



Actions Exist, and So Do the Consequences, but the Person Who Acts on It Does Not

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Introduction

This text is a collection of ideas and memories narrating my process of discovery in becoming an artist. In my practice, I attempt to comprehend what forms our understanding of ourselves in relation to the other and the world that surrounds us, a broad complex investigation that leads to more questions than answers. As a matter of fact, answers are all but what I am looking for. I accept my own brainy limitations, but most of all, I consider the boundaries of comprehension of my species. Although we are constantly expanding knowledge, some mysteries will remain. My interest in how the world within relates to the world outside guides me in multiple directions, like branches of a tree that keeps on growing. The act of making is intuitive. I experiment with materials, questioning the choices made in retrospect. Comprehension doesn't come before a work is produced but rather during and after. The uncontrollable need of making things is directly related to the evergoing investigation into the mysteries of the human mind. In an attempt to decode my creations, I initiated a game of puzzle with no intention of concluding it. The purpose of the game is not to finish the puzzle but to collect pieces and discover ways to connect them. I work on a continuous project informed by my interest in the subjectivity of perception. I question the blurred definition of identity, consciousness and the self by making my subjectivity a theme in my practice. My curiosity lies in how identity is not a constant but rather a fluid construction, very much influenced by our surroundings. We are not unique and autonomous as it feels. Instead, our behaviour is conducted by beliefs that travel outside our conscious awareness. We have been programmed to follow hierarchical structures of power formed long before our time. By exploring my own vulnerability in these power dynamics, I try to understand how the dualisms mind-body, culture-nature, and female-male relate to each other, dictating the hierarchical systems in which we live. I strongly sense a connection in all the subjects mentioned in this text, even though I am yet to delineate clear lines that link them together. Describing my relationship with materials, I emphasise the importance of working with organic and edible materials, illustrating the connection that food has with identity. I explore how food carries information through time, connecting the micro to the macro as it accesses individual and social layers of memory. Visually and ideologically, food is the element that glues all together.

Perception

Perception is shaped not only by our private experiences and memories but also by those who lived long before us. We are in many ways implicated in the other. Our coexistence is more than sharing the same space in time. We are intertwined by a symbiotic relationship that determines our existence. Our body is our home, but also home to many others. What is invisible to us is not in any way inexistent. We are bodies of water, fluid and continuous through a cycle of life and death. In the words of Astrida Neimanis:

"We are literally implicated in other animal, vegetable, and planetary bodies that materially course through us, replenish us, and draw upon our own bodies as their wells: human bodies ingest reservoir bodies, while reservoir bodies are slaked by rain bodies, rain bodies absorb ocean bodies, ocean bodies aspirate fish bodies, fish bodies are consumed by whale bodies – which then sink to the seafloor to rot and be swallowed up again by the ocean's dark belly."¹

Organic materials

Organic materials have inhabited my practice as protagonists in my narrative. Although I see value in human-made materials, I am intuitively drawn to work with silk, beans, coffee and seaweed. By manipulating organic materials, I create pieces that relate to the body and the environment. I contemplate how our perception of life is lost as we transform living things into mundane commodities. Products of living organisms surround us. The shirt I wear, the chair I sit on, and the tea that passes through me; are all fragments of a life cycle of birth, growth, decay, and death. I see beauty in a bean's life potential as a dormant seed at the same time that I am mindful that the worms that spun silk will never become moths and complete their life cycle.

¹ Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of water : posthuman feminist phenomenology* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 3

Me, the self and I

As a child, I was obsessed with animals, especially tiny ones. After a rainy day, I would lie on the floor outside observing the teeny-weeny snails, leaving a trace as they passed by or watching ants getting lost as I rubbed my finger on their path. The idea of sharing the same space as these little creatures and yet having a completely different experience left me puzzled for life. If I am invisible to the ants, that must be something much bigger than me that I do not see. In many ways, I have ever since asked the same question as Thomas Nagel, "What is it like to be a Bat?"². We can imagine living in darkness and sleeping upside down, but only a bat knows what it is like to be a bat, as they perceive the world fundamentally different from us. And if a bat can enjoy a life of subjective experiences, then the bat has consciousness. I am confident my cat is conscious, has feelings, and it is aware. We have daily discussions about it. But what about an octopus? A rat? A spider? Where does consciousness start, and where does it stop? Our consciousness may seem the most obvious thing in the world, but consciousness and the self are very elusive concepts.

