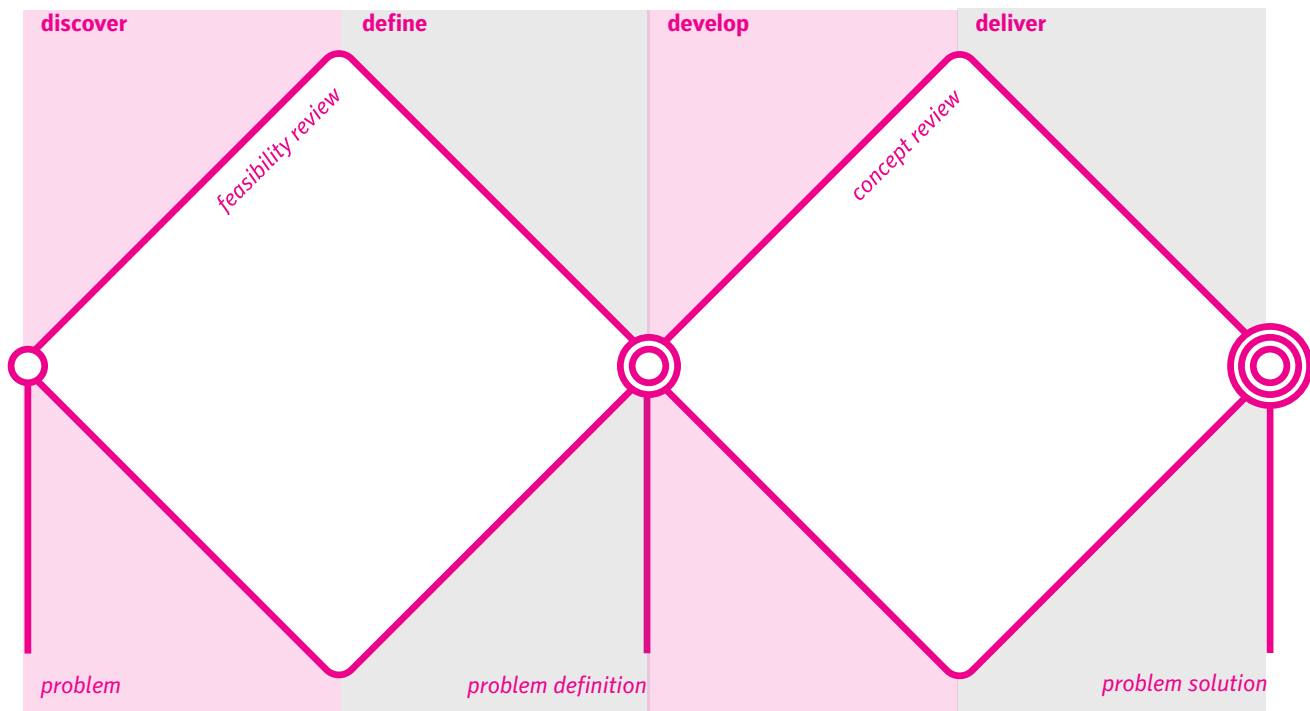


Figure 02 was retrieved and modified from Design Council: <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/about-design/How-designers-work/The-design-process/>, and was last accessed 25.9.2012.

Three Stages

The design process that I have grown the most familiar with has actually been that of concept design, which is actually only a fragment of the whole design process (see figure 03, adapted from Kettunen, 2000). According to Kettunen (2000, p. 60), it excludes both the product strategy and the product development phases. The strategy, or “the product search”, as Kettunen calls the preceding phase, is basically about framing and positioning the project, its main aim being the distilling of a product idea, and a brief, the written description of the idea.

Another outcome of the first phase is a project plan, a document that was also written in the beginning of the master’s thesis project. The positioning done in the case of academic work

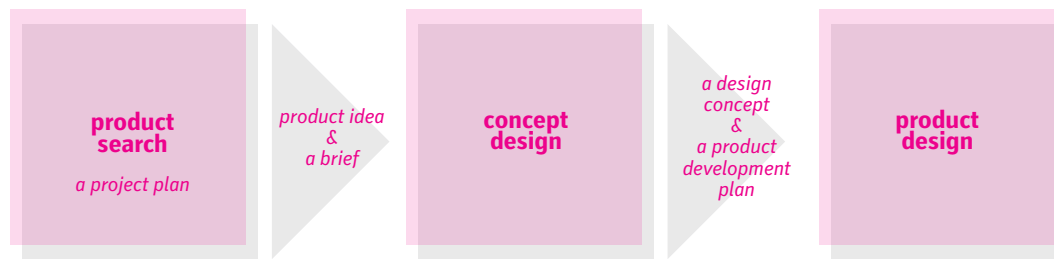
is supposed to be done in terms of objectives of the work, potential areas and the scale of research and user involvement, crucial stakeholders possibly affecting the project, abilities required etc. In the actual project plan of my work, the product idea and its brief were replaced with research questions and a definite starting point for the thesis. These elements framed the scope of the work, and established an understanding of which actions should be executed in the concept development phase.

A very determining factor in the first strategy stage of my thesis was the artistic work I had done during the years 2009-2011, and which I exhibited in the very beginning of the data gathering phase. The exhibition functioned in a way as the design brief: it described the subject matter

that ought to be tackled through design – the multitude of the experience of everyday womanhood. My “brief” gave me little answers concerning clear steps to take in following phases, but this was acceptable, and reasoned though my research questions: the ambiguous brief was aligned with my fundamental aim to keep the process open so that I could study the ways in which the artistic starting point can sensitize designer and thereby enrich the designerly process.

The third phase of the design process is called product design (Kettunen, 2000, p. 57), and Kettunen describes it as the phase when all kind of fine-tuning that inevitably precedes the launching of a functioning product takes place. Understandably, this is a stage that is extremely seldom reached in student projects, plainly because

Design Process



Concept Design Process

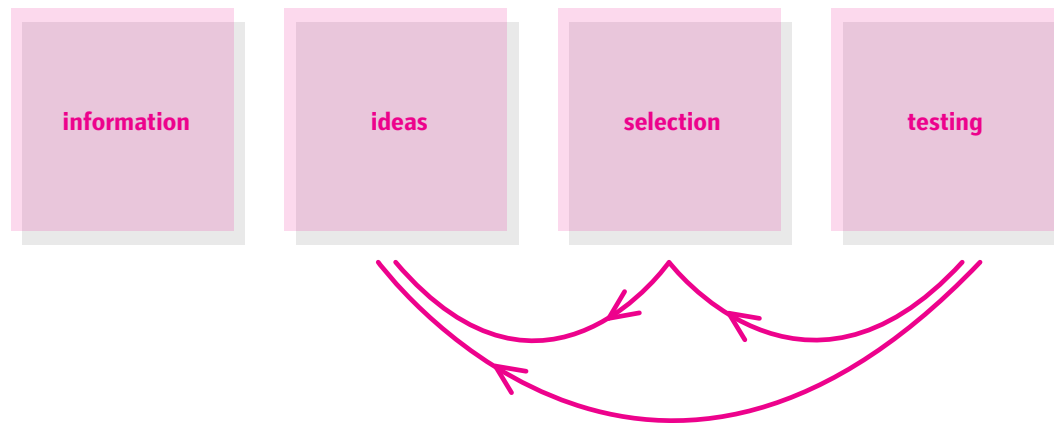


Figure 03: The three partite chart above illustrates the general model of a design process. The graph including four stages, depicts the concept design process, the middle part of the chart above.

course budgets. Hence, acknowledging the starting point in my process, and the last development phases of design that will be excluded from it, I will now pore over the middle stage: to the concept design phase that for obvious reasons grew to cover almost the whole project.

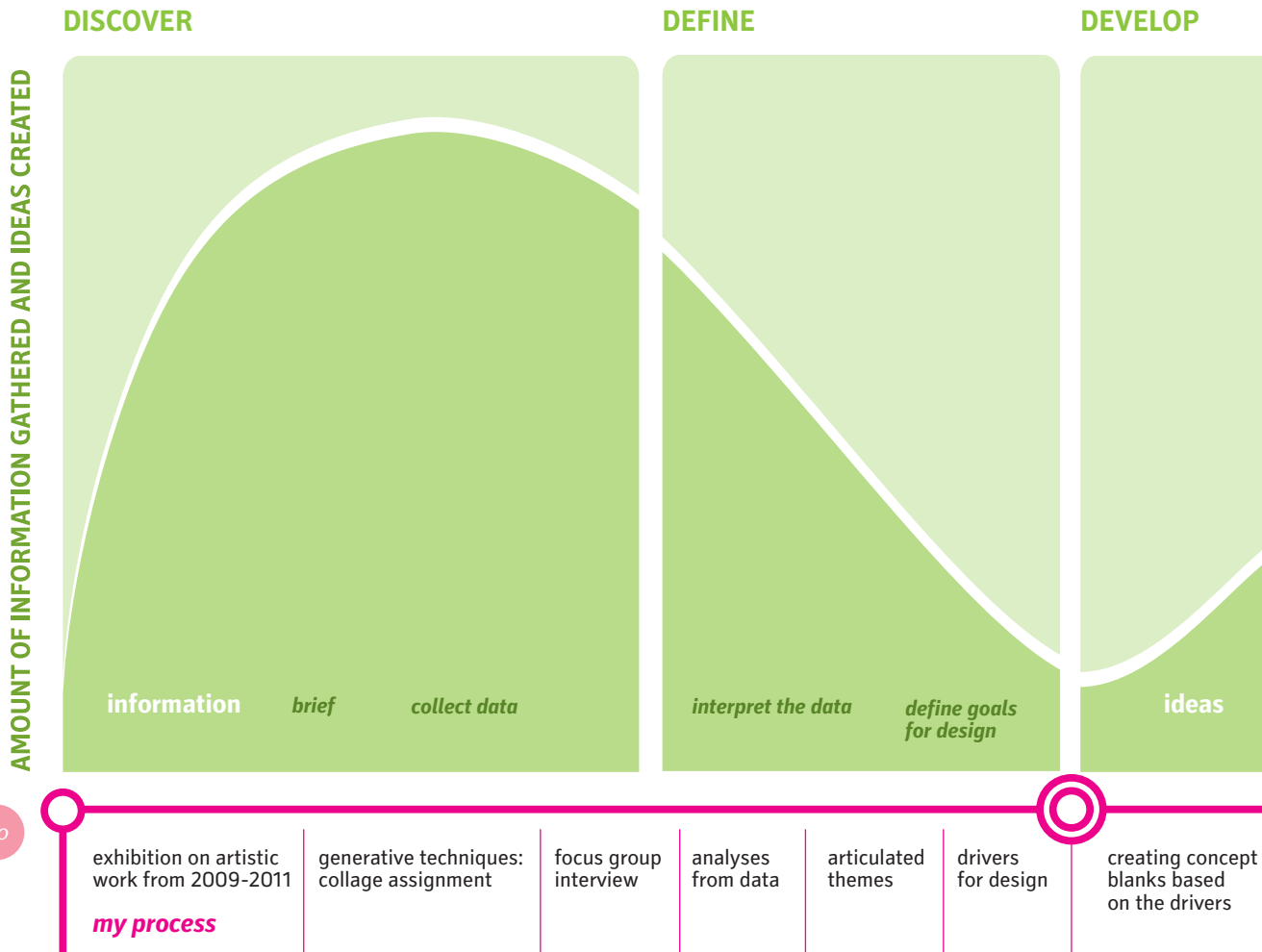
Concept Design

For Kettunen (2000), concept design means the development of product ideas, testing them and finally se-

lecting the best one for product design and development. For me, the product ideas that were supposed to be created and refined, are replaced by actual abstract concepts: in my process, I did not test which features or forms would be suitable for the ultimate product, but was testing what kinds of formulations of the subject matter are viable; what kind of notions can be found to describe everyday womanhood, and thus lead to deeper understanding of the initial concept. As Keinonen (2006, p. 62) notes, “concept design focuses

on clarifying the design’s input data”. Quite similarly, my process concentrated on understanding the preliminary concept of everyday womanhood, and by introducing user research methods, uncovering its meanings yet hidden to me.

Kettunen divides concept design into four different stages: information, ideas, selection, and testing (2000, p. 60), as depicted in figure 03. The first phase is the most information intensive, and it also became the part of the process that provided most of my



findings concerning the research questions. After it, comes the ideation and selection phase, and finally the testing of the concept that has already began gaining form and initial details.

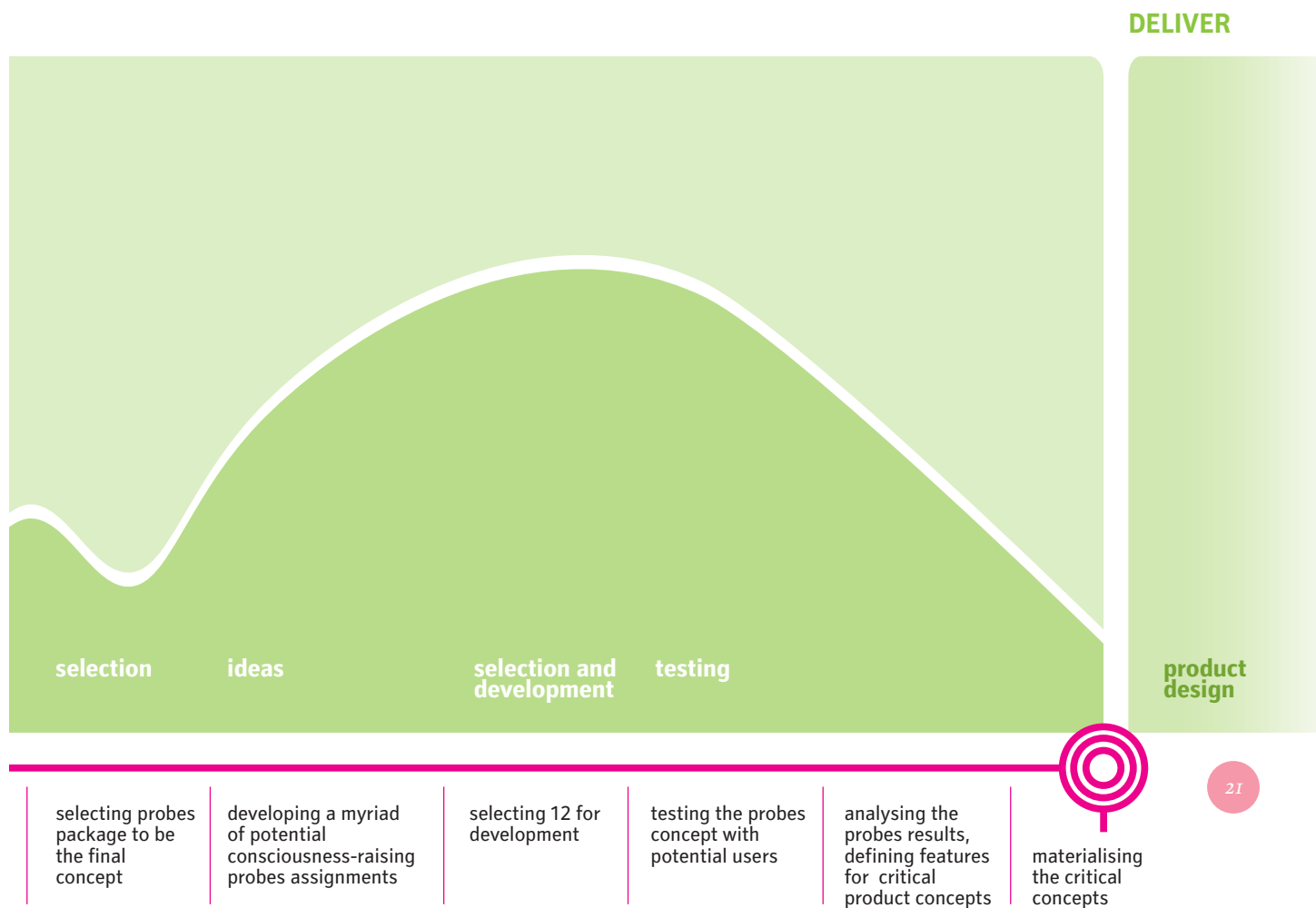
Even though the research question gained such a multitude of answers already during the information phase, I could not have considered the project finalised. Making sure that a real concept design proposal can be developed from the entwined process was an indispensable proof for me to gather – an evidence of the possibility to integrate the two processes. Therefore, despite that the first phase was so much more information intensive in

relation to the gathered data, the ideation and concept development phase obtained a lot of emphasis as well. In the figure 04, the modified double diamond model by Design Council is presented with those tasks Ket-tunen (2000, pp. 60-89) considers of importance, as well as with those that became significant in my process.

As it can be seen from the graph (figure 04), the actual product design phase is depicted very ambiguously. Excluding it from the project is justified for two reasons. First, as mentioned earlier, product design and development is truly not in the scope of a student project, especially a

master's thesis work involving a major research goal as well. Secondly, fine-tuning a product would not provide much more information considering my research question – the sensitization through art and the integration of the two processes had already been succeeded.

Nevertheless, as the project is situated inside critical practices of design, the importance of building a physical product and making the design object a materialized form of discourse (Mazé & Redström, 2007) cannot be overlooked. Thus, some guidelines for a hypothetical product design matching the context of research are drawn to



close the project. As the mere clarification of what a design process might be does not tell much of the nature of the project, a more explicit positioning inside the design practice will be done. Through situating the project inside critical design, I will also clarify my stance to research.

Figure 04: The Design Process as it is applied and conducted within the thesis.

2.1.2 CRITICAL DESIGN – A RESEARCH PROGRAM

In their article *Difficult Forms: Critical Practices of Design and Research* (2007), Ramia Mazé and Johan Redström prefer the notion of program to be used for structuring the experimentation done in design research. They define these research programs as “provisional knowledge regimes” that are not absolute but rather dynamic and “sensitive to [,] heterogeneity and multiplicity”.

Koskinen et al. (2011) continue in their book “*Design Research through Practice*” to illuminate the concept of program. They focus on a fragment of design research that they call “constructive design research”, under which they have been able to recognize three especially successful approaches to, or frameworks for research. These frameworks they have named as Lab, field and showroom (Koskinen et al., 2011, p. xiii), and each of them seem to include one or several programs (ibid. p. 40).

Constructive design research stands for “design research in which construction - - takes center place and becomes the key means in constructing knowledge” (Koskinen et al., 2011, p. 5). Through the different means of creating new objects and artefacts, and the description and explanation given on these “constructions”, new content and problems are being produced (ibid. p. 6). Thus, one of the main aims of constructive design research is to propose ways in which design-specific work methods and research could be integrated (Koskinen et al., 2008). The three approaches that have proved themselves successful in this integration work have managed to articulate something essential to the ways of doing design in the varying frameworks.

Mazé and Redström (2007) cautiously state in their article how the notion of a program might be a worthwhile way to frame especially critical practices in a design research setting. Koskinen et al. (2011) have already fully absorbed this idea, and locate the more narrow term of critical design exclusively under the framework of showroom. They even claim (ibid. p. 90) how “The most influential program in Showroom is critical design”. Now, having established a vague understanding of the research context for critical design - inside constructive design research and as a program under a “knowledge regime” called Showroom - I will continue by validating its presence in my thesis. In the following chapters, I will shed light to the origins and purpose of critical design, its ideological roots and implications to doing research, and finally provide the reader with my personal motivation for having selected it as a track and a thread for my project.

Origins

The origins of critical design are often traced to the Italian radical design and architecture in the 1960s, 70s and 80s (Koskinen et al., 2011, p. 90). Mazé and Redström (2007) speak generally of critical practices that additionally built on anti-design emerging also in England and Austria. Some commonalities the starting points share include the attitude towards the making: designing was considered more or less political, enabling “active critical participation” and giving form to critical issues “that might otherwise be obscured by language or ideology” (Mazé & Redström, 2007). Within anti-design, inspiration was drawn for example from the avant-garde art movements in the post-second world

war Europe; for instance, the emotional play and strategies of estrangement applied by the dadaists, surrealists, lettrists and situationists international were merged into the designers’ tool box (Mazé & Redström, 2007).

Furthermore, it seems that the operational aspects of designing were discussed and valued in addition to the mere theoretical commitment. Ideological engagement and being open for debate was very typical to the origins of criticality in design (Mazé & Redström, 2007). The rather subversive attitude encouraging “not only [of] product but ideological consumption” (ibid.) developed into a new form of criticality that Mazé and Redström (2007) divide into two distinctive paths.

First one of these they call conceptual design that “draws on art to orient a subversion of design norms”. Within the field, focus is not anymore in the maker and the object, but in the concept inspiring the design as well as in the setting up of the concept through for example material objects, interventions or installations. The outcome of conceptual design is not to serve utilitarian ends but “foreground a conceptual or symbolic function”.

The other track distinguished here could actually be characterized as a fragment or a branch of conceptual design (Mazé & Redström, 2007). It is called critical design, and both Mazé and Redström (2007) as well as Koskinen et al. (2011, p. 90) associate it first and foremost to the work done by Fiona Raby and Anthony Dunne. Within their work, the designer is regarded as an applied conceptual artist, or a critically and materially engaged practitioner (Mazé & Redström, 2007). A possible reason for giving such considerable importance on their work is that one of the earliest, if not the first uses of the term critical design can be

Figure 05: Krzysztof Wodicko: Homeless Vehicles (1988-1989). Image retrieved from http://25.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_m9l6vkKkzL1qzwokuo3_1280.jpg, 20.9.2012



traced to Dunne's book *Hertzian Tales* (1999, in the later edition from 2005 p. 63). In chapter 3, Dunne discovers projects from design, architecture, as well as art that are manifestations of para-functionality; designed objects "where function is used to encourage reflection on how electronic products condition our behaviour" (ibid. p. 43). For instance, Dunne takes Krzysztof Wodicko's artworks as design proposals that "with their use of simple electronics and their emphasis on invention and social cultural content" can show how electronic objects and product design could "fuse into critical design" (ibid. p. 63). (see figure 05)

Especially the early core of the work of Dunne & Raby concentrated on how new technologies and electronic products are being produced following only commercial aims, and despite that assimilated all too easily as a part of our everyday lives (e.g.

Dunne & Raby, 2001, p. 58; Dunne, 2005, p. 22). The target of criticism was therefore commercial design and the mere "semiotic skins" (Dunne, 2005, p. 1) that do not encourage or enable people to reflect on the effect the products with inbuilt value systems have on their lives.

Notwithstanding the context of designing, as illustrated in his *Hertzian tales* Dunne remained heavily influenced by avant-garde art that he utilised as a source for strategies for "poeticizing the distance between people and electronic objects", and thereby encouraging sensitive scepticism towards the everyday product-infused environment (Dunne, 2005, p. 22). In addition to Dunne's personal and Dunne & Raby's shared work, also another highly influential track of critical design drawing inspiration primarily from art originated in Royal College of Art (RCA) in London and

within its Computer-Related Design Program. The EU funded Presence Project, where Dunne was also involved, assimilated the notion of psychogeography (Gaver et al., 1999; Koskinen et al., 2011, p. 40) as well as many others from the Situationists International, an avant-garde art movement established in 1957 (Pyhtilä 2005, p. 27).

The Presence Project did not merely search for artistic strategies to be transformed into a tool for designers and adapted to a business-as-usual design process. The protagonists Anthony (Tony) Dunne and William (Bill) Gaver describe time and again the underlying ideology motivating the selection of artistic methodology for the project. In their seminal article *Cultural Probes* (1999), authored together with Elena Pacenti, they distil some of the core aims of their most definitely critical design: they did not want to

focus on commercial design but rather on new understandings of technology. They aimed at discovering “new pleasures, new forms of sociability and new cultural forms”. As people are often all too accustomed to live their lives in a certain, unquestioned manner, “tactics of ambiguity, absurdity and mystery” would be indispensable if wanting to succeed in “provoking new perspectives on everyday life”. With this kind of larger ideological framework in the back of their heads, the Presence Project became an important actor in the early phases of the research program called critical design.

Koskinen et al. (2011) note that the cultural probes research method grew to be the main legacy of the Presence project. The ideology and values behind the cultural probes have even begun to establish the foundation of non-debatable beliefs for the research program (Koskinen et al., 2011, p. 40). With it deriving several strategies of action rather straightforwardly from the Situationists’ toolbox (ibid. p. 91), I became interested in the other possible means art could accompany the design process. As a matter of fact, the fundamental link to art was the main motivation for me to approach design from its critical stance: the possibility to openly seek inspiration from a realm outside design, but in a manner that would finally enrich both the artistic as well the designerly parts of the process. The artistic media being a natural means of discovery for me, I felt that the critical design approach with its allowance for provocation and challenging could guide my artistic and designerly process in a structured manner – and still remaining within design.

The cultural probes was not totally new a research method for me either, and thereby I was considering including it in the process as

the needed structuring force. I had applied its variant design probing in a student project before, but at that time without paying much attention to its background ideology. Earlier, I had merely wanted to gather rich data, but with my thesis project now at hand, I had a good reason to expand my understanding of the method. Now I felt that with cultural probes, I could test how still keeping my feet in my artistic background motivation, I could enrich my understanding of a phenomenon, and even in a manner that would strengthen my identity as a designer.

In the following chapters, the purpose of critical design is presented very briefly, but in a fashion following its early formulations given by Dunne and Gaver. I strongly feel that this underlying reasoning resonates to that present in my project. Moreover, I have realised that it even manages to overcome some of those ideological dilemmas that have been troubling my consciousness as a designer.

Purpose of Critical Design

I feel that the mental starting point in my project has quite a lot in common with the framework created by Dunne and Gaver. Initially, I wished to be able to reveal and articulate adverse habits in thinking gender and its related assumptions; I wanted to create dissensus towards the unquestioned cultural roles through which people re-produce gendered modes of action. One can compare these rather broad goals to that of critical design’s, which Dunne frames in relation to emerging technologies and electronic products. In the preface to the 2005 edition of *Hertzian Tales* (p. xii), he notes the main argument of his book to be that “design can be used as a critical medium for reflecting on the cultural, social and ethical impact of technology”.

Nonetheless, Dunne’s work is often characterized with more general terms as “design for debate” that, by its very nature, “questions the way in which people see and experience the material world and elicits change through debate” (Koskinen et al., 2011, p. 94). Thus, the critical attitude that designers can adopt does not need to be exclusively related to handling the development of technology; rather, they should only be interested in making people aware of their *true interests* – not the ones dictated by commercial, cultural, political, or any other powers whatsoever (Koskinen et al., 2011, p.95).

In *Design Noir*, an account of constructive design research done by Dunne and Raby, the couple claim that “Critical design takes as its medium social, psychological, cultural, technical and economic values, in an effort to push the limits of lived experience not the medium.” (Dunne & Raby, 2001, p. 58). Just like these designers, I want my future work also make people think; I wish to help them to contest, challenge and subvert the structures that indoctrinate values that might not be aligned with their *true interests*. However, inside the critical tradition in design, the methods for making people think have been almost always borrowing heavily from art, and thereby, the protagonists of the field have needed to defend their actions as primarily designerly. Following, there will be a brief account of the arguments designers have given when they have been asked how their proposals differ from art. These grounds can and should be utilised also when my final concepts are assessed.

Not Art!

Being provocative and challenging might seem like an obvious role for art, but art is far too removed from the world of mass consumption and electronic consumer products to be effective in this context - - (Dunne & Raby, 2001, p. 58)

The attitude towards art is rather complicated within the community of designers who are mostly concerned with conceptual design – that is in exploring hypothesis and raising challenging ideas for the public. They often seem to think that what they do is not art because they merely assert so. In their article *The Pillow: Artist-Designers in the Digital Age* (1997) also Dunne and Gaver fall for this trap, but nonetheless manage to articulate something interesting of the relation between art and design objects.

Dunne and Gaver give two main reasons for their electronic conceptual products not to be art. First, they argue that the use of inexpensive materials and constructions is so characteristics of mass-produced objects that they could not be mistaken for “unique exhibition pieces”, and thereby art (Dunne and Gaver, 1997). This argument does not seem to take much criticism, for counter examples of all-accessible everyday objects brought into the art world are numerous, probably the most well-known being Marcel Duchamp’s *Urinal* as early as 1917 (Godfrey 1998, p. 28). The dispute over Duchamp’s work also includes similarities to that of critical designers’ demand for complex aesthetic experiences (Dunne & Raby, 2001, p. 8). The urinal’s presence in the exhibition was defended with the following words:

A lovely form has been revealed, freed from its functional purpose, therefore a man clearly has made an aesthetic contribution. Mr Mutt [the pseudonym used by Duchamp] has taken an ordinary object, placed it so that its useful significance disappears, and thus has created a new approach to the subject. (Godfrey, 1998, p. 28)

Interestingly, Dunne questions user-friendliness as the main aim of interactivity in design. He notes how user-friendliness “helps naturalize electronic objects and the values they embody” (Dunne, 2005, p. 21), and proposes how with estrangement, or user-unfriendliness, the underlying values in electronic objects could be revealed (ibid. p. 22). Consequently, he also suggests alienation from the object’s *useful significance*. Moreover, Dunne even mentions how an alternative use of aesthetics would aid in this process of alienation:

Perhaps with aesthetics, a different path must be taken: an aesthetic approach might subsume and subvert the idea of user-friendliness and provide an alternative model of interactivity. (Hertzian Tales, p. 24)

I am inclined to see some similarity between the justifications given for the existence of both conceptual art and design. Within both realms, the most valued thing is to gain a new approach to a given subject, and the way this should be done is through sensitive aesthetic unsettlement. Because all this have happened through inexpensive and everyday components and materials, the requirement of mass-production seems to fail in drawing any line between the realms of art and design.

The second factor that according to Dunne and Gaver (1997) ought to

establish conceptual or critical design proposals exclusively as design is the inbuilt assertion of being a design prototype. In their mind, this kind of mental setting “encourages viewers to consider it in that context, and thus ask different questions - - than if it is treated as art work”. This latter proposal of theirs seems to be easier to take seriously, as it also seems to lurk behind Koskinen et al.’s (2011, p. 98) first tactic for distancing design from art. Naturally, the assertion of being design needs to be validated somehow, and one of the ways to do so might be to take the discourse about the design proposal outside the art world, outside galleries and showrooms to companies, offices, malls and community meetings (ibid.).

Another tactic for distinguishing design from art is to execute critical projects at a high professional level – by taking a design process as a backbone of the project, and utilising advanced design skills on the way. Several of these terms of design skills and processes are rather vague and obscure, but Koskinen et al. (2011, p. 98-99) imply that with their application, the professional designers would become interested in the case, and again, discourse would take place inside the design world, not primarily amongst artists.

The third tactic is in manner a compilation of the first two. Koskinen et al. (2011) suggest testing the design prototypes resulting from a skilled design process in real life, thereby opening the discourse to several stakeholders. They state that “empirical research turns even very explorative designs into research objects” (ibid. p. 100), but also remember to note how for the researcher working from within the showroom approach, the so called fieldwork has different goals from those of other practitioners’: the criti-

cally oriented design researcher might gather data not only about factual issues around use, but aim at locating novel stories that could inspire their imagination and enrich their handling of the core concepts.

What Could Be Learned from Art

Despite the uneasy relation towards admitting almost any commonalities between their projects and art, critical designers have still gained a lot from different art forms. Through their insistence for more complex and challenging aesthetics, especially Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby seem to prefer some artistic modes of action. In *Design Noir*, they quite beautifully clarify their stance both to art as well as to commercial design:

We are not against industry - - More disturbing is the unwillingness of the design profession to take on a more responsible and pro-active role within society. Before this can happen, designers will have to redefine their role, embracing and developing new methods and approaches that simultaneously appeal and challenge in the way a film or book does. More could be learnt from fine art where there is a history of critical strategies for asking questions through objects and stimulating debate in engaging ways.
(Dunne & Raby, 2001, p. 59)

The general formulation above supplements the dependency on art that the showroom researchers already established with the concrete application of for instance Situationists' strategies (see the earlier chapter *Origins*). During the following few paragraphs, I will briefly summarize the thread my thesis will pick from inside critical practices in design, and thereby also the artistic and critical attitudes towards science it ought to absorb.

2.1.3 THE THESIS TRACK

Koskinen et al. (2011) summarize the Showroom designers' approach to science simply as "agnostic" (p. 91). They highlight the Presence Project and its protagonist William Gaver as a typical case and applier of this attitude. The attitude cultivated in the project was to disrupt all expectations of user research, aiming at allowing totally new opportunities and possibilities for designing to emerge (Koskinen et al., 2011, p. 92).

What is one of the most distinctive characteristics of the agnostic outlook on science is the so-called aesthetic accountability that is preferred to the traditional epistemological accountability. The former does not need to establish objective facts; neither does it have to formulate causal explanations of the world. Aesthetic accountability is reasoned through the non-rationalities of the human conduct: due to the partly insensible behaviour that is the target of the research, also the research methods can and should be something else than perfectly logical and replicable (Koskinen et al., 2011, p. 93).

It is also characteristic to aesthetic accountability not to strive for reasoning the selection of distinct designerly methods. "Anything goes", as long as the designed object works in a manner it ought to. In the critical design context, the degree of success can still be determined through a few guidelines that I will pore over more closely in the chapter 3.6 *Critical Concepts*. However, the conceptual framework that gives the initial shape to a branch of critical practice that I will follow, does not totally build on "anything goes", but has a few distinguishable features.

Mazé and Redström (2007) articulate the research attitude within

critical practices quite aligned with Koskinen et al.'s (2011) insights on Showroom, but go deeper in describing the possible emphases one can follow. First, they establish two orientations one can take in relation to the design tradition, both of them having a different target of criticism. Mazé and Redström call these orientations outside-in and inside-out: the former "operate[s] from the fringes, even crossing over into art or crafts to pose a critique of norms characterizing conservative or mainstream design". Meanwhile, in the latter "the techniques and forms central to design practice are mobilized to articulate ideas about systemic conditions outside of design itself". To me it seems that my project absorbs something from both of these orientations. On one hand, the subject matter of everyday womanhood and the aim to reveal the adverse behavioural habits it may spur rather clearly utilises the designerly process in order to create "constructive counterproposals" (Mazé & Redström, 2007) to the current state of affairs. Thus, my approach seems quite similar to the inside-out approach. On the other hand, on the process level my main target is to give evidence on how the designerly process could be enriched by artistic practtitioning inherent to the designer. Consequently, the outside-in orientation becomes relevant as well: through my actual research question, I am sensitively criticising how design can be made, and suggesting an alternative to a traditional approach.

In any case, independent from the standpoint taken towards the design tradition, I am still dealing with the materialization of concepts that Mazé and Redström (2007) note to be central to critical design practice. Actually, in my process, I aim at showcasing how from artistic media and from

the outside-in approach, the designer can gradually move to use designerly tools in order to handle and contest topics in society. Thus, the outcome of the project is a designerly end result enabled by an inside-out outlook on the project.

Nevertheless, throughout the project the goal remains the same: *to find strategies for making the abstract concept of everyday womanhood more graspable, and thereby available for contestation and change*. The concept is discovered through multiple means, varying from subjective practicioning to focus group interviews executed in a manner typical to sociological research. Consequently, the concept under scrutiny is an integral part of the design object as such, and not only a description that can be imposed on the design exercise in retrospect. Due to the centrality of the objects depicting concepts, I am inclined to turn to a conceptual framework called Object as Discourse.

Object as Discourse

In their article, Mazé and Redström (2007) take the electronic objects produced as a part of Anthony Dunne's doctoral thesis as an example of a framework called Object as Discourse. They describe the work as research that can be interpreted as conceptual modelling, including a critique to the issues in the centre of research. In the approach, the materiality is an indispensable element; only through the concrete shape, design moves beyond mere commentary (ibid.).

The few crucial features of projects that can be categorised inside the framework Object as Discourse seem to give an apt outline of that form of critical design I would prefer to absorb. Mazé and Redström (2007) consider the designed objects in these

projects to be “materialized forms of discourse”, which by their very characters are both propositional and projective. They are aimed at exposing alternative or competing ideas that through materialization become “available both for aesthetic reception and for everyday consumption”. The essential quality of being crafted and made physical most definitely links the framework to constructive design research, as defined by Koskinen et al. (2011, p. 5). This is certainly aligned with Mazé and Redström's following claim: the material form and crafting are in key role to bring about reflection within design and in use (Mazé and Redström, 2007).

In her doctoral thesis, Mazé (2007, p. 245) elaborates more on the qualities of the framework. In addition to Dunne's doctoral thesis, she refers also to William Gaver's writings on the Presence Project. According to Gaver, “design can be seen as embodiments of beliefs or theories about the myriad of issues related to them” (ibid.). Moreover, in the process of embodying beliefs in their integrated designs, designers take the role of researchers; “they assert hypotheses and theories that will be tested aesthetically rather than empirically”.

Notwithstanding the physical designs and the skills an individual designer may possess and be able to fulfil in her designs, the ideological transfer between design and use, the aesthetic skin and the embedded idea, is never totally transparent (Mazé, 2007, p. 245). She takes an example of critical architecture, where aesthetic critique has often been equated with political one in inefficient ways. The projects may have been unsuccessful because the underlying demand for change cannot be mobilised if it does not take a material form, become an everyday utility, and enable on-going

interaction (ibid.). Consequently, Mazé suggests that while we aim at gaining more understanding of how ideology and design could better interact with each other, it might be worthwhile to open up *a more experiential and participatory space for enquiry*.

Following from the remarks above, I will aim at directing my entwined process so that the end result would include at least the most crucial qualities of the framework. When reading through the accounts of critical practices in design, I have felt a strong resonance between the ideological aims of the presented frameworks and my designer's identity. I assume that following this intuition is the best way to proceed in discovering my research question and approaching a personal answer to how a designer could – motivated by her own artistic tendencies – develop a designerly end result from this yet undefined process.

To summarize, in order to follow the attractive framework, in my case the outcome should make the core concepts concrete and approachable through its material form. It should integrate the notion of everyday womanhood and its more precise formulations discovered in the user research in a manner that makes them available for interaction. The aesthetics of the design exercise should also encourage critical reflection, not support easy assimilation of a yet again new product. It seems that notwithstanding the requirement of a material form, the outcome could still remain on a concept level, as long as it's communicated to the audience in a way that force them to consider it as an actual product or prototype (Dunne & Gaver, 1997; Koskinen et al., 2011, p. 98-99). This way, I could also avoid the project becoming categorised only as artistic.

Lastly, as I have been experiencing a need to open up my personal assump-

tions of everyday womanhood to a wider community, I should really consider how to incorporate Ramia Mazé's (2007, p. 245) suggestion: perhaps an integrated participatory approach in the critical design concept could aid in making it truly discursive. An open attitude towards an inclusive - or even emancipatory - development process is also aligned with feminist epistemology, whose presence and influence in and for my work will be clarified in the following chapter.

2.2 Feminist Epistemology

Koskinen et al. note that the conception of science shared by many of the researchers within the Showroom is rather narrow and underrating (2011, p. 92). Only through application of artistic and designerly methods, the researchers claim to be able to approach topics that would otherwise be inaccessible to science. This attitude however underestimates the richness of the methods that for instance the social sciences and a myriad of feminist methods have developed to study the human experience and culture.

In my work, I truly wished to overcome this attitudinal presupposition, and aimed at structuring and executing also epistemologically accountable research. With selecting the focus group interview as the main method for gathering user data, my primary aim was to improve my thinking of the topic by exposing it to outside ideas and insights. Nonetheless, I also aimed at reaching understanding of everyday womanhood in a manner that would allow me to suppose the human experience is real to someone else as well – that the handling of everyday womanhood encompasses some level of transferability. Feminist epistemology gained a key position when I was

searching for this suitable framing of objectivity.

2.2.1 REDEFINING OBJECTIVITY

In her article *Qualitative research: standards, challenges and guidelines* (2001), Kirsti Malterud raises the concept of reflexivity as an equally important measure of qualitative research as validity and relevance have been. She reminds that in contemporary theory of knowledge, the effect of the researcher's position and perspectives have to be acknowledged; one cannot claim doing "objective science" only by applying "the scientific method" (Haraway, 1991), but one needs to assess and bring forth the inevitable subjectivity that all the decisions made during one's study encompass.

In a specific case of qualitative research and research through design, Mäkelä & Latva-Somppi (2011) note how practice-led research is successfully applying the concept of dynamic objectivity, which is a very central notion in feminist epistemology. They state that effective objectivity is bound to reclaim subjective experience. Both Mäkelä & Latva-Somppi as well as Malterud refer to Haraway (1991), when they outline the knowing subject. Malterud condenses Haraway's redefined objectivity by noting that the perspective of the observer is always limited, and her standpoint determines what can be seen and found out from the data. Mäkelä & Latva-Somppi complement this by refusing the concept of a neutral observer, and highlighting her participatory character that should additionally be conscious of her own situatedness.

Mäkelä & Latva-Somppi (2011) do not even consider theoretical thought as universal or "separable from its context or from the researcher". For them, and aligned with the dynamic

objectivity, thinking is unavoidably linked to the randomness of personal experience, thereby necessarily always only partial. Consequently, the feminist concept of objectivity applied in my research as well is by its very nature "socially situated knowledge and produced from a specific speaker's position" (ibid.).

As Mäkelä & Latva-Somppi as well as Malterud built their stance to qualitative research and the subjectivity of knowledge on the same grounds, I dare to refer to Malterud's conclusions of the effects reflexivity has on a study. According to her, the researcher ought not to worry whether she affects the process, or whether it could be prevented under any other study settings. Instead, there should be a transparent agenda for assessing the subjectivity. The assessment of the potential effects of the researcher forms the core of reflexivity, and should be carried out during the whole study.

Malterud claims that if reflexivity is systematically maintained throughout the whole study, personal issues can become very valuable sources for research. This is also a statement that grounded my selection of methods in the beginning of my thesis, and encouraged me to expose a very personal viewpoint to the subject matter of the study. The exhibition of prints and paintings also functioned as a revealer of preconceptions. For Malterud, they are not only a negative baggage, but more like the researcher's backpack, consisting of both personal and professional experiences, pre-study beliefs, initial motivation for the study as well as theoretical foundations related to the topic. By identifying at least some of the preconceptions the researcher brings to the project, the reflective process begins. For me, this happened through discussing how people experienced my exhibition

pieces, and asking them to challenge them by making collages of the subject matter by themselves.

Hypotheses are often ingredients of the preconceptions (Malterud, 2001). Therefore, it is necessary for the qualitative researcher to question and reflect upon her hypotheses rather than merely built a study for testing them. Acknowledgement and transparent report on the underlying pre-suppositions also aid in reaching the basic standards of qualitative research – validity, reliability and a certain form of generalizability – which I will look into in the paragraphs aside.

2.2.2 WHY IS THIS NOT ARTISTIC RESEARCH?

As in feminist methodology, also within practice-led research valuing the personal experience is an integral part of the research. Practitioners use their own experience as an indispensable part of the research, making the process of meaning creation essentially self-reflective and self-critical (Hannula et al., 2005, p. 10). One can spot similar tendencies in feminist social sciences; also here, the researcher's perspective and personal input in the process, and the advantages it provides the research setting with, are acknowledged (Malterud, 2001; Montell, 1999).

Notwithstanding the similarities between the theoretical grounding of artistic research and feminist epistemology, I claim that my project is primarily constructive design research that only recognizes its debt to critical theory, just like practice-based research does. Even though my project involves artistic elements which artistic research would embrace much more easily than what constructive research is capable of, there is quite a gap in the understanding of a process

Standards for Qualitative Research

No matter which methods applied in qualitative research, the aim is always to strive for systematic collection, organization, and interpretation of textual material derived from talk or observation (Malterud, 2001). This kind of research is done basically to explore meanings within social phenomena as experienced by individuals themselves (ibid.). Malterud believes that the methods and their assessment criteria are based on a systematic and reflective process for development of knowledge that can somehow be contested and shared, implying transferability beyond the study setting (ibid.). Hence, one of the most basic standards for qualitative research is validity, both internal and external.

Validity

In its most basic formulation, an evaluation of internal validity will reveal if a certain study investigates what it was originally meant to (Malterud, 2001). It asks if the gathered data provides answers to the core questions the study was supposed to gain an answer to (Ruusuvuori et al., 2010, p. 27). External validity is a slightly more complex concept in qualitative research. Malterud (2001) refers to it as transferability, and lets it answer the question In which contexts can the finding be applied.

Within qualitative research, and especially when the material consists of very personal experiences, serious forethought should be paid on its handling. As Malterud (2001) notes, no study can ever be universally transferable, but in all the cases, the study design should "show a thorough consideration what an adequate degree of transferability would be". A key component in this consideration is to reflect on who and what the findings relate to. Ruusuvuori et al. (2010, p. 27) assure that systematic reporting of the data collection process as well as findings derived from it enable the reader to evaluate this.

Simple means, such as detailed presentation of the demographics of the study participants reveal the level of transferability of the research. Against a popular conception, a large amount data may inhibit transferability, because the researcher might not be able to test reflexivity and look at counterhypothesis, thereby resulting only in superficial analysis (Malterud 2001). In any case, no findings ought to be treated as facts that can be applied to the population at large. Instead, they should be treated as "descriptions, notions, or theories applicable within a specific setting" (Malterud 2001). This statement requires an altered definition of generalizability for qualitative and feminist research.

Generalizability and Bias

In qualitative research, the concept generalizability does not automatically bear in a supposition that the studied phenomenon should be distinguishable from a wider societal context, or applicable to the habits of a larger population outside the study. Thus, the focus when

in these two methodologies.

Artistic research relies rather heavily on Christopher Frayling's notion of research through art and design (Mäkelä & Nimkulrat, 2011), which Koskinen et al. (2011, p. 5) consider quite problematic. They refer to several critics who have judged Frayling's conception for its incapability to give any guidance in putting up a working research practice as well as the lack of theoretical involvement in the framework. For these reasons, Koskinen et al. (2011, p. 5), prefer to talk about constructive design research, in which " - construction - be it product, system, space, or media - takes centre place and becomes the key means in constructing knowledge" (ibid.). This does not seem to differ that radically from practice-led research, where the researcher creates the artefact and documents, contextualises and interprets it as well as the process of making it (Mäkelä & Latva-Somppi, 2011).

Koskinen et al. (2011, p. 6) merely state that constructive design research is not about integrating art and research. I find their argument quite problematic, for it insinuates that drawing some sort of line between art and design would be inevitable for a definition of the branch of research. As anyone who has read more than four pages of philosophy of art knows, building definitions that would require determining what is and what is not art is always a lost cause. Therefore, despite my own yet very limited experience and the methodological literature I have become familiar with, I would like to propose a difference potentially worth of further research between these two areas of *design* research: the role that personal experience takes in the creative process.

In the both forms of research-through-design, human experiences are utilised to fuel the research. In

constructive design research, and especially in its research program critical design, the personal skills of the researcher is brought to the centre of the research (Koskinen et al., 2011, p. 92); the designer does not need to ground all her choices epistemologically, if the end result only is "good design". Naturally, this approach does not free the practitioner from conducting still reliable research, but continues to insist on documenting and describing the process. Often, like in the case of the Placebo Project by Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, even the main outcome of the research project can be a book. For the Placebo Project, it was the highly influential *Design Noir: The Secret Life of Everyday Objects* (2001).