The idea of the 'Self' is the most straightforward and complex simultaneously; certainly, I am 'me', an individual with an identity, a collector of experiences and memories, that has awareness and free will. I remember being a toddler, and although everything feels different now, there is a feeling of continuity. A sense that I am 'me' all through the years. Yet perception and memory are notoriously unreliable. According to Susan Blackmore³, the concept of identity is indeed an illusion, not in the sense that it does not exist but is certainly not what we think it is. We all enjoy a life of subjective experience, The 'Self', the unique understanding of being you, an ego, a thinker of thoughts, the experiencer of experiences. Still, she argues that the existence of a 'Self' makes no neuro-anatomical sense. When you look inside the brain, you find a 'mechanism constructing an illusion' and not a 'mini me' in a controlling room. There is no central place where 'I' could be, nowhere for your ego to hide nor anything it is required to do. I am sitting here writing while I am aware that my cat is meowing at the door, and I need to buy tablets for my dishwasher. We are a collection of multiple parallel systems, processing numerous things simultaneously

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Thomas Nagel, *What Is It Like to Be a Bat?* (The Philosophical Review 83, 1974), 435–450

³ Susan Blackmore is a psychologist, lecturer and writer researching memes, anomalous experiences, evolutionary theory, consciousness, and meditation. She practises Zen and campaigns for drug legalisation.

at great speed. There is no time for your ego to make decisions for an obedient and separate body. I decide to do something, which is why it occurs. But by the time the information gets to the brain, the action has already happened. With great effort, I can rationalise that it makes perfect sense that the 'Self' is an illusion. I feel that I invent and reinvent memories, and I admit to being a different person from time to time. Although there is some continuity in this body over time, nothing remains unchanged; almost all cells that compose a child's body are gone by adulthood, and we are biologically something else. But the illusion is so strong that it is undeniable the feeling that, in essence, I am the same as the girl from the photos. And If the 'Self' is a construction of the brain, what, in essence, am I?



Pink Moon, 2018 - found objects, cloth, stuffing, thread



All the Lies We Tell, 2018 - chair, brass, found objects, muslin, beans, thread

Practice

All the Lies We Tell (2018) is a project that started out of desperation as I found myself in personal turmoil with a project deadline. Running against the clock, I wrapped everything around me into a printed cloth, sewed it together and stuffed it with filling, thinking that I could hide my troubles in that horrendous-looking pillow. Until then, I had been struggling to find interest in what I did. Torturing metal into good-to-look-at jewellery had never worked financially, and once I was under the protection of an institution just felt pointless. Somehow in that hideous pillow, I saw a path worth following. And without much thinking, I started to collect objects from my daily life and wrap them in white muslin. I began sewing the fabric with trapped things to an old chair I had found on the coldness of an abandoned staircase in the old buildings I lived, where a friend would sit to smoke cigarettes. The transparency of the fabric gave a hint of the trapped objects. Amidst the confusion of toys, candles, pacifiers, wine corks, pregnancy tests, keys, medicines, rizla, etc., beans were the element that kept everything together. As the chair started to take shape, I felt vulnerable, as if my experiences of loss and pregnancy were exposed and seen through as that thin cloth. Nevertheless, wrapping objects were healing; repetition was calming; it became a meditation, and my thought went everywhere but into what I was creating. The chair started to grow as I did; it lost some parts but gained others. In many ways, I was the chair—a messy, mutating, growing thing. I never intended to use the narrative of my experience; I wish to hide it as much as I wanted to uncover it. I thought of Tracy Emin's *My Bed* (1998) and how the vulnerability of biographical work intrigued me. Perhaps what was being revealed was subtle enough to pass unnoticed by others. Yet being the subject of my creation felt uncomfortable. Until then, I only wished to create slightly odd but beautiful objects with a hint of darkness. But as the subject of my own experience, the work automatically will always be about me. Perhaps the perception of what constitutes 'me' and which part I wish to expose is what changes. From a multitude, we choose which side we want to reveal, but we can never know what side others witnessed. The way we sense our experiences is intrinsically different from the other. I can imagine that the smell of coffee is the same to you as it is to me, but I can never find it out.