Within the placebo project, the personal designer's intuition has guided the creation of the objects that manifest the presence of electromagnetic radiation amongst us. The actual process of creating the artefacts - the choices made for the materials, angles of joints, finishes of the lacquer surface et cetera are not revealed in detail - only the aspiration for ambiguity and mystery of the final form is shared with the reader. To my mind, a comprehensive root of choices would not even be either relevant for the research or aligned with its aim that is to gently provoke people to acknowledge the meanings their surrounding objects mediate. Thus, the intimate creative contribution deriving from the designer's experiences on the topic at hand is not even supposed to feed the whole of the project, but it is to be enriched, complemented and improved by the experiences of *others*.

In artistic research, the subjective experience feeds the whole process from the beginning to the end, like in the case of Mäkelä's dissertation (Saveen piirtyviä muistoja. Subjektivisen luomisprosessin ja naiseuden

representaatioita, 2003). There is little involvement of experiences outside those of the practising researcher, and the main discourse takes place between the personal creative process and theory (Mäkelä in Mäkelä & Routarinne, 2006, p. 73). Again in constructive design research, like in the case of the Presence Project by Gaver et al., (Gaver et al., 1999) the subjective experiences of the designer-researcher are only one ingredient in the creative process resulting in an artefact.

Especially the research programs under showroom seem to acknowledge, value and express a willing to utilise the subjective perspective of the researcher. Nonetheless, the process does not develop like in many cases of artistic research: around a spiral of the practitioner's experience and theory. Quite the contrary, the designer's intuition and skills are enriched and fed with the experience of others.

Thus, even though the theoretical background seems to be to a rather great extent shared by these two fields of design research, the role of sources that make the epistemological foundation is rather different. In artistic research, theory is an active participant in forming new knowledge in the contemporary creative process. As Mazé (2007, p. 245) puts it: within practice-led research, "design-making - is directed at materializing and situating aesthetic and critical theories". However, in constructive design research theory seems to have much more the role of a facilitator: it reasons the involvement of personal experiences through critical theory, where within also feminist epistemology definitely lies. Nevertheless, knowledge is created rather from the dialogue between *the creative process of the researcher and the experiences of others* - the users, viewers, participants, et cetera.

In order to conclude, I would like to state that the mere involvement of artistic practicioning does not turn a research project into artistic research. I do acknowledge that my artistic starting point would rather easily fall into a model of interaction between art and research that Keinonen (in Mäkelä & Routarinne 2006, p. 49) calls “Art contributing to research”. Within this frame, actions of art commence a chain of activities that gradually develop into contributions in the field of research. Additionally the process crosses over from field of art to that of research.

Even though the outline of my project could be placed within practice-led approach, I still claim the work lies inside constructive design research. I do realise that the artistic starting point of my thesis could be interpreted as an retroactive approach familiar to practice-based research (Mäkelä in Mäkelä & Routarinne 2006, p. 77), and my personal will to expand the array of the methods designer can utilise in her process seeks grounding from the concept of methodological abundance crucial to the field as well (Hannula et al., 2005, p. 37). Even so, I think that because the creative process is not equated with the research process (Mazé, 2007, p. 245), but is utilised in order to *better gain a point of access to the experiences of others*, the work should be placed under Koskinen et al.’s definition of constructive design research.

evaluating generalizability should be in reflecting whether it can be soundly presumed that the findings of the sample are shared in the cultural context of the speaker (Ruusuvuori et al., 2010, pp. 27-28). This encompasses a preconception according to which the way the participants talk and act are always related to what is expected from them in their “indigenous” context. Consequently, as Montell (1999) notes, it is not actually the generalizability that is of main concern, but rather the bias of the sample; thereby the researcher ought to actually consider “how well the data describe particular instances of larger social processes”.

Reliability

Through precise reporting and sharing all the choices, framings and principles directing the data gathering and its analysis, the researcher can gain reliability to her research. Additionally, she should pay attention to presenting the whole of the material to the reader (Ruusuvuori et al., 2010, p. 27). The researcher ought to acknowledge both the strengths as well as the limitations of her data, enabling the reader to judge the transferability of the findings as well as the correctness of the bias in the study. Alongside the wider material, she should be able to highlight and describe in detail the key observations that guided the analyses and conclusions.

Categorisation of the material is essential in qualitative research (Hirsjärvi et al., 1997, p. 227). In order to gain any reliability, researcher should reveal the origins and basis of her classification system. In artistic research, where within also Mäkelä & Latva-Somppi (2011) place their research, reliability comes from open subjectivity. Nevertheless, not even in this context, can the results be validated with the researcher’s personal intuition. Even in the practice-based research, the categorisation of the material has to be brought forth, and described in a manner that makes it possible for the reader to follow the practitioner’s deduction (Hannula et al., 2005, p. 159).

Selected Methodology

3.1. Introduction to the Entwined Process

The main focus in my thesis project has definitely been in exploring concurring methods that both acknowledge my subjective, artistic starting point and the ways in which it can be merged into the study of other people's experiences. When selecting the methods palette, I have been aiming at utilising methods that do not only correlate on the pragmatic level – that is on the level of results. I have been trying to uncover some of the theoretical and often epistemological assumptions underlying them, and examine whether a dialogue could take place here as well.

As presented in the previous chapter, the theoretical level mainly consists of the critical practices within constructive design research and the feminist epistemology. Nonetheless, this theoretical framework needs to be anchored into reality, and this will begin from my subjective experience of womanhood. However, the personal knowledge on the issue functions mainly as a sensitizer that will aid in immersing to the process and showing a door through which one needs to enter to the greater world of collective experiences. Hence, the selection of the research methods is first and foremost motivated by their ability to uncover neglected needs and desires related to the handling of womanhood within common everyday practices.

Bredies et al. (2008) argue that qualitative methods are especially suitable to raise awareness for real user requirements: they decrease the risk of referring to mere stereotypes of people, or relying only on the designer's mental models of the user's needs.

Bredies et al. (ibid.) rather nicely summarize the designers' point of view for preferring qualitative methods in general:

To inform design practice, formative or exploratory research which serves as a source of inspirational data necessarily needs to be qualitative, specific, and narrative to be useful. Integrative and participatory design contexts offer different stages of sensitization and participation to introduce and involve users to the research issue step by step. Such approaches promise to gather more thought-out answers and results than quantitative ones. Besides, uncommon questions and tasks make the users reflect their everyday life and behaviour from a different point of view and help them to express their desires, ideas and visions verbally as well as visually.

In the following chapters, I will aim at articulating the selection of different methods in a manner that does not only explicate their roles and importance for designers, within a design process. I will try to describe them so that the reader will be convinced that they may even come together on an epistemological level, actually forming a mutual methodology. This is one proof of how the entwined process does really function, and that its groundings are even already available, out there in the methodologies literature.

3.2. Exhibition

Even though my project was actually commenced by an exhibition consisting of artistic objects – graphic prints and paintings – the motivation for including it was really artistic. For me, it functioned as a kick-start for the data gathering. Furthermore, it was selected in order to disseminate the subject matter of my thesis in an efficient manner. In the following few paragraphs, including an exhibition in a design process will be clarified and validated through its possible role in the critical design context.

3.2.1 WHY EXHIBITIONS?

Koskinen et al. (2011, p. 89) note that exhibitions, galleries and shop windows are utilised by the Show-room researcher primarily as places to present their work. Koskinen et al. quote Anthony Dunne when they present the main reasoning of exhibitions: they may take the role of a publication (ibid. p. 95); they are an effective means of (KOROSTUS) mass communication for critical design researchers who do not commit to writing conference papers as much as other constructive design researchers. Additionally, exhibition as a means of dissemination is also rather ideal solution for designers who do not want to get involved into mass production of their designs (ibid. p. 94).

Furthermore, exhibiting does not merely enable the exposure of work, but also debate and reinterpretations over the issues and problems embedded in their designs. Consequently, Koskinen et al. (2011, p. 95) consider the presence of hypothetical designs in places like galleries as thought experiments: on them, people can project questions of their everyday life, its

desired and undesired qualities as well as begin imagining an alternative state of affairs. There are a few guidelines the designers can follow in order to direct the viewers' and exhibition goers' reflection on to a track most fruitful and eye-opening for the both parties.

3.2.2 EVERYDAYNESS MEETS THEORY

Koskinen et al. (2011, p. 96) and Dunne & Raby (2001, p. 63) emphasise the importance of an appropriate level of everydayness both in relation to the exhibition context as well as to the actual designs. Koskinen et al. note how the distancing from art world and approaching a more familiar and everyday context of shop windows and showrooms – typical to displaying cars and fashion, for instance – provoke people to re-think their relationship to objects. Dunne & Raby define this stance as encouraging in a way conceptual consumerism, through which people would prompt themselves with questions such as “How would I use this object?”, “Do I need it?”, “How would its use benefit me?” or “Could I ever take this to my home?”. According to them, a total strangeness would make people to dismiss the propositional objects as art, and total familiarity only assimilate them to their everyday practices.

My exhibition was situated in a school gallery that was actually a lobby, directing people from lifts to library. Nonetheless, the users of these premises are accustomed to see art works in the exhibition space, for it houses several short-term exhibitions during the academic year. Thus, they were not my pieces of art that created the distance from the gallery format, but including a generative, common craft space in the middle of the gallery did. With encouraging the exhibition

goers to provide me their own view of “Third Womanhood”, and thereby in a manner fulfil the empty space in one of my art works, I aimed at breaking the authority line between the artist-designer-researcher and the viewer-user-informant.

The inclusive approach aimed at undermining the concept of exhibition and the distant, reverence-seeking artefacts in two ways. First, I hoped it would shatter the notion of white cube and the aura of holiness and respect it presupposes (O'Doherty 1999, for instance pp. 8 & 12). Through this, the Situationists' aspiration for merging art as an inseparable part of the everyday life could be illustrated, and its importance for my work could be made graspable. Secondly, I wished to open a discussion with the exhibition goers, creating a first connection to them – a connection that demonstrates their essential and indispensable presence in my work, and thereby hints of our fundamental equality.

I was not making the viewers of artworks conceptual consumers, but potential informants. With highlighting the importance of their input, I wanted to emphasise their role as shapers of the visibility around them. Everyone is a subject and a creator of their own experience, and they should not submit to a role of a mere onlooker. In this sense, my aim was aligned to that of the Situationists and their followers in critical design. As Gaver et al. (1999) put it, within their research they wanted to shift current perceptions in manner that would result in new forms of understanding.

Another important matter to consider when exhibiting design is to place them in a theoretical framework, not to present them as stand-alone artworks (Koskinen et

al., 2011, p. 95). The theoretical context might also improve their reception as Dunne prefers it: as a gentle form of provocation (Dunne, 2005, p. XVII), rather than as just another re-design exercise. I included the theoretical and academic links of the exhibition in the guest book available on the crafts table as well as in the invitations; I aimed at describing its role as the commencer of the data-gathering phase of my thesis, and explicated the succeeding stages that already await (see *appendix 01: The Introductory Text to the Exhibition, in the Questbook*). Thus, the art works were placed in a frame that modifies and extends their role as mere objects-to-be-looked-at to those that bear in values and hypotheses that will be questioned and reworked.

3.3 Initial Designerly Elements

3.3.1 AIMS OF GENERATIVE TECHNIQUES

Why there initially emerged a need for developing totally new kind of tools for designers was the constantly increasing complexity of products, services and systems (Sanders 2006). The rapid development of especially new information technologies made it difficult for the designers and the design educators to keep up with the new products, contexts and possible ways of use. The conventional user study methods could only reveal “explicit and observable knowledge about contexts” (Visser et al., 2006) that were linked to the current and past experiences of the users. Nonetheless, if wanting to keep pace with the development of future products, the designers would need to access the potential future experiences of the potential future users. In order to succeed in this, including people's dreams,

desires, and fears in the design process became inevitable (Sanders & Dandavate, 1999; Visser et al, 2005).

Sanders and Dandavate (1999) propose in their often referred article *Design for Experiencing: New Tools* that if the designers learn how to access people's experiences, they can utilise these experiences as a source for inspiration and ideation. Consequently, design for experiencing becomes possible. Sanders (Sanders 2001) later notes that designing actual experience is not possible due to their inherently subjective nature, but one can design *for* experiencing. This would mean the designer providing people something like scaffolding, enabling them on their side to create their own experiences (ibid.).

When Sanders refers to the concept of experience, she is talking about the domain consisting of past memories, dreams projected to future, as well as the present, fleeting moment, where all this entwines together (Sanders 2001). In order to gain access to the genuine experiences of users including all these temporal layers above, the designer needs to lead them to "the deepest level of their expression" (Sanders & Dandavate, 1999). This requires special tools that should encourage and enable people to create things by themselves. The approach of not only interviewing and observing people, but also leading them to make something, opens a door to the non-verbal modes of expression – to depiction of thoughts, feelings and dreams.

Sanders' own Make Tools has been referred to as generative techniques (Visser et al., 2005) whose main goal is to enable and bring about "context awareness by eliciting emotional responses from the participants" (ibid.). Sanders and Dandavate themselves claim that their approach is projective, aiming at discovering the unknown

(Sanders & Dandavate, 1999). This is also one of the main reasons why I initially decided to select a generative study method as the first means for data gathering: I wanted to reveal new perspectives to the themes that I had merely been pondering about alone in my head – standpoints that I felt were becoming not only saturated but also stuffy. I felt that I needed to open my mind, revise and contest my presumptions in order to "avoid fixation on preset assumptions" (Visser et al., 2005).

Another reason why I felt that there was actually no other option than to lean to generative techniques in the beginning of my research was the nature of my topic. My initial interest in handling the theme of everyday womanhood in a design project lay in the observation I had made: amongst the general public, the concept is all too often treated in a manner that lacks the inherent diversity of it, and that reduces it to a simple stereotype or a bunch of threadbare expressions. With my artistic handling of the notion, I had gained an inner certainty of the need to shake up this current state, and a hypothesis according to which I would definitely not be the only one frustrated with the situation.

Nonetheless, if wanting to persuade other people to reconsider, and perhaps even subvert the existing scheme of things, I would need to provide a space – both for myself and for them – where dreaming and imagining beyond the current state of affairs would be possible. Sanders & Dandavate (1999) did encourage me in the process of aligning my choice of initial methods with my goals. They (ibid.) noted that " - seeing and appreciating what people dream show us how their future could change for the better."

3.3.2 WHY COLLAGE

Naturally, I could have chosen almost any generative technique to fulfil more or less the same goals. For quite a few reasons, I ended up selecting collaging as the commencing participatory method.

Visser et al. (2005) refer to all of the generative methods targeted at data gathering and research as contextmapping, because the common nominator to be found in all of them is the aim at increasing understanding of contexts of product use. In this process of exploration, users are very heavily involved, and the methods are often applied in the preliminary phases of a design project in order to enhance the design team's knowledge of the environment of possible future use. As Visser et al. (2005) put it, the aim is to gain "richer more dependable view on situations in which products are or will be used".

Collage is one of the lightest means of alluring creative, projective responses from the participants of the study. Nonetheless, it does not fall behind from its siblings such as diary studies or mobile probes, as can be read between the lines when McKay et al. (2006) refer to Sanders and Dandavate (1999). McKay et al. (ibid.) ground their usage of collage as a generative method by stating that as with others also with it, "[T]he act of creation can allow the participant to express feelings, thoughts, and emotions that might otherwise have been inaccessible to a researcher".

The special advantages of collaging exercises lies in the familiarity of the method: almost everybody has made a collage sometime (McKay et al., 2006). When the concept of action is already known, it may be easier to begin scanning also more complex and unexpected topics than with totally unknown

methods. It is also an extremely inclusive method: it doesn't really require previous artistic inclinations, but still allows the participant to express her ideas through a variety of creative means (*ibid.*). One can, according to her own skills, will and mood, choose whether to use pre-selected pictures or to draw images by herself. McKay et al. (2006) supposed that the "participants may find creating a collage less daunting than developing an artefact from scratch." This was also my initial supposition when planning the collage exercise.

In their article, McKay et al. (*ibid.*) contrast the results of using collaging as an individual method as well as with focus group interviews. Their comparative study with high school students concluded that the participants were most relaxed with the collage exercise, but thought that the focus group session would still provide more information. According to the feedback McKay et al. obtained, the participants were the least satisfied with the setting that combined both methods, but believe that this was very likely due to the quite limited time: there were only total 50 minutes for discovering the topic first by collaging, and then continuing with a discussion.

I felt partly rather fortunate not having found the study results of McKay et al. before I conducted my generative sessions: their result with the combination of methods was not the most appealing for future application. Nonetheless, with hindsight one can say that I overcame the time factor by reserving two hours for the whole session. Moreover, I was initially aiming at using them as sensitizing exercises, and being aware of the probable positive effects almost any sensitizing tools can have in a study (Visser et al., 2005), I had gained confidence in trying out the combination.

In addition to these factors, I had already gained backing for combining different methods from the perspective of focus group interviews. Morgan (1996) notes "a majority of the published research articles using focus groups combined them with other methods". Additionally, he had discovered that focus groups can be used both as primary as well as secondary methods, meaning that they either provide the researchers with preliminary information on the topic at hand, or deepen the already gained understanding from some other - for example survey - study. As already mentioned, my preliminary plan was to only use collages as a sensitizer aiding the access to the themes of the focus group discussion. Nonetheless, the piloting session for the sensitizing assignment on the night of the vernissage provided me with such an immense amount of good data - that is collages - that I decided to analyse them in detail and utilise the findings for framing the actual focus group session. Thus, the interview would now become "a follow-up that assists in interpreting the survey results" (Morgan, 1996). Not only assisting in interpreting, I would expect it to enrich and deepen my understanding of the themes discovered through the self-standing collages.

Having scanned through a variety of sources where researchers had encouraged their study participants to create and make something, I had established an understanding that many of these assignments include collaging type of features. Different kinds of sensitizing tools include workbooks (Visser et al., 2005) that bear in drawing and sticker-gluing assignments. Also many probes sets can have these kinds of mixed media assignments; even the original cultural probes included maps stimulating the

users to stick pre-selected images on them (Gaver et al., 1999).

In order to conclude, I had gained a perception of the adaptable and multi-purpose nature of collage. Just like McKay et al. (2006) summarize in their article, the actual meaning of a collage has varied from one researcher to another. Fortunately, also the way of compiling one can be set very loose, thereby allowing the collagers to freely choose their level of creative input and self-expression. According to my understanding, in addition to inclusivity collaging can also be considered as a rather emancipatory method. Thus, it should be quite suitable for my study where I aim at tempting the participants to imagine alternative forms of womanhood.

3.3.3 APPLICATION TO VALUES

It should be noted here, how oftentimes the authors of generative techniques articles seem to suggest a certain type of target of application for their method. Nevertheless, I do not see an insurmountable problem in applying them in a context little more abstract and ambiguous than for designing a fixed product or a service, for instance. My goal was to increase the understanding of a certain context where people work and act with certain everyday utensils, with the aim of improving their working conditions in the future. To my knowledge, the only perceivable difference between these projects is the immateriality of utensils the designers want to make better.

In my case, values and habits of thinking in terms of gendered associations are very much in the abstract end of the spectrum of design targets. Even though, as yet there has not been that many similar applications of the

generative methodology, the roots of it should be borne in mind. Both McKay et al. (2006) as well Visser et al. (2005) mention as one of the earliest variations of generative techniques to be the cultural probes, developed by William Gaver, Anthony Dunne and their fellows. In The Presence Project, where they applied the cultural probes already in the late 1990s, they mention their work focused on discovering new forms of sociability and culture. Even though their more graspable goal was to “increase the presence of the elderly in their local communities” through developing new understandings of technology, their underlying motivation was to “shift current perceptions of technology functionally, aesthetically, culturally, or even politically.” To me, all these claims insinuate to a wider interest in dealing with the values present in the everyday.

3.4. Focus Group interview

3.4.1 A FEMINIST METHOD

In her article “Focus Group Interviews: A New Feminist Method”, Frances Montell (1999) provides the reader with several well-grounded arguments on why the use of focus groups would often be advisable in feminist qualitative research. She presents quite a few examples, where the method rises above individual interviews.

Firstly, Montell establishes an account of feminist research, and refers to five basic, epistemological principles that concern especially feminist social scientists. She quotes Cook and Fonow (1986) for this set of guidelines, and I reproduce them here, for I consider them an epistemological framework worth following throughout my study.

According to Cook and Fonow (1986), the epistemological assumptions that underlie especially principles of feminist knowledge are:

- 1) Pay attention to the significance of gender
- 2) Challenge the norm of objectivity and the rigid separation between the researcher and the researched
- 3) Make consciousness-raising a central methodological tool
- 4) Put emphasis on the transformation of patriarchal institutions and the empowerment of women
- 5) Concern for the ethical implications of the research.

Generally speaking, in “the overlapping research communities of feminism and social science”, the tools of both should be used “in a critique aimed at improving the ways we know society” (Montell, 1999). Montell later adds that the researcher can also strive for not only “providing critique of conditions as they exist, but also a vision of alternatives in the future”. These two underlying aims were the most influential ones when I was only compiling my methodological package. To me, they are very much aligned with the aims articulated in the critical design attitude combining criticism and optimism (see chapter Critical Concepts – Value Fictions).

Montell (ibid.) has been applying the method in her own research on the influence of popular culture on the construction and maintenance of “normative sexuality” for women. One of her arguments in favour of focus groups is related to the actual topic of study. Montell states that based on her experiences, especially the issues related to gender and sexuality are hard to study, because the subject matter is so “naturalized”: it is oftentimes taken as totally granted, or then

considered as unconscious attributes of an individual. Nonetheless, through the unique kind of data that the group dynamics and negotiation between the participants produce, even issues that usually “go without saying” (Montell, 1999), can now be brought to the centre of a collective analysis.

In the following few chapters, I will shortly explain the advantages of focus groups as a feminist method, aiming at shedding light why it was chosen to continue and structure my collection of user data.

3.4.2 INTERACTION INDUCING REVELATIONS

In the beginning of her article, Montell (1999) defines gender to be “primarily a social category that organizes our perceptions of the world”, and therefore, the all-too-easy handling of it as “natural” attributes of an individual, should be avoided. Montell claims that it is paramount to study “the taken-for-granted attitudes and beliefs about gender not as a secondary phenomena, but as integral to the production of the sex/gender system itself”. Nonetheless, these everyday qualities of people’s lives that usually “go without saying” are hard to access in research. However, group interviews and the negotiation they encourage among participants have been noticed to rather effectively facilitate the requisite “transformations of consciousness” (ibid.). These arguments encouraged me to apply the method for my own study, where the aim was also to gain access to attitudes about a very everyday issue – about the personal experience of one’s womanhood – that is seldom questioned due to the pressure of the everyday mannerisms.

Montell notes, how it is often difficult for people to talk about their atti-

tudes and assumptions in an individual interview. Articulation of “beliefs and categories that underlie conscious attitudes” is rather troublesome in a context where an interviewer is asking questions that all should be answered in a clear and rather definite manner.

When studying sex and gender, Montell noted how group discussion developed into a very fruitful method. Within focus groups, the goal is primarily to initiate conversation; thereby, the most vague or difficult questions actually elicit “greater response because a group conversation allows people to feel more comfortable bringing up different ideas without the pressure to provide a definitive answer to each question”. Zeller (1993) agrees with the thesis in his article on sensitive topics: group discussion allows more freedom for the individual attendee to take time for her thoughts, or even to skip a questions if she is not willing to participate. Moreover, as in any free-flowing conversation, the debaters can build on the responses of others, and even their tentative answers provide meaningful content for the discussion.

Both Zeller (1993) and Montell (1999) concur that the main interaction ought to happen between the participants, not the moderator/researcher and the individual attendees. This way, the participants obtain a possibility to narrate their personal experiences and genuinely test their interpretations of processes with others (Montell, 1999). For Montell, the context of focus group allowed her to even clarify and contest the differing ideas and assumptions women had. In an individual interview, the moderator is seldom keen on probing for further responses from the interviewee (*ibid.*), if the initial answer to a question seems to fit her expectations, and consequently is not as responsive for

adapting new ideas. In contrast to this, within group interviews the information is originally produced and framed by the flowing conversation, and thus also by “the categories and understanding of the interviewees rather than that of the interviewer” (Montell, 1999). Thus, it is actually the interaction between the participants that bears in the possibility to reveal and even challenge the assumptions on gender otherwise taken for granted.

To summarize, the reason for selecting focus group interview as a method for studying the concept of everyday womanhood is really not to efficiently gather vast amounts of data. The main motivation lies in the kind of data, and finally knowledge, it produces: social, collective constructed, and targeted to both reveal and alter oppressive constructions in society – the kind of knowledge my subjective starting point has been lacking.

3.4.3 CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING GIVING FORM TO RESEARCH

Consciousness-raising (CR) groups, first established under the rubric in 1960s, is said to be in the heart of women’s movement, and even the source of feminist methodology (Montell, 1999, quoting Devault, 1996, 30). Here, one of the core principles was that women are experts on their own experience. This underlying attitude results in the feminist researchers inclination to grant the status of an expert to their interviewees. Nevertheless, as Montell (1999) notes, the concept of experience is actually a collective construction, and therefore serves the assumption that group interviews such as focus groups could be an effective method for getting at the socially produced knowledge - knowledge that I was after as well.

In one-on-one interviews, the interviewer is actually the expert framing the issue of the study (Montell, 1999). The interviewee’s task is merely to provide the researcher with information on the particular experience the interviewer is primarily interested. In group interviews, however, were these fixed and rather unequal roles are contested and even subverted, every participant can obtain an consciousness raising experience through her presence. Montell (*ibid.*) suggests, that even the researcher can expand her awareness of the social situation examined by bringing forth her personal involvements.

Carol Hanisch’s seminal article “Personal Is Political” first published in 1969 briefly describes the form of a CR gathering as follows:

We have not done much trying to solve immediate personal problems of women in the group. We’ve mostly picked topics by two methods: In a small group it is possible for us to take turns bringing questions to the meeting (like, Which do/did you prefer, a girl or a boy baby or no children, and why? What happens to your relationship if your man makes more money than you? Less than you?). Then we go around the room answering the questions from our personal experiences. Everybody talks that way. At the end of the meeting we try to sum up and generalize from what’s been said and make connections.

According to Montell, focus groups have still a lot in common even with the early CR groups. By shifting the role of the researcher closer to that of a group member, also her experiences can be utilised as a resource, not merely a contaminant (Montell, 1999). However, Montell does challenge the possibility of even a feminist

research project to become a “truly collaborative process”. She emphasizes the importance of finding a balance between the professional role of the researcher as a moderator, and the subject with personal experiences. She is rather convinced, though, that group interviews are still evidently more conducive to such a balance than individual interviews could ever become. In a conversation including several participants, people contradict one another in a manner that is rather hard to achieve in a one-on-one interview: usually, if the interviewer extensively volunteers her opinions, the data is considered biased.

The CR groups that have given their form to the focus group interview hereby encourage the involvement of the researcher as well – an additional feature that spurred my choice of method. Including the exhibition in the conversation session, and consequently my own handling of the concepts as a possible starting point became justified within focus groups. I was also hoping that if I would begin the session by revealing my own conceptions of the issue in a rather intimate manner – through the artworks – the participants would react openly to the collaging assignment planned to further sensitize them for the topic in the very beginning of the session.

Zeller (1993) recommends that the moderator would use a relatively high level of self-disclosure in the beginning of the session, because “Establish[ing] substantial interpersonal rapport” is indispensable in order to create a trustful atmosphere among the participants. As Zeller (*ibid.*) notes, the moderator really needs to encourage self-disclosure beyond the limits of normal social behaviour from the participants if she wants to gain more than only socially desirable responses from them.

Showing a good example herself, and starting the session with a relatively personal story would very likely extend the boundaries of sharing things (Zeller, 1993). With utilising the form of CR groups and thereby reaching a socially trustful atmosphere to reveal something personal, the researcher can become a part in the process of eliciting meaningful information that at its best leads to one of the main aims of the method: producing empowering experiences for all the participants.

3.4.4 THE MAIN AIMS: TRANSFORMATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Through several references, Montell (1999) settles on to define empowerment with the help of the concept of power, which is “the capacity to influence the condition and terms of the everyday life of a community or society”. Following from this, empowerment then stands for the realization of this capacity in order to create history. Thus, empowering research logically deals greatly with enhancing these conditions where people can engage in practices that gradually alter their lives for the better.

When enhancing in a way the participatory aspects of the everyday conditions, research should aim at giving people access to new ways of thinking and seeing their environment, thereby enabling them to question those practices that they find oppressive, and to search for alternatives. It can be found very empowering to contribute to “the description and analysis of a social issue that is of great importance” to a certain group of people (*ibid.*).

The lattermost aspect is something that was part of the core motivation for me to open my personal process,

and asking other women’s experiences of everyday womanhood. I wanted to gain further understanding on the issue, and felt that I had reached a dead end in my own ponderings. In a way, I lacked empowerment to continue examining the topic. Nevertheless, I felt the subject so strongly that I wanted to see the reactions others have on it, and if they would also experience it in a similar way.

With hindsight, I can admit having started the project aiming at gaining subjective empowerment over the topic of everyday womanhood. However, along the route, the selection of methods involving other women resulted finally in revelations also for the participants. Even though the immediate effect of the focus group session was “quite small and local” – just like Montell anticipates – the later stages yielded a very satisfactory result.

Quoting again Cook and Fonow (1986), Montell establishes the goals for the usage of feminist methodology. Based on the filtered information from the discussion, during the following phases I was able to at least partly fulfil this two-fold mission: to both determine a picture of the present situation regarding everyday womanhood as well as to shape a vision of future that aims at transforming patriarchy.

3.5. Cultural Probes

There is a myriad of articles on the creation, application, interpretation and misuses of probes – just to name a few written accounts of the method. The usage of probes, especially its original form with the prefix ‘cultural’ has been claimed to even form a substantial part of the hard core of non-debatable beliefs within the research program critical design (Koskinen et al., 2011, p. 40). However, the popularity of the probes, especially inside the HCI community, has sparked quite some debate of the original aims and how the fading out of the fundamental ideology has undermined the method (Boehner et al., 2007).

During the following paragraphs, I will not aim at giving a thorough description of the method. Rather, I will shed light on the basics of the cultural probes approach in research, also highlighting some minefields in its application. Moreover, I will try to clarify the reasons why I always were fascinated by the method, and why I already in the beginning of the project felt that it should be included in the array of methods in the thesis. At that time, I did not yet have an idea that the cultural probes could also be a part of the final concept of the thesis. Nonetheless, I had a gut feeling of its appropriateness in relation to the artistic approach as well as to the feminist inclination of the project.

3.5.1 THE PROBES ATTITUDE

The reason why I first became interested in cultural probes was the ideology behind the research method. The designers and researchers developing the approach drew and borrowed heavily from art, thereby shifting the entire focus from the

scientific method to agnosticism, aiming at allowing new possibilities of user research to emerge (Koskinen et al. 2011, pp. 91-92). The strategy for understanding the users is based on the tradition of cultural provocation rather than ethnographic observation. Gaver and Dunne (1999) mention that the tactics they have utilised stem from dada, surrealism, and especially from the situationists (Gaver et al., 1999). Characteristic to these groups, and therefore applicable for the artist-researchers’ actions as well, was the use of ambiguity, absurdity, and opacity in order to “strip away habitual interpretations and open new possibilities” (Gaver & Dunne, 1999).

The creators of the cultural probes recognized the essential role played by the interpreter, the artist-designer-researcher, whose subjective stance should be valued, not eliminated in quest of collecting objective data (Boehner et al., 2007; Dunne & Gaver, 1997). Dunne and Gaver (1997) sketch out their role as artist-designers as subjective actors, who are not trying to achieve “a supposedly objective truth”, but rather aim at “eliciting a personal approach to a problem”. They emphasize that the role also involves an assumption to challenge the current state of affairs, and “provoke a search for meaning”. In this process, evocative methods are preferred over explicit ones (ibid.).

The recognition of the designer’s inevitable, personal input and effect in the process frames the cultural probes methodology essentially. The application of the method involves subjective expression and interpretation in many stages, making the process of probing thereby quite uncontrollable (Mäkelä 2006, p. 65). Hence, “the hard core of the probes lies exactly in its hermeneutic or interpretative methodology”, like Koskinen et al. (2011,

p. 41) so aptly put it. Consequently, within the probes approach one should not even talk about collecting data. Rather, probes should be treated as “a means by which data of everyday life might be extracted for the purpose of design” (Boehner et al., 2007).

One should not ask direct questions within the probes tasks in order to gain an understanding of the settings in people’s lives, but to spark inspiration for the design process. If one is trying to gather data, say, about the colours of tablecloths, one is turning probes into a method the original attitude tried to resist: collecting quantitative information, not qualitative responses, and closing space for design instead of opening new ones. The main risk when applying probes lies exactly here: one should not consider it only a method, but as an alternative account of knowledge production (Boehner et al., 2007). As Gaver et al. (2004) put it, the probes embody “an approach to design that recognizes and embraces the notion that knowledge has its limits”. Thus, using probes requires actually also re-adjustment of the epistemological attitude in research – a precondition that motivated me to try to couple it with feminist research methods and epistemology.

In addition to the hermeneutic tone and also related to it, the premises of freshness and playfulness need to be fulfilled within the application of the probes. As Boehner et al. (2007) note, it has clearly been alluring for the researchers to utilise probes as an off-the-shelf method, but this can easily provide a pushy or insincere impression of the researchers to the participants (ibid.). Even worse, the probes-as-recipe approach again undermines the original aim of “disrupting expectations about user research” (Koskinen et al., 2011, p. 92).

Thus, altering the consistency of a probe kit is crucial for probes. It is “an approach to be applied in an experimental spirit” (Mattelmäki 2006, p. 12), not repeated similarly time and again. By noting that “playfulness is contained in the experimental nature of design, concept design and probing”, Mattelmäki (2006, p. 65-66) also encourages experimenting different types of tasks for the probes kit open-mindedly.

3.5.2 THE TASKS

Boehner et al (2007) characterize the cultural probes as “designed objects, physical packets containing open-ended, provocative and oblique tasks”. Also Mattelmäki notes that in the most general sense, they are open questions (2006, p. 65). *The probes assignments are designed in order to reveal something that direct questions could never expose for the researcher: attitudes underlying our conscious actions and behaviour* (Gaver et al., 1999). As the main aim of the researchers was to discover the unknown future that would be built on pleasure rather than utility (Gaver et al., 2004), the methods for gaining understanding of people would require discovering their dreams. Therefore, neither would the designers be able to capture the desired “data” only by observing the participants, as watching what people do would provide them only with information on what they think – that is information of still conscious processes. Thus, one can easily notice how the probes approach pursuing the sub-conscious relates to the say-do-make framework by Elizabeth Sanders (2001).

The outward form that would facilitate answering the open questions originally consisted of maps,

postcards, diaries, photo albums, disposable cameras and sometimes collage materials (Gaver et al., 1999; Gaver & Dunne, 1999; Boehner et al., 2007). The probes assignments of these kinds were noticed to be able to elicit inspirational responses and fragmentary clues about the participants’ lives (Gaver et al., 2004). Nonetheless, it cannot be overemphasized that the mere re-adjusting of the tasks without the probes spirit should be avoided: without a corresponding attitude, “the method of probes often becomes either simply the physical objects – lack[ing] the epistemic grounding that make their results truly meaningful” (Boehner et al., 2007).

Avant-garde Strategies

In order to understand the ideology that frames the knowledge probes can help to extract from the experiences of people, one should look at the avant-garde strategies that inspired the developers of the cultural probes. The different tactics of estrangement outlined by the situationists can often be sensed in the background of the successful probes exercises: exercises that do not merely repeat some already established physical model such as a map, but still succeed in exposing hidden attitudes of people.

The main tactics the situationists developed were *détournement* and *dérive*, the latter of which is closely related to the notion of psychogeography. In the seminal article on cultural probes, Gaver, Dunne and Pacenti (1999) explicitly mention *dérive* and psychogeographical maps as inspiration and influence on their research methods. They note that through these strategies, the situationists were committed to “concrete research into the premise of new cultural possibilities” – something that was very much

in the core of the Presence Project as well (Gaver et al., 1999). In this quest, “disorientation and confusion” were leashed as methods for gaining liberation of the old. The following definitions of the main concepts are derived from the Situationists International online archive, where the original writings of the core members are reproduced and listed according to the chronology of their publication.

Dérive

*“A mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. The term also designates a specific uninterrupted period of dériving.”*¹

As can be found out in the situationists’ online archive¹, the concise definition first appeared in the first issue of the Internationale Situationiste in June 1958. In his earlier article published in *Les Lèvres Nues*, issue 9, Debord elaborated more on the concept. He explicates that in its simplest definition, the notion of *dérive* can be described as “drifting”. It demands for a playful attitude and awareness of psychogeographical effects, which also makes it differ from the classic notions of journey or stroll.

The concept of psychogeography is in turn defined as “the study of the specific effects of the geographical environment (whether consciously organized or not) on the emotions and behavior of individuals.”

“In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there.”²

The whole concept of cultural probes is rather entwined with *dérive*, some of the exercise types highlighting it even more. When one is given a package of ambiguous and oblique exercises for a period of time, she is asked to begin drifting in the value space that these assignments prompt her with. Probes tasks such as Pink (Is It?) (see page XXX) take the strolling in an urban environment even more seriously: it asks the participant to carry glasses through her daily activities, and sense the most positive or negative experiences countered during one day. It definitely demands a playful attitude and predisposes to notice new features in the everyday surroundings.

Détournement

*“Short for ‘détournement of preexisting [sic] aesthetic elements.’ The integration of present or past artistic productions into a superior construction of a milieu. In this sense there can be no situationist painting or music, but only a situationist use of those means. In a more elementary sense, détournement within the old cultural spheres is a method of propaganda, a method which reveals the wearing out and loss of importance of those spheres.”*¹

In the essay *Détournement as Negation and Prelude*², the undistinguished writer(s) note that *détournement* has been present in the contemporary avant-garde movements also before the SI (situation-

ists international) was formed. The author establishes two fundamental laws for the strategy. The first is “the loss of importance of each detoured autonomous element”, and the second a simultaneous re-organization of the elements. The new ensemble should also be somehow meaningful even though every element has lost its original scope and effect. Hence, *détournement* is first and foremost “a negation of the value of the previous organization of expression.”

In the essay, it is also considered that *détournement* really is the signature of the situationist movement. Through the embedded combination of parody and seriousness, it helps in an irreplaceable manner to contest the cultural reality³.

Détournement is seldom if ever explicitly mentioned in the writings of the critical designer-researchers and the cultural probe innovators. Despite this, the tactics for using probe returns to inspire designs resembles in my opinion the process of detouring. Koskinen et al. (2011, p. 93) re-produce the advice given by Gaver: the trick is to start with searching for seemingly un-meaningful details from the responses, then exaggerating them, continuing by imagining devices for carrying them, and finally denying their original meaning and juxtaposing them with another of the like in order to create imaginary communication between the artefacts.

Another example of *détournement*

could be derived from my designing of the probes package. I was trying to elicit responses that would reveal me something inspiring of the ways the participants experience womanhood in their everyday life. With my design, I did not strive for a neutral package, but made it as stereotypically feminine looking as I could: I used pastel pink and other shades of reds broken with earthy tones, and selected warm materials such as un-bleached card board and felt. The selected typeface for the headlines was rounded and created a sensation of static sensuality. The overwhelming visual “femininity” was then questioned by the content of the tasks, especially the most radical ones. For instance, the participants were asked to think what does the women think with, and then are prompted with a picture of the ovary.

The reason why I state that these kind of design decisions would deploy *détournement* was the potential counter effect they would create in the participants very conscious of the gender stereotypes. When being asked about their daily tasks on pink cards and with sweet graphics, I assumed that they might want to question the image of a woman I am imposing on their lives.

My strategy did not seem to be very efficient, for none of the participants commented on the visualisation as irritating, categorising or as a re-production of a stereotype. Quite the contrary, many of them thanked for the visually appealing experience that the filling of the assignments had bestowed them. The mismatch of intentions and interpretations proves of the challenging art of detouring, that can at its best subvert the unthinking of for instance gender stereotypes, but also re-produce and force-feed them.

¹ Situationist International Online is a website that archives essential writings and definitions on the substantial concepts within the artistic movement.

<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/definitions.html>, accessed 3.9.2012

<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html>, accessed 3.9.2012

² The Essay *Détournement as Negation and Prelude* can be found at

³ <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/315> (accessed 23.9.2012).

The original text was first published in the *Internationale Situationniste* #3, in December 1959.

3.5.3 A FEMINIST METHOD?

The reasons for me to apply the cultural probes methodology was very much aligned with those described by Mattelmäki (2006, p.101). First, I felt I needed a supportive tool for connecting my artistic and designerly thinking to the experience of others – to the ones that also grapple with the issues of everyday womanhood. Secondly, I was after inspirational cues that would feed my creative process, simultaneously grounding the artistic and designerly choices I made in a reality shared by other women. Nonetheless, to be honest there was also a third motivator for applying the cultural probes approach: it seemed to be an excellent supplement to my methodological toolbox grounded on feminist epistemology.

There is at least one account where researchers have investigated the appropriateness of cultural probes to gender specific design issues. Bredies et al. (2008) wanted to study how a women's phone could be designed in a manner that evades the groundless gender clichés currently governing the market. They preferred the use of cultural probes because they support effective self-expression of the individual (Bredies et al., 2008) that could go beyond the present, shared cultural reality.

Many of the insistences in the study are aligned with those epistemological principles that also Montell (1999) summarize. For instance, they paid attention to the significance of gender not only when selecting the topic of the study but also in designing the different phases and materials for it. In conclusions of the study, they were able to note that the utilisation of the cultural probes helped to “differentiate and diversify the view on existing gender images”, a piece of evidence

that truly convinces of the detouring power of the method in a gender-sensitive context. However, they unfortunately had to acknowledge that they did not manage to really deconstruct gender images, which was a primary goal of the study (Bredies et al., 2008).

All in all, if the research did not manage to convert the thinking of the participants of the study, it certainly made Bredies et al. to discover the gender images they themselves had been unconsciously living with (ibid.). This motivated me to take on the cultural probes, and through a fundamental application of feminist epistemology and critical attitude see how far the probes could lead me in the search for the experience of everyday womanhood.

3.6. Critical Concepts

Within the design making and the creative process, the problem and its solution are interlinked Mattelmäki (2006, p. 17). Mattelmäki quotes and summarizes several theorists on design thinking before noting that the creative process is fundamentally about looking for something that is not known until it is found. “A great deal of design work is not about solving identified problems, but rather discovering new opportunities and ideas”, she deduces (Mattelmäki 2006, p. 19). Also Koskinen et al. (2011, p. 19) raise the rejection of the rationalistic role of designers as problem-solvers as a substantial turn in the historical development of the practice.

If the problem and the solution emerge simultaneously, one cannot avoid realising that the process and methods utilised in the search for the problem must affect the solution as well. Mattelmäki argues that experimentation and visualisations of the

issue at hand help in examining the problem from different angles, but inevitably the choice of these angles influence the solution (Mattelmäki 2006, p 17).

To me, it does not seem very far-fetched to state that the choice of cultural probes as a research method definitely affects the solutions provided. Actually, Gaver et al. (2004) have even distinguished different levels of influence the probes and their returns can have on the designs: sometimes it is relatively straightforward, even to the extent that the ideas can be traced back to the original responses. Sometimes, on the other hand, the design concepts emerge only from the stories that the designers tell about the participants according to what they were able to extract from the packages.

Notwithstanding the effect of the method to the resulting design ideas, the probes are still only one influence in the whole process. Gaver et al. (2004) list the other factors inflecting the process: overall conceptual interests, technological possibilities, imaginary scenarios and ways for implementing them. Hence, the characteristics of critical concept that I will now present are only very rough guidelines that re-produce the past results of critical design processes, some of them having included the usage of cultural probes. The future concepts may be merged into the field that will be drawn out in the following paragraphs, but it can also break free from these definitions. Whatever the result, I claim that the tradition ought to be acknowledged.

3.6.1 FRAMING CONCEPTS

The outline of a critical design concept within my work relies mainly on Anthony Dunne's legacy of Object

as Discourse. In his doctoral work, Dunne was concerned about how electronic objects should be designed; which territories of the overlapping fields of emerging technologies and modern life should be considered (Dunne 2005, pp. XI-XII). Even though my project is situated in a very different area, I find his framework applicable to mine as well. I think the main aim within our work remains the same: also I wish to provoke “complex and meaningful reflection on the - - environment we live in” (Dunne 2005, p. XV).

Moreover, I do share Dunne’s belief, according to which “design, too, has much to contribute as a form of social commentary, stimulating discussion and debate - -” (Dunne 2005, p. XVI). Thereby it can be concluded that first and foremost, the conceptual design proposals ought to offer a critique of the present. When taking support from the object as discourse framework, this can be done through “the material embodiment of functions derived from alternative value systems” (Dunne, 2005, p. XVII). Here one can distinguish two crucial attributes to a critical concept: first, it should be materialized, and secondly, it ought to apply an unusual value system.

Material Tales

Both Dunne himself and the duo Dunne & Raby seem to emphasize the necessity to give the critical design ideas a concrete, material form. In the two seminal books *Hertzian Tales* (1999 & 2005) by Dunne and *Design Noir* by Dunne and Raby (2001), conceptual designs are presented as lurking on the fringe of everyday materiality. Mazé and Redström (2007) argue very nicely for this tendency. According to them, “through materials and form, ideas become available

both for aesthetic reception and for everyday consumption”.

The design proposals suggested by Dunne seem convincingly product-like, but are still unusable – this strangeness forces their viewers to see the mechanisms that “shape aesthetic experiences of everyday life mediated by electronic products” (Dunne 2005, p. 145). Hence, he argues, it is through use – which inevitably requires something tangible – that the “user” begins to see her surrounding reality differently.

As a matter of fact, Dunne can compromise slightly on the materiality of the artefacts. He admits that “at least by modelling a scenario of use in the mind”, the observer can be allured to change her viewpoint on the electronic environment quite as effective as with more “real” and tangible products (Dunne 2005, p. 145). Also Sengers et al. (2005) agree on this. They state that critical designs do not always need to be built – only the idea of the object can be enough to encourage reflection. Thus, the main aim for the designers ought not to be the crafting of a plausible product-like sculpture, but introducing “both designers and users to new ways of looking at the world around them and the role that designed objects can play for them in it” (ibid.). In opening the eyes of us all, adapting the concept of value fictions has gained indisputable results for the protagonists of critical design.

Value Fictions

In their book *Design Noir: The Secret Life of Everyday Objects* (2001), Dunne and Raby give a rather straightforward formulation of value fictions. They define them as something like alternative scenarios to the governing value system:

If in science fiction, the technology is often futuristic while social values are conservative, the opposite is true in value fictions. In these scenarios, the technologies are realistic but the social and cultural values are often fictional, or at least highly ambiguous. The aim is to encourage the viewers to ask themselves why the values embodied in the proposal seem ‘fictional’ or ‘unreal’, and to question the social and cultural mechanisms that define what is real or fictional. (Dunne & Raby 2001, p. 63)

The scenarios that often include the material objects as well, ought to be gently provocative, for this kind of approach tends to spark vivid discussion amongst all the stakeholders: the designers, the industry, and the general public – that is the users of the everyday electronic products. Nonetheless, the aim is not to be negative, but rather engage people “through humour, insight, surprise and wonder” (Dunne & Raby 2001, p. 63). Dunne and Raby also stress the importance of establishing an appropriate level of strangeness: the proposals need to be grounded on how people really do behave in order to catch their attention and make them consider really using the designs.

Dunne and Raby note that the ultimate challenge within value fictions is the communication. On one hand, they need to be seen “in use, placed in everyday life”, but on the other hand so that there’s still “room for the viewer’s imagination” (ibid.). Hence, if the designs are too weird they will get instantly dismissed, but if they are not strange enough and they will be absorbed into everyday reality. This is also something that Sengers et al. (2005) warn about: on one hand, people may interpret the provocative nature of critical design as mere ironic commentary. On the other, if

the provocation is too subtle, they may “use the design as evidence of support for the very values on which it is attempting to cause critical reflection”.

The issue of communication definitely remains unsolved, but one way of avoiding the aspect of mere commentary is to emphasize the optimistic and projective attitude of the design. Dunne (2005, p. XVII) states that the material tales offer neither mere utopian visions nor ready blueprints for the future. Instead, they blend criticism with optimism to discover the area between the real and the unreal. In *Design Noir* (2001, p. 59), the authors elaborate more on the demand for optimism. According to them it is not enough to only offer an alternative, but also a strategy for how to engage with and challenge the existing conditions should be developed.

In my opinion, an optimistic attitude towards the future lies behind the critical designers’ statements. Things can be changed for better, and critical design can frame the means in this. As Dunne himself puts it, design “can be subverted for more socially beneficial ends”. Moreover, to me this agenda resembles slightly that of feminist social scientists’. According to Cook and Fonow (1986), feminist research “must be designed to provide a vision of the future as well as a structural picture of the present”. They state that social change is the starting point of science, and that the ultimate purpose of knowledge is to transform patriarchy. The actions taken within feminist methodology ought to strive for altering oppressive and exploitative conditions in society. Therefore, I dare to claim that transformation is the concept in which critical design and feminist methodology finally come together.

III

Case Study

1. *Case: Womanhood in the Everyday*

My master's thesis work was commenced with an exhibition that provided the design process with its starting point. The art exhibition held in the Aralis Gallery within the Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture also opened the case study, whose consecutive phases all built on the subject matter first presented in the exhibition. In this chapter, I aim at describing and documenting the concrete proceedings of the project. I will also attempt to do this in a manner that will show the reader how in practice, the selected methods and merging epistemologies functioned, and supported the creation of an entwined project.

The previous chapter Context of Research was written to justify the hypothesis of an entwined artistic and designerly process. In it, I aimed at explicating the prospective choices made in the actually case so that they could be perceived as relevant and meaningful to the project. Notwithstanding the relative expanse of the chapter II, the theoretical understanding of a hypothetical entwined process would not have been enough. The mere description of how things ought to be done would not have proved much of the real viability of such a project. Moreover, I would not have discovered

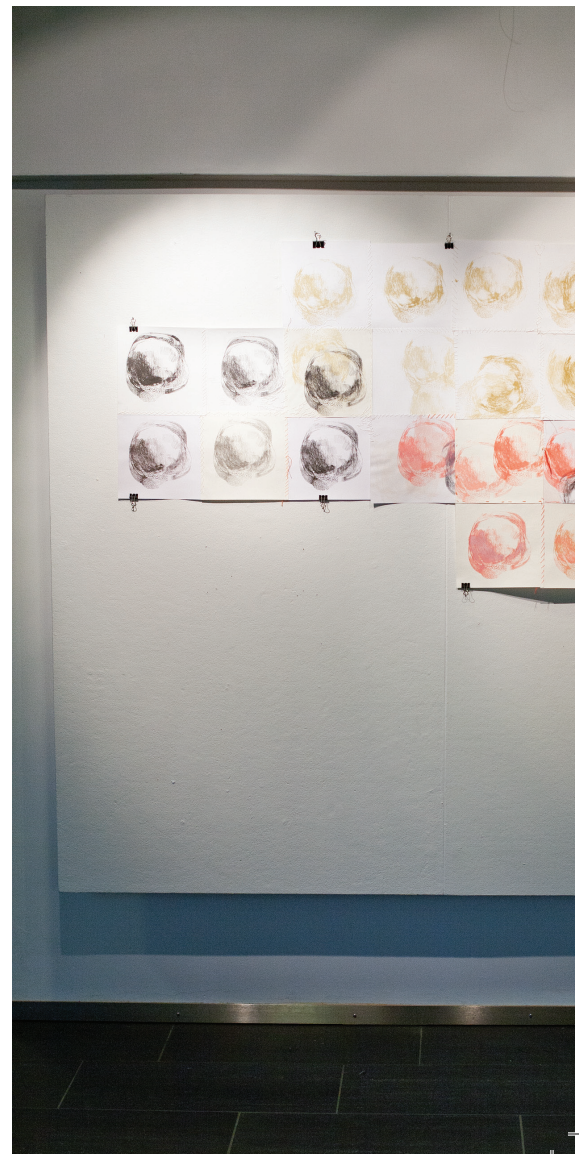
the redeeming features of the process that gave me new confidence as a designer, revealed several areas of future research, and increased my enthusiasm towards the profession.

The structure of this chapter follows that of Context of Research – Selected Methodology. That is to say, the order in which the different methods were presented in the previous chapter narrates the phases of the case study. Thus, I will begin by describing the exhibition setting, and proceed from that onward, sketching out the transformation of the initial artistic input into a critical concept.

1.1 The Exhibition Setting

The subject matter that I was dealing with in my exhibited prints and paintings was the multitude of the experience of womanhood. This is the simplest description of it, but it does consist of several emphasis and sub-themes. The most important of these were womanhood as defined as negative form; the boundary conditions of the notion of womanhood; and the fragility of the personal experience of womanhood. All the included works were painted and printed between Autumn 2010 and Autumn 2011 in Academy of Fine Arts Bratislava and Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture.

On the next spread, there is a very a general view of the exhibition and the artworks involved. The first image starts the stroll from one corner of the triangular space, and following the numbers of the images, the viewer turns 360 degrees within the exhibition space. In the appropriate phases of this chapter, more detailed images and descriptions concerning the core pieces of art as well as the generative activity embedded are provided.





07



08



10

06: The exhibition space including the crafts table, where the collage assignments and related material were placed. The piece **The Negative Form** in the background
07: Above: the artwork **Woman**. Lithography and silkscreen on paper, 2010.
Below: **A Memory: An Evening**. Aquarelle and acrylics on paper, 2010.

11

08: **Memory**. Aquatint, etching, drypoint and reserve on paper, 2010.

09: Left: Sketches for **Memory**. Aquarelle and acrylics on paper, 2010.

Right: **One and Three Womanhoods**. Silkscreen on paper, 2011.

10: **Landscape**. Litography and thread on paper, 2011.

11: **The Negative Form**. Aquarelle on paper, photographs, 2011.

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2.

Generative Session

In the following paragraphs, I will describe the flow of the initial data gathering through voluntary collages that went through unforeseen changes. They are presented in a good amount of detail for all of them provided me with invaluable insights on the process, and especially my role in it.

2.1 The Emerging Role of the Collages

The first major turn to the initial plan for my data gathering took place immediately after the opening of the exhibition. The assignment that I had planned mainly to serve as a sensitizing agent for the focus group session and only wanted to pilot in the opening, was received extremely enthusiastically by the guests. In my brief welcoming speech, I encouraged the viewers to make their own collages¹ if they felt like it. I had printed several exercise sheets, but I never did expect such a large amount of results. After the first night – that is approximately during three hours – I had already 20 collages, filled with drawings, pictures from magazines, text, comments on the exhibition: a huge amount of rich data. I was very contented, and even more so when I noticed that during the next 11 days I received 6 more different kinds of collages; my presupposition was that the space would not have encouraged random library-goers or the like to take part in this kind of assignment at all.

One of the possible reasons for the success on the first night of the exhibition might have been the good example given by a few of the guests with a designer background. Visser et



al. (2006) suggest, “Including one participant with creative job, like graphic designer or architect, can have a positive effect on the generated information”. According to their experiences, a participant “with strong associative reflections” can encourage the others as well to “explore their experiences on a more abstract level”. Nonetheless, it should be noted here that this might not have been quite the situation during the opening, because the participants seemed to be working rather independently, not sharing much of their process with their neighbours (see figures 12 & 13). Still, the first ones to start the collaging were designers, who rather evidently started to draw the more hesitant lookers-on from various backgrounds around the

“hobby table”.

It should also be noted that the most refined collages are amongst of those made during the opening. Evidently most of them have required quite a lot of time and effort (see figures 14 & 15). As the material I provided the collagers with consisted of magazines, pencils, scissors, glue sticks and felt-tip pens, they were allowed a great deal of freedom in terms of their expression (see figures 16 & 17). Like McKay et al (2006) have evidenced, this kind of set of materials enable people to “convey more subtle and personal insights”, but does also require more time than merely cutting images and words from pre-set sheets (Mattelmäki & Battarbee, 2002).

The following six sheets gathered

¹ From now on, I will use the general term collage to describe all the filled-out assignments, even though some of them may be also drawings.



12



13

later were mainly felt-tip drawings, executed in a seemingly fast manner. A few of them provided me with a few rather interesting insights, in spite of their appearance that made me presume that they were made by arbitrary passers-by, wanting to contribute, but who have maybe felt staying in the empty exhibition space for long to become a slightly awkward situation. This reluctance was actually my initial assumption on the willingness of collaging, due to which I thought that the opening quests would not have contributed as actively as they did either. Fortunately enough, the free space and almost limited amount of time created confidence in the participants – an atmosphere that I aimed at creating later in the beginning of the focus group session as well.

The sheer amount of collages accompanied with their detailed and

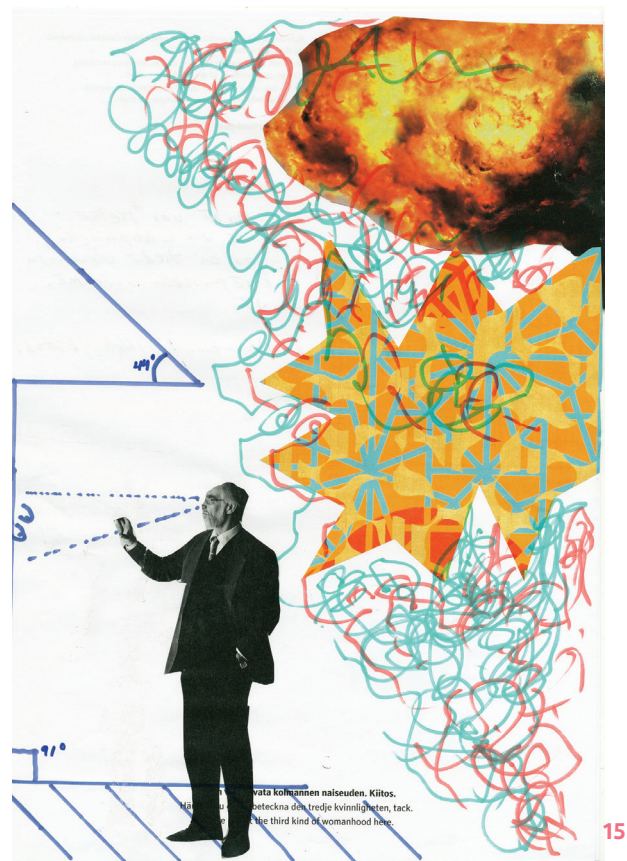
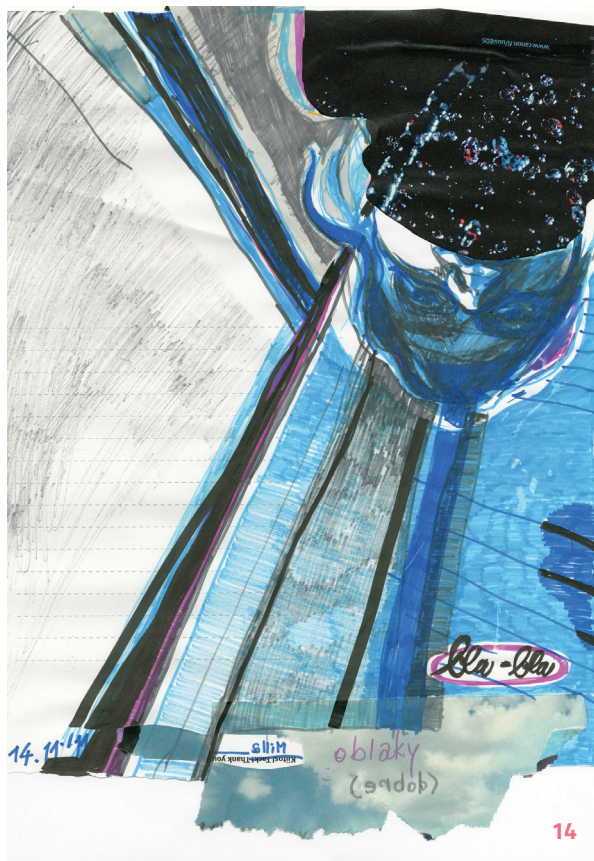
elaborate inner worlds impressed me so deeply that I decided to analyse them in a profound manner, and moreover, to draw inspiration from them to the next data gathering phase, which was to be the focus group discussion. In the analysis phase I followed quite closely a framework provided by Visser et al. (2005), concluding in communicating the knowledge emerging from the process. These phases will be described in the following paragraphs.

2.2 Handling and Analysing the Collages

The text on the assignment side of the collage form was written in Finnish, Swedish and English as follows: "Please depict the third kind of womanhood here". This very same text

was in the middle of the three partite piece *One and Three Womanhoods* (see figure 28, pp. 60-61 and 29, p. 62). Additionally, on the wall next to the exhibition piece to which the collage was fundamentally linked to, there was a text in Finnish and English: "Please help me in my data gathering by depicting and describing womanhood and its presence in your everyday. The utensils you can find from the table and the crafts box". On the crafts table, there were specific cardboard folders wherein the contributors could find empty collage sheets as well a place for putting a ready collage (see figure 18).

The text on the flip side of the collage sheet asked the participant to tell something about him or herself, about the exhibition, or the piece of art they just made. I began the analysing of the collages and drawings by typing out a



brief textual description of every image made, and the text that was on the flip side of the assignment sheet. To obtain a good example on this documentation, below is the description of the collage number 08 (see figure 15):

8: A black-and-white picture of a man on his sixties, watching something on his left side. Trigonometrical lines are depicting his gaze, and it looks like he is looking something on a wall that is attached to a roof and to floor, both of which don't make precise 45- or 90-degree angles, but 44 and 91 ones. Behind the man there is collage and drawing, made in a very free manner; the forms and images resemble explosion or a dust cloud. On the flipside: "Eipä voi tietää mitä on ulkopuolella, jos ei tiedä olevansa sisäpuolella. Siis mä. Avartava näyttely, kiitos." ["One cannot know

what is outside if one doesn't know one is inside. I mean me. An eye-opening exhibition, thank you."]

I typed down both descriptions of all the collages as well as the explanatory text created by the authors on the other side of the sheet. I also wrote down some remarks that were made only orally by a few of the attendees. These transcriptions, even though not based on a video or audio tapings, made all my future interpretations possible. The actions performed also match with Visser et al.'s (2005) first phase of analysis, that they rather aptly call "Fixate on the data".

The second phase proposed (ibid.) consists of searching through the raw data for interesting indicators (ibid.). I continued following their recommendations: I remained "physically

surrounded with all the session materials", in my case the transcripts and the collages. Visser et al. encourage to writing down "all the impressions and insights", and "making notes on small items or stationary post-it notes" in order to make their rearranging easier. Following these suggestions, I made an affinity diagram (see figure 19) that incorporated both words merely describing what was on the "pieces of art", and what the authors themselves had stated on the flip sides of their works to be.

These notes had different background colour: the former kinds were yellow and the latter ones green – a distinction I thought might have become useful later in trying to locate a pattern of some kind, and also in analysing the different natures of the data. Visser et al. remind that the mere



analysis of visual elements have not led to satisfying results, but most of the information is “anchored in the stories of the participants and the relationships between the visual elements and the stories”. Thus, in the end I did not feel obliged to dive into analysing the difference between textual descriptions and visual depictions of womanhood, but aimed at handling the both accounts in parallel, checking that my interpretations would not distance too much from the original statements.

Having organized the notes, I noticed that several thematic groups emerged. On pink notes, I wrote rubrics for each of these groups, now according to my own interpretation on what kind of phenomena the words were describing. The amount of individual notes grew to be altogether

136, so my next phase in the interpretation was to aim at distilling the core themes, emerging from the continuously expanding amount of data. This stage resembles the third phase proposed by Visser et al., where they organize and reorganize the individual notes, preferably by “working spatially, e.g. on a wall or large boards”, because it would very likely “support[s] creating overviews and may show the relations between different experiences and themes visually.”

I obtained several large sheets of paper that I attached together. On this one “canvas” I did all the arranging and organizing of the notes. The reason why I preferred paper to a stiff board was plainly practical: working in different places instead of just one fixed office, one had to move the canvas time and again. The paper allowed

rolling and storage in a fragment of the space a board would have required. In these changing conditions, though, I noticed a drawback of the big size of the paper: oftentimes, I felt reluctant to roll the canvas open again, for it would then take up all the work space I had for myself, and wondered if I should try to limit the amount of post-its in the future.

2.3 Results from the Collaging Exercise

I refrained from some levels of the interpretation while going through the filled-out exercises. Especially the ones including cultural figures were interpreted in a manner that could be described even superficial in relation to the possible meanings that could

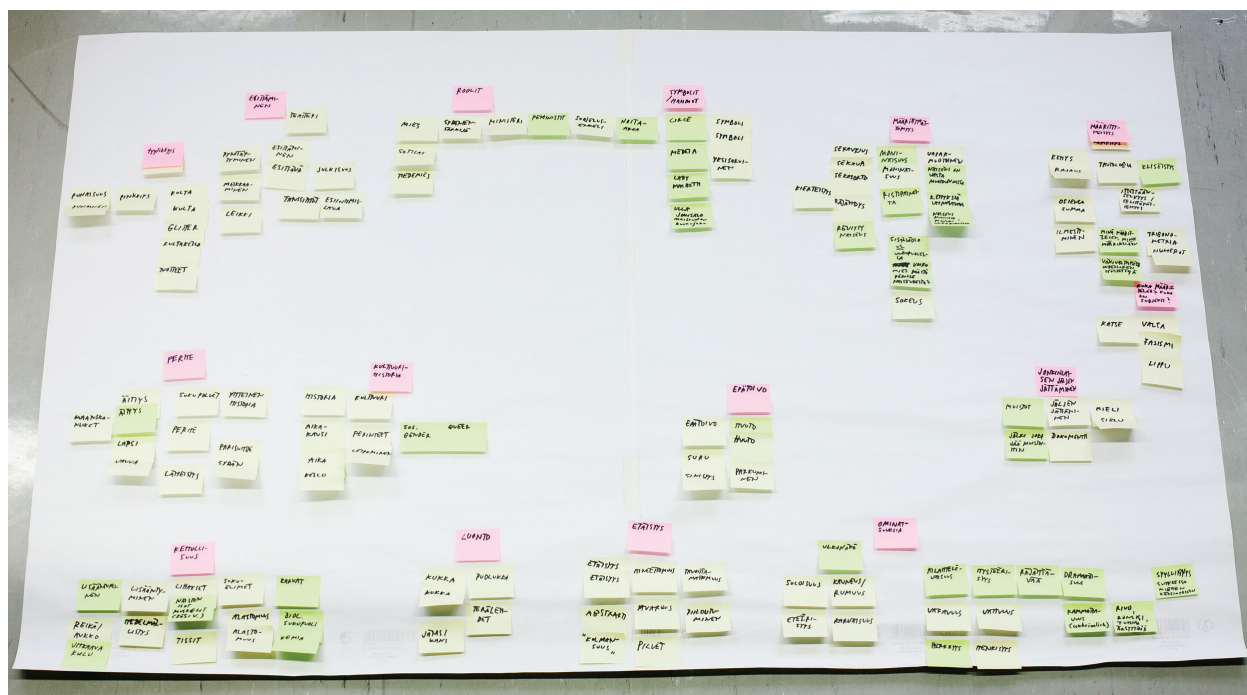


Figure 19: Affinity diagram compiled based on the collages from the exhibition.

be coded in the pieces of work. One of the reasons why I made this conscious decision was the fact that the sample of people who did the assignment were from very varying backgrounds culturally, geographically and linguistically. Due to this, I could never be sure whether they had for instance selected the image of the Finnish author Sofi Oksanen, for her history as a woman in between different nationalities and as an author giving voice to the eating disordered, or only because the composition and the facial expression of Oksanen happened to suit their purposes (see figure 20).

Without including systematic interviewing to the collaging process, I could only grasp the stories explaining the choices concerning the selection of image based on the descriptions on the backside of the exercise sheet. Many wrote about their aspirations and aims,

but several did not, or they wrote only few words. As in the case of the collage with Sofi Oksanen, there was only one word, "Reproduction", written on the sheet. Thereby, I could never know what were the criteria for choosing the most apt images for the otherwise well considered and fine-tuned collage.

Moreover, despite of the heterogeneity of the participants, the situation itself possibly encouraged for rather approximate and rough depictions of womanhood: especially in the context of opening, when the absolute majority of the collages were made, it seemed quite apparent that some of the participants felt peer-pressure and thus an obligation to contribute. Consequently, they might not have focused in the most detailed manner on the exercise. Additionally, even the most motivated ones would select ambiguous images that carry several layers of meanings.

Without interviewing or demanding for a written account of the collage, I could not be sure of their intentions – if it was for instance to find a clip for showing a certain position, expression, emotion, or just to present a general human figure.

Even though the collaging in the opening did not provide me with anything more than very ambiguous data, I still felt the night was success. My initial goal was merely to pilot the reception of the collages, and the acceptance had been overwhelmingly positive. Based on this experience, I could most certainly introduce it as a sensitizing exercise in the forthcoming focus group interview. Moreover, because the number of collages was so big, I thought mapping the themes and topics would provide me with some generalisations about the attitudes towards womanhood. I was in a way do-

ing some playful quantitative analysis, counting the occurrence of words and figures in these altogether 26 collages, aiming at reaching behind the subjective standpoints to womanhood.

After the lettering out of the collages and the textual descriptions of the intentions of the authors, I finally compiled the affinity diagram of the nouns describing what were both literally and pictorially on the collages (figure 19) The themes that began appearing as the clearest ones, are listed below:

- * **Body / Corporality** (14 sticky notes)
- * **Nature** (5)
- * **Family** (10)
- * **Cultural History** (9)
- * **Presentation** (9)
In Finnish this category was called "Esittäminen", which could be translated both as presentation and pretending, and its subtheme Elegance (9)
- * **Roles** (8) & **Symbols** (7)
- * **The Undefined** (16)
- * **The Defined** (12)
- * **Leaving a Mark** (6)
- * **Characteristics**, which has the subtheme **Appearance** in addition its main content, the so-called mental characteristics (11 & 5)
- * **Distance** (9)
- * **Despair** (6)

2.3.1 INTERPRETING THE EMERGING THEMES

The largest ones of these groups were The Undefined (16), Characteristics (16), Corporality (14 notes) and The Defined (12). It was also interesting that the Roles and Symbols group grew to be so extensive with 15 notes, and the Presentation with the incorporated Elegance also seemed to

be one of the major concerns for the participants, at least according to its total sum of 18 notes.

The content in The Undefined presents on one hand the possibilities of the multi-faceted nature of womanhood, and on the other the chaos ("sekasorto"), explosiveness ("räjähdys", "revitty") and free-formity ("vapaamuotoinen", "vasta muotoutumassa") of it. To me it seems that the small group of nouns describing Despair (6 notes) is somewhat closely linked to this latter half of the undefinedness; it seems to be distressing to confront such an ambiguous concept as womanhood is, and trying to handle it among one's everyday schedules. Nonetheless, according to some depictions and descriptions, it can also be experienced as an emancipatory possibility.

The counter group, the one headlined as The Defined, encompasses

a similar dichotomy. Words such as emergence ("ilmestyminen"), frame ("kehys"), and the sum of its parts ("osien summa"), to me seem to manifest positive and relieved attitude – womanhood does not need to be a key issue in everyday life, but it can be easily fulfilled without any special challenges. Once again, very much the opposite is established through the words "cliché" ("kliseisyys"), "violently re-worked" ("väkivaltaisesti uudelleen työstettyä") and "tautology" ("tautologia"), which are inevitably unsettling; they tell a story of forced categorization and one-dimensional understanding of a major part of one's identity.

I am inclined to interpret that the group of The Defined seeks company from the smaller groups Presentation and Cultural History, both of them consisting of 9 notes. Especially the single phrases such as "I define, I am



Figure 20: A Collage with a disputed cultural figure.



21



23

being defined”, “gaze” and “violently re-worked” make me think of “social gender” in Cultural history and “play”, “stage” and theatre” in Presentation. The collage number 15 establishes this connection with its old-fashioned figure of a witch, lurking behind the clusters of numbers, and a modern woman posing in her red gown, both of them whirling above a staircase where a man is walking (see figure 21). For me, the witch presents a playful interpretation of a staged womanhood – a gendered figure from a fairy-tale – and the woman in red a real-life ideal model that everyone should approach – even violently. Thus, I am coming to a conclusion that the different reading of the concept of gender and its sensitivity to different contexts should be discussed rather thoroughly in the focus group session.

2.3.2 ORGANIZING THE COLLAGE THEMES

Although every group naturally had a solid number of notes in them, their consistency was still not that easy to define – some notes or even small groups of notes could have been situated under several rubrics. Because I still presumed that fundamentally, the basis and motivation for the collages might at least partly lie in my exhibition pieces, I felt eligible to combine some of the groups to include sub-groups, according to my subjective understanding of their relation. The manner I did this organizing was in reflection with the themes I had handled also in my works.

In order to avoid “projecting [my] preconceptions on the participants” or their collages, I did as Visser et al

(2005) suggest: I made a preliminary mapping of my “views of the experience domain”, that is the everyday womanhood. As a matter of fact, I had already started doing this when I was selecting pieces for the exhibition. The final hanging presents quite closely my perception of the concept and its challenges, and thereby, I made the mapping based on the exhibition pieces and their core themes. This five-column table is presented later (pp. 58-59, figure 25), where it is already enriched with the themes from the collages. According to Visser et al. (2005), the preliminary mapping is to provide a starting structure for analysing the results, and the topics from the participants can be later added. When proceeding in this manner, it is evidently easier to differentiate what were my initial, subjective outlooks and attitudes, and what did I learn

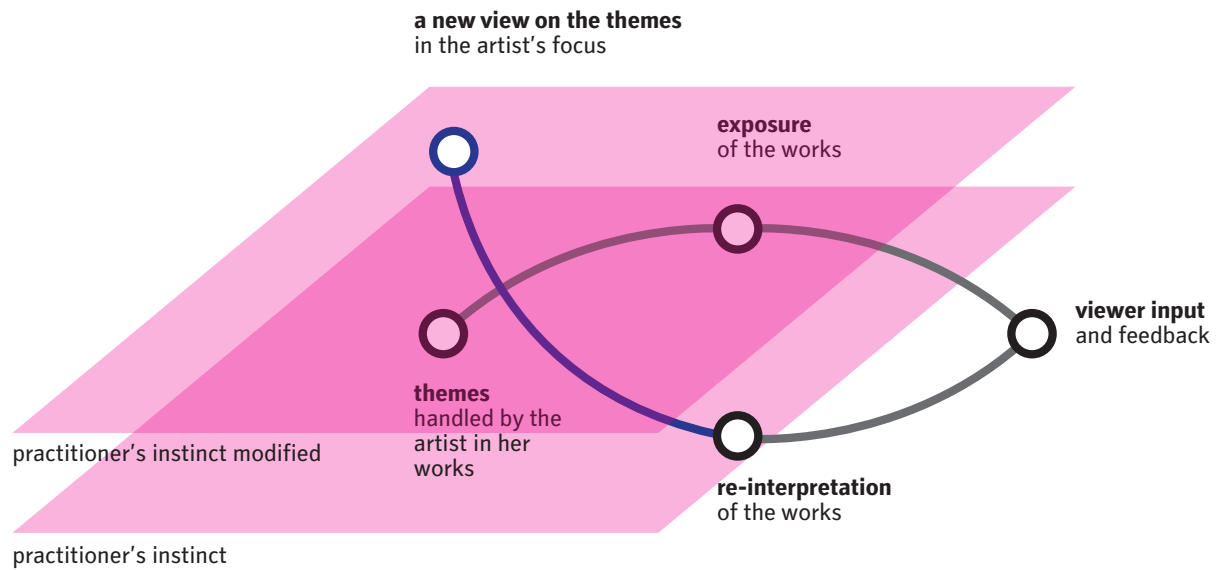


Figure 22: The practitioner interpreting her own artworks in relation to and inspired by the viewer input.

from the participants.

When beginning the grouping of the notes, I noticed having entered a state where I re-interpreted and concretized my artistic thinking through the exhibition-goers outlooks, and thus sensitized my perception of womanhood to their views. Thus, I let my artistic practitioner's instinct group the data, collected through a participatory method – a method traditionally perceived as a very designerly one (see figure 22).

After grouping the notes, I proceeded by making again a five-column table, consisting of the largest themes (large regarding the amount of notes in the thematic group) and their key points from the affinity diagram (see figure 24). One of these columns, titled "Bodily Substance" ("kehollisuus") is loosely attached to an over-hanging theme "Roles and Symbolic Figures"

through two almost inseparable smaller groups called "Family" and "Culture History". The reason why the medium sized group of Roles and Symbolic Figures was initially included in the table, and why I state it to be of over-hanging nature, is that it seems to distil and exemplify many of the other, more abstract concepts; through the figures and descriptions of mythical women and stereotypes, several collage-makers seemed to aim at summarizing their views of womanhood (see figures 21 & 23).

This bridge building and stressed inclusion of the themes is a good example of the fashion of grouping I was doing, following my instinct and understanding, and all the time reflecting my decisions against the main themes I had had in mind when producing my exhibition pieces.

In the table of themes from the

collages (fig. 24), there are a few words underlined with red. This distinction signifies the presence of the themes in my own pieces of art as well. It should be noted here that a few of the underlined themes such as "the undefined" and "presentation" were also present during my process of practicing, and were made more graspable to myself through the viewers' collages. Nonetheless, some of the themes, especially "orifices" ("aukkoisuus"), "hairiness" ("karvaisuus") and "power and gaze", crystallized to me only through this feedback. Even though they were not so present that they would build up a group of their own, their emergence caught my attention during the analysis, and made me realise the long-term influence they had had on my practicing. One could say that actually, the analysis of the collages had revealed a part of my

subconscious process to my knowing. This is something that Visser et al. (2005) anticipate when working with generative techniques and context-mapping, and what they claim the preliminary mapping is also a good tool for: without it, “many of the new insights would have seemed obvious in hindsight.”

2.3.3 THEMATIC DIRECTIONS

Noticing the existing and new thematic links between collages and my own practitioning, I decided to deepen my analysis of the “red” themes by excavating the actual art pieces. Now, I would enrich my preliminary map of subjective themes with the topics brought forward by the participants. In the table in the figure 25, every column indicates one of the works in the exhibition, and the upper part briefly describes my preliminary outlook on womanhood through the work in question. The lower part on its side lists the themes that were recognized both from the collages and my art objects. Through this table, I endeavoured to concretize the coupling of the themes both recognized by the audience and intended by me through my practitioning.

Charasteristics	The Undefined
mental charasteristics * (freudian) hysteria * approaching masculinity and thus interpreted as “racy” (ronski)	positive diversity vs. chaos free-formity vs. explosiveness ripped open blindness
appearance * beauty vs. ugliness * <u>hairyness</u> * ethereal and mythical	pressure from various directions

Figure 24: The five column table describes the themes that were recognized from the collages with the help of the affinity diagram.

The Defined

making the everyday actions
easy

a cliché concept

power and gaze

* who is the definer?

wonder and amazement, but
still believing in the
possibilities of giving a
definition

Bodily Substance

reproduction
fertility

distinction from the male:

* biological sex

* genitals

* muscles

* orifices

being of "the other"

* social gender

* queerness

Presentation

the double meaning of the
Finnish word "esittäminen":
appearance (on e.g. TV) vs.
pretence
* for instance dancing girls
* can be reduced to
simplification and thus
definition (of womanhood)

is it play?

is it experienced as a tough
job?

does it give flexibility?

public vs. private

Roles and Mythical Figures

mythical figures:
Circe, Medea, lady Macbeth

stereotypes:
witches, guardian angels,
heart breakers, feminists

roles: man, minister,
(male) scientist

Family

motherhood
having children
relationship
generations
mutual history

Culture History

culture
traditions
eras
queer
social gender

THE INTENDED OUTLOOK ON WOMANHOOD

RECOGNIZED THEMES

Landscape	The Negative Form	Woman
<p>the diversity of womanhood that should not be reduced to an essential definition of her</p> <p>the experience of being looked at a from distance, categorized and isolated</p> <p>which features build up to a woman? how much can one modify and mutilate these so that the process of recognition doesn't take place anymore?</p>	<p>the quick paintings of women in arbitrary, not planned neither composed situations highlight the impossibility of capturing the essence of woman. still, this pursuit is tried out time and again.</p> <p>is there any other possible definition to be given on woman except that she is the negative form? negation of a man, and the female connector - the one that possesses the orifice.</p>	<p>contradictions in experienced, perceives and stated womanhood: safe >< dangerous wild >< tame unknown >< familiar caring >< ignorant predatory ><pet</p>
<p>THE UNDEFINED</p> <p>BODILY SUBSTANCE</p> <p>HAIRYNESS</p> <p>ORIFICES</p>	<p>THE UNDEFINED</p> <p>BODILY SUBSTANCE</p> <p>POWER &GAZE</p> <p>ORIFICES</p>	<p>BODILY SUBSTANCE</p> <p>THE UNDEFINED</p> <p>CULTURAL HISTORY</p> <p>POWER & GAZE</p> <p>HAIRYNESS</p> <p>ORIFICES</p>

Figure 25: The five column table describes the themes that were recognized from the artworks with the help of the analysis of collages.

As it can be perceived, the most often occurring theme in the works is "kehollisuus", a term that could be translated as "the body" in a wide meaning of the word, or "bodily substance", as I will refer to it on the following pages. Other themes that I experienced very inherent to my works, this meaning in relation to my

original outlook, were "power and gaze", "the undefined", and the surprising emergence of "orifices" and "hairiness", which were manifested in a few notes in the groups Characteristics, Bodily Substance, and also Family, if seen through the concept of child birth.

Memory & Memory: Evening (& sketches for Memory)

elements of experienced womanhood: which ones are more apparent, close and present? Which ones are pushed aside, hidden or forgotten?

Are there singular events, condensated memories, that define certain aspects of womanhood?

HAIRYNESS

ORIFICES

One and Three Womanhoods

Womanhood defined
a) through the body: negation of a man
b) through historical and cultural practices

a) negation of a man equals a negative form, a space, in comparison to the manly obtruding subject filling the space
b) how distant are these historical and cultural roles, favored characteristics and occupations as well as myths related to womanhood?

THE UNDEFINED

BODILY SUBSTANCE

DISTANCE

CULTURAL HISTORY

POWER & GAZE

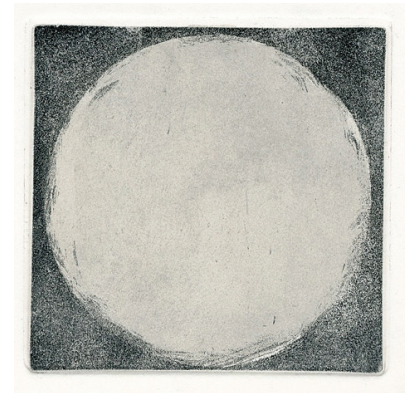


Figure 26: An example of hairy appearance in an exhibition piece (in **Memory**).

Figure 27: An example of a depiction of an orifice, or an opening (also in **Memory**).

Moreover, regarding the formal aspects of my works, I realised striving for a so to say hairy appearance though my manner of using thin “hair lines” and textured colour fields (see figure 26). Thus, I think I am being very honest when stating that hairiness is a matter that is dealt within my art objects; it is not always present as a

subject matter in itself, but I am aiming at expressing something through the usage of drawing akin to hair. Additionally, bodily apertures or orifices were claimed to be an obviously re-occurring formal solution: an exhibition goer during the night of the opening made this statement, and her notion made me ponder on my subconscious



(see figure 27). The presence of these two themes in the collages, as well as my personal sensation of revelation made me raise hairiness and orifices to further investigation.

2.4 The Second Set of Findings: Emerging Roles of the Exhibition Pieces

The emergence of the new themes led me to unexpected revelations that I would gladly characterize as a second set of findings concerning my entwined process. I realised that especially a few of the works had obtained key positions through redeeming certain roles in the exhibition.

2.4.1 ROLE ONE:

The Viewer Activator and Process Commencer

First of the key roles in the exhibition came to exist partly due to conscious planning, but its nature didn't reveal itself to me before the actual implementation and reactions from the audience. The work which I had named *One and Three Womahoods* ("Yksi ja kolme naiseutta"



in Finnish. See figure 28) included a request "Please depict the third kind of womanhood here" (see figure 29), and, as a part of the hanging, next to the name tag of the tripartite piece, there was a further description, asking for participation (see p. 49).

The role of this assignment piece became to be the role of the viewer activator, and the one that unexpectedly re-formed the data gathering. By involving the viewers, it also com-

menced the process of collecting data. It includes very designerly elements as well, seeking an analogy to context-mapping assignments, through which designers aim at creating "context awareness by eliciting emotional responses from the participants" (Visser et al, 2005). The results of these kinds of assignments usually are highly inspirational and informative for the design process (ibid.).

It should also be noted that when

the possibility for becoming inspired - that usually means a possibility to absorbing totally new ideas, insights and attitudes - is present, the designer might collect something that re-directs her process. In this kind of situation, as what happened to me when the amount of collages exceeded my expectations, the data collection method might evolve also to be a director of the designer's instinct and process. Mattelmäki (2005) also

Tähän voit kuvata kolmannen naiseuden. Kiitos.
Här kan du gärna beteckna den tredje kvinnligheten, tack.
Please depict the third kind of womanhood here.

Left, figure 29: The text in the middle part of the work *One and Three Womanhoods*.

Right, figure 30: *Démasquée* by Akseli Gallén-Kallela. Picture retrieved 9.9.2012, from <http://kokoelmat.fng.fi/wandora/w?si=A+I+562>

recognizes a similar tendency from the original cultural probes by Gaver et al. She states the aim of the early probes developers was to “empower the designers’ imagination in combination with the needs of the future users”.

Artistically Designerly

On one hand, one could say that “One and Three Womanhoods” was the most designerly piece in its incorporation of viewer input. On the other hand, personally during the making of the piece I felt that it involved maybe the most conceptual elements, even related to conceptual art, of all the works in the exhibition.

“One and Three Womanhoods” is actually a documentation of a certain concept – womanhood. It was inspired by the work of Joseph Kosuth “One

and Three Chairs”, made in 1965, just before the apogee of conceptual art (Godfrey p. 6, 1998). In his piece, Kosuth asks at least two questions: What is a chair? and What is art?, and also gives analogous answers – a chair is a chair is a chair, and art is art is art (Godfrey 1998). The work is actually an inquiry into the two concepts motivating these two questions. On the surface, the artist reflects on the levels of existence of things - like a chair - in the world. Perhaps a bit deeper, he challenges the concept of art: What is it if it is nothing unique, nor it has no single maker?

Even though Godfrey notes that no typologies or rules should be applied as such on conceptual art, they do come handy when trying to distinguish similarities and differences between artefacts. I would dare

to propose my viewer activator to be something between conceptual art and design research on the strength of his arguments. Firstly, “One and Three Womanhoods” does fit rather neatly in one of the general forms Godfrey (p. 7) establishes for conceptual art: a ready-made, an intervention, words, and documentation. In addition to being an open documentation of womanhood that waits to be completed, it also poses a critical question of art: who is the artist? Can anybody take part in an artwork? Is art inclusive?

The piece approaches the notion of womanhood by giving two sets of limitations. Where Kosuth separates the physical, culturally representational and lingual levels of the existence of chair, I do slightly the same in my compilation of images. The male figure was included in the triptych to

1 For example, the following statements were made:

”Näyttely laittoi ajattelemaan että olenko miehenä oikea henkilö / voinko miehenä kokea naiseuden tunteen / naisellisuuden ja/tai sen hermistymisen. Sitten laajensin/löysäsin ajatusmaailmani ja tulin siihen tulokseen että voin yrittää kuvitella naiseuden kokemuksen tai tunteen.”(collage nr. 6)

”I’m XXXXX [a female name]. Designer, lover, explorer, sometimes a pain in the ass. The exhibition was inspiring, made me think about myself as a woman. This ‘piece of art’ reflects my thought about womanhood. This evening inspired by your drawings... a trace, a mark in our memories.” (13)

”Naiseus on lukujen takana piileskelevä noita-akka; naiseus on hysteeristä; naiseus on kierrätettyä; naiseus on revittyä; naiseus on väkivaltaisesti uudelleen työstettyä; naiseus on uhkaava kuilu; naiseus on räjähtävää ja kehyksiään uhmaavaa; naiseus on herkkää ja vasta muotoutumassa – muutamia kliseitä toistaakseni.” (15, see p. 54, fig. 21)

”Kolmas naiseus voi myös olla Queer-lähtökohdista, ei vain biologisesta sukupuolesta, siitä miten sosiaalinen gender määritellään, ja miten identiteetti rakentuu. Pelkkä ulkonäkö ei kerro ihmisestä kaikkea, vaikka teemmekin sen pohjalta paljon olettamuksia.” (19)



define womanhood through negation; according to my perception, without the concept of man there is no need for the concept of womanhood either. The male draws a biological, and thereby somewhat physical, definition for the female. Through this, the viewer is provided with the first set of limitations (see figure 28).

The female figure (figure 28) on the far right is a cropping from a painting done by Akseli Gallén-Kallela in 1888, depicting a Parisian courtesan, sitting totally nude on a traditional Finnish rug, smoking a cigarette and facing the painter with no trace of shame, disguise or embarrassment; she is more like smiling gently mischievously. The painting was controversial in its indecency in the time when it was commissioned and created (see figure 30), and its historical burden in a way highlights the cultural meanings

and prerequisites that the concepts of gender and gaze encompass.

There are a few reasons why I decided to include a re-make of *Démasquée*, “with her mask taken off”, in the triptych. Firstly, I have been fascinated by the straight, contented and above all, level gaze of the nude. To me, the look is telling a story of professionalism and not of subordination: even though the courtesan is depicted totally naked from the point of view of a male author, she seems to raise herself to the level of Gallén-Kallela. Her look – to me, it seems – is a look of a work companion, with a will of her own.

It is very likely that my interpretation of the gaze of the woman is all too idealised. Whatever was the expression on her face, though, the depiction of a slice of culture history is evident in the painting. Despite the relationship between the female object and the

male subject, the picture represents an age-old tradition, mainly plied by the women. Moreover, it re-produces the historically perceived aesthetics of the nude female body available to the male eye. Thus, the second set of limitations to the assignment was related to the cultural roles and positions women are allowed to take and strive for in the society, as well as the culturally variable aesthetic requirements imposed on them.

As I hoped, these sets of limitations may have also functioned as sources of inspiration to many of the collage-makers. I am inclined to draw this conclusion because of the thematic findings that came apparent from the affinity diagram based on the collages (see figure 24, p. 56-57).

According to my interpretation, several of the rubrics emerging from the collected assignments can be seen as facets of the left and right figures in the “One and Three Womanhoods”. For example, themes such as “Characteristics” and “Bodily Substance” could also emerge from the juxtaposition of the male and female figures in “One and Three Womanhoods”. The images of human beings being clearly of opposite sexes might have encouraged the viewers also to think what is not depicted. What is not present in these two; in the end of the day, aren’t these images only reduced presentations of the concept of woman and man?

It has to be noted that these assumptions do remain only as assumptions, for I did not ask the viewers to analyse explicitly the actual effect the exhibition piece had to their collages. Nonetheless, I am inclined to keep my supposition: the new context of an art exhibition that all the viewers entered must make a difference on the collected data. On one hand, the emerging themes “The Un-defined” and “The Defined” seem to refer to a

certain kind of un-settling and wonder, as also insinuated in the name of the exhibition "Womanhood is - - - -". On the other hand, one could claim now that this wonder may have as well been present in the minds and lives of the viewers also before attending the exhibition. Still, when reading the comments on the flip sides of the collages, several participants had underlined the awakening nature of the happening.¹

Furthermore, when I compiled the affinity diagram, and begun to recognize new themes inherent but latent in my own works, I felt that whether the pieces of the exhibition actually had an effect on the viewers' thinking, the mere input from outside into the author's own inner world enabled me to take a prominent step in my own thinking. Thus, I do think that the positive impact of the contextmapping assignment cannot be over-emphasized.

2.4.2 ROLE TWO:
The Image of the Viewer Input

The second emerging role was especially clearly linked to the work "Woman" (see figure 32), which thus redeemed its key position in my succeeding interpretations of the viewer input. When grouping the data with the help of the affinity diagram, I realised that it was especially in the "Woman" where my preliminary outlooks of the concept coincided with the questions and ponderings of the collages. Here, it should be noted how the "Woman" incorporates most of the key themes that came apparent from the affinity diagram (see figure 25, pp. 58-59). I felt that I could reflect and handle any dichotomies presented in the collages against this piece, and that this juxtaposition between my own

piece of graphic art and the viewers' input would help me in understanding these collages. Or, to put it in other words, through deepening the analysis of this one piece of my own, the collages would begin making sense to me; I could relate to the inner world of the collages more easily.

Naturally, there are quite a few very problematic points of translation presented here. The perceived increase in author's capacity for reflection may derive from quite a few possible sources, and depending on the relationship to the viewers' input, it can reach differing depths. The following table (see figure 31) describes a few routes for coupling the collage data with the original author's intention. According to my perception of the process, I was applying a strategy that would probably best be situated in between the routes A and B.

As it can be also read from the table (figure 31), I presume that no matter which strategy the author applies, she always gains something from the outside input that finally enriches her subjective process. As I have mentioned, I personally experienced that the collage assignment revealed such latent knowledge to myself that made this gain for me immense.