Searching for a new object to wrap, I stumbled on a pointy pair of burgundy brogues. These shoes have moved with me through four different countries, unworn for most of them. I could almost smell the April showers in London as a film passed through my head. I saw myself holding a black umbrella with a blue sky inside, walking towards Archway tube station while the boots made a click-clack sound on the wet pavement. I realised I was no longer the person who once walked in those shoes; nothing remained of her apart from these boots. It made me reflect on the idea of the 'Self'; this unchanging core of identity that makes 'I' the same from day to day, persistent through time, altogether the same, continuous and unique. The feeling that I am the same 'Self' as that child playing with tiny snails. Yet, the body, memories, and experiences are all gone, and I am something else now. It is not so hard to acknowledge that I am not the same as when I was a child or even the same as ten years ago. But am I not the same 'Self' from when I started to write this essay?

During the mounting for a group exhibition on my BA studies, because of my lengthy processes, the only thing that I had ready was a knife and fork, an unfinished pair of shoes and a small detail on a dress. There was no intention of showcasing objects on a plinth; instead, I wanted to translate the concept of a work still to be completed. Running out of time and ideas, I bought forty kilos of beans, the material I've been using together with silk and thread to cover these objects. By the time I arrived to install my piece, most of the room had been taken. I placed the dress on the floor by the entrance and threw bags of beans until a seed circle totally covered the garment. Gently pulling the fabric through the beans, I drew a dress silhouette and placed the knife and fork by the sleeves, and so the work was completed. This new, fast, unexpected way of working has opened doors to new possibilities in my practice. Uncovering the material that has been hiding under silk made me comprehend the personal symbolisms present in this edible seed. Exposing large quantities of beans also made the use of food as material noticeable to me. I appreciate the dualities in my working methods. Spending a year on a single project is a natural process rather than an intention to make a statement. On the other hand, working under pressure with the limitations of time has taught me to incorporate the uniqueness of a room into what I create. There is a semi-magical feeling in developing through the intuitive expressions of your body a unique and ephemeral piece that can never be again, as the work only materialises in a singular moment and space.



Untitled, 2020 - dress, knife, fork, silk, beans



Untitled, 2021 - shoes, silk, beans, thread

The OOO and the microbiome

Influenced by Timothy Morton and Graham Harman's ideas of ecology, anthropocentrism and Art, my practice reinterprets our relationship with time, the world, objects, and hierarchies. Timothy Morton believes all beings are interdependent and presumes that everything in the universe has a kind of consciousness, from algae and rocks to knives and forks. He points out that the very thing that supposedly makes us *us* – our DNA – contains a significant amount of genetic material from viruses. The Anthropocene fails to acknowledge that whether you want it or not, everything is interrelated and dependent. There is no living object less real, vital or important than another. We see nature as something out there, distinctive and separated from us, the illusory idea that humans are independent and above all. Graham Harman writes, "The world is not the world as manifest to humans; to think a reality beyond our thinking is not nonsense, but obligatory."⁴ Human beings are a species among other species; we are not the ultimate object of the planet. Both thinkers are heavily associated with Object-Oriented Ontology(OOO), a popular philosophy in the Art world that believes that objects experience their existence in ways that lie outside of the human-centric definition of consciousness. As an artist, the OOO justifies what I do, as it gives meaning to objects. I consider myself a OOO enthusiast. Nevertheless, I am in some way still an 'elitist', as there are some hierarchical concepts that I am unable to let go of. Outside of my practice, I can defend the experience of a kettle and a fork, but I battle with the idea that the plastic that wraps a Daim bar has the same value as everything else, including you and me.