2.4.3 ROLE THREE:
The Self-Sensitizer

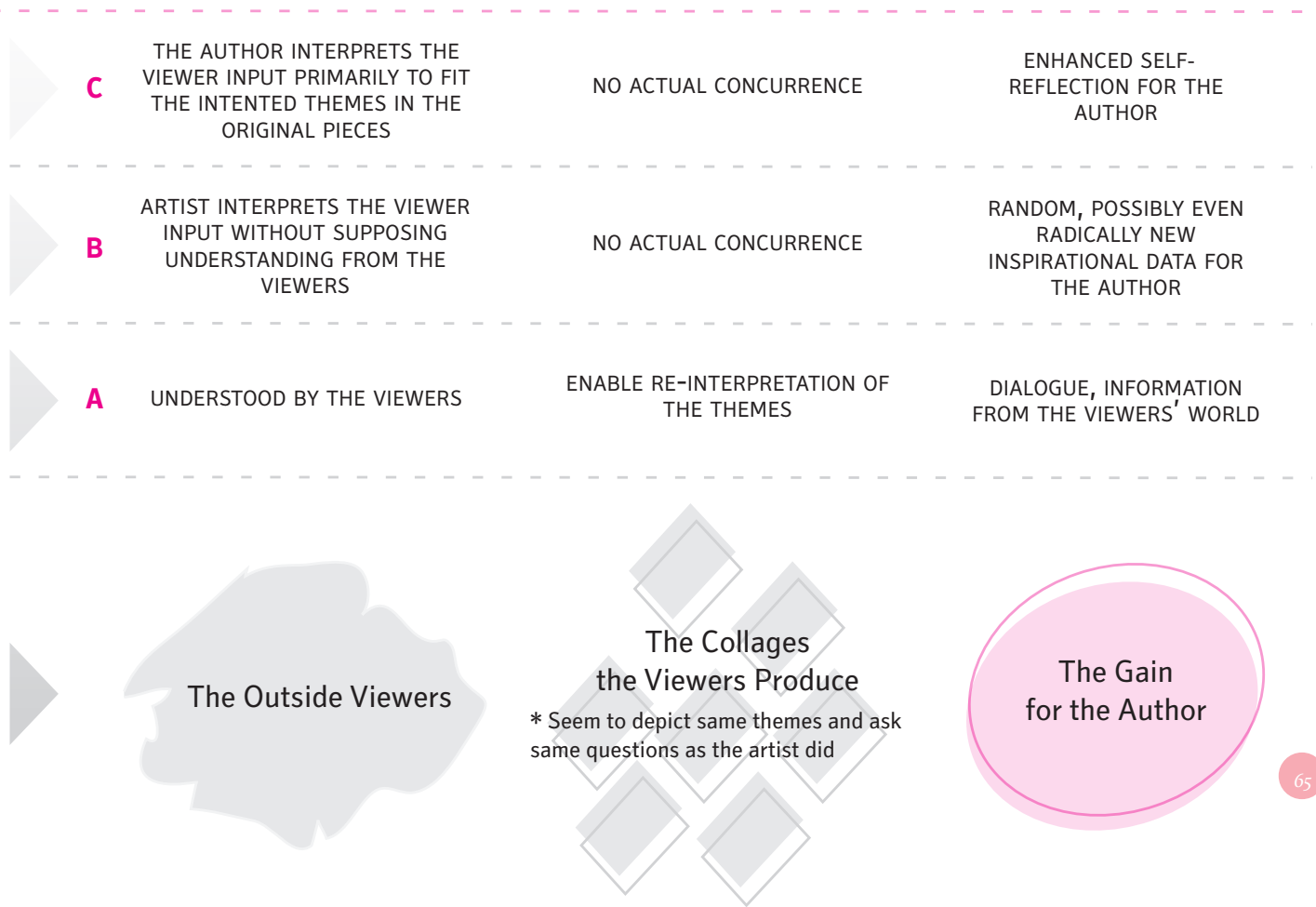
The third recognized role was slightly similar as the second one in the sense that its main gain was enhanced self-reflection through the author's art-objects. However, there were certain elements inherent to this role that made me draw an exclusive account of it.

The exhibition piece "Negative Form" developed into a bellwether for future reflections (see figures 33 & 34.



Figure 31: The table describes possible routes for coupling the viewer input i.e. the collage data with the author's intention..

See pp. 46-47, figures 06 & 11 for the whole artwork). Through making it, and culminating in its exposure to the public, I was able to define my core interests in the process. Actually, this third finding came to be two-fold as my process is. Firstly, the "Negative Form" underlined my attraction to the themes of power and gaze and bodily substance. Moreover, the formal depiction of both of these themes is very much related to orifices – to the



relation of empty and full space on the paper, and to lines forming pits, piles and abysses (see figures 32, 33, and 34). Thus, “Negative Form” also aided me in reaching the realisation of the importance of the theme orifices.

Secondly, and maybe even more importantly, it pinpointed my preoccupation concerning the process: it made me realise that I should target my focus towards finding out how to sensitize the author to her topic, not the viewer as I had thought before.

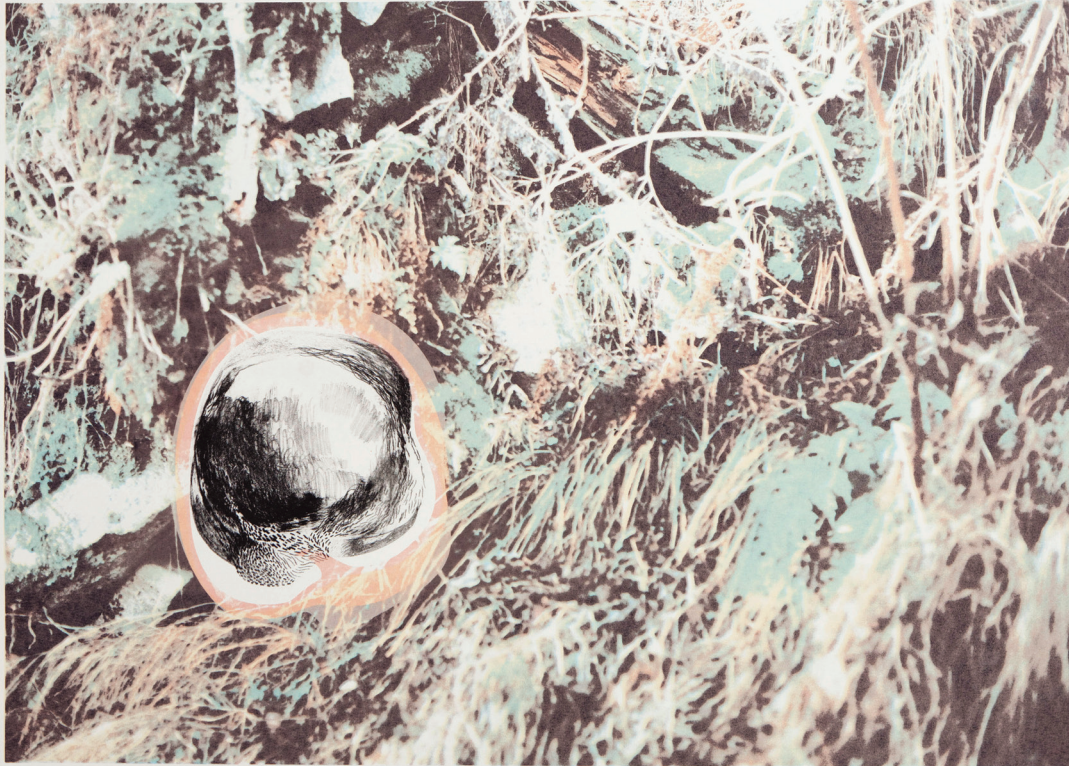
For quite some time, my presupposition for the outcome of my research had been to find out novel ways for

sensitizing the potential user or viewer of the art- and -design-like objects in order to enhance the data gathering of the author. Through the piece “Negative Form”, though, I decided to shift the main focus from the viewer’s to the artist-designer’s sensitization. From this on, the process related question I would aim to discover in my research would be the following:

How can the makings of art-objects guide the artist-designer in her process, even though striving for a design-like outcome? Or, with slightly other words: *How does the self-reflection, concretised in the art-objects, feed the*

design process, and direct towards a designerly end result?

Reflecting on all the findings from the exhibition and the collage assignments, I am inclined to state that the third and the last role is – to some extent - present in all of the exhibition pieces. Nevertheless, one of the reasons why it was especially the “Negative Form” that obtained the main role of the self-reflector, may have been the process of making it: the starting point for me was a bunch of randomly taken photographs, based on which I made aquarelle paintings with the help of an over-head projec-



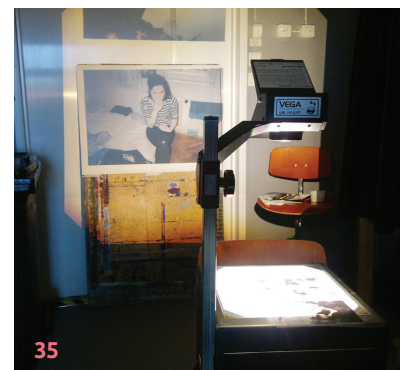
32

66

tor (see figures 35 & 36). During the painting, I was constantly reflecting on the necessity of every line, and the required weight and strength of them. I was trying to focus on establishing the turning point when the painting becomes a self-standing piece, and the projected image drowns under the expressive brush strokes. This kind of working commenced my thinking on sensitizing the artist-designer through her practitioning. The almost forced consciousness during the act of making became a metaphor for the designer's choices when interpreting the user data: in the beginning, one has a myriad of random details, as from a probe diary where an outside participant has shared her daily life with the researcher. Then, one starts to group, map, analyse and finally synthesize them, and finally – hopefully – has a graspable image of the user's world in

front of her.

While painting in this overly conscious manner, I also began to grasp the arbitrary subject matter in the photograph in a more profound manner. I begun noticing things I hadn't noticed before: a pattern on a piece of linen hanging on a radiator, golden stitches and feathers in a dress of a girl. Thus, I immersed in the subject in a fashion I hadn't been able to only by looking at the pictures. The practitioning through painting increased not only my understanding of the personal process, but also of the subject and its environment in the picture. This kind of action matches tremendously well with the definition Visser et al. give of contextmapping (Visser et al., 2005). The enriched and expanded information that I obtained when converting the photograph into a painting might become a usable tool





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for analysing when handling qualitative data collected from the users with a method such as design probes. For the most exploratory design projects, I would even like to cautiously suggest the painting method for analysing and excavating a resource of user data.

2.4.4 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

To summarize, the exhibition increased my understanding of my own process, revealing me latent knowledge and novel aspects on the familiar themes I had been handling for so long. Following, there is a short list of the most important findings on the ways in which the artistic practicioning guided my process, and enabled its success also in a manner that was useful for me as a designer:

1) The exhibited art-object(s) can absorb an interactive and designerly element, such as a collaging exercise.

When merging a feature like this in the exhibition, the data gathering process should be kept open until all the data has been collected: The activity of the exhibition goes may give a positive surprise to the artist-designer, and the utilization of rich viewer-data will probably guide the process to an interesting direction.

2) The act of exhibiting and the collection of viewers' perceptions on a related topic can clarify the thematic focus of the artist-designer. Even previously latent or subconscious themes may become exposed.

3) Using artistic media in an analytic manner can predispose the practitioner to the subject matter in a novel way.

For example the structured painting method can give the artist-designer both new perspectives that crystallize the core concepts of her work as well as re-direct the designerly process.

2.4.5 FRAMEWORK FOR THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

As already seen in the figure 19 (p. 52), several topics arose from the analysis of the collage assignments. Many of them I felt were very relevant and moreover, inherent to my artistic practicioning. As described in the table in figure 25 (pp. 58-59), especially the themes of power & gaze, bodily substance, hairiness and orifices, could have been raised into the core of the following focus group discussion. However, I felt that these themes might be either too intimate or personal, or too abstract to begin a conversation where most of the participants didn't know each other before hand. Moreover, I had not utilised a long-term pre-assignment for sensitizing the participants to such specific topics as the ones mentioned above. I had merely touched the theme of everyday womanhood on a rather general level in my recruiting and organizing emails. Thus, a sudden change in the framing towards an unexpected and definitively sensitive and intimate subcategories of womanhood might cause a negative effect in the participants. Nonetheless, due to their popularity in the assignments and my personal interest in them, I kept them in the back of my head – perhaps they could be justifiable utilised in later stages of the process.

Having now a positive experience of the collage exercise, I would most definitely commence the focus group session by employing its sensitizing capabilities. Even though Visser et al. (2005) suggest utilising sensitizing tools as early as days or weeks beforehand, I suspected that a lighter version of them might function well also in the very beginning of the session. I dared to assume this especially because McKay et al. (2006) had been using collage exercises in the actual generative session, and thus demonstrated its applicability in a real-life group context. Consequently, I was hoping that shrinking the role of the collage from the main data gathering method to a quicker pre-assignment could also help in kick-starting the actual session, and finally yield rich data. After all, the main objective of the sensitizing tool had remained the same: I wanted to make sure that the participants would “establish self-reflection” that could be harvested later in the session.

Still, I remained uncertain of the effect of prompting the participants with all the issues from the affinity diagram might cause. Thus, I reckoned that after the personal depictions of womanhood I should continue the session with a more general approach to the rather sensitive topic - hopefully, it would create an unobtrusive but also approving and open atmosphere for further discussion. Hoping that this could be reached sooner or later, I continue by applying Montell's (1999) strategy on compiling the focus group questions: a few open ended questions (which I would mainly utilise as the introductory conversation starters) could be supported with “a short list of topics I wanted to make sure the group addressed”. The list of topics consisted of those themes that emerged from the analysis of the collages, and was

not included in the material that I provided to the participants; it was more of a personal checklist, which I would use to guide the discussion according to the development of the session.

First and foremost, I aimed at avoiding all possible distress that the handling of sensitive themes might cause in the debaters, and wanted to give the participants a freedom to start the conversation in a manner they would prefer and feel most comfortable with. I decided to select the theme "Roles and Symbolic Figures" due to its over-hanging nature and metaphorical presence in many of the other themes. I also thought that because it was amongst one of the largest groups of sticky notes, it might be a topic quite familiar and easy-to-access to a large number of people. I thought that through this topic, the participants could start talking about their motherly identity, or their student status, or something more or less personal, private and intimate. I was trying to employ both Zeller's (1993) and Montell's (1999) advice: setting the agenda without setting the agenda myself, but letting the participants to frame the categories of interest by themselves. My hope was that after and during a few warming up questions the participants would gain trust and confidence on the situation, and would develop the conversation with my help towards perhaps more abstract issues.

3.

Focus Group Interview

3.1 The Setting

Before starting the actual discussion, I made a few introductory remarks. These included welcoming the participants, explaining the context of the session, and the aim for the focus group discussion as a major data collector in my master's project in industrial and strategic design. In addition to these, I emphasized that I was interested and truly happy to hear all kinds of experiences and opinions. I wanted to highlight that it is me who wants to learn from the participants' experiences, and how every comment is important in itself.

I encouraged the women to start by familiarizing themselves with the exhibition. In its pieces of art, I had been tackling the issues of everyday womanhood, and perhaps, if they felt like it, we could begin the conversation with their comments on them. Nonetheless, before any actual commencement of discussion, I would like them to engage in a small assignment, whose purpose is to elicit ideas on the subject of the conversation. I didn't say straight that the collaging is "to sensitize you", for I thought it might have borne in a ring of manipulation.

3.2 The Participants

The composition of the group discussion was slightly more consistent that I had originally strived for, but being aware of the discursive capabilities of all the participants made me not to worry about such details. I had recruited the participants by simply sending inquiries to ten people who I knew capable of analytic thinking and possessing a high level of self-

awareness. The ones included in the email were also somehow related to the field of fine arts, a prerequisite I decided on in order to form a group that would probably not be hesitant in talking about the exhibition and doing the collaging assignment.

The ones receiving my emails were not close friends or relatives, but rather acquaintances or friends of friends whom I had got to know a little, but had not been much in touch with. I thought that these kinds of people would already have trust in me and my good purposes, and would thus be motivated to help out. Still, we would be that distant that their possible revelations would not have any effects on any current social relations. One of the names included was a closer friend of mine who I knew having taken part in qualitative research projects as well, and dared to ask her to participate because I could trust in her ability to push our friendship in the back of things, and concentrate on the topic of the study.

As Montell (1999) notes, in focus groups the generalizability of data is not a core concern, but rather how well it describes particular instances of larger social processes. Thus, one should not aim at compiling "a random sample to best represent population", but recruit participants to provide the best kind of data. The most desired information to be collected here would naturally focus on diverse experiences of everyday womanhood. Consequently, my participants should both have rich spectrum of experiences on this field and also feel comfortable with discussing them. Bearing these requirements in mind, I aimed at compiling a group with a wide age range as well as different domestic settings and sexual orientations.

Two of the participants I invited through a different route: my tutor

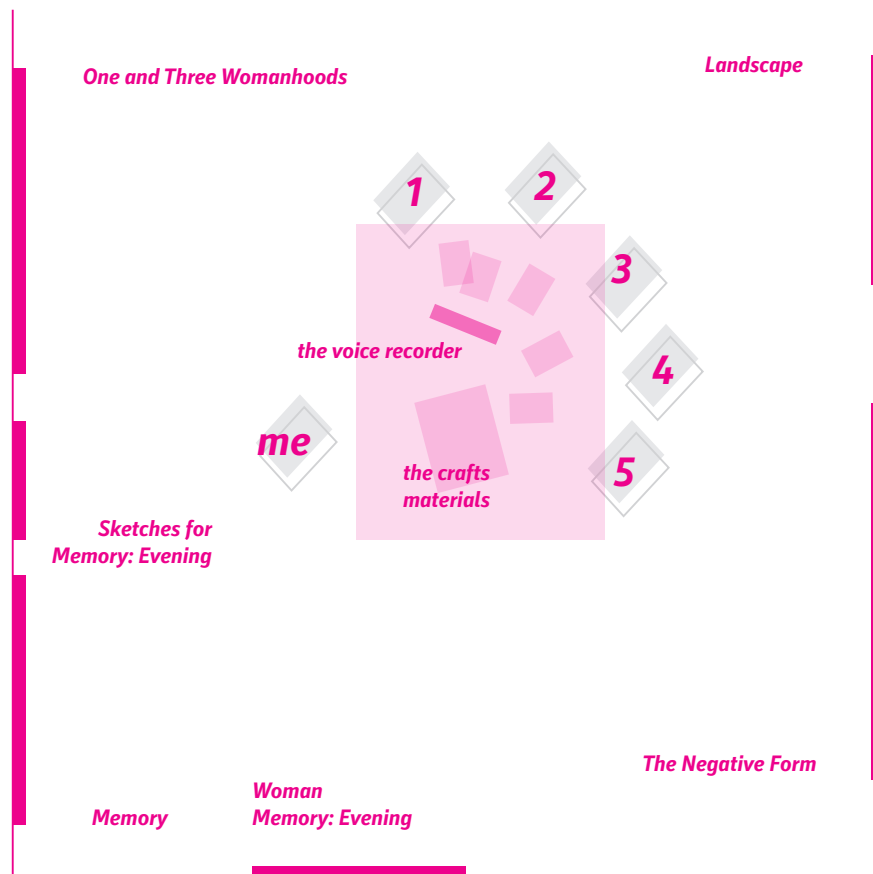


Figure 37: The arrangement and seating of the focus group interview.

suggested to invite them to the conversation for she knew these women to fulfil the requirements of an ideal attendee. They were also studying arts related subjects on a high level in the academia, and thus very much inclined to challenge the taken for granted assumptions of the everyday. With the involvement of these women, I managed to gather altogether five participants. Surprisingly, 4 of them had one or several children, and it came about that 3 of them were living with someone they called their husband. The two did not mention anything specific about their close relationships. The emphasis on women with children and in heterosexual relationships was something I had not planned for, but had originally hoped for more diverse ground. Nonetheless, as Montell (1999) notes, even though a varied group may produce the richest result, in ad hoc

groups the best strategy may be to aim for homogeneity: by creating as many connections between the debaters as possible, comfort and mutual understanding that facilitates discussion, are likely to arise.

Montell (ibid.) continues that in those groups that did not exist before the session, persons with very little in common may feel pressure because they are thought to represent their category: the only one over 65 should give voice to all senior women, or the only lesbian to the gay rights movement. Thus, in the end the compilation of the focus group was a rather lucky one: even though 4 had children, the one without was not the only one to act for the single women. Moreover, the two of the youngest ones were their mid-twenties, and the two oldest presumably in their late forties – the fifth somewhere in the middle. All of

them had a university education, most of them actually finalizing their master or doctoral degree. The ratio between the ones having a study status was 2 and 2; two of them were master and two doctoral students. The participant without arts-oriented education mentioned a few times working in a visual arts -oriented high school as a teacher of Finnish as mother tongue.

The seating was arranged as depicted in the figure 37. The four first ones entered the space inside the same approximate 15 minutes, and could freely choose where to sit. The attendee referred to with number 3 was late for about 15 minutes, and did thereby not obtain quite the same introduction as the others, but a more concise one.

3.3 The Mental Setting: Cold Showers and Sparkling Debate

Several points worth taking into consideration surfaced during the first half of the focus group discussion. Perhaps partly due to the extreme sensitivity of the topic, and partly for the slight ambiguity of the moderator's briefing for the session, rather harsh criticism was received. Before going to the analysis of the data gathered from the discussion, a brief account will be given on the overall mental setting.

After the first 50 odd minutes, the session did begin developing to a direction that I can be very contented with. Even though some tension did remain throughout the whole discussion, all of the debaters expressed willingness to participate and commit themselves. Due to the very intimate experiences and memories shared concerning their issues with everyday womanhood, I still consider the data fully usable and not affected by the remarks made mostly on the arrangement of the session.

In several points, all of them during the first 50 minutes out of the total 107 minutes of discussion, the moderator was criticized for her actions by two of the attendees. Fortunately, it was a minority of the participants who seemed to experience distress, and thereby the neutral and calm behaviour of the remaining three attendees enabled the development of the session towards a prolific and freely flowing debate. As a moderator, I also had to realise that the comments supporting and at times even defending my actions encouraged me to maintain an impartial and liberal appearance.

3.3.1 THE MAIN POINTS OF CRITICISM

In spite of the direct feedback, the possible reasons for the onslaughts should be unearthed. The main points of criticism seemed to consist of suspicion towards the collaging assignment and the usage of the word "role" in the so called extra-exercise whose questions were also utilised as the discussion openers (see appendix 02: The Extra-Exercise Question Sheet).

All of the criticism was given by two of the participants, with a third member merely expressing difficulty for visual expression of the theme. I encouraged her to set out to writing more if it would feel like a more natural means in the context, and also emphasised that the aesthetic qualities of a collage are not in my interest, but the experiences she can reveal through it. All in all, I tried to be as open and adaptive to the participants' needs during the session, concerning both the collaging assignment as well as the themes they were most inclined to handle. As Montell (1999), this is one of the ways to avoid the feeling of exploitation in the research context, and justify the commitment from the participants.

The criticism was given in verbal accusations and condescending advising on the ways such a group discussion should be conducted and the theme womanhood handled. The comments were actually directed to two issues: Firstly, the ambiguity of the moderator's motives and the unexpectedness of the assignment not mentioned in the invitation were lambasted. I defended myself against the accusations by convincing the attend-

ees of my good will, and that due to the early phase of the research, I was merely collecting rich data without yet limiting my scope of interest too much; the ambiguity was not because of concealing agenda but only due to the stage of the process. I was trying to formulate the statement made also by Montell (1999): I was really not testing any hypotheses with the discussion and the participants, but I genuinely wanted to learn about subjects' experiences and perspectives, and had thought the crafty assignment to be a lighter and nicer way to commence the session. I had also hoped that my works around us would have encouraged the exchange of visual accounts.

Secondly, the usage of the word "role" as a discussion-commencer was attacked. It was claimed to be all too a suppressive expression to be used in the context of personal womanhood. Thus, it was experienced totally in the opposite manner as I had suspected: initially, with the use of the word, I was aiming at giving the attendees a full control of the level of their participation, but the two of them were irritated by its provocatively subordinating meaning. I thanked for sharing the outlooks, and assured the debaters of my sincere surprise of the differing interpretations. Retrospectively, I could interpret the critique given on the word 'role' in relation to what Zeller (1993) would call "setting the agenda" and Montell (1999) as not letting the participants' understandings frame the information produced in the session.

3.3.2 DEALING WITH THE FEEDBACK

Because it was the minority of the participants that gave the direct criticism, I am inclined to state that it may not have been not only my chosen ways of conducting the session that lead to the tense situation. Moreover, having received informal feedback from four of the debaters afterwards, I have been convinced that the actual starting point for the discussion, including the assignment, was acceptable, but could have been only communicated more before hand.

I suppose that the unexpected level of sensitivity of the topic, especially coupled with the surprise of having to handle it with visual and self-expressive means, was too big of a demand. I should not have exposed women unfamiliar to each other to share their experiences in a fashion that might make them feel vulnerable. The reason why I had assumed the method not to be this distracting from the actual topic was its extremely positive reception on the night of the opening, and in a previous data gathering I had conducted related to another research. What I did not realise, though, was the crucial difference of the last session: in it, I asked the participants to expose themselves not only to me, but to each other's as well. Additionally, I had imagined that being in the presence of my exhibition pieces, of my personal revelations, a permissive and encouraging atmosphere would have been created. Once again, quite the opposite happened: one of the attendees described later, after the session, not having had this kind of feeling of exchange at all.

After all, the input of the collage assignments when verbalized by their authors, did work in a manner I had hoped: through them, the debaters brought up issues that begun to guide

the flow of the conversation, and that could even be referred back to later in the conversation when a statement at hand needed further clarification; they really demonstrated "the reflection effect of the sensitizing phase" just like Visser et al. (2005) anticipate with their longer term assignments as well. In this sense, they were highly useful, and their introduction to the session became justified.

However, I would not handle the situation in this manner again. Later, I have realised that by failing to announce some of the elements of the situation early enough my objectives could be experienced as exploitative. I did not manage to justify the commitment of time and especially self-revelation that I was asking of the participants. Possibly, if I had conducted a pure discussion on the topic, as stated in the invitation email, the participants would have oriented to it and thus aligned their needs and expectations accordingly. Now, I prepared them only to gain a possibly fruitful and mind-opening discussion with their peers on issues that are of importance to them. However, in the situation I surprised them by asking for another form of self-revelation that created different needs for them. When even framing the next phases of the discussion with the questions circling the concept of role, they must have felt out of control of the situation, and maybe even being converted to fit my presuppositions.

To summarize, the reactions of some of the participants and their analyses has sparked much thinking in me on the power relations between the researcher and the subjects of research. In addition to the interactional level, also the great theme of power began gaining foothold in my research.

3.3.3 ON POWER RELATIONS

The power relation that was unexpectedly created between the participants and me was not aligned with my open-ended briefing of the situation in the actual exhibition context. If demanding a self-expressive input from the attendees, the moderator should probably be either very precise on the assignment details and the aims of the exercise, or then announce it in a more ambiguous manner but well before for the participants' mental preparation. If acting in another manner, her motives may be interpreted as obscure and behaviour arbitrary – something totally different from justified and considerate. Now started the session by advising the five women to think of their experiences on womanhood and femininity in their everyday. This topic was also written out in the invitation e-mail. I explained that after the finalization of the collages, we would begin the discussion, possibly reclaiming topics from their depictions. However, when not being consistently explicit on all the main elements of the session throughout all the communicated material, the trust could not be created between all the attendees.

On the wall, next to the exhibition piece called One and Three Womanhoods, the piece which was most related to the assignment, I had attached a tag saying "Please help me in my data gathering by depicting and describing womanhood and its presence in your everyday. The utensils for this you can find on the table and in the crafts box". In addition to this, the assignment sheets themselves laid out on the table, incorporated a sentence that was identical to the one in the middle of the exhibition piece, and printed with the same font as the plea on the wall: "Please depict the third kind of womanhood here." (see figure 28 on

pp. 60-61 and appendix 03: The Collage Assignment Sheet) This setting was identical to the one in the opening of the exhibition when several collages were successfully created.

One of the attendees experienced the briefing of the collage assignment to be inconsistent, and another one of them made an effort on clarifying her confusion. Thus, I should really have considered whether simplifying the situation and possibly slightly directing the outcomes of the assignments would have been a better option than giving only few advice, intimidated by possibly biasing the results. Now, the defence reaction by a few of the attendees and also the social pressure it caused created a rather harsh atmosphere whose rehabilitation consumed a lot of energy during a major part of the session.

When listening to the recording of the discussion, it is rather easy to distinguish the growth of reserve in my voice, but fortunately also the incremental relaxation in that of the debaters' – even the most critical ones. In a group discussion, Montell (1999) notes, "Once participants feel comfortable interacting, however, they will probably attempt to resolve any points of disagreement on their own." These temporal shifts in power relations took place in the session as well, and finally settled to neutral and good-willing state. Nonetheless, I feel the issues of power and control grew to be an image of something more than just of the method. Through the cold showers in the beginning of the session, I realised my interest in phenomena related to power, statuses, and especially the authority women can obtain over other women.

3.4 Analysing the Focus Group Discussion

I transcribed the recorded material with rather high amount of detail, aiming at reaching the pace of the speech and the flow of the discussion as well as the interactive relations and tensions emerging during the session. I included the pauses of the speakers by using a double-hyphen (- -); the voices raised and words stressed were indicated with capital letters. The murmurs and non-verbal expressions such as sighs and laughs were marked in the transcription as well. I hoped that through the lettering, I would be able to better understand the communicational relations emerging from the discussion, focusing especially on finding out if there was a greater cultural discourse that brought about the reactions, and manifested through the debated issues.

In the end of her article, Montell (1999) pays attention to the ways the interview data could be analysed. She notes that in group discussions, the interviewer does not need to content herself only with the most evident revelations about the interviewees' beliefs. "An accurate reflection of individual experience is not the focus of a discourse analysis", a method that Montell suggests to be used for plumbing the data. According to her, focus groups are an ideal method for exploring underlying cultural assumptions if one utilises discourse analysis, because it assumes that "talk is not neutral but is both evaluative and performative" (ibid.). Also Pietilä (in Ruusuvaori et al., 2010, p. 213-214) reminds how it is assumed in discourse analysis that the way the language is used also constructs the reality where it happens. Thus, by searching the usage of language, one can gain knowledge of the social environment it describes.

With excavating the data in a manner that does not stick only to the individual statements but looks on the ways people are talking about an issue, the interviewer can gain an understanding of the ways it is possible to talk about a particular topic in a culture (Montell, 1999). Some ideas and approaches are accepted and some disputed inside the group. Montell promises, though, that they are exactly these points of disagreement and approval that "illuminate participant's underlying assumptions and the extent to which they share a culture of common sense understanding".

As Zeller has stated (1993), the method of focus groups has proven itself to be highly suitable for handling sensitive topics. Nonetheless, it came as a surprise to me that the topic of womanhood in the everyday was experienced as sensitively as it was. The backgrounds of the participants' may amount to a partial explanation, as well as my very open-ended and even vague moderation of the situation. Still, I do want to believe, and the utmost intimacy and honesty of some of the participants' comments also support this belief, that it is the topic that is really significant, multifaceted and entwined in the lives of these women.

After transcribing the full text I had 26 sheets of conversational data in front of me. I proceeded by reading the text several times, and writing every arisen theme, subject matter, opinion or statement on a sticky note, and attached them on a background "canvas" in a chronological order (see figure 38). By this kind of advancing, I was able to visually grasp the flow of conversation, and moreover the manner in which the main themes developed from one to another. I find this approach especially practical due to the self-guiding nature of

the discussion – it was only on a few occasions when the theme changed because of my initiative. Considerably more often, the debaters grasped a new topic independently, following a claim made by one of them. Thereby, with all the sticky notes attached, I could observe the often-subconscious link the various themes had in the participants' minds. Montell (1999) has also an account of how observing the movement in conversation topics can reveal background assumptions in the discussion; once, through the rapid shift from one topic to another, she discovered how the debaters had accepted the originally feminist idea "rape is violence, not sex".

I did not use any software to ease the work, but rewound and forwarded the recording to and fro, and typed what I heard in a word document. I decided to transcribe the interview only in Finnish and not immersing myself in translating the whole text on the side, for this would have required more professional knowledge on the practical and also ethical issues of translation than what I have (Ruusu-vuori et al., 2010, p. 432). Moreover, it was disputable whether this kind of investment in time would have been cost-effective if my goal were to gain an overall understanding of the most important categories and perspectives on womanhood the participants shared, and the larger cultural discourse they were linked to. Thus, I decided to transcribe the discussion in Finnish, and only translate the core meanings of the most illustrative comments to explain my interpretations to the reader.

From the transcription, altogether 255 individual notes were filled and attached to the flow-canvas (see figure 38). This amount of statements, notions and opinions could be divided into six different thematic categories,

emerging in the following order and named after the main line followed in discussion:

- * Conversation on Roles
- * Conversation on Being of Some Gender
- * Conversation on Decoration
- * Conversation on Biological Gender / Sex as Female
- * Conversation on scabbing from a group ("ryhmärikkuruus")
- * Conversation on striving for definition versus defeating it

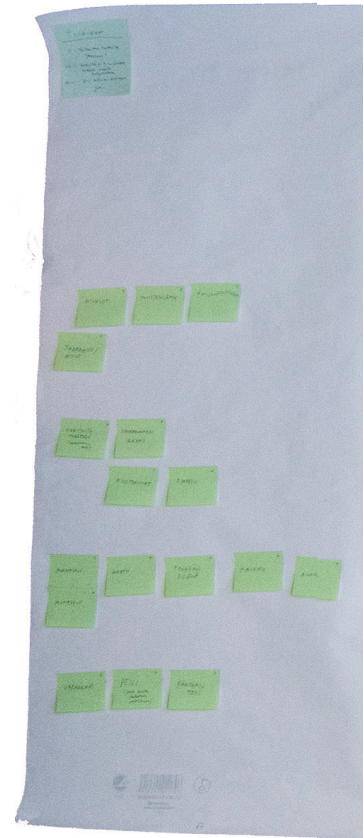
In addition to these, the conversation commenced from an attendee's initiative with a common chatting and analysing of the work named Landscape, which made up a group of notes of its own. I decided to integrate the conversation in the flow-canvas in order to distil the original chronology of the session, and also in order to include the first mentions of the phenomenon of hair thinning on top, for this topic was referred to later during the conversation on decoration.

3.4.1 ASPECTS, STATEMENTS, STANDPOINTS: SIX DIFFERENT CONVERSATIONS

Conversation on Roles

The conversation on roles began from my initiative, because I had thought that the few questions related to the theme would provide the discussion with a relatively easy access to the personal experiences of the participants, and reveal something of womanhood and everyday – something that could be deepened in the following comments. This hypothesis of mine was based on the expansive presence of the topic in the collages created prior to the focus group ses-

Figure 38: The Flow Canvas, incorporating all the main statements and points made during the focus group discussion, and presented in a chronological order.



sion. However, I had not conducted a pilot session to really find out about the reactions where the theme Roles would be introduced. Nonetheless, after discussion and some re-formulation of the session plan with my tutor, I had no reason to except such aggressive a reception as I came to counter.

I had dealt out pieces of paper for the ones who had first finalised their collages to keep everybody equally busy and avoid frustration. On this sheet, the first actual conversation questions were listed. I introduced the sheet as an extra exercise (appendix 02). The questions can be translated as follows:



- * In which roles did you feel you were coming to the focus group session?
- * In which roles did you think I had invited you to the session?
- * Which roles did you push away, or wanted to push farther when you came to the meeting?
- * Are some of your roles visible in the collage you made? If, then which are those?

The main reason why I selected the topic of roles to be the commencement to the discussion was – as I mentioned – to give the participants a freedom to start the conversation in a manner they would prefer and feel most comfortable with. From all the possible subjects emerging from the analysis of the previous 26 collages I could have picked some other as well, but through Roles I assumed

they could start to talk about their motherly identity, or their student status, or something more or less personal, private and intimate. I tried to apply Zeller's (1993) piece of advice on keeping the agenda open, and thereby make the participants to trust my goodwill and not exploitative aims. Additionally, when grouping the preliminary collage data, the themes of roles and symbols seemed to be of an over-hanging nature: they formed links to almost all of the other topics on a more or less metaphorical level. (see figure 24, pp. 56-57)

The word role seems to me to be very widely used in the everyday talk; People are often expected to possess different roles – to show different sides of their personas – in different situations and contexts. Due to this premise, I felt that I was giving as free position to the participants to define

their status, role and interactional relationship towards the others as possible. Nonetheless, quite the opposite occurred: the first debater to finalize the collage and the extra exercise became very reserved, almost horrified of the usage of the word, as well as of my presupposition that she might possess different roles and easily switch from one to another.^{1 2}

From this tension, the discussion developed so that the main issue discussed came to be the meaning of the word; differing attitudes people can have towards the concept; reasons why the word is not suitable when talking about womanhood; and which roles do exist in the lives of the women who want to accept the concept. The most interesting finding for me here was that by admitting taking different roles concerning womanhood, many of the debaters thought they would be

fragmenting their personality. It was clearly stated that their womanhood is one, and it cannot be divided into smaller entities. One even stated that womanhood is present 100 per cent all the time - being a woman is about being a human - and thus she is proud of it, and does not succumb to push it aside to any extent in any kinds of situations.²

It could be read between the lines that taking roles would either mean accepting some malign models from the outside to contaminate one's true self. Or, it could mean merely agreeing on moral or juridical laws by allowing the institutional aspects of for example mother's or teacher's roles to guide one's everyday life.³ Very interestingly, "a man" was stated to be a role that a woman might sometimes need or want to take. Through the comments linked to a phrase "to feel like a man as well", the topic changed slightly, and the next theme of conversation entered the session.⁴

1 *I will not make verbatim translation of the statements from the focus group due to the huge effort it would require, but still without providing the reader with a corresponding amount of indispensable information. I will nonetheless bring about the core meaning of the spoken accounts in the body text, and highlight some especially apt quotes from the session in the footnotes in order to provide the Finnish reader with glimpses to the original data. The numbers in the beginning of the quotes signify the focus group member as they are depicted in the figure 37, p. 70.*

Conversation on Being of Some Gender

The Topic of Gender was introduced through an attendee's personal observation of having a capability to identify oneself also with the male. This was not agreed by all of the participants, but it led to reflection of what do different people actually mean when they claim to be able to engage in this kind of identification. Are they then in a man-like state of some kind, or maybe in an androgynous one? Which things in a woman can be of a

manly nature, or turn to be like that in some situations? The transition from roles to gender in the discussion seemed to make these concepts rather parallel, or at least commensurate. The underlying assumption among most of the women sounded like one can alter one's gender in a manner one could jump from one role to another.

On the other hand, the ones who experienced womanhood as a solid, unchanging quality in them did not approve of the word role, and would thus neither agree on the fluctuating nature of gender. For them, woman-

2 *2: niin sen takia se on jotenki NIIN henkilökohtanen ja NIIN osa sitä, et sen takia jos sanotaan et jätetään asiaa pois niin mulle tulee hirveä vastareaktio, et, ei helvetti jätetä - -*

2: enkä mä voi jättää sitä, tai en mä HALUA jättää mitään osii siitä [naiseudesta] pois. Jos tää teema ois joku muu, niin sit ehkä se, eee, sopis paremmin, toi rooli tai muu. Mut ainakin mun elämässä se on SATA PROsenttia sitä mitä mä oon, en mä oo yhtään mies.

3 *5: - - että pitää olla heikko ja vahva samaan aikaan että, että jotenkin, niinko, odotukset on sitä että pitäis olla semmonen avuton ja naisellinen mut sitten kuitenkin pitäis olla vahva.*

3: mmm - - rooli on jotain. Mitä nopeasti. Niinkun. Omaksutaan, tai joku sellanen.

Me: joo

3: päälleliimattua ehkä jollain tavalla, siin on sellanen sävy.

4: - - mulla on niinku eri tilanteissa missä mä toimin, eli tavallaan niinku sellasia institutionaalisia rooleja. Mut ett ihmisenähän mä nyt yritän olla se yks ihminen [naurahdus]

4 *4: siis roolista mä ajattelin jotain niinku [hengenveto sisään hampaiden välistä], kyl mä nyt aattelen et äidin rooli tai opettajan rooli tai joukkueenjohtajan rooli, et mul on niinku ne tietyt tehtävät, ja mä käyttäydynki ehkä vähän sen mukaan. Ja sit et oonks mä niinku vieraiden ihmisten kanssa ni mul on erilainen rooli ku mä oon tota. Mut ehkä sit just et se voi sanoo et ne on niinku eri puolia itsestä joita niinku, näyttää, eri tilanteissa*

4: Mut mä vastustan itse tota niinku, öö, no mitä nyt ois varmaan tuolt lehdist löytynyt jotain [naurahdus] jotain semmosia tietynlaisia naismalleja vaan niinku enemmänki mä ehkä aattelen että - - et oli nainen tai mies niin että on enemmän ihminen - -

hood could be separated from these notions.⁵

Through pondering the questions above, very quickly the debaters recognized the need for ultimate sensitivity when talking about gender and sexes, of boys and girls. Many were also of the same mind when it was pointed out how the man is often seen as the "basic human being", as the standard, and as for woman, she is seen as something different. The issue of who is the one, who sees the difference, was not discussed. Surprisingly, the role-imposing subject was not touched upon in the beginning of the session either; in general the actors who seem to have the power over the female gender were not discussed. Not their existence, but only the effects of their will or gaze seem to be conceivable for questioning.⁶

If the man is the standard⁷, then what is a woman? Which elements

transcend from a man, and build up a woman? Or is it the other way round? Biological aspects of womanhood were soon distinguished as something absolutely crucial to womanhood. It was stated explicitly that biology is a pertinent element in womanhood, and through its features – the womb, the breasts, and capability of giving birth were mentioned – one might be able to give evidence on her womanhood. When I asked for other means to proving one's female gender, the topic developed to handle the notion of decoration.

Conversation on Decoration

Breasts, wearing or not wearing bras, jewellery, and red lipstick – these were the forms of decoration immediately mentioned when we proceeded to this part of the discussion. One of the debaters repulsed the use of

lipstick because of a personal sensation of dishonesty it creates; it seems to create a film that restrains the truth from coming out. The distinction between the positive and the negative in decorating oneself was established and agreed upon by all of the attendees.

The positive and good in decoration derives from the happiness and joy it can induce in the subject. It was also noted that it allows for women more protean rights than for men. In other words, women have a wider spectrum of possibilities for decoration; they can much more freely decide to either highlight or conceal some elements in themselves, in their womanhood.⁸

Nonetheless, even the protean freedom was often suspected to be used to depict the stereotypicalities in womanhood. This note leads to what was understood as the negative in decoration: the act of decorating may also become a signifier of an overly simplified womanhood. Thus, the eligible and the evadable features in the concept appeared to either give or take power from the woman; the positive decoration gives her rights to decide for herself on her appearance, and the negative redeems this self-control, and in a way reduces the actor to a simple sign of woman.⁹

Freedom and constraint created through decoration actually seemed to reach over the concepts of both self-control and control over other people's opinions. Through decoration, the woman seems to not only manifest her self-image, but also strive for guiding the perception of others on her. The borders and limitations guiding decoration were distinguished to be very different with the male and the female, and one form of decor seemed to have a special capability of drawing the gender line: the hair. Several of the participants admitted having experi-

5 2: *mun on pakko kysyä et mitä te tarkotatte sillä ku te sanotte et teis on miestä ? Mitä, mitä teille se miehuus tarkoittaa?*
[hiljaisuutta]

4: *mitä sulle tarkoittaa se et sä oot sataprosenttisesti nainen [naurua äänessä] ?*

5: *-- mut siis ehkä se pitäis sanoa että niinku miehenKALTainen, et jos on vaikka joutain. Ryhmiä. Ni.*

1: *mut ehkä se enemmän ku et ois mies, osaltaan, naisena, ni onki sitä et on tavallaan SUKupuoleton joissain -- tilanteissa*

6 4: *jos aattelee kirjallisuuttakin ni. Tota [huokaus] niinku miesten kyllästämää. Niinku, kauheen paljon tota -- niinku kuvaukset, oli ne sit naisten tai miesten kirjottamia niin useimmiten kuitenkin, että, tavallaan semmonen -- naiset nähdään niin -- niin tota jotenki vähän tota erilaisina, et se mies on tavallaan se perusihminen, ehkä se on se perusihminen joka mä tunnen olevani sillon ku mä tunnen olevani enemmän mies ku se nainen jolla on kaikenlaista sellasta painetta ja hörhötystä --*

7 4: *niin, mutku mies nähdään niin usein semmosena perusihmisenä, --*
1: *niin, standardina*

4: *-- yhteiskunnassa, et se ei voi olla niinku vaikuttamatta meidän ajatteluun*

mented with their hair, and having afterwards had to counter their new "tomboyish" or unfeminine appearance, re-considered their identities as women. One of the debaters even claimed that the hair is rather like a sexual tour de force that really defines one's level of womanhood.¹⁰

Hair was said to tell something about its bearer, and that it is a rather powerful tool to defy not only the borders of masculine or feminine decoration, but also the borders of manhood or womanhood. As a matter of fact, with this kind of statement

the changing and unstable nature of gender could be anchored to biology, and thus the problematic "role-taking" would become unnecessary for women. Through this quite surprising attitude according to which womanhood can be at least partly be defined through physical attributes¹¹, the discussion rolled out the concept of biological gender.

8 2: - - mä en oo KOSkaan käyttäny, ja mä en meikkaa yleensä niinku ylipäätään. Ja sit ku mä löysin tän uuden ULottuvuuden [naurahtaen] itsestäni, että Mähän [naurauhtaen] voin käyttää myös punaista huulipunaa. Ni mulle tuli tää kontrastinen ajatus, et siis.voin valita joko niinku ikään kuin peittävänä nais- Noh, mitä, stereotyyppistä naiseuttani, tai tuovani sitä esiin. Et mul on se mun käsissä, mä saan päättää.

9 1: Et mä voin olla koristeellinen, jos mää haluun, seuraavana päivänä mä voin. Olla verkkarissa. Niinku jos haluun.

3: - - että se on myös niinku. siin pahassa että. että tavallaan että niinku se on se, se naisen MERkki myös

4: niiiin

3: et se merkitsee sut NAlseksi. Tavallaan niinku, ku sä puhuit siitä et se mies on se perusyksilö, ni. Ni tota - - ni.

10 3: - - Ihan niinku isoihin rintoihin saatetaan niin kyllähän hiuksiinki. Niinku liitetään, emmä tiiä - -

3: - - et ne hiukset jotenkin sellanen seksuaalinen - -

1: mm

3: VOImannäyttö [naurahdus] tai miksköhän sitä nyt kutsuis [naurua]

2: - - Että niinku tavallaan. Kyllä se niinku, se sitä naiseuttakin jotenki. Määrittää se tukkakin.

11 3: mut sit jos mä aattelin sit niitä hiuksia et mitä ne merkkää ja mitä ne kertoo ne hiukset mukamas sitte siitä kantajastaan ni. Ni kyl mä mietin et. Siis tää mun oma poikani, joka nyt tatuoi itseään hurjaa vauhtia, ni tota, ni ku se meni ARMeijaan, ni sitä ennen sil oli semmoset, aika PITkät hiukset usein, ja- ja ne oli vähän sellaset luonnonkiharat, ja se näytti aika sellaselta ROManttiselta.

*Conversation on Biological Gender /
Sex as Female*

Very smoothly from the last statements concerning the physical determinants of womanhood, the briefly discussed and transitional topic of being of the female sex was handled. Probably due to the fact that four of the five debaters were mothers themselves, the concept of motherhood was foregrounded. This was justified as a major definer of womanhood by exclaiming the point of the men not being able to give birth, and thus not being able to be mothers, and further, to have the experience of womanhood.¹²

"The Body is the alpha and the omega", announced one of the debaters, and according to her, without the distinction between the male and the

female body, there would be no need to make a distinction at all between the sexes¹³. This statement created a rather strong response in me when I was transcribing the soundtrack from the session. It made me think of the historical effects of the supposed "natural" gap between sexes that has developed into several concrete gaps concerning gender, including those of income, professional statuses, custody issues, and so forth. Perhaps they are actually the roles denied earlier that lurk behind the statement; is it not exactly them that we re-produce every time when we aim at extracting the women from the men? Discovering the origins of the mental models that allow these differences to exist might be an extremely interesting, although probably a never-ending route to take in a study.

12 2: -- Kyl mä ite ainakin huomaa koko ajan enemmän ja enemmän liittävän sen kehoon, äitiyteen ja KEHollisiin asioihin tän naiseuden. Et- mut se on varmaan ihan henkilökohtanen just, et joku kokee et siin on tietty emotioita, tai tiettyi ajtuksii tai tiettyi muita asioita siin naiseudessa. Mutta mulla näyttää olevan tämmönen kehollinen [naurahtaa] kokemus tai --

13 3: niin kyl mä kans ajattelen et se keho on niinku kaiken aa ja oo et jos aattelee et me oltais kaikki jonkunnäkösiä neutreja niin- niinku kehollisesti, ni, eihän sit olis mitään. eroo, ei tarvitsis tehdä mitään semmosta eroa.

14 1: tuo niinku. Vastakohtaparien kautta määrittäminen ni se käsittää kyllä paljon muutaki ku pelkän sukupuolen. Et jotenki ihmisMIEli vaikuttaa olevan sellanen. et. Koska, se joko tai, se vaan nopeuttaa kaikkee --

4: mm

1: -- ajatusprosessia. Ja, ja niinkun, asioitten asettamista paikalleen. Niin sit se herättää ehkä sellasta suuttumusta jos onkin sillen et En sano, tai että. No En tiiä. Että välillä sitä välillä tätä.

3: et seee... et se tota, tämmönen niinku, just niinku näitten roolien sekoittaminen, se hämmensi.

15 4: -- Mut mua itteäni häiritsee kyllä eniten. sekä naisten että miesten käyttäytymisessä se että, että tota, alistutaan niihin sellasiin, miehisiin valtarakenteisiin. Käyttäydytään niinku miesten palvelijoina, niinku naiset, tai, tai miehet jotka alistaa naisia --

*Conversation on Scabbing
from a Group*

As mentioned, the topic of biological gender was touched upon very briefly, but it did lay ground on the following theme that in turn, became one of the most broadly discussed ones. Relating to the roles pointed to us as well as to the limitations of decoration we ought to obey, I asked if the participants had recognized some ways they were scabbing from the group of women they were expected to represent.

The conversation flowed for approximately²⁵ minutes, introducing several aspects exemplifying ways of exercising power amongst a specific group of people. Quite a few different ways to both sustain and defy prevailing power structures were mentioned, all of the participants recognizing how wobbling in between different options was always experienced rather negatively. It was said that mixing the roles not only confuses but also scares and irritates people. According to observations by one of the attendees, in addition to gender the issues where wobbling causes most rejecting reactions are the manifestations of ethnicity and age.¹⁴

Only now, almost in the end of the session, the subject who puts up the architecture of gendered values that we either follow or subvert, was explicitly brought forth: the manly power structures were seen as the main cause creating different forms of subordination and submission.¹⁵

However, it is not only the men who are to blame here; it was widely agreed on that also women often force other women to take roles in social situations, and these roles can easily be extremely stereotypical. A good example was made to illustrate a situ-

ation of female subordination: when having a dinner party amongst a group of friends mainly consisting of heterosexual couples, the men are expected to drink beer and possibly take care of the household chores in the yard (for instance chopping wood), and the women should handle the cooking and dish washing. Even if feeling more inclined to the tasks outdoors, the "girlfriends" do not dare to break the distinctive line between the two roles that people assume to be fulfilled.¹⁶

One of the debaters mentioned having noticed also another kind of instance where women exercise power over their peers. According to her, the feminists often consider the so-called "modern women" as lost causes when they decide to opt out of the working life and stay home with their children.

Although some can state that this is an act of dropping out of the rat race, the others interpret it as scabbing from their gender – rejecting the rights that women before them were so dearly fighting for.

Additionally, an intriguing fashion for benefiting from the otherwise malign structures of gendered roles and power was posed. Being a woman is not only about having to work in the kitchen but also about taking advantage of the feminine myth, and thereby managing to "cop out" of her assumed chores. This might happen in places where the alleged roles are especially clearly defined. One of the attendees described a scene where she had entered a hardware store, preparing mentally to appeal to the feminine attraction, expecting thereby faster

and better service. She was astonished by the reaction of a male clerk, who had bluntly said "Cannot you do this yourself?".¹⁷

One escape from the ready-made structures of roles may lie in a strategy suggested by one of the participants: she refuses to submit to anything, and does this by emphasizing her presence as a human being living the everyday, not a woman nor a man. It was unclear, though, how easily this can be put to practice outside the security of close relationships, in the working life or other even more temporary contexts – in those contexts where it was already recognized that the undefinedness and "wobbling" was experienced as intimidating.

16 5: *no ku- ku jos joskus ollaan oltu mökillä niin sitten nää kaikki. Tyttöystävät on siellä keittiössä tekemässä ruokaa ja tiskaamassa ja miehet istuu ja juo kaljaa, ja sit ku mua on alkanu ärsyttää et kyl mäkin hakkasin vähän niitä halkoja sillon päivällä että en mä nyt- ei mua nyt - -*

4: *et säkin voisit juoda kaljaa*
[yleisiä naurahduksia]

5: *niin, et ei mua nyt huvita, ja varsinkaan ku enmä nyt ees tunne niitä. Tyttöystäviä välttämättä niin hyvin niin miks mun pitäis mennä sinne, niinkun, just tekee sitä ku ne muut ei tee mitään, ne miehet*

2: *- - Omaksun tämän roolin. Että. en vaan erotu siitä massasta ja meen sinne keittiöön höpötteleen niitä näitä vaikei oo kauheen luonteva olo mut ainakaan mä en oo se joka lähtee kaljalle miesten kaa ettei joku MUU nainen aattele et mä en tee mitään, esimerkiksi. Et siis et silleen sit menee mukaan siihen ryhmäilmiöön. - -*

4: *joo*

2: *Tuntu se hyvältä tai ei.*

17 1: *mä menin, oikein just tätä naiseuttani hyväksikäyttäen pyytämään apua - -*

1: *- - ja sit vastaus oli sellanen et etkö ite löyä. Sit mä olin silleen et ei, ei tän nyt näin pitäis mennä. Että - -*

[yleistä hyväksyvää hymähtelyä]

1: *- - [naurahtaen] missä on mun naisellinen veto-voima*

18 5: *no mä aattelin et mä en osaa määritellä ni tää oli ihan tällasta, naiseus käytännössä [voimakas uloshengitys], tyyppistä [voimakas uloshengitys]*

Conversation on Striving for a Definition versus Defeating It

"To be more of a human, not a woman" -like attitude lead me to pose the last question on the participants. I asked, whether in their collages they were aiming at defining the concepts of womanhood and femininity, or keeping it as open as possible. As it already came apparent during the discussion, nobody was really striving for a definition, but the reasons and strategies of avoidance varied between the participants.

First of the attendees said that she had not thought of defining when she started the assignment. She described her approach to be rather like picking elements from womanhood and depicting them. Nonetheless, this attitude retains a statement that if wanting to, one could define the concept. The next participant to answer the question had wanted to keep the concept absolutely open, but once again, between the lines one can read that someone else perhaps could succeed in drawing the concept to an end. The third acknowledged not having tried to define due to the lack of knowledge in recent feminist theory. The fourth said, having studied the concept in her own work, that she only now is starting to realise the breadth and depth of it, and thereby could not even imagine being capable of defining it.

To me, the third and the fourth comment seem to implicate that even though the attendees themselves felt incompetent, there might be a quarter, an actor, a subject that could manage to define womanhood. There were two strategies that were applied in the session and characterized as applicable in the personal process of determination but evidently insufficient for establishing a final definition. Firstly, there was the strategy of drawing

and getting inspired from one's own experience – personal and subjective viewpoints were also what I had asked for in the invitation email. This approach concretised in the answer of the fifth participant, who noted that due to her incompetence to handle the subject otherwise, she decided to rely on her own evidence.¹⁸

Secondly, the strategy of picking different elements, and compiling one approach to womanhood from these aspects, was utilised. Thus, one has to conclude that the overall attitude amongst the participants was to allow the definition of womanhood. In a way, one could say that this inclination was in line with the assumption of the few attendees according to whom womanhood is something solid and unchanging. However, as the majority of the attendees expressed willingness to shuttle between the alternative interpretations of womanhood and gender, one comes to wonder who is then the definer of womanhood if not the women themselves. Perhaps this chore could be given to the manly power structures, the only quarter that was named accused of sustaining gendered values.

3.5 Conclusions

DISCUSSION

The separate column flowing through the following pages offers a point of view and one possible way to interpret the surfacing topics in the session. It is a rather subjective account that I wrote based on my way of reading the discussion data, and inevitably on my way of grasping the world and its causalities. These following quite a few paragraphs are included in order to provide the reader with some transparency of the thinking process that happened in my head, and that in the end made it possible for the ever-important design drivers and the third set of findings to emerge.

The most fruitful way to familiarize oneself with my thinking process is to read this discussion parallel to the analyses of the different conversations. Due to my incapability of yet grounding my interpretations on valid theory, or taking support from other feminist writings, I decided to exclude this discussion from the actual body text. Hence, it is also possible for the reader to proceed to the chapter 3.6: The Core findings (starting on page 92), and glance the discussion later, if she experiences a lack of transparency with the reasoning of the project.

3.5.1 On Definition

I was rather surprised by the fact that none of the participants totally denied the possibility of defining womanhood. This made me ponder if it was my assignment that was too leading. On one hand, I asked for a depiction of womanhood on the exercise sheet. On the other, I was using terms such as "everydayness" and "the third womanhood" that imply to a myriad of womanhoods - to several definitions as well as multiple definition-giving actors. The everydayness should even eliminate the elitist attitude anticipating a higher force from for example the academic world or the state to give a final version of the definition. Additionally, neither did anyone explicitly question the meaningfulness of striving for a definite definition. A few of them implied that it did not make much sense for them, but on a wider societal level, the endeavour was not criticised either.

The starting point for many of my art-objects has been the sensation of a gap between the personal diversity of experiences related to womanhood, and the popular simplified, trimmed and mutilated reading of the concept. The maybe partly subconscious attitude of the participants, who were all extremely discursive, analytical and gender-aware women, seems to support this hypothesis of the gap: in their thought-provoking and mind-opening comments and stories derived from personal history, there still lies a prerequisite for a definition. Continuing the interpretation, one could even state this to be an act of admittance in favour for an essential understanding of womanhood.

3.5.2 Personal Everyday Womanhood: The Third Womanhoods

In order to gain some grounding for my further interpretations, the starting point for the discussion should be studied. Despite the criticism obtained, at the end of the day the sensitizing assignment did function as I had wished for: it did open the session with the topmost outlooks the participants had of the concept of womanhood. In my opinion, the wording out of the collages made, and recognition of the main themes in them that now follows, can aid in determining whether my reading of the conversation is idiosyncratic, or if it really resonates with the attendees' attitudes.

Four of the five participants having children of their own, the theme of motherhood was rather apparent in the collages. It was linked on one hand to the bodily matters, and on the other to the acts of caring and organizing things for others. One of the attendees even claimed that taking care of things is almost like a myth closely related to womanhood. For her, the identity as a caretaker bears in not only serene lulling of babies, but also worrying, being tired and in general, "coping" in the context of family.

All of the participants had made an observation that they understood womanhood as something that exists in relation to others. One of them proposed explicitly - as I had done in my work *One and Three Womanhoods* - that the concept could be defined in relation to the man. Another debater noted that her life is being arranged mainly for other people, but in the mingling of social relationships, she tries to remain as an "independent thinker". She also strongly defied the "certain kinds of models for womanhood" offered by mass media, which I also interpret as a reaction to the outside world that effects on the image of the self.

One of the participants approached the concept from a slightly more abstract perspective than the others. She began verbalizing her collage by stating that womanhood is something changing and fluctuating, and it takes different forms. To her, it can incorporate as different sides as the basic elements are in relation to each other; it can be transparent and something that only she herself can distinguish – rather like light or air – or then again, it can be something very material. Additionally, on top of the interlocking elements, there are the limitations coming from the outside that she described as norms and etiquette. Following these norms, she said, is nothing inherent, but only an act of following orders that others impose on her (see figure 39).

The most abstract of the collages can be seen to summarize the over-arching attitude amongst the attendees rather beautifully: womanhood is something ever changing, and existing only in relation to others. In the collages, the concept of "the others" varied between the social sphere outside home and the closest relatives inside it, reaching out to the societal and cultural levels by implying to myths and behavioural norms. When talking about limitations and constraints settled by the others, I am inclined to state that the first major and clearly defined concepts – power and control – entered the conversation. Additionally, when insinuating the fluctuating meaning of the concept in relation to different – especially social – contexts, its situational character cannot be overlooked. This situational reading of womanhood, gender and body I will treat as an over-arching theme prevalent in all of the sub themes emerging from the interview data. The notion of situationality does not merely remain as a concept outlining our experience of womanhood, but it seems to develop into a fundamental and indispensable characterization of it.

Another highly noteworthy notion which I feel should be highlighted from the discussion, is the performative nature of womanhood. This facet of the concept became apparent in the session through discussing the bodily ways of being a woman; being a mother, being the one who touches to console, and being the one who determines what to show and what to conceal of her body. Two of the attendees mentioned womanhood being something that is only visible to them. The manifestations of the concept that are invisible to the outside eye, such as underwear, can be complemented with visible ones like lipstick or certain kind of behaviour. What I find intriguing is the amount of corporeal examples given on acting in "a womanly way", or to put it in other words, in performing one's womanhood.

Consequently, I will now elaborate on the newly defined thematic directions in order to describe the stance they take on everyday womanhood. This concentrated analysis of the discourse will provide me with more and more defined points of departure for continuing both my practice-based process and diving into feminist theory.

3.5.3 On Power and Control

The first distinguishable, underlying attitude in the comments seem to suggest a ghost of an undefined subject that possesses both the power and the responsibility over many of the discussed elements in womanhood. It remains very unclear who or what this might be. In the next paragraphs, I aim at shedding light

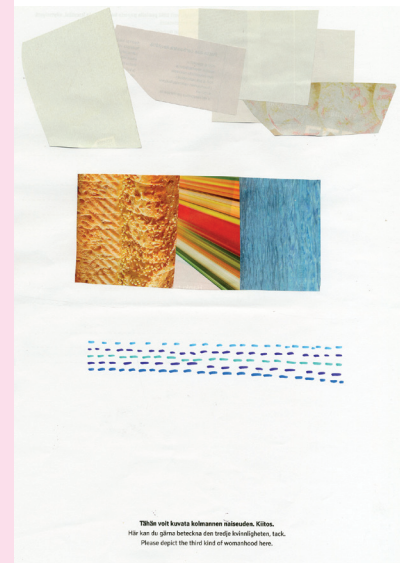


Figure 39: The abstract collage made by one of the focus group participants.

on the few possible possessors of power mentioned or implicated to in different parts of the conversation.

The first negative articulation of a power restricting womanhood took place already in the very beginning of the conversation on roles. As already mentioned, a few of the participants rejected the use of the word due to its nature that for them was something superficial and "determined from the outside". In the context the inside was perceived as the woman herself, but the outside was never explicitly defined. A few instances were drawn out, though, and they enable my first interpretation of the forces controlling womanhood: firstly, the roles were seen having changed through time, and thus the observation of "the roles given for woman in history" seemed to imply to the fluctuating cultural and social contexts diagnosing womanhood.

Secondly, and to me at least, seemingly falling under the rubric of socio-cultural contexts as well, the institutional roles were mentioned. By stating this, one of the participants was implying to the juridical or governmental authorities that determine the ways a woman as a mother or a teacher ought to behave. To put it in short, the society from its three different stances – cultural, social and administrative – was seen to control what is understood as womanhood.

The society at large was insinuated effecting the perception of womanhood in several occasions of the discussion, especially when talking about roles of women and the state of being some gender. In later instances, smaller communities of people were often characterized as constraining and exercising power in a manner that disturbed individual's own perception of natural, easy and inherent behaviour and her ways of acting in a group.

During the conversation on decoration, when discussing its division to good and bad forms, it was stated and generally agreed upon that also the individual can have control over her own appearance, and thus even over her gender or sex. While the positive kind of decoration was about reclaiming one's protean rights and control over her bodily appearance, the modification of some body parts – especially hair – was said to be a truly sexual exercise of power. It was even stated that through hair one can re-adjust one's level of womanhood. It was nonetheless recognized that even though one herself can make the decision of cutting the hair in a certain fashion – say, in an "interesting" or "cool" way – it is still the others that finally make the evaluation of the level of womanliness manifested by the hair and thus possessed by their bearer. These perceptions of coolness had often times in the participants' cases turned into "tomboyish" or "not traditionally feminine" readings through the comments of others'.

The power relations between an individual and the human communities were divided into two different actions, characterized both as voluntarily and involuntarily taken ones. It was stated that the individual can be forced to take a role, and this forcing succeeds either if the person herself submits to demands addressed to her, or if the community or another individual succeeds in their act of subordination. Interestingly enough, it was not the men who were most blamed for their succumbing behaviour, but the groups of women who control social situations through claiming others to submit to familiar, feminine roles. Additionally, the women who do not fight back but merely agree on the manly hierarchy in the everyday were perceived as scabs and the guilty ones.

Suggestion for a Hierarchy of Control

All in all, three levels of human interaction came forth when analysing the controlling and power exercised over one's womanhood. These are now depicted in the graph in the figure 40. The individual herself is drawn out as one form of human interaction because the effect of others on her – the surrounding community always reflecting one's seemingly independent decisions – was so apparent in all the comments. The women told several anecdotes of their voluntary experiments with their bodily features, but these experiments seemed always to conclude to an evaluation given from the outside. Still, I am inclined to state that even the process of evaluation must be reciprocal: when the individual is being scrutinized in her communities, the community is also affected by the individual's input. Examples can be drawn even from the focus group session: for instance, the increasing amount of openly lesbian, transsexual and intersexual students in the high school where one of the participants was teaching, raised issues in the staff meetings, and required the teachers to discuss and ponder upon the differences between hetero- and homosexual demonstrations of affection in the school context. Moreover, the several (male) youngsters wearing skirts in the school halls do not merely need to bear the long looks of their peers, but they also challenge and questions the amount of legs and the fashion of hems each and everyone of the lookers-on are wearing. Due to this obvious interconnectedness of individuals' actions, all the layers of interaction are linked in the graph in a continuous manner.

The society and its social, cultural and administrative norms that surfaced already in the very beginning of the session lay the ground for the control; it seems to define the framework for the communities and their assessments, and the individuals for their acts of re-producing or defying the concept of womanhood. Nonetheless, beside this construction of human interaction, the participants also raised the issue of feminine biology several times during the discussion. "The biological basic features" of women were seen as a means for defining the concept of womanhood. Furthermore, it was noted how losing one of these elements – a breast or a womb for instance – often causes a crisis of some kind for the female individual. I am thereby inclined to state that biology, or at least some fixed form of it, was also seen as a quarter exercising power over women. Once again, it should be noted that biology itself can also be seen as a man-made notion, and the preferences and the definition of normality inside of it, is being modified over time. For this reason, it can never be totally apart from the human communities, and is thus laid next to it also in the diagram.

It seems to me that the countless human interactions that possess the control over the experience of womanhood determine quite a lot of the following themes emerging from the discussion. When "the others" that have the power change according to a social or a cultural situation, the fluctuating social nature of womanhood need to be brought forth and taken into consideration in the following analyses and synthesis.

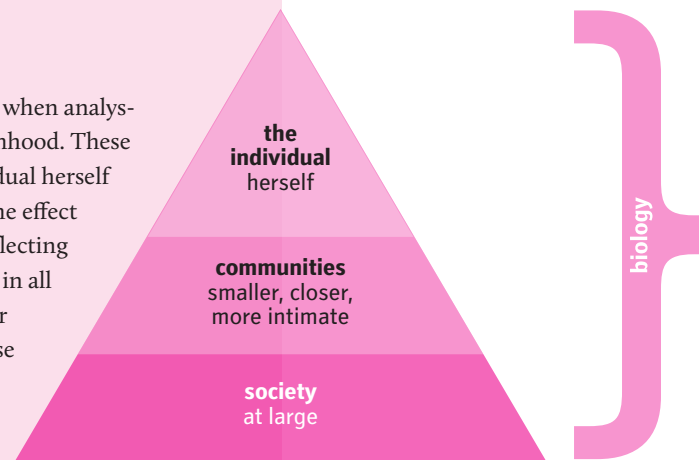


Figure 40: Hierarchy of control based on the understanding gained from the focus group discussion.

3.5.4 Bodily Performance

I began sensing the significance of the concept of performance in relation to womanhood when several of the attendees had been talking about the actions that they felt they were supposed to take especially as mothers. These actions seemed to have a repetitive character; the descriptions of being the one who organizes, takes care, touches and consoles as well as worries for others, were said to "always" fall to them. Furthermore, when continuing scrutinizing, the performance seemed to stand out from the comments made on several occasions that related to some bodily actions taken by the participants. In due course, those actions or pieces of bodily performance had seemed to have a clear effect on their perception of their womanhoods.

Thus, the concept of performance straight from the interview material, and to which I am implying here, has a strongly iterative character. Moreover, it seems to be clearly linked to the perception of the corporality of the attendees. It also needs to be noted that when four of the five participants had children of their own, their bodily performance seemed rather evidently to be framed by the concept of motherhood. Perhaps this is a reason why quite a few notes of performing one's biology were made during the session. Nonetheless, there were also several instances where social relations defined the state of affairs where the debaters seemed to have recognized some kind of performance of happening.

In order to try to grasp the vast account of performance from the interview data, a rough distinction to biological and social performance is made. Still, it has to be borne in mind that often times these two fields overlap strongly, and that ontologically, the distinction has been studied, debated and reformulated time and again in the history of feminist theory. Thus, at this point it should be regarded only as an initial and very cautious categorisation structuring my analyses. Later, I will return to its problematic nature as well as to its potential to guide my practice-based process.

Performance of Womanhood through Biology

The biological performance may sound slightly awkward, for one may be accustomed to conceive the notion of biology as something natural that merely happens, or "is with you all the time", as one of the attendees – the only one without any children of her own – formulated her womanhood. Performance, on its side, is understood as something executed, accomplished, fulfilled or presented¹. With the use of these verbs, one can sense the subject in performance, quite the opposite as in biology.

The performance of biology seems to happen in the lives of the participants in a rather complex manner: firstly, many of the debaters had experienced some of their bodily attributes possessing especially strong tendency for capturing womanhood. In addition to the "biological basic elements of a woman" such as womb, breasts and capability of giving birth, the hair seemed to be of this nature; it was described as having the power to define womanhood. Moreover, rather like losing a breast, also losing large amounts of hair involuntarily as an effect of a disease or growing old was suspected to be a lot more sensitive issue for women than for men. Almost like in order to crystallize the performance of womanhood through biological attributes, the participants' agreed, "a porn movie with a bold - - and

¹ Definition retrieved from the Merriam-Webster online English dictionary, 22.9.2012, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/performance>

breast-less [female star] - - would not exist”.

In addition to hair thinning on top, a few other perspectives were brought to the discussion that could be grouped as biologically uncharacteristic performance of womanhood. Actions such as the deepening of voices of teenage girls – a phenomenon usually related only to the male – and the physical and erotic demonstrations of affection between youngsters of the same gender, would fall to this category. Once again, drawing a category of this kind brings me on rather thin ice due to the historical debate whether sex is actually as socially constructed as gender. Nonetheless, I will establish this account of biologically uncharacteristic performance only in the context of the interview data, where this perspective came to exist and did not seem to disturb the coherence of the conversation.

When one of the participants was memorizing a situation when a shop assistant had been insisting on defining her baby girl as a boy, based on the colour of the overalls worn by the child, the observation of a human need to distinguish one's sex became linked to decoration. To me, raising this issue drew out an interesting note: when one does not wish or cannot define one's gender or manifest one's sex by her/his physiological attributes, people around the individual will still tirelessly call for a distinction, and will over-analyse social and cultural characteristics whilst doing so.

Social and Cultural Performance of Womanhood

As the example of the baby in blue overalls can be seen to showcase, one may even involuntarily, or totally ignorantly, perform her womanhood or the lack of it. The manner one is dressed like, or I am inclined to use the word *decorated*, may guide her performance, or at least the interpretations the others make based on the performance. In several instances, the participants noted that there are innumerable places where one's uncharacteristic social or cultural behaviour can cause social friction – a bit like biologically uncharacteristic behaviour can bring it on as well.

If a young woman reveals having not coloured her hair ever, she can easily be excluded from a group of other women. Or alternatively, if she decides to join the men to the outdoor chores in order to evade gossiping in the kitchen, she is very likely to be the next one to be gossiped about. These two examples establish the two main ways through which the participants seemed to be defining social and cultural performance of one's womanhood. That is to say, through certain culturally established means first posed in the conversation on decoration, one can either strengthen or diminish one's performance of womanhood. By wearing red lipstick, one can claim her feminine protean rights, or give them away when for example not daring to wear jewellery in a group of men.

This strengthening or diminishing one's performance does not always need to take explicitly material forms, as shown through the second means of performing womanhood. Performance can come about also in going to certain places or refraining from others, as in the case of chucking wood versus doing dishes.

The reason why I claim that several of the statements the participants made were specifically about performing one's womanhood, is due to the act of - according to my perception - becoming aware of someone's corporeal states and attributes, and of the changes in womanhood or of a will to change the perception of it. In the discussion, it did not seem to be of much relevance if the subject

herself is the one who becomes aware, as in the case of the baby in blue, or the teenage girls whose erotic closeness the teachers were discussing over their coffee breaks. More important was the realisation that someone is doing something in a certain way – in a womanly or unwomanly way. From this realisation, I am inclined to conclude that with acknowledging that many acts are pursued – or performed – in a certain manner, they can be also performed in an alternative manner. The alternative seems to depend on the dominant factors in one's biological, social or cultural vicinity. Hereupon, the situational character of womanhood can be introduced to the analysis.

3.5.5 Womanhood as a Situation

When implying to a situational character of womanhood I mean the ever-present acknowledgment of its fluctuating nature that was denounced in the focus group session. In almost all parts of the discussion, when diving into the personal and everyday experience of the concept, the participants gave clear examples on the dependency that their experiences of womanhood and femininity had on the prevailing context – on the situation that they were in at the moment. Thus, as can be perceived from the different conversations, the concept of situation mainly consists of the social interaction the participant was taking part in, and the physical appearance she was possessing at a specific instance. The physical appearance here divides into the participants' biological attributes on one hand, and into the socially performed ones, including actions, gestures and decoration, on the other.

Consequently, the situational character of womanhood means that the meaning and content of the concept change depending on the social and physical aspects dominant at a certain situation. As it was noted for instance during the conversation of being of some gender, also “the biology of a woman” can change as a result of disease or childbirth, and thus change the experience of personal womanhood. I will now concentrate on showcasing what kind of forms this fluctuation of womanhood can take, and will thereby aim at grasping some of the situational essence of it.

Premises Enabling the Creation of New Situations

One of the first examples given on adjusting one's womanhood or femininity according to the situation one is entering dealt with being able to identify oneself with the male. This was not agreed by all of the participants, but the ones who did, seemed to imply that in certain situations, they either felt “quite a lot like a man” or, as illustrated in later parts of the conversation, they tried to behave like a man in order to gain an equal status. Not evaluating if the shift towards the so called manly performance is voluntary or not, I state that this process of temporary identification does enable the concept of womanhood to fluctuate.

On the other hand, man was seen as “the basic human being”, and thus something rather solid and unchanging, opposing the “pressure and crackpottery” (“painetta ja hörhötystä”) – words one of the participants linked to the general perception of womanhood. One can start to question, what does this endeavour-

ing towards the solidity of manhood do to the situational character of womanhood. Does it now actually become imperturbable like manhood is claimed to be in its fundamentality? Or is this identification with the male still such a situational act that in the end it only increases the oscillation of the personal experience the women have of their womanhood? Despite the lacking answers, I think that recognizing that one of the directions of fluctuation is actually the direction of manhood is extremely intriguing.

The whole conversation on decoration provided the situational character of womanhood with many directions where to expand. Firstly, as women were said to possess evidently more protean rights than men, the situationality seemed to get the long straw. Almost all of the women shared personal experiences on how they had been literally creating situations with novel and radical hair-dos. Why I claim that the hair solutions is a great evidence on this is due to their account: the coiffures were described as having challenged the ideas of what kind of appearance is womanly, both for themselves and also for people around them. It was also noted that hair has a power to define one's womanhood and even make it climb or drop a level, a bit like big breasts do.

Several of the attendees said having experimented with the hair, and later becoming surprised of the effect it had on their womanhood through the reactions of others. In this testimony, I am sensing something essential to the situational character of womanhood: womanly features are played with and tested; the bearers have a will to try out new things, grasp themselves from a different angle during different times of their lives. The outside lookers-on mirror these experiments, and make the women put their hair to on one hand wider context of womanhood, but on the hand to the very limited area of accepted and generally agreed upon version of it. Perhaps it is actually the others that turn the experiment into a situation: their reactions and the thoughts these provoke in the experimenters make the concept tremble.

During the conversation of scabbing from a group, it was noted that wobbling between alternatives irritates, and sometimes even frightens people. Several strategies of breaking out from an expected behavioural norm were given. Quite a few of these were linked to forms of decoration such as the male wearing skirts or the female not colouring their hair. Additionally, some instances were brought to the discussion where going to unexpected places and doing unexpected chores had had an effect on the environment. I am eager to interpret the women going to hardware stores, or chopping wood and drinking beer while their female peers are mingling in the kitchen, very much as an act of creating a situation. These women are defying the pre-determinate mark of a woman their fellow-men are trying to put on them, and opening the womanly ways of behaving for novel outcomes, that primarily resonate with their inner experience of being in the world.

One of the participants said that she is not submitting to anything as a woman in her everyday, but trying to consider herself as a human being at all times. On one hand, I see this as a huge possibility for creating situations only by going to places in the cultural environment of ours where quite a few things are designed in a manner that underlines the presence of sexual distinction – for example the lavatories, shops and their clothes sections categorised according to sexes, and in general all the tasks that are thought to be pursued by a representative of the other sex. On the other, again I wonder if striving for becoming a human being that refuses gender- and sex-related connotations really enriches or rather blunts the character of the individual.

Biology was referred to as one determinant of the borders of womanhood, and could consequently be characterized as a quarter that inhibits the creation of alternative womanhoods according to a situation. The conversion or modification of some physical attributes that were said to establish “the basic things in womanhood” could turn into a crisis for women, but several of the attendees still believed that losing them would finally make them more aware of their experience of womanhood. I am inclined to handle biology as an anchor that to certain extent allows some movement and re-formulations, but still does draw the sphere of how long one can sail. In the discussion of four mothers, biology does seem to establish the line between the sexes; it is the biology that constitutes the categories. Biology scaffolds the concept of womanhood, and prevents the alternatives from seeing daylight.

Although decoration was generally perceived as a positive array of possibilities possessed by the female, it was thought to include a negative side as well. It was noted that the mere act of decoration - without analysing the more specific meanings the situational decoration can comprise - could mark a woman. The capability of creating alternatives to one's appearance is a possibility that only the women have, and thereby the protean rights actually become a mark of women. This “negative decoration” may sound like a rather complicated concept to overcome when trying to get rid of the limitations for fluctuation. Nevertheless, the attendees did give a hint of a direction to take: one of them mentioned decoration that strengthens the stereotypical image of womanhood, and several of the attendees gave examples on this like wearing red lipstick, jewellery and bras. This observation insinuates that there is something outside the stereotypical décor as well. Still, the way one distinguishes the stereotypical decoration from the other kind seems to depend on the situation.

I am inclined to state that the stereotypical image of a womanly appearance is linked to the concept of roles. During the conversation on them, some of the participants seemed to repress the use of the word when talking about womanhood because of the dubious connotations roles inevitably gain. When scrutinizing womanhood from the perspective of situation, one of the remarks seems especially interesting to me: the reference to roles was refused so strongly for it was said to in a way fragment one's womanhood. Shifting from one role to another according to one's context was experienced as highly negative, untrue, and threatening for one's experience of her womanhood. One of the reasons why the word role was perceived as such a malign one was that it is something superficial, and given from the outside.

Thus, even though the roles provide the women with several choices amongst which to select the nature of their attendance in a certain situation, they still represent only a fragment of possible ways of being, acting and behaving. Moreover, these ways often are linked to pre-determinate, historical, cultural and social norms that through times have been considered more or less limiting. I must admit now understanding the frustration towards my choice of words; I had thought of giving the participants a freedom to enter the situation from whichever stance they felt like, but by implying to “roles” I insinuated that I had already determined something about them. Related to the concept of situation, I would like to summarize the attitude towards roles and individual freedom as follows:

The inherent possibility to commit to situationality is perceived as positive when it happens from an inner motivation of a woman. However, it is perceived as highly negative when an outside actor proposes it.

One elaboration of the outside actor was given during the conversation on scabbing from a group. The manly power structures were made a scapegoat for subordination and submission, and perceived so powerful that they could even recruit other women to forcing to take a role that does not make one feel natural and at ease with oneself. This suppression definitely prevents the creation of situations, and seems to support a solid architecture of values and preferences strongly influencing womanhood.

3.6 The Core Findings

3.6.1 DESIGN DRIVERS

The following theses constitute the core principles that I was able to ooze out of the discussion. Some of them may seem rather simplified when taken out of the original context. In order to avoid a possible lack of transparency in the thinking process, I wanted to include the at times quite long analyses presented earlier. I want to highlight here that my aim was not to twist the words of the attendees, but to crystallize drivers that could evoke critical thinking in me and serve the following conceptual design. The theses do not claim that all of the individual participants agreed with them. However, according to my analysis striving for utmost honesty towards the attendees, they all describe phenomena that the women had recognized being a more or less problematic part of the everyday experience of womanhood.

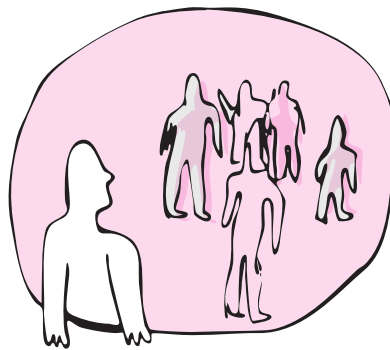
The order of the drivers describes their level of fundamentality. The first, “Driver 0” lays ground for my current understanding of the basic form of everyday womanhood. The following drivers and their clarifying statements enrich the Driver 0, shedding light to its relevant aspects.

Driver 0

Womanhood is situational.

Womanhood depends on the prevailing context.

The context consists of social interaction and physical appearance.

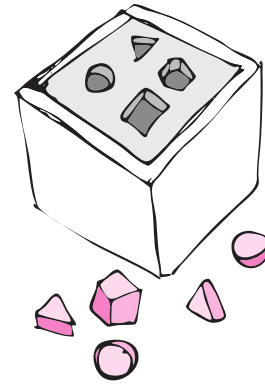


Driver I

Womanhood exists in relation to others.

Womanhood is defined and re-defined countless in human interaction.

Womanhood is about organizing firstly in the sense of and taking care of others, and secondly, taking care of businesses for others.



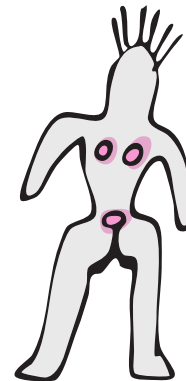
Driver II

Womanhood is changing and fluctuating.

Womanhood does not support the state of a basic human being.

Womanhood is difference, pressure, and crackpottery.

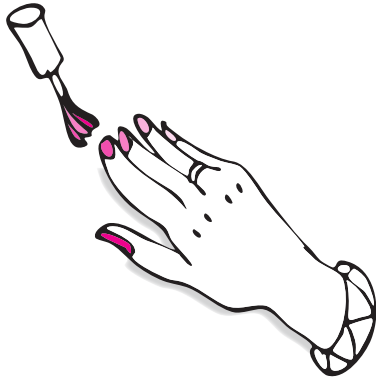
Womanhood can be hidden, and made visible only to one self



Driver III

Womanhood is corporeal.

Womanhood can be defined through biology, or to be more precise, through breasts, womb, capability of giving birth, and hair. There are accounts of biologically uncharacteristic performance of womanhood that blur the borders first drawn by biology.

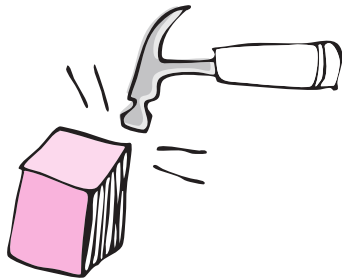


Driver IV

Womanhood is repetitive performance.

Performance can be diminished or strengthened through certain culturally established means.

These means can be material manifestations or immaterial transitions between places and actions.



Driver V

Someone can define womanhood.

Nonetheless, the individual women cannot do this comprehensively as their definition would only rely on personal accounts of the everyday. A solid perception of womanhood is cultivated also by the women themselves, and the heretical can be socially punished.

3.6.2 THE 3RD SET OF FINDINGS ON THE ENTWINED PROCESS

The handling, analysis and synthesis of the focus group data consumed surprisingly many weeks, sheets and sticky notes, but after the exhaustive root it seems to have provided the process guidance on all the levels needed. During the next few paragraphs, I will summarize the extensive impact the session had on the project and its development from an artistic point of departure towards a designerly outcome.

Crystallization of the Artistic Themes

First and foremost, the thorough transcribing, reading and categorisation of the statements made by the participants enabled me to continue the process of convergence and sharpening of the themes present in my artistic practicioning. Through grouping sticky notes, drawing mind-maps and scanning through theoretical resources I was able to preserve my initial interest in the core of the process. Still, this interest in everyday experience of womanhood was fed and nurtured iteratively, resulting in a set of statements that I feel so comfortable with that I dare to call them design drivers. The crystallization of the themes in the drivers could be questioned on the strength of their still quite manifold nature. Despite this, they are obviously consistent with each other, and additionally elaborate and enriched in comparison with the initial, unstructured hypothesis of reduction.

I dare to state that the level of detail in the drivers is sufficient, for the concepting phase did ignite flowingly: I was able to rather effortlessly begin shaping clear ideas for critical concepts, the drivers giving cross-limitations for each other. They seemed to

feed each other rather well, especially when enriched with the focus group participants' statements compiled on the flow canvas (figure 38, pp. 74-75).

One reason for my confidence in the drivers and their future guiding power is that they resulted from a process during which I was able to modify my subjective artistic wonder so that the questions emerging from it could be answered by other people – by the collage-makers and the focus group attendees. The early themes were perceived as important but problematic by most of the attendees during the two first stages of data gathering. This interactive correspondence with the other women and a few men encouraged me to deepen the analysis, and strive for genuine and truthful drivers.

As already insinuated, in addition to the thematic, the shaping of the themes did guide the process on other levels as well. One of these is the theoretical scope of the thesis, and the other the final framing of the process and the research questions.

Framing the Concepting Phase of the Project

As I had planned, after the synthesis of the focus group findings I would begin concepting possible design solutions based on drivers emerging from the data. Nevertheless, through the clarification of the themes in the focus, I began questioning the sensibility of creating proposals that would already in this phase take the form of a product or a service. No matter how critical or conceptual they might be, they would in a manner offer a solution to the topic, thereby potentially inhibiting the recently discovered fluctuating nature of womanhood to emerge. After quite a few sketches in which I was applying the drivers, I realised that maybe the concept of situation, and

the inevitably situational character of womanhood, should be the main subject of my future experiments.

I considered poring over issues that seemed to rise from the cross-fertilization of the drivers. I begun sketching based on the following few conceptual directions emerging from simultaneous application of drivers:

Direction 1:

Revelation of negative self-control and critique towards one's own womanhood

Core motivation: Driver I: Womanhood exists in relation to others; Driver II: Womanhood is changing and fluctuating; Driver V: Someone can define womanhood

Direction 2:

Decoration with biological attributes, both characteristic and uncharacteristic

Core motivation: Driver II: Womanhood is changing and fluctuating; Driver III: Womanhood is Corporeal; Driver IV: Womanhood is repetitive performance

Direction 3:

Conscious over-biologisation of one's milieu

Core motivation: Driver III: Womanhood is corporeal; Driver V: Someone can define womanhood

Direction 4:

Making it easier to define one's own space and place in social situations, and providing a possibility to change it if it feels restricting and unnatural

Core motivation: Driver 0: Womanhood is situational; Driver I: Womanhood exists in relation to others; Driver II: Womanhood is changing and fluctuating

As explicated in the column labelled "Core Motivation", all the above approaches were aligned with the drivers distilled from the focus group session. What very soon seemed to be a common nominator in the shaping directions was the endeavour towards a revelation, a contestation, and a subversion of some kind. This tendency made me to backtrack my early notes on the origins of critical design, cultural probes, and the Situationists International, and finally led to an idea: designing a probe package might converge the artistic, designerly and situationist layers of my thesis in the most logical manner.

One of the emerging conceptual directions that supported my idea of re-designing probes was making the nature of social situations easier to acknowledge. This direction derives its core motivation from the most fundamental drivers, numbered 0, I and II. The Driver IV of repetitive performance and the driver V of defining womanhood was also effecting in my thinking process; they brought to my mind the forced roles women need to take and the pre-defined performance they have to attend to because of sheer peer pressure. To these drivers, I linked the statements by the focus group attendees as well as my own experience of the poisonous feeling flooding to my mind and body when being asked to do the dishes, make the coffee or clean up a place on the grounds of being a female, possessing certain bodily features. I wanted to pore over bringing forth any social situation whose nature is easily retrieved from questionable – usually subconscious – habits in thinking, and not based on the attendees personas, capabilities and own will.

What I was now aiming at with the following concepting was to compile a self-documentation kit that would,

when used in the everyday, reveal and un-cover the quality of social situations for the persons using the kit, aiding them in acknowledging their living environment, with its value structures and norms, so that they could see these limitations from a distance, and for the first time, decide by themselves if it is beneficial to continue following them.

The Research Question Solidified

Having decided on the overall conceptual direction and the frame for the future development, I acknowledged the third manner how the syntheses from the focus group had guided my process. After analysing the collages and being prepared for the discussion, I had defined my research question through the following two formulations, the second of which I had stated to be merely an alternative wording (originally on page 16):

How can the making of art-objects guide the artist-designer in her process, even though striving for a design-like outcome?

How does the self-reflection, concretised in the art-objects, feed the design process, and direct towards a designerly end result?

Now I felt that I had already answered to the first formulation within this case of everyday womanhood. The making of art objects had guided the data collection phase, making it possible for me to frame my thematic and theoretical scopes as well as to validate the last method for research. Thus, the second wording became the priority, and through answering to the first one, it could be reconstituted as follows:

How can the artistic self-reflection, concretised in the art-objects, guide the data collection phase of the design process, and aid the development towards a designerly end result?

So to summarize, the artistic self-reflection had enriched the data gathering phase of a design process, when filtered through generative and focus group sessions. I had proved to myself that subjective, very artistic point of departure can be applied in the design context successfully. At this stage of the process, the successfulness naturally implies only to the convergence and sharpening of the initial themes and hypotheses, making them usable for designerly actions. In order to persuasively prove the applicability of the method, I would still need to produce the designerly end result, as promised in the research question.

Final Method for Research: Cultural Probes

The drivers and themes supporting the selection of probes as the final concept and end result for the project, I planned the last phases of the user study accordingly. In the very early phases of the project, I had had a craving for using probing in some part of the project, due to its historical importance in the development of critical and user inspired design. Now, its usage had become validated in a slightly unexpected manner, and it would be applied in a somewhat unconventional manner.

I would run the last phase of user involvement by using the probes in a fashion that would simultaneously function as collecting both information and inspirational data of the lives of the participants. Moreover, the probing would be the first iteration of the actual concept testing with the

real users. Thus, the probe package should be designed so that it would gather data of the lives of the users as well as to promote its own development. Naturally, these two aims are not totally separable: all the facts that I gained from the returned probes would enrich my understanding of the users' everyday, and will thereby aid me in strengthening the concept's capability in revealing social situations that should be acknowledged. Nonetheless, I will pay some additional attention on including questions that would collect explicit information of the rights and wrongs of the concept.

In my case, the final concept of the project is originally a research method that is now re-designed with respect to its origins, but executed in a way that enhances its implementation as a self-standing observation kit, that anyone can use independently, outside a research context.

Filter for Gender Theory and The Role of Theory

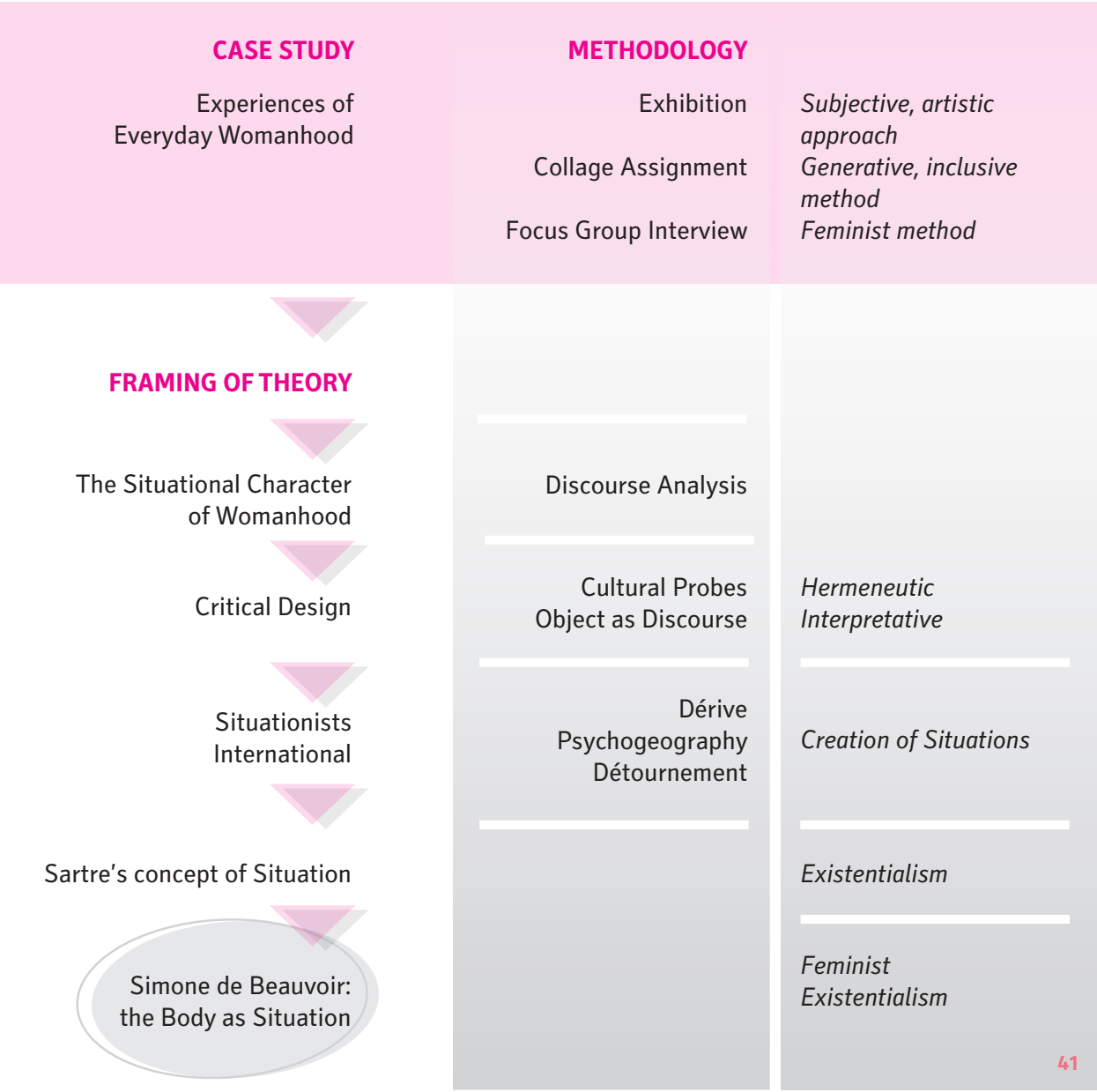
During the process and especially in the early phases of it, I had been scanning through quite a few writers on one hand on gender theory and on the other, on critical practices in design. Nonetheless, only now that I had found an approach to the vast theme of everyday womanhood, I was able to begin framing the theory of the subject matter of the work effectively. Through distinguishing the situational character of womanhood, and thereby the concept of situation to be an integral part to my understanding of the everyday womanhood, I would be able to target the reading on theory in a manner beneficial to the project; by enriching it in a concentrated manner, without scattering my attention.