I am interested in the strange relationship between humans and the world that lives within us. Microbiologically the 'Self' is constituted of a multitude. Trillions of microorganisms reside in us and inhabit just about every part of the body; these include not only bacteria but fungi, parasites, and viruses. They provide vital functions essential for our survival, a symbiotic relationship that dictates much more than our bowel movements. The gut and the brain are connected physically and biochemically in a number of different ways. And so, altering the varieties of bacteria living in your gut can improve your brain health. We do not encounter each other; still, we are an interdependent unity. You are not an individual but a colony. And how can we determine who is in the drives seat? Our modern way of living

⁴ Graham Harman, *Object-oriented ontology : a new theory of everything* (London: Pelican Books, 2018)

makes us lose key species that are foundational to our functioning. Like the oceans losing species affects whales and jellyfish, losing species in our microbiome has brutal consequences for our physical and mental health. And it all goes back to food as you are what you eat. When we ingest food, we are not only generating energy for human cells; we are feeding our colony, and the choices we make interfere with its population. The creatures that reside in us all have their functions; It is not about good or bad; it is about balance. We can reintroduce lost species that nurture our inner ecosystem, but first, we must acknowledge the importance of their existence. Exploring sprouting and fermentation is a strategy to repopulate my microbiome, but also a source of material and processes I wish to investigate in my practice. What we do to our bodies is a reflection of how we relate to other organisms and the environment. The hierarchy of power also applies to our inner self. To care for and nurture our microbiome is perhaps to admit that we are not as human as we like to believe. As hosts, our power is not in the denial that we are an environment for other bodies but in the notion that we are a non-hierarchical unity.



Other, 2021 - barbie doll, hair, silk, thread

Food

The use of food has been constant in my practice. Rather than a conscious decision, using food as a material is something that I became aware of over time. Food is vital in the construction of identity, as we are biologically, psychologically and socially constructed by what we choose to ingest. For me, food is a way of exploring the dualities of living and growing up between cultures. Although I am technically as Norwegian as my mother, I'm perceived and feel like an immigrant in Norway, a feeling that is neither new nor necessarily damaging. Growing up in Brazil with a Norwegian mother and a Japanese-Brazilian father has made me culturally ambiguous. I feel enriched by the diversity of cultures that reside in me as much as I feel ethnically undefined.

During my childhood, I spent many Christmas visiting my grandparents in Norway, where the language barrier was often fixed with the language of food. Mormor knew precisely how to please my brother and me. We would bake numerous sweets together, and she made sure to make kjøttkake on the day lutefisk was served, just in case gelatinous fish was off limits. Yet, I was no stranger to weird food. My father ensured that I tried everything from tripe to caviar in fine-dining restaurants or improvised street stalls with dubious hygiene standards. It was mainly through food that Japanese culture was passed on to me. My father often cooked Japanese food and always searched for Nipponic cuisine no matter what country we were in. From an early age, I understood that something rather peculiar about my family differentiated me from the kids at school. I was often pointed out as being Asian and somehow less Brazilian. A rather absurd thought if you consider that Brazil is a land built on migration, with the largest concentration of Japanese descendants outside Japan. Perhaps I just lived in the wrong part of the country for my ancestry. It is amusing that my most distinctive physical characteristic is associated with a place I have never been. I am aware that I enjoy a life of invisible privilege as somehow Japan falls on top of the Asian hierarchy, and I am diluted enough to experience the benefits of being white. The curiosity around my ethnicity remained even living in one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world. Saying 'Brazil' when asked 'where are you from?' just caused another exclamation point in the face of those



Other, 2021 - barbie doll, hair, silk, thread

questioning me. Explaining why I look the way I look has proven to be much more satisfactory, as if the fact that my grandparents from my father's side were born in Japan said much more about me than anything else. I explore this topic in the series *Other* (2021), a collection of black, white, and brown jewellery made out of Barbie dolls. It plays with the social constructions of race and ethnicity and the necessity to categorise individuals, organising them into boxes they often don't fit. The structure of the adornments is built using Barbie dolls' heads and legs, and each piece of jewellery is wrapped in silk, exposing fragments of the dolls.

For migrants living in a complex multicultural scene, food plays a vital role in maintaining kin, social and cultural ties. Food is much more than a survival necessity; the act of eating is a ritual artifact conducted daily, a sensory experience that embraces memory, identity, history and politics. How we eat affirms our individuality and the otherness of those who eat differently. In this context, food plays a vital role in my understanding of the self, as it allows space for multiplicity while carrying familiarity and a sense of belonging. Cooking rice, beans, and farofa⁵ is a ritual that brings memories and connects me with a place that, by my extended absence, seems to exist only in my head. Still, no distance can detach me from the place where I spent most of my life. I feel impacted by everything that has happened before me, what is happening now, and all that is still to come. I am tied to memories that are not mine, the experience of those I haven't met. We share the same location at separate times, a bond made not by blood but by water and food that, in cyclic nature, passes through all of us. As Black feminist scholar Christina Sharpe reminds us, "[B]ecause nutrients cycle through the ocean (the process of organisms eating organisms is the cycling of nutrients through the ocean), the atoms of those people who were thrown overboard are out there in the ocean even today."⁶