The following graph (see figure 41) presents an outline of the data collec-

tion of the entwined process till the formulation of the drivers. The gathered information and responses made it possible for me to finally frame and link the different theoretical sources. On the right hand's side, the utilised methodology is recapped in order to illustrate the intertwining of different methods. The two sources of theory in the bottom of the graph – the existentialist philosophers' Jean-Paul Sartre's and Simone de Beauvoir's concepts of situation – present the interesting direction the framing of theory gained.

Claire Gilman states in her article on Asger Jorn, who was a significant figure within the Situationists International (McDonough (ed.) 2002, p. 210) that "Sartre and his philosophy of the situation are fundamental to the SI's notion of everyday life authentically experienced". Sartre, on his side, approaches the concept in his book *Being and Nothingness – En Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Nonetheless, there has been debate within the philosophers' community on the intellectual influence Sartre's companion Simone de Beauvoir actually had on his thinking. Fullbrook (1999) argues in his essay how Beauvoir was actually the first to approach several topics in her novel *She Came to Stay* – such topics that have been considered as Sartre's discoveries. Hence, it could be possible that also the concept of situation originates from Beauvoir.

One can cautiously believe in Beauvoir's authorship on the notion of situation when glancing through her array of writings: within her seminal book *The Second Sex*, she dedicates the entire part V in the book two for clarifying the women's situation. Moreover, later, although through criticism, Butler (1986) analyses Beauvoir's concept of body as situation. Therefore, based on my very superficial archive search, I dare to state that a rigorous rooting



of the fundamental sources might reveal an interesting feminist twist in the foundations of the Situationists International, and thereby and in the critical design ideology as well.

Koskinen et al. (2011, pp. 118-119) state that for constructive design researchers, theory is only one ingredient in a larger framework that is produced from a successful, frontline design project. The accompanying ingredients are things such as debates,

designs, and design process. They note that theory is definitely important in constructive design research, for it raises questions of what should be designed in the first place. Moreover, it helps designers to see things. This happened also to me: even the shallow familiarity with the Situationists International and their intellectual relations to Sartre and Beauvoir made me realise the importance of the concept of situation, and the possible

future steps I might take within critical design.

Nevertheless, theory ought to be considered as explication that comes after design (Koskinen et al. 2011, p. 110): it possesses a capability to explain why design works, but it does not tell how to create good design (ibid. p. 121). Koskinen et al. (ibid. pp. 118-119) claim that design is not a theoretical discipline, and that researchers should rather put their effort into developing

their prototypes. They also note that the most abstract theoretical thinking appears only in the theoretical sections of doctoral theses (Koskinen et al. 2011, p. 120), and even then, researchers seldom hope to add to this knowledge.

I hope that the reader does not think that Koskinen et al.'s framing of theory within constructive design research only gave me an excuse to skip the whole thing. Rather, it forced me to realise how unrealistic a goal I was setting for myself. I also realised that even though I had found astonishingly interesting theoretical agenda, this agenda could not be fruitfully examined within my project that already involved a rather vast user research phase. Having compiled the graph above, I had most definitely found a new area of theoretical interest, but also had to acknowledge that within this project, it would very likely remain as a loose add-on. Thus, the entwined project had again guided me in an utterly constructive manner: it had revealed me a new subject for future projects, but also pointed out the importance of framing.

Gaining New Confidence

The last but not the least of the findings from the entwined process was more like a revelation of a personal issue regarding my designer's identity. Having collected, grouped, analysed and synthesized the responses from the focus group session, and being on the verge to start the conceiving phase, I realised that there was new confidence in me that I haven't experienced for a long time, if ever. In retrospect, I suppose the main reason was being able to see the subjective, un-rational and un-grounded interest in the matter *womanhood* to take

shape and convert in my designer's hands.

Hence, the project had made me realise that I had actually been rather un-contented with the attitude that I had been taught to nurture. This attitude was actually that of rationalism: one needs to reason all the decisions made and or else the design process is very likely to fail and produce a bad *solution*. When exploring the emerging confidence, I understood that notwithstanding all the talk about reflective practitioning, design thinking, creativity and problem finding instead of solving, I was still very attached to rationalistic thinking as a necessity in the design process.

Koskinen et al. date the golden period of the design rationalists to the 1950s and 1960s (2011, p. 15), when the designers were considered as problem solvers and the act of designing as the science of planning. Not quite that surprisingly, this model was to fail, and in the end even its protagonists encouraged experimentation with art (ibid. p. 16). Nonetheless, the effect from the rationalistic thinking went deep, and as late as in the 1990s designers still had to explicate how they were primarily sense-makers, not problem-solvers (ibid. p. 17).

I argue that the rationalistic ethos is still present in the design education. In the beginning of my studies in 2005, at least I was lured to the game of reasoning *everything*. I do acknowledge that there are downsides also in the anything goes –attitude cherished by for example the showroom researchers (Koskinen et al. 2011, p. 92), and that it bears in a high probability of failing as well. Nonetheless, I am extremely glad having finally been able to reveal what has festered me within the design process. One *can* conduct a meaningful project without an all-penetrating

rationalistic attitude involved. As a matter of fact, letting myself loose, and deriving inspiration from something that is deeply significant for me can aid me in reaching the highest point in the learning curve, and probably a good end result as well.

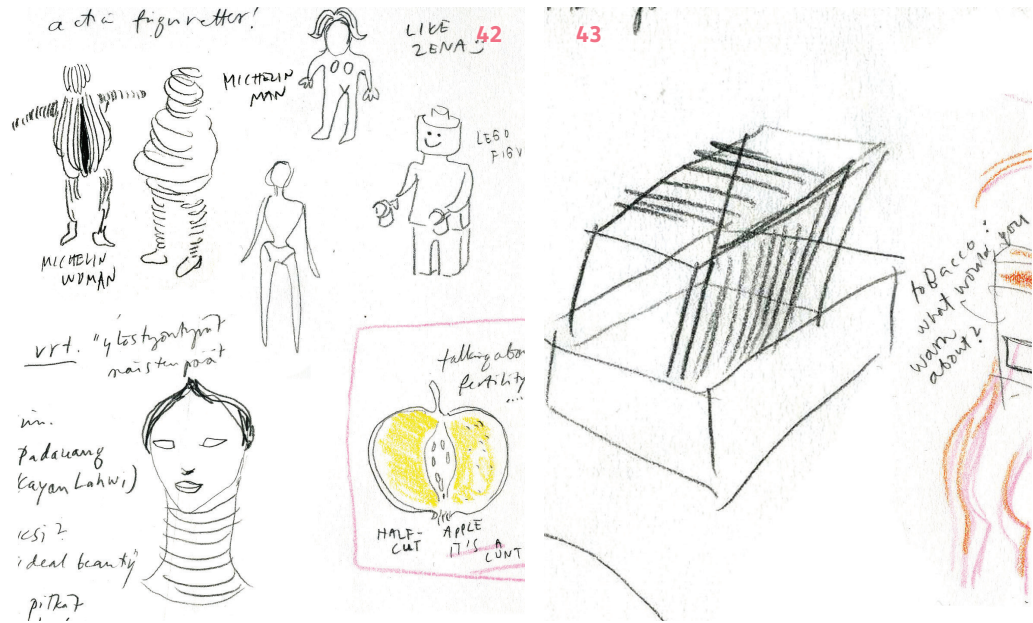
Concepting Phases

4.1 What Kind of Probes?

As stated earlier in the chapter *Framing the Concepting Phase of the Project*, the most prevalent aspiration in the idea of re-designing cultural probes that was also in line with the set of design drivers, was to make the nature of social situations easier to acknowledge. Bearing this in mind and being still inspired by quotes from the focus group discussion, I began sketching out possible contexts of contestation in the everyday social interaction. I made dozens of sketches, varying between a thumbnail picture and an A3 in size, and distilled them finally into altogether 12 assignments. (see figures 42 & 43)

Each of these assignments presented a state of the world that either encouraged the potential participants to reflect on their own past and present experiences, or to imagine an alternative future for their everyday. In every piece of exercise, they were also encouraged to write, and in some also to illustrate their thoughts, perceptions and experiences. Some of the assignments were more clearly and straightforwardly linked to individual statements from the focus group conversation that had come to describe a larger and more complex theme in a concrete manner. One example of an exercise of this kind would be the *Mamtryoshka doll*: one of the participants had explicitly stated that womanhood for her is largely about taking care of others – a statement which aided me in the formulation of the Driver 1: Womanhood exists in relation to others.

Nevertheless, quite a few of the exercises were slightly obscure, with no obvious link to the discussion data.

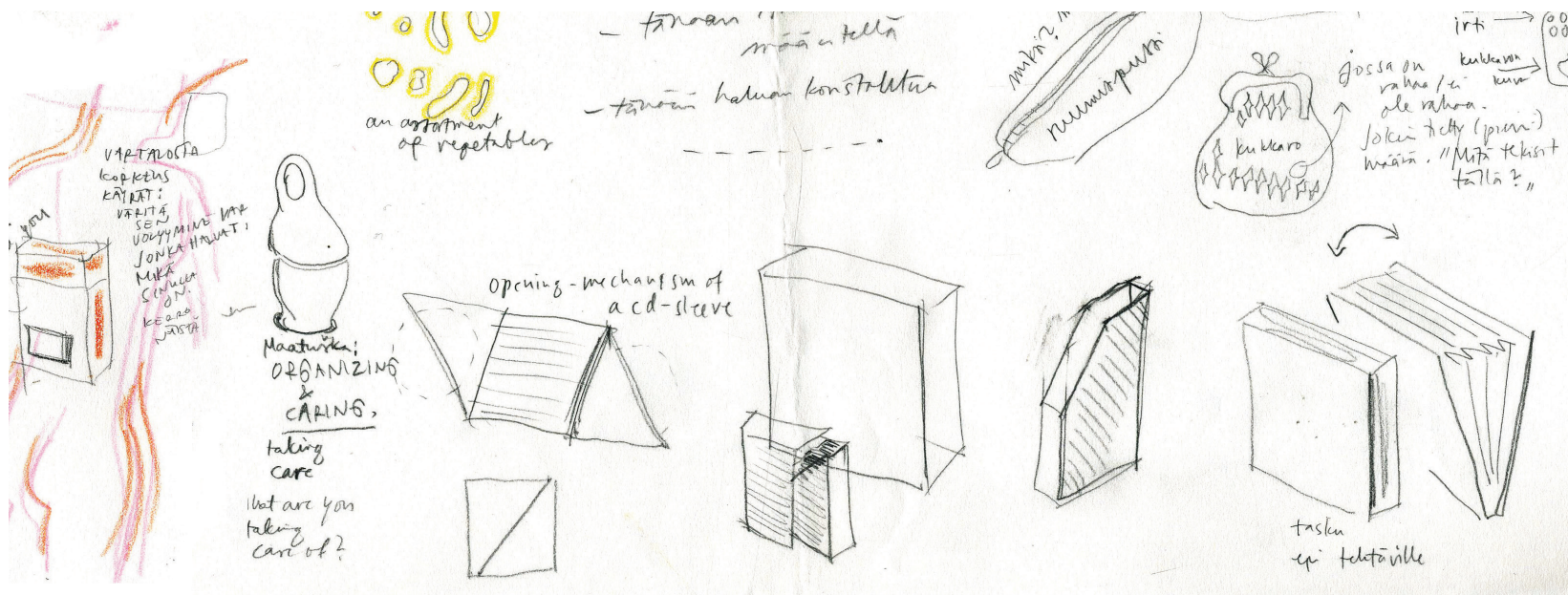


Figures 42 & 43: Initial Sketches for the Probes assignments.

For instance, the assignment *Pink (it is?)* aimed merely at probing the daily experiences the participants had. I dared to include tasks like this one, or the *Red Ribbon*, following the example given by Gaver et al (2004), who had requested participants of a study to take pictures according to even very absurd briefings. They had given only limitations such as “something you’d like to get rid of” or “something red”, but had found that these “accidental glimpses of the home’s atmosphere were as informative to us as more purposeful presentations made by the volunteers”. In general, in the article “Cultural Probes and the Value of Uncertainty” (Gaver et al., 2004), the writers criticise the manner designers had obtained to rationalize the data gathered via probing, and even compile the sets with the aim of gaining specific answers to specific questions. Like Gaver et al. (2004) note, the ultimate value of probes lie in their explorative, playful, uncertain, and subjective nature; or as I would put it, their capability to subvert the existing order by showing things that people

have not come to consider before.

Undoubtedly, as Mattelmäki (2006, p. 58) thoroughly presents, probes can be utilised for multiple purposes – for collecting different data in various phases of a design project. She constitutes four different categories of application the method: inspiration, information, participation and dialogue. Having already gathered a huge amount of data through the focus group discussion and its minute transcription, I felt that I had in a way reached a point of saturation of how much is useful to know of one’s subject of research. Like Gaver et al. (2004) put it, “knowledge has its limits”. I felt alike after the discussion analyses were done. Still, I did feel a lack of something: a lack of inspiration, of guidance that could provide visual and emotional enrichment in the following, creative concepting phases. This is one of the main reasons why I ended up selecting the cultural probes as the final method of research: I had already gained so much from the volunteers through the discussion session that I felt I did not need that



much of facts anymore. Having been able to distil themes and statements about everyday womanhood, I was now after a direction of how to elaborate on these themes. Undoubtedly, the rich details from everyday incidents gathered through a probe study, would provide me with this extra kick of inspiration I was lacking.

4.1.1 FURTHER INSPIRATION FROM SITUATIONISTS INTERNATIONAL

Several of the assignments fluctuated between these two poles of traceability and vagueness, or as Gaver et al. put it, "requests ranged from straightforward to poetic" (Gaver et al., 1999).

As it can be noticed in the description of the exercises (chapter 4.1.3 Exercises, pp. 101-112), also the most ambiguous assignments had links to focus group session; they were only formed via the most fundamental – and also the most equivocal – drivers. To name one, *Pink (is it?)* (p. 106) endeavours to grasp moments; fragments of everyday situations that the women involved

live through. This kind of attitude evidently manifests the situational nature of womanhood, as well as the original Situationists' goal to encourage drifting, or *dérive*: a technique of strolling in one's surroundings but in a manner that involves an experiential and playful spirit as well as sensitivity to psychogeographical effects.

The exercise 9: *Suffragette Map* was a rather straightforward adaptation of the principles of psychogeography as well as the map format utilised by Dunne and Gaver (1999). The assignment asked the participant to imagine Helsinki as the body of a woman, and ponder which areas would present which parts. Through this kind of phrasing, I wanted to make the attendees aware of "the varying emotional neighbourhoods" (ibid.), as well as the feelings that they link to the physical attributes of a woman. Moreover, the exercise reached toward the everyday sphere of the women: which areas they used, and of which they only had presuppositions of – and which stereotypical assumptions of the female body would relate to these presuppositions.

The map is a strong metaphor, and I utilised it in a lighter manner also in the exercise 11: *Orienteering*, where the participants were to draw the contour lines of their body on an orienteering map. This was also in a way an adaptation of drifting: I asked them to follow the lines, and free themselves to think what kind of contours they would prefer themselves. Nonetheless, the lines had gaps, and one could not to follow only one contour to create an unbroken silhouette. In the points of discontinuity, participants had to determine how "fat" or "skinny" arms, legs, or thighs they wished to possess.

The exercise 7: *Michelin Woman* presents the clearest example on *détournement* (for definition, see p. 41). In it, I took a familiar figure from the consumerist culture – the Michelin Man – and re-formed it to resemble the figure of a woman. I also tilted the Michelin Man's tyres 90 degrees for two reasons: firstly, with women, the concept of "having a spare tyre" on the belly is very derogatory, and re-produces the suppositions that everybody should be thin and fit, cat-walk-like.

Secondly, the stripes that now run from head to heels, from breasts to crutch, provoke people gently to think of the “wound” or “crack” that women have, and the description of the sexual organs as a flaw, even a bruise.

To summarize, most of the exercises encouraged drifting of some sort: withdrawal from the supposed ways of conceiving womanhood. *Détournement* was not very present, which was partly only a coincidence – I happened to come up with and create just these assignments. Nonetheless, if the emphasis in my project would have been more on the Situationists’ and critical designers’ critique on the spectacle and consumerist behaviour (Pyhtilä 2005, e.g. pp. 44-45; Koskinen et al 2011, p. 90), including popular figures and images such as the Michelin Man would have been indispensable.

4.1.2 THE FORMAT

Rather like Gaver et al. (1999) first approached their participants when handing out the cultural probes package, I decided to obtain a similar attitude. They announced in their reputed article that they had approached the elderly people in their research focus with an indisputable offer: “We’ve brought you a kind of gift”. This was a guiding thought for me as well when I began sketching out the possible looks of the package: it would need to be something out of the ordinary so that it would really encourage the participants to immerse themselves in the making.

The format of the self-documentation package was slightly like an elaborated version of the postcards assignment that Gaver et al. had pursued already in the late 1990s (Gaver et al, 1999). In their postcards, they had

applied questions on the other side, and thought-evoking pictures on the flip side. Like Gaver et al. described their package, also I aimed at finding out the participants’ attitudes towards their lives. Unlike the original cultural probes, though, my context wasn’t technology usage and living environment of the elderly, but the everyday experience of womanhood. Nonetheless, quite like them, I also “used oblique wording and evocative images to open a space of possibilities”, and aimed at “allowing - - as much room to respond as possible” with my design.

The original postcard assignment encouraged casual reflection because of their “connotations as an informal, friendly mode of communication”. Gaver et al. (1999) executed the idea of postcards quite literally through “pre-addressing and stamping them for separate return” (ibid.). Although I kept only the postcard-like format and size in my assignment cards, also I strived for casual and visually overwhelming experience in order to overcome the gap between a researcher and her informant. The forerunners in 1990s had used a variety of playful assignment formats, such as maps, pre-selected photographs, and cameras. I wanted to include a similar attitude in my package, but also to create the rich imagery through using my artistic skills gained in printmaking and illustrating.

Other aspects that were designed in favour for the informality of the package were to underlay the exercise sheets on stiff cardboard, and use coherent decorative patterns, outline colouring and typefaces. With these designerly choices I aimed at creating a product-like appearance for the whole set. I justified this with distancing my package as far as possible from on one hand formal text-based questionnaires and on the other, from homespun, arty-crafty package. I as-

sumed that if already endeavouring to a laid-back but professionally crafted set, the participants might be both inspired and also take the given tasks and the rules I had asked them to follow more seriously.

I wrapped the exercises in three purses that I sewed out of felt. Each of these was of different colour, and had a tag on one side that indicated the numbers of the exercises that were inside. I had made this division so that in the lightest coloured purse, there were the seven exercises that I wished most the participants would do. Nevertheless, I decided to include all the 12 assignments to the set for two reasons: first, the extra and joker exercises would allow freedom for the attendees to skip those tasks that they did not understand, or which might in their opinion present values or areas of everyday life that did not commit to at all. Secondly, I wanted to test more than only seven types of exercises, but considered that a workload of 12 compulsory assignments might be rather much. Hence, the possibility to choose the most interesting exercises would also provide me with some insights on the successfulness of the task types.

The assignments numbered 8-11 were situated in the second lightest, grey purse called “The Jokers”, and number 12 in the darkest one that had a tag “Extra Bonus”. The exercises that I had decided to take out of the seven first ones were in my opinion slightly more metaphorical, personal, or plainly provocative. So to conclude, I had compiled the whole set in a manner games often proceed: first the player begins with more basic tasks, but if she notices liking the game, she wants to get to next levels and find out more about the world unwinding to her.

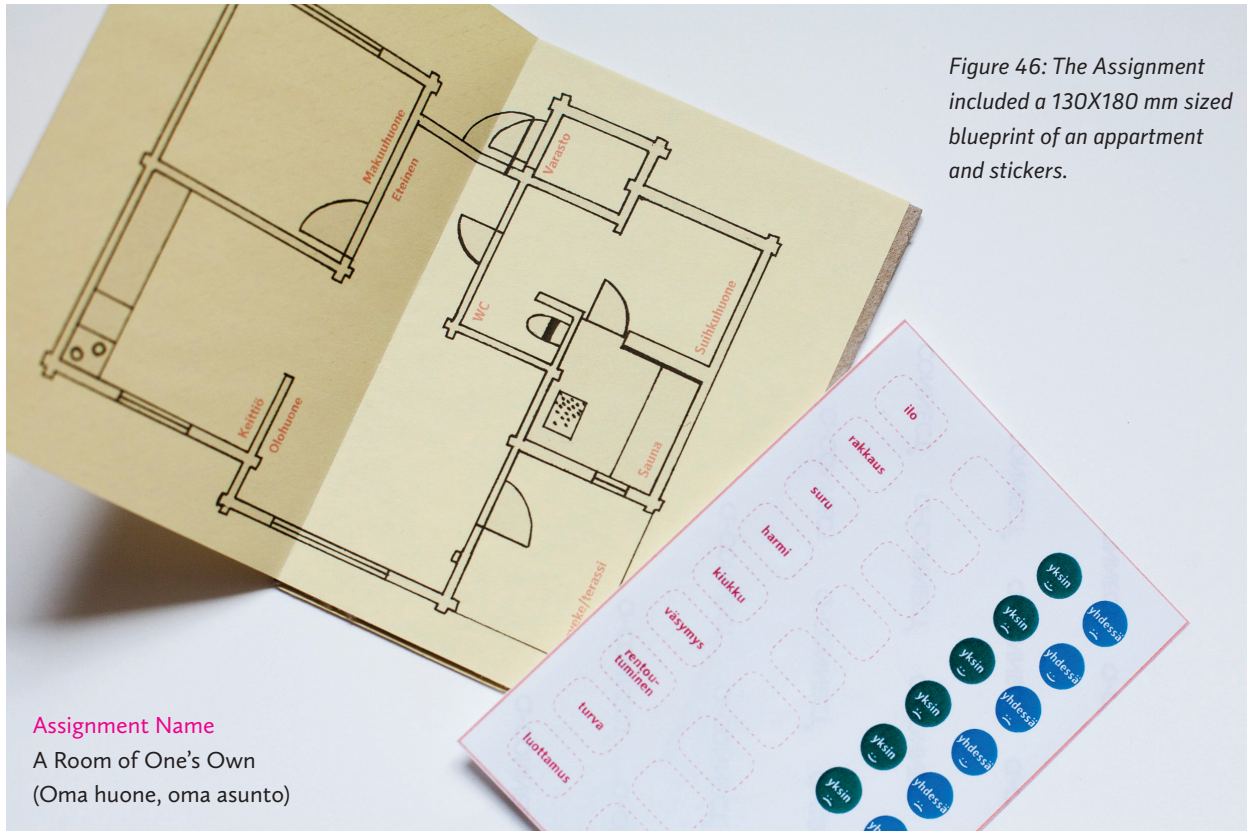


Figure 46: The Assignment included a 130X180 mm sized blueprint of an apartment and stickers.

Assignment Name

A Room of One's Own
(Oma huone, oma asunto)

Assignment Description

On the flip side, there is a blueprint of a nice two room apartment in a block of flats. Cut out words from the sticker sheet to describe emotions that you experience in different rooms of the flat. You can also draw in the picture. Please consider in which rooms you are alone, and in which ones with other people. Write down, if the solitude is voluntary and decided by you; where do you do things together, and where would you need more own space? These questions you can answer with the smiley stickers.

“Did You Know That...?”

A Room of One's Own is a novel by Virginia Woolf, first published in 1929. In her book, the author touches upon the question of why women are absent from the canon of Western fiction - excluding few exceptions. The emphasis of the book is in the critique of social and economical inequality. The metaphorical title summarises actually just these material prerequisites for creativity: money and the privacy it makes possible.

Core Drivers Influencing the Assignment

Driver o: Womanhood is situational

Driver I: Womanhood exists in relation to others

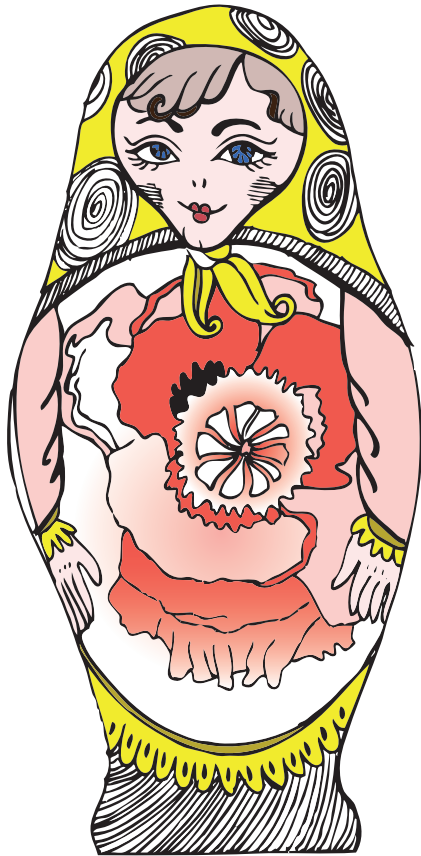
Driver IV: Womanhood is Repetitive performance

2

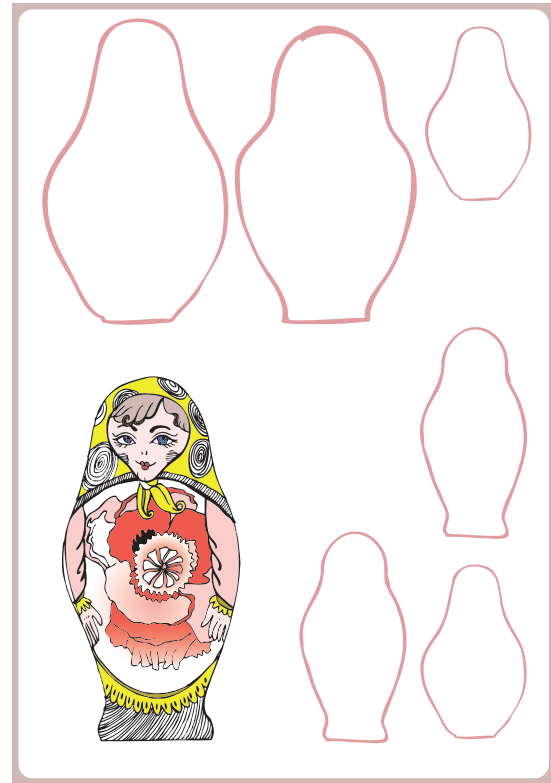
Oma huone (engl. A Room of One's Own) on Virginia Woolfin 1929 ilmestynyt teos, jossa kirjoittaja tarkastelee kysymystä siitä, miksi naiset puuttuvat muutamaa poikkeusta lukuunottamatta länsimaisen kaunokirjallisuuden kaanonista. Teoksen pääpaino on taloudellisen ja sosiaalisen eriarvoisuuden kritiikissä. Woolfin otsikon metaforisessa "omassa huoneessa" tiivistyvätkin nimenomaan luovuuden aineelliset ehdot: raha ja sen mahdollistama oma rauha.

Oma huone, oma asunto

Käantöpuolella on kuva mukavasta kerrostalokaksiosista. Leikkaa irti tarra-arkista ja liimaa pohjapiirrokselle oheisia tarroja kuvaamaan tunteita, joita sinussa herää eri huoneissa. Voit myös piirtää kaavioon. Mieti myös, missä huoneissa olet yksin, missä tositien kanssa. Kerro, onko yksinäisyys omaehtoista; missä tehdä asioita yhdessä, missä taas kaipaisit hieman omaa tilaa? Näihin kysymyksiin voit vastata hymiotarroilla.



Left: figure 47, A close-up of the Matryoshka illustration from the assignment card (below).



Assignment Name

Matryoshka Doll (Maatuska)

Assignment Description

Who or what have you been taking care of today?
Draw and/or write inside the empty forms on the flipside.
You can also draw more forms, and continue on the lines below, as well as in the diary.

"Did You Know That...?"

Inside the matryoshka doll there is always an even number of dolls inside, because in the Russian tradition it symbolizes the continuity of life. In addition to this, the nesting doll have been said to represent fertility.

Core Drivers Influencing the Assignment

Driver I: Womanhood exists in relation to others

nro.

3

Tiesitkö että...

Maatuskan sisällä on aina parillinen määrä nukkeja, sillä se symboloi venäläisessä perinteessä jatkuva elämää. Jatkuvuuden lisäksi maatuskan on sanottu kuvastavan hedelmällisyyttä.

Maatuska матрёшка

Mistä tai kenestä olet huolehtinut tänään? Piirrä ja/tai kirjoita kääntöpuolen tyhjiin muotoihin. Voit myös piirtää lisää muotoja, ja jatkaa alle sekä päiväkirjaan.

nro.
4

Tiesitkö että...

Saudi Arabiassa naiset eivät saa ajaa autoa eivätkä matkustaa ulkomaille ilman miespuolisen holhoojan lupaa. Viimeistään vuoteen 2015 mennessä he saavat kuitenkin äänestää, lupaa äärikonservatiivinen kuningas Abdullah.

Menolippu

Mihin matkustit tänään? Onko vastaasi tullut paikkoja, joihin olisit halunnut mennä, muttet voinut? Miksi? Kirjoita kääntöpuolelle kaikki haluamasi matkat ja paikat, jotka olet tehnyt tai joihin olet mennyt, tai joihin et ole jostain syystä ole voinut mennä. Jos menolippu ei riitä, voit jatkaa lokiasi vielä päiväkirjaan.

Assignment Name

Ticket to Ride (Menolippu)

104

Assignment Description

Where did you travel today? Have you encountered places where you would have wanted to go, but for some reason couldn't? Why? Write on the flipside all the places and journeys where you wanted to travel to or which you wanted to make. You can also write the journeys that you couldn't make. You can also continue your log in the diary!

"Did You Know That...?"

In Saudi Arabia women can neither drive cars nor travel abroad without a permission granted by a male guardian. Nevertheless, at the latest in 2015 they can vote in elections, as promised by the ultra conservative king Abdullah.

Core Drivers Influencing the Assignment

Driver IV: Womanhood is repetitive performance

Figure 48:
Text on the assignmentment side of the card says (on blue background): "A ticket for riding and not-riding. Personal". In the low end of the "ticket", the season for travelling is indicated - it is for 2011-2012.





Figure 49:

Upper row: The assignment card from the description side (left). Next to it is the envelope for the cut-out pieces of hair/skin
Lower row: Backsides of the hair and skin sheets.

Below: figure 50, both the skin and hair sheets were actually different coloured fleece materials, glued on paper. The deep brown one represents hair, and the light pink represents skin.



Assignment Name

Hairy (Karvaista)

Assignment Description

Separate hair and skin sheets are included in the following exercise. Use these sheets to freely cut out of them shapes that representing hairy and skinny areas. Write on the back side of these shapes where in your body you would like these hairy or hairless areas to exist. Can you think of anyone who you would like to give some hair, or someone from whom you would like to take away some? Put the cut out shapes in an envelope attached in the exercise. If you want, you can continue writing in the diary.

“Did You Know That...?”

For example the British female epilation market reached over 30 billion pounds already in the beginning of the millennium. What would Frida Kahlo say!

Core Drivers Influencing the Assignment

Driver III: Womanhood is corporeal

Driver IV: Womanhood is repetitive performance

nro.

5

Tiesitkö että...

Esimerkiksi britannialaisten naisten karvanpoistomarkkinoiden arvo oli jo vuosituhaten alussa yli 30 miljoonaa puntaa. Mitähän Frida Kahlo sanoisi!

Karvaista

Tähän tehtävään liittyy erillinen karva- ja ihoarkki. Leikkaa näistä vapaasti haluamasi muotoisia palasia, ja kirjoita niiden toiselle puolelle, missä kohtaa kehoasi haluaisit, että nämä karvalliset tai karvattomat ihoalueet sijaitsisivat. Tuleeko mieleesi henkilöä, jolle haluaisit lahjoittaa karvoja, tai jolta haluaisit poistaa niitä? Miksi? Laita leikkaamasi palat niille tarkoitettuun kirjekuoreen. Kirjoita halutessasi lisää taustapuolelle ja päiväkirjaan.



Above: figure 51, the backside of the assignment card for writing down one's notes.

Right: figure 52, the "glasses", laser cut from red acrylic sheet.



106

Assignment Name

Pink (it is?) (Vaaleanpunaista(ko?))

Assignment Description

Keep the pink "glasses" with you at least for one day. What is the most beautiful, terrible, memorable, disgusting or _ _ _ _ _ that you saw through them? Please describe below and on the back side of the card. On demand, you can also continue in the diary.

"Did You Know That...?"

In English language, the euphemism "seeing pink elephants" has been recognized at least since 1931, when writer Jack London applied it to the description of the state of delirium caused by excessive use of alcohol. In addition to elephants, blue mice appeared in his description.

Core Drivers Influencing the Assignment

Driver o: Womanhood is situational

nro.

6

Tiesitkö että...

Englanninkielessä termiä "nähdä pinkkejä elefanteja" on käytetty ainakin vuodesta 1913 asti, jolloin Jack London käytti sitä kuvaillakseen alkoholin aiheuttamia hallusinaatioita. Elefanttien lisäksi siniset hiiret esiintyivät Londonin kuvailemassa deliriumin tilassa.

Vaaleanpunaista(ko?)

Pidä vaaleanpunaisia "laseja" mukanasasi ainakin yhden päivän ajan. Mikä on kauneinta, kauheinta, mieleenpainuvinta, inhottavinta tai _ _ _ _ _ mitä näit niiden lävitse? Kerro ja kuvaile alle sekä kääntöpuolelle. Voit tarvittaessa jatkaa myös päiväkirjaan.

Assignment Name

Michelin Woman (Michelin-nainen)

Assignment Description

Michelin man consists of tires that he deals out for the ones in need. In Spanish, the word michelín in itself has already started to indicate a spare tire. If the Michelin figure would be a woman, what would it consist of? Write and/or draw on the flip side in the slices of the woman and on her sides, what does she give out for others. What does she get back in return? What do you gain from / need to give for others? What do you get from them in return?

“Did You Know That...?”

The Michelin bros. Édouard and André developed the first pneumatic tire that needn't to be glued to the rim. According to the legend, one evening a cyclist with a broken tire appeared in their rubber factory. After an over-night reparation, the tire broke again during the test drive the following morning. Instead of losing his heart, Édouard became interested in pneumatic tires that wouldn't need to be glued to the rim. As a consequence, in 1888 the Michelin company was established.

Core Drivers Influencing
the Assignment

Driver 0: Womanhood is situational

Driver I: Womanhood exists in
relation to othersDriver II: Womanhood is
changing and fluctuating

7. **Tiesitkö et?**

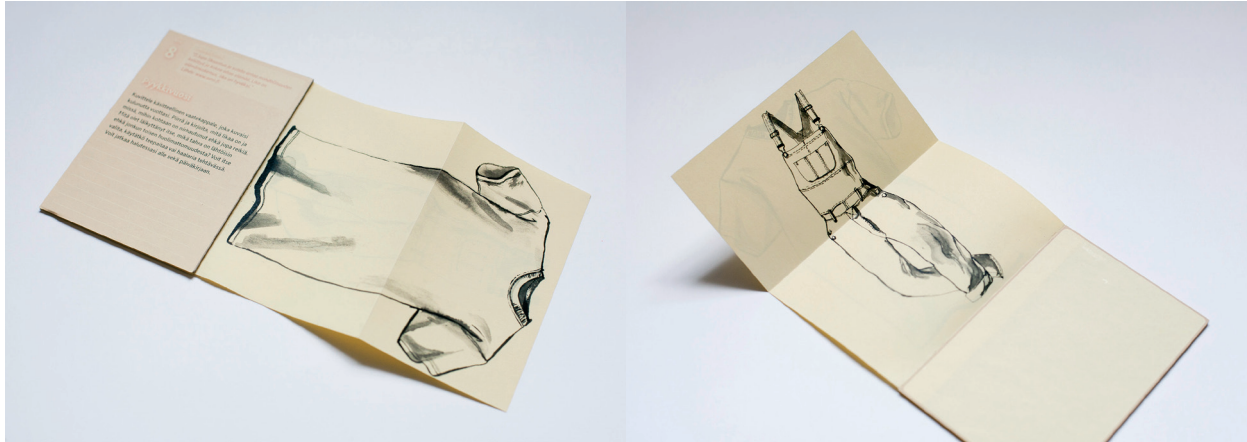
Tarinan mukaan Michelinin veljesten Édouard ja André'n kumitehtaalle ilmestyi eräänä iltana pyöräilijä, jonka rengas oli rikkoutunut. Hankalan ja yli yön venyneen korjauksen jälkeen rengas irtoi vanteesta ja rikkoutui jälleen. Lomistumisen sijaan Édouard kiinnostui ilmatäytteisistä renkaista, joita ei vanhaan tapaan tarvitsisi liimata vanteeseen. Siinäkö auttaminen paljittiin 1888 perustetulla Michelin-yhtiöllä, joka tuottaa nykyään yli 170 miljoonaa rengasta vuodessa.

Michelin-nainen

Michelin-mies koostuu renkaista, joita se jakaa niitä tarvitseville. Espanjan kielessä sana michelin on alkanut jo sellaisenaan tarkoittaa vararengasta. Jos Michelin-hahmo olisi nainen, mistä se koostuisi? Kirjoita ja/tai piirrä kääntöpuolelle naisen viipaleisiin ja sivuille, mitä se jakaa toisille. Mitä se saa tilalle? Mitä sinä saat/joudut anattamaan toisille itsestäsi? Mitä saat heiltä takaisin?



Figure 53: The 130 X 180 mm sized,
folded assignment sheet of the exercise
number 7.



nro. 8

Tiesitkö että:
"Ojapa likaantua ja sotata antaa mahdollisuuden kehittyä ja kokea aitoa elämää. Lika on elämäkokemus, lika on hyväksi."
Lähde: www.omo.fi

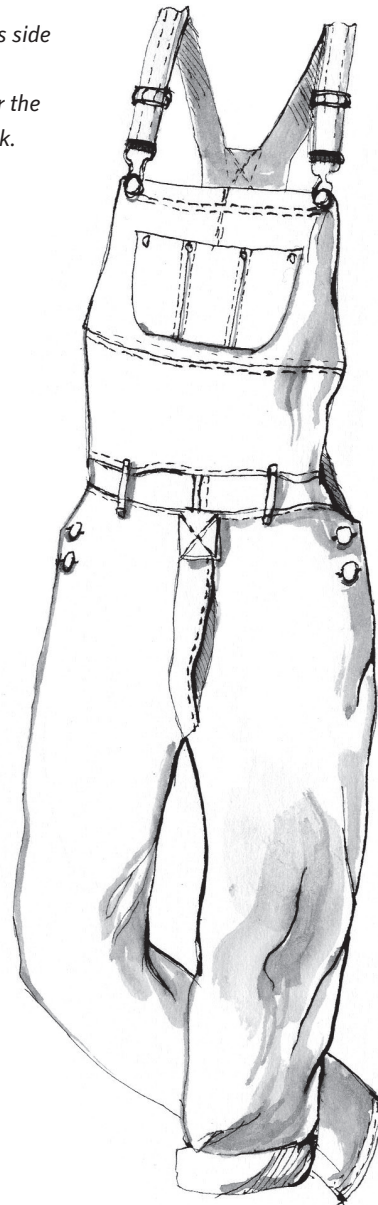
Pyykkivuosi

Kuvittele käsitteellinen vaatekappale, joka kuvaisi kulunutta vuottasi. Piirrä ja kirjoita, mitä likaa on ja missä, mihin kohtaan on nirhautunut ehkä jopa reikiä. Mitä olet läikyttänyt itse, mikä tahra on lähtöisin ehkä jonkun toisen huolimattomuudesta? Voit itse valita, käytätkö teepaitaa vai haalaria tehtävässä. Voit jatkaa halutessasi alle sekä päiväkirjaan.

Above, left: figure 54, the T-shirt side of the assignment card.

Above, right: figure 55, the overalls side of the assignment card

Right: figure 56, the illustration for the overalls was made with drawing ink.



Assignment Name

Laundry Year (Pyykkivuosi)

Assignment Description

Imagine a conceptual piece of clothing that would depict your year. Please draw and write, what kind of dirt there is and where, and if there are even holes in some parts of the garment. What have you spilled over it yourself? Which smudges were caused by the carelessness of others? You can choose yourself whether to use the T-shirt or the overalls for the assignment. If you feel like it, please continue in the diary.

"Did You Know That...?"

A permission to get dirty and mess things up gives one a possibility to develop and experience real life. Dirt is life experience, dirt is good for you. Source: www.omo.fi

Core Drivers Influencing the Assignment

Driver o: Womanhood is situational

Driver I: Womanhood exists in relation to others

Driver II: Womanhood is changing and fluctuating

nro.
9

Tiesitkö että...

Suffragette City (suom. Naisasianaisten kaupunki) on David Bowien vuonna 1972 ilmestyneellä *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* -levyllä mukana ollut kappale. Laululyyriikkaan sisällytettyä huudahdusta "Wham bam thank you ma'am!" on englannin kielessä yleisesti käytetty tarkoittamaan hyvin nopeaa yhdyntää.

Naisasiakartta

Jos Helsinki olisi naisen ruumis, missä sen eri osat sijaitsisivat? Piirrä ja/tai kirjoita kääntöpuolen karttaan, missä olisivat rinnat, kohtu, häpy yms. Missä kohtaa kaupunki olisi karvainen, mistä se olisi ajeltu? Perustele hieman sijoitteluasi. Voit jatkaa alle sekä päiväkirjaan.

Assignment Name

Suffragette Map (Naisasiakartta)

Assignment Description

If Helsinki was a female body, where would its different parts be situated? Please draw and write on the map on the flip side where would the breasts, the womb, the vulva etc. be situated. Which parts of the city would be hairy, and which parts of it would be shaved? Please give a few reasons for your choices. You can also continue below or in the diary.

"Did You Know That...?"

Suffragette City is a pop song that first appeared in 1972 on the album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders from Mars* by David Bowie. The exclamation included in the song lyrics "Wham bam thank you ma'am!" has been used in the English language to mean very swift sexual intercourse.

Core Drivers Influencing the Assignment

Driver o: Womanhood is situational

Driver III: Womanhood is corporeal

Driver V: Someone can define womanhood



Figure 57: The incorporated map was also of the size 130 x 180 mm.

Figure 58: The lines for writing on the flip side of the assignment card were also illustrated to resemble the red ribbon. Below, there is the un-touched packaging of the 150 cm long, silky red ribbon included in the assignment.

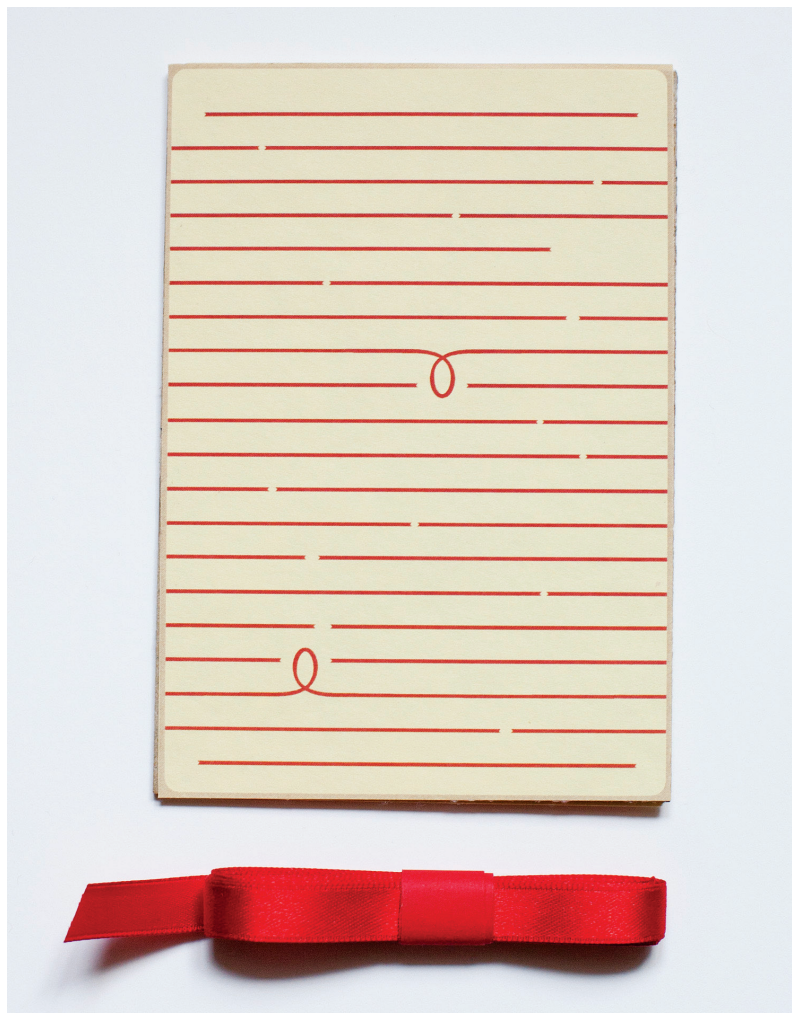
Assignment Name

Red Ribbon (Punainen nauha)

Assignment Description

Use the red ribbon included in the package to circle an object, a place, or a person meaningful to you. Take a picture of your object with e.g. a camera in your cellphone, and send it to the email address milla.toukkari@gmail.com or to the number 0503471119. Please write below, on the flip side, and also in the diary if needed, why did you choose this particular object. Bear in mind that you don't need to use all the ribbon, and you may divide it between several objects. Moreover, if the length of the ribbon is not enough, the photo and a written description will do very well.

110



"Did You Know That...?"

The red ribbon was originally a symbol of awareness. It was pressed by the dwellers of a Mexican town when their fellow villager and a DEA agent Enrique Camarena was kidnapped, tortured and murdered. The residents wanted to make people to become aware of the importance of pre-emptive drug work.

Core Drivers Influencing the Assignment

Driver I: Womanhood is situational

Driver II: Womanhood is changing and fluctuating

nro.

10

Tiesitkö että...

Punainen nauha (engl. Red Ribbon) on alun perin symboli tiedostamiselle, ja sen ottivat käyttöönsä meksikolaisen huumeepoliisin Enrique Camarenan kidnappauksen, kidutuksen ja murhan jälkeen tämän kotikaupungin asukkaat. Nämä halusivat saada ihmiset tiedostamaan ehkäisevän huumeiden tarpeellisuuden.

Punainen nauha

Ympäroi paketin mukana tulleella punaisella nauhalla jokin sinulle merkityksellinen esine, paikka tai vaikka henkilö, ja ota tästä kuva kännykkäkamerallasi tai muulla käytössäsi olevalla laitteella, ja lähetä se osoitteeseen milla.toukkari@gmail.com tai numeroon 0503471119. Kirjoita alle, kääntöpuolelle ja halutessasi myös päiväkirjaan, miksi valitsit juuri kyseisenomaisen kohteen. Huomaa, että sinun ei tarvitse käyttää kaikkea nauhaa ja voit jakaa sen halutessasi usean kohteen kesken. Jos nauhan pituus ei riitä, valokuva ja kirjallinen kuvaus riittävät mitä mainioimmin.

nro.

11

Tiesitkö että...

Koinofilia on termi, joka tarkoittaa eläinten taipumusta etsiä parittelukumppaneikseen sellaisia lajitovereita, joiden fyysiset ominaisuudet eivät vaikuta poikkeavilta tai kummallisilta. Koinofiilalla selitetään myös inhimillistä kauneuskäsitystä: tutkimuksissa on huomattu, että yhdistettäessä useita ihmiskasvoja yhdeksi mahdollisimman keskimääräiseksi kuvaksi, lopputulosta yleensä pidetään ideallimpana ja viehättävämpänä kuin yhtäkään yksittäisistä alkukuvista. Meilläkin on siis taipumus rakastaa ja tavoitella tavallista.

Suunnistusta

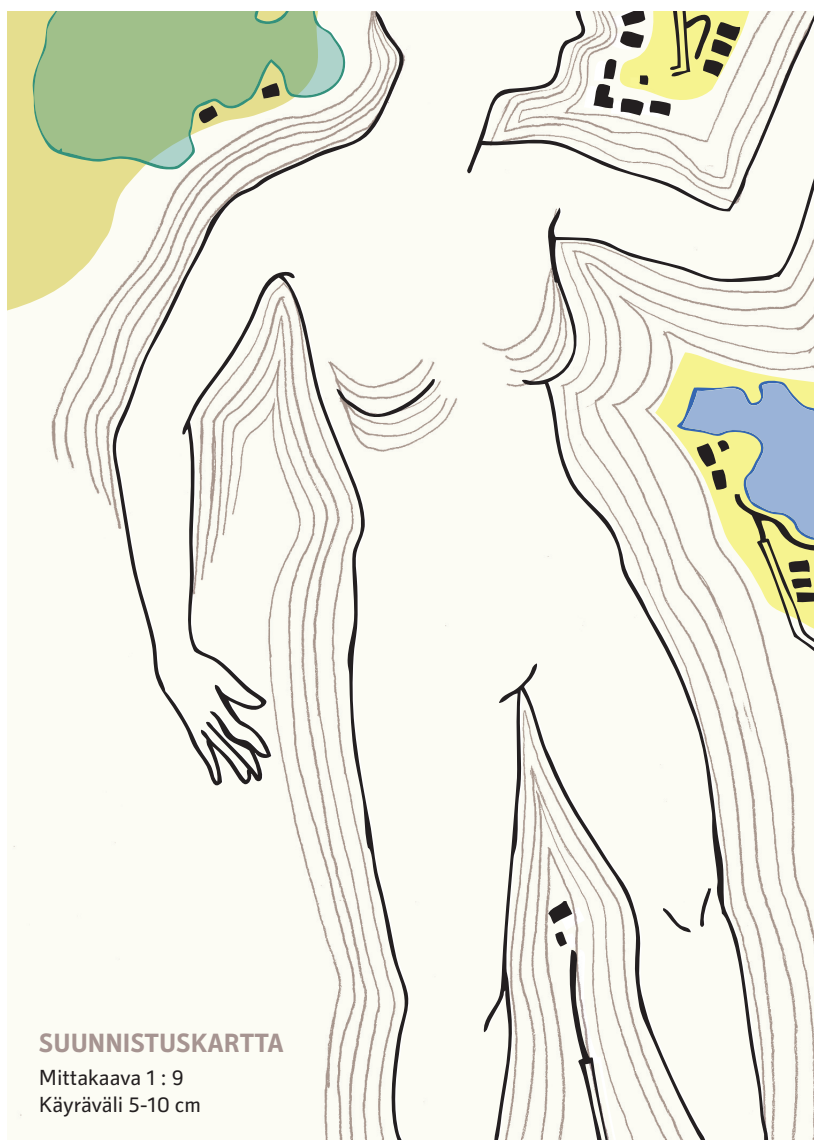
Seuraa sinisellä kynällä sitä linjaa, joka mielestäsi kuvastaa oman kehosi rajaa. Ota sitten punainen kynä, ja seuraa sillä sitä linjaa, jota haluaisit lähentyä. Kirjoita alle ja päiväkirjaan, miten ja miksi nämä viivat eroavat toisistaan, jos eroavat. Miksi arvelet, että ne eroavat?

Assignment Name

Orienteering (Suunnistusta)

Assignment Description

Use a blue pen to follow a line that you think is closest to the silhouette of your body. After this, take a red pen, and use it to follow the ideal line that you would like to grow closer to. Write down below, and in the diary, in which ways and why do these lines differ from each other, if they do differ. Why do you think they are not the same?



“Did You Know That...?”

Koinophilia is a term meaning the facility of animals to search and prefer mating partners whose physiological characteristics don't seem odd or deviant. Scientists have used koinophilia also to explain human conceptions of beauty: it has been noted that when compiling several pictures of human faces into one average image, the end result is very often considered as more ideal and attractive than any of the initial photos. To put it in other words, we also possess a facility to aspire to the ordinary.

Core Drivers Influencing the Assignment

Driver III: Womanhood is corporeal

Driver V: Someone can define womanhood

Figure 59:

The text on the assignment side of the card, lower left corner:

“ORIENTEERING MAP

on a scale of 1 : 9

curve cap 5-10 cm”.

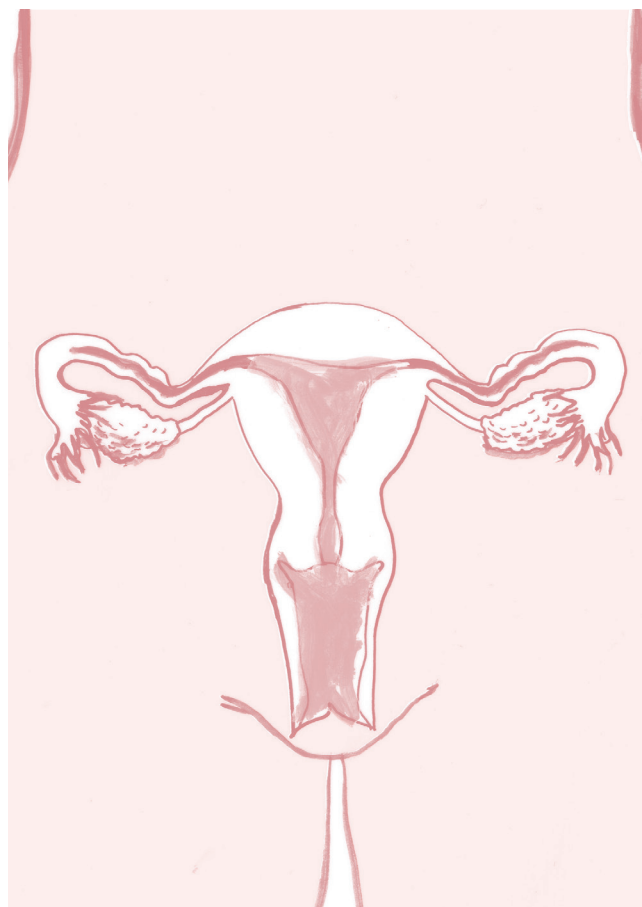


Figure 60 & 61: The photograph of the illustration for the assignment 12, printed on a shaded paper. On the right, there is the digital illustration, which was modified from an original tusch drawing.

112

Assignment Name

About Eggs (Munista)

Assignment Description

According to a worn-out saying, men think with the wrong head. Respectively one can ask with which head the women think with. Complete the picture on the flip side by drawing and writing: where do the thoughts come about? What kind of thoughts are these? Please do give examples!

“Did You Know That...?”

In 2010 in Finland 2450 women and 1450 men were sterilized. Vasectomy, i.e. the surgical procedure where the deferent duct of a male is cut and sealed, was clearly increasing its popularity (12% growth with comparison to 2009). Meanwhile, the female sterilization was decreasing (4,3%).

source: National Institute for Health and Welfare

Core Drivers Influencing the Assignment

Driver o: Womanhood is situational

Driver I: Womanhood exists in relation to others

Driver II: Womanhood is changing and fluctuating

nro.

12

XTRA
BONUS

Tiesitkö että...

Vuonna 2010 Suomessa sterilisitiin noin 2450 naista ja 1450 miestä. Miesten vasektomia eli siemenjohtimien katkaisu oli tuolloin selvästi kasvussa (12% nousu vuoteen 2009 verrattuna), kun taas naisten sterilointi hieman laskussa (4,3%).
Lähde: Terveysten ja hyvinvoinnin laitos

Munista

Kuluneen sananparren mukaan miehet eivät ajattele päällään vaan alapäällään. Vastaavasti voidaan kysyä, millä nainen ajattelee. Täydennä kääntöpuolen kuvaa piirtämällä ja/tai kirjoittamalla: missä ajatukset syntyvät, ja minkälaisia ajatuksia? Anna mieluusti esimerkkejä!



Figure 62: The three felt purses that housed all the 12 assignment cards, the diary, and the additional crafting materials: scissors, a package of 12 colouring pencils, and a ballpoint pen.

Next spread:

Figure 63: The incorporated materials. The bookmark sticking out of the diary says "Start from here", and it is laid in between the first spread where the instructions are placed (see figure 65).

Figure 64: The back and front covers of the diary. On the front cover, it says "Womanhood in the Everyday - A

Self-documentation Package. Contains instructions and the diary". The size of one diary page is 100 X 130 mm.

Figure 65: The first spread of the diary, presenting the different features of the assignment cards as well as explaining the functioning of the diary.

Figure 66: The diary has one spread for each assignment, and this spread includes extra space for writing down one's thoughts, and also a short evaluation form for the assignment



Tässä se nyt oli! Alle voit vielä kirjoittaa mitä tahansa mieleesi nousseita ajatuksia, arveluita, kysymyksiä, tai ihan vain terveisiä.

Kiitos!



Hei!

Kiitos että osallistut tutkimukseeni naiseuden arkipäiväisestä kokemisesta. Kädessäsi oleva itsedokumentointipaketti on suunniteltu toivoen, että täyttäisit yhteensä vähintään seitsemän tehtävää. Kuitenkin, jos jokin vaaleimassa pussissa olevista ensimmäisestä seitsemästä tuntuu hankalalta, vaikeaselkoiselta tai vain tylsältä, voit tehdä jonkin Jokeri- tai Xtra bonus -pussien tehtävistä. Näissä tilanteissa toivoisin, että kertoisit, mikä tehtävässä ei houkuttanut sinua. Kaikki tehtävät saa tehdä, ja ylimääräiset tehtävät voi tehdä vain osittain - kaikki, mitä kerrot minulle arjastasi, on arvokasta.

Tämä vihkonen sisältää näiden ohjeiden lisäksi päiväkirjan ja tehtävien arviointiosuudet. Jokaiselle tehtävälle on varattu yksi aukeama, jolle voit vapaasti kirjoittaa tehtävän herättämiä ajatuksia ja tunteita. Kirjoitustilaa ei ole valtavasti, eikä joka tehtävästä välttämättä nouse esiin sen suurempia pohdintoja. Toivon, että käytät tällöin vihkoa tavalla, jonka itse koet parhaimmaksi: pitkiksi venyviä ajatuskulkuja voit jatkaa tyhjiksi jääneille aukeamille. Lähes tulkoon kaikki on sallittua. Jos paketin mukana tulleet kynät ja sakset tuntuvat kankeilta ilmaisullesi, voit hyvin ottaa käyttöön omia välineitäsi.

Viereinen kuva esittelee tehtävien yleiskäsitteen. Lue tämä ensin kun aloitat paketin käytön. Inspiroivia päiviä!

Tehtävän numero. Auttaa pysymään kärryillä, monta tehtävää olet tehnyt, mutta järjestystä ei tarvitse orjallisesti noudattaa. Tehtäviä voi hyppiä ylitse ja niiden tekojärjestystä muuttaa. Mahdolliset tehtävään liittyvät lisämateriaalit on myös aina merkitty tehtävän omalla numerolla.

Faktaruutu. Sillä nippelitieto virkistää ja avaa mieltä uudelle!

Kääntöpuoli. Varsinainen tehtäväarkki.



Tehtävänanto. Lyhyt kuvaus siitä, mistä tehtävässä on kyse.

Lisätilaa omille ajatuksille ja huomioille.

65

Päivä 1 pvm / / 2012

Päivän tehtävä oli...

66

Kun tiimalasin hieka ehtyy...

helppo ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ vaikea

innostava ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ tylsä

kevyt ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ uuvuttava

silmii ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ arki-
avaava ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ päiväinen

haluaisin tehdä ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ en haluaisi tehdä
uudestaan ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ uudestaan

Kerro vielä kokemuksistasi: mikä tehtävässä oli kiinnostavaa, minkä takia se tuntui rasittavalta? Auttoiko se sinua näkemään jonkin asian eri lailla?

4.2 The Participants

Having been slightly surprised of how the consistency of the focus group discussion turned out to be, especially in its emphasis on women with children, I was now thinking of broadening the scope of participants towards little younger and less established in their everyday. There were a few reasons for me to take this decision: firstly, having initially begun the process with an extremely subjective approach, I now felt that I would want to insert some of my subjective, artistically oriented interpretations of the drivers to the probes exercises. These kinds of exercises would then probably be easier to relate to by attendees in a partly similar life situation as I am in – of the same age and social status, for instance. Secondly, thinking of the future product-like end result, and the possible target group, the all-too-busy mothers with children might not be the ones to become the most enthusiastic of seeking out even more chores to their everyday.

Eventually, I had a group of five women taking part in my study, three of them having also attended in the focus group session. Nevertheless, also the additional two involved had been interested in my research from the very beginning. They had even been invited to the focus group discussion. Unfortunately, due to their timely limitations, they could not attend in November 2011, yet they mentioned being interested in taking part when the process progresses. Thus, even these two were not total outsiders, but had already in November 2011 been encouraged to think about the everyday womanhood like the other participants.

Nonetheless, now two of the women with children and family had been replaced with two without.

Moreover, both of the new ones were under 30-years-old, the ages of the participants being now 26, 27, 28, 30 and 48 years. The previous four of five attendees having children had been converted into only two of five, and the two of five being under 30-years-old into 3 of five being this young. I realised that I would need to take this into consideration when designing the probes: when the initial data had been collected mainly from women with motherhood included in their identity, I would now need to handle the challenges of their everyday on a slightly more general level, not explicitly hinting towards family life. In practice, this would mean for example including the important theme of organizing and taking care of others, but allowing the participants to report freely - without insinuations - whom all do they need to take care of. I did dare to re-arrange the consistency of the group of participants in this manner due to the nature of the most prevalent themes: although they were often linked to the everyday of family life, almost as many examples were given outside that realm.

4.2.1 HANDING OUT THE PROBES

When approaching the participants via email, I asked them to take part in an approximately 14 day session with a self-documentation kit that still wouldn't require attending to daily activities. I wanted to keep the schedule as open as possible, in order not to scare the women – who I already knew to be very busy - with heavy duties. I promised the participants that there would be maximum 7 exercises that would require a daily workload of approximately 15 minutes – if divided on 7 days during the time of 14 consecutive days. I also explained them that

the kit including a diary is simultaneously a “design prototype”, and will probably in its openness arouse a lot of wonder and thought. However, I also emphasized that exactly this wonder is the best gain for me, and that their writing down of thoughts is the most valuable input I could obtain for my research.

I wanted to hand the packages in person to every single participant in order to make sure the form of the study is understood, and additionally to schedule the time for collecting the packages and having a close-up interview. The distribution of the probes took place during Sunday 20th of May and Friday 25th of May. The sessions took place in the participants' homes, cafés, or on a work place. During the approximately 20-30 minutes sessions I already gained a few valuable insights concerning the packages.

When handing out the three-partite package, I first encouraged the participants to take their time and read the instructions in the diary notebook, and familiarize themselves with the first 7 exercises. Additionally, I encouraged them to ask if they came to think of anything that didn't quite seem to be answered on the first spread in the diary. After these approximately 2-10 minutes, I asked their first impressions of the package and how they think they'll next odd two weeks will turn out. Finally, we scheduled a preliminary date, time and place for the close-up interview.

4.2.2 FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Four of the five participants seemed enthusiastic and interested in poring over filling the exercises. Words such as “interesting”, “exciting”, “fun”, “good” and “nice” were used. When I asked the question “What is your first

impression”, only one of the attendees replied, “I think I’ll manage”. One of the women experienced some of the first seven exercises as too personal, but commended the possibility to replace those ones with the “joker” or “extra bonus” exercises. The first participant who I met was especially infatuated with the patterns that I had created on the back of the exercise sheets. She also said that she enjoys stickers a lot in general, and seemed thereby obviously excited.

4.2.3 CONCERNS AND CRITIQUE

There were two main features that were almost without exception experienced as unclear. In the very beginning of every meeting, I instructed the attendees to first familiarize themselves with the diary. I did this in order to make them read the instructions first, but the strategy had its drawback: almost all of them thought that the diary pages were the primary place for executing the exercises. This might also be partly due to the exercise book style appearance of the diary, with every page including the evaluation form of the exercise of the day.

In the instructions spread, I had explained the different parts and functions of the exercise cards, but seemingly this information was not easy to absorb, especially when reading it while being simultaneously observed by someone, and moreover, when it is read from a source that could also be used for the same purpose. When beginning the further development of the package, I would need to really closely consider which part of the package the user would most likely first address, and design it to be so visually appealing and informative that this kind of cross messages could not be created.

Even though the appearance was

experienced very positively, some of the patterns that I had created to mimic lines on which one can read, did not seem to be understood so. Especially in the exercises *Pink (it is?)* (see p. 106) and *Hairy* (p. 105), the relation between different places for writing was unclear. For a few of the participants, I needed to explicitly explain and show that even in these exercises, the background of the exercise card functions as writing space, like in almost all the others.

So to summarize, the relation between the diary and the actual exercise cards should be re-designed so that the former would provide evidently subordinate extra space for the exercises, and that only the evaluation is something that cannot be done elsewhere except in the diary of set. Although it was written on all of the 12 exercise cards that the emerging thoughts can be written down on the flipside of the card, under the few extra lines below the assignment description, or if needed, also continued in the diary, the visual design should communicate this more explicitly: including a pictogram insinuating turning the card on the text side of the card, and on the backside a symbol encouraging to write, or at least to open the double sheets in the altogether 7 assignments (three of which in the first seven exercises).

One of the participants also mentioned that it might have been nicer if all the exercises had been in only one purse. In addition to this, there could have been another one just to separate the already filled out assignments from the not finished ones. Interestingly enough, she was the only one who voluntarily started to unpack the joker and the bonus purses, the rest of the attendees refraining to the ones I obliged them to read through.

Perhaps due to some level of shyness or reservation of a new situation,

most of the attendees did not flick through the exercises numbered 8-12. However, all of them with one exception seemed amused, and eager on starting to do the package, giving a few laughs, giggles and positive comments on various assignments. Especially the card number 5 called *Hairy* was described as nice and cool. The only participant examining the extra assignments was also the only to give any critique for the individual exercises. Interestingly, she mentioned that the card *Suffragette Map* was a bit of a map of Helsinki “for singles” (“sinkku-Helsinki”), and could have been wider, covering more northern areas, occupied by the detached houses of families with children. As her husband commented in between, the map presented the area that the tramlines reach, not much more.

4.3 Close-up Interviews

4.3.1 INTERVIEW SITUATION

I scheduled the collection of the probes sets according to the common preferences, due to which the initially estimated two-weeks study time expanded slightly. In the end, the participants kept the sets for 18-21 days. Nonetheless, this seemed to have been a positive solution, for now everybody had had time to make at least the required seven of the assignments, with two of them even fulfilling altogether nine exercises, and a few starting some extra ones, but not finalising them.

The close-up interviews took place in cafés and participant’ homes, and spanned over varying 57 to 98 minutes. I was quite surprised of how well my estimation of 1-1,5 hours – a time limit I had promised in the scheduling emails – held true. I remained a simi-

lar structure over all of the interviews, although it was modified to some extent after the first discussion. The questions I covered during the discussion, although in diverse order, are listed in the appendix number 04.

I asked the participants beforehand if it would suite them to have a voice recorder in the interviews for my own back up. Fortunately all of the attendees were positive about this facilitation, and in addition to making notes, I obtained recordings from the situations for later transcribing. I decided not to take any pictures for two reasons: firstly, photographing would greatly disturb my concentration in the unique situation. Even though this could be covered with the back up recording, the interviewee might become reserved and awkward if in a relatively intimate situation with only us two involved, I would introduce a camera. The latter reason I based on my own earlier experiences: I had conducted individual interviews before where the picture taking had created awkward silences and rather violently punctuated the flow of talking.

4.3.2 FRAMEWORK FOR HANDLING THE PROBES DATA

After the interviews, I had two very differing sorts of data in my possession: one was the spoken word that mainly consisted of evaluation of the packages in general and of ponderings of the successfulness of different exercise types. The interviews did also reveal several insights of the main themes that I could now anticipate would be processed in more detail in the actual exercise answers, but the spoken accounts still evidently concentrated on the experiences of the actual doing, and contemplation aroused by that.

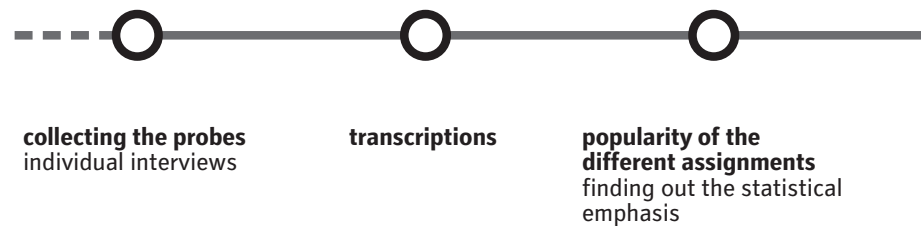
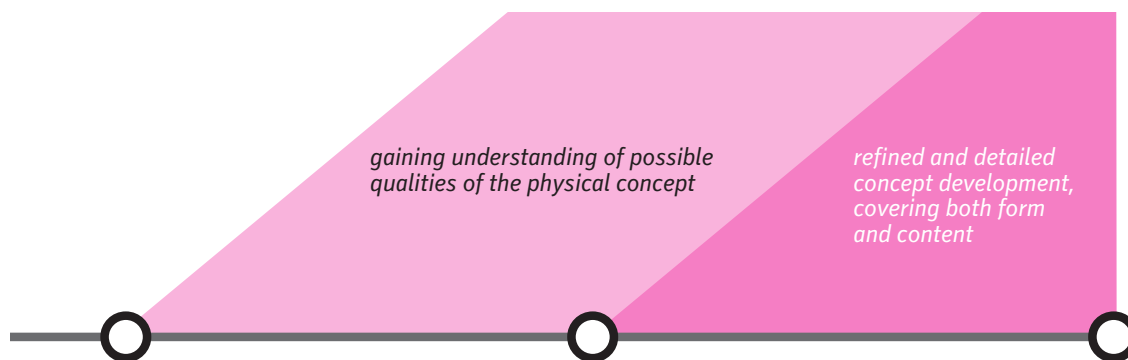


Figure 67: The progress of analysing and interpreting the probes data and responses.

The other collection of data was the probes answers per se, which I soon realised should be kept separate from the early phases of the analyses in order to maintain control of the – once again – immense amount of data. The following graph illustrates the rough structure that I followed during the processing. As it can be seen in the graph (see figure 67), the handling of the two sources of data and responses gained quite differing roles in the concept development: naturally, as the interview data mainly covered the impressions of the functioning of the assignments, the synthesis of this data revealed rough outlines on the popularity of different assignments and on the usability of materials and the format – 90 X130 millimetre cards in 3 felt purses. The reliability of the findings from the interviews would later be ensured by going through the

actual probes answers, and enriched with the help of them.

In this chapter, I will first go through the comments that I was able to get from the participants about the functioning of the package, for these may explicitly guide the design of a future probe-like concept. Nonetheless, because the form of the final concept is only defined as something that would incorporate the probes attitude encouraging to self-observation and self-reflection – that does not necessarily have to follow the form of the first set of exercises – all the succeeding findings may not become utilised and put to practice in the final concept. Despite this, I decided to include the proposals for improving the package because I still consider them as findings that can help me and potentially other practitioners as well when compiling emancipatory probes



analysis

reading through the transcriptions

establishing an understanding of the reasons why some of the assignments were more popular than others

drawing outlines and distilling larger themes on the issues that surfaced during the study

making an synthesis of the ways the participants suggested for improving the

interpretation

reading through the probes answers in order to gain

further guidance in developing the assignments towards the final concept(s)

help in understanding the pros and cons the participants had pointed out

further ideas and detailed inspirational material of the everyday of the women

synthesis

distilling the core findings from the probes into conceptual proposals with

a critical slant and a probe-like operational principle

in the future.

After the root of the comments concerning the successful of exercises and functioning of the package as a whole, I will proceed to drawing conclusions on the emerging core themes that should be placed in the centre of the final concept(s). Thereby, I will begin going through the actual responses, and quickly shift for developing the final concept.

4.3.3 SUMMARY OF THE INTERVIEW FEEDBACK

All in all, the package was experienced very positively, even with some thrills and expressions of amazement. Nonetheless, quite clear and consistent proposals for improvement were aroused and discussed. I felt very lucky with my participants, all of them pos-

sessing such a developed contemplation skills, both on a concrete - here meaning material - and also on more abstract, i.e. thematic, level. Following, there are four different categories under which the spoken feedback could be grouped: firstly, concerning the materiality of the package, that is the purses and the format; secondly, the most inspiring and difficult of the exercise materials and props; thirdly, the popularity of the different assignments; and finally the deeper, theme-related findings the most popular assignments succeeded in distilling.

The Probes "Purses" and the Card Format

All of the participants told having liked the purses, but most of them had not find the division in three separate ones very useful. Very soon, during al-

most all of the interviews, the women revealed having started doing the assignments by taking all the cards of their felt containers, browsing through all of them a few times, thereby mixing the numerical order, and beginning to fill them in an order they felt like. Three of the women said they were using only evening time after their work for the study, and this seemed to direct the selection of the exercises: depending on the day and its business, and the tiredness of the participants, they selected more or less time consuming assignments.

When mixing the order of the exercise cards, their numerical divisions between three different sized purses becomes quite futile, and even impractical. As one of the participants put it, the packaging solution looks nice, but one doesn't have the patience and motivation to distribute the cards

according to their original order evening after evening. One of the women said she kept the cards laid out on the living room floor, and another having only grouped them all in a one big pile. The ones who proceeded otherwise, told that the felt purses seemed a bit fragile: if trying to fit too many cards in one purse, the straight corners of the cards were almost striking through the purse material.

The above observations resulted in a few suggestions for improving the package. Several of the participants proposed having either one big purse that could fit all the cards, props, pencils etc., or two purses, where one could keep ready ones and still un-finalised assignments in separate pouches. This kind of redesign would be encouraged not only by the treatment of the cards as one big punch, but also by a remark made by one of the women: she had experienced that the division of the assignments into basic, joker and extra bonus ones was not playful and game-like at all, as was my initial intention, but rather dismissive and pre-evaluative. In her opinion, there were several very good exercises in the joker purse, exercises that were more reflective and thus interesting for her than some of the basic ones – too easy, simple and quickly done in their turn.

One of the participants also proposed to keep the crafts “tools” – the scissors, pencils and the like – separately, and maybe even provide the future users a possibility to choose between a full package, and one that includes only the essentials. She very fairly pointed out how people often have such materials as pencils and ball-points in their home offices, as well as scissors or cutters of some kind. This became to be a proposal that should be taken into consideration, especially when a few of the participants claimed

enjoying most writing and reflection through it – action that does not even require coloured pencils and paper cutting.

Compact Cards

The compact and rather stiff cards were experienced as a successful and delightful solution. Their visual richness was described as charming, and even inspiring and thought provoking. Especially the exercises 3: *Matryoshka Doll*, 4: *Ticket to Ride*, 8: *Laundry Year*, and 10: *Red Ribbon* were highlighted when asked to name the aesthetic favourites.

Nevertheless, there were two major proposals for improvement that recurred in the discussions. Firstly, the otherwise compact size of the cards was not that handy a feature in the assignments where the actual exercise sheet would fold open (in exercises 1, 2, 7, 9, 11 and 12). This was due to the fact that when moving a pen over the edge of the card, along the double-sized exercise sheet, the pen might pierce the paper if one was not anticipating the end of the rigid background card-board. Here, it should be noted that the difficulty did not reach the exercise number 8, for its sheet was folded two times in a manner that managed to avoid the crossing of the picture over the card edge. However, one of the participants noted that in this exercise, one could not take support of the cardboard at all. So, all things considered, the compact size and especially the fact that it allowed one to fill the assignments holding them in one's one hand only, seemed to be preferred over wider space for writing and drawing.

The other suggested improvement dealt with the writing space provided in the package. Once again, several of the participants analysed their behaviour, and realised that it would have

been more convenient for them to have everything related to an assignment on the exercise card. Now, the only thing that expanded the actual filling of the exercises to the diary was the request to continue one's ponderings in the diary if the space provided in the cards was not enough. Despite this, two of the attendees expressed very explicitly the problematic role of the diary: one didn't want to leave the diary pages totally empty, that would have been the actual case in a few of the assignments, so she realised afterwards having ended up repeating a lot of the thoughts that were already crystallized on the assignment cards. “The data started to disperse”, she said. In other words, the diary was “the place where the meandering took place”. The other, on her side, left the whole of the diary totally blank, with the exception of one page. She estimated that she might have had more things to write, but switching to the diary would have just been too much of an effort to make.

The comments from the rest of the women varied between these two extremes; some admitted having filled some of the pages mostly in order to “have a clear conscious” – having had done the assignment in a proper way even though it might have not aroused that much thought in the first place. The others said that it was relieving to know there was a place where one could exactly meander a bit, because the crystallizing of some thoughts was slightly challenging from time to time.

In this concept, half of the diary pages were dedicated to the evaluation of the assignments, a feature that would naturally be left out from the final concept. Thus, the meaningfulness of including a self-standing diary should be carefully considered when the concept would develop further. During the time of collecting

the probes, I was inclined to cut the notebook of the self-reflection set, but decided still to wait and see what kind of form the actual assignments would take.

The Negative Findings

In the end of every interview, I asked the participants to name the materials that they had found most inspiring for them, and also most difficult to relate to, or just plainly unusable. A clear consensus was reached on the latter issue: the stickers related to the exercise 2: *A Room of One's Own* had been very hard to use. They had been a bit too small so that the detaching would have been pleasant, a feature that was strengthened by the fact that one first needed to cut them out of the 90 times 130 millimetre sticker sheet by herself. Moreover, the emotions stickers were not used by all of the participants – several of them preferred writing down things more with their own words. For this option, I had included the blank stickers, but evidently, using them was not really a relish if one would first have to struggle them loose.

Additionally, the smiley stickers were slightly problematic, although clearly more successful a feature than the emotions. One of the participants told that she did not first notice the difference between in the happy and sad smileys in the alone- and together-stickers. Nonetheless, after looking more carefully, she said she “could fully take advantage of them”, and did use several in the exercise. Another attendee complained that there were not enough of smileys provided, and a third had solved the removing of the stickers by just drawing the smiley faces herself in the assignment.

All in all, there did not seem to be any major material difficulties, but all

of the participants had rather easily found their way to adjust to the situation. Notwithstanding the initiative, two of the attendees raised a hindering issue. All of the participants had recognized the ambiguity of the wording in several of the assignments, but fortunately only these two had experienced it as a holdback. One of the women expressed slight frustration, and said having noticed that she had skipped an assignment (11: Orienteering) because she felt that first independently deciding her preferred approach to it made the whole assignment require too much effort.

Another attendee told having been a bit confused with the first assignment (Like sands through the hourglass...), for she could not figure out what was the answer that I was looking for. “It was such an everyday assignment, but still something that you don't really come to think of that even in the end. So that's why I figured it must be a trick question”, she explained when we began going through the assignments. She as well expressed some frustration when describing her feelings that occurred while she could not think of what would be the correct answer. Fortunately, despite the frustration, all of the participants filled out this assignment, and several of them picked it out when I asked them which assignments had been most eye-opening for them.

Thus, I dare to claim that avoiding ambiguity is probably a value in itself when compiling a self-reflection kit for women. A note from a participant supports this proposition: related to the assignment 8: Laundry Year, she said having enjoyed its wide array of possible approaches. She herself had decided to take a very concrete outlook on the exercise, listing different stains on her clothes. The metaphorical approach, she stated,

would have been a bit too demanding, and also, the literal reading was very suitable in her case, because of the small child in the family – the past year had really been full of dirt. Again, another participant had rejected this exact assignment because she took the metaphorical approach as the only sensible one, and told me that revealing that personal things of her would be too much. With hindsight, one could say that she had absorbed one of the most deeply reflective attitudes towards the set, which reasons her comment on the exercise: “If you'd really like to dig it all the way, you'd have to pore over that kinds of things that you wouldn't want to go through even in this kind of context.” On the other hand, she had also liked the assignment, and felt sorry that she could not share it with me. “It would be a great exercise to do, just for yourself”, she admitted.

The Positive Findings

In the end of the day, the ambiguity of the wording was not merely a negative feature, but did actually encourage the participants really to reflect and challenge themselves, and thereby even their everyday habits. As in the exercise 5: *Hairy*, despite its rather threadbare approach to women and bodily hair, one of the participants had begun to ponder on giving hair as gifts, and was now wondering why is it only locks of babies' hair that can be given and kept as a beautiful memento.

In retrospect, the experience of the most inspiring features was quite non-uniform, but everyone seemed to keep their own favourites. Still, something that recurred in the comments of many, were the overall visual appearance of the cards that appeared to have been an immersive factor. In addition to this, writing and reflecting

through it had been experienced as an easy yet comprehensive way to cover everything one wanted to in an assignment. For some, it also released them from the burden of having to draw something.

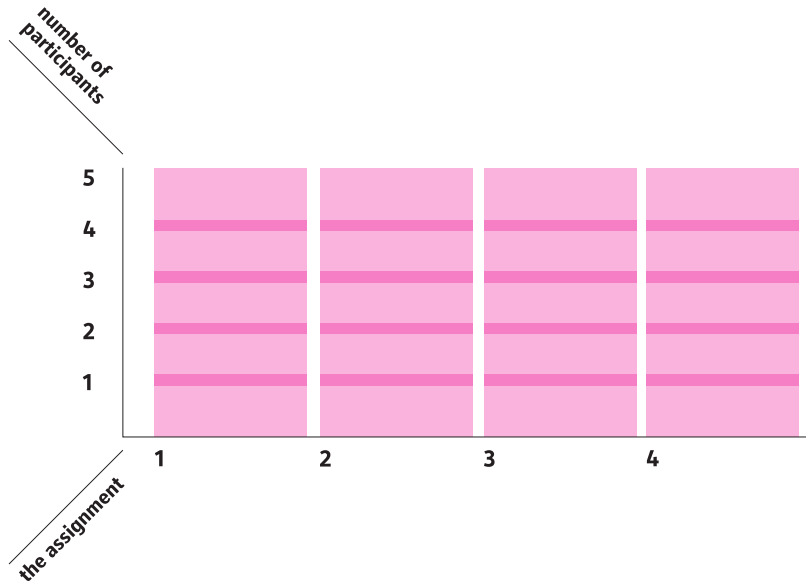
One liked colouring, some cutting, but altogether four of five did or considered doing the camera assignment 10: *Red Ribbon*. One even thanked its innovativeness of realising picture taking with the help everyday means available to almost all. The positive reactions I found very notable, for the assignment was numerically in the very end of the assignment line. I am inclined to think that one of the reasons for the success of the assignment must be the fact that photographing one's everyday and sharing it possibly even with strangers is very natural to so many nowadays.

The Popularity of the Assignments

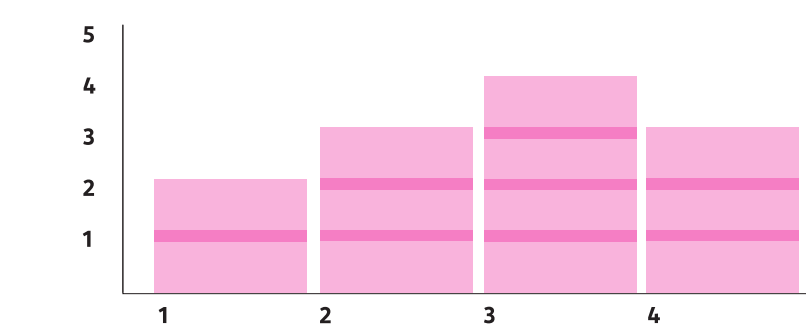
Despite almost all of the participants told having filled the probes by taking all the assignment cards out of the purses, mixing them, and then choosing the exercises one by one, fitting their mood, the distribution of the popularity of the assignments insinuates that the numerical order still had an effect of some kind (see figure 68). Every participant did the first four assignments, and four out of five attendees also did numbers 5 and 7. With honesty I can note that the only true surprises regarding the choices made took place with the assignments 6 and 10: only one did the assignments number 6: *Pink (Is It?)*, but even 3 realised the exercise 10: *Red Ribbon*, which included the picture taking request.

In the appendix number 05, there is a summary of the statements providing grounding for the successfulness and failure of all the assignments, with

popularity of the different assignments
number assignments made



popularity of the different assignments
the most eye-opening assignments
as stated during the interview



the emphasis on the most popular exercises, though. I will also pay some attention to the exercises that only one or two participants had filled out, for in all of the cases the attendees gave valuable feedback both on the assignment as well as their personal reasoning for not doing it

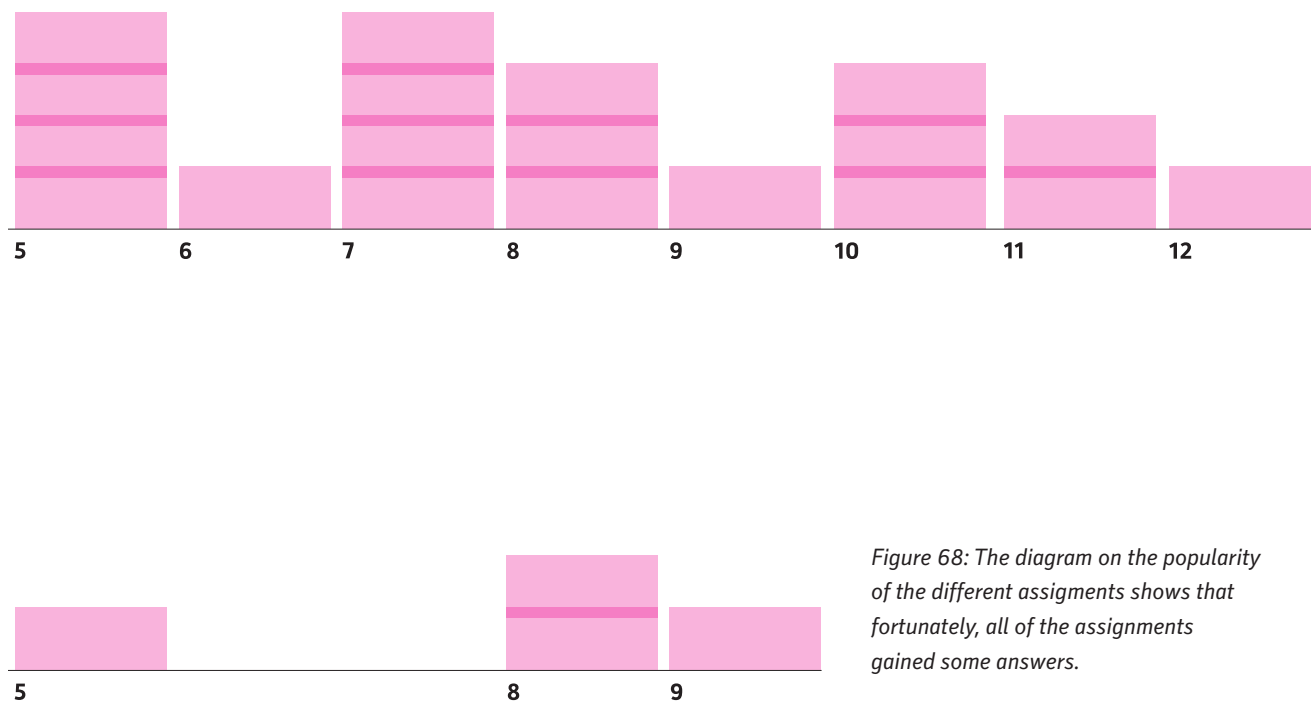


Figure 68: The diagram on the popularity of the different assignments shows that fortunately, all of the assignments gained some answers.

4.3.5 INITIAL THEMATIC DISCOVERIES

The exercises really seemed to make the participants reflect and contest their everyday habits and routines concerning social behaviour and others in their vicinity (see appendix 05). In this sense, the package can be called successful, as its main aim was to make the nature of social situations easier to acknowledge, as framed originally in the chapter Framing the Concepting Phase of the Project (pp. 93-94). One of the participants explicitly phrased

her preference regarding the assignments: the favourite ones were those that encouraged and allowed the deepest form of immersion in oneself. Again, another attendee noted that the exercises that made her realise how her life actually is, and what kind of limitations it comprises, where the most rewarding for her. Comments of these kinds gave me quite a lot of confidence: the future self-reflection set seems to be a concept that could gain

its audience, and help these women to acknowledge the invisible structures of their everyday lives around them.

I cannot help noticing that both of the women making the comments above chose to highlight the exercises 1 and 2 as the most eye opening ones for them (see figure 68) when asked in the very end of the interviews. There was also a third participant, who mentioned in the end of the interview, that the assignment 2: *A Room of One's*

Own had been one of those that provided the most revealing things of her everyday life. Nonetheless, as it can be read from the figure 68, the assignment 3: *Matryoshka Doll* had been the most thought provoking and fruitful for almost all of the attendees. Thus, based on the interviewees' own statements, at least the assignments 2, 3, and 4: *Ticket to Ride* should be taken to further development. Their future form and role in the set, though, will be re-designed to match the core findings from the close-up interviews and the actual probe assignment answers.

The Core Themes

Interestingly, the assignments that aroused most discussion during the interview where not all included in the top three most eye opening exercises. Nonetheless, the underlying themes that were handled stayed the same, and I got to notice unexpected links between the exercises I had designed myself.

Own Time

The conversation theme that claimed most minutes was clearly the conversation on own time and the definitions the women had for it. One of them noted that the assignment was capable or revealing how close one is other people all the time, and how limited the time of solitude is during a regular weekday. Another participant approached the definition of own time by stating that it's not something that you mark in your calendar. Another attendee completed this by describing own time as time when one can freely chose not only what one is doing but also when, and in which order. "And that you don't have pressure. And that you don't need to think that oh darn I'm here now even though I wouldn't

want to be", she continued the reflection.

The free order of doing things and the overall context were significant elements in the definitions. Several participants said that it was interesting how one cannot really say beforehand, if time spent alone is always own time, and time with others is not. Dreaming while sleeping can be wearingly social, and lonely days in one's studio most definitely do not sum up to own time. When one can do something purely out of one's own will and to serve only one's personal gratification, without having to compromise a thing, usually seemed to evolve into own time.

One of the interviewees said that she is actually missing a tool that would help her clarify for herself when she is having "totally free time". She would wish that this kind of device could aid her in bringing rhythm to her everyday life, and release her from those on-going thoughts in the back of her head, reminding her constantly of the things that she should do. She described very elaborately how she is very much inclined to endlessly speculate on the things that she should do, but that it takes huge amount of time and energy to actually get to the doing-phase. Having a tool that would " - - in the everyday life, help in recognizing those things that you could easily clear from the jam in the back of the head", is her dream.

Caretaking

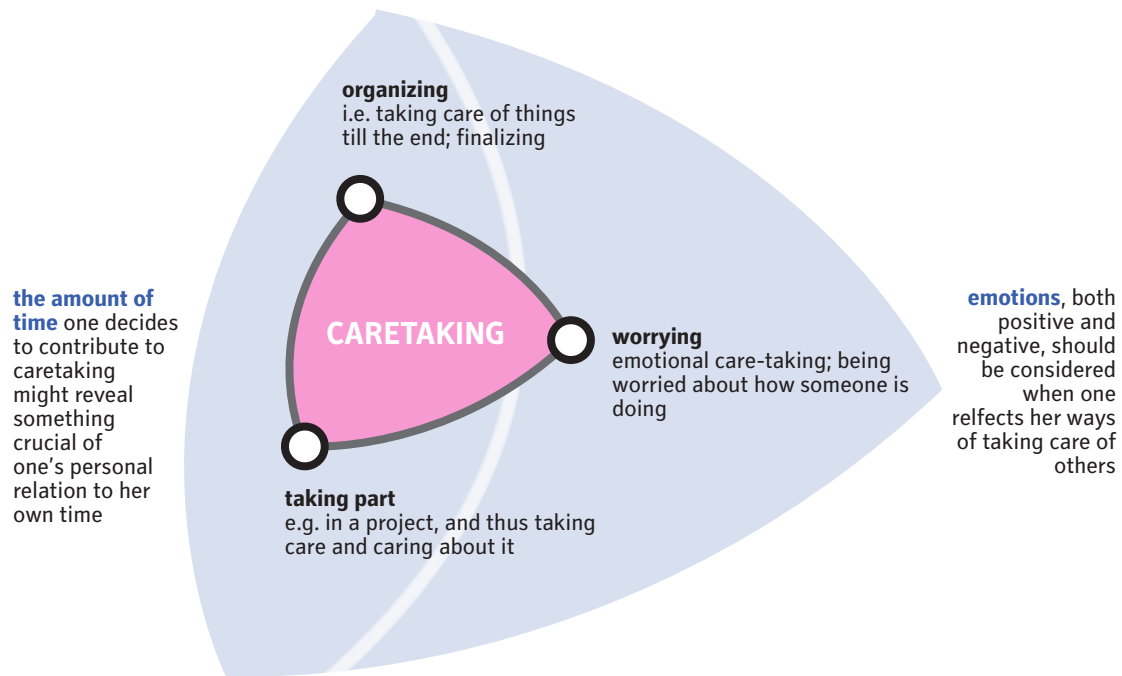
Through the talk on one's control of her own time, and thereby life and the elements that become included in it, it soon became evident that the exercise number 7: *Michelin Woman* handled very similar issues. The core of the assignment number seven lay in giving and receiving, that is in the balance of social interaction in one's life.