Açaça (2022) is an installation that merges white corn and black-eye beans, creating a circular drawing on the floor. The dark green from the Kombu⁷ draws a contrasting pattern emerging through the seeds. Behind the seed circle, a Victorian(ish) armchair sits. In searching for a chair that had its own stories and memories, I found some that caught my attention. In my head, the chairs symbolised men and women of colonial times exhaling an imperialist perfume that still permeates the air. Whether a replica or not, I was interested in how its aesthetics bring us to an era we haven't experienced but are very much influenced by as we are bound to agreements made hundreds of years before us. I ended up choosing the feminine chair as a reminder that we may have normalised sexism marking it almost transparent, yet, we still live under a male-dominated power structure. And this is something we all need to confront. As women, we are not simply victims of machismo. We are made inferior not only through a male-centred perspective but through our own as we are a product of a patriarchal society with roots that reach beyond the reality of now. Like culture is above nature, and human is above nonhuman, we naturally fall under men. There

⁵ Farofa is a quintessential Brazilian dish made of toasted cassava flour.

⁶ Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 104.

⁷ Kombu is a kelp widely consumed in Asia, especially in Japan, where it is used to make dashi, a base broth essential to Japanese cuisine.

are, of course, other nondominant groups of humans. In these systems of oppression, women will always fall into the bottom class. We are restrained to silent agreements we have never signed. Still, to this day, I regret not bringing those two men(chairs) home for a future project, but my eyes remain open in the hope that we will meet again one day.

I worked on the feminine chair in an attempt to create a new perspective on its memory, applying different types of seaweed to the seat in a torturous process of forming a pattern reminiscent of its original fabric. With a more simplified approach, the upholstery in the backrest was replaced with Kombu sheets that fold and grow beyond its frame. By the chair's feet, there is a pair of shoes; one is a replica made of Kombu, while the other is an untouched Dr Martens Chelsea boots. This time I managed to be in the room of choice but got decentralised, making me incorporate the beam as I adapted into a corner. During the exhibition, the Kombu dried and shrunk, making unwanted ruptures that subtly exposed the plastic underneath. Ever so often, the chair would release a cracking sound of splitting seaweed as if to demonstrate its active presence in the room. The sound of the cracking seaweed, the odour of Kombu, not getting the place I wanted, having to incorporate the beam, running out of time, running out of corn. This series of minor catastrophes, initially perceived as a failure, directed my interest in the more than visual aspects of the work. It brought awareness to the use of space and the undeniable presence of materials making decisions besides my wishes. Earlier experiments with seaweed have created a scent repudiated by my peers. My current project using coffee will perhaps offer a less controversial aroma—the pleasant scent of an industry built on colonialism and slavery.

White corn and beans also play a vital role in Candomblé, the country's most disseminated Afro-Brazilian religion. Candomblé is a monotheistic religion that has Olodumare as its supreme God. Mediating between God and humans are the orixás. Every orixá has its favourite food dishes. Each food is carefully prepared and served to the orixás during rituals that include prayer and songs. Later, the participants consume the saints' food, believing that the orixás have accepted and blessed their offerings. Food in Candomblé acts as language as the offerings communicate something to these entities and the people



Açaça (detail), 2022 - chair, shoes, seaweed

participating in these rituals. As a language, food follows a strict grammar that dictates which food should be used, for what purposes, how, by whom and to whom. Açaça is a dish made of white corn grounded in a pestle and mortar, cooked and wrapped while still warm in a banana leaf. It is the essential food in the Candomblé, offered to all orixás, the only food capable of reconstituting axé (the vital force of life) and creating peace and prosperity on Earth. Ritual initiations, funeral rites and anything else that happens in a house of Candomblé only occur in the presence of açaça.