When designing this exercise, I had not realised that the balance can also rest upon the division of time consumption. One who attended to the exercise number seven noted that it was very closely linked to the exercise number 3: *Matryoshka Doll* – an assignment that I had explicitly designed in order to ravel out who are these women taking care of, with having the issue touched upon in the focus group discussion.

For some, the link between personal time management and caretaking was more explicit than for others. One of the women said that she had made promises for herself on what to cut out her schedule, and thus who not to give out her time anymore, in the exercise 7: *Michelin Woman*. Another participant had noted that there could be more variation in the sizes of the caretakes in the assignment 3: *Matryoshka Doll*, for her little daughter requires so much more time the other objects of taking care. I am thereby inclined to state, that in the future concepting phases, these two elements of time management and care taking should be brought closer. This approach might even help in establishing the otherwise very problematic definition of own time.

During the very last of the interviews, the participant in question sketched out the different modes of care taking in a manner summarizing the statements of all the attendees. I decided to reproduce her reflection in a form of a graph (see figure 69), including further remarks from the other interview sessions. I was extremely contended with being able to distil at least a few results as this from the probes – results that deepen the themes first formulated in the focus group discussion.

Figure 69: Different modes of caretaking, and the resources they require.



Emotional Focus Points in the Everyday

Another cluster of thematic interference was noticeable between the assignments linked to places and travelling. Especially the exercises 2: *A Room of One's Own*; 4: *Ticket to Ride*; and 10: *Red Ribbon* exposed me the expressive power that certain places can possess. These assignments were able to distil focus points of everyday interaction with people, and showcase how it transforms and develops over time.

Through this emerging set of three assignments, I began to consider the different roles and tasks the exercises could have in the self-reflection package. When one pores over the reactions these assignments aroused in the participants, one can observe that number 2 managed to deal with the distribution of emotional charge

at home – an issue that it was also designed to tackle. I was glad to record the experiences the attendees had of it: most of them noted that it had been one of the most eye-opening ones with its capability to open a new approach to the everyday dialogue with people.

The assignment number 10: *Red Ribbon* gained surprisingly much popularity (see figure 68), which might become more understandable when one realises the effectiveness of the exercise number two as well. With hindsight, I am inclined to state that they handle very much the same issues, only with a different emphasis: where number 2 collects overall and rather estimated data on the domestic emotional charge, there number 10 reveals exact and concrete examples on affective nucleus of home (see figures 70, 71 & 72).

The exercise 4: *Ticket to Ride* casts

the net the widest: it succeeded in revealing sensitive and significant places both outside home area and also related to the domestic activities, and the gradual changing of these over time. Additionally, with some participants, it revealed their dreams related to travelling, that is the potential future emotional centres. The assignment might have functioned rather like a sensitizer to topics related to dreams, travelling, and one's possibilities for doing a variety of things in their lives, both alone and with their families, friends and companions. When talking to the interviewees, I got an inkling that it may have been partly - definitely in an unintended and subconscious manner - used as a collector for material one could later process in the exercises and the diary.

I really would need to reconsider the importance of the exercise: even



Figures 70, 71, and 72:
Responses to the assignment
10: Red Ribbon

<< Figure 70: The participant photographed her faithful companion the coffee tree.
< Figure 71: An armchair where the participant spends a lot of time in her home, and where from she can observe others.
> Figure 72: The participant stated that she could not possibly take a picture of anything else except her family. The red ribbon was thus tied around her daughter's hair.

though the participants had experienced it as very easy and some even as superficial, it might have aided them in their reflections in the following exercises. Nonetheless, before making any final decisions, I would need to study the actual probes answers and find out if any support could be found for my hunches.

4.3.6 PRELIMINARY GUIDELINES FOR CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Even before looking that extensively into the actual probes answers, the mere interviews and their transcriptions enabled the discovery of a few guidelines for the soon to be commenced, detailed concepting phase. It seems that the issues of *own time*, *caretaking* and *emotional focus points* would be the themes through which I should start filtering the probes answers, in order to find further guidelines, latent needs and inspirational material for the final concept.

Yet again, already through discussing the notion of own time, the participants managed to sketch out qualities of a tool they would like to have for themselves. One of the interviewees was especially explicit about this possible future aid she would

like to possess, and listed the issues it should provide some relief to. In addition to helping one to establish when one is alone and when one considers this solitude as own time like in the exercise number 1, the tool should also aid in gaining an understanding of one's daily and weekly rhythm. In her point of view, this revelation might help in the re-construction of one's routines so that they would become more positive ones, structuring the everyday instead of merely making one constantly think of all those little chores one should be doing.

The participant in question wondered if the assignment number 4: *Ticket to Ride* could provide some additional help for clearing out the issues around the concept of own time. She suggested having a weekly reporter of one's coming and goings, in order to obtain an understating where one has



spent her time, doing what, and why one has been feeling busy, hectic, or relaxed. When looking back at the thematic clusters of assignments, I should now especially carefully consider the role and focus area of an assignment such as the *Ticket to Ride*: is it in the end of the day more related to own time than the emotional focus points? Could it be designed so that it could assist the user in getting hold of both issues?

When beginning the concepting, I was paying a lot of attention on the roles and thematic emphasis of the assignments that participants had named as the most eye-opening ones. They were now in the primary focus in constructing a coherent but sufficiently varied content for a subversive self-reflection kit. Additionally, a guideline that I had gained from the interview sessions for the concept

development handled the target group of the final concept. As I had suspected based on the focus group session, it might be wise to shift the main target from the extremely busy mothers with children to women who would have more possible slots of free time in their everyday to be used for reflective activities. Quite a few comments made during the interviews supported this surmise, one of them with the most explicit wording: *"the working women with little children are probably not the target group"*.

All in all, both the mothers and the rest of the women seemed to have been happy with the amount of energy and time the filling of the probes set had required. "I would be using from ten to fifteen minutes every evening", stated one of the women. "If I only remembered", she continued, though. The retention of the almost but not

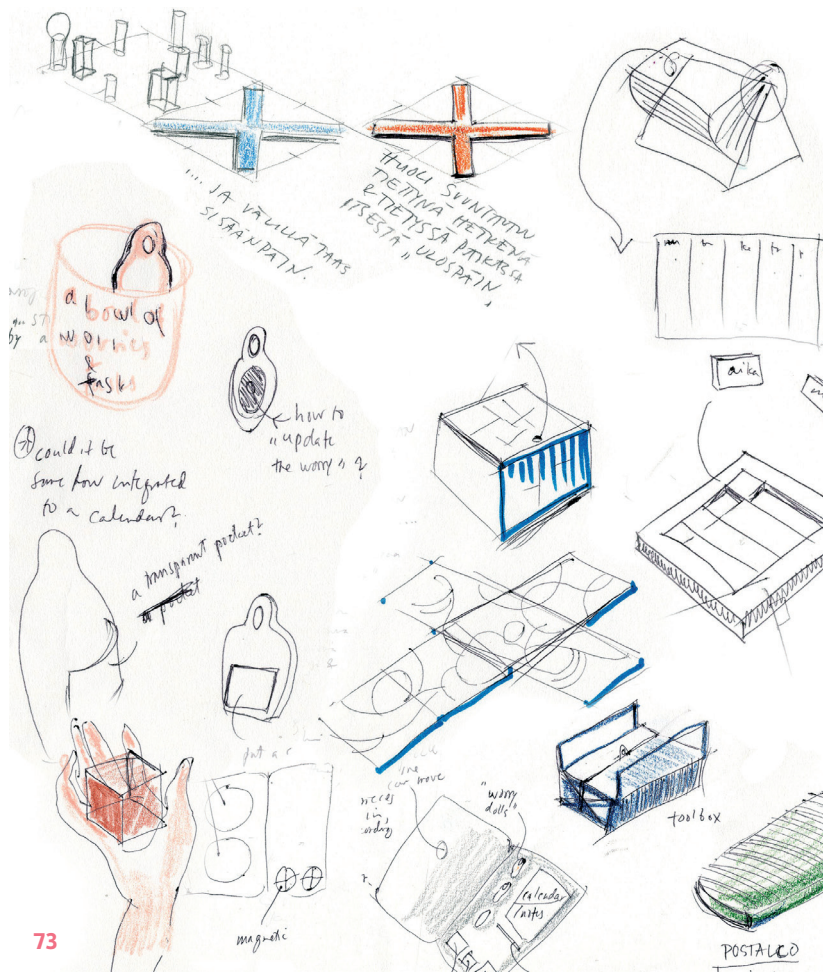
quite daily assignments had been an issue for a few of the participants, especially with the most unpopular assignment 6: *Pink (Is It?)*. Some of the women had started it, but forgot it during the day. I reckoned that the amount of time used for the assignments, and especially the time span over which they would reach – individually and altogether – should be well considered. Achieving a balance of adequately intense but autonomous commitment to the assignments might bring about the best result.

4.4 Extracting Concepts from the Probes Returns

After the analyses and a partial synthesis from the interview data, I began going through the actual probes answers. At this point, I had already established a vague understanding of the newly formulated themes that had been condensing since the very first data gathering during the exhibition quite a few months ago. Bearing the notions of own time, caretaking and emotional focus points in mind as well as the centred popularity of the assignments, reading through the women's revelations of their everyday developed into a rather effective iterative process of data absorption, sketching, and concepting.

I began making visual notes and very preliminary concept sketches at the same time when reading further the participants' answers. I was loosely following the tactics for using returns to inspire designs as described by Gaver: I tried to make myself sensitive to idiosyncratic details (Koskinen et al. 2011, p. 93), and after locating some seemingly insignificant statements, exaggerated them, and beginning to sketch a form that would carry their meaning.

The blanks of concepts that had been starting to emerge already when transcribing the interviews began taking more and more detailed forms. In the following sub chapters I will present an overall description of the route that the conceiving phase took, finally reaching the goal: a set of subversive “actions”, aiding in distancing oneself from the everyday social intercourse in order to realise its targets for development.



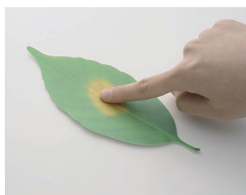
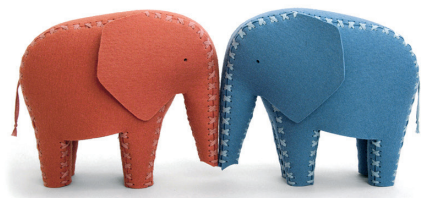
4.4.1 CONCEPTING AWARENESS OF THE EVERYDAY SOCIALITY

While conceiving, I started reflecting more and more on the definition of probes as a self-documentation kit, and its suitability in becoming a critical design concept. A quote from Dunne and Raby was jingling in my head: in *Design Noir* (2001, p. 63) they note about critical designs that “ - they have to be grounded in how people really do behave”. Is documentation in the end an action that requires too much effort? While questioning the necessity of explicit documentation, I put more emphasis on the qualities of the concept that would promote self-observational and self-reflective activities of a person using the “probe”.

First, I started to develop an all-in-one-solution that is a concept that

would incorporate all of the newly filtered three themes of own time, caretaking, and emotional focus points. The concept was becoming a proposal with a game-like character, although a game that would be played alone. The player, the woman, would have to follow some rigid rules on how to compile her days in a manner that would balance her time between all the actors demanding their share of it (see figure 73: Sketching and concepting for the all-in-one game proposal). Nonetheless, the concept started to seem too complicated, and moreover, it would have probably required an input rather distinct from all of her everyday actions. Thus, I began sketching for more embedded proposals.

Alongside with the exhilarating probes returns, I did further inquiry into materials, methods of attaching things to each other, textures



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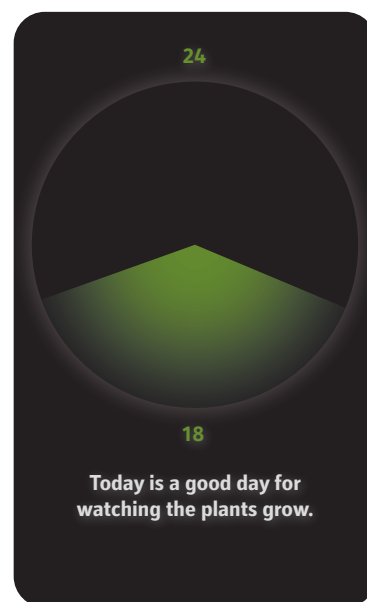
and so forth. With surfing the web and its numerous design blogs, I got a few nice hints for the fine-tuning of concepts when they were starting to gain more shape. The figure 74 is a moodboard style of a compilation of some of the visual and functional cues that I absorbed from only flicking through images of new products or product concepts. They sparked my imagination with ideas for packaging, graphics, construction, and materiality as well as with unobtrusiveness of the design and issues of privacy, just to name a few accounts.

After scribbles of various sizes and levels of details, I managed to distil three separate concepts that mix the three themes in different proportions. They all take advantage of a gentle form of value fictions and user-unfriendliness in order to make the potential user of the concept to

reflect; to gradually begin contesting her everyday actions concerning what she grasps as own time and who she is taking care of, and in which terms. Additionally, one of the concepts is especially targeted for providing the user an unobtrusive tool for making her realise the nature of social situations, and aiding in opposing a role that may be imposed on her.

4.4.2 CONCEPT I: TIME CARDS

Time Cards is an app for a smart-phone that provokes the user to think of her understanding of the concept “own time”: how much she has it on a daily basis, how much she would like to have it, and in how long periods at once. Additionally, by deciding on behalf of the user when she has own time, the concept aims to raise aware-



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ness of how it is always fundamentally ourselves who are responsible for sharing our time – our lives – for other people, for studies, work, and so forth.

Basically, Time Cards is a collection of a myriad of “cards”, or rather screens that show the periods of own time for each day (see figures 75 & 76). The 24 hours are divided on two clock views, and the user of the application is supposed to structure her day according to the arbitrarily selected and very artificial schedules. During the day, she inevitably develops conflicts with the application, but may also find it relieving during a busy.

When the period of own time starts, the application will give an alarm clock style of a sound signal. Simultaneously, it will remind the user of what kind of day she is having: with the schedules, also statements will be raffled (see figures 75 & 76). These

statements describe the general level of business or relaxation that one can anticipate from the day. “Today I don’t even have time to go out of the house”, or “Today I am on a lonely island” can match with the time schedule of the day, but it can also conflict with it.

The blank of the concept “Time Cards” was originally planned to be an analogue one, but then I reminded myself of people’s willingness to engage in any new products if they already possess a good solution to a similar problem themselves. The problem in this case is mostly related to time management, and so many people do today solve it with the help of the calendar and alarm clock features in their smartphones. There-

fore, the new critical time manager is also designed for the smartphone environment (see figures 77, 78 & 79). The sectors of own time as well as the statements are almost all grounded on the probes returns. I was struck by the fact how some of the participants had only 30 minutes of own time during a day, excluding sleep. Most of them had more than that, but then again, it may be shattered to very short periods. Most fundamentally, the concept Time Cards questions the sensibleness of these kinds of everyday arrangements, but does not want to do it in a manner that makes the women themselves feel guilty of their incapability to manage their lives. Rather, it aims at bringing forth the structures that we are

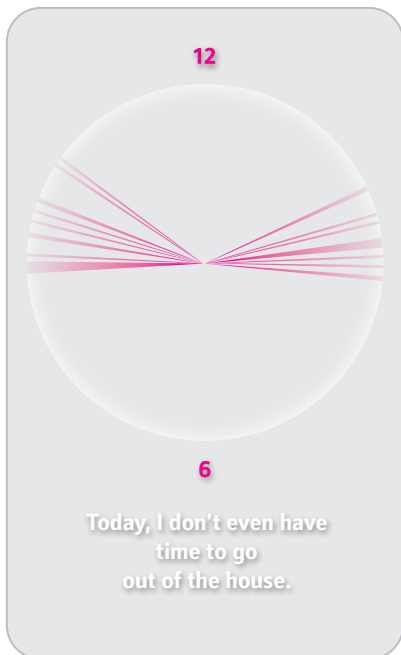
Figures 77, 78 & 79: The Time Card Application may alert the user any time of the day.

thought to consider as natural and necessary for handling our everyday lives, but that very often only make us loose contact with our true needs and desires.

In order to function, the concept requires some kind of doublethink: one has to act if there was no additional application guiding her life, but still, when the phone alerts, switch to obey its arbitrary rhythm. However, this is actually how we live our lives all the time, in the riptide of conflicting demands imposed on us.



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4.4.3 CONCEPT II: MATRYOSHKAS

The second concept is somewhat like the first one – a very easily traceable adaptation of a probe exercise and the feedback that was given on it. It is a series of small figures whose contour resembles a bit to the outside form of the Russian Matryoshka doll. Nonetheless, these dolls interact both with each other as well as with their user – they actually insist on attention and caretaking (see figure 80).

Embedded in the objects there is a web camera type of device, a sound recorder and a microphone (see figures 81 & 82). Moreover, there is a bluetooth or a resembling connection that enables the interchanging of the data recorded in all the dolls that are on a required distance from each other. The camera and microphone are embedded so that the user of the product can save pictures and record sounds of the people that she considers she is taking care of, caring, or worrying about. The object has only two buttons in the bottom: an on/off –switch and a record button (see figure 83).

When one has purchased a few dolls, she should start by recording sounds and taking images of her surrounding social atmosphere. This might be a nice family activity, or a moment to share with friends: the round shape of a figure distorts the pictures funnily on its display that is achieved with the help of flexible screen technology. The recorded messages can capture shared moments almost anywhere, because the small size of the figure makes it extremely portable.

After gathering some “social data” on her Matryoshkas, the user can place them anywhere in the house (see figure 84). When they are turned on, however, an algorithm shuffles images and sounds that progress and change in a



Figure 80: Sketches for the looks of Matryoshka dolls.

manner that is uncontrollable to the owner of the dolls. At some instances, the ensemble can build to a harmonious dialogue between the figures, but the next moment this can develop to a cacophony of random information flooding to the owner's consciousness. The originally beautiful images and messages carrying a loving message turns into a stressful shouting where everyone is demanding their share of the owner's attention.

With using the Matryoshkas, the owner needs to start considering her own needs, and if the caretaking of others in her life inhibit the realisation of them. Moreover, when the babble becomes nerve breaking, and the owner switches the figures off, she has to begin reflecting on how does she “turn other people off”, or if she is doing this at all. She has to confront the emotions other people actually arouse

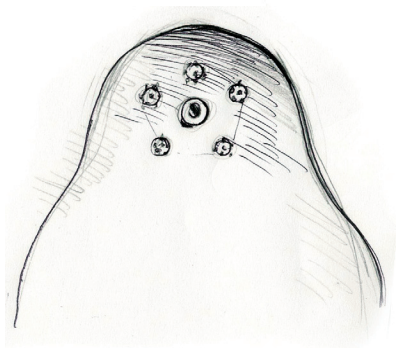
in her, and re-consider her relationships with “the stakeholders of her life”: is there a balance between giving and gaining? Who is dependent on whom, and what should be done if one needs to develop her independence? By placing the figures in the emotional focus points of own's life, the other members of a family or a work community can be involved in the analysis of the everyday social sphere.



Above: figure 84, a collection of Matryoshka dolls in an arrangement on a bedroom side table.



< Figure 83: The bottom of the Matryoshka doll with the power button and the green record button.



< Figure 81: The alignment of microphone, webcam and sound recorder elements in the head part of the Matryoshka doll

> Figure 82: A possible look of a Matryoshka doll displaying the visual data that was recorded and saved in it.



4.4.4 CONCEPT III: THE EVERYDAY NAPKINS

The Everyday Napkins is in a way an airbag for the unpredictable social collisions in the everyday. The napkin was selected to be the carrier of emancipatory, subversive and non-submissive statements because its unobtrusive but rather guaranteed presence in the places where the women had experienced categorisation and forced role taking. Within the focus group discussion and in the probes returns, these contexts included evening gatherings, dinner parties, and talks with roommates that usually took place in the kitchen. The napkin is an object that is always available in these

social situations, either in the form of a serviette laid out on the setting, or in one's pocket of purse (see figures 85, 86 & 87).

The functioning of the Everyday Napkin proceeds as follows: one is in a social situation, and notices being imposed with a status, a role, a definition, or an identity that she is not willing to accept; that to her seems untrue. Often times, people in these situations do not know how to defend themselves, for the stigmatization is usually unexpected and comes as a surprise. Basically, the words just don't come out. Here, one can reach out for

her napkin, and glance at the message printed on it: "Where are you? Why are you here? Who are you here?", or "Move on! Don't try to change the people but the environment around you".

The statement may help the woman out of the situation either verbally, or in any case, at least mentally. The mere acknowledgement that there are different and opposing truths of the social order can provide a sensation of relief even though verbal lashing would be impossible. Then, the role of the napkin is to remind the user that she does not have to give in to others'





perceptions of womanhood. Naturally, the handkerchiefs can also be utilised as a refreshing supplement to the everyday life in general. For instance, in November, with a terrible cold and the yellow press ranting, say, about the gap in salaries between men and women, one can glance to her napkin, sneeze, and repeat in her mind: “The basic needs of the male and the female are the same. End of story.”



Opposite page: figure 85, using the everyday napkin during a family dinner. Above: figures 86 & 87, reaching for a napkin from one's purse

Next page: figure 88, All the prompts, questions, and statements are grounded in the probes returns and the participants' descriptions of their everyday activities.



Move on!
Don't try to change
the people but
the environment
around you.

You can say
"I want to be left alone"
any time.

Red wine
will always spill
on the same spot if you
don't hold the glass
straight
yourself.

Where are you?
Why are you here?
Who are you
here?

Where is
the ideal woman?
In the pulp fiction
section.

The basic needs
of the male and
the female are the
same. End of
story.

4.4.5 VIABILITY, FEASIBILITY, AND CRITICALITY OF THE CONCEPTS

Each one of the three concepts presented above utilise already existing technology and manufacturing methods: flexible screens, blue tooth connections, injection moulding, silkscreen printing, and programming languages such as the Objective C. Physically, all of them could exist already, which is a key ingredient in the application of the critical design strategy called value fictions. The concepts are viable: their manufacturing process could be planned out, their branding fine-tuned, their distribution organized and so forth. Nonetheless, their success is very much questioned, for the embedded user-unfriendliness especially of the concepts I and II challenges the feasibility of the conceptual products. They seem like potential products, but still make the viewer ask herself: Would I really use this?

The main thing that the concepts do is that they raise a question “What if?”. If these would exist, how would their use change the everyday of the user? Actually, it is even a bit too precipitated to even suppose the concepts would become real. The mere possibility to play with the idea of a matryoshka is enough, for it already does what critical design is to do – challenges the way we perceive our surrounding world, and crafts a strategy for taking

an alternative route.

The Time Cards and The Matryoshkas utilise the inside-out orientation recognized within critical design: they employ the designerly tools and methods in order to “articulate ideas about systemic conditions outside of design itself” (Mazé & Redström, 2007). The Everyday Napkin is similarly a product of a designerly process, and can also be manufactured industrially. Nonetheless, as a printmaker I see there a possibility also for an outside-in approach: by printing the paper napkins by myself, and changing the rather streamlined method of silkscreen to the age-old intaglio tradition, or even wood-cut, the concept would target its criticism a bit elsewhere. In addition to its emancipatory nature, it would also start to “pose a critique of norms characterizing conservative or mainstream design” (ibid.); it would even take a suspicious slant to industrially manufactured everyday – but single-use – goods.

The self-documenting aspect of the cultural probes is rather hidden in the concepts as they are now, but they all do include a possibility for that as well. Clearly the Matryoshkas are the most documenting-oriented by their very nature; the basic idea is to enable reflection on the social relations through

recording them. Nonetheless, also the Time Cards could be easily developed to include a messaging feature: the user could type in some of the feelings she encounters while being prompted by the application’s schedule. The included statements encourage this already by offering a gently provocative viewpoint to the daily rhythm.

In order to summarize, the concepts are first and foremost self-reflection oriented – a feature that was highly valued already in the probes exercises by many of the participants. With using value fictions and user-unfriendliness as tactics, they start telling material tales of an alternative social system where the user, the woman, explicitly signs away their own time and control over their social relations. Through the provocative approach, the concepts still point to a positive direction. It is actually precisely through the provoked self-reflection that enables the women to craft their lives themselves, in a conscious and optimistic manner.

IV

Discussion

When finalizing a specific thesis project, the embedded process does not necessarily end. As with my case, the product development could still take several steps ahead, the related theory could be revised and integrated to explain the phenomena studied, and so forth. Nonetheless, one also has to know when to stop, to distinguish an ensemble that is coherent to the extent that it is able to answer to questions about itself. I think that with the concept creation phase, my process developed into a whole, and the following discussion derives from this sensation, aiming at describing what kind of a whole it actually was.

1.

Laborious Entwining

After all the data – or response – gathering phases of the project, on the verge of commencing conceptualizing, I started questioning the flow of the process. Going through a generative collage exercise and its interpretations, a vast focus group discussion, and finally a probe study, I wondered if I could have proceeded in a more concise manner. I had gathered a huge account of experiences of womanhood, maybe even more than what I could fully utilise. All the collection methods provided me with rich data

that I could have handled in a more thorough manner, poring deeper over their analyses. For example, with hindsight I can say that probably the focus group discussion itself would have provided me with a sufficient amount of personal stories and interpretations of the cultural phenomena around womanhood if I had spent more time with its discourse analysis.

On the other hand, I have to acknowledge that it was very likely precisely the array of methods that provided me with the abundance of good strategies on how to entwine the two processes. Through the variety of methods and the comparison between their fundamentally rather aligned epistemological assumptions, I managed to even excel myself: I was able to locate new areas of theoretical interest and potential further research. Putting it more specifically, the concept of situation as it appears in gender studies is tickling my brain cells at the moment, especially in a sense of discovering what kind of implications it might have for design. I dare to suppose that there are some implications based on the surprisingly high common denominator regarding theory. Hence, it would be extremely interesting to couple principles from feminist epistemology with those of the critical design ideology.

There is a fact regarding the design world that would also support investigating the presence of gender in the contemporary design practice. The founders of the newly established network of female designers iGDN (in-

ternational Gender Design Network) argue that the impact of gender on the processes of production, distribution and use is still hugely underestimated¹. They even claim that female designers do not enjoy equal participation on all areas of design, but notwithstanding these fundamental flaws, there is no international initiative focusing on gender and design, and bringing together in a single influential and powerful network all those who have a potential interest in this issue¹. Consequently, intensive and networked debate is most definitely needed in order to bring about knowledge of the historical, cultural, and situational conditionality and contextualisation of gender relations to design². With my work at hand, and hopefully with my future projects as well, I wish to be able to contribute to this discourse.

The contributors in the network's blog point out that even the design professionals are not freed from their gender; also they deliberately or unintentionally transport their gender in their design². In my opinion, acknowledging this requires immediate deeds, and I wish to further develop the modes of action that I only started contributing to within my thesis project. As the contributors suggest, not only do we have to be aware of this social genderization in design, we also have to comment on it in a critical, open and public way, and in so doing we have to aspire after change. These projective pursuits have a strong empowering and transformative tendency as they ultimately strive for accepting

¹ Retrieved from iGDN's website that is build to follow a blog format. <http://igdn.blogspot.de/p/why-we-need-international-gender-design.html>, accessed 25.9.2012.

² <http://igdn.blogspot.de/p/gender-design-some-hypotheses.html>, accessed 25.9.2012.

and supporting diversity, towards a gender-sensitive and gender-appropriate design in both theory and practice². The endeavour for diversity was in the core of my work from the very beginning, which makes it very easy for me to see my future practicioning as a part of the continuum of iGDN, or a similar organization.

Naturally, these next possible areas of research would require a profound understanding of the origins of critical design, especially in relation to the development of critical thinking and theory – naturally including feminist theory as well – where it draws its fundamental inspiration from. This is an area that I barely touched with my thesis. Nonetheless, I think that the emphasis in methodology does justify my shallow commitment to the philosophical discourse, especially when I still acknowledged its underlying ideology as well as the dangers that too straightforward application of methods may cause.

Notwithstanding the new insights that this specific project was able to give me, the work should also be evaluated on the basis of how well the entwined process explicated here can serve me in the future. As I just noted, some more emphasis could be put on the flow of the process; now, despite its utterly positive gains, it became evidently very laborious. However, the streamlining of the process is perhaps something that only happens with time and increasing professionalism: only after several research projects, one starts to have a gut feeling on the necessity of different stages. In the end of the day, despite the many transitional episodes the designerly end results still retain the thematic, originally artistic starting point, and are thereby a rather good proof of the possibility to entwine the processes.

2.

Successful Self-sensitizing

Something that I am now very confident of is the capability of artistic practicioning to sensitize me to a topic, to aid me in finding meaningful facets in it, and to guide a project forward. For example, utilising the artworks as an ingredient in a generative data gathering method proved to be a very successful coupling. It provided me with findings on the ways art can advance a process, and moreover, it directed *this specific* process towards a thematic convergence indispensable for the. The findings even made me realise a special form the self-sensitization could take: when I was interpreting the collage results in relation to my practicioning, I realised how *the method of painting* in itself had made me grasp the environment I am painting in a very profound manner. Thus, in the future I may want to discover the self-sensitizing capabilities of painting, and how this might help in immersing to a topic.

The process was revealing methods-wise, but also pointed out instances that should be taken into consideration when studying a sensitive topic, especially in a manner that merges the experiences of the researcher traditionally conceived as authoritarian, and the researched, who are willing to share their insights. The whole concept of feminist methodology and its aims such as consciousness-raising and empowerment were all very new to me, but became graspable and meaningful on a personal level through familiarizing myself with related literature supporting the actual case study.

Nevertheless, in spite of the process being so guiding and fruitful in many ways, in the future I would like to enrich it more with artistic input in

different stages of the project. Now, I think that the structure did remain rather rigid. On one hand, the overwhelming and unquestionably loosely framed topic required this – otherwise the process might have become impossible to handle. On the other hand, the artistic elements where I would utilise my printmaking skills and their embedded knowledge are in the heart of my subjective professionalism. Hence, they ought to be given more emphasis when I am reaching for the best understanding of myself as a practitioner as well the best result of my practicioning.

The research question for the project was worded out as follows:

How can artistic practicioning sensitize the designer to the topic of her design project, and how can this sensitization be integrated in a process that still has a designerly end result?

In my opinion, the case study provides answers to the two embedded questions. Firstly, the findings from the exhibition frame three different roles the art objects can take in the early phases of the project. These roles support the transition towards more designerly means of progress, and I labelled them as the viewer activator, the image of the viewer input, and the self-sensitizer. They evidently managed to sensitize me to the topic in a manner that reaches beyond what I knew of the subject matter, and to maintain this sensitisation over the whole process. Secondly, the findings from the focus group session that was conducted based on the previous findings, integrated the converging artistic themes to the design process for good, as they were crafted into design drivers. The thematic and theoretical crystallisation and the guidelines for the last phases of the designerly process

do all in my opinion show how artistic practicioning can enrich the designerly process as an integral part of it.

3.

Enrichment and Elaboration

In the first sketches of the project plan the artistic input was more prevalent, but its role had to be decreased in order to make the work to fit in the frame of an industrial designer's Master's thesis. I do not regret or feel sorry for the form that the project took, but am rather very thankful for the insights that the need to adopt gave me. Having to position the project primarily inside industrial design and its related research, I managed to locate myself solidly somewhere in the field – for the first time ever during my studies. This increased my confidence on the whole profession outstandingly, and proved me that it is possible to find my own place within the line of trade.

I situated my project in the research program of critical design within constructive design research, and further explicated its groundings with feminist methodology and epistemology. Notwithstanding the great subjective feeling of relief and trust that the recognition of which giant's shoulders I am standing on caused, I claim that the main accomplishment of the thesis lies somewhere else. With the project, I feel that I was able to fulfil a goal that Gaver (2012) suggests to be placed in the core of the future development of research through design.

In his rather recent article labelled "What Should We Expect From Research through Design?" Gaver (2012) explores ways how the approach

should develop. His main statement is that the research community involved should

"- be wary of impulses towards convergence and standardisation, and instead take pride in its aptitude for exploring and speculating, particularising and diversifying, and – especially – its ability to manifest the results in the form of new, conceptually rich artefacts."

Gaver remarks on the adverse effects the tendency for convergence and consolidation of theory and methods may have on research through design; the aspiration for standardising its processes, procedures, and activities may lead only to an overly restrictive form of research that may loose its ability to creatively challenge status quo thinking. From this perspective, my search after a distinguishable framework for research seems prohibitive rather than purely beneficial for the project. It is almost exhilarating to notice that Gaver himself does not seem to care that much of drawing distinct lines between the Fraylian notion of research through design – that I was so wary of – and practice-based research that is in several occasions used interchangeably with artistic research. He applies both of them to research done within HCI (human-computer interaction) community. For Gaver, calls for guidelines and protocols would only assume that "disciplinary convergence is a prerequisite for cumulative growth of understanding in design". Nonetheless, he manages to argue that research through design does not need to develop only through agreement but also through *discursiveness* and *elaboration*.

Even though the most preliminary

phases in framing the process insisted on adaptation to some kind of readily established standards for an industrial design project, I think I managed to find quite new a way of elaborating with them. The main goal that I feel I reached with my thesis is *an articulation for an elaborated, enriched, and methodological abundant process that recognizes practices outside the field of design as a possibility to develop the field, rather than deconstruct it*. Nonetheless, in many phases of the process, I was questioning the meaningfulness of the process to others: is it only a subjective account of knowledge that I am producing here, and can somebody else ever apply it?

During the project, my misgivings of the significance of the process to others were quieted with the salience of subjective experience in the contemporary theory of knowledge, and with the denial of objective truths. The appreciation of the provisional and contingent seems to be also present within Gaver's (2012) views on the future of research through design. Naturally, as a designer-researcher he proclaimed the interpretive nature of the practice already in the late nineties with the Presence project and the creation of the cultural probes. Nonetheless, the more recent wording of the emphasis in proliferation rather than agreement and convergence does help me finally break free from my mistrust. I will conclude to a quote from Gaver, where he suggests that

"We may built on one another's results, but we can also usefully subvert them, suggest alternatives, or establish entirely new constructions, and this applies equally to our concepts, methods, processes, artefacts and approaches to evaluation."

William Gaver, 2012

Appendices

Appendix 01: The introductory text for the exhibition, provided for the exhibition-goers in the questbook

Womanhood is _____ is an exhibition commencing the data gathering phase of my master's thesis project in industrial and strategic design. In and during my work, I will explore novel ways of sensitizing user to dreaming and imagining alternative futures, especially in relation to the everyday experiences of womanhood and femininity. Moreover, I aim at redefining the possibilities of an artist-designer identity in the contemporary value-scape of 2010s.

After the exhibition and interviews related to it, I will continue my study with self-documentation assignments which I will hand out to my so called target users in the beginning of January 2012. For me, though, the term user means broadly a reflective individual aware of the problems that the cultural values and meanings reproduce in the everyday life of ours. In case you feel you might want to participate in my study in the near future, please leave your contacts to the visitors' book.

Hope you enjoy the exhibition!
Thank you for your interest,

Helsinki, November 14th, 2011

Naiseus on _____ -näyttelyn tarkoitus on toimia lähtölaukauksena teollisen ja strategisen muotoilun maisterin opinnäytteen tiedonkeruulle. Työssäni tulen tutkimaan taiteen roolia käyttäjän hermistään; sen kykyä rohkaista unelmointiin ja vaihtoehtoisten tulevaisuuksien kuvitteluun, erityisesti suhteessa arkipäiväiseen naiseuteen ja naisellisuuteen. Pyrin myös selvittämään, mitä mahdollisuuksia taiteilija-muotoilijan identiteetille avautuu 2010-luvun arvoympäristössä.

Näyttelyn ja siihen perustuvien haastattelujen jälkeen aion jatkaa tutkimustani mm. itsedokumentointi-tehtävillä, jotka tulen jakamaan niin sanotuille kohdekäyttäjilleni tammikuun 2012 alussa. Minulle termi 'käyttäjä' kuitenkin tarkoittaa laajasti pohtivaa, kulttuuristen arvojen ja merkitysten kanssa elävää ja niiden problemaattisuuden tunnistanutta yksilöä. Jos haluat osallistua tiedonkeruuseeni tulevaisuudessa, jätä yhteyshetosi vieraskirjaan.

Nautimollista näyttelykäyntiä!
Kiitos kiinnostuksestasi,

Helsingissä, 14.11.2011

Appendix 02: The extra-exercise question sheet used in the focus group interview

Missä **rooleissa** koitte saapuvanne tänne?

Missä rooleissa ajattelitte, että olin kutsunut teidät tänne?

Mitkä roolit sysäsitte kauemmas tänne tullessanne?

Näkyvätkö jotkin tietyt roolit kollaasissanne? Jos, niin mitkä?

Appendix 03: The empty collage sheet, shrunk from the original A3 (297 X 420 mm) size to fit the page.

Tähän voit kuvata kolmannen naiseuden. Kiitos.

Här kan du gärna beteckna den tredje kvinnligheten, tack.

Please depict the third kind of womanhood here.

Appendix 03: The request on the flipside of the empty collage sheet

Halutessasi voit tällä puolella paperia kertoa jotain itsestäsi, näyttelystä tai tästä teoksestasi.

Om du vill, kan du berätta något om dig själv, om denna utställning, eller om detta konstverk på denna sidan av pappret.

On this side of the paper, you can tell something about yourself, about the exhibition, or this piece of art you just made.

Kiitos! Tack! Thank you!

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dashed lines, typical of primary school handwriting practice paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the entire width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

Collecting the Probes – Close-up Interview

Woman, ____ -years-old

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

When handing out the probes package, I asked for your first impression of the tasks. Do you remember how you felt then? According to my notes, you answered something like ...

How do you feel now? What did change, and in which manner?

ASSIGNMENTS

Did you make all the seven first ones? -----

Did you make more than these? -----

Which ones? -----

Why these?

Which assignments you enjoyed the most? -----

Why did you enjoy them?

Appendix 04: The structure of the close-up interviews that were conducted when collecting the probes packages from the study participants, page 2/4

Can you describe them with at least 4 adjectives?

Which assignments you didn't understand? Why?

Which assignments you disliked the most?

Why did you dislike them?

Can you describe them with at least 4 most accurate adjectives?

Which assignments where the most challenging? Did you experience this challenge as positive or negative?

Did some of the assignments make you see your everyday from a different perspective?

Which assignments were these? How did they change your outlook on things?

MATERIALS

Which materials did you find most inspiring?

Which materials did you find most boring / uninspiring?

Which materials were hard to use? Why?

Was there a lack of materials in some of the assignments you made? Please describe these situations.

Appendix 04: The structure of the close-up interviews that were conducted when collecting the probes packages from the study participants, page 4/4

Was there too much of materials provided? How did this make you feel?

What kind of pencils did you use the most? Why?

THE FORMAT in general (the assignment card size 130mm X 90mm)

Was the size of the assignment card too small or too big? Please describe in which way.

Was the size of the diary too small or too big? Please describe in which way.

How did you experience the packaging (the three purses)? Please pick at least 4 adjectives to describe it.

How would you improve the packaging?

Appendix 05: The summary of the feedback given on the probes assignments, 1/4

The Hotshots of the assignments: 4-5 out of 5 participants contributed to the exercise

Assignment	Positive Comments	Negative Feedback	Things to Improve	The Main Themes and Thoughts Aroused
<u>1: Like Sands Through the Hourglass... (5)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Made one to realise how much time one spends together with other people* Eye-opening when it comes to personal time management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Most boring of all the illustrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Would definitely require the full 24 hours. Now the clock spans around only 12 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Within all the discussions, created debate on the definition of own time, and its controllability.
<u>2: A Room of One's Own (5)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* A fresh perspective to how space and emotion are linked to each other* First, the assignment did not seem too personal, but in the end, when poring over it, it aroused deep reflection on one's daily life.* Several participants mention this having been one of the top assignments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Stickers were difficult to use: too small and hard to detach from the sheet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* The blueprint was applicable to very different housing solutions, but it was still wondered if it could be kept more adjustable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* What is own space, and who has it? What are the limitations of one's life?* What is a home, and which parts of it create the feeling of shelter, especially in shared apartments?* What kind of sociality one is lacking, and what kind togetherness feels forced?
<u>3: Matryoshka Doll (5)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Enchanting visually* Very easy and quick exercise, but nonetheless succeeded in revealing new things of the dialogue one has with people.* Personal and private, but still correct; not too intruding.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">* The figures should have faces so that the emotion that defines the nature of caretaking would turn out.* The relative size of the objects of caretaking could be more varied or variable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* The definition of caretaking through its different modes
<u>4: Ticket to Ride (5)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Helped to realise causes of stress.* The visuality was striking in its resemblance to the old tickets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Even a bit too easy to make.* Stayed on a very superficial level when compared to the most reflection-provoking exercises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Could be designed into a tool what would aid in observing one's journey over a full week, in order to see if there are some emerging patterns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* The habits, routines and aspirations that change over time

Appendix 05: The summary of the feedback given on the probes assignments, 2/4

The Hotshots of the assignments: 4-5 out of 5 participants contributed to the exercise

Assignment	Positive Comments	Negative Feedback	Things to Improve	The Main Themes and Thoughts Aroused
<u>5: Hairy (4)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Despite having dealt with the issue a lot, the concrete graspability of the hair managed to open eyes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Women and body hair is such an over-covered issue in the media that it made many to wonder whether they will produce only stereotypes themselves as well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Some people used almost only hair, and some almost only skin, but seemingly much more skin was used in average. Maybe excluding this sheet and keeping only the hairy one might evoke more novel approaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* The different cultural meanings different body hairy possess: what it takes for hair to turn into dirt – both on skin and loose from it? How can bristle signify hurry, rebel, and lack of hygiene, depending on the context?
<u>7: Michelin Woman (4)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Helped to realise ones duties and that they should be cropped in favour for one's own well being.* Made one participant to realise how she sees the traditional wife figure as a real renaissance woman: capable of everything.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Over-lapping with the exercise 3: Matryoshka. Care-taking is in the core of the exercise here as well. Slightly repetitive in this sense.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Could be merged with either the exercise Matryoshka Doll, or developed together with a time consumption exercise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Women's role as a wife, and a general caretaker, all-organizer, was discussed.* The myth also discussed in the focus group session: the womanly tendency for taking care, making sure, and finalizing everything that has been started.

Mr and Mrs Browns of the assignments: 3/5 participants contributed to the exercise

<u>8: Laundry Year</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Could be approached from multiple perspectives, and filled out according to how much one wants to reflect and reveal on and of the past year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Too personal!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Would be a great exercise to ponder upon just by oneself.* Should include hands and arms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* What does one remember of different spills after a year, and why most of the stains are easy to forget.
<u>10: Red Ribbon</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* An easy way to manage taking pictures and sending them forward to the researcher* Allows several approaches: depicting the grass root level of the everyday as well the most important things in the whole world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Requires quite a lot of thinking before hand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Limiting the wording of the exercise might make the pondering easier. Now, it felt hard to think of all the important objects, people and places, and deciding which of all these to select.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Managed to reveal the focus points in the everyday lives of the women and their homes; objects, people and places in which the everyday is very much entwined.

Appendix 05: The summary of the feedback given on the probes assignments, 3/4

The Misfits of the assignments: 1-2/5 participants contributed to the exercise

Assignment	Positive Comments	Negative Feedback	Things to Improve	The Main Themes and Thoughts Aroused
<u>6: Pink (Is It?) (1)</u>	<p>* Several of the participants characterized the assignment as fun and interesting. An unusual object was a positive surprise, and made the exercise thus thought-worthy.</p>	<p>* All the four women who did not do the assignment either told that their days are too boring and ordinary for this kind of exercise to reveal anything of them, or that they forgot to think of their experiences through the filter.</p>	<p>* The time limitation could be thought out anew, and perhaps restricted to only a certain moment of the day.</p> <p>* The red shade made everything appear very ghost-like and lifeless.</p> <p>* In the end, it was not only the shade that was wrong, but also the whole concept: the glasses were forcing the participants to look at their world from one single perspective, to see it in a way black and white. The original aim of revealing new approaches did not materialize here, yet it was transformed into an opposite: emphasizing narrow-mindedness and blindness to everyday beauty.</p>	<p>* The colours in the world are beautiful, and they shouldn't be repressed in any circumstances.</p>
<u>9: Suffragette City (1)</u>	<p>* The one participant contributing to the assignment characterized it as possibly her favourite: she felt it very natural to think of the city in terms of metaphors.</p>	<p>* Several of the participants claimed that it was not natural for them to conceive Helsinki as a female body.</p> <p>* If one does not live in Helsinki, or has not lived long enough, fulfilling the exercise would feel mostly leaning on superficial statements.</p>	<p>* The map should be of the whole Helsinki, not merely of the most core parts of it. The map represents the "single-Helsinki", excluding suburbs with their family apartments, day care centres, forests etc.</p>	<p>* Is there a danger of overly incarnating places? Should some objects, places or phenomena be kept safe from alien connotations?</p>

Appendix 05: The summary of the feedback given on the probes assignments, 4/4

The Misfits of the assignments: 1-2/5 participants contributed to the exercise

Assignment	Positive Comments	Negative Feedback	Things to Improve	The Main Themes and Thoughts Aroused
<u>11: Orienteering (2)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* It was nice to notice that one is not that far from the ideal body one would like to have.* Both of the women fulfilling the assignment realised in retrospect that their own ideal body is not totally following the stereotypical beauty image that they thought it might. This seemed to be a positive finding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* What is meant with the borderlines? Do they implicate the physical silhouette of one's body, or the socio-emotional sphere that a stranger should not trespass?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* The fact that the contour lines cannot be followed straightforwardly but one needs to hop from one to another in different parts of the body, was experienced as a negative hindrance. As a researcher though, this only proves me that the participants really gave thought to the exercise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* The body in which one would feel most comfortable is not aligned with the stereotypical image of a female body.* Nonetheless, the urge to be smaller and thinner was evident and recurring.
<u>12: About Eggs (1)</u>		<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Several of the participants said that they found it very hard to relate to the assignment: they had not thought of "thinking with their other end" like the male are supposed to do.* The drawing of the actual organs directed the participant's thinking in her opinion too much towards medical analyses. She as well thought the exercise to be a bit difficult.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Having a picture of a belly and vulva might allow more freedom of thought and diverse interpretations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* If the women do not experience their sex organs as predominant in their thinking as the male are assumed to, is the original saying then merely a myth? Or do the male plainly experience their organs as more governing than the female do?

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