Açaça, 2022 - chair, shoes, seaweed, corn, beans

The beans, the corn, and the Kombu tell much about my story, but they can also speak of the complex history of migration in Brazil. Feijoada⁸ is considered one of Brazil's national dishes. It is regarded as the Indigenous, black, and white culinary contribution—a romanticised idea of an ethnically unified nation that forgets all the cruelties of the past. Food is a language that tells a tale beyond ourselves and our experiences—an essential expression of human culture. Food nourishes. Still, it also signifies: as we feed from the past, traditions, history, and the environment. The famous anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss said that food is not just good to eat; food is also good to think with. Food nourishes peoples' collective minds: their values, beliefs and traditions. He argues that food is a communication system, a language that reviews society's structures.



Applying wet Kombu on chair, 2022

⁸ Feijoada is a Brazilian black bean and pork stew served with rice, farofa, kale and orange.

Temporality

There is more than one way to comprehend time. History is more than a succession of events in a linear temporal relationship to the present. Timothy Morton invites us to start thinking 'weirdly of time', arguing that history is a nested series of catastrophes that are still playing out. Our understanding of time is linear, made of different moments. We believe that when something stops, it ends and will stay in the past. We can relate things to each other, but there is no continuation. But time is not as rigid as we perceive; there is more than linear historical time. We tend to think that slavery and colonialism are something that went away, irrelevant. But colonisation has never really ended, and we are still very much influenced by everything that happened in the past. Colonies that were meant to be exploited have been left at an irreversible disadvantage. Although there is constant change, the power dynamics remain the same. The exploitation goes beyond human catastrophe. Our colonial past could be responsible for altering the ecobalance of the planet, with the effects of the colonial era being detected in rocks and even air.

Time is an essential element of my process. Being low-tech is intentional; my practice focuses on artisanal methods where my body is the most valuable tool. For me, the act of making is a necessity, a channel of communication between the world within and my surroundings. The slow, continuous, repetitive act of making initiates a conversation not strictly between humans and materials but also between materials. At times I feel like an observer of my own creations, as I am an observer of my own self. What I create becomes separated from my intentions and somehow independent. I decode what I produce as much as someone else would, though I have the ability to change them, creating new narratives. Instead of utilising heavy machinery and university workshops, I develop techniques as I manipulate materials of my interests, adapting my ideas to what the material wants to do. In this lengthy negotiation, it is through failure that I adjust the material desires to mine. Only then do I know I have found a technique worth exploring. *Açaça* (2021) and *The Illusory Self* (2021) served as investigations, where I test processes and ideas, and so returning to them is inevitable.

The Illusory Self

Garments are an individual's visual memory, symbolising the presence of their body, history, and identity as well as its absence. The closeness to the body creates an intimate relationship with the wearer, a second skin that connects the individual to the world; it touches the body from the inside and faces the world from the outside. Like skin, clothing is a border, but also shelter.

Using a personal garment, *The Illusory Self* (2021) is a reflection on the idea that the self is an illusion of a brain that hallucinates reality. Inspired by Shibori⁹, I developed a binding technique where beans are wrapped in silk and tied up with thread one by one. The white silk fabric is sewn into a dress until most of the redness disappears. The dress fades into thin strips that connect the garment to the floor, where a duplicate of the dress lies partially covered in black-eye beans. Using the same dress is a comment on the perception of the self—the blurry distinction between me and I, objective and subjective—the abyss between thinking and existing. We exist in the world of ideas and as physical being occupying space in a material world. There is a struggle to grasp that reality is relative and multiple. All theories and concepts have their limitations, and we are left guessing.

Imaginary lines divide the soil into territories of ownership, while we give value to a piece of paper we call money. We think of our bodies as borders that separate us from our surroundings and everything nonhuman, seeing the environment, or what we call 'nature', as something out there, isolated and distinct from us. But humans, more-than-humans and the surroundings, are connected in an infinite cycle. We eat and drink from the environment and secrete it back on an eternal loop. As Astrida Neimanis puts it, "Past and Future bodies swim through our own". What we do outside our leaking borders comes right back to us. Our garbage doesn't go away; it just goes someplace else. The plastic that we throw out there also lives inside us, and so does the memory and bodies of others.

⁹ Shibori is a Japanese manual resist dyeing technique with innumerable ways to bind, stitch, fold, twist or compress cloth to print patterns.

My practice feels like a never-ending project, an attempt to distend me from the humancentric perspective of being in the centre and, above all—the accumulation of unsolved questions that informs me beyond my relative reality. At the same time, I pursue to live life without constantly questioning my existence as the little creature I sometimes encounter and a river that keeps flowing. I wish to be a much more fluid and liquid thing than solid and ecstatic.



The Illusory Self, 2021 - dress, silk, beans, thread

The last dance

I entered the MA program wanting to explore the senses beyond the visual. Already thinking of the final show, I wanted to create a sensory installation for the first time. The techniques I use creates intricate surfaces that have a tactile quality to them. In a gallery setting, touching an object is a no-no, a silent rule known to all. I want to encourage this urge to touch and connect with the work, not only by making this interaction possible but by making it about the interaction. The plan was to find those two men(chairs) I had lost and cover them in Kombu, removing the actual chair and leaving a fragile seaweed skeleton. I wanted to replicate the woven straw seat with long grass seaweed I had collected from the Danish coast. The woven seat would elongate to the bottom as a long dark horsetail, and seeds would cover the floor connecting both chairs through the distance.

But lightning struck my head one day as I entered the Skylight room. I visualised in that space an unique opportunity to create an installation that captivates all the senses. Merging the object and its surroundings into a single entity, I wish to utilise all aspects of the room to create a unique environment—a space where you can experience the world through the perspective of the other. And so I left the idea of the skeleton chair for later use and returned to my BA final project to alter the red dress I had worn many times before. Swallowed by silk and beans, a hint of red is all that remains on the surface. The dress disappears to the inside and, like organs, becomes invisible to the eye. On the contrary movement of turning the inside out, the beans covered in silk are now partially revealed as the 'wrong side' of the fabric is exposed. The seeds fade from the lightness of soya beans to the darkness of coffee. Tentacles grow from the bottom of the object that once was a dress and connect to a ground covered in coffee beans with white corn drawing a grid pattern found in floor tiles. I elongated the dress and removed its frame to achieve an ambiguous form dissociating it from the human-only physique. I want to create a form perceived as neither human nor animal, man nor woman. Merging human and more-than-human as a counterpoint to culture-nature/men-woman dualism.



Work in progress - dress, silk, beans, thread

Detached from the rest, you find a small room covered in coffee beans. White corn draws a grid pattern on top of the coffee. The lines that go up and down and side to side are often interrupted by organic lines that naturally follow the tentacles on the floor. Lightened from above, a strange and primarily white entity hangs at the end of the space. As in a home, The welcome word written in corn invites you in. Drawn by the curiosity of the object at the end of the room, you enter, still uncertain of your decision. Like gravel, the coffee beans under your feet slightly change your balance. Maybe you try to step lightly as if the weight of your body would suddenly change, and you could somehow float on the surface. Crushed

by your feet, the beans create a sound and intensify the already present smell of coffee. Perhaps the initially uncomfortable feeling of stepping on beans fades away as you encounter a creature with tentacles. You examine the intricacy of its surface, trying to figure out the what, the why and the how. You may wonder about the concept and if there is any particular direction that your mind should follow. Or perhaps your memory associations have already taken you to a place that is only yours. Hung by a large fish hook and beige rope, the entity with tentacles invites you to look up where you meet with the sky, a little square on the roof that reminds you of the world outside. As you step to leave the room, the grid lines might be distorted, maybe part of the floor is exposed, and the welcome that invited you in has disappeared. Perhaps you only had a glimpse and turned your back, refusing to engage in this nonsense. Whatever reaction you could have, we won't ever find out, not in this room, not in this exhibition. As the walls in which I wished to create this private universe were not chosen to be mine, the installation will only exist in your imagination and mine. I have gambled, and I have lost.

Without the room, the experience disappears, and what is left is another work that, in the curator's words, "will look good in the room". As an irony of destiny, that was precisely what I worked so hard to avoid— years of investment culminated in the moment where I was able to create a world to be entered and experienced and accomplish more than a piece that decorates a room. The installation is made not by the hanging object or the pattern on the floor but by the experience of the viewer. Only the confinement of a room could create a sense of intimacy necessary for the viewer to embark on a sensorial experience that has the potential to be uncomfortable. I know that given a chance, no one wants to step on coffee beans. Neither I want them to, now that the walls have fallen. I welcomed the consequences of so many steps crushing the beans, destroying the pattern and exposing the floor. Perhaps I would, from time to time, tap the beans back into place but never remake the patterns as I welcomed impermanence. I guess that being part of the crafts department, I fall into the class of decorative arts, where what is taken into consideration is the object you can visualise and not an idea that needs to be thought of. Once again, I am categorised and placed in the correct box, the room where objects are hung. Trying to explain that the experience can only exist in the confinement of a room is like describing qualia while trying to

understand the mind in physical terms. More than crafting a dress of hundreds of beans, I have crafted an idea, a world to be entered. It was naive to think that after these five years of frustration, I could have my cake and eat it.



Work in progress - coffee beans, white corn

And now, living in anticipation as I wait for closure, I struggle in being present with what is. I want to achieve blind positivity but feel anchored in Murphy's law. The excitement surrounding me at the juncture that anticipated the final show has dissolved into a wish to conclude my duty and leave. In wait of the instant when the wall that protects me will fall, and what will remain is a sea of uncertainty and debt to pay. Am I good enough? And is it good enough, enough? I am particularly ambitious in ideas, but the plan is relatively simple: survive from my craft. But am I asking too much(or perhaps too little)?

The university is a time to take risks and think big; everything can be turned down afterwards. It is much easier to simplify an idea than to pump it up. Thought almost two years, I nourished a very strict idea of how the last exhibition should be—working on a single piece that never became. The deception, the rage, and the victimisation left me on the edge of quitting. Then I remembered that the most exhilarating things happen when something goes terribly wrong. The final show is not final; it is only the end of an introduction chapter. It does, however, at least for me, define who you are as an artist. And I am a risk taker, a slight troublemaker, working on the edge of my comfort zone. I try to achieve and explain something that I am yet to comprehend. And if there is one thing that I learned is how to dance with my misfortunes and turn casualties into intentional practice.

Because of how I mount, every installation becomes site-specific; creating for and with the space is a necessity, as I want the work to merge with its surroundings and become part of it. And now placed in this broad space, although I enjoyed the idea of building a room inside a room, there is no intention to visually separate my piece from the other works. It is not a simple and adaptable piece, at least not for me. The installation felt so intertwined with that room that I couldn't stop thinking about the four walls I didn't get. The idea of protection and intimacy kept echoing in my head, and I became obsessed with the idea of a confined space and all it symbolises. The room itself became more significant than the centrepiece I devoted so much time crafting. And so, stubbornly, the project became about creating the room that was not given to me.

Seiduken One, like most galleries, is a big white box. It is marked by four wooden pillars at its centre, a rather strange combination to be intentional. I wonder if these beams are the remaining memory of a past building. Perhaps because we only see what we choose to see, looking at these wooden pillars, I can visualise the edges of a room that already exists. I want to draw lines and make this phantom room also visible to others. Using rope and thread, I will build delicate see-through walls that are unable to hold image, sound, or smell. I want to play with the idea of separation, privacy, protection, and everything else a confined space can do. Embracing the four wooden pillars in the centre of the gallery, I want to create the memory of a room that leaks to and from its surroundings. The floor of this room will be a grid pattern of coffee beans and white corn, spreading through the fragile walls of a space that cannot contain itself within its boundaries. As I plan to materialise the room that got stuck in my head, I think about the vulnerability of our own borders, as our body can also be seen as a house or a room that leaks through the environment.

This is certainly not how I intended to finish my studies. Perhaps it is much better than what I planned for. The idea of occupying such an ample space in the centre of the university's main gallery would never cross my mind as, inevitably, I would have the certainty of a no. Perhaps the rejection of my former request is directly linked to the approval of my latest proposal. In some weird way, I did get the room I wanted; I simply have to build it myself. For now, that is not much prepping I can do; the installation exists in my head but can only manifest itself during the mounting week. I'm uncertainly prepared as things can still go terribly wrong. But this time, I find no space for speculative anticipation. This last dance made me realise that I arrived as an artist, not because of the diploma I'm yet to receive, but because I can transform ideas into form in whatever adversity. All I want is to live from the individuality of what makes me an artist, in the hope that making things can be my bread. I encounter in this sea of uncertainty, waves of possibility. And I can accept all the variables of the future to come, just as long as a starving artist I will not become.

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